

Chapter 12

Regulatory Support Activities in the Swedish Policy and Practice Nexus: Inclusive Culture of Education Policy in Different Contexts



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Abstract The policy and practice nexus in this chapter aims to investigate how Swedish regulated support activities, inspired by an inclusive approach, are theoretically designed in governance, interpreted in policy documents and put into practice in the classroom. The inclusive culture of education policy face multiple demands which makes it necessary to elaborate with a deeper and more detailed explanation for understanding how inclusive support activities are formed and are presently functioning. Drawing from the characteristics of the culture of policy embodying culturally-bound beliefs, we explore regulatory support activities through three analytical lenses of: (i) the principles for educational governance that guide the agencies that produce national policy, (ii) regulated support activities as problems that have to be solved by policy intervention, and (iii) how teachers guided by subject matter and teaching activities in the classroom end up resisting national policy guidelines. The result indicates that the policy of support activities for students defined with special needs can have various meanings both within and between policy contexts. In the discussion we emphasize that the distance between inclusive policy and practice widens the closer we come to the classroom. It is also concluded that inclusive support activities have to be understood in the context where they appear, which is where they create meaningful content for each actor in the policy and practice nexus of inclusion.

Introduction

[T]he closer we come to educational practice and results, the more demanding it is to define what inclusion is actually about. (Haug, 2010: 207)

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The particular policy and practice nexus in this chapter investigates how inclusive support activities are expected to be performed at the policy level and how they may be performed in practice. More specifically, we focus on the relationship between regulatory support activities expressed in contemporary Swedish inclusive education policy and performed in education practice in schools and classrooms. By examining the transmission of inclusive education policy, instantiated by support activities at three levels: public authority, policy administration and teaching in school, we aim to highlight the various nexuses where policy and practice are translated and put into effect. As Prøitz et al. (2017) states, inclusive support activities are framed by students, teachers, policy administrators and policy makers in different and often contradictory policy and practice contexts. It is also obvious that the why of inclusion is a lesser problem than how to actually do inclusion (Wermke et al., 2020). From an international perspective, the two biggest trends within education policy are the movement towards an inclusive school for all, represented by the 1994 declaration of Salamanca, and the trend towards standardisation reflected in the global testing culture, expressed in ubiquitous testing practices such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Hamre et al., 2018). Deriving from these two trends, a field of tension occurs in the nexus between the aim of goal-achievement for all students resulting from the increased level of standardization and standards, and the aim to include all students independently from their ability to meet such standardized prerequisites (Ainscow, 2016). Internationally, professional teachers feel that there are many barriers to inclusion, however teachers' understanding of inclusion is critical for inclusive education to be successful (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). There is also a lack of a firm research base for inclusive education to support either whether this is a preferable approach in terms of outcomes, or how inclusion should be implemented (Lindsay, 2007). Mitchell et al. (2010) complicates the policy and practice nexus further by stating that inclusive education tends to serve multiple purposes, in such different contexts as pedagogic documentation, legal documentation, documentation for performance or quality accounting, to provide resources, as planning documents or to serve administrative purposes. Further knowledge about the contemporary educational policy culture is greatly needed for a deeper and more detailed explanation of the complex relations within the school of the twenty-first century, and contribute to further development towards a genuine school for all (Ainscow, 2020).

Regulatory Support Activities in the Swedish Policy

There are two contemporary regulatory support activities in Swedish education. First, additional adjustments, meaning alternative or supplementary assignments which enable students to participate in general educational programs. If these additional adjustments prove to be insufficient, the second support activity is the individual education plan (IEP) for students with special educational needs (SEN). In contemporary Swedish education, these two support activities are governed by requirements for concretisation of goals into

various kinds of planning documents. Legislation and accompanying support materials with the intention of promoting support activities are a clear feature of the emerging culture of inclusive individualisation in the public sectors in Sweden and other Western countries. Support activities aimed at students' individual knowledge development were first advocated in a Swedish publication in the early 2000s, in the Swedish Ministry Publication Series *The Student's Success – The School's Responsibility* (Ds 2001: 19) with the statement that planned documentation for special support e.g. additional adjustments and individual development plans, can serve as a strategic pedagogical activity in order to prevent school problems and educational difficulties. In contemporary education policy, the notion of a strategic pedagogic activity can be understood as based on the idea of organising public activities according to market principles with “clearly formulated goals, a conscious strategy, governance and management in order to achieve the goals, and clear follow-up and evaluation” (ibid: 37).

Individual education plans (IEP) have been mandated since 1994, and before that, from 1980, they were recommended in the national curriculum for compulsory schools. Their origin can be traced to the USA and the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Mitchell et al., 2010). Individual development plans (IDP) for all students in the Swedish compulsory school were mandated in 2006, and supplemented by a 2008 regulation on written reviews in all school subjects, which in 2013 expired in grades six to nine, supplemented by grades. The individual education plan (IEP) has been revised on several occasions since 1994. Initially, an IEP had to be made for all students at risk of not achieving the national goals in grades 3 and/or 5 and/or 9, but this act was replaced in 2014 by additional adjustments for students at risk of not achieving the knowledge requirements and individual education plans when additional adjustments proved to be insufficient.

The requirement for performing an educational investigation currently covers teachers' and special educators' pedagogical work with additional adjustments and individual education plans. The investigation includes an individual assessment in which the teacher, according to Chapter 3, §4 of the Educational Act, shall make an individual and extended assessment of the students' knowledge development. If the assessment shows that the student will not reach the minimum knowledge requirements, the student must be supported by additional adjustments in the ordinary educational setting (ibid., §5). If the additional adjustments are estimated to be insufficient and an investigation proves that the student is unlikely to reach the minimum knowledge requirements, special support shall be provided and documented in an individual education plan (ibid., §9). The student and the student's legal guardians participate in the design of the individual education plan.

Support Activities as Culture of Inclusive Education Policy

Requirements to register, measure, compare, calculate, quantify, standardise, weight and weighing seem to be constantly increasing within the contemporary school. Rather than communication and reflection, it is now about performance and documentation.

The professional culture that emerged just over ten years ago has today been replaced by a culture of documentation. (Alexanderson, 2007: 33. *Translation by the authors*¹)

... teachers often viewed IEPs as an administrative task, rather than as a tool to develop more effective instruction and learning [...] the same IEP document is expected to serve educational, legal, planning, accountability and resource allocation purposes. (Mitchell et al., 2010: 15)

The first quote above states that the contemporary educational policy is largely governed by requirements for the breakdown of goals in planning documents of various kinds. The second quote comments on specific documentation – i.e., individual education plans (IEP) – and the multiple purposes of a culture of policy simultaneously functioning in such different contexts as pedagogic documentation, legal documentation, documentation for performance or quality accounting, in order to provide extra resources, such as planning documents, or to serve administrative purposes. The results of schools and teachers as well as students are assessed in accordance with quality requirements relating, in particular, to the achievement of goals which are aligned with the knowledge requirements and equivalence expressed in the national goals.

What, then, is the idea behind support activities in schools based on achievement of goals and equivalence? On the basis of the Swedish Education Act (SFS, 2010: 800), equivalence is a central policy concept and a common policy definition of the concept is “equal access to education, equal education and the equal value of education” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009: 125). According to the principles of the economic market, one consequence of this definition is that students’ choices ideally should be decided between qualitatively equivalent schools (Norén, 2003). The ideal of establishing quality-equivalent schools gives meaning to the concept of quality and how it should be controlled. Instruments for monitoring, measuring and evaluating results and knowledge requirements have thus become more and more important for education and instruction. Following this idea, we argue that inclusive support activities constructed as additional adjustments and individual education plans within the framework of current governance, are at risk of being understood as targeted assessment and control of the student decided to be in special need as a designated policy beneficiary. This is of importance because educational institutions frame professions and the different ways in which professionals interpret and work within this framework based on their professional understanding of their assignment. It is worth noting that students within this context can in many ways also be considered as professionals, i.e., professional policy benefactors, as they are part of an institutional setting where they are expected to be active participants responsible for, designing and understanding their assignments and learning trajectory (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

¹All quotes in the chapter are translated by the authors.

Theoretical Points of Departure

Popkewitz (2009) describes a number of rules and standards which frame students and teachers within a curriculum practice. He explains that these rules and standards are culturally and historically shaped, constituting a cultural norm for how students and teachers ought to be. Within a cultural context of tracking the students' knowledge development, Popkewitz (ibid.) emphasises that if the student is at risk of not achieving one or more subject goals, many categorisations will be verbalised simply by making agreements on what to do to prevent this. To point out that a student is at risk of not achieving the goals, presents, within the current education policy, an understanding that it is possible for all students to achieve the goals. The student who is at risk of becoming a policy beneficiary is therefore distinguished – differentiated – from the others with a visible sign of the exclusion by regulated support activities. In this way, Popkewitz (ibid.) argues that a curriculum embodies culturally-bound beliefs that distinguish students with the ability to take responsibility for their own knowledge development, to achieve the goals of the curriculum and syllabi, and with the competence to make deliberate choices from students who exhibit deficiencies in one or more of these abilities. The paradox that occurs, is that students who lack these abilities have to be excluded in order to be included.

Sandra Stein (2004) also defines policy as cultural construct. The culture of education policy, she states, pinpoints students who need special support or special programs to overcome their cultural disadvantages. The basic idea is that students defined as policy beneficiaries are deviant from a perceived norm, and that government institutions can fulfil a corrective role in the lives of these deviant students. Stein (ibid.) describes the characteristics of the culture of policy as follows:

- Policy beneficiaries are problems that government intervention can solve
- The government can mitigate the problems through funding allocation and bureaucratic design
- As policy mechanisms are implemented, government agencies interpret, formulate and reformulate the culture of policy in the language and rituals of practice

The culture of education policy constructs cultural theses about the individual student and how to live. Mass schooling produces the individual who embodies the principles that often are codified in narratives that link the individual to the citizen of a nation. Today there is a language of globalization and freedom of choice and the current reforms of schooling aim to enable students to become successful in the new global world. The culture of education policy values individual freedom of choice and useful knowledge. These ways of seeing policy can be made available through analysis of “language and behaviours of policymakers and practitioners at various stages of the policy process” (Stein, 2004: ix). The language of education policy carries words and concepts about goal fulfilment and knowledge requirements which function as cultural theses about student behaviour and of what a student

should become (Popkewitz, 2009). The analytical method draws on Stein (2004) and Popkewitz (2009) and consists of the following steps:

1. Identification of the contextual backdrop and the principles for educational governance that guides the agencies that produce national policy
2. Analysis of regulated support activities as problems that have to be solved by policy intervention guided by the National Agency for Education
3. Analysis of how teachers guided by subject matter and teaching activities in the classroom end up resisting national policy guidelines

Methods and Materials

Our design in the study discussed in this chapter aims to link educational policy and practice. We use a multiple approach design, with qualitative multilevel methods which in a three-level procedure combines contextual backdrop, policy text analysis and field notes sampled from classroom observations, followed by informal conversations with students and teachers. The design aims to illustrate a governance-policy-classroom transmission route where regulated support activities for students with special needs are transmitted in the current culture of education policy. The contextual backdrop draws on an organisational theoretic perspective where the public choice market is the politicians' tool to control the production of services in the direction of choice and efficiency (Norén, 2003). At the next level, policy text analysis is performed on national policy guidelines, followed by observations and focus group interviews that provides data for analysing an inclusive teaching environment (Table 12.1).

The selection of policy documents for analysis is limited to the two most recent guidelines for regulated support activities: *General guidelines for working with additional adjustments, special support and individual education plans* (The National Agency for Education, 2014a) and *Support activities in education: guidance and stimulation, additional adjustments and special support* (The National Agency for Education, 2014b). These documents were chosen because of their heavy policy weight regarding regulated support activities for students defined with special needs in the Swedish compulsory and upper secondary school. They are also

Table 12.1 Governance-policy-classroom transmission route

Governance context: principles guiding the customer choice market	National policy: guidelines for regulated support activities	Classroom practice: teaching as resistance to policy guidelines
Transmission of governance and managing from the customer choice market to the National Agency for Education	Transmission of national policy guidelines for regulated support activities from the National Agency for Education to schools, teachers and students	Transmission of national guidelines for regulated support activities into the classroom where they are transmitted into teaching activities

an example of the National Agency for Education's (NAE) way of "speaking to" teachers and students as well as parents in the Swedish school.

The last step focuses on data from an upper secondary classroom. Two researchers and a teacher jointly followed a class of 20 students in the school subject Image and Form, an art course for 5 weeks. The teacher had noticed that many students were bothered by stress-related symptoms. Many students had difficulties getting started with their assignments and this was documented as a need for additional adjustments by individual instruction. The researchers performed participatory classroom observations (Bradbury, 2015) in an art class and performed focus group interviews with the students, followed by reflective conversations with the teacher (Halkier, 2010). The focus group interviews included four recorded interviews from 20 students in groups of four to five students. Each group interview lasted between 35 and 50 min. Semi-structured interview questions were designed after reading the students' individual education plans, after they were anonymized, specifying support activities and the grading criteria for the course. The content of the focus group interviews then addressed issues that all students wrestled with but which were perceived by students in need of support to be linked to their specific support needs. Based on field notes from the participatory observations, transcriptions from focus group interviews and reflective conversations with the teacher after each observation session, changes were implemented in the teaching.

The design is based on Stein's definition of an educational policy problem whose solutions are transmitted between and among various policy agents (Stein, 2004). Transmission among policy agents at different levels, constitutes a recursive relationship which makes it possible to consider adaptation of and resistance to policy problems and solutions. Our methodological framework is presented in Fig. 12.1.

The culture of policy has a set of characteristics that includes policy beneficiaries – i.e., the subjects of regulated support activities – as problems that have to be solved by policy intervention. The primary focus for characterising the policy beneficiaries is by individual attributes and behaviours, instead of structural or institutional conditions. The culture of policy acknowledges the impact of structural and institutional conditions by following the transmission of regulated support activities in policy and practice.

In the following section, with contemporary educational governance as a contextual backdrop, we will describe, analyse and discuss Swedish regulatory support activities in policy and practice in terms of: (1) how governance of regulatory support activities is represented in the Swedish National Agency for Education's General Council and recommendations (2014a) with supplementary support



Fig. 12.1 Methodological multilevel procedure of analysis

material (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014b), and (2) how regulatory support activities can be performed on the basis of educational changes in the social context in which the student is a member, i.e. support activities actively and consciously based on the learning environment as the main resource for support.

Regulated Support Activities and School Governance: Contextual Backdrop

It can be said that rational choice markets emphasise one goal, which is individual freedom of choice. (Norén, 2003: 22)

Teachers have probably always used different strategies to compile information about their students' knowledge development, even before the implementation of grades or "developmental" conversations with students and their guardians. However, this has been handled within professional contexts without being regulated by law and educational policy. Contemporary governance has led to a change in this professional tradition. Today, public welfare is essentially based on a theoretical model from economic market management. Norén (2003) describes how a rational choice marketplace rationale is intended to work within public areas, where schools are significant actors. The models are based on the idea that the citizen is awarded a school voucher that transforms her into a consumer of society's services. According to Norén (*ibid.*), politicians have a central position in the rational choice market, with responsibility for regulating and designing the school market by legislation, in order to achieve the policy goals of efficiency and freedom of choice. However, customers are not the only actors in the public market. Politicians are also a part of a representative democratic system where they are expected to serve public interests. Governance is based on freedom of choice, but politicians are forced into regulations if and when the freedom of choice threatens public interest.

Thus, the freedom of choice is regulated, which leads to frequent regulations and re-regulations of the marketplace. In theory, Norén (*ibid.*) explains, the marketplace is framed by three principles. The first principle is to affirm the customers', in this case the citizens', self-interest, the second is to create independent producers – i.e., schools – that compete with each other, and the third principle is to create an autonomous administration of the market, in this case, the Swedish National Agency for Education, which ideally should be independent of both students and parents (i.e., the customers in this construction) as well as of teachers and school management (i.e. the producers).

When politicians regulate and re-regulate the educational marketplace, they also weaken the theoretical principles. The independent status of the National Agency for Education is for example of the utmost importance in order to maintain competition. This institutional regulation, however, states that the goal of equivalence is governed by national legislation emphasising that all schools should be equal and guarantee the democratic rights of all citizens, while the goal of individualisation

should offer students freedom of choice and efficiency, and allow them to make informed decisions. The consequence of these conflicting goals is that public markets often become a mix of market and management, they become quasi-markets (Bartlett & Le Grand, 1993: 10) which lack credibility because they both regulate and deregulate schools.

Since the institutional regulation is expected to be detached from customers and producers, the governance of the market is perceived as a rational process with a rational organisation that is a tool for targeting the goals efficiency and rational choice.

Norén (2003) states that one characteristic of welfare markets, as opposed to the financial market, is that customers and producers do not really exist and have to be created and framed in the marketplace. Students and parents need to be persuaded to acquire identities as autonomous consumers of welfare services, and teachers and school management have to inform them about possible choices to make and what impact they may have. One way is to inform the individual student about available options and students and parents about evaluations of the school's performance. Within this context, regulated support activities in schools can be understood as a form of support that regulates students and parents right to be informed in order to make the right choice.

Support activities in Schools: Transmission of Advice in Policy

Transmission of policy texts among agents in the rational choice public marketplace influences the way we look upon and understand teachers and students as actors in the marketplace. General guidelines with comments and support materials published by the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE) concerning additional adjustments and special support with individual education plans were introduced in 2014. The texts (NAE, 2014a, b) have an overall design according to which they first formulate advice as guided by legislation and regulations on support activities in schools, such as additional adjustments, special support and individual education plans, and then follow up this advice with comments. This emphasises, for example, that the teachers should always be aware of signs from their students implying that they need, or will need, additional adjustments or special support.

It is important that teachers and school staff pay attention as early as possible to signs and signals that a student may be in need of additional adjustments or special support. (NAE, 2014a: 22)

The signs and signals are the students' deficiency in attaining the minimum knowledge requirements (i.e., the lowest grading scale on a scale from A to E), or lacking the capacity to develop the required knowledge. The general guidelines are presented as both general and specific as they are to be followed in all forms of schooling:

This general advice, with comments on work with extra adjustments, especially support and individual education plans, applies fully to the preschool class, the recreation center, the primary school, the special primary school, the special school, the Sami school, the upper secondary school and the special upper secondary school. (NAE, 2014a: 7)

Mediation by the Student Health Service

Both texts stress the importance of the Student Health Service at the school's organisational level for performing assessment studies and support activities. The Student Health Service (SHS) is a multi- and/or interdisciplinary team with medical, psychological, sociological and special educational competencies. This team is responsible for undertaking

The investigation of the student's possible need for special support [which] aims to provide the school with sufficient documentation to understand why the student has difficulties in the school situation and what support activities the school needs to put in place. The school health service often plays an important role in the work with investigations. (NAE, 2014a: 13)

The *investigation's* aim is to develop routines and modes to follow students' learning and knowledge development. The requirement for teachers and the school in general is to have a common approach, common procedures and common modes of documentation, as well as the ability to cooperate on the individual students' development.

It is important to find ways at the individual school for teachers and other school staff involved in the work on the additional adjustments to collaborate and transfer information about the additional adjustments and the student's development. (NAE, 2014a: 23)

This implies that teachers in their profession ought to be aware of each student's individual learning trajectory: how every student learns, when learning takes place for each student, and make adjustments on basis of this knowledge. When the importance of collaboration is emphasised, it may imply that the NAE assumes that teachers lack adequate and common methods to the extent that the general goal fulfilment requires. This deficiency can however be "remedied" if collaboration between teachers, other staff and the SHS is developed. The focus here is exclusively on teachers' behaviour: to design their teaching so that all students reach the minimum knowledge requirement.

Mandatory Duty to Provide Information

Teachers' main assignment, besides paying attention to and observing which students may be in need of support activities, is to inform. As previously stated with the support of Norén (2003), information is extremely important in the rational choice

market, because the customers – the students and their parents – should be stimulated to make use of their freedom of choice through information. Further indication that the NAE wants to emphasise the importance of information is that the teacher's approach to students and parents is almost regulated in detail.

... it is important that teachers and other school staff inform and interact with the student and the student's legal guardian about regulated support activities. Here, it is important to listen in to the knowledge and experience that the student and the student's guardians have about the student's situation. Similarly, when teachers or other school staff have noticed that a student may be in need of regulated support activities, it is important to as soon as possible inform the student and the student's legal guardian. (NAE, 2014a: 25)

The teacher should apparently also create respect and mutual trust in the relations with students and parents in order to clarify the goals to be achieved by the student, all with the aim of structuring a development plan that will guide the students towards continuous responsibility for their learning. In order to comply with the provisions of the School Act, the school has to create a conversational context where the student has the opportunity to express his or her views. The general guidelines state the importance of, but lack clarifications on how, the student's opinions should be given importance in the design of support activities. Instead, the NAE declares the importance of

making it clear to the student that the activities carried out in connection with different tasks within the education are linked to the knowledge goals in the curriculum or to the knowledge requirements that are at least to be achieved. The teacher is responsible for leading the teaching and to clarify how different parts of the teaching are linked to the abilities that the student should be given the opportunity to develop. Clarifying how the activities in the teaching are linked to the knowledge goals or knowledge requirements can make the student more involved in the work, which is important for motivation and willingness to learn. (NAE, 2014a: 43f)

Teaching Linked to the Minimum Knowledge Requirements

The national goals have to be aligned to the actual teaching and teachers need to be reminded of the importance of relating the national goals and knowledge requirements to their teaching. How teachers should design additional adjustments and special support in practice, mainly consists of stressing the importance of information and individual-bound activities. Additional adjustments may be performed when students need clearer instructions, guidance to understand subject content or to plan and structure the chronological planning of a task.

The teacher takes the students' different needs into account in all the learning environments and throughout the whole teaching process, i.e., in planning, implementation, assessment and grading, follow-up and documentation. (NAE, 2014b: 12)

In the text as well as in the schematic working model for the design of support activities, comments regarding the importance of giving the student conditions for

learning in interaction with the rest of the students in the learning environment are lacking.

The support material *Support activities in education – guidance and stimulation, additional adjustments and special support* (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014b) gives an example of how a pedagogical investigation guided by the agency’s template can be carried out. Under the heading “pedagogical assessment”, it is proposed that the student “Johan” shall be given a number of individualised interventions that are consistent with the individualised additional adjustments in the support material. All proposals are based on the notion that learning occurs without considering the importance of promoting interaction with classmates.

The teachers need to understand why the student has difficulties in the school situation in order to assess what the student’s needs are, and decide which additional adjustments will best benefit the student. (NAE, 2014b: 20)

The solutions, or concrete suggestions, for changing the student’s study situation are all about training abilities and skills outside the classroom. The student “Johan” in the example has difficulty participating in sports and the proposal for support activities is to offer teaching in a less imposing context. The proposed activities do not provide guidance for in-depth analysis of why the student finds the situation difficult, nor do they have active participation in the learning environment as a stated goal

The student may, for example, be in need of special support in the form of regular special educational interventions, and at the same time need additional adjustments within regular teaching in the form of, for example, special teaching materials and digital technology. In some cases, the student may need many different additional adjustments, which all together become so extensive that the student is deemed to be in need of special support. If the student is in need of special support, an assessment is made of the specific support needed and the extent to which it is needed. (NAE, 2014b: 44)

The student’s voice in the pedagogical investigation is almost non-existent besides an introductory section in which “Johan’s” perception of a teacher he appreciates is used as an example to express his opinion of his situation in school.

Support Activities Linked to the Minimum Knowledge Requirements

What is evident, is the epistemological approach in the policy texts, i.e., the perception of knowledge. Knowledge is something that should be assessed, and the assessment should be made in relation to both subject specific goals and knowledge requirements. The standard for assessing the knowledge requirements is the national high-stake tests in grades 3, 5 and 9. The text depicts the student as being involved in his or her own knowledge development. The purpose of support activities in the

school is that student and parents receive clear and concrete information about the student's knowledge development.

It is important to make it clear to the student that the activities carried out within the different parts of the education process are linked to the knowledge goals in the curriculum or to the minimum knowledge requirements that are to be achieved. The teacher is responsible for the teaching and for clarifying how different parts of the teaching are linked to the abilities that the students should be given the opportunity to develop. (NAE, 2014a: 43f)

The activities should increase the student's ability to take responsibility and develop towards the curriculum goals, simultaneously increasing participation in his or her individual learning trajectory, thus facilitating lifelong learning. The students shall develop the ability to assess and understand their results and, according to the policy guidelines, they have an internal will and motivation to learn and to develop and grow.

To what extent students achieve the specific curriculum goals by the end of the third and fifth school years respectively, is an indication of whether the teaching leads students to develop their knowledge in accordance with the intentions of the curriculum and syllabi. The goals that the student should have achieved by the end of the ninth school year describe a minimum level of knowledge that the school should have to provide. Helena Korp (referred to in the Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009) highlights an equivalence problem regarding the use of high stakes national tests as a basis for assessment. The epistemic belief expressed by national tests is based on the approach to knowledge in the syllabi's core subjects, which are the theoretical school subjects. Hence, learning is mainly seen as a cognitive activity that can be expressed in writing. This approach to knowledge can thus legitimise additional adjustments, especially special support and individual education plans as an understanding and expression of equivalence. Support activities, with the national tests as reference, are thus at risk of becoming a new technology to legitimise students' exclusion and prevent access to upper secondary and tertiary studies.

Support Activities in Schools: Transmission of Advice in Practice

The aesthetic program in the upper secondary school, which is part of our study, is attractive to many students. A portfolio as well as high grades are required for entering the program. Despite this, almost fifty percent of the students have a neuropsychiatric diagnosis, e.g., ADD, ADHD or dyslexia and the School Health Service (SHS) defined many of them as policy beneficiaries for additional adjustments and/or individual education plans. Most of the students planned for a future in some creative profession, and thus it is important to receive high grades in the subject "Image and Form". The teachers received pedagogical assessments from the SHS suggesting adjustments like the right to extended time on tests, individual

instructions and accommodations, in other words, proposals taken directly from the Swedish NAE's general advice for additional adjustments.

The situation was, however, stressful for both teachers and students alike, since so many students needed individual support in order to commence working with their tasks. The teachers perceived an unsustainable work situation where they had to devote substantial time only for "firefighting". Their understanding of the problem did not correspond with that of the SHS, so they initiated a joint project with researchers to investigate how additional adjustments could be framed within the aesthetic program. The aesthetics teachers described the actual problem as follows:

In recent years, my colleagues and I have noticed that students find it difficult to run their own creative processes from start to finish. Can this depend of the increased demands from the national curriculum, increased mental illness or something else? As a teacher in the aesthetics program, I wonder if I can make adjustments that are more subject-specific? Will it create a more sustainable work situation for me as a teacher, if I change my way of working with additional adjustments?

Students Defining the Problem

The class of 20 students included nine students with additional adjustments. As it turned out, the students shared the teachers' perceptions of the problem and they presented important reflections on the causes and solutions. In the focus groups, students reasoned about running their own creative process in a goal-driven school. The knowledge requirement to "take risks" has different meanings depending on the student, but regardless of interpretation, the concept permeates their way of performing the task. Therefore, it was not the task per se that created uncertainty, but how a process-oriented task should be performed and assessed in relation to the concepts in the knowledge requirements.

I'm thinking that you have to be able to present your thoughts, visualize the connections you make and which conclusions you have. How you chose to develop the feelings that occurred. It has to be stated so clearly that the person reading your text understands the connection to the original work.

One of the students' interpretations of "working in experimental forms" involved doing something without previous experience.

I'm a person who gets stressed about grades, but I decided from the beginning that I wanted to do something new [...] but it was very hard and I was not sure if the teacher would like it.

Here, we can see the difference between the SHS's way of describing additional adjustments by giving the student individual instructions of the assignments. However, most of the students didn't want the teacher to address them individually, out of fear of appearing helpless:

When you ask questions, it is sort of proving what you know and what you don't [...] maybe it also depends on what you ask? I believe I'm quite stressed about the grade and when I get stressed, the teacher doesn't understand what I want to say with my work. The teacher asked me a lot of questions and listened very thoroughly and I thought she would probably use this later for grading me.

Most of the students were very concerned about how to handle assignment related to the knowledge requirements. The student in the following example easily puts instructions into action, but trouble occurs when peers start to judge the person behind the work.

The risk of doing something that you don't feel completely safe with is that you know that there are a lot of other people who are going to see this... And that there is a risk that this will not be so cool? People will think I'm weird.

The introductory part of the project was structured by a collective learning process among peers. Thereafter, the students were dedicated to individual work. Once the students had expressed their opinions about their school lives, the teachers became aware of the importance of getting confirmation from peers and decided to enact additional adjustments in the students' learning environment. When students with extensive need of support activities reflected on their own development with peers, it became clear that they were all struggling with the same issues, regardless of receiving or not receiving support. The embarrassment of feeling different disappeared and was replaced by joint interpretations of the knowledge requirements in relation to the teacher's instructions. Assessment became a collective experience. This situation made it easier for the teacher to understand how all students perceive the knowledge requirements as formulated. Once the teachers took part in the deidentified student interviews, they gained a deeper understanding of their perceptions of teaching.

Teachers and Students Solving the Problem

The first step into educational change should ultimately not be to follow the recommendations from the SHS, i.e., from the National Agency for Education. To reduce student stress and difficulties is an ongoing creative process where the teacher's starting point is to use subject-specific knowledge and competencies to design the classroom as a safe place for learning. Many of the students' concerns have to do with how their peers will react to their work in progress. It also seems important to find ways for students to gain an understanding of process-oriented tasks in relation to the knowledge requirements. Students testified that they are constantly trying to decode the teacher's instructions as an imagined end product in disguise.

The modified teaching from individualised instruction into collective process-oriented instruction, led in fact to more time to support students in their work. The teacher concluded the changes she had made by emphasising the importance of explaining what one learns during a process-oriented work, as important as giving students instruction on the current stage of the task. Furthermore, the teacher emphasised the importance of confirming that the students are working correctly in the moment, rather than providing forward-directed, product-related feedback. Besides this, the teacher introduced a 20-min rule, which means 20 min work without evaluating themselves and their work, also she constantly reminds them that "you are not your pictures". A form of teaching that does not follow the general

policy guidelines, but is instead based on the teacher's subject-specific competence, proved to reduce the need for individual adjustments from nine students to one. When the teacher summarised the most important change for gaining a deeper understanding of process-oriented assignments, she emphasised the work-related common conversations when lessons were introduced. The teacher now made additional adjustments followed by professional subject knowledge and supervision.

Support Activities in Policy and Practice: Final Discussion

In this chapter, we aimed to highlight the various nexuses where policy and practice are translated and put into effect in policy documents and classroom practice in Sweden. The following questions were used: How is governance of regulatory support activities represented in the National Agency for Education's general guidelines with supplementary support material? How can regulatory support activities be performed on the basis of educational changes in the social context in which the student is a member?

Several dilemmas emerge in the nexuses between theory, policy and practice. As we can see in the study presented in this chapter, the same policy – here the policy of support activities for students defined with special needs – can have various meanings both within and between policy contexts. As Stein (2004) points out, practitioners that aim to serve students in need of support activities in ways that build on their assets and abilities, often must act in resistance to the culture of policy to do so. We can also see how contradictory meanings within the current educational policy culture in fact contribute to a situation where teachers' professionalism is at risk of becoming degraded.

The state's pedagogical advice will be: "be careful and follow our advice", hence the responsibility of teachers for planning instruction in order to meet students' various needs is replaced by a perspective where various special needs are the main responsibility of the students themselves, school health service-team and school management.

Governance as Barriers to Learning

Regulated support activities in the theory and policy nexus works with the support of a rationale choice theory developed by and for the economic market. Unfortunately, a linear relationship between theory and practice in such an ideal type is difficult to find. This can almost be stated as fact, proven by the frequent regulations and re-regulations that are constantly taking place in the economic market as well as in the public. One consequence of the way in which the policy texts address teachers and students, is that support activities in schools are at risk of being simplified and individualised within the framework of this form of governance. The transmission of the policy texts mediates that additional adjustments and individual education plans are something

that teachers obviously should be able to deal with if they only follow the advice given to them. Another consequence is that it is not possible for teachers to be professionals, if they were only to follow the advice and recommendations of the Swedish National Agency for Education. This is triggered by the current system of governance, which requires producers, i.e., schools to be independent. However, there is still room for maneuver – or resistance – for teachers, even if pressure obviously falls on teachers and students due to a rational choice education marketplace.

Goal Requirements as Barriers to Learning

When we approach the policy and practice nexus, the distance between inclusive policy and educational practice is even greater. It is hard to overlook the aspect of the creation of a regime, implied by the regulatory support activities. Each and every student's results should be thoroughly audited as well as their approaches and actions in the future. If general learning instructions constantly need to be supplemented with individual support, the students labelled as in need of support activities are at risk of being ostracised from their regular peers' learning group. Furthermore, the knowledge requirements in the national curriculum, which are the norm and must be met, do not necessarily have to be relevant to either the teacher's or the students' way of understanding a specific field of knowledge. Therefore, it is also quite possible that the goal requirements within the framework of certain interpretations may constitute an obstacle to the students' learning; i.e., the controlling function becomes counterproductive.

The requirements for achieving the goals are also in conflict with the requirements for equivalence and equity. As with many other concepts in education, equivalence and equity acquire different content on different levels in the system (Haug, 2010). Popkewitz (2009) explains this as a divide between what science tells us about value-charged concepts like equivalence and individualisation, and the problem-solving of the student in practice. The principle of equivalence presupposes that the centrally defined knowledge requirements and centrally designed national tests constitute a standard for equivalence, which makes it more difficult for teachers to perform the design of autonomous support activities where they are able to make independent interpretations of national knowledge goals and requirements. Additional adjustments and individual education plans are presented as instruments for evaluating and ensuring equivalence in the policy texts, but they are not able to individualise to the fullest extent, as the standard of equivalence must simultaneously be observed.

Goal fulfilment, on the other hand, requires individualisation in the sense that each student should develop the ability to be responsible and act independently. The idea of individualisation is carried to extremes and it is necessary for students to be stimulated to develop the abilities necessary to manage their individual freedom. In this context, support activities in schools can be considered as a tool for developing individual abilities framed by the welfare design of our time. In other words,

excessive individualisation is hard to reconcile with the demands for equivalence. Individualisation and equivalence are simply two divergent values. The dilemma that teachers and students have to handle is that when the language of teaching is about participation and empowerment, while the language of policy is about stating what is given as the stable and consensually defined reality (Popkewitz, 2009).

Educational Alliances as Support for Teaching and Learning

The way of perceiving the current market-oriented governance, framed by laws and regulations, i.e., regulatory support activities interpreted and explained by general advice, as a linear relation, teachers as well as students are assumed to be actors in a perfectly rational process. Provided that teachers and students partake in their roles in this setting, goal achievement, understood as attaining the minimum knowledge requirement, will be achieved. However, in the practice of schooling, it is obvious that students who avoid being defined as in need of support activities, are able to develop in stronger and more independent ways about their experiences of school work. Our study from the educational practice shows that students with experience of being dependent on the teacher's support in order to succeed, gain new insights from listening to their peers who are perceived as successful. This is also a kind of support activity, bringing forth the insight that similarities between different students' perceptions of school quality were stronger than the differences. Educational alliances can thus create new opportunities for students to put past failures behind them and look forward to the future. The example shows, that in order to experience school assignments as meaningful, students need to feel confident both in their peers and in the learning environment.

This is a different solution from the NAE's (2014a) proposal to investigate the individual students' needs of support as a starting point. This procedure would endanger the students as at risk of being defined as problem students who first must be excluded in order to be included in the learning environment. The work of creating a genuine inclusive learning environment, entails those activities and adjustments must be implemented in the classroom. There is also a contradiction when goal-oriented knowledge requirements are introduced in situations where students are expected to work with process-oriented tasks.

Finally, the policy and practice nexus in the initial quote in this chapter, underlines the complexity in defining value-charged policy concepts and predict how the actors will operate in practice, especially when re-regulations constantly are made in the market. On the other hand, knowledge of the principles of the marketplace's design and how it is regulated, provides increased opportunities for teachers and students to be active participants in order to control and take responsibility for their opportunities. Support activities, understood in the context where they appear, entails the possibility to create meaningful content for each actor in the policy and practice nexus of inclusion.

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