



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# **SCHOOL DIGITALISATION IN SWEDEN**

## **Governance and policy translation in a decentralised K-12 education context**

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### **Akademisk avhandling**

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School Digitalisation in Sweden – governance and policy translation in a decentralised K–12 education context

**Abstract**

The National Digital Strategy for the Swedish School Sector was launched in 2017, aiming to make Swedish K–12 schools the best in the world at utilising digital opportunities by 2023. The implementation of the strategy has involved education stakeholders at different organisational levels, from the national policymaker level to local education offices and schools. This thesis explores the translation of national school digitalisation policy into local actions, focusing on the contextual diversity within the decentralised Swedish K–12 education system.

This research employs a policy trajectory approach, exploring the translation of the national strategy across four organisational levels: the national, municipal political, local education office, and school level. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (N=61) with national policymakers, school superintendents, ICT coordinators, and other key informants as well as analyses of local policy documents and minutes of education committee meetings (N=223). Thematic analysis was used, focusing on the practical actions taken in school digitalisation processes.

Two distinct approaches to school digitalisation among Swedish municipalities were found: a general approach, primarily in larger urban municipalities, and a specific approach, more common in smaller rural municipalities. The general approach involves providing extensive resources and leaving the responsibility for policy translation to individual schools and teachers, while the specific approach features detailed local policies and collaborative efforts across all organisational levels. This thesis highlights challenges faced by small and rural municipalities, including limited resources and remoteness from national policy processes. It underscores the importance of ICT coordinators in bridging the gap between national policy and local implementation and provides insights into education governance of school digitalisation. The thesis shows that the national strategy and the #skolDigiplan represented a move towards collaborative governance, aiming for a democratic, negotiated, and co-creational policy process. However, the remoteness experienced by small and rural municipalities suggests a need for more inclusive and supportive national governance structures. The development of network governance among these municipalities highlights their capacity for self-organisation and resilience, but also underscores the challenges of ensuring educational equality in a decentralised system.

**Keywords**

context, education governance, national strategy, policy translation, school digitalisation.

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