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**What is school inspection for? The assumptive worlds of the Swedish  
Schools Inspectorate**

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## Abstract

In Europe and some of the Nordic countries school inspection is now a policy and practice governing education in one way or another. Central to inspection practice are the inspectors and managers at different levels of the Inspectorate and their 'assumptive worlds' (Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt 1985), i.e. their notions of the purpose of inspection, of how inspection should be and is carried out, and of the effect/influence of school inspection. This paper concentrates on notions of the policy problem the creation of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SI) was intended to solve, compared to notions of the effects/influence of inspection. The empirical material consists of interviews with inspectors and inspection management at national and regional levels at the SI. Inspired by Bacchi (2009) a two-step analysis was performed. In the first step interview statements about inspection effects were categorised and then deductively analysed to find out what policy problem(s) the effects reported by the inspectors and inspection management correspond to. In the second step of the analysis, the deduced problems were compared to the interviewees' notions of the policy problem(s) the SI was created to solve. The interviews show differences between the inspectors and inspection managers, especially when it comes to policy problems to be solved by the SI. The inspectors referred to the lack of educational equity for students in different schools and to municipalities and schools failure to comply with the steering documents. The inspection managers foremost referred to the lowered academic school performances in Swedish schools. The comparative analysis of the notions of policy problems and the deduced problems shows that there are both discrepancies and correspondence in this respect. One discrepancy relates to the problem of raising school performance perceived by the inspection managers to be a problem to be solved by SI. However no informant mentioned this as an impact from school inspection. Furthermore, the comparative analysis shows that there is correspondence between the policy problems most often referred to by the inspectors (i.e. educational equity and failure to comply with steering documents) and inspection impact, and hence the deduced problem of guarding individual students' rights.

In recent decades all sorts of evaluative activities have increasingly marked education governance and policy. Examples are; school inspection, (quality/effect) evaluations, quality assurance and assessment, international tests like the PISA, and national testing systems. School inspection has gained ground in this context, and in Europe several nations have developed and installed inspectorates. Inspection policy and practice is communicated and learned through organisations like the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) (Grek & Ozga 2012, Segerholm 2012). Some of the Nordic countries have launched school inspection activities, albeit not always organised in inspectorates.

In Sweden school inspection was abolished in the beginning of the 1990s in the wake of the radical deregulation taking place at that time. In 2003, and partly as a result of pressure from the then political opposition to the Social democratic government, regular school inspection was reinstalled (Segerholm 2009). In official documents, the policy problem to be solved was represented "*...in terms of a need for additional state control and involvement in order to uphold equivalence and high-quality education.*" and "*Intensified state involvement was legitimized by arguing that school results and performance, quality improvement and evaluation efforts at the municipal and school levels as well as systematic information from school site visits were lacking or unsatisfactory.*" (Rönneberg 2012a, p. 78). At this time the National Agency for Education performed this task parallel to other assignments from the government such as national tests. In the election in 2006, the conservative, liberal, centre and Christ democrat coalition won the election, and the then new minister of education had promised to sharpen school inspection as a means to improve Swedish schooling. A new

national agency was decided and started to operate in the autumn 2008, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SI). The political motifs for this decision, or the policy problems to be solved by this decision were the same as before, but with a "...more prominent position given to results, performance and pupils' academic achievements" and that inspections at the time "...were insufficiently performed, in particular when it comes to monitoring educational performance, which is necessary in order to retain and improve educational quality and equivalence" (Rönnerberg 2012b, p. 6).

In the international research project *Governing by Inspection: education governance in Sweden, England and Scotland*<sup>1</sup>, one of the aims is to examine "...the ways in which Inspection regimes may be understood as governing education in three national education systems - Sweden, England and Scotland - (Seegerholm, Forsberg, Lindgren, Nilsson & Rönnerberg 2009<sup>1</sup>). Part of this project is directed to the inspectors, their practice, background, training, what they base their judgements on, and their notions and experiences of inspection (ibid., p. 5).

Central to inspection practice are the inspectors and managers at different levels of the Inspectorate and their 'assumptive worlds' (Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt 1985), i.e. their notions of the purpose of inspection, of how inspection should be and is carried out, and of the effect/influence of school inspection. What these central actors think and experience is part of how their practice is formed, as are preconditions like resources, policies, inspector competencies, etc. Inspectors' and managers' assumptive worlds are therefore one aspect of the governing of education. Do they think that the problems that were put forward by the government are solved through their work, or are there discrepancies in how the formal policy problems and motives for school inspections are formulated compared to their notions?

Our aim is to explore and illuminate this particular aspect of the governing of education, that is, as partly a matter of central actors' notions about the policy problems that their work is intended to solve. We do this by analysing the assumptive worlds of inspectors and inspection managers. Questions that direct this analysis are:

- how do the effects reported by inspectors and managers relate to the policy problems to be solved?
- are the assumptive worlds of inspectors and managers one mutual world or do they differ?

The paper unfolds as follows: After a short presentation of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate an account of our theoretical understanding and of how we performed the analysis is provided. Thereafter the results of the analysis are presented in three sections closely following the logic of the analysis. Finally, we compare and discuss the results and point to similarities and discrepancies in the assumptive worlds of the inspectors and inspection managers. We also bring forward similarities and discrepancies in policy problems these central actors perceive are solved by their work, and the policy problems inspection was intended to solve when it was reinstated, and later strengthened.

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedish part of *Governing by Inspection* (no 2009-5770) is financed by the Swedish Research Council and the UK part by the *Economic and Social Research Council* (ESRC). The authors also acknowledge the close links and collaborative work with the projects *Swedish national school inspections: introducing centralised instruments for governing in a decentralised context* (financed by the National Research Council, project no. 2007-3579, project leader Dr. Linda Rönnerberg), and *Inspecting the 'Market': education at the intersection of marketisation and central state control* (financed by Umeå University, no. 223-514-09).

## **The Swedish Schools Inspectorate<sup>2</sup>**

Since autumn 2008 when the new inspection agency, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate started to operate inspection activities have increased dramatically, the SI now is visiting thousands of schools annually (Skolinspektionen n.d. a). In 2011 the Inspectorate assessed 2 400 comprehensive schools, 550 secondary schools and 660 other publicly funded educational enterprises. In their annual report to the government they stress the increase in productivity of around 1 000 visits compared to the previous year, (or a 41% increase in productivity, our calculation) (Skolinspektionen n.d. a, p. 8).

The Inspectorate is commissioned by the government to carry out: a) regular supervision of all schools and principal organizers (municipalities and operators of independent schools), and b) quality audits where a sample of schools are audited thematically, e.g. one school subject, or a particular area of interest like assessment in the lower grades (Regeringen Utbildningsdepartementet 2010, 2011, Skolinspektionen n.d. b). The SI also handles c) complaints from individuals (e.g. concerning bullying) and d) licences for independent schools. The basis for all activities are the agency's interpretations of the Education Act and Ordinance, and other national formal documents that have to be adhered to by all schools. These laws, rules and regulations are particularly important in regular supervisions (Regeringen Utbildningsdepartementet 2010, 2011, Skolinspektionen n.d. b). Decisions and reports in regular supervision are made for individual schools and principal organizers focusing deviances from what is required. A response from the principal organizer with a plan of how to comply with the SI decisions has to be sent to the Inspectorate. The SI assess if they can accept the response and planned actions and inform the organizer of their decision. A follow-up is conducted approximately three months later. From the first of July 2011 the SI may make use of penalties according to the new Education Act. Fines can be imposed, or for independent schools the license to operate may be withdrawn if the principal organizer does not correct what is wrong.

The Inspectorate is organized in five regional departments and the head management group is composed of the Director general, the Director of Inspections, the five department head managers, and the managers from central functions like communication, internal support, personnel, etc., and law. Persons with a background in education (teachers, head teachers and local administrators), persons with a general competence to investigate, and persons with a background in law have been recruited as inspectors in order to get an inspectorate with mixed competences and knowledge (Skolinspektionen n.d. a, p. 51).

Last year (2012), SI's grant from the government was 351 million SEK. More than half of the economical resources are now used for regular supervision - a steady increase over the years (Skolinspektionen n.d. a, p. 43). Considering the very comprehensive activities undertaken by the SI it is interesting to ask the inspectors and inspection managers which problems they are supposed to solve, if they believe that the inspection activities 'make a difference', and if so, in what ways.

## **Methodology**

Our ambition is not to study causal links between inspection and effects. Drawing on the extensive evaluation literature on evaluation use, impact and effects (e.g. Dahler-Larsen 2012,

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<sup>2</sup> This is a description we use with some variations, in several texts within the project.

Kirkhart 2000, Power 1997, Sahlin-Andersson 1995, Segerholm & Åström 2007, Vedung & Svärd 2008), and on research on education governance in a global and European context (e.g. Ball 1998, Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm & Simola 2011), one starting point for the project has been that school inspection is part of education governance and of transnational as well as national policy processes in education. When it comes to what actually happens during the inspection process at schools and municipalities, we also argue that the inspectors and inspection managers' views on inspection problems and effects are influential of these processes. Marshall, Mitchell & Wirt (1985) use Youngs' (1977) concept 'assumptive world' to elaborate on policy makers' "subjective understanding of the environment in which they operate" (Young, p. 2). Following Marshall et al. we assume that inspectors are socialized in a certain culture that affect their notions of expected behaviours, judgements and understandings and reflects "a shared sense of what is appropriate in action, interaction and choice." (p. 90). Thereby are inspector notions likely to "limit the range of options and focus debate within certain understood priorities" (p. 110) and in so doing affect the course of action and how governing is done. Assumptive worlds glues together other elements of policy making like informal processes and formal structure (p. 113) and "reflects the taken-for-granted framework within which policy making occurs." (p.91). Simply put this means that we believe that the assumptive worlds of inspectors and inspection managers, their notions of school inspection, their work and what it is aiming at and leads to, matters in understanding how inspection policy and practice is constructed and governs education.

Following Marshall et.al's advice to use interviews as a means to enter the assumptive worlds of policy makers, our empirical material consists of interview statements from 15 school inspectors, four follow-up interviews with inspectors who were project leaders in inspections in four municipalities that we studied, and nine head managers (four at the national level and five at department level). The interviews with the head management were conducted in autumn 2010, the main part of the interviews with inspectors during spring 2011, and some in the autumn of 2011 when a new Education Act and Ordinance was valid. Implementation work in relation to these 'regulative' governing devices (Jacobsson 2006, 2010) had however started earlier in several municipalities, schools and by principal organizers for independent schools with different directions and velocity. The main interviews ranged from 45 to 90 minutes and the follow-up interviews were shorter. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interviews concerned primarily regular supervision, which is one of the main activities (see description of the SI above).

The first activity in organising the empirical material was to construct descriptive categories from the interviewees' statements about inspection effects. This was also used in a separate study reported by us (Hult & Segerholm 2012). As a continuation of that study, statements concerning what policy problem school inspection is to solve were likewise used to construct categories representing the inspectors' and managers' notions of the policy problem.

In order to relate the inspection effects to the problems school inspection is intended to solve, we decided to analyse the effects reported by inspectors and managers in a kind of reversed and Bacchi (2009) inspired analysis. Bacchi offers a methodology for analysing policy that probes how problems are represented in policies, arguing that it is important that we 'interrogate' how these problems are thought about in order to understand how policy works and how we are governed. We do however not claim to perform a regular "what's the problem represented to be" analysis, but Bacchi inspired us to try to infer 'problems' in a reversed analysis of the reported effects. The analysis was carried out in two steps. The first step was to deduce the policy problems from the notions of inspection effects as constructed

in our categories. That is, looking at the reported effects on for example national level, which problems could they represent a solution to?

The second step of the analysis was to compare the interviewees' notions of what policy problem inspection was intended to solve, to the deduced policy problems. The point with this kind of analysis is to try to capture correspondences and discrepancies between what the actors at the SI believe is the purpose with their work and with school inspection, and what they believe and experience is actually happening. One way to describe our analysis in a more evaluation theoretical vocabulary is as a type of reversed programme theory analysis (e.g. Chen 1990, Weiss 1997). The idea with such an analysis is to analyse the causal logic of an intervention or an educational programme, reform or activity in order to assess its potential to achieve what is planned.<sup>3</sup>

We also compare the two groups (inspectors and managers). The problems are discussed according to the possible mutual or not, assumptive world/s of inspectors and inspection managers. Following the methodological argument of Marshall et al. (1985, p. 94) we "examine how the dominant story emerges in the assumptive worlds" of inspectors and managers. This comparison is supposed to show if there are tensions and inconsistencies in the assumptive worlds of the inspectors and inspection managers as a way to illuminate one aspect of education governance, i.e. as partly a matter of central actors' notions.

### **What is the policy problem?**

As a part of our study inspectors and inspection managers at department and national level answered the question "What are the problems that the Inspectorate is aimed at solving? Why was SI created?" Their answers were categorised into four different categories, two of them mainly mentioned by the managers and two mainly put forward by the inspectors. The most common problem mentioned by the managers was the declining school performances.

*We have during the last years, or even during a rather long time seen a declining development, unfortunately, when it comes to students knowledge. That's what we above all need to work with concerning the Swedish school and the Schools Inspectorate is a tool for this, as I see it. (Department manager 4)*

Another issue, only expressed by the managers, was the problem with implementation of new laws and regulations. In order to make the local school board and head teachers pay attention to new regulations the SI has to put questions on how they are going to solve a special charter/statute:

*I think we have had an implementing role, because we have put the questions... all inspectors have had rather a distinct mission concerning bullying and offending behaviour /.../ and we think in that direction now too, when it comes to the new Education Act, that there can be some areas that isn't actually the main ones maybe- concerning good effects on education, that is, the quality of education per se, for example the possibility (for parents and students) to fail a complaint /.../ but in an implementation phase maybe we should bring that question with us: How are you administering the possibility to fail a complaint? And how have you informed students and parents of their rights? (Manager 3, national level)*

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<sup>3</sup> In the case of the Swedish School Inspection model, a program theory analysis has been done by Jan-Eric Gustafsson and Eva Myrberg (2011).

The inspectors expressed and highlighted another angle of problems with laws and regulations, the lacking awareness of existing laws and regulations among head teachers and municipal officers. The inspectors however often took off from a student perspective:

*Students have the right to study mother tongue and they don't even get information about this, students have a right to do 'students' choice' (a small part of the curriculum that students can choose out of their own interest) that instead is used for remedial teaching, they can't choose to study the language they have a right to. The municipality naturally ought to know which rules that apply here... (Inspector 5)*

A central problem for the inspectors was also the differences between schools and municipalities, which means that the educational equivalence for students in different schools and municipalities is a problem that SI is supposed to deal with.<sup>4</sup>

*Well, it's far to big difference between schools, far to big difference between qualities when it comes to leadership, when it comes to quality in education. Quality in education can differ between classrooms in the schools and between the municipalities. (Inspector 13)*

Some of the problems expressed by inspectors and inspection managers can be said to accede to the officially declared motifs for reinstalling and for sharpening school inspection, in different ways though. The inspectors draw on the lack of equivalence between schools and municipalities and the managers pointed to declining school performances.

### **What are the effects?**

Our presentation continues with inspectors' and inspection managers' notions of inspection effects at different levels (national, municipal and local school level).<sup>5</sup> In our interviews we posed the question "What are the effects of school inspection at different levels, as far as you know? Please give concrete examples!"

The empirical material was organised according to what level in the education system the interviewees' statements about effects were ascribed. Accordingly, at the *national* level four categories were constructed:

- changes in education policy
- appointment of national investigations, commissions or quality audits
- interpretation and standardisation of regulations (in national statutes)
- implementation of the Education Act and Ordinance and other regulations

Inspection managers mentioned more examples directed towards the national level compared to the inspectors, which is not surprising given their personal contacts with the Ministry of Education. Examples given from the four categories concerned changes in the national curriculum as a policy change; the appointment of a national investigation to establish rules for principal organizers of independent schools (corporations); interpretation of what counts as a school library that is now a mandatory in the Education Act; and implementation of the

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<sup>4</sup> Educational equivalence is one of the key words in an analysis of texts concerning school inspection in Sweden (see Lindgren et.al 2012). There is also an extensive discussion of the concept of educational equivalence in the Swedish context, focusing on its meaning and also its translation. There may be good reasons to translate the concept to equity rather than equivalence in some instances (Englund & Francia, 2008; Francia, 2011). However, the official Swedish translation is equivalence.

<sup>5</sup> This part is based on an earlier paper where we analysed inspectors' and inspection managers' notions of inspection effects (Hult & Segerholm 2012).

new Education Act through the inspectors questions making head teachers and local politicians aware of these changes.

At the *municipal* level or *principal organizer* level both inspection managers and inspectors gave examples of perceived inspection effects. Three categories were constructed to which both groups of interviewees gave examples:

- organizational changes of, or administrated by municipalities' school boards<sup>6)</sup>
- municipalities' increased awareness of their responsibility for the schools
- improved work with school development in the public schools

Organizational changes that the inspection mentioned were redistribution of resources among schools and an increase in the number of teachers with a teaching degree. Inspectors, on the other hand talked about organizational effects that could create problems for individuals or schools, for example when a school was heavily criticised by the SI, the municipality removed the head teacher. Inspection managers as well as inspectors also experienced an increased awareness among politicians and municipal officers concerning their responsibility as laid down in laws and regulations for school bussing, required plans and documents, etc. Both inspection managers and inspectors also offered different examples of an improvement in school development initiatives like creating forums for different school subjects where teachers from different schools could cooperate.

Statements about effects at the *school* level given by the interviewees expressed a commitment for the wellbeing of the individual child or student. This seemed to legitimate and justify much of their work and was particularly dominant among the inspectors. Altogether three categories were constructed to capture effects at this level:

- individual students' rights
- attitudinal change
- increased awareness of laws and regulations among head teachers

Earlier and better identification systems for of students with special needs and better systems for documentation of decisions and progress in these cases were examples given by both managers and inspectors that related to individual students' rights. Inspectors also volunteered stories about students who were harassed, that they could bring forward in their reports. The increase in complaints filed by parents and students were also mentioned as a positive effect of school inspection. The inspectors brought forward attitudinal changes like a more recipient attitude from head teachers towards the inspectors and the inspection procedures. Inspection managers said that there is an increased awareness among head teachers and teachers concerning the schools' obligation to teach in a way so that all students pass their grades. Yet another example of changed attitude mentioned was that head teachers now realise that they can use a favourable inspection report to promote their school in the local competition between schools. Finally, both inspectors and inspection managers reported an increased awareness of laws and regulations at the school level. One example being that required documentation and development plans for all individual students are now in better order, and so are plans to prevent bullying and offending manners. One inspector however expressed a

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<sup>6</sup> A municipality is a geographical as well as a political and administrative entity in Sweden that impose local taxes on the citizens to get public resources in order to provide for public education, elder and social care, culture and leisure as well as local infrastructure. There are local elections and the results lead to a proportionate distribution of members in the local parliament. All policy areas have a board that is accountable for decisions made for that policy area. However, the local parliament is ultimately accountable and responsible for political priorities and distribution of resources to different policy areas.

concern that one effect of increased demands on documentation may lead to teachers focusing less on teaching.

The views of inspectors and inspection managers mainly differed when it came to effects on national level, where managers not very surprisingly did offer more answers. They also reported some effects that were not mentioned at all by the inspectors, the standardisation process of and implementation of parts of the Education Act.

### **What are the inferred policy problems?**

The next step in our presentation is the result of our attempt to infer what policy problems the interviewees' notions of inspection effects may correspond to. We are fully aware that what we suggest here does not exclude other possibilities to deduce or construct policy problems that correspond to the notions of inspection effects expressed by the inspectors and inspector managers in the categories of effects described above.

Looking at the reported effects at the *national* level, what policy problems could they represent a solution to? Starting with the national level and effects in the category "changes in education policy", this solution may correspond to a need of information for political direction and a need of political action. Change in education policy signals political initiative and energy, something always needed in politics. In order to take action information is also needed. The policy problem corresponding to policy change is therefore lack of political initiative and/or action, or that a policy is "wrong" and a new direction is needed. Effects in the category "appointment of national investigations, commissions or quality audits" are equally about the same type of policy problem, but mainly about a need to show political initiative.

The policy problem we find corresponds to effects in the category "interpretation and standardisation of regulations (in national statutes)" and "implementation of the Education Act and Ordinance and other regulations" concerns implementation problems of national decisions and policies. The implementation problem is connected to different aspects of an implementation process. The first aspect has to do with the SI's internal work to interpret and standardise national requirements into comprehensible (and measurable) descriptions (criteria) that make the requirements clearer to local actors. The second aspect is similar but takes place in the direct contact between the SI and the local actors where the policy requirements are communicated.

Now turning to the effects at the *municipal* level brought forward by inspectors and inspection managers, what are the corresponding policy problems they present a solution to? The category of effects labelled "organizational changes of, or administrated by municipalities' school boards" leads to a problem of inadequate local school organisations (generally in municipalities but could also be principal organizers for independent schools), that fail to live up to the responsibility legally put on them. The problem we find corresponding to the effect category "municipalities' increased awareness of their responsibility for the schools", is lack of knowledge about (new) laws and regulations, and inadequate awareness of local political responsibility among local politicians. Both these inferred problems are related to different aspects of an implementation process, that is, how national policy is observed, understood/interpreted and handled at the municipal level.

A related problem corresponding to the category “improved work with school development in the public schools” may also reflect issues of implementation, like how policy is handled at the local level. But this category of perceived effects at the municipal level may also concern a local problem of a need to show, or lack of, political initiative and energy.

Finally, what are the corresponding policy problems to the categories of effects at *school* level reported by the inspectors and inspection managers? The category “individual students’ rights” points to a specified problem located in educational practice; individual students’ rights, as they are laid down in the Education Act and Ordinance and other statutes, are not honoured. The category “increased awareness of laws and regulations among head teachers” leads to a more general implementation problem at school level, similar to the one we deduced at the municipal level. Here again, our analysis associates the policy problems to aspects of the implementation process at school level.

The “attitudinal change” category concerned mainly effects on head teachers’ attitudes towards inspection – now more positive. We find the corresponding problem to that category to be an earlier lack of responsiveness and openness to inspection among head teachers.

The analysis performed is of course hypothetical since it takes inspectors’ and inspection managers’ assumptions/notions of effects as a starting point. In that sense the policy problems that these effects correspond to, or the problems that inspection solves, only give a sense of what kind of policy problems this group assume that they help solve or improve. If however the effects they reported are in fact taking place (which our other studies suggest), the major problem school inspection seems to correspond to is an implementation problem. More precisely, different steps in a chain of top-down policy implementation are made visible and affected in particular ways. One of the notable ways is the making of actors at all levels aware of laws, regulations and statutes that are tied to national education policy and decisions. Another problem of concern particularly for inspectors, but also managers is the problem of individual students who suffer from harassment and bullying, or do not get the amount of time or the school subject content they are entitled to. This is arguably also an implementation problem, but one directly connected to implementation of laws and regulations in educational practice.

## **Discussion**

Our analysis brings forward one aspect of governing processes in education, and that is possible gaps between publicly expressed purposes with certain educational reforms or national steering initiatives as in government decisions, and how central national policy actors’ notions about the purposes with their work and the agency may differ with or correspond to these decisions, that is, the policy problem to be solved. This is by no means a new insight, more common is however to study implementation or governing processes as a relation between political decision making at national level and the implementation at local levels. Our attempt here was to show that governing education and implementing education reforms is also about the processes taking place at the national level, in this case expressed by the inspectors’ and inspection managers’ assumptive worlds concerning the purpose with and effects of their work.

By and large inspectors’ and inspection managers’ assumed policy problems agree with the political intentions and motifs for the establishment of the SI in 2008 (problems with equivalence and performance). But the analysis shows that there are some interesting

discrepancies between their notions of what policy problems their work is intended to solve and what we have inferred from their notions of effects. The inferred problems (deduced from the interviewees' notions of inspection effects), point to policy problems linked to implementation, more precisely to problems with top-down steering. Almost all effects they reported concern a strengthening of this "steering chain". One question that can be raised in relation to this is whether this affects the legitimacy of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate in the minds of the inspectors and managers? If indeed, the effects are related to other problems than what they assume what are the political intentions, how then do they motivate their work? What in their assumptive worlds may "glue together" their inspection policy and practice?

Turning now to the assumptive world/s of inspectors and inspection managers and the question of their possible mutual world, there seemed to be some problems and effects that they agreed on. In the mutual assumptive world of inspectors and inspection managers the lacking awareness of laws and regulations is a problem of concern for the Swedish school and here the Inspectorate has been successful in both implementing new statutes and in making school boards and head teachers aware of their responsibilities according to the Education Act and other regulations. Their efforts also have had effects on organisation at municipal and school level and not the least for individual students with problems of different kind. This concern for the individual child that is maltreated in various ways seemed to be an important part of the mutual assumptive world of inspectors and managers.

However there also seemed to be at least some parts of the assumptive world of inspectors' and inspector managers respectively, that not to any great extent was shared among the other group. Inspectors were rather agreed upon equity among schools and communities as an important problem for the SI to deal with, while the problem of declining academic school performances for Swedish students seemed to be part of the managers' assumptive world.

The 'dominant story' then seems to be the one of implementing new statutes and monitoring law compliance and thereby governing Swedish municipalities and schools according to the Education Act and other regulations. However this also serves as a tool for them to protect individual students, and this concern for individual students' rights and welfare, is what ultimately comes out as the strong and vital assumption that motivates and legitimizes their work.

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