

“Quality Problems” in Swedish Municipal Adult Education

The Micropolitics of Quality Construed in the Audit Society



Linköping Studies in Behavioural Science No. 243

“Quality Problems” in Swedish Municipal Adult Education

The Micropolitics of Quality Construed in the
Audit Society

Johanna Mufic



Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning
Faculty of Educational Sciences
Linköpings universitet, SE-581 83 Linköping, Sweden
Linköping 2022

© Johanna Mufic, 2022

[CC-BY-NC](#)

Printed in Sweden by: LiU-tryck, Linköping 2022

ISBN 978-91-7929-357-4 (print)

ISBN 978-91-7929-358-1 (PDF)

<https://doi.org/10.3384/9789179293581>

ISSN 1654-2029

Abstract

The aim of this thesis was to analyze and critically scrutinize how quality is construed in an audit process in Swedish Municipal Adult Education (MAE) and the discursive effects. Drawing on adult education policy documents and observations of a quality audit process, as well as the Swedish Schools Inspectorate's (SSI) Day, this study also contributes to the uncharted field of how the micropolitics of "quality" is being produced in the Audit society within adult education. By applying Carol Bacchi's post-structural, Foucault-influenced 'What's the "problem" represented to be?' approach, it became possible to analyze the politics of "quality" on a micro level. The results indicate that quality seems to be construed as a 'lack' or a 'problem' in Swedish MAE policy and during the quality audit that SSI carried out in MAE. Moreover, principals, teachers and heads of education seem to be held responsible for this lack as the increased need for flexibility and individualization is stressed as a solution to the 'quality problem'. There also seems to be an ambiguity of how quality should be addressed, defined, audited, and produced in MAE, as the SSI seem to struggle with making quality measurable for it to be auditable. The analysis shed light on two different logics that underpin the way that quality is construed; on the one hand, it is construed as something elusive that can be used to pinpoint quality in teaching and schools. On the other hand, it is construed as something quantitative and limiting that has effects on what can be said and done in MAE. There also seems to be a hierarchy between different 'problems' during the SSI's audit of MAE which also have consequences for what can be said and done about quality in this context.

Keywords: Adult Education, Governing, Swedish Schools Inspectorate, Quality, WPR-approach

Sammanfattning

Syftet med denna avhandling var att analysera och kritiskt utforska hur kvalitet konstrueras i en granskningsprocess i svensk kommunal vuxenutbildning (komvux). Det empiriska materialet bestod av samtida vuxenutbildningspolicydokument, observationer av en kvalitetsgranskningsprocess av komux som utfördes av Skolinspektionen och en observation av Skolinspektionens dag. Avhandlingen fokus guidades av frågan: Hur mikropolitiken om "kvalitet" produceras i vuxenutbildning inom granskningssamhället. Därmed bidrar avhandlingen till det ännu utforskade fältet kring effekterna av mötet mellan komvux, Skolinspektionen och kvalitetsbegreppet. För att kunna analysera och kritiskt utforska hur kvalitet producerades på mikronivå användes Carol Bacchis (2009) poststrukturella, Foucault-influerade "Vad är problemet representerat att vara? (WPR)-applikation. Resultaten indikerar att kvalitet verkar konstrueras som en "brist" eller som ett "problem" i vuxenutbildningspolicy och under Skolinspektionens kvalitetsgranskning och Skolinspektionens dag. Dessutom verkar huvudmän, rektorer och lärare hållas ansvariga för dessa kvalitetsbrister när ökad flexibilitet och individanpassning produceras som en lösning på "kvalitetsproblemet" i komvux. När det pratas om kvalitet i dessa sammanhang så görs det också ofta i ambivalenta termer i relation till hur kvalitet ska adresseras, definieras, granskas och omsättas i komvux. Under Skolinspektionens dag framkommer det att Skolinspektionen å ena sidan producerar kvalitet som något mätbart som är lätt att arbeta med. Men å andra sidan produceras kvalitet också som något mer kvalitativt och svårmeasurable som pågår bakom det som kommunerna visar upp för Skolinspektionen under kvalitetsgranskningar. Alla dessa olika sätt som kvalitet produceras på får konsekvenser för vad som kan tänkas, sägas och göras i vuxenutbildning. Det förefaller också finnas någon form av hierarki mellan de problemformuleringar som framkommer i mötet mellan Skolinspektionen, komvux och policy, vilket gör att vissa aspekter och vissa röster faller bort eftersom de inte inryms inom kvalitetsgranskningens ram.

Nyckelord: Kvalitet, Skolinspektion, Styrning, WPR-applikation, Vuxenutbildning

Acknowledgement

Even though only a single name appears on the cover of this thesis, it has been far from a one-woman job. I am so very grateful that I have been allowed to take this journey. I would like to send my eternal gratitude and regard to my awesome supervisors, Andreas Fejes and Song-ee Ahn, for teaching me how to navigate academia and for all their challenging critiques. Special thanks to Diana Holmqvist and Johanna Köpsén. I am so very grateful for all the support and insights you have given me about how things really are and work. I am also very grateful for being a part of the 'best cohort', together with Maria Ariazaa Hult, Tobias Lasse Karlsson and Filippa Millenberg. It has been an honour to pursue a PhD together with you. Moreover, I want to thank all my colleagues, anonymous reviewers and people I met along the journey who have all supported, guided, and inspired me. I also want to express my gratitude to Gun-Britt Wärvik and Linda Rönnerberg for their valuable comments and insights.

I am also very grateful to all my family, relatives, and friends! You mean the world to me, and I love you to the moon and back! ♡

Johanna Mufic
Vancouver, April 28, 2022

List of papers

- I. Mufic, J., & Fejes, A. (2022). 'Lack of Quality in Swedish Municipal Adult Education: A Policy Study', *Journal of Education Policy*, 37(2), 269-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1817567>
- II. Mufic, J. (2022). 'Measurable but not quantifiable': The Swedish Schools Inspectorate on construing "quality" as "auditable", *The International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 41(2), 199-211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2022.2041747>
- III. Mufic, J. (2022). Discursive effects of "quality" talk during a quality audit in Swedish municipal adult education, *The Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2022.2042844>
- IV. Mufic, J. (2022). 'And suddenly, it's not that flexible anymore!': Discursive effects in talk by officials and staff about distance education, Submitted to journal.

Table of contents

- Abstract..... iii
- Sammanfattning..... v
- Acknowledgement vi
- List of papers vii
- Table of contents ix
- Introduction..... 11
 - Aim and research questions 14
 - The form and structure of the thesis..... 15
- Previous research 16
 - Quality in the Audit society 16
 - Quality audit processes 19
 - Audits and audit concepts: indicators and transparency* 19
 - Outcomes and effects of quality audit processes* 21
 - Quality in (adult) education 23
 - In summary: From Audit society to quality control 26
- Background..... 28
 - Swedish adult education and governing by auditing..... 28
 - The structure of MAE 30
 - Flexibility and individualization* 31
 - MAE and the market*..... 32
 - The structure of SSI..... 33
 - Regular supervisions and quality audits in MAE* 33
- Theoretical considerations 36
 - What’s the problem represented to be? 36
 - Situating the WPR approach in a wider theoretical discussion 36
 - A post-structural approach to policy 38
 - WPR and its three key assumptions 39
- Methodological considerations 42
 - Introducing the three policy sites 42
 - Site I: Policy and instructional documents* 43
 - Site II: Quality audit* 44
 - Site III: the SSI conference* 47
 - Methodological considerations: observing, audio recording and transcribing 48
 - Ethical considerations 49
 - Applying and operationalizing the WPR approach 50
 - Q1: What’s the “problem” represented to be in, in a specific policy or policies?*..... 52
 - Q2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?* 53

Q3: <i>How has this representation of the “problem” come about?</i>	
55	
Q4: <i>What is left unproblematic in this “problem” representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?</i>	56
Q5: <i>What effects are produced in this representation of the “problem”?</i>	57
Q6: <i>How and where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted or replaced?</i>	59
<i>Questions of self-reflexivity (Step 7).....</i>	59
Findings	61
Article I: ‘Lack of quality in adult education: A policy study’	61
Article II: ‘Measurable but not quantifiable’: The Swedish Schools Inspectorate on construing “quality” as “auditable”	63
Article III: Discursive effects of “quality” talk during a quality audit in Swedish municipal adult education	65
Article IV: ‘And suddenly it’s not that flexible anymore’: Discursive effects in talk by officials and staff about distance education	67
Discussion	70
The micropolitics of “quality” construed in the Audit society	70
“Quality problems” and their “solutions”	70
Governing in the name of “quality”	72
Quality audit processes as “quality” producers	74
Reflections on reflexivity (Step 7)	77
Contribution and suggestions for continued research.....	80
References.....	82
Appendix 1: Information about the study	94
Appendix 2: Consent	95

Chapter 1

'Quality is to a product what character is to a man.'

Heinz Tomato Ketchup

Introduction

If Jane Austin were to write a book about quality in the 21st century, she would perhaps have started with the following sentence: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a society in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of educational quality'. Regardless of how accurate this statement is (or whether it can be applied to an educational context or not), it can, without doubt, be argued that "quality"¹ has become an increasingly important topic in education systems around the world (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). Quality is expected globally, and the quality discourse seems to encompass almost all aspects of our lives (Bornemark, 2018) as we both demand and look for quality everywhere (Dahler-Larsen, 2019).

One example of this comes from the organizational world where companies, as well as schools and hospitals, are expected to provide, define, and hold themselves and others accountable for quality. Another example is how schools' main task, which previously was to bring education, democracy and equality, may now be to achieve and uphold quality (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). Subsequently, the concept of quality can seemingly unproblematically replace a lot of other concepts. However, even though many organizations work with quality daily, the concept is often referred to as something opaque and vague (Bornemark, 2018; Dahler-Larsen, 2019). In line with previous research, it can be argued that quality is a highly demanded, yet elusive concept in contemporary societies around the world. Put differently, we seem to be in the middle of an ongoing "search" or "chase" for quality.

And even though politicians and policymakers seem to agree on quality

¹ Within the WPR approach quotation marks ["quality"] are used to signal how certain concepts are being produced as specific kind of concepts (Bacchi, 2009). Hence, the focus is not to try to define quality, but rather scrutinize how the concept is being produced. However, quotation marks will only appear the first time concepts such as "quality" and "problem" are mentioned in a section in order to make the text more readable.

as something that both education systems and the rest of society need more of, it still seems to be left undefined in policy (OECD, 2018, 2019; World Bank, 2018). Instead, most of the focus appears to be on how to increase quality, as it is often construed² as a “lack” or as a “problem”, both in national and transnational policy (Education, 2019:06; Ministry of Education, 2018:71). And as Dahler-Larsen (2019) argues, the concept is closely linked to governing and questions of power, as the practice of pointing something out as a “quality issue” is quite an effective way of mobilizing people.

Quality, although often left undefined, seems to have attained the status of something that is a “common good”, which makes it hard to object to (Cottle & Alexander, 2012; Hunkin, 2019; Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm, & Simola, 2011; Rudoe, 2020). On the one hand, the need for more quality is stressed in policy and organizations, and various resources such as time and money are invested in order to obtain it. On the other hand, it is argued that the chase for quality has created an ‘evaluation monster’ (Lindgren, 2014), as well as an additional ‘paperwork-focused’ reality, where only things that can be documented and measured can exist (Bornemark, 2018). In contexts like these, it appears impossible to talk about quality if it is not measured or documented. Such situations raise questions about how these activities affect the people involved in these systems. The use of concepts such as quality is not neutral, and it does indeed have effects of different sorts (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). We need more knowledge about what these effects are (Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011).

One process where such effects can be studied is auditing of educational systems. Hence, as Power (1997) claims that we live in an Audit society where issues of quality are often discussed around inspections and accountability, audit practices and rituals of verification play an important role in construing the concept of quality (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). Not only is the concept of quality positively loaded and therefore hard to criticize, but it is also open and flexible (Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Mufic & Fejes, 2022; Power, 1997). Subsequently, ‘metrics and other forms of documentation have such a wide space for not only measuring quality but, in fact, also *defining* what it means’ (Dahler-Larsen, 2019, p. 11). The act of measuring and auditing quality is performative as it produces in practice what these processes measure and inspect (Butler, 2010). In other words, definitions of quality

² In this thesis, “construed” and “produced” are used as synonyms in order to create some variation.

may be produced in the quality measurement and audit. Therefore, quality audit processes should be studied in detail as they have effects on what can be said and done about quality issues in educational contexts. This notion can be exemplified by the extensive focus on auditing activities in educational systems around the world, where the goal seems to be to find, measure and evaluate the elusive phenomenon (Dahler-Larsen, 2019).

And as Power (1997) points out, there seems to be a link between the increasingly New Public Management (NPM) influenced society and the growing demand for audits. As an effect of the pursuit of quality in education, almost all educational systems regularly undergo some kind of inspection or audit. One example of how demands for more and different kinds of audits are being formulated in policy can be found in the Swedish municipal adult education system (MAE). In MAE, it is the municipality that is responsible for the educational quality, regardless of whether it is outsourced or run by the municipality itself. Subsequently, issues of quality are raised in several instances, as the municipal is responsible for following up on the quality of the education that the external providers deliver as well as the quality of the courses that the municipality organizes itself. Activities that entail a quality focus in MAE are, among others, the procurement process, the organization of systematic quality work, and quality audits.

Even though quality is audited throughout the whole Swedish school system, MAE stands out, not only because it is heavily marketized but also because it is organized and audited differently. In Sweden, it is the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SSI) that audits the quality of adult education by commission from the State. More specifically, the Education Act (2010:800, chp. 24 §19) stipulates that: 'SSI shall examine the quality of education and other activities that are under its supervision or under the supervision of a municipality...' The agency's role in the production of the quality concept is actualized, since it has to interpret national policy to carry out its inspections (Mufic, 2022b).

The focus of these quality audits in MAE is often to point out deficiencies and areas for development. More specifically, MAE has been criticized for its inefficiency to fulfil labour demands and students' needs (Bjursell, Chaib, Falkner, & Ludvigsson, 2015), shortcomings when it comes to individualization and flexibility of the education, lack of documentation, as well as the challenge to prepare students for entering the labour market or the transition to further studies (Education, 2019:06; Ministry of Education, 2018:71; SSI, 2019). Concurrent with these demands of increased quality in

adult education, the need for more audits and quality controls is also stressed in policy as one of the “solutions” to MAE’s “quality problems”.

As the SSI is tasked with reviewing quality, it also takes an active part in shaping the seemingly undefined concept. Therefore, these auditing practices have consequences for both school personnel and students that are involved. Subsequently, it becomes important and relevant to question what problems the quality audits are a solution to? And even though both quality and audit practices have been studied before, these two phenomena are brought together in a new way in this thesis, focusing on a quality audit process in municipal adult education, a so-far uncharted area. As Dahler-Larsen (2019, p. 4) points out, ‘we are still lacking an academic analysis of the politics of quality itself’. Against this background, this thesis aims to critically scrutinize the micropolitics of quality by focusing on how quality is construed in policy proposals and during a quality audit process³ that concerns MAE, as well as the discursive effects of such constructs.

Aim and research questions

This thesis aims to critically scrutinize the micropolitics of quality as construed in adult education in the Audit society. By focusing on how quality is produced in policy proposals and in an MAE quality audit process, it also interrogates the discursive effects of such constructs.

The study departs from the overarching question, i.e. *How is the micropolitics of “quality” in adult education construed in the Audit society?* into the three following sub-questions:

- How is “quality” construed in policy proposals that concern adult education and what are the discursive effects? (Article I)
- How is “quality” construed during the SSI day and what are the discursive effects? (Article II)
- How is “quality” construed in school personnel’s talk during a quality audit conducted by the SSI and what are the discursive effects? (Article III-IV)

³ In this thesis, the concept “quality audit process” is used to refer to several audit contexts and practices, such as policy proposals, an SSI conference, and a quality audit focused on flexibility and individualization that was conducted by SSI in MAE.

The form and structure of the thesis

The following chapters will cover previous research (chapter 2) and the background (chapter 3). This is followed by two sections that cover the theoretical framework (chapter 4), as well as methodological considerations (chapter 5). In chapter 6, the findings of this thesis are summarized and analyzed. And in the final chapter (7), the findings are discussed in relation to previous research. Here, a discussion about the implications of this study's design, as well as theoretical reflexivity, is also included. In the appendix, an information letter about the study and a consent document are attached.

Chapter 2

'Quality assurance is a horrible word!'

Jonna Bornemark

Previous research

The following section focuses on three different research fields relevant to the aim of the thesis: *Quality in the Audit society*, *Quality audit processes* and *Quality and (adult) education*. First, research that discusses quality in relation to Power's (1997) concept, the Audit society, will be introduced. Here, quality is discussed in relation to New Public Management (NPM) trends and questions of governing. Second, research that concerns quality in audit processes will be highlighted. In such research, quality is discussed in relation to both international and national research about audits and their effects and impacts. Third and finally, research about quality in both international and national research about (adult) education will be presented. In all the three different research areas, the focus is first on international research and then on Swedish research to give an understanding of how quality is discussed within these fields. Consequently, this chapter aims to give the reader an overview of the different research areas that relate to the thesis. Moreover, it provides a foundation for writing the dissertation in a context, which constitutes a precondition for discussing the results of the thesis.

Quality in the Audit society

According to Power (1997, p. 5), the Audit society is a society 'which has come to understand the solution to many of its problems in terms of audit'. Note that audits, as Power understands them, are not passive phenomena but rather active processes that have side effects as they shape performance in organizations and societies. Moreover, an audit is not an isolated activity as it takes place in a network of collective negotiations (Power, 1995, 2000). When it comes to a definition of the concepts of audit and Audit society, Power (2000, p. 116) points out that 'the relation between auditing, evaluation and inspection remains far from clear'. Put differently, the definition of audit remains dynamic, vague, and opaque within the Audit society.

The Audit society can also be described as a global phenomenon, which can be related to several changes in society and which has consequences; not only for the public sector but also for the way that educational systems are being organized and operated (Forsberg, 2014; Power, 1997). As a consequence of the critique against the public sector as too costly and ineffective, new models of an NPM-influenced steering by objectives were introduced in the 1990s. The expanded organizational importance of auditing practices has been attributed by many scholars to the implementation of neoliberal ideals of governance, control, and accountability (Miller & Power, 2013; Miller & Rose, 1990). However, this new way of governing from a distance also raised new questions about legitimacy and about how one could know that things were done in the right way (Forsberg, 2014). In other words, the Audit society with its audit explosions can be seen as a lack of trust or confidence in the governing and steering of society (Power, 2000). According to several scholars, NPM-influenced governing is underpinned by a logic that evocates audit activities (Power, 1997).

Dahler-Larsen (2019) has looked into the history of the concept of quality and connects it to Power's (1997) critique against the steady increase in audit activities. Dahler-Larsen (2019) also points out that the way in which quality is audited resembles risk management (Beck, 1992; Power, 2016) because audit activities are not only trying to evaluate processes and outcomes but also trying to prevent quality problems from happening (Harvey & Stensaker, 2008).

So not long after industrialism made it clear that quality was an aspect of human-made products, and thus became something for which someone could be held accountable, a new era was inaugurated in which the control of quality became a problematic industry itself. (Dahler-Larsen, 2019, p. 36)

According to Power (1996), the way that quality is shaped today in service organizations, as well as in educational systems, is a consequence of how quality was comprehended and controlled in industrial production. Hence, quality is construed as a problem that can be prevented through different kinds of auditing activities. As such, quality becomes something that can be made visible within an organization and then audited externally.

Organizations, as well as schools, have to undergo audits as they have to

make the organization “auditable” to live up to external demands (Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Power, 1996, 1997). In such contexts, quality is articulated as an ‘organizational recipe’ in an increasingly abstract way ‘in terms of what organizations see when looking at other organizations, at a great distance from actual products and services’ (Dahler-Larsen, 2019, p. 38). Therefore, quality documentation becomes important as it is assumed to shed light on how organizations live up to both internal and external quality demands (Lindeberg, 2007). The way to solve ‘quality problems’ in an Audit society seems to be to implement a recipe, process it and then document it in an explicit way (Dahler-Larsen, 2019). Consequently, much of the organizational work focuses on the implementation of activities that make the organization “auditable” for external auditors (Power, 1997).

According to Dahler-Larsen (2019, p. 38), ‘The corollary imaginary of a perfect social world is one where people follow handbooks, prescriptions, checklists, and standards’. However, such procedures affect societies, organizations and individuals who are involved, as the “reality” is much more complex than the corollary imaginary of the perfect social world that Dahler-Larsen describes. Hence, Lindgren (2014) even takes it so far as to call the increased burden of documentation and audit activities in contemporary quality and objective steering in the public sector the “evaluation monster”.

Power (2021) also stresses the need for more empirical and theoretical research that addresses how these audit mechanisms define, represent and intervene in the ‘performance of individuals and organizations and shape them as “auditable subjects”’ (Power, 2021, p. 27). Hence, these transnational trends, with an increasing focus on external and internal audit activities, have consequences on how MAE is being evaluated, and thus also organized and managed in Sweden. And in the light of the Audit society, it becomes possible to put the decentralization process of the 90s, that led to the development of a range of different control instruments for audit activities, in a larger context. In such settings, quality becomes a central concept as many of the audit activities are motivated by the ‘lack of quality’ in various policy documents.

Quality audit processes

Audits and audit concepts: indicators and transparency

In previous research, an audit is often referred to as an umbrella concept that encompasses many forms of activities, such as school inspection, supervision, quality audit and so on (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2016). Even though audits can be conducted in many different ways, it has been argued that the process can be defined as an audit as long as some form of monitoring activity is taking place (Ek, 2012). In most research, audits are described as a way of governing (Miller & Rose, 1990), especially governing from a distance (Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Ek, 2012; Jarl, 2012; Power, 1997). As mentioned before, there are several different kinds of audits, and they can have different focuses. Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg (2016) separate 'hard' audit activities, such as controlling specific details with no regard to the bigger context, from 'soft' audit activities, such as guidance and counselling activities.

Audits can be described as both forward- and backward-oriented at the same time, often with the overall goal to make an organization or a school more effective (Ek, 2012). Audits have also been criticized for being used as a 'universal cure all', as a solution to various "problems" and "deficiencies", especially in relation to questions about accountability and responsibility, as someone usually is held responsible for the problems (Sahlin-Andersson, 2006). An audit can have different targets and operate at different societal and organizational levels (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2016). An audit of quality in a school is not the same as an audit of a quality system that is used in a school (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2002; Strannegård & Brülde, 2013). And sometimes the focus of the audit could be to ascertain that the quality assurance system is in place, not how it is used, whether it functions or if it is useful to the organization (Ek, 2002).

To carry out audits, indicators are often introduced and developed. According to Dahler-Larsen (2008), there is a difference between a measure and an indicator, as a measure becomes an indicator depending on when and how it is used. One example of this is how a measure of customer satisfaction becomes an indicator when it is considered to be a quality aspect (Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Ek, 2002, Power, 1997). As such, an indicator could be seen as an expression of knowledge, which in turn affects what representations of measures are regarded as valuable. In previous research,

indicators have also been discussed as objects that can lock representations, which then can be spread outside the context in which they were created, which in turn makes governing from a distance possible (Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1991).

Even though audits and performance indicators have been studied in different ways (Ehren, et al., 2013; Perryman, 2006, 2009), not much attention has been given to contextual aspects of audits (Braun, et al., 2011; Carlbaum, 2016), especially when it comes to quality audit processes in adult education. However, attention has been given to the effects of governing under a 'quality regime', where responsibilities seem to be delegated to administrators (Jarl, 2012). In effect, professional groups need to compete to make their voices heard. This way of governing from a distance through audits is a way for a government to delegate tasks, and to send a message to schools about what is seen as important.

In line with how Power (1997) and Dahler-Larsen (2019) describe organizational recipes as remedies to (quality) problems, Roberts (2018) argues that transparency can be seen as a solution or a cure for organizational problems. Moreover, it is often implemented as an instrument of control and is underpinned by the assumption that it can shed light on what otherwise would be obscure or hidden. The different external audit activities that organizations have to undergo 'always involves abstraction from the context that masks as much as it reveals of the working of institutions' (Roberts, 2018, p. 54). Thus, transparency seems to become an important instrument of control in the process of making phenomenon or criteria, such as quality, auditable. In such a context, even the use of language construes what is being uncovered respectively concealed when an organization is made auditable. Or, as Strathern (2000, p. 315) puts it:

...to auditor and auditee alike, the language of assessment, in purporting to be a language that makes output transparent, hides many dimensions of the output process [...] The rhetoric of transparency appears to conceal that very process of concealment, yet in so far as 'everyone knows this', it would be hard to say it does so.

Roberts (2018) also points out that even if we cannot manage complex organizations without transparency, we cannot manage only with it.

Outcomes and effects of quality audit processes

Previous studies on audits and inspections have been concerned with the impacts and effects of audit processes (Shaw, Newton, Aitkin & Darnell, 2003; Weiner, 2002) and the implications they have for school personnel (Clapham, 2015; Page, 2015). Some studies point out that audits improve schools marginally, even though teachers regard inspectors' feedback as useful (Chapman, Cooper & Miller, 2009; Gray & Gardner, 1999). Other studies suggest that the effect of audits is inconclusive, and that the outcome is sometimes unanticipated (Ehren, Altrichter, McNamara, & O'Hara, 2013). According to de Wolf and Janssens (2007), there can be many side effects of audits, especially in competitive systems. Some examples are 'window dressing',⁴ frauds, and misunderstandings. Various international studies have also pointed out that auditors' assessments of a school or organization are treated as facts, which in turn have effects on the practices being audited (Gendron, Cooper & Townley, 2007; Hopkins et al., 1999; Thrupp, 1998). In most of these studies, attaining audibility and transparency seem to be both a prerequisite and an effect of audit practices, depending on the focus area of the specific study.

The consequences of a system where audits have been institutionalized in the form of internal and external evaluation systems have also been in focus in some studies. Leeuw and Furubo (2008) stress that evaluation systems might risk regenerating self-fulfilling evaluation practices and thus assure procedural safety, rather than regenerating question policies and implementations. Audits also carry with them 'hidden' or 'forgotten' costs, as the administrative work it takes for a school to become auditable is not included in the audit budget (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2016). According to Forssell and Ivarsson Westerberg, there is no easy way to calculate these costs, but they estimate that the school being audited probably invests the same amount of time in administrative work as the auditing authority does.

Previous research in Sweden has, to a vast extent, focused on regular supervision in elementary and upper secondary education (Carlbaum et al., 2014; Novak, 2014; Segerholm & Hult, 2018). In these studies, the need for further research, especially concerning the internal processes of how inspectors chose what to inspect and how they come to decisions, has been

⁴ Which means that organizations adapt to deliver what they think that the audit demands on a surface level (Wolf and Janssens, 2007).

stressed (Hult & Segerholm, 2016). Besides this, the need for empirical research that concerns evaluation systems at a local level, focusing on how local school actors respond to the evaluations, is also requested (Hanberger et al., 2016; Segerholm & Hult, 2018). Some research has already been carried out in that context, focusing on the process of regular supervision audits at Swedish intermediate schools (Carlbaum et al., 2014). In their study on how municipalities in Sweden cope with school inspections, Forsberg and Nordzell (2013) point out that there seems to be an ‘absolution through confession’ regime, where the municipalities need to admit that they have the problems that the SSI has identified and then promise to change and implement certain logics and processes in order to solve the problems.

Moreover, Carlbaum’s (2016) and Rönnerberg’s (2019) studies about the processes and effects of school inspection shed light on how knowledge is negotiated, and how blame and responsibility are distributed. Rönnerberg (2014) has also investigated the effects of the SSI’s policy work and the different tools of inspection. Hult’s (2014) study provides knowledge about the constitutive effects on school inspection. Novak and Carlbaum (2017) have studied the ‘juridification’ of the education system.

Issues of quality have been implicitly present in many of the studies that focused on audit activities in the Swedish school system, as the SSI’s official mission (SFS, 2011:556, 1§) ‘...is through audit of principals and activities, work to ensure that all children and students have access to an equivalent education and other activities of good quality in a safe environment’. Issues of quality have also been explicitly in focus in a recent case study that shed light on how SSI tries to base its audit activities on findings from educational research (Segerholm, Lindgren, & Judit, 2021). Although these studies overlap with the focus of this thesis, many of them are directed to audit effects of regular supervision in compulsory and upper secondary school, while this study directs its interest to quality audits in Swedish MAE.

Even though there is a lack of research about the SSI’s quality audits in MAE, quality assurance systems have been studied in Swedish Vocational Education and Training (VET) (Wärvik, 2013). In this context, it is contended that even though the aim was to increase quality through the standardization of the content and assessment of adult education, the implementation of the quality assurance scheme also had consequences for VET teachers. In line with the standardization of the concept of individualization, the quality assurance scheme affected how teachers were

able to approach students with multiple needs. Subsequently, a tension between the standardized meaning of individualization and the VET teachers' understanding and practice of the concept was created. However, as Wärvik also points out, 'the scheme also has the potential to govern new relations in teachers' work by creating new links between knowledge, adult education policy, management, teachers and students' (Wärvik, 2013, p. 122).

In another study about the marketization of MAE, Andersson and Muhrman (2021) show that quality assurance processes play a central role in the procurement process where municipalities outsource MAE to external providers (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019; Holmqvist, 2021; Holmqvist, Fejes, & Nylander, 2020; Muhrman & Andersson, 2021). In such settings, quality criteria (or indicators) can be used as a way for a municipality to keep control of its provision as it can choose to focus on quality and/or instead of price during a procurement process (Holmqvist, 2021). Developing such criteria can be a complex process and, subsequently, definitions of quality, as well as different quality indicators and/or criteria, differ between municipalities (Forkby & Höjer, 2008; Holmqvist et al., 2020).

Quality in (adult) education

As Dahler-Larsen (2019, p. 2) points out, quality has 'invaded the public space' as it has become something that represents our culture and connects us as a society. From this point of view, quality is described as a meta-discourse, or as a 'mirror in which we should see our existence' (p.1). It has also been pointed out that quality is a concept that is often mystified (Bianco-Ramirez, 2015) and that it has received a 'common-sense' status in educational settings (Cottle & Alexander, 2012, p. 632). In addition, it is argued that schools, which previously were supposed to provide education and equality, may now be primarily focused on providing quality (Dahler-Larsen, 2019).

The standard way of thinking about the topic of quality seems to have it that the more evaluations, audits, and follow-ups the better (Skourdumbis, 2019; Ozga et al., 2011). Therefore, as Delaney (2018) points out, quality seems to be defined through the choice of measure. Hence, local quality values risk being lost, as it is the official metrics that are in focus and thus, quality becomes increasingly reduced to figures and numbers (Rudoe, 2020).

When Egetenmeyer and Käßplinger (2011) scrutinize the history of the concept, they contend that the concept of quality emerged in industrial and economic contexts. In those settings, “quality” was used as a way to indicate that the produced product ended up as it was intended to. Quality was not used to describe a better or outstanding product, but rather that the product did not deviate from the intended standard. When it comes to the concept of quality in educational settings, Egetenmeyer and Käßplinger (2011, p. 25) note:

...the predominance of quality and management even within the educational debate is a good example of the increasing predominance of economic perspectives in the perception of a “market” of adult education nowadays. It outlines to a certain degree the failure of adult education to develop its terminology and to use quality management in an economic sense.

Another study where quality is discussed in relation to the limitations of the quality assurance and audit systems in adult education is Mark’s (2004) study about stakeholders’ involvement in quality management in adult education. He argues that middle managers, teachers, and students who want to improve quality often find that it is outside their reach because of organizational limitations. Another example comes from Ethiopia, where audit processes in adult education have been criticized for being too narrow, as they only focus on learners’ participation (Assefa, 2021). The same trend can also be exemplified in Swedish adult education, where the quality follow-ups often include the employment rate of the students after their studies (Andersson & Wärvik, 2012), instead of focusing on inequalities between different groups of people.

It seems to be concluded in many international studies that neoliberal discourses and the idea of a market equalize efficiency and profit with high quality (Andersson & Wärvik, 2012; Fejes, Runesdotter & Wärvik, 2016; Gouthro, 2002; Košmerl & Mikulec, 2021; Leach, 2014). Moreover, Holmqvist et al. (2020) point out how quality becomes linked to price during such procurement processes in Swedish MAE, as low prices sometimes become related to low quality. And in effect, ‘good quality’ in education seems to be possible to relate to a specific price that the municipality itself can decide’. In relation, Bjursell (2016) highlights that economic metaphors are most dominant, and thus argues that the systematic quality work in Swedish MAE can be ‘understood as driven by economic theories’ (p. 191).

Moreover, Lassnigg (2011), by drawing on Austrian adult education policy, contends that quality of provision seems to be guided by the pursuit of the lowest possible cost. And by grounding her analysis on neoliberal adult education policy in New Zealand, Walker (2008) concludes that while one might think that the implementation of the free-market model would lead to less government involvement, the opposite is true: 'Neoliberal policies intensify assessment norms and outcome requirements, calling for increased surveillance and monitoring to ensure quality, efficiency, and accountability' (Walker, 2008, p. 55).

However, in previous research, there is also a call for more auditing activities. This can be exemplified by Getnet Abate's and Yirga Adamu's (2022) study of collaboration among different sectors in adult education in Ethiopia. As some adult education programmes have not yet been successfully implemented, they stress the need for more committed Government and stakeholders, as well as a 'strong programme monitoring and evaluation, supported by a clear accountability study' (p. 1). Hence, the emphasis on accountability and auditing seems to be recommended as a strategy for enforcing changes, both in policy and research in some cases (Black, Balatti, & Falk, 2012; Viennet & Pont, 2017). The same notion is stressed in Leach's (2014) study about changes in adult education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand and Chile (Didier, 2018).

Both in research and policy, the concept of quality is often preceded by enhancing words (high quality, good quality) or diminishing words (decreasing quality, bad quality) (Armstrong, 2007). In her study about quality assumptions in adult education in the UK, Armstrong includes both educators' and students' voices. According to her study, students were clear about the differences between good and bad quality teaching and connected it to the educators' interpersonal skills. However, this was not included in the framework for assessing and evaluating quality in adult education. Armstrong connects it to the adage of 'what gets measured gets managed' (p. 244). Christophersen, Elstad, and Turmo (2011) stress that accountability thinking influences the design of quality systems in integration policies in Norway. They also point out that there seems to be a lack of quality in the teaching of adult immigrants. And in line with Armstrong (2000, 2007), they conclude that even though the quality of relations in the classroom is affecting the improvement work positively, it is not audited or accounted for. Moreover, Christophersen, et al. (2011) explain that the accountability-influenced system puts pressure on adult education leaders as they are held

responsible for clear leadership. This goes in line with Egetenmeyer's and K pplinger's (2011) observation that quality discourses are organization-focused rather than person-focused.

In summary: From Audit society to quality control

By putting together previous research on quality, the Audit society, audit processes and adult education, it became possible to shed light on how the concept of quality is discussed in these different fields. The compiling of these sources made it possible to put the thesis's scope in a larger context by relating it to previous international and national research. By illuminating the research that has already been carried out, it became possible to outline what the contribution of this thesis will be.

In summary, there seems to be a constant search and quest for quality in the different settings included in this section. Quality is frequently described as something both broad and versatile by many scholars. It is also often addressed in binary terms as either being shaped by local values or by external official figures and numbers. Subsequently, there seems to be a tension between the quantifiable aspects of the quality concept and the softer, more nuanced local approaches to it. In previous research, it also seems to be concluded that the risk that the concept becomes reduced to metrics and numbers is steadily increased, especially within the Audit society, where the aim seems to be to "capture" quality in different audit processes in order to improve it. Even though there much research about quality in education, research about quality audits in educational settings seems to be less abundant and even scarcer when it comes to quality audit processes in Swedish adult education. Moreover, the discussion about who quality and educational quality is meant for seems to be lacking, and 'the objectives and the content of adult education are not reflected in their meaning' (Egetenmeyer & K pplinger, 2011, p. 27).

However, even though quality gets so much attention and seems to be taken for granted, it is still described as something that is being mystified and, at the same time, as being reduced. As Dahler-Larsen (2019, p. 4) points out, '...we are still lacking an academic analysis of the politics of quality itself' as the mechanisms of audits and their effects are still an uncharted field (Power, 2021). Hence, Marco-institutional theories can explain *why* auditing practices happen but not *how* they happen or *why* they seem to have practice shifting performativity (Marti & Gond, 2019). According to

Power (2021), it takes a more micro-processual analysis to shed light on how adoption happens and reproduces. Put differently, quality seems to both enable and obstruct different behaviours and ways of thinking in organizations. This begs the question, what constructs of quality are at play in Swedish adult education, and what are their effects? It is in these questions that this thesis takes its point of departure, as it aims to contribute to critically scrutinizing quality issues in audit processes in MAE. By that, it answers Dahler-Larsen's (2019) and Power's (2021) call for an academic analysis of the micro-politics of quality.

Chapter 3

'Guarantee quality – always and everywhere'

Hermods

Background

This chapter will provide a bird's eye view of some of the policy changes that underpin the way that quality is construed in contemporary adult education. Moreover, it will briefly address the structure of MAE and SSI. By situating the concept of quality in relation to past and present' events, it becomes possible to trace how representations of "quality" have come about.

Swedish adult education and governing by auditing

The first change that will be in focus is the initiatives for decentralization that took place in the 90s, where educational governance changed from a centralized to a decentralized model, thus moving the exertion of control and power from a national to a sub-national level. In other words, from the State to the municipality. The municipality became the primary authority for its schools (Lundahl, 2002), and new routines for steering were implemented (Skr, 1996/97:112). Additionally, the National Agency of Education (NAE) was introduced. As the goal was information governing, NAE had the ambition to conduct detailed and encompassing evaluations to boost reflection among schools and practitioners. However, because the loosely structured-oriented approach appeared to be complex to use (Forsberg & Nordzell, 2013), many municipalities did not implement it (Nytell, 2006). As a response to politicians' demand for more accountability and auditing activities, a thematic quality audit was introduced in 1999. That initiative has been described as a way to avoid the more accountability-oriented mode of governing and auditing (Ekholm, 2012), but the model was not approved by the Government as it was regarded as not being politically useful (Gustafsson et al., 2014).

The second change was the Adult Education Initiative (AEI) 1997-2002, a reform that has been considered as closely linked to the changed educational system (Rubenson, 2001). The AEI was an extensive initiative from the State to reduce unemployment and reshape adult education. Yet, it has been contended that the very same changes left the MAE defenceless to

the forces of the economic market (Andersson & Wärvik, 2012; Henning Loeb, 2007).

The third change was the introduction of the SSI that took place in 2008. The authority aimed to improve equivalence on a national level (Rönnberg, 2014). The SSI overtook the NAE's audit commissions and began to supervise schools by focusing on negative deviations from rules and regulations (Rönnberg, Lindgren, & Segerholm, 2013). Even though the reformed educational system was intended to be decentralized, the State's influence increased over the years. Hence, increasingly more attention was given to inspecting and auditing activities. Consequently, the State apparatus became active in terms of diverse audits, evaluations and reviews of how adult education is operated by the municipality.

Bergh's (2010) thesis, with its focus on quality, shed light on the consequences of the decentralization of the 90s. He points out that the goal- and result-oriented approach was introduced in relation to the shift and was conceptualized, together with words like quality, result and goal achievement, in national policy. The municipality also became active in a process of evaluation of its own education in forms of local quality work that should be oriented towards the goals that are formulated in the Education Act, as well as other national policy documents such as the curriculum and syllabus (Muhrman & Andersson, 2021; SFS, 2010:800; SNAE, 2017). This process has been described as a slow re-centralization that is taking place within a quality regime (Nytell, 2006).

The fourth change concerns the increased market orientation in MAE. As the municipality got the right to arrange the structure of MAE, the organization of adult education varies considerably at a sub-national level in Sweden. Through procurement, municipalities can contract for-profit and non-profit providers to deliver courses, or the municipalities can deliver the courses themselves, or a combination of both (Holmqvist et al., 2020). Consequently, as Sweden's 290 municipalities vary both in size, organization, population, economy and geographic placement, the pre-requisites for enabling students to 'develop their knowledge and skills' (SFS, 2010:800) vary significantly.

In summary, as the exertion of power and control was moved from the State to the municipality, and as the pre-requisites for managing adult education differ, MAE is organized differently throughout the country. A shift to more steering by an objectives-oriented system increased the need to follow up and audit adult education. Thus, auditing became a way for the

State to govern the decentralized educational system. In such a context, where the search and pursuit of quality are in focus, both internal and external audit processes become central. Consequently, the next section will deal with the structure of MAE and SSI, and then focus on audit processes from both an international and a local perspective.

The structure of MAE

The overall goal of MAE 'is to enable students to develop their knowledge and skills to strengthen their position in working and community life and promote their personal development' (SFS, 2010:800; Swedish National Agency for Education [SNAE], 2017). More specifically, the goals are to:

- help students who previously failed in their schooling
- shape individuals who can partake in life as active democratic citizens
- prepare students for the labour market

The municipality is responsible for fulfilling these goals, as well as for managing the education in a way that provides students with flexible and individualized teaching (SFS, 2010:800). These tasks should be realized with the help of an individual student plan (ISP) (SSI, 2019). Every student has an ISP, which contains information about the goal of the student's studies, as well as which courses the students will take to reach the goal.

MAE consists of different parts and is also provided at different levels. Basic adult education equates to compulsory school while municipal adult education at the upper secondary level equates to upper secondary school. As well as that, Swedish for Immigrants (sfi) is for newly-arrived students who need to learn the Swedish language, and Education for adults with intellectual impairment is also included within the framework of MAE. All of these study forms have their own syllabus. Altogether, MAE encompasses approximately 400,000 students (SNAE, 2021b) compared to 359,700 students enrolled in upper secondary school (SNAE, 2021a). MAE is a study form that involves many people, not only students but also teachers, study counsellors and principals, amongst others. The students are often described as heterogenous in contemporary policy (Mufic & Fejes, 2022) in terms of background, such as age, ethnicity, study motivation and socio-economic circumstances. There are no tuition fees in MAE (Muhрман &

Andersson, 2021).

MAE has a unified curriculum (SNAE, 2017). It is often called a “second chance” in education policy (Bjursell et al., 2015), as it targets the least educated individuals in society (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019). Put differently, MAE could be seen as a complementary form of school for adults who need to complete their primary school or upper secondary school education. Additionally, adult education is available for adults who want to change their careers or continue with university studies and therefore need to extend their eligibility. Even though both MAE and the upper secondary school prepare students for continuous studies, the way that courses are provided differs. In MAE, all courses should have continuous admission, and they can be offered either in-house, distance-based, or in a hybrid, blended version of both. Courses can also be studied during the daytime or in the evening.

Since the principal and responsible municipal authority⁵ remains accountable for the educational quality, regardless of who is offering the courses, issues of quality are raised in several instances in MAE. This is especially the case when it comes to systematic quality work, a process that the SNAE (2021c) describes as the constant work of developing the quality of the organization. This process has been divided into different phases and connected to the following questions ‘Where are we?’, ‘How do we do what we do?’, and ‘How does it happen?’ Compared to the rest of the school system, systematic quality work is less formalized and more decentralized in MAE because it is up to the municipality to figure out and organize how to follow up quality, and how to hold both itself and external providers accountable for it.

Flexibility and individualization

In contrast with compulsory school, the importance of flexibility and individualization is stressed in adult education. The definitions of flexibility and individualization sometimes vary, but in general, flexibility means the way that MAE is organized in terms of course access, distance-based and school-based education (SSI, 2019). This means that courses should be offered continually during the year so that the students do not have to wait longer than a few weeks to start a course. Individualization often means that the education should be didactically adaptable to the students’ different

⁵ In this thesis, “responsible municipal authority” and heads of education are used synonymously as translation for “huvudman”.

backgrounds and life circumstances (Swedish Institute for Educational Research, 2019).

And as previously mentioned, MAE is organized differently to the rest of the school system, as it is the municipal authority that remains responsible for the education, even if it is outsourced to external providers. The fact that education is being outsourced while the principal remains accountable has different consequences for how MAE is organized. One example of such a consequence is that an MAE principal in one municipality is still responsible for teachers at an external provider that offers courses on behalf of the municipality. Hence, if courses are offered over a distance, the external provider could be based anywhere in Sweden. The very same system has effects on external providers as well, as they could have students taking their courses in different places in Sweden. Moreover, as the procurement process and the tenders are organized and stipulated differently in different municipalities, these students study at the same external providers but on different terms, depending on the specific agreement their municipality has with the external provider.

MAE and the market

The way that different adult education providers organize their education also differs. Therefore, the heavy marketization in the Swedish adult education system sets the conditions for adult education providers. The market-oriented system has been criticized by many scholars (Beach & Carlson, 2004; Beach, 2004; Bjursell, 2016), as it is assumed to make principals like business leaders, and standardize teachers (Fejes et al, 2016). More specifically, the procurement process influences both students, teachers, and principals, as well as the way that adult education is organized. Hence, as it is up to each municipality to organize adult education the way it sees fit, the equality differs in Sweden's 290 municipalities. It has also been pointed out that competition is at play when municipalities outsource some or all of MAE to external providers (Holmqvist, 2022).

Procurement is used by municipalities to purchase education from external providers such as private companies, folk high schools (FHS), study associations and so on (Fejes & Holmqvist, 2019). The municipality initiates the process by writing a contract where the needs and requirements are stipulated (Holmqvist, 2022). The contract also contains information about how the different bids will be evaluated by price, quality criteria or a mix of

both. The providers then submit tenders where they explain what they can offer at what price. Thereafter, the municipality handles the offers and announces the winner. The length of the contracts varies between municipalities but is seldomly longer than a few years. This means that the procurement process takes a lot of time for both the municipalities and the external providers. It also leads to a sense of uncertainty for external providers as there are no guarantees that they will be able to continue to deliver courses to the municipality.

The structure of SSI

The Swedish School Inspection (SSI) audits and inspects schools, by commission from the State. It is tasked by the Swedish State to ensure ‘every student’s right to quality education and equal opportunities to reach the goals of education’ (Carlbaum, 2016, p. 137). The SSI also handles complaints from pupils, parents, and school personnel (e.g., concerning inequalities and bullying), issuing licenses for independent schools, and conducting regular supervisory audits and quality audits (Segerholm & Hult, 2018). These activities originate from the SSI’s interpretation of national documents, in particular the Education Act (SFS, 2010:800). To provide the SSI with diverse knowledge and skills, people with varied qualifications are recruited (Carlbaum et al., 2014; Segerholm & Hult, 2018). Some have a background in law or education, either as former teachers or principals, and so forth, or as academics. Others have a more general knowledge of inspection or public administration, such as political scientists. Gustafsson et al. (2014) also note that school inspection has mainly been used to facilitate reforms and shifts in education, and nowadays it deals with quality, flexibility and individualization problems.

Regular supervisions and quality audits in MAE

The SSI conducts two kinds of audits in the MAE, namely regular supervision, and quality audits. These can be described as embodied audits as the school inspectors visit the municipality they inspect. When it comes to MAE, it is the municipality that is audited and not the school, in contrast to compulsory education where all schools are inspected.⁶ Consequently, the

⁶ This is about to change as the Government recently decided that adult education also will be audited on a school level because: ‘The quality in adult education needs to improve.’ (SSI, 2021b).

audits have a slightly different focus, especially when it comes to systematic quality work, as the SSI inspects how the municipality deals with the issue and not the systematic quality work in itself. The agency's role in producing the quality concept is actualized in its interpretation of national policy before conducting inspections.

Regular supervision is carried out recurrently and focuses on equal rights for all students to good education and knowledge in a secure environment (SFS, 2010:800). Hence, it is the Government that decides the focus of these audits as it decides on the objectives, resources, and guidelines for the SSI (Gustafsson, et al., 2014). The regular supervision takes place every five years, even though the Inspectorate also has the opportunity to inspect a municipality at other times as well. The supervision aims to make sure that all schools comply with the laws, rules and curricula that exist for education (Segerholm & Hult, 2018; Swedish School Inspectorate, 2020a).

If the deficiencies are serious, the SSI can decide on a fine, which means that the responsible municipal authority may have to pay a sum of money if the deficiencies are not remedied in time. During regular supervision in MAE, the responsible municipal authority, principals, teachers, study counsellors and students in the municipality are interviewed by two school inspectors (Gustafsson, et al., 2014). After the visit, which usually takes one to two days, the school inspectors write a preliminary report that they send back to the responsible municipal authority in the audited municipality. The responsible authority must respond to that report. Later, the formal report is published online and also presented to the media in a press release. This kind of audit can be described as high stake, as a decision can result in a fine that the municipality has to pay.

The quality audit is different from the regular supervision as it is more in-depth and focuses quality control on education in a particular context, often upon a request from e.g. the Ministry of Education (Segerholm & Hult, 2018). Moreover, the quality audit is based on national goals and guidelines, supported by research results and proven experience, and focuses on different quality aspects (SSI, 2020). As the SSI puts it, it is 'tasked with reviewing the quality of such education and educational activities that are under the authority of the municipal authority' (SSI, 2019, p. 3). Moreover, the main purpose of the quality audit is to contribute to the development and to describe well-functioning elements, and show success factors. Usually, a relatively small number of municipalities, approximately 30, are stratified or randomly selected (Gustafsson, et al., 2014).

Before the quality audit takes place, the SSI has project meetings with experts and researchers where a project plan is put together. This project plan is then operationalized to indicators, metrics, and interview guides. Then, the selected municipality is visited by two school inspectors and the selected target groups are interviewed. The quality audit also results in a report that is usually accompanied by a web seminar. Compared with regular supervision, this kind of audit can be described as low stake with no direct financial consequences for the municipality. However, both the quality audit and the regular supervision report can result in negative publicity about adult education in a specific municipality. Recent quality audits in MAE have focused on quality in distance education, the teaching quality of Swedish for immigrant education, and reasons for students' dropout, among others (SSI, 2021a).

In this thesis, it is the national and external quality audit that SSI carries out that is in focus. As previously mentioned, the concept of quality is only vaguely described in adult education policy. To assess how quality is construed in MAE, it becomes pivotal to understand how the SSI construes and produces quality through its audits. As we are living in an Audit society and in a decentralized State that relies on auditing activities to govern from a distance, the SSI becomes an increasingly important factor when it comes to quality.

Chapter 4

'Quality gives security'
Redovisningshuset

Theoretical considerations

The study applies Bacchi's (2009) post-structural framework 'What's the problem represented to be' application (the WPR approach) to critically scrutinize how "quality" is construed in MAE. Within this approach, theoretical and methodological considerations are closely connected. In this chapter, the main theoretical concepts that inform this study are presented, as well as the background and the premises of the WPR approach. The next will focus on the operationalization of the approach.

What's the problem represented to be?

Bacchi's WPR approach is introduced as a way to make politics visible (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The overall goal of this approach is to identify, reconstruct and interrogate problematizations in policy proposal. By applying the WPR approach it becomes possible to scrutinize implicit problem formulations that are embedded in all policy proposals. Moreover, the application provides guidelines to critically study how governing takes place and the effects and implications for those who are governed (Bacchi, 2009).

Situating the WPR approach in a wider theoretical discussion

To get a better understanding of the WPR approach, as well as its contribution to this thesis, the application will here be situated in a wider theoretical discussion. Moreover, some key concepts that are used within the WPR approach will be elaborated upon. The starting point for this elaboration is the roots of the WPR approach, namely Foucault-influenced post-structuralism. Just as Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) point out, it is not a single theory. However, some general premises seems to be shared by most post-structuralist approaches: a) a questioning of assumptions about reason and emancipation; b) heterogeneous knowledge practices produce

hierarchical forms of rule; and c) the plurality of practices we live with are open for both challenge and change. ‘Rather than essences, “things” are “done” or “made”, constituted, or brought into being’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 4). As things such as nation-states and organizations are viewed as being made and done, they can also be “unmade” and “undone”. Within a post-structuralist framework, the same goes for political “subjects” as they are ‘understood to be emergent or in process...’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 4), rather than possessing any static essence.

Within the WPR approach, policy is seen as elaborated in discourse (Bacchi, 2009, p. 7). Consistent with Foucault, discourses are argued to be ‘socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what is possible to think, write and or speak’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 35) about a practice or social object (McHoul & Grace, 1993). Moreover, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) refer to Stephen Ball (Ball, 1990, 1993, 2015) who describes policy as discourse as it produces “truths” and “knowledges”. In line with Foucault, Ball’s focus is not on how ‘people make policy’ but rather on how ‘policy makes people’ (Goodwin & Bacchi, p. 8). The policy is seen to be enacted by agents (such as teachers and principals) at different levels in an organization (Ball, 2015).

As Bacchi (2018) points out, the WPR approach draws on Foucault-influenced post-structuralism. Moreover, it focuses on how governing takes place and shares premises when it comes to power, which is seen as relational and productive, and a view of subjects as constituted in practice (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 45). According to Foucault-influenced governmental scholars, Miller and Rose (1990), ‘governmentality refers to the way of thinking – or mentality – that allows the exercise of power by social authorities to manage the population in modern politics’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 8-9). Here, the WPR approach draws on Foucault’s understanding of governmentality as ‘techniques of government, which are established systems for regulating the conduct of conduct’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 29), specifically, by government of the State, the self, and the other. Hence, ‘...a conception of governing as including but beyond the state’ (Bacchi, 2018). Moreover, Foucault (1987) argues that these governmentalities should be analyzed, as State domination can often be established within such technologies. In line with the WPR approach, the State is viewed as an idea of how governing takes place through the use of regulations and control.

Within the WPR approach, the understanding of power is underpinned

by Foucault's writings. "Power" is not a thing that can be possessed by anyone, but rather '...the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a society' (Foucault, 1990 [1987], p. 93). Subsequently, power is seen as something that is "doing" something and not something that is bad within itself (Foucault, 1987). Rather, it is seen as a productive force, as it produces realities, and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1984). Grounded on this statement, the WPR approach argues for the importance of analyzing the production and constitution of such realities and truths (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

There is also a connection between power and policy within the approach. Policies involve power relations as they are productive in the way they construe problems as specific kinds of problems. As the focus is on people's performances and not their identities, the WPR approach attends to the way that practices produce subjects. Put differently, '[people] frequently know why they do what they do, but what they don't know is what they do does.' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 187). Within the WPR approach, the relation between power and knowledge is central as "'Techniques of knowledge" and "strategies of power" are "joined together" in *discourse* [...] forming "local centers" of power knowledge' (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 31). Therefore, knowledge within the WPR application is seen as a cultural product; not as "the truth" but rather as what is "in the truth". In other words, the concept of knowledge is used as a way to describe what is seen as truth at a given moment in a given practice.

A post-structural approach to policy

As policy proposals are the main study object of a WPR analysis, we need to turn to the implications of a post-structural approach to policy. Within the WPR approach, policy is considered to have a cultural dimension as it is shaped by historical, national, and international contexts (Shore & Wright, 1997). Policies are viewed as human constructions with implications and effects (Shore, 2012). In Bacchi's and Goodwin's (2016, p. 5-6) words: "Policy", in this view refers to how the order is maintained through politics, understood as the heterogeneous strategic relations that shape lives and worlds.' By describing policy as discourse, its exercise of power through the production of "knowledge" and "truth" is emphasized (Ball, 1993, p. 14). In a WPR study, the attention is directed to such "patterns" (specific ways of producing "truths") of thinking, as well as the production of knowledge and

truths. To do so, it focuses on policy proposals to examine the ‘unexamined ways of thinking and question underlying assumptions and implications’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 16).

This approach to policy is related to the neoliberal shift in political steering, from Government to governance (Olmedo & Ball, 2015). Policies stem from a governing process that the Government no longer has full control over (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). “Government” refers to the medium through which the State's power is enacted. Governance could be described as the act of government, therefore focusing on how rule takes place, rather than on the specific people in charge of governing.

The prevailing view in most approaches to policy is that policy is a “problem solving” activity (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Some examples could be health policies that target “obesity problems”, “binge drinking problems” or “traffic problems” (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, as problems need a solution, the Government is believed to fix and solve the proposed problem (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Therefore, most policies also contain a solution to the problems they address. It is this production of problems that is understood as governing within the WPR approach. By that, governing is seen as a ‘problematizing activity’ (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 181). Therefore, in line with Osborne (1997, p. 174), it is suggested that: ‘policy cannot get to work without first problematizing its territory.’ Thus, the WPR approach stresses that policy produces problems rather than assesses them (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Subsequently, the focus of a WPR study becomes ‘products of governmental practices through the examination of how issues are problematized in such proposals’ (p. 16).

WPR and its three key assumptions

The WPR approach rests on three key assumptions. Firstly, that ‘we are governed through problematizations; secondly, that we need to ‘study problematizations through analyzing the problem representation they contain rather than “problems”’; thirdly, ‘we need to problematize the problematizations through scrutinizing the premises and effects of the problem representation they contain’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. xxi). These three key assumptions will now be further elaborated.

Firstly, the assumption that ‘we are governed through problematizations’ (Bacchi 2009, p. xxi) indicates that the WPR approach concerns the rule that both includes and goes beyond the State. Therefore, the WPR application

studies target the ‘thinking behind different forms of rule’ (p. 30) and by that, also the ‘style’ of the problematization. The approach assesses patterns of *governmental rationalities*, associated with the study of governmentality (Dean, 1999; Rose, 2000). The focus of the WPR approach is directed to examining the effects of governmental rationalities on policy proposals. Thus, the way that problems are thought about is central to how governing takes place (Osborne, 1997). In other words, we are not governed by policy, but rather through problematizations (Bacchi, 2009).

Secondly, it is suggested that we need to ‘study problematizations through analyzing the problem representation they contain rather than “problems”’ (Bacchi 2009, p. xxi). The focus of the WPR approach is not the problems that the policy proposal is targeting, even though problems such as obesity and social welfare are not rejected within the approach. Instead, the focus is directed to how the problem is shaped in a specific policy proposal. By taking its point of departure in the characterization of the problem, the WPR approach makes it possible to understand how the issue is understood and how that “thinking” shapes how we are governed. However, such rationalities are not always explicitly present in policy. Hence, there could be *implied* problems in policy proposals. Nevertheless, as policy by its nature advocates for change, it carries the assumption that something needs to change with it. By applying the WPR approach, these implied problems, e.g. *problem representations*, can be made explicit and therefore also critically examined.

The third and final assumption stresses that ‘we need to problematize the problematizations through scrutinizing the premises and effects of the problem representation they contain’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. xxi). This assumption is characterized by an intention of critically interrogating problematization in policy proposals. Moreover, by focusing on the effects of different forms of rule, it also advocates for the need to rethink how governing takes place. When something is represented as a problem, the complexity of the issue is often reduced (Osborne, 1997). In effect, we only see one side of the coin. Thus, it becomes important to critically scrutinize the effects of such simplification to see what they include and exclude (Bacchi, 2009). The WPR approach advocates “problem-questioning” rather than “problem-solving” (p. xvii).

By drawing on Foucault’s argument that problematization emerges in practice (Foucault, 1986), Bacchi (2012, p. 2) also formulates the call to ‘turn to practice’. In this context, practice is described as the ‘intelligible

background' (Flynn, 2005, p. 31), which means that individuals become produced and shaped as specific subjects within a specific practice (Eveline & Bacchi, 2010). Subsequently, 'problematizations emerge from practices' (Bacchi, 2012, p. 3). By applying the WPR approach it becomes possible to study the problem representations that are implicitly embedded in policy proposals. As a policy proposal could be almost anything that expresses a proposal, hence, not only "texts" but also debates, newspaper articles, meetings and so on (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), the theoretical framework makes it possible to scrutinize a wide range of material on the same premises.

Subsequently, it becomes possible to critically scrutinize how quality is construed in different practices, such as a meeting between a school inspector and a teacher, a policy text, or a school development conference. By using the WPR application, it also becomes possible to 'make politics visible' (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), which means that it scrutinizes how governmental practices 'produce "problems" as particular kinds of problems' (p. 14). The focus is on what is produced by such practices, how it is produced, and with what effects it is produced?

Chapter 5

'No matter which hotel you stay at, we can guarantee quality'
Quality Hotel

Methodological considerations

In this section, the methodological considerations and the design of this thesis will be presented and discussed. First, the empirical material, as well as the design of the thesis, will be introduced. Second, the operationalization of the WPR approach will be exemplified. Third, ethical concerns will be elaborated on.

Introducing the three policy sites

In line with the WPR approach, policy is considered in a broad sense (Bacchi, 2009). For this reason, everything that is shaped as a proposal, regardless of whether it is said or done or written, is considered a policy proposal within this application (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).⁷ To make it possible to identify, interrogate and reconstruct how “quality” is construed in MAE, three specific sites where such representations have been produced were selected. These different sites were chosen because they all attend to issues of quality in adult education. Within the WPR approach, they can be seen as sites where policy proposals that concern quality are being produced at different levels.

The first site was contemporary adult education policies, as they made it possible to scrutinize how “quality” is construed in written policy. Second, audit meetings in a quality audit that were carried out by the SSI in MAE were observed. Third, an SSI conference that focused on quality and adult education was observed. The quality audit and the SSI conference were observed in order to scrutinize how quality was construed by the SSI and the school personnel at these different sites.

Altogether, the three different sites made it possible to scrutinize how

⁷ Dahler-Larsen (2019) points out in his research how discussions of quality often seem to be “problem oriented”. By using Bacchi’s (2009) problem-focused WPR approach to further investigate Dahler-Larsen’s (2019) observations of quality, it became possible to scrutinize how quality was construed in Swedish municipal adult education.

quality was construed at different levels within the adult education system. The selection of sites also made it possible to follow the way that the concept of quality was construed both in written and spoken policy proposals. Hence, policy produces things as specific kinds of things in specific practices (Bacchi, 2009). These three different sites will now be described in more detail.

Site I: Policy and instructional documents

The written policy was selected because it gives insights into how the concept of “quality” is construed in Swedish adult education. Consequently, the material was demarcated to a year span between 2017 and 2021. The policy documents were collected from two different domains that concern MAE and the SSI. In total, 10 policy documents were selected. Two different types of documents were included in the analysis. The first type were general policy documents that concerned both the SSI and MAE, namely the Education Act (2010:800). Other documents that were included in the analysis were two official Governmental reports from the Ministry of Education (2018:71, 2019:06). These two reports were selected because they focus on quality in MAE and also propose how the educational system should change to better handle contemporary “challenges”. Besides the two reports, the curriculum for adult education (SNAE, 2017), as well as a report from Swedish Institute for Educational Research (2019), were included as they also give directives on quality in the specific educational context.

The second type of documents were reports and instructional documents from the SSI. These documents were collected in two different contexts, namely the quality audit and the SSI conference. A document that was part of the quality audit consisted of the quality audit report that was published after the audit was finished (SSI, 2019). Moreover, documents that the SSI used during the quality audit also constituted a foundation for analysis, such as interview guides, matrixes, the project plan, and the directives. During the SSI day, several documents, such as PowerPoint slides were used and the programme sheet that described the conference’s various themes. These were also included in the analysis.

In line with the WPR approach, policy is seen as setting a frame for what can be thought and written at a discursive level. Subsequently, the documents were collected and selected as they focus on quality and quality audits in MAE. Even though it can be argued that there is a difference

between official or public policy (regulations and reports), and unofficial policy (SSI interview guides and matrixes), all of the various documents have been treated as equally important policy proposals (Bacchi, 2009). Hence, it is the way that specific issues are problematized in the proposal for change that is important. Altogether, these documents made it possible to identify, interrogate and reconstruct how quality was construed at different sites.

Site II: Quality audit

The audit that was observed and audio recorded was carried out by the SSI in the MAE in 2018-2019 (SSI, 2019). The focus of the quality audit was to review the principal's and the responsible municipal authority's work for flexibility and individualization in municipal adult education. The procedures of the audit were as follows: 30 different municipalities were selected by the SSI with a stratified selection to give a representative overview of Swedish municipalities. This included both large and small municipalities that organized their adult education in different ways.

Of those 30 municipalities, I was granted permission to accompany the school inspectors in six different municipalities. These six municipalities were chosen, in cooperation with with SSI, to provide a sample of both large and small Swedish municipalities. The different municipalities organized adult education in different ways, ranging from provision under the municipality's own direction, arranged in collaboration with other municipalities, or outsourced through tendering-based procurement. The teaching is both online (at distance) and at the school. Altogether, I observed 20 audit meetings between eight school inspectors and responsible municipal authorities, principals, study counsellors and teachers between August and October 2018. I ended up with audio-recorded data from 20 different interviews. An average interview was between one hour to one-and-a-half hours, depending on the number of participants. In larger municipalities, there could be up to four study counsellors who were interviewed by the school inspectors at the same time. In smaller municipalities, there was perhaps only one.

Sometimes, the school inspectors and I met at the schools and sometimes I travelled with them, both by car and plane. Depending on the geographical locations, they sometimes travelled for only a day and sometimes they planned travel routes to be able to audit several municipalities in one trip.

The audit visits followed a standard procedure. There were always two school inspectors who travelled together to the selected municipality, and they had different roles and obligations. The main responsible school inspector had requested many documents from the municipal authority and principal, such as ISPs, a list of provided courses and so on, beforehand. Moreover, the main responsible school inspector also sent a schedule for the day with information about when the different interviews would be carried out. When I travelled with the school inspectors, we usually arrived a little early at the selected school, to find the right place. Usually, the school inspectors and I were welcomed by the principal, who offered us coffee and showed us the room where the interviews were planned to take place.

These rooms were usually group rooms with a table and a few chairs, even though they varied in size and shape depending on the location. One thing they all had in common was that they were sparsely furnished. Depending on the location and the furnishing, the school inspectors and I sat in different constellations. One time, when the three of us were sitting at the end of a big table, one of the study counsellors exclaimed: ‘Wow! This really feels like an interrogation!’ when he entered the room. At another municipality, the school inspectors and I sat around a round table and had coffee and mineral water served, which made the environment feel more comfortable.

Usually, the school inspectors and I occupied the room and waited for the school personnel to turn up at the appointed time. The interviews followed a specific logic; usually it started with students, teachers and study counsellors, and finished with principals and responsible municipal authorities. In some municipalities, there was a reconciliation meeting at the end. The schedule varied, depending on the organization of adult education in the municipality. If an external provider was being audited, phone interviews were sometimes carried out with students and principals beforehand.⁸ During the interview, the school inspectors introduced themselves and the purpose of the audit. The main responsible school inspector was in charge of the interview and asked the questions. These questions originated from the SSI’s interview guides.

There were separate interview guides for each occupational group, as well as for the students. The other school inspector took notes during the

⁸ Due to practical reasons, I was not observing and recording those interviews, only the ones that were carried out in person.

interview. These notes then became the foundation for a decision that was sent back to the municipality. The dynamics between the school inspectors differed during the meetings. Sometimes, the school inspector taking notes interrupted the interview to ask for clarification. Sometimes, the interviewing school inspector followed the interview guide to the letter and sometimes he or she broke loose from the structure and asked questions freely: 'Now I'm asking out of curiosity, but how is that possible?' (School inspector). Many times, the questions of the interview guides were reformulated by the school inspectors to get an answer. These reformulations are often meant to encourage school personnel to provide concrete examples.

Depending on the dynamics between the school inspectors, they also communicated between themselves, making sure that they were both on the same question and got the right answer to the right question. One of the school inspectors organized the interview situation differently from the rest of the interviews that I observed because s/he gave the interview guide to the group of teachers being interviewed and then left the room, along with the note-taking school inspector and me, to give the teachers time to discuss. After a certain amount of time, 30-40 minutes, we returned to the room, and s/he carried out the interview.

During the interviews, I sat silent, while the school inspectors performed the audit procedure. As a passive observer who was not engaged in the conversation, I got the opportunity to focus on the interaction between the school inspectors and the interviewees, the room and the interview guide that was being used.

After and between the interviews, I got the opportunity to chat with the school inspectors and also listen to them while they were planning, discussing and evaluating the interviews and the answers they got. Thanks to these informal conversations, I learnt a lot about how the school inspectors sometimes struggled with the interview guides and getting the information they wanted. Moreover, they talked about how to notice if the information they get from the interviewees was correct or not, and that it was easy to spot if it was not, because then the answers were not aligned in the chain of command. Moreover, many of the school inspectors talked about the impact of school inspections in smaller municipalities, and how a school that had received remarks from the SSI had later been significantly criticized in the local press. Moreover, I also heard a many stories from other audits that had been carried out in different educational settings, and the

inspectors told me about the daily struggles and joys of inspecting schools, as well as their career paths and how they ended up working at SSI.

Site III: The SSI conference

The SSI conference, or ‘the SSI day’, is an annual conference with different themes each year. On this day, the SSI presents a summary of the audits it has conducted during the year. The audience is school personnel from different municipalities in Sweden and the programme includes school inspectors and researchers, presenting their work, research, and results from recent audits. In 2019, the focus of the conference was *Quality work in MAE and upper secondary education*. The conference takes place in three different cities in Sweden every year – Gothenburg, Stockholm and Malmö. During the SSI day in Stockholm, I observed the various presentations to obtain information about what was said about quality in this specific context.

Hence, the whole conference could be considered a proposal, as it works as a platform for the SSI to communicate its findings to school personnel in Sweden. Thus, much focus was directed at presenting successful examples and pointing out what is and is not working. Moreover, during her presentation at the beginning of the conference, the General Director of SSI gave hints about future changes and adaptations to the way the SSI audits. After her presentation, school inspectors presented results and summaries of recent audits in different constellations. Moreover, the responsible authority from a municipality that had recently been audited was invited to talk about successful examples and how they had organized adult education in that specific municipality. Besides that, a researcher had been invited to talk about the quality of adult education.

While I observed the SSI day, I also took fieldnotes about what was said and done during the conference. When I was observing, I acted as a non-participatory, passive observer as I sat in the audience taking notes. I observed all of the presentations during the day. Moreover, I collected one programme sheet, one document called ‘Material from the SSI day 2019’ and the six PowerPoint presentations that were used during the day. As previously mentioned, all of the presentations that took place during the conference could be considered as proposals and directives to the audience of practitioners. Therefore, my observations and fieldnotes from the conference made it possible to analyze how “quality-talk” was construed in

that specific context to that specific target group. It gave a broader picture and also a richer understanding of the concept of quality and how it was construed, as the school inspectors were talking to the audience and not to me, which they would have been if I had conducted interviews myself. Instead, participating as an observer, the focus of the data collection became how things were said and done in this specific context, rather than the school inspectors' thoughts and opinions about quality.

Methodological considerations: observing, audio recording and transcribing

At the beginning of the audit meetings, I introduced myself and my purpose and handed out consent documents to the school inspectors and school personnel. When all of them had given their written consent, I placed my audio recorder equipment in the middle of the table and then took a non-participatory role during the audit interviews. Without a doubt, my presence, and the fact that their conversation was audio recorded, influenced the audit meetings even though I just sat quietly and observed and sometimes took notes. In line with Cooper and Schindler's (2001) definition of the three dimensions of direct observation and audio recordings, the presence of the observer was known to the participants, even though my role was passive. However, I sometimes wondered if my presence affected the school inspectors more than the school personnel, who were already being audited by the school inspectors while I was observing all of them. I could have just left the audio recording device on and left the room, but I choose to stay to be able to observe the interviews live.

One of the perks of observations and audio recordings compared to interviews is that they offered me a unique insight into how audit processes are carried out by school inspectors 'in situ' (Wellington, 2015, p. 213). Observation can provide the researcher with first-hand data about contextual and material aspects, and both verbal and non-verbal communication (Clark, Holland, Katz, & Peace, 2009). And just as Robson (2002) points out, there is often a discrepancy between what people say that they do and what they actually do. However, it has been pointed out that observations can be influenced both by the researcher's choice of theory as well as previous experience (Barrett & Mills, 2009).

On the one hand, it could be argued that a lot of information gets lost in the audio recordings as human memory is fragile and it will be hard to recall

the looks and gestures of the people who were recorded. Moreover, audio recording has been criticized for being a selective choice of method, as contextual factors such as visual and non-verbal are left out (Mishler, 1986). On the other hand, it can also be argued that video recording (a method which would have given more information) would perhaps have made the school inspectors and school personnel uncomfortable.

Just as with observations, there are both advantages and disadvantages with audio records, especially when it comes to the transcription of them. As Powney and Watts points out:

Talk is dynamic – a quality it loses as soon as it is collected in any way. It is somewhat [...] like catching rain in a bucket for later display. What you end up with is water, which is only a little like rain (Powney & Watts, 1987, p. 16)

Put differently, the very word *trans-* suggests that the original material changes form, thus raising questions of what gets lost in this selective transformation (Kvale, 1996). This awareness is also discussed by Mishler (1986), who stresses that the relationship between language and meaning is situated in context as it is constantly changing and opened for constant reinterpretation. Therefore, the researcher is not just gathering or collecting data, but rather co-authoring them. One of the benefits of transcribing was that I became familiar with my data and that I was able to analyze the data as I took notes in NVivo at the same time as I was transcribing (Heritage, 1984). Thus, I started to recognize patterns and I could also select quality-related quotes quite early in the research process. Moreover, it helped me distance myself from the material and possible biases or intuitive glosses that I might have placed on people, as the possibility to both relisten and reread the recordings and interviews allowed more thorough scrutiny of what was being said.

Ethical considerations

When I was granted access to the audit interviews that the school inspectors carried out, I contacted the responsible authorities in the six different municipalities and asked for their permission to observe and audio record the interviews. At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself and the purpose of my research. Then I handed out a consent form, explained its

content, and asked both school inspectors and school personnel to sign it. In line with the Swedish research council's guidelines (Swedish Research Council, 2017), the consent included information about the participant's right to quit the project whenever they felt like it. If the participant so wishes, the fieldnotes or the recording concerning that person would be destroyed as well. I also asked if the school inspectors and/or the school personnel had any questions, and that they were welcome to contact me at any time if they should change their mind about participating and/or want to know more about the study. However, I did not receive any questions and all school inspectors and school personnel agreed to sign the consent form.

During the audit interviews that I observed, some people may have been uncomfortable and may have felt exposed, even though they did not say so. However, the school inspectors are working at an administrative authority and therefore, in a way, do not represent themselves as individuals. However, teachers, study counsellors, principals, and representatives of the municipal authority at the schools that the SSI inspect might have felt discomfort at having a researcher there. It was challenging to account for the confidentiality criteria (Swedish Research Council, 2017), as the SSI includes the name of the municipality, as well as the school personnel's profession in their reports (Hult & Segerholm, 2016). The same goes for the SSI day, where all the names of the presenters were included in the programme sheet. In this thesis, as well as in the articles, all data (such as the names of municipalities, school inspectors and school personnel) have been anonymized. I have also chosen not to give detailed information about the municipalities, in an effort to make them more anonymous.

After all the data were collected, the fieldnotes, the selected documents, and the transcribed interviews were encrypted in order to de-identify participants, and stored in a hard drive in a locked cupboard. The code key is being stored in a different place. Since the material is about public occupation it is, however, not considered to be highly integrity sensitive (Swedish Research Council, 2017).

Applying and operationalizing the WPR approach

To answer the overarching research questions, the study proceeded from the following questions that are used within the WPR approach (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). As the goal of the WPR approach is to 'read off' the implicit problem representation within a policy proposal, the critical

task becomes to identify, interrogate, and reconstruct such problematizations (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 19). This goal is fulfilled by the use of the set of six questions that is introduced as a guide to analyze policy proposals within the WPR application. As Table 1 indicates, different questions were in focus in different articles and chapters of the thesis. Due to the limited space that the article format provides, it was neither possible nor necessary to answer all the questions in every single article. Rather, the questions were chosen to guide the analysis depending on the specific article’s scope and empirical material. Altogether, the thesis and articles make it possible to explore the full range of the WPR approach.

WPR Question	Article/Chapter
Q1: What’s the “problem” represented to be in, in a specific policy or policies?	Article I, II
Q2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?	Article I, II, IV
Q3: How has this representation of the “problem” come about?	Discussion
Q4: What is left unproblematic in this “problem” representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?	Discussion
Q5: What effects are produced in this representation of the “problem”?	Article I-IV
Q6: How and where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted or replaced?	Discussion
Step 7: Apply this list of questions to your own problem representation.	Discussion

Table 1: Application of Bacchi’s (2009, p. 2) questions

The following section will now describe and exemplify how each of the six

questions was operationalized and helped to guide the analysis. As the table indicates, only Q1, Q2 and Q5 were used as guiding questions in the articles. This selection took place for many different reasons; first, because of the scope of the thesis but also because of the empirical nature of the material. Hence, it would not have been possible to apply Q3, which focuses on how the problem representation comes about in contemporary policy proposals. Bacchi (2009) also acknowledges that it is possible to focus on only a few questions to conduct a WPR analysis as long as one can carefully explain the process.

Q1: What's the “problem” represented to be in, in a specific policy or policies?

The goal of the first question is to find a place to start the analysis by making it possible to question something that seems to be obvious or taken for granted (Bacchi, 2009). As focus was quality in MAE, I started to read contemporary adult education policy to identify how quality was construed in this specific site. Thus, I used the search function [ctrl+f] and typed “quality” in the search field, then copied all the sections that included the word, and pasted it into a separate document. After the quality quotes had been collected in the same word document, I started to scrutinize how quality was put forward. By working backwards from the policy proposals, I could identify what was being problematized in a general sense. One example of many such formulations that were included in the first article was ‘quality deficiencies revealed in education...’ (Ministry of Education, 2018:71, p. 459; Mufic & Fejes, 2022).

With the use of the WPR approach, I was able to identify several problem representations in the way that quality is framed in policy (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The “quality problem” then became a springboard for the rest of the analysis. There were also several other problem formulations in the policy proposals that I scrutinized. However, as the focus was on quality, the other problem representations, ‘such as lack of inequality’, were noted but not included in the analysis. In line with the WPR approach, I did not try to identify any intentions or agency behind a particular policy proposal, nor did I evaluate the gap between the suggested changes and the delivery of them. Put differently, I did not compare “problems” and “solutions”, but rather used the solutions as a starting point for identifying and later interrogating implicit problems. Thus, in adult education policy, the need for quality that was stressed several times could be read in the context of

‘guides of conduct’ (Foucault, 1986). The lack of quality was clearly expressed as both a problem and a challenge in many policy documents. Moreover, the way that quality was put forward as something desirable also signalled that the “lack of it” was a problem even if it was not explicitly expressed in some proposals. The very need for a quality audit in MAE signals what the problem is represented to be in this specific context.

Q2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?

According to Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), the goal of the second question is to identify and interrogate unexamined ways of thinking in the policy proposals. In this specific case, it is about identifying the discourses that make it possible for “quality” to be construed as something desirable and lacking. These presuppositions and assumptions were identified in the policy proposals and/or in what was said and done during the quality audit and the SSI day, and *not* in the mind or the beliefs of the policymakers. Thus, I reread the same quotes about quality (that had previously been selected during the first step of the analysis) with the second question in mind. As previously mentioned, a policy is seen as something that construes meaning, and thus, the second question’s aim becomes to identify how that meaning is created. By focusing on binaries, key concepts and categories, the way that problem representations were construed was identified and then interrogated.

First, I identified *binaries*, a concept that is used to signal a dichotomy within the WPR application. Some examples of binaries could be ‘public/private’ and ‘national/international’, according to Bacchi (2009, p. 7). In these examples, a binary presupposes an ‘A/not-A relationship’, hence, the one side is what the other side is not. Or put differently, the ‘A’ includes what the ‘not-A’ excludes. In public debates, as well as in policy proposals, there is often an implied hierarchy in the way that binaries are construed. One side could often be perceived and produced as more privileged, important, and valued than the other side. With the use of binaries, complex relationships are being simplified. One example of this is the binary of “quality” and “not quality” identified in school inspectors’ talk during the SSI day in the second article (Mufic, 2022b). The use of this binary construes the understanding of a certain issue or problem in a policy proposal and may limit the understanding of it, as well as what can be said and thought about it.

Second, I looked at *categories*, which, according to Bacchi (2009), have an effect on how governing takes place. Some examples of categories could be 'gender' and 'age' (p. 9). It is people categories, such as 'single mothers' and 'taxpayers', that are particularly in focus here because of their central role in governing processes. In the first article, the 'heterogenous target group' could be considered as a category, as it produces a certain kind of meaning to a certain problem representation. This is in line with Hacking's (2002) argument that people are 'made up'. Thus, the construction of people categories affects how people think about and see themselves, as well as how governing takes place (Bacchi, 2009; Foucault, 1990 [1987]). Moreover, these categories are created through measurement techniques. Another example of how the concept of categories was used to guide the analysis comes from the second article, where words such as 'measurable' and 'elusive' were used in relation to quality (Mufic, 2022b).

Third and finally, I searched for *key concepts*. Bacchi (2009, p. 8) contends that key concepts such as 'health' and 'welfare' are flourishing in policies. What most key concepts seem to have in common is that they are often abstract and open-ended. Therefore, the definition of them can be challenged and contested, as they are filled with different meanings in different contexts. The way that key concepts are filled with meaning also has effects. One example of this is whether 'health' is defined as well-being or as the absence of disease. But even though many key concepts can seem relatively open-ended, they are also a part of cultural and historical practices. As exemplified in the first article, some concepts, such as "quality", can seem to be loaded with so many positive connotations that it becomes challenging to identify them as a construction (Mufic & Fejes, 2022). Since these connotations can be implicitly embedded in governmental practices, it can be complicated to both identify and interrogate them (Bacchi, 2009).

By identifying binaries, key concepts, and categories in the selected policy proposals, it became possible to scrutinize the particular styles of problematizations. And in extension, these patterns could signal the operation of a specific logic or governmentality, hence governmental or political rationality. Moreover, the way that these concepts are construed in policy also signals political rationalities; the deep-seated assumptions that underly the representation of the problem. Subsequently, the "solutions" to the "problem" have effects on what can be said and thought about quality in a specific context. The second question thus makes it possible not only to

critically interrogate these different forms of “truths” or unexamined ways of thinking (Foucault, 1994 [1981]), but also to study possible implications (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). By locating these unexamined ways of thinking in the networks and discursive practices that produce them, it becomes possible to understand how they received their status (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). ‘These comprise a wide array of elements, including sites, “objects”, and subject positions, together with interconnecting mechanisms and processes’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2017, p. 22). As such, the concept of quality can be located in the discursive practices of written policies, a quality audit, and an SSI day. And with the help of Bacchi’s second question, it became possible to scrutinize what meanings need to be in place for a problem representation to be taken for granted.

Q3: How has this representation of the “problem” come about?

The third question focuses on how the “problem” came to be produced as this specific kind of problem (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, it has two aims. One aim is to shed light on the events that affected the way that the problem is represented today. The other aim is to highlight alternative ways that this issue could have evolved and developed. Or, as Bacchi and Goodwin (2016, p. 22) put it: ‘The intent is to disrupt any assumption that what *is* reflects what *has* to be.’ Subsequently, the analysis should result in recognition and representation of alternative or competing problem representations that exist in different times and different places. Moreover, the question is used to pinpoint and acknowledge that ‘things could have developed quite differently’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10).

Similar to the second question, Q3 also involves a method inspired by ‘Foucauldian genealogy’ (which has already been explained in relation to Q2), and includes a detailed analysis of practices that produced the “problem” (Bacchi, 2009). To explain it, Bacchi relates it to the process of conducting a family genealogy that will eventually result in a family tree. The focus on this mapping should be power relations in the form of operation of discursive practices and the way they construe “knowledges” and “truths”. According to Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), a specific focus should be on subjugated knowledge (Foucault, 1980 [1976]). Hence, when the “roots” of a specific problem representation are traced, it is often possible to identify moments where other ways of understanding the problem would have been possible. Moreover, it can help trace and scrutinize the logics that allowed a

problem representation to dominate. In this way, an analysis like this can illuminate the way a specific problem is produced in contemporary practice and/or policy proposals can be changed. Bacchi (2009, p. 11) notes that Q3 can have a ‘destabilizing effect’ on assumptions about a specific problem.

Just as in Q2, the third question focuses on the way that people are categorized within a specific means of governance. Or in Rose’s (2000, p. 209) words, ‘to govern, it is necessary to know’. By drawing on Hacking (2002), Bacchi (2009) connects this trend with increasing official statistics that measure, count and survey people and their actions under different labels. Hacking (2002) exemplifies this with historical categories such as drunkenness, prostitution, madness, and crime. If we turn to Swedish adult education, examples of categories could be students’ dropout rates, grades, background, and socio-economic circumstances. What becomes important here is that statistics produce knowledge ‘of a particular kind’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 11). Therefore, it becomes important to critically interrogate why these specific things were measured and not others, who it is that gets counted and how, and moreover, how this counting relates to the understanding of a problem. Rose and Miller (1992, p. 200) give an example of this in their quote that can be related to auditing activities regarding systematic quality work in Swedish MAE.

Making people write things down, and the nature of the things people are made to write down is itself a kind of government of them, urging them to think about and note certain aspects of their activities according to certain norms.

Q4: What is left unproblematic in this “problem” representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) describe the fourth question as inventive since it opens the possibility to think of a world, or a specific practice, where a “problem” is represented differently. Or maybe, not even represented at all. Q4 also involves ‘thinking otherwise’ (p. 22) by shedding light on silences and/or unproblematized elements within a problem representation. In other words, with its focus on the limits of a specific representation (Bacchi, 2009), it can be described as a way to destabilize problem representations (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Q4 is underpinned by Q1-3 and encourages the comparison of problematizations across time, space and cultures.

This kind of comparison can provide insight on how a specific issue can be produced differently in different contexts and thus shed light on contrasting problematizations. It can be exemplified by reference to the previous research chapter in this thesis, where the concept of “quality” was understood and used differently in different studies, hence, sometimes criticized, and sometimes encouraged. Put differently, Q4 provides the tool to critically scrutinize how ‘specific policies are constrained by the way in which they represent the “problem”’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 13). To do this kind of analysis, Bacchi encourages the focus on binaries (mentioned in relation to Q2), as the use of them in policy proposals often indicates that some sort of simplification has taken place. Moreover, Q4 can be used to shed light on tensions, inequalities, and contradiction in the way that a “problem” is represented.

Q5: What effects are produced in this representation of the “problem”?

This question draws attention to the effects of the problem representation in policy (Bacchi, 2009). Therefore, by analyzing the way that the “problem” is construed, the focus is on how these underlying presuppositions may affect what can be said and thought about a specific issue, in a specific practice; in this case “quality” in adult education policy. Within the WPR approach, effects should be seen as political implications and not as “outcomes” that can be measured (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Bacchi (2009) introduces three different kinds of effects, namely discursive, subjectification, and lived effects.

By focusing on *discursive effects*, it becomes possible to scrutinize how ‘the terms of reference established by a particular problem representation set limits of what can be thought and said’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 23). An example of such effects can be found in the third article where quality was construed as the absence of warning flags and compliance with standards (Mufic, 2022a). In effect, the concept becomes “locked”, as it seems to be impossible to talk about quality in other ways. The way a problem is conceptualized in policy can lead to a certain social intervention becoming closed, subsequently affecting peoples’ lives. Another example of this can be found in the fourth article, where flexibility demands in policy lead to some municipalities only offering courses at distance. In effect, students were left with no other option than to study at distance, regardless of whether it suited them or not.

Subjectification effects highlight how “subjects” are construed within the frame of a specific problem representation. Or, put differently, ‘how subjects are produced as specific kinds of subjects’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, p. 23) as ‘discourses make certain subject positions available’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16). Such effects can often be identified in policies where groups of people are sometimes produced as being in opposition to each other. Hence, ‘unemployed’ versus ‘employed’ or ‘problem gambler’ versus ‘recreational gambler’ (p. 23). In line with Foucault (1982), Bacchi (2009) argues that this way of stigmatizing particular minorities serves a governmental purpose as it implicitly encourages desired behaviours. Problem representations also often carry implications about who is responsible for them. By identifying the way that this attribution of responsibility is produced in policy, it becomes possible to interrogate it. An example of this can be drawn from the fourth article where the MAE student is construed as a specific kind of student in relation to distance education (Mufic, forthcoming). Subsequently, talk about students ‘jumping in at the deep end’ or ‘biting off more than they can chew’ seems to construe them as responsible for failing or succeeding with their studies, regardless of how the adult education system is organized.

Lived effects draw attention to how discursive and subjectification effects play out in peoples’ lives (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016); the material aspects and impact of problem representations (Bacchi, 2009). This concept was also used in the fourth article to scrutinize how flexibility demands in policy played out during a quality audit (Mufic, forthcoming).

Altogether, these different kinds of effects are in line with Foucault’s concept (1982, p. 208) of dividing practices. This concept can be used to shed light on how groups of people can become divided amongst themselves as they are being construed as governable subjects. According to Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), these effects bridge the gap between policy and “real life”, thus indicating that the analysis does not take place in a separate policy universe. To conduct the analysis, five different sub-questions were used as a guide as Bacchi (2009, p. 18) presents them as an interlaced part of the overarching fifth question. These sub-questions were:

- What is likely to change with this representation of the ‘problem’?
- What is likely to stay the same?
- Who is likely to benefit from this representation of the ‘problem’?
- Who is likely to be harmed by this representation of the ‘problem’?

- How does the attribution of responsibility for the ‘problem’ affect those so targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to ‘blame’?

These sub-questions helped to guide the analysis in both the second and the third articles, thus highlighting different effects of specific problem representations.

Q6: How and where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted or replaced?

The goal of the sixth question is similar to Q3 as both of them focus on contestation and destabilization of problem representations (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). But Q6 takes the analysis one step further as it provides the tool to reflect on resistance and ‘counter conduct’ (Foucault, 1978) as it focuses on the practices that shape the “problem” as a particular kind of problem. Or, in other words, how does a problem representation receive legitimacy? Here, Bacchi (2009) draws on Foucault’s (1991, p. 60) questions: ‘What individuals, groups or classes have access to a particular kind of discourse? How is the relationship institutionalized between the discourse, speakers, and its destined audience?’ Bacchi (2009, p. 19) also stresses the importance of analyzing resistance, by looking at discourses that can be both ‘plural, complex, and at times, inconsistent’. This question has been used to guide the discussion and the suggestions for previous research.

Questions of self-reflexivity (Step 7)

In the WPR approach, six different questions are used to conduct an analysis of policy proposals. After the WPR analysis has been carried out, Bacchi (2009) stresses the importance of self-reflexivity, and calls this process ‘Step 7’, as it comes after the six questions.

The theme of reflexivity is commonly engaged within contemporary critical studies (Bacchi, 2011). The self-problematization is a way to critically scrutinize one’s own thinking as it is influenced and shaped by a person’s geographic, historic, and cultural contexts (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Instead of just reflecting upon the need to become reflexive, Bacchi and Goodwin advocate for researchers to take action and conduct a WPR

analysis of their own proposals. This process is called ‘step 7’. For a researcher, that means carefully avoiding just accepting certain “problems” without careful reflections on the history, purpose, and consequences of those problems. An extensive guide to how this process of reflexivity might be performed has not yet been found.

On her blog, Bacchi writes that the reason for the formal introduction of the step was that researchers tended to leave that part of the analysis out (Bacchi, n.d.). When they describe reflexivity, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016, p.24) refer to Foucault’s (2001, p. 1431) encouragement to problematize ‘even what we are ourselves’. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) also point out that there is a difference between the reflexive ‘declarations’ that can easily be made at the end of an analysis, and the more demanding reflexive activity that step 7 requires.

However, they also note that not all of the questions need to be answered when such a reflexive analysis is conducted. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) also point out that it is possible that one of the questions has to be asked several times, as problem representations tend to be lodged and nested. Hence, there may be ‘problematizations *within* problematizations (Bacchi & Goodwin, p. 24). In the last part of the discussion chapter of this thesis, the WPR questions have been applied to the process of producing the thesis. This attempt at a reflexive analysis that will be explained, discussed and analyzed, can also be seen as a contribution to the field in form of a concrete example, and a reflection on the WPR methodology.

Chapter 6

'Quality is profitable'
Kvalitetsmagasinet

Findings

In this section, the findings of the thesis are explained and explored in the form of article summaries.

Article I: 'Lack of quality in adult education: A policy study'

The first article takes Bacchi's first question, 'What's the problem represented to be?' (Bacchi, 2009) as its point of departure and focuses on how quality is construed in written Swedish adult education policy. The result indicates that the concept of quality seems to be left undefined in policy. However, even though it is not explicitly defined, the concept is still construed in relation to certain issues of 'quality deficiencies' and a 'lack of quality' (Mufic & Fejes, 2022). The material analyzed consists of key policy documents which all concern contemporary Swedish adult education. The policies that were included in the analysis were firstly documents that govern adult education, the Education Act (SFS, 2010:800), and the Curriculum for Adult Education (SNAE, 2017). Secondly, two recent Official Government reports on adult education (Ministry of Education, 2018:71, 2019:06) were included in the analysis, together with a report from the Swedish Institute for Educational Research (2019) and a report from SSI (2019) that concerned individualization in adult education. Altogether, these documents constitute approximately 1,000 pages.

The study draws on Bacchi's (2009) post-structural analytical strategy for critical analysis 'What's the problem represented to be' (WPR) approach, and focuses on three of her questions (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2):

- Q1: What's the "problem" represented to be in, in a specific policy or policies?
- Q2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem"?
- Q5: What effects are produced in this representation of the

“problem”?

Bacchi’s questions were used to guide the analysis by focusing on identifying, interrogating, and reconstructing problem representations in the selected policy. In the result, section quotes from the policy and documents were used to exemplify and illustrate the analysis.

The first part of the analysis focused on the question ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2). The analysis highlighted that the concept of quality is described as a “problem” in relation to the decreasing throughflow and goal attainment in MAE. Quality is also construed as a deficiency in relation to what are framed as the challenges of adult education, namely the ‘heterogenous student group’ and the ‘varying pre-conditions for the organization of education’. It also seems to be assumed that increased quality in adult education will lead to an increased throughflow. Subsequently, the policy documents indicate what is perceived as ‘not quality’ or ‘not quality enough’; they provide us with a picture of what needs to be improved to achieve and maintain “quality”.

The second part of the analysis took its point of departure in the question: ‘What presuppositions or assumptions underlie the representation of this problem?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2). The analysis highlights that the concepts of flexibility and individualization are introduced as problem ‘solvers’ in policy. The concepts seem to be introduced as a means to organize MAE in a way that will increase quality by targeting the challenges of the heterogenous target group and municipalities’ varying preconditions, thus, solving the decreasing dropout rate and failing goal attainment. However, it is concluded that the implementation of flexibility and individualization has failed in practice due to weak compliance and responsibility-taking in the chain of command. By stressing the need for more and improved accountability through the means of increased auditing and systematic quality work, it seems to be presupposed that the implementation of the concepts will be successful. Subsequently, flexibility and individualization seem to be a part of both the ‘problem’ and the ‘solution’ of the ‘quality problem’ in MAE.

The third and final part of the analysis departed from the question ‘What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2). It sheds light on both anticipated and unanticipated effects of the way that the ‘quality problem’ is produced. In policy, it seems to be the responsible municipal authority and principals that are held responsible for

the failing implementation of the concepts of flexibility and individualization. In effect, the need for harsher regulations and increased accountability in the adult education system is stressed. It is stipulated in policy that the implementation of flexibility and individualization is not foremost based on didactical ideas, but rather seen as necessary to make it possible for adults to engage in studies.

Taken together, the analysis of the policy documents leads to questions about the consequences for both school personnel and the students enrolled in adult education, as the quality of the education seems to be assessed in relation to goal attainment and throughflow and not pedagogical and didactical issues. Rather than focusing on changing the system, focus on policy is directed at the development and implementation of educational methods. Subsequently, flexibility and individualization:

...become means for chasing the holy grail of quality rather than focusing on the actual pedagogical work with students, where the blame of failing finally is but on teachers and principals rather than the education system itself (Mufic & Fejes, 2022, p. 281-282).

Article II: ‘Measurable but not quantifiable’: The Swedish Schools Inspectorate on construing “quality” as “auditable”

The second article aims to critically scrutinize underlying assumptions and the discursive effects of how the SSI construes “quality” during a quality audit process. The SSI is in focus as it is tasked with auditing quality in MAE. In its audits of quality, it has to interpret policy as it figures out how to inspect the phenomena. Thus, the empirical material for this study draws on observations of an SSI conference that concerned quality in adult education, and documents from a quality audit that focused on flexibility and individualization in MAE. By applying the WPR approach, the following questions were used to guide the analysis (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48):

- Q2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?
- Q5: What effects are produced by this representation of the “problem”?

The first part of the analysis took its point of departure in the question: ‘What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem”?’ First, the analysis identifies that it seems to be taken for granted that quality is something that is measurable. As one of the school inspectors said during the SSI Day, measuring it is something that the SSI does every day. Second, quality seems to be produced in binary terms, as either “quality” or “not quality”. For a concept to be referred to in binary terms, many simplifications have to take place. Subsequently, “quality” seems to be stripped from other, more complex, definitions. “Not quality” is produced as much less desirable than “quality” in this context. Third, it seems to be assumed that quality can be improved by being audited and followed up if it is defined in terms of clear and explicit categories before an audit process takes place.

The second part of the analysis focused on the same question as the previous part of the analysis. Here, the analysis illustrates that quality seems to be produced as something elusive and something “more” than figures and numbers. Subsequently, during the SSI day, quality is construed as both quantifiable and elusive at the same time. It seems to be assumed that it is hard to get to the elusive quality behind all the figures and numbers and ‘fancy PowerPoints’ that the school personnel show the school inspectors during quality audits. Therefore, the SSI is developing a new way to get to quality as ‘principals are good at playing with numbers, but the qualitative parts are missing’ (Mufic, 2022b, p. 9). It also seems to be presupposed that this new way of working will make it possible to audit the more qualitative aspects of quality.

The third and final part of the analysis departed from the question: ‘What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?’ In this part, the effects of the different assumptions and presuppositions of quality are scrutinized. First, the analysis highlights the effects of when quality is being produced as something that can be audited as either an outcome or as a part of a process. Subsequently, quality seems to be limited to explicit categories that can be both audited and followed up. Second, the analysis shed light on the effects of the assumption that quality should be audited to be improved. As the SSI turns its focus from the ‘fancy PowerPoints’ to the ongoing processes in the organization, the administrative burden for school personnel might increase. The SSI does not present how it will get to the more elusive parts of the quality concept, except for the statement that it will ask a lot of process-focused questions. Third and finally, the analysis

scrutinizes the effects of the “quality vocabulary” and illustrates how the privilege to suggest solutions to schools’ shortcomings seems to be closely linked to who has the right to point out its problems. Consequently, as the SSI audits generate both success factors and development areas, based on its understanding of problems and their solutions, it puts limits on what can be said and thought about quality in this context.

Altogether, the article sheds light on the different ways that quality is construed during the SSI day. These different logics can be linked to the two different kinds of audits that the SSI conducts in MAE. Thus, in the regular supervision, the focus is on whether the municipality followed the law in terms of right or wrong. However, in the quality audit, it is no longer about right and wrong, as quality is construed as something more than that. Even though the SSI explains that it will try to focus on broad quality metrics, this raises questions about whether it is possible to get to the more elusive parts of quality with the same methods that it uses to access figures and numbers.

Article III: Discursive effects of “quality” talk during a quality audit in Swedish municipal adult education

The third article shed light on how and with what effects quality is construed during a quality audit in MAE, carried out by the SSI. Even though transnational policy flourishes, with directives on how to obtain and maintain quality, more research is needed about how these “quality demands” affect school staff and students in local contexts. Thus, the empirical material of this study consisted of observed, audio-recorded and transcribed audit interviews between school inspectors and study counsellors, teachers, principals and school leaders.

The following questions were used to guide the analysis (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48):

- Q5: What effects are produced in this representation of the “problem”?
 - What is likely to change with this representation of the “problem”?
 - What is likely to stay the same?
 - Who is likely to benefit/be harmed from this representation of the “problem”?
 - How does the attribution of responsibility for the “problem” affect those targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the

community about who is to blame?

These questions were used to shed light on silences, responsibility attributions, and limiting and enabling effects. The first part of the analysis took its point of departure on the two sub-questions, ‘What is likely to change with this representation of the problem?’ And ‘what is likely to stay the same?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48). In school personnel’s talk, quality seems to be construed as something problem oriented, as it is only brought up in relation to the absence of ‘massive criticism’ and ‘something alarming’, as well as ‘warning flags’ (Mufic, 2022a, p. 9). When the focus is on ‘warning flags’, currently functioning areas in the organization seem to be less prioritized.

The second part of the analysis focused on the sub-question, ‘How does the attribution of responsibility for the “problem” affect those targeted and the perception of the rest of the community about who is to blame?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48). Here, the analysis shed light on how school personnel at both the municipalities and at external providers seems to attribute the responsibility for “quality” elsewhere. On the one hand, responsible municipal authorities and principals at the municipality construe quality in relation to ‘trust’ when they say that they have handed over the responsibility for quality to the external provider by signing the procurement agreement. On the other hand, school personnel at the external providers stress that many agreements do not specify how quality should be followed up by the municipality.

The ‘trust’ that the school leaders at the municipalities say that they have becomes questioned by the school inspectors, as they want to know how and when the municipality makes its demands and then follows them up. There also seems to be a difference between how quality is construed in the municipalities’ own management of education and in the education that is outsourced. The quality of the municipalities’ own education is construed as ‘known’ and easy to keep track of, in contrast to the outsourced education that is assumed to be ‘unknown’. What all of these different constructions of quality seem to have in common is that they are underpinned by the assumption that a more active engagement and follow-up is a way to ensure that “good quality” is achieved and maintained.

The third and final part of the analysis departed from the sub-question ‘Who is likely to benefit/be harmed from this representation of the “problem”?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48). The analysis highlights how the

procurement agreement seems to both enable and obstruct quality at the same time, as some municipalities focus on pinpointing quality perspectives, while others let the economics govern. Quality also seems to be produced in two different ways. On the one hand, in relation to the basic quality requirements in the agreement, and on the other hand in relation to the ‘real teaching quality’ (Mufic, 2022a, p. 12). Moreover, teachers at the external providers express that the agreement limits their discretion, as different municipalities have different conditions and different quality requirements. Subsequently, the difference in agreements affects the students as they cannot be treated the same way by the external provider. Teachers at the external provider and at the municipalities say that they sometimes act against the system in the students’ best interests, even though they sometimes get reprimanded for it.

Altogether, the analysis of the quality audit interviews indicates that school personnel construe themselves as the ones who think about what is best for the students and/or the quality of the education. Subsequently, they problematize not only what they say and do, but also the educational system that they operate within. In this context, quality is produced in terms of ambiguity. On the one hand, the concept opens up the opportunity to talk about “good teaching” and “good education”, but on the other hand, it also sets limits for what can be said and done, as the question about how the organization of MAE and its impact seems to be overlooked.

Article IV: ‘And suddenly it’s not that flexible anymore’: Discursive effects in talk by officials and staff about distance education

The third article aims to critically analyze how distance education is construed and the discursive effects on school personnel’s talk during quality audit interviews conducted by the SSI. Distance education has received much attention in contemporary transnational and national policy, especially Swedish adult education policy, where the need for more and increased flexibility is stressed (Mufic, forthcoming). However, not much is known about how these flexibility demands in policy affect how distance education is construed in practice. Subsequently, this study draws on observed, audio-recorded and transcribed audit interviews between school inspectors and study counsellors, teachers, principals, and school leaders.

This study focused on Bacchi’s (2009, p. 48) fifth question and the related

sub-questions:

- Q5: What effects are produced in this representation of the “problem”?
 - What is likely to change with this representation of the “problem”?
 - What is likely to stay the same?
 - Who is likely to benefit/be harmed from this representation of the “problem”?
 - How does the attribution of responsibility for the “problem” affect those targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to blame?

The first part of the analysis took its point of departure in the sub-question: ‘Who is likely to benefit/be harmed from this representation of the “problem”?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48). First, the analysis highlights how flexibility demands in policy seem to produce a “flexibility problem” in practice, as some municipalities have difficulties with offering education with continuous admission during teachers’ summer holiday. Second, different “solutions” seem to be produced in practice to solve the flexibility problem. Such a solution seems to be to outsource courses, mainly in the form of distance education, as this makes it possible for the municipality to live up to the flexibility demands of the policy. However, the “distance solution” seems to have an effect and produce new problems as well. Consequently, in some municipalities, it is no longer possible for students to choose school-based teaching for some courses, as they are only offered as distance education. In effect, a flexibility paradox is produced as increased flexibility through distance education actually decreases the flexibility of the system as students’ options become limited. Third, the distance solution also seems to be underpinned by an economic rationale, as it is often less costly for the municipality to offer outsourced distance education.

The second part of the analysis focused on the sub-question, ‘How does the attribution of responsibility for the “problem” affect those targeted and the perceptions of the rest of the community about who is to blame?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48). Even though distance education is introduced as a solution and is also construed as a problem, i.e. ‘a quick fix’ (Mufic, forthcoming, p. 14), as the dropout rates for distance education are much higher compared to school-based education. Within the discourse, both the adult education

system and the students seem to be construed as responsible for the distance problem. More specifically, the municipalities seem to be held responsible for making it ‘too easy’ for students to apply and for failing to provide sufficient information about what it takes to study at distance. Students also seem to be held responsible for their own success or failure, as they are sometimes seen as ‘over confident’ and as ‘jumping in at the deep end’.

The third and final part of the analysis departed from the sub-questions: ‘What is likely to change with this representation of the “problem”?’ and ‘What is likely to stay the same?’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 48). Here, the analysis indicates that the way that distance education is introduced as a solution to the flexibility demands in policy seems to be likely to stay the same. The analysis also sheds light on how different solutions to the distance problem are produced. One such solution seems to be increased control when students are admitted to adult education. In effect, the study counsellor seems to be construed as a gatekeeper, whose role is to decide who is suitable for studying at distance and who is not. Another solution seems to be to increase school-based supervision and guidance. In both of these different solutions, the organization of distance education seems to remain unquestioned. The focus is not on how to change the adult education system or to change how courses are offered. Rather, the suggestions for change concern how to scaffold distance education by selecting who is eligible and by supporting students who seem to be failing with their studies.

In sum, the analysis highlights the discursive effects of how distance education is construed in policy and during the quality audit. Both in policy and sometimes also during the audit meeting, the logic seems to go that the more flexibility, the better. However, at the same time as distance education includes some students, it also excludes others. In effect, distance education is construed as something that both produces and removes barriers to participating in adult education. Two different underpinning rationalities for the introduction of distance education have been identified and interrogated in the study. On the one hand, the demand for more distance education seems to be underpinned by an inclusive rationale. On the other hand, there also seems to be an economic rationale behind the implementation of distance education. In effect, it becomes difficult to question distance education, as all suggestions for solutions to the problem focus on supporting students. Therefore, there seems to be a hierarchy of problems, as they are given a different kind of attention in policy and during the quality audit.

Chapter 7

'Quality should not cost more'
Favorit Roasted onion

Discussion

In this chapter I will first discuss the findings in relation to previous research. Second, the focus will be on self-reflexivity. Third and finally, the contribution of the thesis will be discussed.

The micropolitics of “quality” construed in the Audit society

By taking its point of departure in the results of this thesis, three different themes will be highlighted. Together they shed light on the overarching question of how the micropolitics of quality is being produced in the Audit society. In order to situate the results of this thesis in a larger context, these themes will also be discussed in relation to previous research. First, the focus will be on the micropolitics of quality in the Audit society on a more general level. Second, the discussion will tend to how “quality governing” is being produced. Finally, questions of “quality” in relation to quality audits will be elaborated on in a more detailed way. Each one of the themes has been guided by Bacchi’s (2009) Q3, Q4 and Q6.

“Quality problems” and their “solutions”

This theme takes its point of departure with Bacchi’s (2009) third question: ‘How has this representation of the “problem” come about?’. To do that, it will return to Dahler-Larsen’s (2019) and Power’s (1997) critique against the steadily increased amount of auditing activities that affect the way we refer to quality in everyday life and policy. By returning to previous research, it becomes possible to shed light on the assumption about the relation between quality audits and risk management (Beck, 1992; Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Power, 2016). This can be exemplified by the principals’ and responsible municipal authorities’ talk about quality as the absence of warning flags and alarm bells in the third article (Mufic, 2022a). Even though the focus in adult education policy seems to be to remedy the ‘lack of quality’ (Mufic & Fejes,

2022), the way that it is talked about during the quality audit seems to introduce systematic quality work as a way to solve or prevent “quality problems” from happening. This is in line with Harvey’s and Stensaker’s (2008) claim that audits carried out within a risk management discourse not only evaluate processes but also try to prevent quality problems before they even happen. But the way that quality is produced during the quality audit seems to be underpinned by two different logics.

In policy, the need for increased quality is stressed, but it is not defined how or what quality should be developed after the point that the quality problems have been fixed. Hence, if the ambition is goal fulfilment or a decrease of dropouts, what happens when all the goals are fulfilled, and dropout rates are at zero? The same logic about quality as risk management seems to be reproduced by principals and responsible municipal authorities during the audit meetings. However, on the SSI day, the SSI looks ahead and presents its visions of a future where it can audit quality without focusing on measuring activities. The same goes for the teachers who, during the quality audit interviews, criticize the educational system for not putting the students first.

This begs the question of who it is that has the imperative prerogative regarding the way that quality is construed in relation to specific problems. When SSI, MAE and the concept of quality meet, one might think that it is the SSI that dictates what is and what is “not quality”. However, by drawing on data from the SSI day, the findings indicate that the SSI’s relationship to quality is quite ambiguous and complex (Mufic, 2022b). In one way, the SSI construction of the concept of quality impacts MAE. But in another way, MAE also impacts SSI, as the organization of it, as well as the way that quality is formulated in policy, have consequences for how the SSI can relate to the concept and audit it. Additionally, the municipalities also take part in the production of quality when they define it in the procurement agreements they constitute when they outsource education to external providers, and when or if they choose to follow it up. But it seems as though these processes are still locked and constrained by the vocabulary of the Audit society and the logic of accountability and assessment activities.

In previous research, quality is often addressed in critical terms. There seem to be many concerns about the effects of what happens when quality is shaped within the Audit society.

Some of the consequences that are mentioned are the ‘paperfication’ (Bornemark, 2018) and the increased administrative burden on school

personnel (Bergh, 2010), when they are held accountable by the evaluation machinery (or monster?) (Lindgren, 2014). Additionally, it has been pointed out that the audit activities have led to two realities, one that plays out in practice, and one administrative that plays out in the documentation of what is being done in practice (Bornemark, 2018). Gustafsson, et al. (2014) mention the risks of ‘window dressing’ and Power (2021) raises the concern that audit, and accounting activities not only represent the organizational reality, but actually take part in shaping it. It could perhaps be argued that even the research about quality seems to have a problem-oriented focus?

The ‘quality problem preventing’ approach can also be connected to the following quote by Dahler-Larsen (2019, p. 36), where he writes that ‘...the control of quality became a problematic industry itself’. And perhaps this is the intersection point where Bacchi’s (2009) problem-focused WPR approach and Dahler-Larsen’s (2019) critical analysis of the concept of quality meet and play out in the context of a quality audit process in MAE. By focusing on what the problem was represented to be in specific proposals, and by critically interrogating and reconstructing such representations, a space for reflecting and thinking about quality in different ways has been opened up. This relates to Egetenmeyer’s and K  pplingers’s (2011) call for more engagement with the concept of quality in adult education.

Governing in the name of “quality”

The second theme has been guided by Bacchi’s (2009) fourth question: What is left unproblematic in this “problem” representation? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be conceptualized differently?

If we turn back to the thought image of “quality” as an empty signifier, are the discussions in Swedish adult education policy proposals really about quality at all? Instead of being about what quality is or could be, contemporary policy discussions seem to focus on what should be done to find or achieve quality. Which begs the question, at which sites do these discussions take place? The word quality seems to flourish in policy, in the talk of school inspectors, responsible municipal authorities and principals, but not in the talk of teachers and study counsellors. Quality seems to be construed differently by teachers and study counsellors, as they often mention how the organization of the adult education system put obstacles in the way of them and their students. Put differently, the focus on SSI’s definition of quality during the audit process sheds light on some issues,

while other issues remain in the shadows.

However, one could also argue that this is a necessary evil and that it would be impossible for the SSI to focus on every aspect that is brought up during the quality audit interviews. Even though these silences or blank spots could be regarded as something unavoidable, as they seem to be a consequence of an audit, the SSI wants to improve this area. During the SSI day, the call for a more process-oriented audit that focuses on what is going on 'behind the facade' is formulated. Within an Audit society that is governed by quality audits, it seems logical to remedy the issue of blind spots in audits with a wider focus and to stress the need for schools to be more transparent (Roberts, 2018). But if this intention is scrutinized with the help of Dahler-Larsen's (2019) and Bacchi's (2009) thoughts on quality and "quality governing", as well as Power's (1997) and Robert's (2018) thoughts on audits and transparency, it opens up a space for seeing the issue in a different light.

Moreover, it becomes possible to link the ideal of transparency as a mechanism that plugs into the process of what it is that makes schools auditable (Power, 1997, 2021). By bringing these different concepts of quality, audit and transparency together, it becomes possible to pinpoint the mechanisms that need to be in place to make quality governing possible. When these concepts are used together, it also gives the impression that a quality audit process can audit all quality aspects of a school. But what seems to be left unproblematized in this way of thinking is that '...the rhetoric of transparency appears to conceal that very process of concealment...' (Strathern, 2000, p. 315).

Another mechanism that stems from the audit process is the act of accountability (Power, 2021), a concept that can be related to Bacchi's (2009) fifth question about who is held responsible for the "problem". Therefore, the quality steering process seems to go from identifying a problem, suggesting a "solution" and then holding people or organizations responsible for solving the problem. An additional way of governing in the name of quality is the way the 'success recipes' and 'good examples' that the SSI shares with the responsible municipal authority, principals, and teachers during the SSI day. These 'recipes' are a part of the quality audit process that steps away from the focus on 'warning flags' and 'problem solving' in one way, as they are future focused. But at the same time, it could also be argued that they are a part of the 'risk management'-logics (Dahler-Larsen, 2019), as the 'good examples' are thought to be implemented by less

successful municipalities so that they can also be successful, or at least improve. But what seems to be left out here is the SSI's influence, as it has been active in terms of defining the 'good example', selecting it, and then also communicating it to a wider audience. So, is it really a successful recipe for educational quality, or rather a 'success recipe' for becoming "quality auditable"? The SSI is being active in terms of governing, as these examples of 'success recipes' are produced as specific kinds of examples. When such an example is produced, the impact of certain indicators in a municipality is highlighted in relation to what constitutes quality in an education system. These recipes are not neutral, as the way they are produced has effects on what becomes possible to think and say about quality in adult education.

Another example of how knowledge about quality is being construed is the way that the concepts of flexibility and individualization are introduced as a solution to MAE's quality problem in policy. However, when the logic that underpins this way of reasoning is interrogated, it seems as though the solution, while solving some issues, also produces new problems. The flexibility logic seems to go like this: the more flexible the MAE is, the more the throughflow will increase. What is left unproblematized in this solution is the fact that the demands for flexibility in policy produce difficulties for the municipalities and the external providers delivering courses, as they need to have a continuous intake. Distance education seems to be introduced as a way to live up to the demands of flexible adult education. However, distance education is perhaps not the best way for all students in MAE to study. The story is endless, as every new implementation in policy and practice has new, sometimes unexpected, consequences.

During the quality audit meetings, there is much talk about what the municipality can do to increase flexibility and individualization to prevent dropouts. At this meeting, both adult educators and students seem to be held responsible for these issues. On the one hand, school personnel are held responsible by the SSI for not delivering enough flexibility and individualization. On the other hand, school personnel seem to hold students responsible for "jumping in at the deep end" when they plan their studies, as they overcommit and then drop out. There seem to be competing problem representations at play here.

Quality audit processes as "quality" producers

This third and final theme takes its point of departure in Bacchi's (2009) sixth

question, ‘How and where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted or replaced?’ This section will focus on how “quality” is construed in relation to audit processes. Consequently, it will draw on the two different kinds of audits that the SSI carries out in MAE, regular supervision and quality audits. The different audits have different scopes and also some differences when it comes to procedures. One thing that both audits have in common is that they rely on regulations such as the Education Act (SFS, 2010:800) and the Curriculum of Adult Education (2017). While the audit supervision focuses on whether the goals in these legislations are fulfilled or not, the focus of the quality audit is to what degree these goals are fulfilled. However, as there are no instructions in the legislation on how to measure the level of goal fulfilment, the SSI has to produce such metrics to make the quality audit possible, and sometimes the vocabulary used in the different audit types seems quite similar. Even though the SSI indicates that it wants to move away from this, quality seems to be produced in binary terms, sometimes as either “quality” or “not quality”.

The SSI takes an active part in the quality governing as it is the quality producer within the quality Audit society. Therefore, the way that quality is audited in MAE has consequences for the organization, the teaching, school personnel and students. During the audit interviews, the school inspectors and the school personnel might have different opinions about what the “problem” is and the solution to that problem. In such contexts, the WPR analysis sheds light on competing and hierarchal problem representations as some “problems” seem to be taken more seriously within the quality Audit society than others.

One example of competing problem representations can be found in the way that distance education is produced as a solution to the demands for flexibility in policy, but is also produced as a problem due to student dropout (Mufic, forthcoming). By scrutinizing what seems to be taken for granted when a “distance problem” is construed, it becomes possible to question if it is the distance education itself that is the problem or if it is something else? If the municipality and the external providers delivered courses of high quality and if the students only chose courses that they could complete successfully, distance education would not be a problem, according to policy. What is being said about distance education during the audit interviews, written in the report by the SSI, and then communicated back to practice during the SSI day, has effects on all of those who are involved in adult

education, both school personnel and inspectors. More specifically, it has effects on the way that certain issues are discussed as problems while others are not. It also has effects on where the responsibility for the problem is put. Is it the teacher or the principal who fails to deliver a flexible education? Or is it the organization of the adult education system that fails to deliver the prerequisites to deliver a flexible education?

Moreover, the way that quality is audited in MAE does not always seem to be adapted to the varying ways that adult education is organized, as many municipalities outsource their education. In some municipalities where MAE is being outsourced, a principal can be responsible for teachers who work in another part of Sweden (Mufic, 2022a). As the SSI interviews school personnel both in the municipality and at the external provider, it gets an encompassing overview of how MAE is organized, as well as a personal connection with school personnel; an overview and personnel connection that both the municipality and the external provider often seem to lack.

Another example of how the organization of MAE has effects is the agreements between the municipality and the external provider. Since these vary between municipalities, students from different municipalities have different opportunities to, for example, prolong their studies, even though they study the same course at the same external provider. As the different municipalities specify different quality criteria in the agreement, the students are treated differently by the external providers. In that aspect, indicators for quality seem to be produced differently in different agreements. Moreover, as the SSI is tasked with auditing quality, it is measured and assessed with the same methods and indicators, even though it is produced differently in different municipalities.

During the quality audit process, the way that quality is audited can seem strict and controlled. Even though it seems to be taken for granted that something needs to be measured to audit quality, the question about what it is that is being measured and how it should be measured remains. The risk of reducing quality to numbers has been pointed out by several scholars (Biesta, 2009; Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Power, 1997) and it is an old adage that there is 'no safety in numbers'. But at the same time as quality is produced as something auditable and measurable during the quality audit process, there is still much room for interpretation due to vague formulations in policy. It seems almost paradoxical that the definition of quality is so vague and ambiguous within a quality Audit society that is constantly focused on the improvement and development of quality.

Reflections on reflexivity (Step 7)

According to Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), it has been suggested that the WPR approach creates confusion about how to move forward after a “problem” questioning analysis, as it ‘leaves us mired in a field of competing interpretations’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 24). Hence, should a WPR analysis result in practical guidelines? Instead of prescribing ‘what needs to be done’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 84), Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) promote critical discussions of power and its effects.

According to the WPR approach, politics and policies need to be critically scrutinized as they often ‘buy into problematic premises’ (Bacchi & Goodwin, p. 25). As the goal is to govern ‘with a minimum of domination’ (Foucault, 1987, p. 129), all recommendations for change should be critically reflected upon. Put differently, the analysis aims to do ‘a work of problematizations and perpetual problematization’ (Foucault, 2001, p. 1431), even on one’s own WPR analysis (Bacchi, 2009). Subsequently, this section will provide a critical reflection of the study and its context by applying the WPR questions to my own analysis in line with the instructions for step 7 (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

I will start this reflection by pointing out that there were an uncountable number of “problems” in the selected policy proposals that were left out because of my initial focus on quality. Before I turned to the WPR approach, I thought of several different theoretical lenses to apply to my empirical data. First, I thought of doing a conversation analysis to shed light on how school inspectors formulated their questions during the quality audit. Second, I considered the benefits of a policy enactment (Ball, 2015) analysis to illustrate how policy was being translated at different levels in the adult education system. Third, I contemplated using ANT or practice theory to highlight the materiality in the way that objects such as matrixes, interview guides, watches, nametags and even glasses of water, were used during the audit meetings.

I am confident that all of these different approaches would have been applicable to the collected empirical material. They could also have been used to illuminate aspects that have been left out due to my decision to focus solely on the WPR approach.

It must also be mentioned that even though I sometimes write about the “quality problem” in MAE, which might indicate that there is only *one* problem, I am fully aware of the fact that several competing problem

representations are going on at the same time. The focus on problematizations also has its consequences. After having worked with the WPR approach for more than four years, I suddenly see problems everywhere! And it becomes more difficult to unsee how things are produced as issues in media and everyday life. Besides this, the WPR approach and its initial focus on problems has limiting effects on how issues can be understood. I have also thought a lot about the way that I reproduce the concept of quality as a problem in the way I communicate and present my findings.

In the same way that I risk reproducing problems, I risk reproducing simplified binaries by criticizing them in the light of governing issues instead of unpacking them and trying to understand them and define them. In the analysis, I prioritized using binaries as a foundation for my critique rather than giving a more detailed and nuanced account of them. This line of thought can be related to Deleuze's and Guattaris's (2004) critique of dichotomies, a critique that I think applies to the WPR approach as well. Hence, by focusing on power, oppositions, hierarchies, binaries, and dichotomies, I risk reproducing these concepts in my own analysis. The WPR applications focus on 'revealing the operation of conceptual logics' (Bacchi, 2009) also seems to indicate that something is going on behind the façade. But what if there is nothing there (other than my own reproductions)? And what if the world, in reality, is really messy, complex and intertwined, like the image of the rhizome, and can only be easily divided into different conceptual logics in the writing of an analysis?

It will not be possible for me to account for all of these moments, but I will mention a few of them to exemplify. One example of what has been left out in this thesis is the voices of the MAE students. This is due to many different reasons. First, I planned to conduct interviews with students, but that idea was abandoned since I already had more than enough empirical data from just the observations. Another example of things being left out or, more specifically, getting lost or dropped along the way is the focus on material aspects. I still have some of those questions at the back of my head, such as what does materiality do? And how have the results of the quality audit been materialized?

When it comes to effects, Bacchi (2009) mentions three different types: discursive effects, subjectification effects and lived effects. Due to the aim of my thesis and the empirical data, the focus naturally became on discursive effects. But I have been thinking about the relationship between materiality

and the lived effects and how I could have engaged with those questions more within the scope of the thesis. It has not been possible to answer all of the six questions within the scope of this thesis, as it seems like an overwhelming task to attempt to suggest how the “quality problem” can be disrupted and replaced. Perhaps this study could be seen as a starting point for that kind of discussion.

Another aspect of the effects is the way that I present and criticize how the “heterogeneous target” group is introduced in adult education policy (another problem that got lost along the way). At that moment, I could have chosen a completely different path by trying to engage in a more participatory type of research by bringing the voices of the heterogeneous target group, Bacchi’s (2009) lived effects, and material aspects together. Instead, my attention went directly to steering mechanisms and I started top-down, from policy to the actual audit meeting and the SSI day. And there I stopped. I cannot help but wonder what might have happened if I had gone the other way around, i.e. bottom-up, by focusing on what was being produced as a part of the quality problem in MAE.

Finally, I want to discuss possibilities and limitations of a critical stance in research. At the beginning of this research project, I was hesitant to apply a critical lens on quality issues as I felt uncomfortable criticizing. I thought a lot about the point of critique and often felt that I would contribute more by offering solutions rather than just criticizing things and leaving them as they were. To return to the question that was asked at the beginning of this section, can a critical stance provide us with a path on which to move forward?

When I told people about the post-structural framework that I used and the critique against the “system” that focused on making students employable rather than fostering democratic citizens, I sometimes got the response: ‘But isn’t it a good thing to be employable? How would it look otherwise? Isn’t becoming employable best for all of us in the end?’ And of course, I agree to some extent, but the critique that this thesis offers is not about MAE preparing students for the labour market. The more I engaged in the WPR approach, I started to realize the creative potential that lies in the art of criticizing. For me, it has become a way to open up a window for possibilities and think about “problems” differently. MAE is already delivering flexibility and individualization in the name of quality, but I believe we can be, and do, so much more!

Contribution and suggestions for continued research

Finally, it is time to summarize the contribution of this thesis and to look forward. This study aims to shed light and critically interrogate how the micropolitics of “quality” is being construed in the Audit society. Grounded in the rich body of research on quality in educational contexts, the contribution of the study lies in its focus on an embodied audit meeting in MAE. Thus, the thesis sheds light on the uncharted relation between SSI, MAE and the concept of quality. Moreover, the thesis has also provided some answers to Dahler-Larsen’s (2019) call for an analysis of the politics of ‘quality itself’ and Power’s (2021, p. 11) call for ‘...a more fine-grained, micro-processual analysis’ of how auditing practices seem to have practice shifting performativity (Marti & Gond, 2019; Power, 2021).

The thesis also constitutes a methodological and theoretical contribution, as it has explored the possibilities of the WPR approach in different educational contexts by focusing on different policy proposals. Additionally, it has engaged with Bacchi’s (2009) step seven, as it has provided a critical reflection of the WPR analysis that was conducted. The findings have also been related to international research about adult education, audit practices and quality. In the thesis, it has been pointed out that part of MAE’s organization ends up outside of the quality audit (as it is the municipality and not the school that is in focus). The discussion also highlights how the concept of quality seems to be produced as a specific kind of problem in relation to specific issues, such as economy, pre-requisites, throughflow and the heterogeneous target group. What seems to be left out of the quality discussions is pedagogical visions.

The absence of pedagogical visions is a theme that will hopefully be explored further in research to come; hence, how or if pedagogical visions can be included in the way that quality is produced in adult education? Moreover, it would be beneficial both for the field and practise if scholars answered Egetenmeyer’s and K  pplingers’s (2011) call for adult education to find its own version and definition of quality.

Other aspects of quality and auditing in MAE that could be explored are the relationship between the different actors involved, and questions of materiality and how subjectification effects and shapes adult education and its students within the Audit society. There are also some uncharted participatory possibilities within the WPR approach that could be explored by focusing on lived effects and by expanding the understanding of policy

proposals. Even though this study has opened the possibility to view the micropolitics of quality in adult education in new ways, many questions still remain. Are there other kinds of quality governing possible within the “quality Audit society”?

References

- Andersson, P., & Muhrman, K. (2021). Marketisation of adult education in Sweden. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*. 1-18.
Doi: 10.1177/147797142111055491
- Andersson, E., & Wärvik, G.-B. (2012). Swedish adult education in transition? Implications of the work first principle. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 18(1), 90-103.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7227/JACE.18.1.8>
- Armstrong, L. (2007). The significance of interpersonal skills and tutor behaviour in determining quality of teaching and learning in adult education. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 13(2), 231-246.
- Armstrong, P. (2000). *Never mind the quality, measure the length: issues for lifelong learning*. Supporting lifelong learning global colloquium. University of East London.
- Assefa, Y. (2021). Towards learner-oriented monitoring and evaluation in adult education program: A vital approach to ensure adult learners' learning needs. *Education Research International*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/6663700>
- Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Pearson.
- Bacchi, C. (2011, 3 February 2011). *Gender mainstreaming and reflexivity: Asking some hard questions (Keynote address)*. Paper presented at the Advancing Gender + Training in Theory and Practice, Conference at Complutense University, Madrid.
- Bacchi, C. (2012). Why Study Problematizations? Making Politics Visible. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 2(1), 1-8.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2012.21001>
- Bacchi, C. (2018). *Governmentality and WPR*.
<https://carolbacchi.com/2018/11/19/governmentality-and-wpr/>
- Bacchi, C. (n.d.). *FAQ*. <https://carolbacchi.com/faq/>
- Bacchi, C., & Bonham, J. (2014). Reclaiming discursive practices as an analytic focus: Political implications. *Foucault Studies*, 17, 173-192.
- Bacchi, C., & Goodwin, S. (2016). *Poststructural policy analysis: a guide to practice*. Palgrave Pivot.

- Ball, S. J. (1990). *Politics and policy making in education: Explorations in policy sociology*. Routledge.
- Ball, S. J. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 13(2), 10-17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0159630930130203>
- Ball, S. J. (2015). What is policy? 21 years later: reflections on the possibilities of policy research. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 1-8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1015279>
- Barrett, M. S., & Mills, J. (2009). The inter-reflexive possibilities of dual observations: An account from and through experience. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(4), 417-429. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390802448549>
- Beach, D. (2004). The Public Costs of the Re-structuring of Adult Education: A Case in Point from Sweden. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 2(1), 159-188.
- Beach, D., & M. Carlson (2004). Adult Education Goes to Market: an ethnographic case study of the restructuring and reculturing of adult education. *European Educational Research Journal*, 3(3), 673-691. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eej.2004.3.3.9>
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society. Towards a new modernity*. Sage.
- Bejerot, E., & Hasselbladh, H. (2002). *Kvalitet utan gränser: En kritisk belysning av kvalitetsstyrning*. Academia Adacta.
- Bergh, A. (2010). *Vad gör kvalitet med utbildning? Om kvalitetsbegreppets skilda innebörder och dess konsekvenser för utbildning*. (Doctoral thesis). Örebro universitet, Örebro. (Örebro Studies in Education 29).
- Berg, A. (2015). Local quality work in an age of accountability: between autonomy and control. *Journal of Education Policy* 4(30), 590-607. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2015.1017612>
- Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 33-46. Doi:10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9.
- Bjursell, C. (2016). When theories become practice - a metaphorical analysis of adult-education school-leaders' talk. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 7(2), 191-205. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela9084>
- Bjursell, C., Chaib, C., Falkner, C., & Ludvigsson, A. (2015). *Kvalitetsarbete i vuxenutbildning: Nomen*.

- Black, S., Balatti, J., & Falk, I. (2012). Health literacy and social capital: What role for adult literacy partnerships and pedagogy? *Studies in Continuing Education*, 35(2), 1-19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2012.712038>
- Bornemark, J. (2018). *Det omätbaras renässans: En uppgörelse med pedanternas världsherravälde*. Volante.
- Braun, A., Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Hoskins, K. (2011). Taking context seriously: towards explaining policy enactments in the secondary school. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 32(4), 585-596.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601555>
- Butler, J. (2010). Performative Agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 147-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2010.494117>
- Carlbaum, S. (2016). Equivalence and performance gaps in Swedish school inspection: context and the politics of blame. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 37(1), 133-148.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2014.936929>
- Carlbaum, S., Hult, A., Lindgren, J., Novak, J., Rönnerberg, L., & Segerholm, C. (2014). Skolinspektion som styrning. *Utbildning & Demokrati*, 23(1), 5-20. Doi: 10.48059/uod.v23i1.1007
- Chapman, C. S., Cooper, D. J., & Miller, P. (2009). Linking accounting, organizations, and institutions. In C. S. Chapman, D. J. Cooper, & P. Miller. *Accounting, organizations and institutions*, (pp-1-29). Oxford University Press.
- Christophersen, K.-A., Elstad, E., & Turmo, A. (2011). Contextual determinants of school teaching intensity in the teaching of adult immigrant students. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 17(1), 3-22.
- Clapham, A. (2015). Post-fabrication and putting on a show: examining the impact of short notice inspections. *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(4), 613-628. Doi: 10.1002/berj.3159
- Clark, A., Holland, C., Katz, J., & Peace, S. (2009). Learning to see: lessons from a participatory observation research project in public spaces. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(4), 245-360.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570802268587>
- Cooper, D. C., & Schindler, P. S. (2001). *Business Research Methods* (7th Ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Cottle, M., & Alexander, E. (2012). Quality in Early Years Settings: Government, Research and Practitioners' Perspectives. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 635-654.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2011.571661>
- Dahler-Larsen, P. (2008). *Konsekvenser av indikatorer*. KREVI.

- Dahler-Larsen, P. (2019). *Quality: From Plato to Performance*: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Dean, M. (1999). *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. Sage.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2004). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Continuum.
- de Wolf, I. F., & Janssens, F. J. G. (2007). Effects and side effects of inspections and accountability in education. An overview of empirical studies. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(3), 379-396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980701366207>
- Didier, N. (2018). About the (non) existence of a lifelong education system in Chile. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 24(2), 229-249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971418818574>
- Dreyfus, H. L., & Rabinow, P. (1983). *Michael Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (2nd ed.). Chicago University Press.
- Egetenmeyer, R., & K apflinger, B. (2011). Professionalisation and quality management: struggles, boundaries and bridges between two approaches. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 2(1), 21-35. Doi:10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0058
- Ehren, M. C. M., Altrichter, H., McNamara, G., & O'Hara, J. (2013). Impact of school inspections on improvement of schools-describing assumptions on causal mechanisms in six European countries. *Educational Assessment Evaluation and Accountability* 25(1), 3-43. Doi: 10.1007/s11092-012-9156-4
- Ek, E. (2012). *De granskade: Om hur offentliga verksamheter g ors granskningsbara*. G teborg University, G teborg.
- Ekholm, M. (2012). *Samverkan i styrningen*. http://www.eveduc.com/images/doc/vagval_i_skolans_histori_a_samverkan_styrningen.pdf
- Eveline, J., & Bacchi, C. (2010). Power, resistance and reflexive practice. In C. Bacchi & J. Eveline (Eds.), *Mainstreaming politics: Gendering practices and feminist theory* (pp. 139-161). Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press.
- Fejes, A., & Holmqvist, D. (2019). Procurement as a market in adult education. In M. Dahlstedt & A. Fejes (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and market forces in education: lessons from Sweden* (pp. 156-169). London: Routledge.
- Fejes, A., Runesdotter, C., & W rvi , G.-B. (2016). Marketisation of adult education: Principals as business leaders, standardised teachers and responsibilised students. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 35(6), 664-681.

Doi:10.1080/02601370.2016.1204366

- Flynn, T. R. (2005). Foucault's mapping of history. In G. Gutting (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Foucault* (2nd ed., pp. 29-48). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Forkby, T., & Höjer, S. (2008). Ritual eller strategi - upphandlingar och ramavtal inom den sociala ungdomsvården. [Ritual or strategy – procurement and frame contracts in social youth care]. *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 15(2), 115-134.
- Forsberg, E. (2014). Utbildningens bedömningskulturer i granskningens tidevarv. *Utbildning & Demokrati*, 23(3), 53-76.
- Forsberg, E., & Nordzell, A. (2013). Dialogue' for school improvement? *Nordic Studies in Education*, 33, 187-203.
- Forssell, A., & Ivarsson Westerberg, A. (2016). Granskningens (glömda) kostnader. *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 118(1), 19-37.
- Foucault, M. (1966 [1973]). *The order of things: An archeology of the human sciences*. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *Michel Foucault: Security, territory, population, Lectures at Collège de France, 1977-78* (G. Burchell Ed.). South Yarra: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Foucault, M. (1980 [1976]). Two Lectures, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977/Michel Foucault* (C. o. Gordon, Trans.). In C. Gordon (Ed.). Sussex: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. In H. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michael Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (pp. 208-228). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1984). The means of correct training. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader* (pp. 188-205). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1986). *The use of pleasure. The history of sexuality, Volume 2* (R. Hurley, Trans.). London: Viking Press.
- Foucault, M. (1987). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom: An interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984 with R. Fornet Betancourt, H. Becker, A. Gomez-Müller, J.C. Gauthier. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 12, 112-131.
- Foucault, M. (1990 [1987]). *The history of sexuality. Volume 1: An introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Politics and the study of discourse. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault effect: studies in governmentality with two lectures and an interview with Michael Foucault* (pp. 53-72). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Foucault, M. (1994 [1981]). So is it important to think? (R. Hurley, Trans.). In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Power: Essential works of Foucault 1954-1984* (Vol. 3). London: Penguin.
- Gendron, Y., Cooper, D. J., & Townley, B. (2007). The construction of auditing expertise in measuring government performance. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 32, 101-129.
- Gray, C., & Gardner J. (1999). The Impact of School Inspection. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25(4), 455-468.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/030549899103928>
- Getnet Abate, S., & Yirga Adamu, A. (2022). Stakeholders' participation in adult education programme development in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 1-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2022.2052990>
- Gouthro, P. A. (2002). Education for sale: at what cost? Lifelong learning and the marketplace. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21(4), 334-346.
- Gustafsson, J.-E., Lander, R., & Myrberg, E. (2014). Inspections of Swedish schools: A critical reflection on intended effects, causal mechanisms and methods. *Education Inquiry*, 5(4), 461-479.
- Hacking, I. (2002). Making up people. In I. Hacking (Ed.), *Historical ontology* (pp. 99-114). Cambridge MA: Harvard.
- Hanberger, A., Carlbaum, S., Hult, A., Lindgren, L., & Lundström, U. (2016). School evaluation in Sweden in a local perspective: a synthesis. *Education Inquiry* 7(3), 349-371.
<https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v7.30115>
- Harvey, L., & Stensaker, B. (2008). Quality Culture: Understandings, Boundaries and Linkages. *European Journal of Education*, 43(4), 427-442.
- Henning Loeb, I., & Lumsden Wass, K. (2014). A Policy of Individualization and Flexibility Ignoring the Situation of Non-self-Reliant Individuals: The Example of Swedish Basic Adult Education. *The Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 12(2), 399-422.
- Heritage, J. (1984). *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Holmqvist, D. (2021). A cry, a clash and a parting: a French pragmatic sociology approach to 'the struggle over the teacher's soul'. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 1-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2020.1865830>
- Holmqvist, D. (2022). *Adult Education at Auction: On Tendering-Based Procurement and Valuation in Swedish Municipal Adult Education*. (Doctoral thesis). Linköping University, Linköping. (Linköping Studies in Behavioural Science 242).

- Holmqvist, D., Fejes, A., & Nylander, E. (2020). Auctioning out education: On exogenous privatisation through public procurement. *European Educational Research Journal*, 1-16.
Soi:10.1177/1474904120953281
- Hopkins, D., Harris, A., Watling, R., & Beresford, J. (1999). From Inspection to School Improvement? Evaluating the Accelerated Inspection Programme in Waltham Forest. *British Educational Research Journal*, 25(5), 679-690.
- Hult, A. (2014). Granskningens verkningar – inspektörer om inspektionen. *Utbildning & Demokrati* 23(1). 107-126.
<https://doi.org/10.48059/uod.v23i1.1012>
- Hult, A., & C. Segerholm. (2016). The process of juridification of school inspection in Sweden. *Utbildning & Demokrati* 25(2), 95-118.
- Hunkin, E. (2019). If not quality, then what? The discursive risks in early childhood quality reform. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 40(6), 917-929.
Doi:10.1080/01596306.2018.1453780
- Jarl, M. (2012). *Skolan och det kommunala huvudmannskapet*. Malmö: Gleerups.
- Košmerl, T., & Mikulec, B. (2021). 'You have to run it like a company': The marketisation of adult learning and education in Germany and Slovenia. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 12(1), 47-63.
<http://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.ojs3466>
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews*. London: Sage.
- Lassnigg, L. (2011). Contradictions in adult education structures and policies in Austria: their interrelation with the professional development of educators. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 2(1), 37-55.
Doi:10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela0028
- Leach, L. (2014). Adult and community education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand 2000–2014: neoliberal influences? *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 33(6), 705-720.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2014.946976>
- Leeuw, F. L., & Furubo, J.-E. (2008). Evaluation systems. What are they and why study them? *Evaluation*, 14(2), 157-169.
- Lindeberg, T. (2007). *Evaluative Technologies. Quality and the Multiplicity of Performance*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School.
- Lindgren, L. (2014). *Nya utvärderingsmonstret : om kvalitetsmätning i den offentliga sektorn* (2 ed.). Lund: Studentlitteratur.

- Mark, R. (2004). Quality management in lifelong learning: Can a stakeholder approach to involvement make a difference?. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 10(1), 19-30.
- Marti, W., & Gond, J. P. (2019). Why do theories become self-fulfilling? Clarifying the Process of Barnesian Performativity. *Academy of Management Review*, 43, 487-508.
- McHoul, A., & Grace, W. (1993). *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Miller, P., & Power, M. (2013). Accounting, organizing and economizing: Connecting accounting research and organizational theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 7, 557-605.
- Miller, P., & Rose, N. (1990). Governing economic life. *Economy and Society*, 19(1), 1-31.
- Miller, P., & Rose, N. (2008). *Governing the present. Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ministry of Education. (2018:71). *En andra och en annan chans - ett komvux i tiden*. Ministry of Education.
<https://www.regeringen.se/4a57d7/contentassets/d2112ee65999452b937573e1c91bc9d9/en-andra-och-en-annan-chans-ett-komvux-i-tiden.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2019:06). *På väg - mot stärkt kvalitet och likvärdighet inom komvux för elever med svenska som andraspråk*.
<https://www.regeringen.se/4ada7e/contentassets/825db34545104965a8c06fd3d7a03b11/pa-vag--mot-starkt-kvalitet-och-likvardighet-inom-komvux-for-elever-med-svenska-som-andrasprak>
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research interviewing. Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mufic, J. (forthcoming). 'And suddenly it's not that flexible anymore!' Discursive effects in officials and staff in charge of adult education's talk about distance education.
- Mufic, J. (2022a). Discursive effects of "quality" talk during a quality audit in Swedish municipal adult education. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 1-13.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2022.2042844>
- Mufic, J. (2022b). 'Measurable but not quantifiable': The Swedish Schools Inspectorate on construing "quality" as "auditable". *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 41(2), 199-211.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2022.2041747>

- Mufic, J., & Fejes, A. (2022). 'Lack of quality' in Swedish adult education: a policy study. *Journal of Education Policy*, 37(2), 269-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1817567>
- Muhrman, K., & Andersson, P. (2021). Adult education in Sweden in the wake of marketisation. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2021.1984060>
- Novak, J. (2014). Anpassningarnas för(e)ställning. Om Skolinspektionens tillsyn som en scen för förändring. *Utbildning & Demokrati* 23(1), 127-144.
- Nytell, H. (2006). *Från kvalitetsidé till kvalitetsregim. Om statlig styrning av skolan* Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- OECD. (2018). *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre*. <https://doi-org.e.bibl.liu.se/10.1787/9789264301528-en>
- OECD. (2019). *Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Olmedo, A., & Ball, S. J. (2015). Competition, Governance and Global Education Policy. In M. Souto-Otero (Ed.), *Evaluating European Education Policy-Making*: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Osborne, T. (1997). On Health and Statecraft. In A. Petersen, & R. Bunton (Eds.). *Foucault, Health and Medicine* (pp. 173-188). Routledge.
- Ozga, J., Dahler-Larsen, P., Segerholm, C., & Simola, H. (2011). Introduction. In J. Ozga, P. Dahler-Larsen, C. Segerholm, & H. Simola (Eds.), *Fabricating quality in education: data and governance in Europe* (1st ed. ed., pp. 1-8). London, New York: Routledge.
- Page, D. (2015). The visibility and invisibility of performance management in schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(6), 1031-1049. Doi: 10.1002/berj.3185
- Pettersson, S., & E. Wallin (1998). *Målstyrning och resultatansvar. Analyser och utvärderingar 1996-97*. Skolverket.
- Power, M. (1995). Auditing, Expertise and the Sociology of Technique. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 6, 317-339.
- Power, M. (1996). Making Things Auditable. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 21(2/3), 289-315.
- Power, M. (1997). *The audit society: rituals of verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Power, M. (2000). The Audit Society - Second Thoughts. *International Journal of Auditing*, 4, 111-119.
- Power, M. (2016). Postscript. On Riskwork and Auditwork. In M. Power (Ed.), *Essays on the Organizational Life of Risk Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Power, M. (2021). Modelling the Micro-Foundations of the Audit Society: Organizations and the Logic of the Audit Trail. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(1), 6-32.
Doi:10.5465/amr.2017.0212
- Powney, J., & Watts, M. (1987). *Interviewing in educational research*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Roberts, J. (2018). Managing only with transparency: The strategic functions of ignorance. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 55, 53-60. Doi:10.1016/j.cpa.2017.12.004
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rose, N. (1991). Governing by numbers: figuring out democracy. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 16, 673-692.
- Rose, N. S. (2000). *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, N. S., & Miller, P. (1992). Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 43(2), 173-205.
- Rubenson, K. (2001). The Swedish Adult Education Initiative: From Recurrent Education to Lifelong Learning. In D. Aspin, J. Chapman, M. Hatton and Y. Sawano (Eds.). *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*, vol 6, (pp. 329-338). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Rudoe, N. (2020). 'We believe in every child as an individual': Nursery school head teachers' understandings of 'quality' in early years education. *British Educational Research Journal*.
Doi:10.1002/berj.3610
- Rönnerberg, L. (2014). Justifying the need for control. Motives for Swedish national school inspection during two governments. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 58(4), 385-399. Doi:10.1080/00313831.2012.732605
- Rönnerberg, L. (2019). Att göra styrning och styra görande: Skolinspektionens aktiviteter för ökad genomströmning från gymnasieskolan. *Nordiske organisasjonsstudier*, 21(1), 34-57.
- Rönnerberg, L., Lindgren, J., & Segerholm, C. (2013). In the public eye. Swedish school inspection and local newspapers. Exploring the audit-media relationship. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(2), 178-197.
- Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2006). Transparensens former. In C. Levay & C. Waks (Eds.), *Strävan efter transparens. Granskning, styrning och organisering i sjukvårdens nätverk*. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.
- Segerholm, C., Lindgren, J., & Judit, N. (2021). Evidence-Based Governing? Educational Research in the Service of the Swedish

- Schools Inspectorate. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 1-16.
- Segerholm, C., & Hult, A. (2018). Learning from and reacting to school inspection: two Swedish case narratives. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 62(1), 125-139.
- Shaw, I., Newton, D. P., Aitkin, M., & Darnell, R. (2003). Do OFSTED inspections of secondary schools make a difference to GCSE results? *British Educational Research Journal* 29(1). 63-75.
Doi: 10.1080/0141192032000057375
- Shore, C. (2012). Anthropology and public policy. In R. Fardon, O. Harris, T. H. J. Marchand et al. (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of social anthropology*, (pp. 89-104). Sage.
- SFS. (2010:800). *Skollag*. Utbildningsdepartementet.
- SFS. (2011:556). *Med instruktion för Statens skolinspektion*. Utbildningsdepartementet.
- SNAE. (2017). *Läroplan för vuxenutbildningen*.
<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.45c3a0221623365b28e33c8/1524143990406/Laroplan%20vuxenutbildning.pdf>
- SNAE. (2021a). *Preliminär statistik om gymnasieskolans elever*.
<https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/arkiverade-statistiknyheter/statistik/2020-11-05-preliminar-statistik-om-gymnasieskolans-elever>
- SNAE. (2021b). *Stor ökning av antalet elever i komvux på gymnasial nivå*.
<https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/statistik/arkiverade-statistiknyheter/statistik/2021-06-11-stor-okning-av-antalet-elever-i-komvux-pa-gymnasial-niva>
- SNAE. (2021c). *Systematiskt kvalitetsarbete – så fungerar det*.
<https://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/leda-och-organisera-skolan/systematiskt-kvalitetsarbete/systematiskt-kvalitetsarbete-i-skola-och-forskola>
- SSI. (2019). *Kommunal vuxenutbildning på gymnasial nivå - Granskning av huvudmäns och rektorers arbete för flexibilitet och individanpassning*.
https://www.skolinspektionen.se/globalassets/publikationssok/granskningsrapporter/kvalitetsgranskningar/2019/komvux/kommunal-vuxenutbildning-pa-gymnasial-niva_kvalitetsgranskning-skolinspektionen2019.pdf
- SSI. (2020). *Historiebeskrivning - skolinspektioner över tid*.
<https://www.skolinspektionen.se/om-oss/uppdrag-och-verksamhet/historik/>
- SSI. (2021a). *Vuxenutbildning*. <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/rad-och-vagledning/skolrepresentanter/vuxenutbildning/>

- SSI. (2021b). *Vuxenutbildningen ska granskas på skolnivå*.
<https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2021/12/vuxen-utbildningen-ska-granskas-pa-skolniva/>
- SSI. (2022). *Vuxenutbildning*. <https://www.skolinspektionen.se/rad-och-vagledning/skolrepresentanter/vuxenutbildning/>
- Strannegård, L., & Brülde, B. (2013). *Den omätbara kvaliteten* (2., oförändrade uppl. ed.): Studentlitteratur.
- Strathern, M. (2000). The tyranny of transparency. *British Educational Research Journal*, 26(3), 309-321. Doi: 10.1080/713651562
- Swedish Institute for Educational Research. (2019). *Individanpassad vuxenutbildning - med fokus på digitala verktyg*.
https://www.skol.fi.se/wpcontent/uploads/2019/07/Individanpassad-vuxenutbildning_pdf-i-fulltext-
- Swedish Research Council. (2017). *Good Research Practice*.
<https://www.vr.se/english/analysis/reports/our-reports/2017-08-31-good-research-practice.html>
- Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2007). Governance network research: Towards a second generation. In E. Sørensen & J. Torfing (Eds.), *Theories of democratic network governance* (pp. 1-21). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thrupp, M. (1998). Exploring the politics of blame: School inspection and its contestation in New Zealand and England. *Comparative Education*, 34, 195-208. Doi:10.1080/03050069828270
- Viennet, R., & Pont, B. (2017). *Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework*. Paper presented at the OECD Education Working Paper No. 162.
<https://tinyurl.com/4ym8ejnt>
- Walker, J. (2008). Conspirators in a neo-liberal agenda? Adult educators in second-chance private training establishments. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 14(1), 55-73.
- Weiner, G. (2002). Auditing failure: moral competence and school effectiveness. *British Educational Research Journal* 28(6), 789-804. Doi: 10.1080/0141192022000019062
- Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational Research* (2nd ed.). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- World Bank. (2018). *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018>
- Wärvik, G.-B. (2013). The reconfiguration of adult education VET teachers: Tensions amongst organisational imperatives, vocational ideals and the needs of the students. *International Journal of Training Research*, 11(2), 122-134.

Chapter 9

Appendix 1: Information about the study



Institutionen för beteendetskap och lärande, IBL
Avdelningen för pedagogik och vuxnas lärande

2018-08-25

Kvalitet i vuxenutbildning: Informationsblankett

Forskningsprojektet "Kvalitet i vuxenutbildning" syftar till att förstå hur kvalitet görs i vuxenutbildning genom att undersöka skolinspektion, policydokument och lokalt kvalitetsarbete. Forskningsprojektet genomförs av mig, Johanna Mufic, doktorand vid Linköpings universitet.

Studien baserar sig på observationer av Skolinspektionens platsbesök, intervjuer med rektorer, skolpersonal och representanter för huvudman i olika kommuner och hos olika utbildningsanordnare, samt analys av lokala och nationella policydokument.

Medgivande

1. Jag har fått tillgång till information om studien och förstår hur den kommer att utföras samt hur mycket tid den kommer att ta.
2. Jag har fått möjlighet att få eventuella frågor kring studien besvarade innan studien påbörjades och jag vet vem jag ska kontakta om jag har fler frågor.
3. Jag vet att informationen som kommer fram i studien kommer att hanteras konfidentiellt och behandlas så att inga obehöriga kan ta del av den. All hantering av personuppgifter sker i enlighet med de bestämmelser som fastställts i PUL och GDPR.
4. Jag har fått information om att jag deltar frivilligt i denna studie och vet varför jag har blivit tillfrågad detta, samt vad syftet med mitt deltagande är.
5. Jag vet att jag också kan komma att bli kontaktad för uppföljande intervjuer. Jag vet då att det är möjligt, att utan motivering, avböja ytterligare deltagande.
6. Jag vet att informationen som kommer fram i studien kommer att sparas av Linköpings universitet i en säker miljö under tio år, för att därefter förstöras.
7. Jag har fått information om att jag kan avbryta mitt deltagande när som helst och att jag inte behöver uppge skäl till varför jag inte längre vill delta.

Kontaktuppgifter

Önskar du ytterligare information, vänligen kontakta:

Appendix 2: Consent



Institutionen för beteendetskap och lärande, IBL
Avdelningen för pedagogik och vuxnas lärande

2018-08-25

Kvalitet i vuxenutbildning: Samtyckesblankett

Eftersom du har valt att delta i denna studie vill jag återigen informera dig om projektet och hur vi behandlar den information som framkommer. Informationsbrevet är bilagt denna samtyckesblankett.

Jag skulle vilja spela in observationen (ljudinspelning). Inspelningen görs i datainsamlings syfte. Om du ger ditt medgivande, vänligen ge ditt medgivande genom din namnteckning på denna blankett.

Med din namnteckning intygar du att du fått information om forskningsprojektets syfte och tillvägagångssätt, att du fått tillfälle att ställa frågor, fått dem besvarade, samt att du fått information om behandling av personuppgifter. Du samtycker också till deltagande i studien.

Deltagarens namnteckning _____

Namnförtydligande _____

Datum _____

Kontaktuppgifter

Önskar du ytterligare information, vänligen kontakta:

Johanna Mufic

Papers

The papers associated with this thesis have been removed for copyright reasons. For more details about these see:

<https://doi.org/10.3384/9789179293581>

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

Linköping studies in Behavioural Science Nr. 243, 2022
Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning

Linköping University
SE-581 83 Linköping, Sweden

www.liu.se