

JOHN BÅÅTH  
1931-1999  
Obituary

John A. Bååth the well-known Swedish distance educator, died on 15th August, 1999. Internationally he was noted as the author of some very important scholarly studies of the methods of distance education. The best known of these is probably his doctoral thesis on communication in distance education of 1980, in which he presented three empirical studies. One of these examined the importance of the frequency of the submission opportunities offered to studies. An earlier work of great importance, to which less attention has been paid than it deserves, analysed the applicability of seven well-known educational theories or models to distance education (Skinner, Rotkopt, Ausubel, Bruner, Rogers, Gangé and the model of Structural Communication). In this work of 1979 Bååth analysed the implication of these theoretical approaches for the development of course materials, for non-contiguous communication and for the supplementary use of face to face contacts. Other studies of his were concerned with very concept of distance education, the drop-out problem, thus a much discussed paper of his of 1989, as well as psychological and other aspects of course development. He was one of the first to pay serious attention to the possibilities of the using the computer in distance education.

John Bååth was by no means exclusively a theoretician since 1960s he had worked as a course author, a tutor and an adviser. He began in distance education as a teacher of Swedish at Hermods, where in the earlier 1970s he was made director of research and development. During the last two decades of his life he run a consultancy service of his own and in this capacity taught staff at Swedish universities, the Armed Forces and private companies. He was also very active in European cooperation in the field, functioned as an author, tutor and examiner in the professional training organised by what used to be cold the Association of European Correspondence Colleges, now the European Association for Distance Learning and contributed lectures and discussion papers to the conferences. On a couple occasions he was a guest lecturer at the FernUniversität in Germany.

To distance education and to many colleagues in the field John Bååth's death means a great loss. He was not only highly competent and good communicator of his knowledge and judgement, but also good friend, helpful and generous, whose memory will be respected and cherished by the colleagues all over the world.

Börje Holmberg  
August 1999

Out of John Bååth's some fifty publications on distance education those referred to above are:

- Nya vägar inom fjärrundervisningen (on computer-assisted distance education). Malmö: Hermods 1971
- Correspondence education in the light of a number of contemporary teaching models. Malmö: LiberHermods 1979
- Postal two-way communication in correspondence education. Lund: Gleerup 1980
- On the nature of distance education, *Distance Education*, 2.2 pp. 212-219 (1981)
- Distance student's learning – empirical finding and theoretical deliberations. *Distance Education* 3.1 pp. 6-27 (1982)
- Research on completion and discontinuation in distance education. *Epistolodidaktika* 1984: 1-2, pp. 31-43
- Learning by written material. Psychological aspects with particular for correspondence education. *Epistolodidaktika* 1986: 2, pp. 8-22
- A list of ideas for the construction of distance education courses. An appendix to B. Holmberg, *Distance education: a short handbook*. Malmö: LiberHermods 1987
- Handbok för distnsutildare. Stockholm: Utbildningsflörlaget Brevskolan 1996