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Public Reforms of Swedish Upper Secondary Education, 1991–2017

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the Swedish reforms of upper secondary schools and their effects during the period of 1991–2017. The reforms were conducted in the spirit of New Public Management (NPM) and generated many more problems than solutions. The purpose of this article is to prepare a foundation for further research by mapping: What do we know about the NPM reforms within the Swedish upper secondary schools? What kind of knowledge is still missing and should it be developed? With the assistance of Roland Almqvist's (2006) understanding for the NPM movement divided into three theoretical perspectives (marketization, contract management, and decentralization), we propose a literature study.

This study showed that the Swedish reforms of the upper secondary schools contributed to growing social segregation among students, students' decreasing performance in science, reading and mathematics that proved to be under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, and teachers experienced a lack of autonomy and de-professionalization. The political promises about “school for all” and “social inclusion” either were not fulfilled or the reform effects were not investigated well enough. Despite all research being done, we do not know what kind of Swedish upper secondary school represents a good practice for the future.

Keywords:

public reform, upper secondary schools, privatization, competition, contract, decentralization and control, segregation, students' performance, teachers' de-professionalization

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INTRODUCTION

The general idea of public reform is to improve a situation at hand. Politicians promise plenty of magnificent aims, e.g., to make government work better, save money, increase efficiency and effectiveness, improve service delivery, achieve better leadership, establish decentralization, etc. The Swedish school reforms coincided with the New Public Management (NPM) reforms introduced in the 1980s. They became a new trend across the world, including Sweden, but why? Was it only a reaction to the financial crisis in Sweden or rather a reaction to the crisis of Swedish upper secondary schools? Maybe, it was a new steering fashion successfully spread in the world only because it promised an increase of efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector.

In this article, we have an interest in the effects of the reform of Swedish upper secondary school during the period of 1991–2017 because the Swedish mass media, like dogs “brooked off the chain”, expressed disappointment with the new school policy. Examples of disappointments are found in the daily press; e.g., Krönlein in *Göteborgs-Posten* on January 19, 2012 advocated for: “more stand up for school electives”. Svensson in *Sydöstran* on May 3, 2012 directed strong criticism towards the municipalisation starting in 1991, because a new curriculum was introduced first in 1994. The new curricula focused on students’ other knowledge, other abilities, and skills than PISA measured. Eklund in *Borås tidning* on November 08, 2012 emphasised that “free schools lead to segregation”. Wernstedt in *Dagens Nyheter* on November 07, 2013 wrote: “The sorting of schools increases segregation”. Baudin, Jaara-Åstrand and Jansson on February 09, 2016, in *Dagens Nyheter*, shared the opinion that: “Free schools’ special queue systems lead to segregation”. Sundhage, in *Bohuslänningen* on April 21, 2017, stated that decentralization in combination with market leadership influenced negative public knowledge and teaching equality. Then, one can really wonder: what is so specific about the Swedish curriculum that students have lost important knowledge, skills and abilities? Hence, we ask: What do we know about the NPM reforms within the field of the Swedish upper secondary schools? What kind of knowledge is still missing? The major purpose of this literature study is to prepare a foundation to further research in this field. Sweden seems to be a good example because the well-working education system turned into a worse one after implementation of the school reforms conducted in the spirit of NPM.

The issue is important when the upper secondary school has an impact on the country’s economic growth, social- and cultural development and on peoples’ standard of life. The education level of the population is perceived by national

statistics, Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), Human Development Reports, or Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as an indicator of human capital and available skills on the labour market. Thus, lower educational attainments suggest social risks, like unemployment, and lower wages and widening gaps between those who have completed upper-secondary education and those lacking education at this level (OECD, 2013 and 2016). Most research conducted in Sweden points to the negative effects of school reforms like growing segregation, growing social inequalities, de-professionalization of teachers, lower quality of teaching, and devaluation of the grade-system. We are afraid that such development can cause the devaluation of the Swedish upper secondary school and in consequence, the devaluation of academic education that is expected to meet new students. It will be a question about the country's sustainable development in the future, if universities will have to adapt their academic programs, courses, and working methods to new students' potentially limited knowledge, abilities, and skills.

The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2 Almqvist's understanding for the NPM movement is presented. Section 3 presents our methodological approach. In Section 4, we describe the institutional context of the Swedish school reforms with a focus on upper secondary school. Section 5 focuses on the research findings about the reforms of upper secondary education. Finally, in Section 6, we answer the research questions and draw conclusions.

THEORETICAL ANGELS

Hood (1991, 1995) and Osborne & Gaebler (1992), who contributed to the construction of the NPM concept, had different understandings of how NPM should work in practice. Osborne and Gaebler advocated for delivery of public services only by the private sector, while the state was expected to regulate, steer, and control delivery of those services. Hood instead argued that the state should still be involved, but delivery of public services ought to be better organized and managed internally by creating internal quasi-markets. In this way, public organizations and organizational departments could compete with each other. Sweden has followed Hood's understanding of NPM. However, Hood (1991, 1995), Pierre (1993), and Montin (1992) shared the opinion that the Swedish public reforms towards decentralization were conducted in a typical Swedish way. It involved transferring authority to the local level and outsourcing of service delivery to the private market in order to induce competition between private and public service providers. At the

beginning, the concept of NPM was somewhat unclear, but researchers gradually have developed it. Almqvist (2006, pp. 13–15) has explained that NPM consists of many ideas and theories about how to administrate public organizations. It was a question about “the optimal leadership” anchored in the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), which took for granted that customers should be involved in the planning and management of public services.

The first theoretical perspective handles marketization and competition. The major assumption is that marketization and competition within the public sector can increase productivity and efficiency. This perspective focuses on such issues as: marketization and how the market is created, competition and cost effects, cost reduction, savings, tender competition, tender procurement, privatization of public services leading to various forms of specialized services, and client in focus. Dominating questions are: does the competition threat have any effect on the organization, and if so, to what degree and how can it be investigated? This perspective can help us to select the Swedish empirical research about upper secondary school that provides answers to the following questions: How did marketization of upper secondary school become possible? How are marketization and competition working in practice? Has participation in competition of upper secondary schools really contributed to savings? How has participation in competition influenced attitudes among various stakeholders towards the Swedish upper secondary school and quality of education?

The second perspective focuses on contract management. Outsourcing can contribute to growing specialization, market discipline, flexibility, and cost savings. However, this method can cause some risks regarding reforms of upper secondary schools; it may generate more administrative work and buyers can be less sensitive to a service provider’s competence. Hence, “learning by doing” can be lost, and the issue of responsibility between the parts can lead to costly conflicts. Moreover, contract management does not pay attention to informal relations (Almqvist 2006, p. 54 f). A contractual relationship is not perceived as a traditional neo-classic form, with detailed contracts, but it means that those involved learn with time and adapt service providing to a contract. A social relation between the buyer and service provider is based on trust (Almqvist 2006, p. 57 f). Thus, this perspective can be promising to estimate: if school management by contract can really provide education services representing high quality teaching. The following questions seem to be important: How are contracts between a municipality and private upper secondary schools working in practice? What about the education effects of students with special needs? How can quality of education services provided by public, private and independent upper

secondary schools be measured and compared? Is it possible to measure quality of education? How can it be done?

The third perspective is about decentralization and internal control. Decentralization is understood as the variety of organizational reforms aiming at an organization's division into smaller units, division with the market as a breakdown basis (geographical, customer or production), far-reaching delegation of duties, combined with management by objectives, smaller units' accountability, internal deregulation, internal control, and flatter organizations (Almqvist 2006, p. 85 f). The relevant questions are: If decentralization has caused increased effectiveness, what happens with staffs' motivation to work? What about teachers' qualifications and competences? What about their recruitment to upper secondary school, how management by objectives is working in practice, and how organizational performance and students' performance is measured?

The issue of quality is working like a *light motive*, going across these three theoretical perspectives of NPM that are strongly connected to each other. Following those specific questions addressing each category, we expect that the division of collected articles, books or book-chapters into three categories allows us to identify some types of literature in each category and provides us with knowledge about what we know and what we do not know about the school reforms' outcomes.

METHOD

This article is a literature study focusing on the Swedish reforms of upper secondary education and their effects published during the period of 1991–2017. We have limited the search for relevant research to the search engine containing the majority of the collections available at the Gothenburg University Library (SUPERSÖK, *in English*: SUPERSEARCH) and the Swedish National Catalogue (LIBRIS) databases. We used some filters when searching for data; they included material outside library collections, displayed only scientific, full text online, magazine articles, and books. We used Swedish and English words like “Gymnasiereform”, “Svensk gymnasium reform”, “Reformer i gymnasieskolan”, “Svenka gymnasieskolan + reform”, “Swedish reforms of upper secondary schools”, “Upper schools + reforms + Sweden”, “Upper secondary schools + reforms + Sweden”, etc. The search varied from 30 to 17,262 results by September 14, 2017. The computer system selected plenty of irrelevant studies. According to the huge numbers of possible results, we selected only those articles or books which focused on the Swedish reforms of upper secondary schools. We followed Almqvist's questions addressing each

theoretical perspective. Sometimes, we did not know to which category an article or book might be ascribed because its author(s) paid attention to aspects going across two or three categories. Then, the article's purpose and research questions had decisive importance for the categorisation.

Marketization, contract, and decentralization are three theoretical perspectives that we perceived as “closed categories” but in each category, we identified some “open types” that constituted the further division of selected literature into various topics (types of literature) we found in one category. Finally, we analysed 52 publications dealing with the reform effects of the Swedish upper secondary school, published between 1991 and 2017.

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF SCHOOL REFORMS, 1991–2017

The Swedish Social Democratic Government advocated for the municipalisation of Swedish primary and upper secondary school since 1986, to increase social equality and integration, reach a higher quality of teaching and have better results of students' performance. It proved important to provide teachers with a larger professional space in choosing, adapting, and developing teaching methods and to giving schools full financial responsibility for organizing, running and developing school activities (Kommittédirektiv 2012: 84, Sveriges Kommuner och Lands (SKL), 2011). The reforms were based on several regulations and the first ones were important in the shaping of upper secondary education:

- Proposition/Bill 1988/89: 4 (Om skolans utveckling och styrning) started the process of reforming of basic and upper secondary school. The state government submitted the bill on school development and governance to the Swedish Parliament on July 20, 1988. It formulated principles for steering school by objectives, which occurred somewhat on the expanse of rule control. Parliament accepted the proposal on February 8, 1989. Basic and upper secondary schools were transformed from centrally steered into being in the municipal regime steered by the same major objectives.
- Proposition/Bill 1989/90: 41 (Om kommunalt huvudmanskap för lärare, skolledare, biträdande skolledare och syofunktioner) the government submitted to Parliament on October 26, 1989. According to this bill, a municipality became a principal responsible for decision-making, the organization of primary and secondary education in terms of school numbers, class sizes, and teacher density but also about how much money the municipal authorities should allocate among schools.

- Proposition/Bill 1990/91: 18 (Ansvarspropositionen), known as the Accountability Bill, was submitted by the government to Parliament on October 11, 1990. Municipalities received responsibility for payroll and employment of teachers and school managers. Parliament clubbed this decision on December 12, 1990. It implied a clearer division of competences and responsibilities between the state and municipalities and concerned activities of primary- and upper secondary school, and vocational education for adults.
- Proposition/Bill 1991/92: 95 (Friskoleproposition) regarding free schools was submitted by the government to Parliament on March 31, 1992 and closed the series of important bills. It was accepted on Jun 6, 1992. This regulation was general and concerned mainly free primary schools.

Since the implementation of Free School Reform (Friskolereform) of 1992, the number of independent schools increased dramatically. Free schools received similar duties as ordinary municipal ones and had to follow the same national regulations. Allocation of financial resources depended on a school's location. A free school was awarded means corresponding to an average cost of one pupil in a municipality's own schools. For each student not being a resident of a municipality but participating in such school education, the municipality was entitled to receive a cost compensation from the student's home municipality. The approved independent schools had to participate in evaluations and follow-ups conducted by *the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket)*. Any refusal might result in removing approval to run the school. However, the last regulation did not mention anything about free upper secondary schools. Thus, the issue was awaiting discussion in Swedish Parliament, or it could be interpreted that the same rules concerned all schools and thus, upper secondary schools too.

According to Proposition/Bill 1992/93: 250, a new curriculum was introduced in 1994. At the same time, vocational education was prolonged from two to three years. To be admitted into a national program of upper secondary school, the government introduced requirements for approved grades from primary school in the subjects of Swedish, Mathematics, and English. Regarding grades, the five-grade so-called *group-related rating* was replaced by a *goal and knowledge-related grade system*. In upper secondary school and upper secondary adult education, a rating consisting of four grades was introduced. Grades had to be set for each course.

Four years later, the government sent Proposition/Bill 2008/09: 199 to Parliament on Gymnasium Reform 11 (Gy11), i.e., the Upper Secondary School Reform of 2011 (Gy11) on May 13, 2009. The law was to be enacted by December 31, 2009.

According to the law, the Swedish upper secondary schools should have 18 national programs, some vocational programs, and preparatory programs for university education. Students participating in vocational programs should be given the opportunity to develop qualifications that allowed them to enter university. National programs had either national orientations or were designed as specific programs. Schools were expected to run preparatory programs for university education. The government advocated for co-operation between school and working life to improve the quality of national vocational programs. For further university education a two-grade upper secondary school diploma awarded as a *Vocational Qualification Degree* or as a *University Preparatory Degree* was required, in addition to passing an exam in Swedish or Swedish as secondary language, and English.

In *Gymnasieförordning SFS 2010: 2039* (the Swedish Code of Statutes) one could also find other regulations addressing the Swedish Gymnasium. Chapter 1 on *Preliminary provisions* refers to the School Law (in the Swedish language: *Skollagen*) 2010: 800, one of the most important regulations. According to this regulation, the Swedish school was expected to work with democracy and its fundamental values. The state prepared a *Curriculum for Upper Secondary School (Läroplan för gymnasieskolan, 2011, known as the Gy11 reform)*. Thus, a rector was responsible for planning school activities, and for evaluation, follow-ups, and comprehensive development of education. This person was expected to see if all school activities were in line with the national objectives. As the educational leader, the rector was obligated to collaborate with teachers from their own school, with other schools, and with universities, but also to secure teachers-, other staff's competence development and students' performance (p. 15). Parallel to this development, the rector had to ensure an increase of users' influence on provided education services. Parents could share with the school's staff opinions about school activities, they could provide pragmatic ideas for the school's development, or discuss how teaching in upper secondary school should be adapted to local needs and conditions. Chapter 2 of *Svensk författningssamling (SFS)* (the Swedish Code of Statutes) 2010: 2039 regulated who could become principal and what conditions this person had to fulfil to be approved as sole principal.

Nowadays, the Swedish upper secondary education is voluntary and is built on the Gy11 reform. It consists of upper secondary school and upper secondary school for students with functional disorders. Education is course-designed. Students get grades after each completed course. The grade scale has the designations A–F, where F means unauthorized. National knowledge requirements are available for grades A–E. English, Mathematics, Science, Religion, Social Sciences and Swedish are obligatory subjects for all students. However, they also have to

study in depth some specific subjects for a program. All programs offer students entrepreneurship. The education programs include a total of 2,500 credits. Every student has to collect at least 2,250 credits. English, Mathematics, Swedish and the degree project must be approved. In this way, after vocational programs students ought to be well prepared for professional life. All graduates from vocational programs are able to choose preparatory courses for basic university education. Moreover, students who are not qualified for a national program can also choose among introductory programs. After completing such introductory programs, students become eligible for a national program, or are prepared either to start working or to continue education at university. Programs that deviate from the national ones consist of specific variants, nation-wide recruitment programs, or nationally approved sports education.

The four-year upper secondary school consists of 18 national programs, vocational and university preparatory programs. There are also five introductory programs and programs that differ from the national programs. The last ones are divided into upper secondary subjects, program-related subjects, specializations, in depth programs and degree projects. There are also individual programs adapted to students' specific disorders.

The last word in reforming constitutes Proposition/Bill 2012/13: 136 on Career Services for Teachers (CST) (*Förstelärarereform*) that concerns teachers from primary and upper secondary schools and their career opportunities. It was submitted by the government to Parliament on March 21, 2013 and obligated since July 1, 2013. According to the new law, a first teacher having high qualifications and extraordinary skills contributing to improvement of students' results could receive 5000 SEK (ca. 500 EUR) more than other teachers (see: SFS 2013: 70).

In sum, since 1991, important institutional changes had been introduced. They constituted a *Reform Package*. The first regulations up to 1991 were about decentralization and municipalisation of school. The second step, in 1992, concerned school choice. In 1994, a new curriculum was introduced. *Gy11* started in 2011. Finally, CST, known also as the First Teacher Reform, began in 2013. These reforms constituted only a part of the whole Reform Package and concerned two program categories: (1) preparatory programs, and (2) vocational programs. All programs were expected to provide basic qualifications making it possible to start working life or to attend academic education. This presentation of school reforms during the period of 1991–2017 seems to be important for understanding what research trends might have dominated empirical studies, how Swedish researchers reacted to the occurring changes, what implications the school reforms had for the whole society and for the public administration, and what issues deserve further research.

THE FINDINGS ABOUT THE REFORMS OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Below, we present a categorization of the empirical studies dealing with the Swedish reforms of upper secondary school in line with Almqvist's understanding of the NPM movement's three theoretical perspectives: (1) the empirical studies about marketization, (2) the research focusing on contract management, and (3) the empirical studies dealing with decentralization and internal control.

MARKETIZATION

The presented studies below focus on marketization, privatization, competition, cost effects, cost reduction, tender competition, tender procurement, various service forms offering, and client in focus; thus, the key words that Almqvist (2006) perceived as typical for this category. However, we identified only three types of empirical studies within this category: (a) studies focusing on the importance of political ideology behind school marketization, (b) studies explaining the links between upper secondary education and economic growth, and (c) studies on school privatization, free choices, and the consequences of competition.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY BEHIND SCHOOL MARKETIZATION

Beach & Dovemark (2011), Lundström & Holm (2011), and Dovemark & Holm (2015) described the Swedish welfare state since the 1980s. The issue of *marketization*, partial reduction of state subsidies, and partial privatization of the education system proved to be connected to *political ideology*. Political ideology was about the state's current power, lasting after elections, and advocating for competition among Swedish schools. It was perceived as a good method creating choices of upper secondary schools for students. Adman (2015) explored, e.g., the Right- and the Left-wing's ideology behind upper secondary school's municipalisation. He showed that the politicians advocated for school reforms among others to strengthen democracy (p. 104) but according to him, the Social Democrats contributed to growing segregation among students. This development had nothing to do with the Social Democrats' official rhetoric, when presenting the big vision and strategies to reach "social inclusions".

Quennerstedt (2006) and Jarl & Rönnerberg (2017) showed how the political ideology of Social Democrats initiated a political game aiming at the decentralization and adaptation of the Swedish school to a market. Quennerstedt described the political struggles in public debates. She identified three discourses about a municipality's participation in the new educational policy: (1) the municipality was perceived as the responsible actor for performance, (2) the municipal-

ity was perceived as a non-participant, and (3) the municipality was perceived as a political-ideological actor. She concluded that independent of a dominating discourse, the municipality was steered by political ideology. Jarl & Rönnerberg (2017) also described the political game about the Swedish school but the school reform was seen from the state's perspective. In addition, Quennerstedt (2006) and Jarl & Rönnerberg (2017) agreed that the reform package was presented gradually for the public. Maybe this was because the proposed reforms encountered strong criticism, which resulted in a struggle between political parties and protests from teachers and parents. The political game between the Left and the Right was permanent, and on all levels of public administration. When the political Right took over power in the 1990s, they implemented the decentralization and marketization of the Swedish upper secondary school but the reform caused some unintended consequences.

Alexiadou et al. (2016) showed how often the Social Democrats used the concept of competition among schools to convince society that it could create equal opportunities and a school for all (p. 14). They found that school marketization and competition among schools was “enthusiastically adopted” in promoting the school reforms but in Sweden, it was observed much less diversity between upper secondary schools.

Erikson (2017) also investigated the school municipalisation and how the government motivated the need of a unified upper secondary school. She identified the social and the economic functions of municipalisation on individual and societal levels. Erikson mapped out conflicting goals that brought about the growing differentiation of Swedish education. She concluded that school reform was motivated to increase “equality” and create “social inclusion” but was not in the first place constructed to resolve inequalities. The politicians wanted rather to introduce and take advantage of competition when Sweden was in an economic crisis (p. 151). The government's intention was to increase peoples' general knowledge. This competition might have positive effects on economic growth. However, a conflict between equality among various socio-economic groups and economic growth proved obvious. Thus, future research should analyse more deeply the major objectives of school reforms and their practical implications.

Regarding local policies, Zehavi (2012) conducted an international comparative study about the partisan politics in England, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden. The political Right made the first move in privatization and its expansion. The Left was reluctant to privatize and advocated for keeping public services in their own regime (p. 214). Such differences in the approach are the natural result of different political ideologies, but in Sweden, it was the opposite; the political

Left started the process. Sass (2015) argued that comparative studies about historical origin, development of education systems, and the results of conducted reforms among the European countries were lacking. This research area deserves further research because struggles for power and political conflicts have always had an impact on the education systems but how differences can be observed is unknown. She emphasised that when the Swedish Conservatives took over power in 1990 and implemented market-based reforms, there was “increased social and ethnic segregation” (p. 250). Sass concluded that the power resource theory and the role of political ideology can explain the development of the education system in every country. International comparisons can even explain patterns of social inclusion and exclusion among students, which is closely related to school marketization.

STUDIES EXPLAINING THE LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Erixon-Arreman & Holm (2011a) showed that independent schools recruited a quarter of upper secondary students in Sweden in 2010. Commercial trends expanded inside and outside of upper secondary schools. Eight out of ten schools were managed by limited companies. This level of education became “big business”, or “Edu-business”. Erixon-Arreman & Holm (2011b) analysed also a public debate in the mass-media on the emergence, development, and effects of school marketization. They concluded that social segregation of students, inflation of grades and lower teaching competence became the result of the growing expansion of independent upper secondary schools, downsizing of public schools, softer regulations, business interests and dominance of profit-maximizing companies, market-oriented policy language with concepts like “quality”, “efficiency”, “knowledge”, and “creativity”. However, the authors did not explain to what degree “Edu-business” contributed to economic growth.

Lundahl (2012) stated that “Sweden is a telling example of the globally tightening links between education and the economy” (p. 217) because the education system played an important role in economic growth. Thus, its re-shaping in line with the market logic was the urgent issue. However, the neo-liberal colonization of the education system brought about serious threats and challenges. Revision and development of theory and methods to study the dynamic of privatization and its effects seem to be necessary. According to Lundahl (2012), Swedish schools should be “sensitive and accountable to stakeholders, and more profiled in order to successfully compete for students” (p. 219). Moreover, academic research should provide evidence of how educational policy is working in practice. The education system was broadly discussed by Swedish researchers and in the daily press but

with many errors and lacking understanding for schooling. Lundahl advocates for an investigation of the whole spectrum of educational matters from educational philosophy and historical development of education policy by using ethnographic studies. Empirical data should be collected within classrooms, schools and other educational settings (p. 223).

PRIVATIZATION OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS, FREE CHOICES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF COMPETITION

Wikström & Wikström (2005) found that intra-municipal school competition and independent schools caused inflation of grades; especially non-native born male students from independent schools could improve their “position in the grade distribution by approximately 15%” (p. 309). According to the authors, future research should “elaborate measures of competition by constructing measures of market concentration” (p. 318) and by studies about school size effects on students’ performance and collected grades.

Lund (2008), three years later, argued that it was impossible to “choose a particular upper secondary school in the previous two decades” (p. 634). The reform gave opportunities for students to select schools, programs or courses and those free choices were perceived as a part of integration and differentiation processes. Lund argued that “introduction of choice can also be understood in relation to school efficiency and market mechanisms” (p. 634) but students’ choices proved to be dependent on a local development. Lund referred to Arnman, Järnek, & Lindskog (2004), who in their study about free choices came to similar conclusions, that: “Differentiation processes in upper secondary education can be described as a movement from a selection process based on meritocracy and the availability of places in program to an issue of individual selection processes” (Lund, 2008, p. 635). Lund concluded that students took more individual responsibility for their educational results and “the development of local quasi-markets overrides the Swedish policy tradition of enabling a coherent and equivalent upper secondary education for all pupils” (p. 646). However, some pupils who were lacking opportunities to discuss the different educational choices faced disadvantages of the new neo-liberal education system. In consequence, pupils often made their school choices according to their social background (p. 641 f).

Söderström & Uusitalo (2010) evaluated the effects of school choice on segregation when students applied to any upper secondary school in Stockholm. Then, a decision about admission was solely based on the student’s grades received from a basic school. Similar to Lund (2008), Söderström & Uusitalo concluded that: “the grade-based admission system increased the sorting of students to schools according

to their ability” (p. 75) and the growing segregation was due to family background. Moreover, “the segregation between immigrants and natives increased more than one would expect as a result of increased sorting by ability” (p. 75).

Holm (2013) investigated students’ freedom of choice, competition between schools, and students’ opinions about the effects of school marketization, free choices, and competition among schools. Holm concluded that it was hard for students to find objective information about schools. Information was rather “flashy” which caused “misdirected marketing”. At the same time, the sea of options was limited because of schools’ geographical location, students’ access to public transport, family traditions, gender, level of grades from a basic school, and personal interests or pressure from peers. Only strong and independent students could make their own choices and stay in line with their interests, preferences, and personal “style” to “fit in”. According to Holm, research about the outcomes of marketization, privatization, and competition deserves more attention.

Panican & Hjort (2014) discussed the implication of the public services’ deregulation and free choices for citizens, who represented different socio-economic backgrounds. They identified some structural-based and agency-based restrictions that limited citizens’ choices (p. 65 ff). They came to the conclusion that “both affluent and underprivileged citizens have limited choices” (p. 54 and 70). However, “when freedom of choice is stimulated, it can reproduce and even increase social and ethnic segregation” (p. 54). Moreover, “the development of greater freedom” of upper secondary school choices paid much more attention to the consumer’s social rank than to the quality of education (p. 54), which caused growing social inequality.

Similar conclusions draw Erixon-Arreman (2014). Students’ rational choices were denied because of social interaction, geographic place and time, and cultural capital and habits. Those aspects played a central role in gendered recruitment patterns. Students hardly understood the intentions with free choices. Moreover, the Swedish school policies of Gy11 essentially reduced students’ free choices and their opportunities in their future. The policies contributed much more to social segregation than to integration, which had negative implications for social and economic development (p. 616). Erixon-Arreman concluded that students’ free choices mirrored family background. The majority of students from big cities preferred continuing their education at universities to secure their future careers, while the students from smaller municipalities chose vocational programs that followed either traditional patterns of gender recruitment or parents’ understanding of what profession is best for women and for men. The choices of academic programs were gender neutral (p. 624).

Alexiadou et al. (2016) stated that the free choices of upper secondary school were about “profiling” or “unique brands” almost in relation to “pedagogical identities” or to: “a particular ‘ethos’ that corresponded to either traditional, elitist and academic-aspiring themes, or oriented towards personal and social development, aimed mainly at schools with more vocational orientation” (p. 22). However, this “profiling” could be perceived as a turning point in the school policy because these new keywords challenged the previous rhetoric: “equality of opportunity”, and “a school for all” (p. 14). Thus, Alexiadou et al. (2016) showed that school reform caused segregation of pupils. Students did not solely base their choices on teaching quality when deciding which schools to attend.

Thelin & Niedomysl (2015) tested what influence the theoretical assumptions of Rational Choice Theory have on human behaviours. Similar to Lund (2008), Söderström & Uusitalo (2010), Holm (2013), and Panican & Hjort (2014), it is not the rationality of “Economic man” that influence students’ preferences but other factors like geographical attributes, distance to school, school’s location and accessibility. Socio-economic factors and gender proved to be important. Thelin & Niedomysl argued: “Unless policymakers come to realize that their fundamental assumptions are flawed, they will never fully understand how school choices are made” (p. 118).

Edmark, Frölich, & Wondratschek (2014) were more optimistic. They asked what happened with children from different socio-economic backgrounds in Sweden in their later life, with regard to crime, university education and employment. The authors came to somewhat surprising results; segregation had minimal or no effects on the committing of crime, university education or employment, at the age of 25 (p. 141), which could be interpreted that students from poor families or from families with immigrant backgrounds could benefit from school choices in similar way as pupils from Swedish families with a higher socio-economic background.

Lind’s (2017) study about upper secondary schools in Northern Sweden belonging to sparsely populated areas showed that since the 1990s the number of schools and competition between students increased. However, when the cohorts declined, the school structure proved vulnerable because competition about students among these schools caused a serious increase of costs per capita. In consequence, it caused a limited number of available programs in small northern municipalities. Thus, fewer students attended and completed their education in small municipalities in comparison to bigger ones. This study paid attention to school reform effects and demographic development. The reform did not generate savings but led to higher costs in small municipalities only because of the municipalities’ size.

In sum, above, we have presented studies focusing on the importance of political ideology on school marketization and its impact on school policies locally,

explaining the links between upper secondary education and economic growth, and school privatization, free choice and the consequences of competition among them. We conclude that upper secondary school reforms conducted in the spirit of NPM contributed to the marketization of upper secondary school and competition about students. However, no one study has explained to what savings the school reforms contributed, nationally or locally. We can see that in small municipalities, the reform caused an increase of costs. In general, privatization and free choice contributed to growing segregation among students, as well as devaluation of grades. Such outcomes are contradictory to the official rhetoric used by Swedish politicians. The amount of comparative studies of international character is limited. We hardly know how marketization of upper secondary school is working in practice. Researchers should answer the following questions: Has competition in a market among upper secondary schools really contributed to savings? How has upper secondary schools' participation in competition influenced attitudes among various stakeholders? Thus, the results of school reform being seen in terms of output are unknown.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Our expectation was to track research about how municipalities contract out a part of their own educational duties to other actors. However, the presentation of such studies requires additional explanations because contract management in the field of education looks different than, e.g., tenders in construction or care for the elderly. To run a private, independent upper secondary school, a service provider has to first receive permission from *the National Agency for Education*. Moreover, such a school is visited by *the School Inspectorate*, which controls if the school complies with the School Law and the national curriculum. The relationship between municipal authorities and providers of education service can be perceived as a “relational contracting” based on trust when learning and developing such contracts. It should be added that private, independent and free schools are also perceived as part of a market-oriented reforms agenda but not as a classical outsourcing.

A few selected studies were already mentioned: Beach & Dovemark, (2011), Dovemark & Holm (2015), Lundström & Holm (2011), and Holm & Lundström (2011) used the concepts of “contract” and “contractor”. According to them, contractors were expected to provide good upper secondary education services working in the favour of municipal authorities or contractors. However, we did not find any empirical study regarding the relationship between municipality and contractors. One can find evaluations of such independent schools made by the School Inspectorate, but still it is only a control mechanism and not research about the contract management. Thus, the research field is untouched by scientists. Some

questions deserve to be answered: What about the relationship between contractor and municipal authorities? What about trust between municipal authorities and contractors of upper secondary education? How is the contract between municipality and contractor designed? What about sanctions, if the contractor does not fulfil the national curriculum? What about education quality and its measurements in line with the national curriculum?

DECENTRALIZATION AND INTERNAL CONTROL

In this category, we focused on research dealing with school organization in line with the major objectives, the national curricula, and the way upper secondary schools were controlled by state authorities, but also on research paying attention to teachers' competence and its development, teachers' recruitment and career opportunities, and teachers' feelings about their professionalism, but also studied the relationships between teachers and students, and students' performance. Hence, collected literature will be structured as follows: (a) decentralization, performance management and its measurements, (b) teachers' competence, competence development, recruitment, and opportunity for making career, (c) teachers' professionalism, and (d) quality of teaching and students' performance.

DECENTRALIZATION, PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ITS MEASUREMENTS

Daun (2004, 2006) compared privatization, decentralization, and governance in education in the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, and Sweden. He concluded that these countries went through similar trends; the national objectives and curricula for upper secondary school played a decisive role in the practical running of schools' activities. Municipality received a high degree of autonomy and a great responsibility (Daun, 2004, p. 325 ff). Hence, the upper secondary school had relatively free hands in organizing school activities in the frame of the ascribed budget. When comparing the school reforms internationally, the Swedish decentralization was perceived as very radical:

[...] the processes of changing school governance and educational outcomes based on decentralization and privatization must be understood in terms of the reforms having been implemented in the context of an economic recession, budget cuts, and shrinking funds for the public sector (2004, p. 343).

According to Daun (2004), the ideological arguments of politicians about "school for all", the higher equality of education, free choices proved less important.

Hall (2011) showed "what effects the extension of the upper secondary vocational courses had on students' educational and labour market outcomes" (p. 167).

She concluded that more students achieved three-year high school qualifications, but the prolongation of vocational education did not cause those students to continue their education at university. Many students who had less educated parents did not complete upper secondary school with approved results. A quarter of students did not obtain a final grade when leaving the four-year school.

Rönnerberg (2011) investigated the re-introduction of the Swedish state's centralized monitoring of schools' education quality. According to her, controls and the collecting of valid information about schools' performance allowed the state or local authorities to identify weaknesses in the education system. Such information was disseminated among stakeholders, which caused some improvements to be observed later on. But, Westling-Allodi (2013) showed that evaluation of a school's performance was difficult because too often variables such as costs or average grades were used to evaluate performance. The grades were not perceived as a valid measure. Instead, they should be used to estimate if the schools really need resources to support weaker students or students with some kind of disability. She advocated for using measures such as: student's language proficiency, their feeling of inclusion, equity, well-being, and accessibility (p. 357). Westling-Allodi demanded more resources for upper secondary schools that had students with special needs because the weaker students had affected the goal achievements of upper secondary schools.

Regarding management by objectives (MBO), Lindberg (2011) addressed this issue in his dissertation. The first article, written by Lindberg & Wilson (2011), and the fourth, written by Lindberg (2011), were about the effects of MBO on school performance. They shared the opinion that the impact of MBO was neutral on student performance but it had a frustrating effect on teachers (Lindberg 2011, p. 24; see also Lindberg & Wilson 2011, p. 72). Lindberg came to the conclusion that the school-based management in combination with MBO caused stress for the head-teachers. Both management forms represent a decentralized approach. According to the author, the role of head-teacher should be clearly designed as "how responsibility and authority is divided between central administration and the level of schools" (p. 28). The second article written by Lindberg & Wincent (2011) and the third one written by Lindberg, Wincent & Örtqvist (2013) explained the impact of MBO on the school's management (p. 7). Lindberg & Wincent (2011) focused on "the influence of goal commitment on head-teacher's role performance and the extent to which increased levels of role stressors contribute to performance in the process of committing to goals" (p. 25). They came to the conclusion that high commitment to goals could reduce the head-teachers' ambiguity and in a positive way could influence the head-teachers' performance. However, the authors also identified the dysfunctional effect of commitment. Thus, Lindberg &

Wincent included the role of teachers' self-efficiency in the model. It was a new approach to analyse "how goal commitment subsequently develops into performance" (p. 25). This research raised the next question: how could head-teachers develop high levels of self-efficiency? Lindberg, Wincent & Örtqvist (2013) found that self-efficiency did not have a linear influence on head-teachers' performance but a U-shaped one, which questioned the results of previous research. According to them, role conflict and role ambiguity had quite a positive impact on head-teachers' self-efficiency. The role conflict could be perceived as a functional challenge worthy of trouble. However, it was still unknown how "the role of head-teachers should be designed to facilitate good role performance" (p. 26).

TEACHERS' COMPETENCE, COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT, AND OPPORTUNITY FOR CAREER-MAKING

Few empirical studies address this topic. Drakenberg (2001) described the development of teacher education programs for compulsory and upper secondary school at university since the 1960s until the late 1990s. She focused on teachers' traditional career structure, and their new opportunities to climb upward. Drakenberg made readers reflect on how the teacher education program ought to be adapted to "a rapidly changing and dynamic society" (p. 200) with regard to what kind of knowledge students should embrace and what kind of working culture and resource centres could support a good quality of education. She also emphasized the role of research evidence that could support teachers in their professional development. This study showed that the education programs from the late 1990s hardly paid attention to the social changes when training new teachers for the new society. This issue should be broadly discussed and adapted to social changes.

TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF OWN PROFESSIONALISM

Lundstöm & Parding (2011) investigated the influence of the Swedish independence school reform on teachers' profession, their increasing work-load, less control over duties and decreasing autonomy (p. 72). The logic of market divided teachers into the advocates and the opponents of school reforms, which also confirmed the authors' previous conclusions from their individual written doctoral dissertations (see: Parding, 2007; Lundström, 2007). However, according to them, the effects of the independent school reform deserve further research.

Frostenson (2012) blamed the school reforms for the decrease of teachers' professional autonomy with regard to their everyday work, its contents, working methods, control mechanisms, and used criteria for evaluation of teaching activities. Instead, many teachers enjoyed autonomy at the collegial and individual level.

His conclusion was that the teaching profession became fragmented. Experience of professional autonomy was due to the grade of autonomy teachers received after the implementation of reforms. Thus, Frostenson (2015) focused on three types of teachers' autonomy: (1) general professional autonomy, (2) collegial professional autonomy, and (3) individual professional autonomy. According to him, general autonomy was related to the organizational level, while the latter two were perceived as the practical level (pp. 22–25). Frostenson argued that scholars should not stop examining teachers' general autonomy because school managers have their own ideology and routines to evaluate teachers' performance. They have the power to make decisions about teachers' practical work (p. 26). But, it is still unknown if the general adaptation of managerial, pedagogical and administrative practices limited teachers' autonomy at the practical level. He concludes that in the decentralized and fragmented school system, professional autonomy is due to who the local principal educational organizer is.

Wermke & Forsberg's (2017) findings were different; they investigated to what extent teachers lost or gained autonomy after various educational reforms (p. 156). Their conclusion was that on the one hand, teachers' autonomy decreased because their tasks/duties were strongly regulated, evaluated, and controlled by state authorities. On the other hand, teachers' professional autonomy exists thanks to the fact they have to follow ethical code in daily practice, and thanks to peer evaluations and organizational culture with its values and norms for behaviour. Future research ought to handle how multiple relationships among the state, municipalities, and private entrepreneurs also affect teachers' autonomy when acting.

Ringarp (2012) asked two questions: whether the school municipalisation was a break with the previous political debate on "a comprehensive school for all", and whether the increased control over teachers' work can be perceived as a consequence of school reform. Ringarp's study concerned almost only teachers working at a comprehensive school. However, the state regulations and policy documents she analysed and her literature overview allowed us to think that her research also concerned teachers working at upper secondary schools. Ringarp perceived the municipalisation as the great transformation of the public sector. She did not find any links between teachers' de-professionalization and municipalisation. Instead, teachers' status was showing a declining tendency by years only because the Swedish welfare state has expanded. In consequence, the general level of peoples' knowledge increased too, which has led to people demanding more from Swedish schools.

Samuelsson & Lindblad (2015) compared Finnish and Swedish upper secondary schools with regard to school management, various teaching cultures, and their influence on students' performance and the teaching profession. The countries

seem to have similar education systems representing Nordic Welfare but producing different outcomes according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) measurement. The Finnish education system proved more successful than the Swedish one. The Swedish teachers embraced much more the logic of a market, while in Finland dominated the professional logic (p. 175). Hence, the authors advocated for more research on institutional logic and their importance for teachers' professionalism and, in consequence, for students' performance.

Also, Fredriksson (2009, 2010) was writing about teachers' de-professionalization, which had a negative connotation. According to him, decentralization caused the decline of teachers' autonomy. The author developed the Market Orientation Index for measuring market orientation among teachers from the public and private sector. In general, teachers from both sectors were market-oriented but teachers working within upper secondary schools for profit proved to be more market-oriented than their colleagues from the public sector. Fredriksson concluded: "The results also show that both subjective political orientation and teaching subject individually can influence market orientation among teachers" (2009, p. 308). The study indicated that the schools' profit-interest can lead to openness towards market norms and by that to market-oriented behaviours. In consequence, it leads to the emergence of "the market-oriented teacher" (2009, p. 309).

STUDIES ABOUT TEACHING QUALITY AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

We did not find any articles about teaching quality. Instead, we found empirical studies that showed that the Swedish school reform had a negative impact on students' performance. The first one, written by Ringarp & Rothland (2010), investigated "*What does a country do when its schools and educational system in general do not produce the results the country believes they are capable of?*" (p. 422) The simple answer is: such a country borrows an education policy from another more successful country. This transfer of policy occurs in two steps: (1) one model is perceived as cross-national attractive, and (2) this attractive model is adapted to own conditions and implemented (p. 423). Germany adapted the Swedish education policy because the Swedish results of PISA 2000 proved better than the German ones. The authors wondered "whether or not the debate on educational policy in Sweden and Germany following the PISA results plays a role in policy borrowing" (p. 422 and 427). It proved that Germany did not make the transfer of the Swedish education policy but knowledge about the last one opened a public debate in both countries (p. 427).

Ringarp (2016) six years later analysed "to what extent examples from international assessments and other countries' results were used as justification for school

policy change in Germany and Sweden” (p. 448). She found that international large-scale assessments like PISA and the OECD measurements contributed to the promotion of organizational changes of education systems in both countries.

Palm et al. (2017) in their review of the impact of formative assessment on student achievement in mathematics analysed the scientific articles published between 2005 and 2014. The concept of formative assessment was understood as:

Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or be better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of evidence that was elicited (Palm et al., p. 26, after Black & William, 2009, p. 9).

The article was about how often teachers collect information about their students’ learning, how teachers adapt their teaching methods to meet students’ needs, what feedback teachers give to students on their mathematical accomplishments, how students modify their learning based on their own assessment, and finally, what role does peer-assisted learning play for student’s practice when performing the formative assessment. They showed positive relations between student achievement in mathematics and different methods of formative assessment. Teachers modified their teaching according to their “information gathering from small and frequently used tests” (p. 38), which proved to be in line with the previous research by the National Mathematics Advisory Panel (2008). However, the authors shared the opinion that it would be useful to get a clear picture of “exactly how formative assessment works to enhance student learning in mathematics” to compare various practices in this regard and learn more about it. Palm et al. (2017) identified the research areas that deserve further research as, e.g., studies dealing with the impact of peer assessments or studies that explain how integrated approaches influence formative assessment.

In sum, above, we have presented studies about decentralization, performance management and its measurements, and about teachers’ experience of own professionalism. When scholars used the concept of decentralization, they referred directly to “marketization and competition”, i.e., the first category. They focused much more on the ideology behind the school reforms, instead of focusing on decentralization understood as the new way of school organization with the delegation of power to the local level ascribing local authorities’ autonomy in organizing education. Management by objectives did not have any positive effect on teachers’ experiences of their own professionalism or on students’ learning effects. Most empirical studies about teachers’ experience in this regard concluded that teachers feel de-professionalization and a lack of autonomy. We did not find studies about

teaching quality, teachers' recruitment, competence and competence development in line with the changing society. Research dealing with teachers' career-making deserve much more attention, but this issue of Career Services for Teachers is relatively new. Those we presented above only indirectly concerned teachers from upper secondary school. Regarding research on students' performance, one can likely find more studies internationally than from Swedish researchers.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this literature study was to prepare a foundation for further research about the effects of the Swedish school reforms by mapping: What do we know about the NPM reforms within Swedish upper secondary schools? What kind of knowledge is still missing and should be developed?

This study proved to be really educational. Regarding the first research question, what we know about the NPM reforms within the Swedish upper secondary school, we have found quite a lot of studies (Beach & Dovemark, 2011; Dovemark & Holm, 2015; Lundström & Holm, 2011; Zehavi, 2012; Sass, 2015; and Alexiadou et al., 2016) dealing with marketization and competition. The mentioned authors focused on political ideology having an impact on school marketization in general. Presented studies showed that the politicians' official rhetoric proved manipulative towards taxpayers. They argued that marketization, privatization, and competition would contribute to creating a school for all, social equality, social inclusion, respect for democratic principles, and client in focus. They promised that schools would be adapted to clients' needs, it would contribute to growing efficiency, effectiveness, and savings, and by that ought to bring the country out of its economic crisis. Only a few studies like Erixon-Arreman & Holm (2011a, 2011b; and Lundahl, 2012) tried to explain the links between upper secondary education and economic growth after the school reforms, but those studies did not present any calculations working in favour of economic growth. Both studies rather described that "knowledge" or "know-how" could have a potential to develop 'Edu-business', or according to growing interest of stakeholders, it could eventually contribute to economic growth.

Topics like school privatization, free choice, and the consequences of competition among schools were discussed by Swedish scholars, e.g., Wikström & Wikström (2005); Lund (2008); Arnman, Järnek, & Lindskog (2004); Söderström & Uusitalo (2010); Holm (2013); Edmark, Frölich, & Wondratschek (2014); Panican & Hjort (2014); and others. Without any exception, all those authors shared the opinion that privatization, free choice and competition among upper secondary schools

caused segregation of students. The research outcomes confirmed again the “empty” promises given by the Swedish politicians. However, Edmark, Frölich, & Wondratschek (2014) showed that segregation had minimal or no effect on crimes committed, education and employment, or academic education. Moreover, the free school reform has led to devaluation of grades. According to Söderström & Uusitalo (2010), Thelin & Niedomysl (2015), Panican & Hjort (2014), and Alexiadou et al. (2016), free choice of upper secondary school proved to be fiction. The choosing of a school for many young people seldom was rational and in line with their actual requests.

Regarding the second category of *contract management*, we found little relevant research about that issue. Beach & Dovemark, (2011), Dovemark & Holm (2015), Holm & Lundström (2011), and Lundström & Holm (2011) only mentioned the importance of contracts between the national authority and those who received permission to run upper secondary schools as private, independent, or free schools. It seems that this issue is left to the regulatory power of state authority like the National Agency for Education and the School Inspectorate.

The presented studies above provided a broader understanding of how upper secondary schools were organized and managed locally during the period of 1990–2017. From Daun (2006) we know that this *decentralization* was radical. Other studies, e.g., Adman (2015) or Erikson (2017), paid attention to the school reforms’ origin, the passage of important events like, e.g., public debates, ideological conflict, and goal conflicts among political parties; they described the Swedish decentralization in such a way that maybe we ought to place those studies in the first category – marketization and competition. However, the same authors used the words “democracy”, “social equality”, “education goals”, “conflicting educational goals”, and “education policy”, which made us change our minds and we placed them in the third category. Lindberg (2011) and Lindberg & Wilson (2011) wrote about management by objectives and its measurement. Hall (2011) showed that prolonged vocational education from two to three years resulted in more drop-outs, but it had no negative effects on number of students at university or on students’ incomes. Rönnerberg (2011) showed the importance of re-introducing the Swedish national school inspection system to control schools’ performance, and students’ learning results. Westling-Allodi (2013) emphasized that another measurement instrument should be used to evaluate performance of students with disorders. Surprisingly few studies investigated teachers’ career opportunity but we did not find any on teachers’ recruitment, competence, or their competence development being in line with the changing society.

A few researchers (Fredriksson, 2009; Frostenson, 2012, 2015; Wermke & Forsberg, 2017) showed interest in how teachers have been thinking about their

profession. They complain about lacking autonomy and de-professionalization. This feeling was quite frequently explained with the assistance of theories about the institutional logics of (1) market, (2) bureaucracy, and (3) professionalism, or the logics of (1) general professional autonomy, (2) collegial professional autonomy, and (3) individual professional autonomy. We did not find studies that used alternative theories to study de-professionalization. The selected articles did not specify the teachers' category, if they were working within comprehensive or upper secondary education. We did not find any study that investigated the quality of teaching.

When analysing articles about students' learning effects, we found two studies, written by Ringarp & Rothland (2010), and Palm et al. (2017). Both anchored in PISA results. Those articles were in scientific contradiction. The first one showed that the Swedish school was perceived as a pattern to follow, while the other one, published seven years later, showed that the upper secondary school was in crisis since 2015.

Regarding our second research question (What kind of knowledge is still missing and should be developed?), we have found that this reform did not meet the Swedish politicians' expectations either from an economic point of view or from a societal perspective. It is still a huge gap in our knowledge that deserves further investigation.

With regard to the category of marketization and competition, there is a lack of knowledge about: (1) the expected efficiency gains from competition among public, private and free upper secondary schools, (2) cost-savings in public upper secondary schools and differences in cost-savings between public, private and free upper secondary schools, (3) competitive threats from external actors in the education market, (4) how competition among various upper secondary education providers can contribute to more individualized education for young people to meet their needs and be in line with the national curriculum, and (5) how upper secondary schools' participation in competition has influenced attitudes among various stakeholders about the quality of upper secondary school education.

Regarding contract management, there are missing studies about: (1) criteria for good education, (2) how contract management influenced quality of upper secondary school, (3) how quality might and ought to be measured with respect to big variations among upper secondary schools, (4) the relationship between municipal authorities and contractors, i.e., the actors looking for permission to run independent or free schools, (5) trust between national and local authorities and education providers/contractors at the upper secondary level, (6) design of contracts between authorities and contractors that constitutes a foundation for issuing a permit to run such schools, (7) sanctions if the education provider does not fulfil the national curricula, and (8) what criteria for education quality might be found in a contract.

Regarding decentralization and internal control, there are lacking studies about: (1) what it means to have client in focus in practice, (2) how various types of upper secondary schools can satisfy young people's needs, (3) students' right to autonomy in decision making concerning their own education, (4) cooperation among public, non-public and commercial actors providing upper secondary education, (5) intra-organizational relations among professional groups with respect to gender (genus), ethnicity, and social class, (6) management by objectives and to which degree national educational goals have been achieved, (7) comparative approach to the outcomes of upper secondary schools' performance management, and (8) staff recruiting, its competencies and qualifications, but also opportunity for competence development.

Our general impression from this review study is that the school reforms during the period of 1991–2017 did not solve experienced problems within the Swedish education system but generated additional ones that proved much more serious for teachers, students and the whole society. Moreover, this review has shown that the school reforms undermined the authority of politicians who proved to be manipulative towards Swedish citizens. We would like to finish our study with a message addressed to Swedish politicians: do not reform the public services that are working well only because the state is in an economic crisis. Maybe temporary restrictions and some adjustments adequate to the crisis situation would create better conditions for the education system proven in practice than just following “the new fashion” of NPM. Despite all the research done, we do not know what kind of Swedish upper secondary school represents a good practice for the future.

List of abbreviation:

CST – Career Services for Teachers, also known as the First Teacher Reform in Sweden

EUROSTAT – Statistical Office of the European Communities

Gy11– Gymnasium Reform 11 (Gy11), *in English*: The Upper Secondary School Reform of 2011

LIBRIS – The Swedish National Catalogue

MBO – Management by Objectives

NPM – New Public Management

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

SFS – Svensk författningssamling, *in English*: The Swedish Code of Statutes

SKL – Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, *in English*: The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

TQM – Total Quality Management

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