



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

Regnr Östersjöstiftelsen: Dnr 15/14

Project manager: Anders Ivarsson Westerberg

Project title: School under review. Examining control methods in Swedish, Polish and Finnish compulsory schools: organization and effects (Skola under granskning)

1. Purpose of the project

The project aims to answer four questions: first, how is the audit of the school organized - what does the national audit look like and how does it relate to other auditors (such as the OECD and any private / local initiatives)? How is the design, implementation and motivation of the audit conducted? Second: what effects will the audit have on the school's organization - how is the formal organization affected (work teams, routines, policy documents, etc.). Third: what effects does the school's review have on the principal and teacher professions - how are tasks and room for action affected, and how do these changes in turn affect the core business, ie teaching? Fourth, is there any difference between the effects that different types of review systems have on the school's organization and professions? Do the effects of the audit differ between Swedish, Finnish and Polish schools?

2. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

In recent decades, scrutiny has become increasingly important in society, both within politics and more generally (see, for example, Power, 1997). There is an increasing general confidence in the use of different types of review such as evaluations, audits or supervision (Johansson and Lindgren 2013). One of the areas that has been subject to particularly extensive scrutiny is the education system (Ozga 2013). Schools and education are currently being scrutinized by many different actors and organizations such as the School Inspectorate, which is the foremost auditor of schools, but also municipalities, international organizations, non-profit organizations, parent organizations, thought media and media (OECD 2011). The review of the school sector is extensive and is aimed at the students



'goal achievement and results, the learning environment, assessment and grading, the teachers' situation, planning and follow-up of the activity. In the school area, there is a considerable crowd of reviewers (Lindgren 2014). In this project, a comprehensive survey study was conducted, which shows that the landscape of school review has expanded since the late 1980s, and that development is marked by three general and general trends: internationalization, marketing and mediaization. In recent years, the Swedish state has also strengthened its oversight and scrutiny of the school by establishing the School Inspectorate and conducting inspections of schools to check compliance with the legislation, which has led to increased formalization and juridification of the audit (Novak 2018). In the project, a study of the school inspectorates work shows that this type of review can lead to negative effects for schools because the inspection can steer obliquely and lead to goal displacement and contribute to administrative work (Ivarsson Westerberg 2016). This is because the School Inspectorate has a great deal of interpretative space when conducting its examination. The other side of the increasing scrutiny in the school sector is that the scrutiny objects, that is, the schools, increase their efforts to make themselves auditable (Ek 2014). A study in this project shows that the digital learning platforms used in schools also are increasingly used to systematize and present school activities in such a way as to facilitate review (Gullberg and Svensson, forthcoming). Therefore, the interaction between companies providing such systems and schools is also part of the expanding scrutiny landscape. A study comparing the school review landscapes between Sweden and Poland also shows that this is an international phenomenon with significant similarities (Ivarsson Westerberg and Walczak 2016 and Ivarsson Westerberg, Walczak and Svensson, forthcoming).

The three most important results are that school reviews have been expanding all over the world, that there are differences in how to review and inspect schools in Sweden, Finland and Poland due to historical and political structures and that school reviews are a kind of governing instruments that affect school organizations and professions.

The first result is that we see a growing landscape of reviewers and a more densely populated organizational field. Indeed, the educational policy field is governed increasingly by such activities as inspections, supervision and auditing. Although this is an explorative study, we can identify certain aspects and characteristics in the field. Beside expansion, we



can also see processes of internationalization, marketization and mediatization. These changes create new relations and boundaries between actors and organizations in the field. A growing number of reviewers result in dispersion of power, albeit the states and their agencies still the main actor within the field.

Internationalization of the field makes it easier for ideas and concepts to travel between states. The models of inspection in almost all OECD countries becomes more unified. Scientifically oriented model of a rationality combined with market approach dominates schools' revision. Simultaneously international actors like OECD or McKinsey start to play active roles reviewing national systems of education. One such system is the PISA studies, which have been studied within the project (See Rehnberg 2019, 2020a, 2020b).

The marketization of the field of school review have led to a number of effects for schools, parents, school boards and school politicians. One basic trait in a market system is competition between providers. In this competition the results of school inspections and other reviews as evaluations or rankings are highly important for the schools, when they can get an advantage if they come out well in the reviews. Other studies show that schools use good results from inspections in their marketing activities to attract students and parents (Novak 2014). Marketization thus changes the positions of actors in the field. The role of "evidence based inspection" starts to play a key role within the field. One underlying idea or argument is that schooling is supposed to be evidence based. It means that research about school performance and how to reach educational goals are referred to and used when the reviewers evaluate and inspect schools. There have been a "evidence based movement" in schooling, like the one in medical treatment. Reviewers in order to position themselves within the field refer to the needs of particular group (showing the advantage or disadvantage for vulnerable groups of students or educational employees) or to integrating ideologies (reference to values or tradition).

The second result is that there are differences in how to review and inspect schools in Sweden, Finland and Poland due to social, historical and political structures. In Sweden there has been a strong focus on inspections since the beginning of the 2000. This goes along with ideas of New Public Management and it's strong focus on measurements,



evaluation and evidence based practice. In Sweden and Poland there is a strong idea about rationality in the governing of schools and education. One basis of education policy is thus that education will rest on scientific knowledge, and therefore reviewing activity also refers to scientific sources. If we look closer at Polish inspection model, we can easily find that almost all the educational standards and the indicators covering learning and teaching area are derived from international educational researches, like OECD report *The Nature of Learning* (2010) or John Hattie's *Visible learning* (2014). So not only approach to the schools' ranking, but also the rationale lying behind schools' revision is rooted in Castell's space of flow (2007, 381-428). The flows result in mutual influences of inspection models developed in different countries. The model of school inspection in Sweden is for example inspired by the British OFSTED and the Dutch inspectorate (Grek and Lindgren 2014), while Polish model was strongly influenced by Scottish HMI.

Finland however differ from Sweden and Poland. There is no single "factor" or "variable" that could account for the anomaly of the school evaluation in Finland. To use Althusser's terminology, it is overdetermined. Semantically, the Finnish language "locked" audit in the family of evaluation-related terms and away from those more formal inspection. This "locking" effect was strengthened by the historical evolution of evaluation as an academic discipline in Finland as well as the institutional coupling of Utbildningsstyrelse with the supervision of assessment (the same word as evaluation in Finnish) of pupils' school performance. Finally, the research project led by the school researcher Niemi on effectiveness of teacher education brought together a number of key individuals who later were in charge of designing also the school evaluation model.

Finland and Sweden have on paper very similar design of comprehensive schooling and legal provisions concerning it. The only really striking difference is that whilst in Sweden, as well as in Poland, it is allowed to operate schools on a profit-base, this is explicitly denied by the Finnish legislation. The focus on economy in New Public Management may have played a trick in giving an irrefutable argument in favor of random sample as the basis of school evaluation instead of national exams. This choice has made it in practice impossible to introduce market logic into the school sector beyond the curricular profiling of schools.

The third result is that school reviews like inspections are a kind of steering instrument that affects both schools and the profession within the schools. The schools make themselves



accountable by preparing for example the right documents to show how they live up to the formal regulations. This can sometimes lose focus on the main goals of schooling, so called goal displacement. The school reviews also take a lot of time, work and energy from the teaching practices, and can be even be counterproductive.

3. The project's contribution to the international research frontline

All in all, this project has contributed to a problematization and to a nuance of what review and inspection of the school sector means and what it looks like, as well as what effects the extensive review can lead to. A contribution is also the discussion about the expanding landscape of school review. We therefore have contributed to the discussion about “audit society” (Power).

4. New research questions that the project has led to

A new question is how digitalization in schools can affect the relationship between those who are under review and the reviewers. Most schools have systems that organize and present school activities, which is a way to make them accountable for the reviewers.

5. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

The comparison between Sweden, Finland and Poland contributes to an understanding of how social, political and historical factors affects how to think about school review and how to organize the review activities.

6. The contribution of research to multidisciplinary knowledge formation

The project has involved researchers from different academic fields: Public administration, business studies, sociology, political science history and language studies. This has made it possible to understand the research in a more complex way.

7. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

Conference papers

Ivarsson Westerberg, A, and Walczak, B, 2016, The Organizational Field of School Review In Sweden And Poland. EDULEARN Proceedings Barcelona 2016.



Ivarsson Westerberg, A and Svensson, J and Niemann , C, 2015, Landscape of school review in Sweden and Poland. Paper till 23:rd conference, Nordic academy of Management, Copenhagen Business school. 12-14 aug.

Reports

Ivarsson Westerberg, A, 2016, *På vetenskaplig grund: Program och teknologi inom skolinspektion*. Förvaltningsakademins rapport nr 7.

<http://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A971855&dswid=7058>

Nilsson, T, 2018, *Mellan rådgivning och kontroll. Den statliga skolinspektionen som skolexempel 1861-1991*. Förvaltningsakademins rapport 15. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola.

<http://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1179772&dswid=-1368>

Rehnberg, Hanna Sofia, 2019. *PISA-press: Svenska och finländska mediekonstruktioner av "världens största elevstudie"*. Förvaltningsakademins skriftserie 19. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola. [111 s.]

<http://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1371182&dswid=2204>

Articles

Ivarsson Westerberg, A and Walczak, B and Svensson, J, The Organizational Field of School Review In Sweden And Poland. Under review.

Gullberg, C. & Svensson, J. , 2020, "Institutional Complexity in Schools: Reconciling Clashing Logics Through Technology?" *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, vol 24, no 1. <http://ojs.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/sjpa/article/view/4677>

Gullberg, C. and Svensson, J. , 2020, "Digitalisering i skolan - ännu en utmaning för lärarprofessionen?", *Organisation & Samhälle* (forthcoming)



Rehnberg, Hanna Sofia, 2020, PISA som belägg och auktoritetsförstärkare: En analys av mediekonstruktioner och deras funktioner i skolans granskningslandskap. *Språk och stil* NF 30. [30 s.]

Rehnberg, Hanna Sofia, 2020, Pisa – en elevstudie som riskerar att bli sönderälskad?. I: *Organisation & Samhälle* 2/2020.

Book chapters

Ivarsson Westerberg, A, och Svensson, J, 2018, Skolans granskningslandskap, i *Gransknings-samhällets organisering* (Jacobsson, B och Pierre, J och Sundström, G, red). Studentlitteratur.

Ivarsson Westerberg, A, 2018, Skolinspektion på vetenskaplig grund. I Rönström, N och Johansson, O (red) *Att leda skolor med stöd i forskning*. Stockholm: Natur & Kultur.

Books

Ivarsson Westerberg, A, (Red) 2020, *Skola under granskning*, Lund: Studentlitteratur. (forthcoming)

Education

Education at the program for principals at Stockholm University (Rektorsprogrammet), 4 groups a year since 2014 år

Guest lectures at Karlstad University program for principals (4 times)

Conferences and seminars

NFF (Nordic Academy of Management) 2015, Copenhagen. Paper presented

Edulearn 2016, Barcelona, Poster presented

Institutet för utbildningsrätt seminarium, 2016, Paper presented

Rättssäker utbildning, konferens 181128, Track

Symposium för lärarutbildningen 2018, Södertörn högskola, A day for school teachers

FEKIS Företagsekonomi och skolans organisering. Panel discussion

2019-07-23 PISA as oracle and legitimation. The mediated discursive battle of the Swedish school system. Language in the Media 2019, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilien. Paper presented



2019-02-12 "PISA-press" – PISA som orakel, auktoritetsförstärkare och metafor i svenska och finländska tidningsartiklar. Högre seminarium inom det utbildningsrättspolitiska området, Institutet för utbildningsrätt, Juridiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet. Seminar

2017-10-25 Massmedia som skolgranskare. Vad är problemet i skolan? Svenskans beskrivning 36, Uppsala universitet. Seminar

2018-04-24 Massmedia som skolgranskare. Om Pisa i pressen. Föreläsning vid lärarutbildningens symposium om skolgranskning, Södertörns högskola. Lecture