

# How is Education Policy Shaped through Opinion- and Coalition Building?

The Interplay between Political Parties and Teachers' Unions

# Abstract

The interplay between political parties and teachers' unions has transformed. At the same time, education policy has been prioritized on the reform agenda in Sweden. Parties and unions are key actors in the development of education policy, but their interplay is a neglected area within earlier research. Therefore, the following paper seeks to examine how the interplay between parties and unions has shaped the development of education policy.

The thesis answers that question by understanding the interplay as the actors' opinion- and coalition building. To enable the study of the interplay, different policy reforms have been selected. The analysis first has a policy focus to describe and compare the actors' policy ideas during the reforms. Next, the analysis shift to an actor focus, in order to map the interplay over time.

The results indicate that the teachers' unions have had a significant role in the agenda-setting. Furthermore, the Swedish Teachers' Union (LF) and the left parties have agreed more, as the National Union of Teachers (LR) and the right parties have agreed more. Also, the results highlight that the unions and the parties in the government have had corresponding policy ideas. Finally, the traditional, parliamentary blocs were not stable.

*Key words:* education policy, political parties, teachers' unions, policy development, Sweden

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# 1 Introduction

Policy actors have demonstrated determination in prioritizing education policy. The determination is indicated by the increasing global average of education spending, because of the proven effect education has on economic growth (Ansell 2008, p. 289). It is further indicated by the internationally rising status of education on governmental reform agendas, following the increased focus on education in the knowledge society (Martens et al. 2010). As a result of these objectives with education policy, the frequent reforms within the policy area are often portrayed and defended as not only of importance for the education provision, but for the broader society as well (Dobbins & Christ 2019, p. 61; Ansell 2008, p. 315). The determination in prioritizing education can also be interlinked with an increased interest in the policy area. The education spending and policy reforms, in terms of education outputs, are regularly being evaluated and compared on an international level. The international comparisons of education outputs have awakened an interest in education policy that is ranging beyond solely the political arena (Dobbins & Christ 2019, p. 61; Busemeyer & Trampusch 2011).

In light of the increased spending and reforming within the education policy area, it is of importance to also understand how education policy is being created in the first place. Behind all education outputs, policy actors have been fighting to achieve certain goals or ideas (Jensen 2011, p. 427). In order to understand how education policy is developed, political parties are significant actors, as they are in constant battles to achieve different objectives. Research has further indicated that even if different political parties would pursue similar reforms, parties typically have varied policy arguments behind the policy changes. In some cases, they even have diverse definitions of what the problem is (Dobbins & Christ 2019; Lundahl 2002).

To create an understanding of how education policy is developed, it can be argued that studies with solely the political parties as the focal policy players are missing a critical interplay with other actors in the policy process (Dobbins & Christ 2019; Haugsgjerd Allern & Bale 2012; Dobbins 2014). Teachers' unions can be translated to an important interest group in the Swedish context, since they play a role as a consultative or advocating body outside their typical association with bargaining (Rothstein 1992, p. 292-294; Lilja 2014b, p. 55). In earlier research, the unions have also been understood as central players in education policy development (Cooper & Sureau 2008; Jacoby 2011; Moe 2009). Thus, both political parties and teachers' unions have been recognized as key policy actors.

However, the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions is identified as a neglected area within the academic literature (Dobbins 2019). This thesis aims to fill this gap by studying their interplay in the Swedish context. Sweden makes an interesting case to study the interplay during the development of

education policy. The reason for this is that the Swedish educational policy has followed the international trends, as the policy area has been a prioritized issue on the governmental reform agenda during the past decades. The interest is also based on that the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions traditionally has been strong in Sweden. Yet, as the previously strong corporativism has been demonstrated as declining, the interplay between unions and other actors has transformed. The declined corporativism has therefore led to a transformed interplay where the unions use other strategies to influence the policy development. (Haugsgjerd Allern & Bale 2012; Haugsgjerd et al 2007; Lindvall & Sebring 2005; Dobbins 2014)

As the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions has transformed during a time period with several introduced policy reforms, it is of interest to study their interplay during the development of education policy. How has the interplay shaped the education policy development in Sweden? Furthermore, empirical examples point out that the interplay can consist of different actor constellations depending on the policy reform. These varying policy actor collaborations or oppositions can be understood in terms of the actors' opinion- and coalition building during the policy development. In order to understand how the interplay has shaped the education policy, do different parties and different unions repeatedly find common ground during the policy development? Or do different parties and different unions repeatedly have an interaction characterized of disagreements during the policy development?

## 1.1 Research Aim and Research Question

The central research aim of this thesis is to understand how the development of education policy in Sweden has been shaped by the interplay between the political parties and teachers' unions. How the development of education policy has been shaped refers to how the interactions between parties and unions have influenced the education policy development over time. Interplay can be defined as mutual interaction between policy actors, where the actors and their interests are coordinated to reach a common goal (Hedlund & Montin 2009, p. 7).

A limitation has been done concerning the policy actors. Other actors than the parties and the unions can play a role in the educational reform process, but in line with the research aim of this paper, the interest lies in understanding the particular interplay between political parties and teachers' unions. The interest in these two policy actors is based on their transformed interplay due to the declined corporativism. Furthermore, both of the actors have been identified as key policy actors on their own. Finally, their interplay has not been examined in the research field. The political parties of interest in this paper are the parties in the Swedish parliament. The unions of interest are the two main teachers' unions in Sweden: the Swedish Teachers' Union, *Läraryrket* (*LF*) and the National Union of Teachers, *Lärarnas Riksförbund* (*LR*). The Swedish Teachers' Union is connected to the Confederation of Professional Employees, *Tjänstemännens*

*Centralorganisation (TCO)*, and the National Union of Teachers is connected to the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations, *Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation (SACO)* (Persson 2008, p. 366).

The study is further demarcated to understand the interplay during the compulsory school's policy development from the year 2000 to the year 2020. The policy development is consequently demarcated to policy changes concerning the compulsory school, as it is a level of education with frequent introduced changes. The demarcation is also done due to the limits of the scope of this thesis. The second demarcation is concerning the time period. In the education policy literature, the earlier time periods covering the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in Sweden have been well studied (see 1.2.1). Therefore, the ambition is to contribute empirically with the latest period of time, from 2000 to 2020.

As presented in the introduction, the broad interest in education policy is seen both internationally and in Sweden. Sweden is not an exception in the frequent reforms concerning the education provision and in the public interest in the policy area (Dobbins & Christ 2019; Lundahl 2002). The societal relevance of conducting this thesis is therefore based on the interest in education policy and the particular interest in shedding light on interplay during the development of policy. The focus on interplay will contribute to the understanding of how the educational path in Sweden has been shaped.

Since this study's central aim is to *understand how* the development of education policy has been shaped by the interplay, the research has a descriptive ambition (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 27). It is therefore of importance to understand what this is a case of. Even if the research ambition is not to be able to generalize the results, the understanding of what this is a case of, together with a rich description of the case, can lead to that the results will be transferable or contribute to understandings in similar contexts (Ryan 2018, p. 284; Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 33). In light of this discussion, this is a case of policy actors' interplay during policy development. The scientific ambition is therefore that the knowledge this research will bring can be compared or complement studies of similar countries' policy development with a focus on interplay between policy actors. This could be in education policy, or also in other welfare policy areas, with other policy actors. As mentioned in the introduction, Sweden makes a suitable case due to the frequent reforms in the education policy area, and due to the described transformed relationship between the political parties and the unions. Especially context-specific studies of the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions in the development of education policy has been identified as a neglected subject in the research field (see 1.2.3).

With a basis in the stated aim that guides the research, the research question to be answered is the following:

- **How has the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions shaped the development of education policy concerning the compulsory school in Sweden from 2000 to 2020?**

## 1.2 Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to give an overview of the current state of knowledge about the research question and related ones (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 20-21). Starting off broadly with education policy in general, not many academic studies had been devoted to the policy area just a few decades ago. However, as both political and public interest in education policy have developed, interest has been demonstrated in the research field too (Jensen 2011, p. 413; Busemeyer & Trampusch 2011, p. 413).

### 1.2.1 Political Parties in Education Policy

The debate on whether political parties influence the level of education provided by the state or not has been important in the literature field (Busemeyer & Trampusch 2011, p. 416). To study the role of political parties, researchers have conducted comparative, quantitative studies with a focus on the determinants of educational spending. The traditional side of the debate mean that left-wing governments have a political preference for expanded education spending (for example Iversen & Stephens 2008). The other side of the debate argues that left-wing governments do not lead to more spending, instead spending is motivated by other concerns (for example Jensen 2011; Ansell 2008). Regarding political parties' role in policy development, there are also classification discussions concerning the types of policies different parties prefer, such as the widespread assumption that parties to the right promote privatization and management (Gingrich 2011) and the division of political parties into different types of reform agendas (Dobbins & Christ 2019). These research debates mainly have a focus on the political economy of education, consequently the effects and outcomes are of importance (Busemeyer & Trampusch 2011, p. 414), in opposite to this study's qualitative focus on policy development. Yet, the debates enlighten the important role of political parties in education policy, and the results demonstrate that preferences are not uniform across welfare areas and policy reforms. In line with the research of Dobbins and Christ (2019), to be presented more below, this thesis will assume that the political parties will present different policy arguments during the reform processes.

The interest in studying how political parties shape education on the national level is described as related to the increase in privatization and the introduction of quasi-markets in many countries (Busemeyer & Trampusch 2011, p. 419). In the Swedish context, the role of parties in education policy has been connected to the transformation of the welfare state. The transformation of broader public sector reforms has been explained as "spilling over" to the education area (Dobbins 2014, p. 285). To summarize and exemplify this trend in the literature, research has been devoted to relating changes in education to the general transformation of the public sector and the role of the state (Lundahl 2002), changes in partisan welfare policy positions (Nygård 2006; Klitgaard Baggesen et al 2015), the growth of free schools due to party policy changes (Wiborg 2015) and the political partisanship's effect on



welfare privatization (Lindh & Johansson Sevä 2018). A shared focus in the research trend is on the time period covering the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, as broader changes in the welfare state and significant educational reforms happened during the period. The studies are of importance to understand parties' role in education policy. Yet, the research misses to highlight the interplay between the political parties and other actors in the development of policy. Using solely the perspective of political parties has further been criticized, as the policies of larger parties are becoming more similar as the parties are trying to satisfy the median voter (Dobbins & Christ 2019).

## 1.2.2 Political Parties and Interest Groups in Education Policy

In the academic literature, the role of both political parties and interest groups in policy development has been discussed. It has even been stated that it is “widely agreed” in the field that political parties and interest groups are the most important actors when it comes to influencing policy (Haugsgjerd Allern & Bale 2012, p. 99). In research on the relationship between parties and interest groups, the relationship has been described as an exchange; interest groups provide for instance votes and financial support, as parties provide beneficial policy (Haugsgjerd Allern et al 2019, p. 1-2). Yet, differences across countries exists. For example, in the United States the parties can be seen as in alliances with interest groups, and in Europe the interest groups can better be categorized as external actors that the parties can choose to cooperate with or not (Haugsgjerd Allern et al 2019, p. 3).

In the Swedish context, political parties and trade unions as interest groups historically have had a strong link. Due to this strong collaboration, Sweden has before been ranked as one of the most corporatist countries (Lindvall & Sebring 2005, p. 1057; Rothstein 1992, p. 11; Korpi 1978, p. 74). Corporativism can be defined as “*a political structure within advanced capitalism which integrates organized socioeconomic producer groups through a system of representation and cooperative mutual interactions at the leadership level and mobilization and social control at the mass level*” (Panitch 1980, p. 173 used by Rothstein). It is particularly the relationship between the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions that has been stressed as the central corporatist relationships in the literature. The particular exchange between the actors has been described as the Social Democrats representing the working class on the political area, as the unions operated for the interests of organized labor in the corporate channel (Haugsgjerd Allern et al 2007, p. 608-609; Korpi 1978, p. 301).

Yet, the weakening linkages between political parties and unions have been examined in the literature, especially in the Swedish and other Nordic contexts where corporativism typically has been strong (Haugsgjerd Allern & Bale 2012; Haugsgjerd Allern et al 2007; Lindvall & Sebring 2005). The most common explanations to the weakened relationship are structural changes in the economy and changes in the workforce, with shifts from industry to service. The transformation is further caused by the general declining support for Social Democratic parties. To increase the support, Social Democratic parties have

formulated policies targeting a wider part of voters. The initiative for exchange between parties and unions has therefore decreased (Haugsgjerd Allern et al 2007, p. 609-610). In Sweden, the institutionalist explanation has also been used to describe the transformation. It has been stressed that bargaining institutions changed from being centralized to decentralized, and that unions were removed from boards of governmental agencies (Swenson & Pontusson 2000, Rothstein & Bergström 1999 in Lindvall & Sebring 2005, p. 1058). Even if Sweden has gone through a “decorporatization process”, the former collaboration between parties and unions has been replaced with other ways of coordination or influencing of policy (Lindvall & Sebring 2005, p. 1058). The findings that describe a transformed, but still existing, interplay in Sweden is one of the building blocks in this thesis. With the transformation in mind, the definition of corporativism presented by Rothstein can still be relevant, as the definition also includes political mobilization and political control (Rothstein 1992, p. 30). Since the structure of representation and interactions have changed, political mobilization and political control can still be used to describe the interplay, as mobilization and control can be linked to the forming of opinions and coalitions.

### 1.2.3 Political Parties and Teachers’ Unions in Education Policy

In line with the criticism against research solely having political parties as the focal point, similar comments can be made regarding the studies of teachers’ unions. The studies have generally focused on the unions individually, not their role in developing education policy or their interplay with other actors. To exemplify this, research have been engaged in studying teachers’ unions as a specific form of public sector corporatism (Garrett & Way 1999), the teachers’ unions collective bargaining (Moe 2009) and teachers’ union organization from a comparative perspective (Moe & Wiborg 2016). Multiple studies in the Swedish context have been engaged in transformed teacher professionalism from institutional, organizational and discourse perspectives (Nordin 2016; Lilja 2014a; Milner 2018; Lilja 2014b). Closer to the aim of this study, research by for example Cooper and Sureau (2008) and Jacoby (2001) have discussed the role teachers’ unions play as stakeholders in policy development, outside their typical associations with collective bargaining over wages or work conditions. Furthermore, unions have been identified as important to explain education policy outcomes (Moe 2009; Dobbins 2014; Dobbins & Christ 2019). In these kinds of activities, scholars have discussed that unions have clear opinions regarding the educational policy (Dobbins 2014; Moe & Wiborg 2017). Results from earlier studies have for example indicated that teachers’ unions’ opinions correspond more with parties to the left than to the right (Moe 2011).

With a basis in the discussion about the existing teachers’ union literature, the unions and their interplay with other actors in the development of education policy is identified as a neglected area. Additionally, as union organization and educational development is varied internationally, context-specific variations on the interplay are missing in the academic literature (Dobbins 2014, p. 286; Dobbins & Christ

2019, p. 64-65). Recent research that aims to fill this gap is a study of how parties and unions have influenced education policy in Spain, which was mentioned above (Dobbins & Christ 2019). In line with this study, Dobbins and Christ argue that a single focus on parties neglects the role of interest groups, in particular teachers' unions as an organized collective interest. Also, in line with this study, the scholars argue that political parties from both left and right will pursue policies to improve the education provision, but they will present different policy arguments for their reforms (Dobbins & Christ 2019, p. 66-67, 76). The study's conclusion is that both parties and unions are key policy actors, as their preferences and influences have impacted the direction of reforms in Spain (Dobbins & Christ 2019).

The Swedish teachers' unions have due to their involvement in policy development, mainly as a consulting body in governmental investigations, been recognized as functioning as interest groups (Rothstein 1992, p. 292-294; Lilja 2014b, p. 55). The unions' influences in the reform process have been described from different perspectives in the literature. On one hand, the political parties can, in a detailed manner, govern the education policy area. On the other hand, the teachers have significant agency when it comes to implementation (Rothstein 1992, p. 284-285). Teachers' unions have also in some cases been described as having a weak possibility to influence. This is explained by the institutional structure, with the change from a centralized to a decentralized school system with the municipalities as organizers. This has declined the teachers' former impact, according to the general trend of "decorporativism" in Sweden. Yet, in line with the earlier description of a transformed, but still existing, interplay, scholars have argued that teachers' unions in Sweden still have impact to influence the policy development to some extent (Dobbins 2014, p. 292-295; Wikstöm 2006, p. 115).

As presented, how the interplay between the policy actors has shaped the development of policy will be analyzed through their opinion- and coalition building. The decentralization, *kommunaliseringen*, of the compulsory school can serve as an empirical example for the interplay. At first, both of the unions were against the decentralization. Later in the process the Swedish Teachers' Union accepted the changes in order to bring through other demands, in contrast to the National Union of Teachers who worked against the reform to the end. This case exemplifies how the two unions can have different policy opinions and strategies concerning the education policy. It also demonstrates that the reform happened after all, but the unions still influenced aspects of the reform (Persson 2008, p. 21, 365). On the other hand, when the teachers' role as a trade union was transformed due to the decentralization, the unions started a council that is managing both of the unions' bargaining, *Lärarnas Samverkansråd* (Carle et al 2000, p. 278). The decentralization can further illustrate the different policy directions among the political parties. When the governmental decision to decentralize was made in 1989, the Social Democratic Party together with the Left Party had a bare majority in the parliament, as all of the other parties voted against the reform (SOU 2014:5, p. 55). Yet, more unexpected political party combinations can have similar policy ideas concerning the education policies, such as the Liberal, the Swedish Democratic and the Left parties wanting to centralize the compulsory school again. Moving the

compulsory school from the municipality level back to the state level is a policy idea these parties now share with both of the teachers' unions.

These empirical examples concerning the opinion building on different policy objectives, and sometimes also coalition building inside or outside the parliament, in education policy is another central building block in this thesis. In the next chapter, the collective agreements and disagreements on policy ideas will be theoretically developed with a base in theories of the policy process.

## 2 Theory

As presented and discussed in the previous chapter, the education policy and governance research has stressed the influence of both political parties and teachers' unions in education policy development. However, research has paid little attention to combine the study of the two policy actors in order to increase the understanding of their interplay in the Swedish context. Given this research gap, the following chapter introduces theoretical concepts drawn from a theory of the policy process that will enable the study of the interplay. The constructing and application of a theoretical framework is of importance when conducting a descriptive study, as the theoretical concepts provide a certain theoretical lens that guides the data collection and analysis. Concepts from a theory of the policy development can therefore be used in order to answer the research question of this study. (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 136-137; Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 24, 98; Toshkov 2018, p. 221, 226)

The purpose of this chapter is to first briefly present the aim of theories of the policy process and how they can be beneficial in the answering of this study's research question. Subsequently, the specific theoretical concepts from the *Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)*, to later be incorporated in an idea analytical tool and applied in the empirical analysis, will be presented.

### 2.1 The Policy Process

The overall aim with theories of the policy process is to study "... *the complexity of interactions involving public policy*" (Schlager & Weible 2013, p. 390), as the focal point is to examine "*the interactions that occur over time between public policies and surrounding actors, events, contexts, and outcomes*" (Weible 2017, p. 2). This holistic scope of the theories will only serve as a point of departure, as different theories within the field are covering certain aspects of the aim. Theoretical concepts that will be suitable for the research to be conducted is from a theory that particularly focuses on the study of "*the interactions that occur over time between public policies and surrounding actors*". The interactions can be translated to the interplay during policy development, the public policies to the education policies and the actors to the political parties and the teachers' unions. Interlinked with the definition of interplay, the interactions should further be mutual in order for the policy actors and their interest to be coordinated toward a common goal with the education policy. Furthermore, actors in the policy process can be connected to the government, as the political parties, or be nongovernmental organizations who seek to influence public policy on a given issue, as the teachers' unions (ibid).

The policy process as a theoretical definition is interlinked with the concept of public policy, which also is illuminated in the definitions of the policy process above. Public policy can be described as the “*deliberate decisions of a government or an equivalent authority toward specific objectives*”. Connected to the research aim of this study, a number of public policies related to a certain public policy issue, the education policy area, will be analyzed (ibid). In summary, theoretical concepts based in the study of the policy process are beneficial as they emphasize the role of actors and their interactions in the development of public policy. Therefore, they can serve as a theoretical lens used to understand the interplay between the political parties and teachers’ unions in the education policy development.

## 2.2 The Advocacy Coalition Framework

Based on the previous discussion, a theory to go hand in hand with this study’s aim is one that is particularly focused on actors and how they influence education policy over time. The theoretical framework to be used for this purpose is therefore the *Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)* created by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993). The ACF is classified as a theoretical framework as it consists of a statement of the basic assumptions made, a description of the scope, and an establishment of concept categories and their general relations. The framework is commonly used in studies of the policy process as it is possible to apply to various policy areas and political systems, and as it is applicable in both case studies and comparative studies (Weible et al 2020). Furthermore, the intention with the framework is to provide theoretical guidance towards specific areas in research, such as descriptive analysis like this one. The ACF is usually used for a longer time period, but at the same time it is stressed that actors can see opportunities from a short-term perspective, which can change their ideas and strategies (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 142-143).

As the interplay between parties and unions is the focal point of this study, the theoretical concepts from the ACF are suitable to understand conflict and concord in policy development. This involves a focus on policy beliefs to understand actors’ opinion building, and the forming of coalitions to achieve policy objectives (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 135-138). As the parties in the parliament and the two unions in some cases cooperate in different constellations to advocate for the same policy objectives, at the same time as competing constellations of parties and unions are disagreeing over the policy, the policy actors’ interplay can be understood in terms of opinion- and coalition building.

### 2.2.1 The Policy Subsystem

The basic assumption made in the ACF is that the *policy subsystem* is the central unit of analysis. In the policy subsystem different components interact to produce outputs for a specific policy topic (see figure 1). The policy subsystems can have

periods of stasis, incremental change and major change (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 139). The ACF focuses on many different components and interactions to describe and explain the comprehensive policy process, which includes perspectives outside the policy subsystem as well. This is since policy subsystems are explained as semi-independent and thus the different subsystems are nested within other subsystems. Therefore, the framework's aim is to be applied to help identify important system components to solve questions that can span over the policy process as a whole (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 139). Guidance provided to use the ACF is thus that scholars can use parts of the framework to study and learn more about a specific phenomenon (Weible 2020, p. 1055-1056). An overview of earlier studies has demonstrated that most scholars using the ACF have predominantly been interested in the forming of coalitions, and not how they affect or are affected by their surrounding environment (Weible et al 2020, p. 1059). As this study is demarcated to understand the interplay between the policy actors during the policy development, the policy subsystem as the main unit of analysis will be the focus to solve the research question. This demarcation is motivated by the fact that the interaction between the actors, or between the coalitions, takes place in the policy subsystem.

The *policy actors* included in the subsystem are the ones regularly attempting to influence the policy affairs, by impacting the contents and directions of policy (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993). This can be interpreted in a more traditional way with actors such as legislative committees and interest groups, or more broadly with a focus on actors such as representatives from the private sector and academic scientists. Even if multiple policy actors, in one way or another, can be involved in the education policy development, this thesis' focus on political parties and teachers' unions imply that the concentration of actors only will be demarcated to those two, in line with the more traditional understanding. Another characteristic of the policy actors within the subsystem is that they provide authority or potential for authority. This entail that they for instance can enforce or monitor a policy or that they are involved in the legislative processes (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 139).

A basic assumption made in the ACF, concerning the policy actors, is that individuals are boundedly rational. This is explained as the individuals being motivated by goals, but the strategy they will use to achieve the goals is often unclear (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 140). Both individuals and groups can be defined as policy actors, and in this study the group perspective will be used to study "political parties" and "teachers' unions" (Weible et al 2020, p. 1061).

## 2.2.2 The Policy Actors' Belief System Structure

The policy actors simplify the world through their *belief systems*, which then also motivates their actions. This relates to another assumption made, which is that the policy actors have a three-tiered belief system structure. Firstly, deep core beliefs are fundamental normative values and ontologies, thus these beliefs are not policy specific (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 140). With respect to the difficulty in understanding actors' deep core beliefs together with the fact that they are not

policy specific, this study will not engage further in that kind of beliefs. Instead, the focus will be on the ones called *policy core beliefs* that are bound by scope and topic to the policy subsystem. These kinds of beliefs can be normative, such as value priorities, and empirical, such as preferred goals for addressing a problem. The policy core beliefs are therefore the “glue” to the group (Weible et al 2020, p. 1063). Furthermore, *secondary beliefs* are referring to the specific means for achieving the aspired outcomes outlined in the policy core beliefs, which can be explained as the beliefs needed to fulfill the policy core beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 140-141). It is underlined in the theory that belief systems should not be seen only as abstract descriptions of values and priorities, but also aims to capture representations of scientific and technical information to suggest for example causal relations or problem attributes (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 142).

The policy actors’ belief systems will be a central part of the idea analysis in this study. The belief system structure will be used as an approach to study the actors’ ideas, as a strategy to understand and map how the actors build opinions and coalitions during policy development. The interplay is therefore studied through variables relating to beliefs or ideas, which is suitable as policy ideas that create a coalition can be called “coalition magnets” (Béland & Cox 2016).

### 2.2.3 The Coalitions

To reduce complexity and to enable examination of actors’ interactions, the policy actors, both governmental and non-governmental, in the policy subsystem are grouped into *coalitions*. *Advocacy coalitions* share beliefs and coordinate their efforts, intentionally or unintentionally, towards shared policy outcomes (Weible et al 2020, p. 1055). According to the theory, an advocacy coalition can be constructed on the basis of shared beliefs, organized strategies and their relative stability over time. As the advocacy coalitions have named the framework, these are fundamental in to understand policy actors’ strategies for influence during policy changes. Policies and programs can therefore be studied as they show the translated belief systems of the coalitions (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 141-142). Important to note here is that the political parties and the teachers’ unions are not automatically different advocacy coalitions by themselves but can be parts of them. Therefore, advocacy coalitions do not refer to specific organizations, but to interactions or strategies of organizations. The theory therefore distinguishes the advocacy coalitions from *parliamentary coalitions*, consisting of political parties sharing beliefs and choosing to collaborate or coordinate their actions in the parliament. Yet, parliamentary or governmental actors can be part of a coalition, even if they are the coalition’s target to influence (Weible et al 2020, p. 1056-1057).

The theoretical concept of advocacy coalitions can be used to identify single actors who interact as a coalition. Yet, as this study is demarcated to two actor groups, due to both the interest and the scope, the coalition concept will be used to study the interplay between the policy actors as collectives. Furthermore, the coalitions will be identified based on their shared beliefs, which will be translated to policy ideas (Weible et al 2020, p. 1057). The coalitions can further be identified



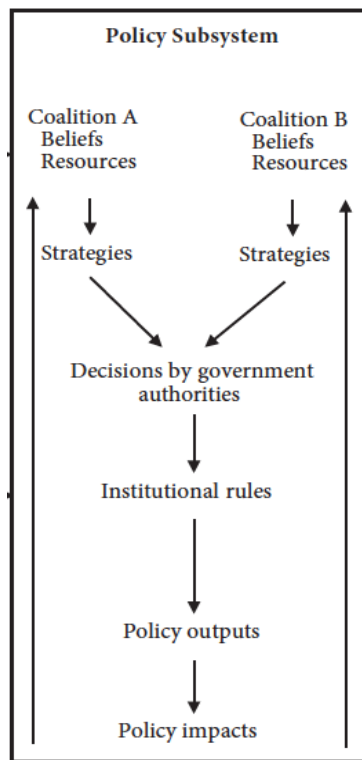
based on their collective action. It can be seen as a form of weak coordination when the actors share information, and a strong form of coordination when the actors together are developing policy or implement shared plans (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 150). Collective action or coordination can therefore be understood as when the actors in a coalition demonstrates collaboration beyond solely shared beliefs.

Political resources are important for the advocacy coalitions when they seek to shape the public policy. Easily put, resources are the policy actors' source of power or influence (Weible et al 2020, p. 1066). In the Swedish context, with emphasis on political parties and teachers' unions, the two policy actors have different resources, and these can be measured in various ways. For example, the political parties have the formal legal authority to make political decisions and the teachers' unions only have the ability to mobilize, create public opinion or spread information. In this case, the resources the political parties have are more dominant to achieve influence, as the political parties in government with legal authority are the actors whose agreement is needed for policy change (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 155). Weible et al interlink resources with the traditional faces of power by Lukes. The coalitions with access to the formal legal authority have the first and second faces of power, as they can shape the governmental agendas. The actors with information or support from the public can act according to the third face, as they have the capacity to shape opinions with the ambition to influence the agenda. The resources in the ACF are described as underdeveloped but are still of importance to highlight that different actors can use different resources based on their power to influence policy. It is further of importance to understand that different coalitions will use their resources competitively when in opposition (Weible et al 2020, p. 1066-1067).

#### 2.2.4 The Policy Changes

The *policy changes* according to the theory can be a broad range of activities, such as smaller adjustments in policy core components of governmental programs, closure of programs or introduction of new programs. A distinction between minor and major policy changes is further made, where a minor policy change can be an adjustment or temporary investment, as a major policy change can be the implementation of a new policy. To study the Swedish education policy development, policy reforms that can be classified as major will be chosen. Furthermore, it is expected in the theory that agreements on the secondary beliefs are easier to reach, in opposite to agreements on the policy core beliefs. This means that it is easier for policy actors to reach consensus on the measures needed, rather than the goal or problem description formulated as the base for the change. This is further the explanation to why minor changes occur more frequently than major ones. This also means that if the policy core beliefs are agreed, it will possibly be easier for the actors to also agree on the secondary beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 145).

**Table 1: Flow Schema of the Policy Subsystem in the Advocacy Coalition Framework**



Source: Sabatier & Weible (2007) in Jenkins-Smith et al. 2017, p. 143, with an adoption to solely focus on the policy subsystem.

The figure is the fundamental presentation of the central unit of analysis, the policy subsystem, in the Advocacy Coalition Framework. The figure demonstrates the basic theoretical logic of the advocacy coalitions by exemplifying Coalition A and Coalition B as competing coalitions to achieve their policy objectives. Each coalition is the aggregated beliefs and resources of the policy actors within them. Further, both Coalition A and Coalition B have different strategies they put forward in order to shape the policy development. Finally, the influences result in institutional rules, policy outputs and policy outcomes. The lines from the policy impacts back to the coalitions demonstrate that the decisions can feed back into the policy subsystem (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 143-144).

To summarize this chapter, the core theoretical concepts from the Advocacy Coalition Framework has been selected as theoretical guidance in order to solve the research question of the study. The concepts are suitable for this purpose as the they help to theoretically approach the interplay between the parties and unions, as the focus is to capture the conflict and concord in education policy development. The main unit of analysis is the *policy subsystem*, where the *policy actors* interact to develop education policy by building opinions and coalitions. In the policy subsystem, their interactions, or more concretely their policy goals and measures, are connected to their *belief systems* consisting of *policy core beliefs* and *secondary beliefs*. If the beliefs are shared between the actors, it is possible that *coalitions* can be created to shape the policy development, which both can be solely *parliamentary*

*coalitions or advocacy coalitions*. These theoretical concepts will further be operationalized in the next chapter, when they will be integrated in an idea analytical tool to be used for text analysis of *policy changes*.

## 3 Research Design and Methodology

### 3.1 Qualitative Case Study Design

The goal with a research design is to select a design that is suitable to answer the research question. Thus, it is about “*making optimal choices under constraints*” (Toshkov 2018, p. 219). To answer the question of how the interplay between parties and unions has shaped education policy, this study applies a qualitative case study approach as its overall research design. The choice is motivated by the central research ambition of *understanding how*. The aim includes an ambition to provide an in-depth understanding of the interplay (Vromen 2018, p. 237). To contribute with the comprehensive understanding, the collected data need to be rich in scope and depth. Thus, the case study approach is relevant to apply in a research setting in which the variables of interest are not quantifiable, such as the actors’ policy ideas (Toshkov 2018, p. 229; Blatter & Haverland 2012, p. 6). These arguments can further be linked to that analyses of policy processes usually are designed as case studies, as they emphasize the processes with actors, ideas or behaviors as focal points (Blatter & Haverland 2012, p. 2). Against this background, the argument is that a qualitative case study approach is the preferable choice to answer the research question.

Case studies can be designed in different ways and can therefore be divided into different categories, depending on the role theory plays in the study. This study will be *using* theoretical concepts to point out specific aspects to understand the interplay. This can be contrasted to research that test the theory with hypothesis against the empirics, or research that develop theory by testing it to new cases (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 39-42). The use of the theoretical concepts from the Advocacy Framework will therefore be guiding the analysis in order to answer the research question.

#### 3.1.1 Case Selection

In order to study the interplay during the development of policy, a more tailored research design is needed. Therefore, the point of departure will be a selection of major policy changes in Swedish education policy. Using policy changes as cases is a strategy used to be able to study the interplay during policy development. This design therefore makes it possible to study the opinion- and coalition building during periods of time when policy actually is developed.

The analysis of the interplay will first take a policy focus, to describe and compare the policy beliefs during the reforms. In the next step, the focus will shift to an actor focus to map the building of coalitions. A number of cases is therefore needed to be able to map how the forming of both opinions and coalitions have developed during different reforms. The different reforms can then be compared, in order to map interplay patterns over time.

### 3.1.2 Criteria for Case Selection

The central aim with the case selection is for it to represent the “education policy development”. Consequently, a case selection consisting of cases of different natures is needed. The two basic selection criteria for the policy reforms are that they will be concerning the compulsory school system and be during the time period covering the 2000 to 2020. As there still are multiple possible cases to select, a more strategic strategy for case selection has been needed.

In order to capture a variety of cases, a review of the reforms during the time period of interest has been done. The cases from the review have then been categorized into different “cases of”, with the three categories “*pupils*”, “*teachers*” and “*regulation*” (see 3.1.3). As discussed previously, a number of cases are needed to be able to identify possible patterns. Therefore, two cases from each category will be selected, which amount to a total number of six cases. The six cases to be selected will represent major policy changes and cannot be temporary investments or smaller governmental regulations. Finally, the ambition is to select cases spreading over the time period, even if different periods are subject to a varying number of reforms.

**Table 2: Categorization of Policy Changes concerning the Compulsory School 2000-2020 in Sweden**

<b>Pupils</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Regulation</b>
<b>National tests:</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade (2010), nature-oriented and society-oriented subjects in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade (2010), abolishment in nature-oriented and society-oriented subjects in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade (2016)	<b>Education:</b> education for teachers (2000) and (2011), special teachers (2008)	<b>Documents:</b> curriculum (2009), education act (2010), revised syllabus (2020)
<b>Grading:</b> Written assessments from 1 <sup>st</sup> grade (2008), grading scale (2009), from 6 <sup>th</sup> grade (2011), from 4 <sup>th</sup> grade (2015)	Introduction of teachers' license (2011)	<b>Agencies:</b> Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2008), National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (2008)
<b>Subject focus:</b> investment in mathematics, natural science and technology (2009), extended teaching hours in mathematics (2016), the read/write/count guarantee (2018)	<b>Investments:</b> salary (2015 in-service training (2015), special teachers (2015), career efforts (2016), teachers' assistants (2019)	10-year school (pre-school class made compulsory) (2017)

*(The years are representing the year the decision was made)*

Based on time spread and extent, two cases from each category have been selected: *the grading scale (2009), the read/write/count guarantee (2018), the teacher education (2000), the teacher license (2011), the curriculum (2009) and the 10-year school (2017).*

## 3.2 Idea Analysis

In light of the research question and the research aim of this thesis, the methodological approach to conduct the research will be text analysis, or more directly a descriptive idea analysis of policy documents (Jenkins-Smith et al 2017, p. 158). To conduct a descriptive idea analysis does not solely involve a description

of the ideas in the texts. It will also involve a comparison between the actors' different policy ideas to find similarities and dissimilarities, in order to understand the opinion- and coalition building between parties and unions (Bergström & Svärd 2018, p. 140-141). The analysis will be done through the application of an idea analytical tool, presented in 3.2.1, with the aim of finding patterns in the interplay over time. As I will systematically identify and compare policy ideas, the texts will be interpreted in accordance with what they mean to me as an analyst. This strategy is the opposite to one where the meaning of the texts is interpreted in accordance with what it means to the sender of the text (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 227).

Idea analysis can be defined as "*the scientific study of political messages*" (Beckman 2005, p. 11). Ideas in themselves can be defined as causal beliefs about economic, social and political phenomena (Béland & Cox 2016, p. 428; Béland & Cox 2011). A more hands-on definition in this context is the understanding of ideas as notions of "*how the world or the society is*", "*how the world or the society should be*" or recommendations of "*what is appropriate to do about it*" (Bergström & Svärd 2018, p. 134).

Idea analysis is selected as the methodology goes hand in hand with the theoretical concepts from the ACF. An idea analysis of policy documents can be conducted since policies and programs are, as presented in the theory chapter, interpreted as the translated belief systems of the policy actors. This is further the motive to why advocacy coalitions have been called idea driven or idea bounded policy networks (Danielsson 2018, p. 255). Therefore, a strategy for systematic qualitative text analysis will be needed to analyze these and to achieve reliability for the results (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 211-212; Beckman 2005, p. 9; Bergström & Svärd 2018, p. 141). Also, the study of ideas in politics is important in the political science field, and especially in the policy process research. Policy decisions according to this reasoning are shaped by ideas, as they both limit and enable the policy development (Béland & Cox 2016; Danielsson 2018). To connect this to the research question, the interplay during education policy development can be studied through the actors' ideas about the education policies.

In summary, the theoretical concepts from the ACF will be integrated in an idea analytical tool and applied to policy documents. The idea analysis as a methodology will be suitable to analyze the building of opinions and coalitions based on policy ideas shared, or disagreed, between the policy actors. In line with the idea analytical reasoning, the ideas can therefore both enable or limit the interplay. (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p. 99; Beckman 2005, p. 20-21)

### 3.2.1 The Idea Analytical Tool

The analysis will be structured as follows. As presented earlier, the selected education policy reforms are the cases to be analyzed. For each of the policy reforms, an idea analytical tool (see table 3) will be applied to describe and compare the policy ideas during the reforms. The idea analytical tool is the direct operationalization of the theoretical concepts: policy core beliefs, secondary beliefs

and coalitions, both parliamentary and advocacy. This concretely means that questions regarding the policy ideas have been formulated and will be asked against the policy documents (Beckman 2005, p. 20, 24; Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 216). The idea analytical tool can therefore be used to gain understanding about both the opinion building and the coalition building, to finally reach conclusions about the interplay.

**Table 3: The Idea Analytical Tool**

<p><b>1. Opinion Building: Policy Belief System</b></p> <p><b>1.1 What is the policy idea?</b> The <i>policy core belief</i> in the ACF/ideas about how the world or the society is or should be in idea analysis, which can be translated to ideas about <i>how the education policy or school sector is or should be</i>.</p> <p><b>1.2 What needs to be done?</b> The <i>secondary belief</i> in the ACF/ideas about what is appropriate to do to achieve the policy ideas in idea analysis, which can be translated to ideas about <i>what is appropriate to do about the education policy or school sector</i>.</p> <p><b>2. Coalition Building: Advocacy and Parliamentary</b></p> <p><b>2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?</b> Are either policy core beliefs or secondary beliefs from the opinion building shared with other parties or unions?</p> <p><b>2.2 Are there any coalitions?</b> Are the coalitions <i>parliamentary</i> or <i>advocacy coalitions</i>?</p>
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The final step, after the idea analytical tool has been applied to each policy change, is to compare and map how the interplay has looked like during the whole period. A wider perspective is needed to understand the interplay during the reforms as representing the interplay during education policy development. At this point, the research question of how the interplay between the parties and the unions has shaped the education policy development will be possible to answer.

### 3.2.2 Data Collection

The data collection will be consisting of primary source policy documents from the parliaments, the governments and the teachers' unions during the selected time period. The policy documents are used as they in a historiographic manner can demonstrate the positions of the parties and unions during the policy changes, which in turn enables the study of their interplay (Vromen 2018, p. 249-250). The ambition with the data collection is that it will capture an empirical counterpart in



the Swedish context to the central unit of analysis according to the ACF – the policy subsystem.

The data collected will based on this discussion be from the initial steps of the Swedish decision-making process: 1) the comment letters, *remissvar*, from the unions on the governments' policy suggestions in forms of ordered investigations, 2) the governments' propositions to policy, 3) members of the parliaments' motions as reactions to the propositions. Using documents that follow the process will decrease the risk of missing key documents.

To complement the teachers' unions' perspective, their own statements in form of press releases and debate articles will be used. These texts can represent the ideas in an earlier or later stage of a reform process than the comment letters. This is of importance since the comment letters can be seen as mainly the unions reactions to the parties' proposals, as their own texts can provide other insights to their opinion- and coalition building.

### 3.3 Limitations

As a result of the selected research design and methodology, the central limitation with this research is the weak possibility to generalize (Blatter & Haverland 2012, p. 82; Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 28). Since the focus is the interplay in the Swedish education policy development, with a methodology that to some degree involves an interpretation by the researcher of the ideas, the external validity of this study risks being weak (Bergström & Svärd 2018, p. 141). This is based on that the results might not be applicable to other cases. The study can for example describe ideas that were important to create coalitions but cannot prove that the same ideas will be important in another case (Blatter & Haverland 2012, p. 93). However, it is important to note that this is a trade-off, since in its place the analysis can be in-depth, which is needed to solve the research question. Yet, as discussed in the introduction chapter, as this is a case of policy development with focus on interplay, the theoretical contribution of the study can still be relevant. The results can by possibilistic generalization contribute or complement the understanding in similar cases (Blatter & Haverland 2012, p. 134).

Since the policy documents which are analyzed by the researcher not have been produced for the specific purpose of research, there is an inherent risk that the documents might not provide the sufficient amount of information which is necessary to answer the question. In addition, an incomplete collection of documents within the scope of the idea analysis inevitably poses a risk for biased selectivity in the empirical material from which conclusions are to be drawn. Therefore, it is of importance that the researcher reflects on the selection, as the ambition was above (see 3.2.2). (Vromen 2018, p. 249-250)

## 4 Analysis

In this chapter the analysis of how the interplay between parties and unions has shaped the policy development will take place. Each policy change will be analyzed separately and follow the same, systematic disposition. First, the reform will briefly be presented. Second, the questions from the analytical tool (see 3.3.1) will be asked to map the opinion- and coalition building. The concluded results will be presented in section 4.7.

### 4.1 The Grading Scale

The government (G), consisting of the Moderates, Centre, Liberals and Christian Democrats, presented the policy about the grading scale in 2008. The scale included 6 steps, with A as the highest and F as failed. There is also a distinction between getting a F, failing, and getting a line, been comprehensively absent (prop. 2008/09:66, p. 1). The previous grading scale included three steps and no failed grade.

The reform was first mentioned in the budget proposition for 2007. Later that year, a group at the Ministry of Education was commissioned to investigate the scale, which was presented in a memorandum in 2008 and reviewed by the unions. The proposition is in line with the memorandum (prop. 2008/09:66, p. 4). Members of the parliament reacted with motions, which are from the Social Democrats (S), Left (V) and Greens (MP). The decision to implement the grading scale was made in 2009 (Riksdagskrivelse 2008/09:169).

#### 4.1.1 Opinion Building

##### **1.1 What is the policy idea?**

The government's core belief is that Sweden should be a leading nation of *knowledge*. This is related to that more pupils will have the possibility to reach the knowledge goals at an early age. A second belief, linked to knowledge, is that the school should be intent on *assessing and monitoring*. The ideas are linked as the goal with assessing and monitoring is to follow the pupils' knowledge development. (prop. 2008/09:66, p. 4, 7)

The Social Democratic and Green core belief is *stability*. The goal is a school without constant reforms, where the pupils and teachers experience a school characterized of calmness and long-sightedness. A second Social Democratic idea is that the school should be intent on *systematic follow-up*. This goal is interlinked

with more pupils reaching the *knowledge* goals. The last idea is an *equal* school, where all will have the same possibilities to learn. (Motion 2008/09: Ub9; Motion 2008/09: Ub11)

Both the Left and Greens also have *knowledge* as a policy core belief. The Left Party means that knowledge should be a leading idea for the society, not only for the school. The Greens stress that knowledge is the main goal, and the pupils' development should be the focal point. With knowledge as the goal, both parties argue that grading do not give an accurate representation of the process (Motion 2008/09: Ub11; Motion 2008/09: Ub10). Furthermore, the Left Party's second idea is *democracy*. The school should be more democratic, which will be enabled by a focus on the group instead of the individual. The measuring of individual performance should therefore be removed (Motion 2008/09: Ub10, p. 2).

From the unions it was possible find the idea of a nationally equivalent school from the National Union of Teachers (LR). The idea of *equivalency* is connected to measuring pupils' knowledge similarly over all municipalities (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2008a, p. 2). The core belief of the Swedish Teachers' Union (LF) is *knowledge*, as the union underline the obligation to make pupils reach the goals. As knowledge is the leading idea, the union express that they are critical towards grades (Läraryrket 2008, p. 1).

## 1.2 What needs to be done?

The government's secondary belief is the *grading scale*, as it is needed for the ideas about knowledge and monitoring and assessment. The scale will fulfill the ideas as it will provide increased clarity and motivation. The distinction between a F and a line is a needed measure, as the F will indicate that the knowledge goals are not fulfilled, and the line will indicate that it is not possible to evaluate if the goals are fulfilled. (prop. 2008/09:66, p. 6-9)

The Social Democratic and Green secondary belief is *compromise*, as it will increase the stability and decrease the constant reforms. Another Social Democratic belief, as a measure for systematic follow-up, is *individual development plans*. The plans will be the main instrument. Grading is just a "receipt" that the goals are fulfilled, contributes to sorting pupils and decreases the motivation. The suggestion connected to the idea about equality is *evaluation*. Evaluation of schools, teachers and pupils are needed to direct resources and efforts to where the needs are the greatest. (Motion 2008/09: Ub9, p. 1-3)

The belief of the Left, to fulfill the ideas about knowledge and democracy, is to *remove grading*. This is an appropriate measure as pupils solely understand knowledge as receiving good grades. Another idea to focus on knowledge and democracy, is *individual study plans* with development talks. This measure will decrease the competition, increase the motivation and provide a nuanced picture of the knowledge development. (Motion 2008/09: Ub10, p. 2-3)

According to the Green Party, the grading system needs to be replaced with an *evaluation system*. The argument is that the grading works for the selection for further studies, but not for giving pupils and parents information on the knowledge development. The evaluation system will be grading-free, as grades are not relevant until the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. (Motion 2008/09: Ub11, p. 2, 5)

The National Union of Teachers' express their positive attitude towards the reform and state that the union has worked for a *grading scale* for a long time. In order to reach the idea about equivalency, the system with more scale steps is needed. Yet, they also underline that *extended scale descriptions* are needed to provide clarity. This will create national equivalence instead of local interpretation. (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2008a, p. 1-3, 5)

The Swedish Teachers' Union was not as positive as the former union. Their secondary belief is to have *no failed grade*. No failed grade is appropriate to fulfill the knowledge idea, as it better demonstrates the schools' responsibility to make all students pass. Their suggestion is to have a grade called "still not passed". The union also expresses an overall criticism against grading and suggest that individual *development plans* are an adequate tool. (Läraryrket 2008, p. 1-2)

**Table 4: Grading Scale**

<b>Policy Actors</b>	<b>Policy Core Belief</b>	<b>Secondary Belief</b>
<b>G</b>	knowledge, assessing monitoring	grading scale
<b>S</b>	stability, systematic follow-up, knowledge, equality	compromise, development plans, evaluation
<b>V</b>	knowledge, democracy	no grading, study plans
<b>MP</b>	stability, knowledge	compromise, evaluation system
<b>LR</b>	equivalency	grading scale, extended descriptions
<b>LF</b>	knowledge	no failed grade, development plans

#### 4.1.2 Coalition Building

##### 2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?

With the political parties' beliefs as the point of departure, it is possible to identify shared ideas. All parties, especially the Left, the Green and the government, emphasize knowledge. Yet, their courses of actions are different. The government wants to implement the grading system, the Left wants to remove grading, the Greens want to an evaluation system and the Social Democrats want a reduced focus on grades – all with the idea of knowledge as the leading goal for their measures. The Social Democrats and Greens have expressed an agreement on stability in the policy, which will be done through compromise. The government's idea about assessment and monitoring can be equated to the Social Democrats' idea about systematic follow-up. However, their secondary beliefs differ as the government suggests the grading scale and the Social Democrats underline development plans. The development plans are rediscovered in the Left Party's idea

about individual study plans, the Greens' evaluation system and the Swedish Teachers' Union's development plans, all as alternatives to grading. Furthermore, the National Union of Teachers are in line with the government regarding the grading scale. Yet, they differ in their policy core beliefs. The Swedish Teachers' Union, similar to the political parties, emphasize knowledge. The union's secondary beliefs are more comparable to the Social Democrats, Left and Greens, as they all highlight various development plans instead of grading. Thus, the National Union of Teachers welcomed the scale, as the Swedish Teachers' Unions criticized the extended use of grading.

## **2.2 Are there any coalitions?**

An obvious parliamentary coalition is the government consisting of the Moderates, Centre, Liberals and Christian Democrats. The opinion building indicated that the Social Democrats, Greens and Left created an opposing, parliamentary coalition with some shared policy ideas. Yet, the parties also disagreed, especially when it came to the role of grading. The opposing coalition is therefore mainly based on critique against parts of or all of the reform, instead of the sharing of ideas. With respect to the ideas, the Social Democrats and Greens can also be seen as a coalition on their own. This is confirmed in their collective action where they reached out to the government, asking for stability and compromise. Their secondary beliefs were also to reform the current grading system when the stronger opponent the Left Party wanted to remove grading.

It is possible to find interplay between the parties and the unions. One coordination is between the government and the National Union of Teachers, as the union expressed that they welcomed the reform and have worked for it during a long period of time. The positive attitude is further underlined in two press releases, where the union again write that they welcome the reform (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2008b; Lärarnas Riksförbund 2008c). The government and the union therefore share policy ideas and the coordination is visible through the strong welcoming of the policy.

Yet, in one of the press releases from the union, another strong coordination is identified. The union write that they assume that the Social Democrats will stand by what has been agreed on in a debate article in *Dagens Nyheter*, and do not condition a new grading system with demands for the abolishment of the written assessments in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2008c). In this mentioned article, the Social Democratic Party leader and the two unions write a common statement. The aim with the statement is to ask for a broad political agreement regarding the grading scale, and the postponement of written assessments of 1<sup>st</sup> graders (Dagens Nyheter 2007). Due to this article, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the unions and the Social Democrats were in an advocacy coalition, based on shared beliefs and intended, collective action. It is further possible to draw the conclusion that the National Union of Teachers during the reform process decided that the grading reform was more important than the abolishment of assessments and left the coalition to build an advocacy coalition with the government instead. The stability during the coalitions can therefore be questioned.

## 4.2 The Read/Write/Count Guarantee

The government (G), consisting of the Social Democrats and Greens, presented the read/write/count guarantee in 2018. The policy is a guarantee of tailored support efforts in the first years of schooling with the aim to map linguistic and mathematical understandings. If the knowledge requirements are not met, an assessment must be done to determine whether and which adoptions of the regular education or special support is needed. The guarantee is “fulfilled” when the measures covered by the guarantee have been taken, which include that the adjustments have been implemented and evaluated. (prop. 2017/18:195, p. 1-2)

The reform process started in 2015 when a special investigator was commissioned to present a suggestion for the policy, which was presented in 2016. The proposition is in line with the investigation but is a revised version of an earlier proposition as some clarification was demanded (prop. 2017/18:18; prop. 2017/18:195, p. 13-15). The parties and unions have therefore had the possibility to comment twice. The same members of the parliament reacted with two motions each, from the Swedish Democrats (SD) and the Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats (A). The decision to implement the read/write/count guarantee was made in 2018 (Riksdagsskrivelse 2017/18:333).

### 4.2.1 Opinion Building

#### 1.1 What is the policy idea?

The government’s overarching core belief is *equality*, as it is stated that all pupils will have equal opportunities to reach the knowledge goals and have equal access to education. A second idea is *knowledge*, which is identified as the Swedish pupils’ declined results in surveys and tests, together with the weakened eligibility for upper secondary school, is discussed. Equality and knowledge are interlinked as the results have indicated that socioeconomic background have mattered (prop. 2017/18:195, p. 15-19). *Equality* and *knowledge* are the core beliefs for the Moderates, Liberals, Christian Democrats and Centre too. The ideas are visible as the parties write that children are born with different prerequisites and therefore have individual development processes. All pupils need to be given the right to develop with respect to this (Motion 2017/18:4117, p. 2). The Swedish Democrats’ policy core belief is not clear in the text but based on their discussion with the guiding argument that the decreasing results need to change, it can be interpreted that *knowledge* is the belief (Motion 2017/18:4074, p. 1).

In line with the parties, the unions also have *knowledge* as their core belief. The National Union of Teachers (LR) and the Swedish Teachers Union (LR) discuss pupils’ knowledge development and stress that they agree with the government’s discussion on declining results and the need to identify pupils that risk not fulfilling the goals at an early stage. (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2016a; Lärarförbundet 2016a)

## 1.2 What needs to be done?

*The guarantee* is the secondary belief the government argue is needed to strengthen both the equality and knowledge. The idea means that pupils with weak knowledge will be identified earlier, in order to receive support and have equal opportunities to reach the goals. The guarantee is focused on language and mathematics as the results have been especially weak in these subjects. (prop. 2017/18:195, p. 15, 19)

The Moderates, Liberals, Christian Democrats and Centre reject the first proposition. Instead, their secondary belief is to phase out the preschool class as its own school form and convert it into the first year of a *ten-year compulsory school*. This will make it easier to implement measures at an early stage. Yet, the main reason why they disapprove the policy is the predicted, increased documentation (Motion 2017/18:3910). In the second proposition, the government underlined that the documentation would stay the same, which lead to that the opposing parties approved the policy (Motion 2017/18:4117, p. 2). The belief about the ten-year compulsory school is still present, but now the secondary belief of *the guarantee* is included.

The Swedish Democrats rejected both propositions. Their secondary beliefs are a calm *classroom climate* and increased *skills training* to fulfill the knowledge idea. The party argue that the extended support efforts will not be needed if these ideas are fulfilled. (Motion 2017/18:3906; Motion 2017/18:4074, p. 1-2)

Moreover, the National Union of Teachers welcomed *the guarantee* and expressed that they have worked for earlier support efforts for a long time. Another belief presented is more time for each pupil. The union mean that if the *time management* for the teachers was better, this reform would not be needed in the first place to fulfill the knowledge idea (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2016a; Lärarnas Riksförbund 2015).

Like the Moderates, Liberals, Christian Democrats and Centre, the Swedish Teachers' Union was first critical due to the risk of increased administration. After the second proposition they had a much more positive attitude to *the guarantee*. Furthermore, the union expressed that the *division of responsibility* must be clarified. This belief involved that both the teachers' and organizers' mandates need clarification (Läraryrket 2016a; Läraryrket 2016b).

**Table 5: Read/Write/Count Guarantee**

<b>Policy Actors</b>	<b>Policy Core Belief</b>	<b>Secondary Belief</b>
<b>G</b>	equality, knowledge	guarantee
<b>SD</b>	knowledge	classroom climate, skills training
<b>A</b>	equality, knowledge	ten-year school, guarantee
<b>LR</b>	knowledge	guarantee, time management
<b>LF</b>	knowledge	guarantee, division of responsibility

## 4.2.2 Coalition Building

### **2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?**

This reform symbolizes broad consensus on the policy core beliefs; the knowledge among pupils needs to increase, in order for more pupils to fulfill the goals. The equality idea is also widely agreed. Even if these are comprehensive ideas, the actors seem to share the meanings of the ideas as well.

The case also demonstrates that the Swedish Teachers' Union, Moderates, Liberals, Christian Democrats, Centre and Swedish Democrats had different courses of actions with respect to their secondary beliefs. Yet, a majority of the actors, except the Swedish Democrats, changed their courses of action during the reform process, or at least included the guarantee as an appropriate measure. As the government responded to the criticism in the second proposition, an extensive consensus was reached on the secondary belief as well. The National Union of Teachers is another exception here, as the union shared both policy core belief and secondary belief with the government from the start.

### **2.2 Are there any coalitions?**

The first parliamentary coalition is the government, consisting of the Social Democrats and Greens. Another parliamentary coalition is the Moderates, Liberals, Christian Democrats and Centre. At first, this was an opposing coalition. Later during the process, they welcomed and supported the reform. The Swedish Democrats continued to disapprove. This can be interpreted as all of the parties in the government, besides the Swedish Democrats, created one parliamentary coalition.

With respect to intentionally shared beliefs towards a shared policy outcome, the parties, except the Swedish Democrats, and the two unions were in line. Yet, the political parties did not act collectively, as the opposing parties used their resources to influence the development of the government's reform. Neither is there any stability over time, as the actors changed their beliefs. Instead, the question is if the government together with the Swedish Teachers' Union created an advocacy coalition. Even if the union also changed their approach during the process, the policy ideas were more in line from the start. After the government received the feed-back, it did changes according to the union's suggestion (prop. 2017/18:195, p. 33, 69). Moreover, in a document published from the union, there is a joint statement from the union and the Minister of Education. In the document they state their full agreement and ask to meet the opposing parties to discuss the continued work (Läraryrket 2017b). The actors fulfill the requirements of sharing beliefs and acting collectively. It is further possible to identify a form of coordination with the National Union of Teachers, as the union expressed that they have pushed for the change for a long time. This coordination could be intentional or unintentional from the government's side.



## 4.3 The Teacher Education

The government (G), consisting of the Social Democrats, presented the new teacher education in 2000. The renewal of the education involved a replacement of a number of teacher's degrees with one degree. The structure entailed a general area of education, then further directions and specializations, together with a stronger connection between education and research. (prop. 1999/2000:135, p. 1)

The reform process started in 1997 when a committee was assigned to present a suggestion for the policy. The investigation was presented in 1999 and reviewed by the unions (prop. 1999/2000:135, p. 5). The proposition is in line with the investigation and members of the parliament reacted with motions. Relevant for the analysis, based on a focus on the complete reform and not on demarcated aspects, are from the Christian Democrats (KD), Moderates (M), Liberals (L) and Centre (C). The decision to implement the education was made in 2000 (Riksdagens protokoll 2000/01:18).

### 4.3.1 Opinion Building

#### 1.1 What is the policy idea?

The government's belief is the *life-long learning*, as the opportunities to predict what is necessary knowledge for teachers will be less, which requires frequent development. This is related to the idea that the education should follow the *societal development*. The education should reflect changes such as the decentralization, and values such as multiculturalism (prop. 1999/2000:135, p. 5-7). The *life-long learning* is a central idea for the Centre too. Even if the idea should guide the policy, the Centre also highlight the increased demands it entails (Motion 1999/2000: Ub37).

The Christian Democrats' and Liberals' goal is that the education should be a *hybrid* of vocational training and university degree, as to educate is a science in itself. The teacher *status* is a second core belief, since the teacher's role is emphasized as leading and transformed, and in need of increased status. (Motion 1999/2000: Ub33; Motion 1999/2000: Ub35).

The Moderates' policy core beliefs are *knowledge* and *competitiveness*. The ideas are prominent as the knowledge development is central to keep pace with the surrounding world. Therefore, the role of the teacher and the teacher education design should be linked to the requirements of the economy and knowledge society. (Motion 1999/2000: Ub34)

The National Union of Teachers (LR) and the Swedish Teachers' (LF) unions' core belief is *professionalization*, as the education must remain its quality and a closer connection to the research. The idea is interrelated with the *knowledge* and *teacher status* ideas too. (Lärarnas Riksförbund 1999; Lärarförbundet 1999).

#### 1.2 What needs to be done?

In order to fulfill the ideas about life-long learning and society-based education, the government's secondary belief is the *new education*. The structure will enable

active teachers and teacher students to continue their development, as the relationship between the research and the education will be strengthened. The closer link to the research will support the idea of a society-based education, as the research will contribute to an updated education (prop. 1999/2000:135, p. 18, 33, 48). The Christian Democrats and Centre share the *education* as a secondary belief, as it will balance the practical and theoretical parts at the same time as the teacher profession will be supported. To support the teachers further, the parties also emphasize *educational leadership* (Motion 1999/2000: Ub33; Motion 1999/2000: Ub37).

The Moderates and Liberals agree that a renewed education is needed but rejects the policy. The two political parties present *a longer education*, where the Moderates emphasize *traditional knowledge* and the Liberals *special competence*. Moreover, both parties also have a *teacher license* as a belief. (Motion 1999/2000: Ub34; Motion 1999/2000: Ub35)

The National Union of Teachers is mainly positive to the policy, but similarly to the opponents, negative to its content. The union write that the *traditional knowledge* cannot be replaced, and that the *specialization* must be the base. For the professionalization, they have similar comments as the Christian Democrats and Centre and underline a focus on *leadership*. Furthermore, the entrance qualifications should maintain but also include an *interview as a part of the admission*. Another secondary belief related to the same core idea, is a *teacher license* as crucial step to make the profession more attractive. (Lärarnas Riksförbund 1999, p. 2-6)

The Swedish Teachers' Union is extensively positive and share all fundamental opinions. In line with the other union, it underlines that subject knowledge is important for the quality but demonstrates another approach. As the National Union of Teachers discusses the traditional subjects, the Swedish Teachers' Union agrees with the suggestion's structure with more *flexibility* through alternative courses. (Läraryrket 1999, p. 1-3, 7).

**Table 6: Teacher Education**

<b>Policy Actors</b>	<b>Policy Core Belief</b>	<b>Secondary Belief</b>
<b>G</b>	life-long learning, society-based	education
<b>C</b>	life-long learning	education, leadership
<b>KD</b>	hybrid, status	education, leadership
<b>L</b>	hybrid, status	revised education (special competence), license
<b>M</b>	knowledge, competitiveness	revised education (traditional knowledge), license
<b>LR</b>	professionalization, knowledge, status	specialization, traditional knowledge, leadership, entrance qualifications, license
<b>LF</b>	professionalization, knowledge, status	education, flexibility

### 4.3.2 Coalition Building

#### 2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?

During this reform, all policy actors agree that the initiative for a renewed education with an increased connection to research is needed. Yet, there is a difference between an agreement on that a transformation is needed, and agreement on guiding policy ideas. With respect to the core ideas, the government, Centre, Christian Democrats and Liberals have matching beliefs. The unions further share ideas with a stronger teacher perspective on professionalization, knowledge and status.

Regarding the secondary beliefs, the education is shared between the government, Centre, Christian Democrats and the unions. Especially the political parties in this group share core beliefs, as the unions differ with their previous mentioned focus on the teacher perspective. The Moderates and Liberals share the secondary beliefs of a revised education, but with different motivations, and the teacher license. The Liberals stand out with similar core beliefs as the pro-side, but with the motivation that another content will better fulfill the ideas. The National Union of Teachers' share comments regarding the content and license with the opponents, the Moderates and Liberals.

#### 2.2 Are there any coalitions?

Worth mentioning is that the government had the Greens and Lefts as supporting parties, so it is safe to say that they created a parliamentary coalition. The Christian Democrats and Centre are also belonging to this coalition. The Christian Democrats

as a traditional, right-wing party is more unexpected in this group. They write that it is of importance to design an education based on the widest possible majority (Motion 1999/2000: Ub33). The opposing parliamentary coalition is the Moderates and Liberals. The opposition is mainly based on the lack of support for the policy, rather than the sharing of ideas, with the license as the exception.

There is interplay with the unions during the reform, as both of the unions welcomed the policy. The Swedish Teachers' Union is comprehensively positive, as their comments were exclusively underlining opinions stated in the investigation. The National Union of Teachers is less positive, as it stresses that if it is not possible to implement a field of science with associated research, they will reject the suggestion (Lärarnas Riksförbund 1999, p. 11). The interplay with this union is more complex, as it mainly agrees with the investigation, but its critique is in line with the opposing parties, Moderates and Liberals. The teachers' license, traditional knowledge and specialization are ideas shared with the Moderates and the Liberals, which were not included later in the proposition.

## 4.4 The Teacher License

The policy about teacher license was presented by the government (G), consisting of the Moderates, Centre, Liberals and Christian Democrats, in 2010. The policy involved a legitimation system with the principal rule that in order to be employed, allowed to teach and to set grades independently, a teacher license is needed. To be eligible, a teacher's degree and at least one academic year working with the support of a mentor are required. (prop. 2010/11:20, p. 1-2)

The reform process started in 2006 when special investigators on two different occasions explored the system. One investigation was then presented in 2008. The first proposition needed to be supplemented, which led to the creation of a memorandum reviewed by the unions (prop. 2010/11:20, p. 23). The second proposition is in line with the memorandum, and members from the Social Democratic (S), Swedish Democratic (SD), Left (V) and Green (MP) parties reacted with motions. The decision to implement the policy was made in 2011 (Riksdagsskrivelse 2010/11:170).

### 4.4.1 Opinion Building

#### 1.1 What is the policy idea?

The government's main argument is that all pupils should have appropriate, qualified teachers. The goal is related to the beliefs *rule of law*, *the right to education* and *guarantee of quality*. The teacher profession should further be *attractive* (prop. 2010/11:20, p. 25-26). The beliefs are substantially shared with the other parties. The Social Democrats underline *well-educated* and *motivated* teachers, and the need to increase their *status* and the *quality assurance* (Motion 2010/11: Ub4), the Swedish Democrats *quality assurance* and *the rule of law*

(Motion 2010/11: Ub5), the Left *high competence* among teachers in order to conduct teaching with *high quality* (Motion 2010/11: Ub6) and the Greens the teacher *profession's importance* and the *profession's competence* (Motion 2010/11: Ub7).

The Swedish Teachers' Union's (LF) core beliefs are *professionalization* of the teachers, which is interlinked with the *professional responsibility*. This idea is related to the *quality assurance* as well (Läraryrket 2010). The National Union of Teachers' (LR) beliefs are that the *quality* should be secured, and the *division of responsibilities* should be clearer (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2010a, p. 3).

## 1.2 What needs to be done?

The government argues that after the teacher education, there must be another possibility to determine whether teachers are suitable, which is why the *license* is the secondary belief. The license will therefore increase the status. Moreover, the license will also guarantee the pupils' right to education and quality (prop. 2010/11:20, p. 25-26). The *license* as the belief is shared with the Social Democrats, Swedish Democrats and Left. The Social Democratic Party is the most positive as it welcomes the policy and only comment on smaller adjustments. The Swedish Democrats and Left highlight the need to *remove the exceptional occasions* when the license is not needed (Motion 2010/11: Ub4; Motion 2010/11: Ub5; Motion 2010/11: Ub6).

The Left Party also expresses another belief, which is that teachers need to be *certificated*. This is different from the license, as they argue that the main problem with the policy is that it requires that teachers work one year. Instead, it should be enough to be certificated by solely finishing the education. Yet, their reasoning result in that the license in itself might be justified (Motion 2010/11: Ub6). The secondary belief of just being *certificated* as a part of the education is in line with the Greens' view, which is the motive to why the Green Party rejects the policy (Motion 2010/11: Ub5).

Both of the unions welcome the *license* system. The Swedish Teachers' Union write that they have worked for it for many years and took part in pushing for the first investigation. The National Union of Teachers write that they have worked for the policy since 1992 (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2010a; Läraryrket 2010). Based on the Swedish Teachers' Union's idea about professionalization, the union also present another belief about stronger *eligibility requirements* (Läraryrket 2010). The National Union of Teachers is extensively positive but put forward a comment in line with the Swedish Democrats and Lefts, which is the *removing of the exceptional occasions* when license is not needed. Furthermore, the license fulfills the unions' ideas about division of responsibility. It clarifies that licensed teachers have a personal responsibility for the quality of the education, and the organizers are responsible for the quality of the education if they hire people without a teacher's degree (Lärarnas Riksförbund, 2010a, 1-3).

**Table 7: Teacher License**

<b>Policy Actors</b>	<b>Policy Core Belief</b>	<b>Secondary Belief</b>	
<b>G</b>	rule of law, right to education, quality, status	license	
<b>S</b>	competence, status quality	license	
<b>SD</b>	quality, rule of law	license, exceptions	no
<b>V</b>	competence, quality	license, exceptions, certification	no
<b>MP</b>	profession's status and competence	certification	
<b>LR</b>	quality, division of responsibility	license, exceptions	no
<b>LF</b>	professionalization, division of responsibility, quality	license, eligibility	

#### 4.4.2 Coalition Building

##### 2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?

With the policy core beliefs as the starting point, the political parties agree on ideas such as quality, competence assurance and the rule of law. The unions more strongly emphasize the teachers' perspective by discussing professionalization and the division of responsibility. Yet, there is a clear consensus across parties and unions that the profession's status and the quality of the education need to be increased.

Regarding the secondary beliefs, the license system will fulfill the core beliefs according to all policy actors, with the Green Party as the exception. Still, the party's core ideas are corresponding to the other actors' ideas about the strengthened role of the teacher. Yet, they do not think that working one year will help more than giving teachers a certification after a finished. The Left Party agrees with the Greens' view but decides to not reject the policy. The critique that there should be no exceptions for when a license is needed, is shared between the Swedish Democrats, Left and the National Union of Teachers.

##### 2.2 Are there any coalitions?

The first, obvious coalition is the government consisting of the Moderates, Liberals, Centre and Christian Democrats. As the Social Democrats, Swedish Democrats and Left also joined the pro-side of the policy, they can all be seen as one parliamentary coalition. As during earlier reforms, the core beliefs seem to be of importance to reach common ground when it comes to the secondary beliefs as well. Also of

possible importance for the opinion building is the overlapping of two governments. The Social Democrats write that the first investigation was initiated by the former Social Democratic government (Motion 2010/11: Ub4). The former government initiated an investigation, and the latter continued the reform by initiating a second investigation. Shared ideas can be indicated already during the preparing investigation years, and not solely during the actual reform process. Lastly, the Green Party is the only actor rejecting the policy, so no opposing coalition was created.

Moreover, there is interplay identified between the parties and unions. Both of the unions straightforwardly express that they have worked for the license system during many years, and that they pushed for the parties to initiate the process. Given this, it can be concluded that the parties and the unions have been intendedly coordinated. Mainly the National Union of Teachers' opinion building seem to have mattered, as the union in a press release write that during their congress in 1992, they decided to work for the reform. They write that they were alone behind the license system at first, but over the years the support has constantly grown (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2010b). In another press release, after the parliamentary decision was made, the union once again express the long-awaited change and name it "one of the most important education reforms during the last decades". More importantly, the union express that the Minister of Education has fulfilled his election promises, and that they are convinced that the reforms will lead to a better school (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2011). Furthermore, there is also a joint statement from the unions where they highlight the license as "one of the best reforms" (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2010c). Based on the intended coordination and shared beliefs, both of the unions can be seen as forming an advocacy coalition with the parties on the pro-side. Yet, an even stronger advocacy coalition might in this case be consisting of just the National Union of Teachers and the governmental parties.

## 4.5 The Curriculum

The policy about the curriculum was presented by the government (G), consisting of the Moderates, Centre, Liberals and Christian Democrats, in 2008. The policy involved the design of the curriculum which included overall goals, guidelines and syllabi. Through the curriculum the government and the parliament state the goals and guidelines that are to apply to the schools' activities, and through the syllabus they express the requirements the state places on the education in various subjects. Additionally, compulsory national subject tests will be available in year 3, 6 and 9. (prop. 2008/09:87, p. 1, 6)

The reform process started in 2006 when a special investigator was commissioned to study the goal systems, which then was presented in a report in 2007 and reviewed by the unions. The government's proposition is in line with the investigation (prop. 2008/09:87, p. 4). Members from the Left (V), Social Democratic (S) and Green (MP) parties reacted with motions. The decision to implement the curriculum was made in 2009 (Riksdagsskrivelse 2008/09:189).

## 4.5.1 Opinion Building

### 1.1 What is the policy idea?

The government base their policy on governmental investigations that demonstrate that the earlier curriculum was complicated to interpret. How the curriculum should be is therefore *functional* to use, *conveniently* formulated and with *concrete* goals. Furthermore, *quality*, *knowledge* and *equality* are other core ideas, which are observable in an argument that Sweden should be a “knowledge nation” with education in “word class” “for all” (prop. 2008/09:87, p. 6-7). Comparably, the Lefts express that the guiding ideas should be *clarity* and *easy access*. On a more general level, the Left Party also connect to the *knowledge* idea, by stating that there should be no limits to the knowledge development (Motion 2008/09: Ub16, p. 2, 4).

The Social Democrats underline *stability*, which similarly was discussed during the grading scale. They express that “peace and quiet” is needed for both pupils and teachers. The *knowledge* and *equality* ideas are also visible. It is underlined that all pupils need to reach the goals, which is related to that the curriculum must be guided by *clarity* and *assessment* (Motion 2008/09: Ub17, p. 1-2). The beliefs of the Greens are matching, as they underline *equality* and *efficiency* as guiding ideas for the policy (Motion 2008/09: Ub18, p. 1).

The core belief of the National Union of Teachers (LR) is that the school should be a guarantee for that each pupil, *independent on where in Sweden*, should receive a stable *knowledge* ground, which enable further studies (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2007, p. 1). The Swedish Teachers’ Union (LF) underline *clarity* as guiding the design of the curriculum, and on a broader level the *profession’s mandate* (Läraryrket 2007, p. 1).

### 1.2 What needs to be done?

For the government, the *curriculum* is the solution needed to fulfill the core ideas. The redesigned curriculum will be the measure to continuously follow-up and evaluate, in order to track the knowledge development and identify pupils in need of support. With a clear structure, it will further be possible to assure an equal assessment. (prop. 2008/09:87, p. 7)

As during the grading scale, the Social Democrats have *stability* as their core idea, and *comprise* with all parties as their secondary belief. Still, the Social Democrats, and also the Greens, share the *curriculum* as the secondary belief to fulfill the core ideas. (Motion 2008/09: Ub17, p. 1-2, 5; Motion 2008/09: Ub18, p. 1-5).

The Left Party rejects the policy, by arguing that even if there might be a need to revise the curriculum, there is no need to change its content and structure. The secondary belief is instead to prepare *support material*, in order to provide the requested clarity and accessibility. Furthermore, the party is against the national tests and knowledge goals as the *responsibility of the school* needs to be strengthened for the knowledge idea. It is the schools’ obligation to make all pupils pass, but the policy blurs the responsibility (Motion 2008/09: Ub16, p. 2-5). The *responsibility* issue is brought up by the Green Party as well (Motion 2008/09: Ub18, p. 2).



Both of the unions welcome the *curriculum*. The National Union of Teachers means that this is an important step for increased equivalence and knowledge, but as another idea the union presents the belief of implementing a *10-year school* (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2007, p. 1-4). The Swedish Teachers' Union is less positive and criticizes the compulsory *national tests in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade*. The motivation is a worry that the test to a greater extent will be linked to the grading (Läraryrket 2007, p. 1-3).

**Table 8: Curriculum**

<b>Policy Actors</b>	<b>Policy Core Belief</b>	<b>Secondary Belief</b>
<b>G</b>	clarity, ease of access, quality, knowledge, equality	curriculum
<b>V</b>	clarity, ease of access, knowledge	support material, schools' responsibility, no early test
<b>S</b>	stability, knowledge, clarity, assessment, equality	compromise, curriculum
<b>MP</b>	equality, efficiency	curriculum, schools' responsibility, no early test
<b>LR</b>	equivalence, knowledge	curriculum, 10-year school
<b>LF</b>	clarity, profession's mandate	curriculum, no early test

#### 4.5.2 Coalition Building

##### 2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?

Between the political parties, especially the parties in the government, the Left and the Social Democratic, it is possible to identify corresponding core beliefs about the design of the curriculum. Guiding ideas are clarity, accessibility and assessment, which reveals that there also seem to be a consensus on that the former curriculum did not properly fill its function. Additionally, the curriculum's role for ideas such as equality, equivalence and knowledge are emphasized across all policy actors. In summary, both parties and unions share similar policy core beliefs, which can be interlinked with sharing the problem description of the former curriculum.

When comparing the actors' secondary beliefs, there is an even clearer shared understanding. All parties and unions, with the Left Party as the only exception, agree that the redesigned curriculum will fulfill the core beliefs. Even if the Left Party's core ideas were matching with the other actors, support materials would be a more appropriate measure to solve the problems raised. Other critique presented about strengthening the responsibility of the school, rather than the pupils with

national tests and knowledge goals, was shared between the Left, the Greens and the Swedish Teachers' Union.

## **2.2 Are there any coalitions?**

First, the given parliamentary coalition is the government consisting of the Moderates, Liberals, Centre and Christian Democrats. The Social Democrats and the Greens were also positive to the policy and can be included in the coalition. These parties shared policy beliefs, but possibly also crucial for consensus is that the reform process overlapped two governments. It is namely explained in the motion from the Social Democrats that the Social Democratic government initiated the investigation for the policy in 2006 (Motion 2008/09: Ub17). It does not seem to be a cooperative atmosphere between the government and the Social Democrats. Like during the grading scale, the Social Democrats express the need for more compromise. Therefore, that they started the policy change themselves is possibly important to understand why they still decided to join the government's coalition. Similar comments are put forward by the Greens as well. They discuss that during the last redesign of the curriculum in 1994, all parties met to discuss, which has not been the case during this reform (Motion 2008/09: Ub18, p. 1-2). Lastly, as the Left Party is the only party rejecting the policy, no opposing coalition was formed.

There is interplay with the unions, as both of them are sharing policy ideas with the large coalition. The National Union of Teachers was more positive and corresponded more with the government regarding the ideas about increased knowledge. In a press release, the union underlines the positive attitude toward the policy, and that it satisfies the union to see the broad parliamentary consensus (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2008d). The Swedish Teachers' Union expressed more critique against parts of the proposal. The union also disagreed with the idea about earlier national tests, together with the Left Party and the Green Party.

## **4.6 The 10-Year School**

The policy about the 10-year school was presented by the government (G), consisting of the Social Democratic and Green parties, in 2017. The policy was a prolonging of the compulsory schooling with one year, which involved a school start when children turn six years old. Worth mentioning, even if the school duty will be 10 years, the pre-school class is properly its own school form. (prop. 2017/18:9, p. 1)

The reform process started in 2014 when a special investigator was assigned to investigate how the preschool class could be integrated as a part of the compulsory school, which was presented in 2015 and reviewed by the unions (prop. 2017/18:9, p. 14). The government's proposition is in line with the investigation. Members of the Swedish Democrats (SD) and the Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats (A) reacted with motions. The decision to implement the policy was made in 2017 (Riksdagsskrivelse 2017/18:43).

## 4.6.1 Opinion Building

### 1.1 What is the policy idea?

The government's overarching ideas for the reform are *equality* and *knowledge*, as all children should have the same opportunities to develop their knowledge from the start of the schooling. A core belief more directly linked to the proposal is *equivalence*, as it is stated that with compulsory schooling it will be the same schooling everywhere for everyone. (prop. 2017/18:9, p. 15-16, 19)

The core belief for the Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats is *knowledge*. The idea is visible as their previous period in government is discussed, where the increased focus on knowledge goal fulfillment was leading all policy. This is further interlinked to the central idea of Sweden being a leading nation of knowledge, where children need to learn the basics early (Motion 2017/18:2555, p. 1). The *knowledge* idea is shared with the Swedish Democrats, who underline the role language and mathematics should play in the first year of schooling for continued knowledge development (Motion 2017/18:475).

The unions' ideas are in line with the political parties. The National Union of Teachers (LR) underline *knowledge* and *equivalence* as leading for all policy. The Swedish Teachers' Union (LF) emphasize *knowledge*. The latter union also has a core belief more directly connected to the policy, which is *cooperation*. The idea means that cooperation, or the "bridge", between the preschool class and the 1<sup>st</sup> grade is of importance for the continued schooling. (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2016b; Lärarförbundet 2016c).

### 1.2 What needs to be done?

The *10-year school* is the government's solution to how children will have the same opportunities for knowledge development. With prolonged schooling, the thought is that pupils in need of support will be identified earlier, which will increase the possibility for them to fulfill the goals in the later parts of the education. Additionally, the first year must be compulsory for the sake of the equivalence (prop. 2017/18:9, p. 16). The Swedish Democrats agree, and the *10-year school* as their secondary belief is recognized as they welcome the policy. It is stated that the preschool class should remain, but an *increased focus on knowledge* is further needed in the curriculum (Motion 2017/18:475).

The Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats reject the proposal. To fulfill the knowledge idea, their belief is that the *preschool class should be abolished*. The first year of schooling needs to be more *focused on learning*, and less on play, and therefore the six-year-olds should start the 1<sup>st</sup> grade directly. With this structure, it will be easier to implement earlier support efforts (Motion 2017/18:2555, p. 1-5). The secondary belief of *reforming the preschool class to the new 1<sup>st</sup> grade* is shared with the National Union of Teachers, who also reject the proposal. The motivation behind the rejection is also comparable, as the union state that the change would make the *focus on knowledge development* clearer. This would also make the compulsory school more cohesive. This is also interlinked with the equivalence idea, as the measure would involve a holistic grip of the Swedish compulsory school (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2016b, p. 1-2).

The unions went in different directions during the reform, as the Swedish Teachers' Union joined the pro-side. The union welcomed the policy and mainly agreed with the measures, especially that in the *10-year school*, the preschool class should remain as a bridge to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Yet, they reject the prolonging of the school duty, it should only apply to pupils in need of extra support. The belief of a *voluntary first year* is interlinked with the knowledge idea. In order to fulfill the knowledge goals, the content rather than the time matters. (Läraryrket 2016c, p. 1-3).

**Table 9: 10-Year School**

<b>Policy Actors</b>	<b>Policy Core Belief</b>	<b>Secondary Belief</b>
<b>G</b>	equality, knowledge, equivalence	10 year-school
<b>SD</b>	knowledge	10 year-school, knowledge-focus
<b>A</b>	knowledge	no pre-school class, knowledge-focus
<b>LR</b>	knowledge, equivalence	no pre-school class, knowledge-focus
<b>LF</b>	knowledge, cooperation	10 year-school, voluntary first year

## 4.6.2 Coalition Building

### 2.1 Are the policy ideas shared?

With the policy core beliefs as the point of departure for the comparison, it is possible to identify a clear focus on the knowledge idea across all policy actors. As the knowledge idea is a wide-ranging belief, it is further possible to see that the idea is attributed with different meanings for the actors. The government interlink knowledge with equality, and the idea imply that pupils will have the same opportunities to develop their knowledge. This reasoning corresponds with the unions, who also discuss knowledge as connected to knowledge development. The knowledge idea for these actors can be contrasted to the meaning for the remaining parties. The Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats, together with the Swedish Democrats, emphasize knowledge as more related to concrete subjects in the schooling. The former parties discuss knowledge goal fulfillment in connection to increasing the focus on learning in the first year, and the latter party discuss the need to increase the role of language and mathematics.

The varied meanings of knowledge might lead to the different courses of actions, but it is possibly not the whole answer. The government, the Swedish Democrats and the Swedish Teachers' Union share the idea of implementing the 10-year school, which makes the Swedish Democrats the exception with the increased focus on learning. The union's ideas also differ, as it does not agree with the measure to make the first year obligatory for all pupils. The Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats, together with the National Union of Teachers,

share the idea of abolishing the preschool class and name it the 1<sup>st</sup> grade in the 10-year school. The actors also share the belief of increasing the focus on learning during the first year.

## **2.2 Are there any coalitions?**

An obvious parliamentary coalition is the government consisting of the Social Democratic and Green Party. The opposing parliamentary coalition is the Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats. Even if these two coalitions share similar core ideas, the divide is mainly based on that the school form of the first year became a political question. The opposing coalition was the former government that initiated the investigation in 2014, but the later government changed the investigation's directives by including the alternative of keeping the preschool class as its own school form. The former government therefore argues that the investigation departed from its stated goals (Motion 2017/18:2555, p. 1-5). The opinion building further demonstrated that the Swedish Democrats, quite unexpectedly as a right-wing party, joined the government's coalition. The support from the Swedish Democrats is also unexpected with respect to their policy core belief, where it was concluded that their knowledge idea corresponded more with the opposing coalition. Yet, in their other secondary belief, they underline the need to focus more on learning in the pre-school class.

Furthermore, this is the case where the unions differ the most. The Swedish Teachers' Union welcomes the policy, and the National Union of Teachers' rejects it. When comparing the parliamentary coalitions' policy ideas with the unions, it is possible to identify coordination between the actors. The Swedish Teachers' Union shares ideas with the government's coalition, and the National Union of Teachers' with the opposing coalition. In an article, after the presentation of the government's proposition, the Swedish Teachers' Union wrote that the government has understood the problem and expressed that they hope that other parties will back the suggestion (Läraryrket 2017d). In a press release from the same union, after the parliamentary decision was made, the union once again underlines the support. The union also states that it had worked for the policy during a long period of time (Läraryrket 2017c). This is indicating an intentional coordination between the government and the union.

Already when the Social Democrats back in 2012 had discussed the policy in a debate article, the National Union of Teachers responded with a debate article. The message was that the idea is a great first step, but that it is not enough. Lastly, the union expressed that the Social Democrats must dare to fully take the step needed by making the pre-school class the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (Lärarnas Riksförbund 2012). Another sign of an intended coordination is that the Liberals, Moderates, Centre and Christian Democrats directly referred to their corresponding ideas with the National Union of Teachers (Motion 2017/18:2555). Based on shared beliefs, intended coordination and stability over time a conclusion to be drawn is that two advocacy coalitions are possible to identify in this case. One is formed by the governmental parties and the Swedish Teachers' Union, and another one formed by the opposing parties and the National Union of Teachers.

## 4.7 Summary of Results

The cases selected to study the interplay during policy development were at first divided into the categories *pupils*, *teachers* and *regulation*. There were some variations in the interplay identified between the different categories. First, most interplay between both political parties and teachers' unions was during the policy changes that were concerning the teachers. During the teacher license, all parties and unions agreed, except the Green. During the teacher education, all parties and unions agreed, except the Moderates and Liberals. Less interplay was identified during the reforms concerning the pupils and regulation. During the grading scale the parties did not agree, but the unions did. Yet, the interplay was more extensive during the guarantee, with all parties and unions agreeing, except the Swedish Democrats. The same mixed results are found regarding the regulation. During the curriculum all parties and unions interplayed, except the Left, but during the 10-year school both parties and unions took different paths.

Across the policy reforms, the influence of the teachers' unions in pushing for the governments to initiate investigations is indicated. It was at least clearly stated from the unions during the grading scale, the guarantee, the teacher license, and the ten-year school that the unions have worked for similar policy suggestions for long periods of time. The teacher license was a case that stood out more, as the unions had worked for the license for about 20 years. The results therefore indicate that the unions are playing an important role in the agenda-setting. The unions' role in the following steps of the policy development, such as the specific design of the reform, is unclear over the cases. In some cases, their comments were partly included in the political parties' discussions in propositions and motions, in others not at all.

When summarizing the forming of advocacy coalitions during the reforms, it is possible to see an interplay pattern. Regarding the interplay between the unions and the parties, the analysis demonstrated that the Swedish Teachers' Union and the left parties collaborated more, as the National Union of Teachers and the right parties collaborated more. The National Union of Teachers and the right governments were in advocacy coalitions, or comparable to advocacy coalitions, during the grading scale, the teacher license and the 10-year school. The Swedish Teachers' Union and the left governments were in advocacy coalitions, or comparable to advocacy coalitions, during the read/write/count guarantee and the 10-year school. When not in coalitions, the results also showed that the National Teachers' Union agreed with the right parties' critique, comments and ideas, as opposite to the Swedish Teachers' Union that mainly agreed with the parties to the left.

Regarding the policy ideas over all reforms, there are policy core beliefs that were recurrent, crossed all categories, and were shared between different policy actors. As an example, "knowledge" is a policy core belief that was broadly agreed over both actors and time. It is not an unexpected goal that the Swedish school should be characterized by knowledge. Yet, as the belief is not very specific, the idea was attributed different meanings for different actors. One more agreed meaning was that all pupils should reach the knowledge goals. One less shared meaning was the Moderate's goal that Sweden should be a leading nation of

knowledge. Other repeated policy core beliefs are “equality”, “quality” and the “professionalization” or the “status” of teachers. Divided between the two biggest political parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderates, the results also indicated some dissimilarities in the recurrent policy core beliefs. The Social Democratic Party generally underlined equality, knowledge goals and stability over time, as the Moderate Party generally underlined the knowledge society, quality assurance and clear assessment. Not surprisingly, the two unions highlighted the teachers’ perspective in the policy core beliefs. Frequent ideas were referring to the “competence”, “status” and “professionalization” of teachers. The unions also highlighted the regulation of schools across Sweden, and “equivalence” across schools and municipalities was therefore repeated.

When mapping the policy ideas from a wider perspective, it is possible to see that the unions almost always agreed with the party or parties in the government over time. The only exception from this pattern was that the National Union of Teachers rejected the Social Democratic and Green policy about the 10-year school. Furthermore, it is possible to see that the traditional, parliamentary blocs were not stable over time. The blocs in the Swedish parliament have during the studied time period predominantly been the Moderates, Liberals, Centre and Christian Democrats in one parliamentary coalition, and the Social Democrats, Green and sometimes the Left another coalition, with the Swedish Democrats as a single player. The results from the analysis demonstrated that the grading scale was the only reform when these blocs were completely visible. In the other cases, more unexpected collaborations were therefore found. As an example, during the teacher education, the Christian Democrats collaborated with the Social Democratic government instead of the opposing Moderates and Liberals.

The cases where most interplay was found were the read/write/count guarantee, the teacher license and the curriculum. All of these cases have in common that the policy core beliefs were similar. In line with the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the conclusion is that it seems to be easier for policy actors to agree on the secondary beliefs when the core beliefs are corresponding. This can be opposed to the case about the teacher education, and partly the case about the grading scale, where the actors could agree that a transformation of either the teacher education or the grading scale was needed. Yet, the specific policy ideas for the transformations mattered for consensus to be reached. Furthermore, during the curriculum and the license, the fact that one government initiated the investigation, and another government presented the proposition was possibly also of significance for the interplay. With an overlap between two different governmental periods, and particularly between two governments from different political parties, it is easier to reach broad consensus in the parliament. During the guarantee it was possibly of importance that the government received negative feedback from its opponents and treated it in a second proposition that more actors could agree on.

One case that contradicted these results on what makes more interplay possible is the 10-year school. During this reform the policy core beliefs were similar, together with that two governmental periods were overlapping. This could possibly be explained by that the core beliefs were attributed different meanings for the policy actors. A main difference is also that the latter government transformed the

directives for the investigation that the former government had initiated. This made the school form, either remain the pre-school class or convert it to the new 1<sup>st</sup> grade, the focal political question.



## 5 Conclusions and Discussion

The central aim of this thesis has been to understand how the development of education policy in Sweden has been shaped by the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions. How the development of education policy has been shaped referred to how the interactions between parties and unions influenced the education policy development over time. For this purpose, the study addressed the following research question:

- **How has the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions shaped the development of education policy concerning the compulsory school in Sweden from 2000 to 2020?**

To study the interplay during policy development, the analysis focused on the policy actors' opinion- and coalition building during six different policy reforms. The analysis demonstrated that there were interplay patterns over time. First, the study of especially the opinion building indicated that the two teachers' unions have had a significant role in pushing for governments to initiate investigations. Therefore, the results suggest that the teachers' unions mainly influence the agenda-setting part of the policy process. Second, the Swedish Teachers' Union (LF) and the left parties collaborated more, as the National Union of Teachers (LR) and the right parties collaborated more. Third, the teachers' unions generally agreed, or had similar policy ideas, with the political party or parties in the government. Lastly, the traditional blocs of political parties that usually collaborate in the Swedish parliament were not stable.

The result that the unions mainly influenced the initial part of the policy process can possibly be interlinked with the result that the unions generally agreed with the government. As the unions had pushed for governmental investigations in multiple questions, they were largely positive to the following, introduced reforms by the politicians. The conclusion is in line with earlier studies, mainly Dobbins and Christ (2019), that found that the interplay between political parties and teachers' unions is of importance, as both groups of actors influenced the direction of the education policy development. Based on the comment letters to governments, and especially the debate articles, it is further possible to conclude that the teacher' unions have clear opinions in the development of education policy. They also influence to some extent, even if Sweden has gone through a decorporatization process, in line with for example Dobbins (2014), Moe and Wiborg (2017) and Lindvall and Sebring (2005).

Furthermore, as for example Rothstein (1992) has explained, the teachers' unions are functioning as interest groups in the development of policy. Even if they seem to influence to some extent, their continued possibility to influence during the

reform process was unclear. The analysis demonstrated further interplay when the political parties in some cases included their comments in the direct design of the policy, in others it was only possible to see possible interactions during agenda-setting. Neither is it possible to conclude anything about changes in their influence during the 20-year period studied. This means that it is not possible to see changes in any direction in their influence over time.

The material used in the analysis was central to understand the opinion- and coalition building, as it demonstrated the initial steps of the process from both the political parties' and the teachers' unions' perspectives. This study could demonstrate that both policy actors were important in the development of policy, as the teachers' unions were identified as important during agenda-setting. Yet, in a study with more time and resources, more material could be included in order to conclude more about the interactions between the policy actors in different stages of the reform process. More material from both parties and unions would therefore better capture a dynamic process of opinion- and coalition building.

Results from earlier studies had indicated that teachers' unions corresponded more with political parties to the left than with parties to the right (Moe 2011). Based on the analysis, it is not possible to confirm that result. Instead, the main conclusion to be drawn over time is that the Swedish Teachers' Union and the left parties had more interplay, as the National Union of Teachers and the right parties had more interplay. This could possibly be interlinked with the fact that the unions are connected to different organizations representing different worker groups. The Swedish Teachers' Union is connected to The Confederation of Professional Employees, which historically represents officials. The National Union of Teachers is connected to the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations, which historically represents academics or professional graduates. Yet, these typical divisions have faded over time and both organizations represent broader groups.

The result that the traditional, parliamentary blocs were unstable was surprising, as they generally have been stable in other policy areas over time. The consensus or unexpected collaborations between both teachers' unions and political parties indicate that the education policy area is shaped by many agreed ideas. Yet, with focus on solely the political parties, the corresponding ideas can both be related to that the parties easily find common ground, or in line with research stating that policies of larger parties are becoming more similar to satisfy the median voter (Dobbins & Christ 2019). The conclusion that many ideas were shared is corresponding to Dobbins and Christ (2019). Their argument was that political parties' education reforms might be similar, but the ideas linked to different arguments would be different. The analysis over the interplay indicated that the parties had similar definitions of what the problems are. Problems that are well-discussed and shared between actors within the policy area are for example the weakening results and knowledge goals fulfillment among pupils and the falling status of teachers. A general trend among the policy reforms, independently of parties in the government, is therefore different kinds of earlier support efforts for pupils and increased monitoring or control of both pupils and teachers. Though, the main differences found were in the specific policy ideas, or more directly in which policy arguments or meanings the policy ideas were attributed. Understanding the

ideas was therefore a challenge during the analysis. In some cases, the ideas were broad and therefore easier to be shared between multiple actors. In other cases, the ideas were more specific and related to the direct design of the reform and therefore harder to find common ground around. The theoretical concepts policy core beliefs and secondary beliefs from the Advocacy Coalition Framework were both helpful in finding similarities and dissimilarities between policy actors, and to map how coalitions were constructed based on beliefs. Yet, the theoretical concepts did not bring clarity to what the identified policy ideas actually meant for the actors. As an example, “equality” as a core belief might mean two different things to two different policy actors. In the analysis, it was in some cases clear to see that one idea meant different things to different actors, in others it was not. There is hence a risk that the interplay in some cases might be overstated or understated. For future usage of the theoretical concepts from the Advocacy Coalition Framework, sharper definitions of the beliefs, or a complement of other theoretical concepts in the idea analytical tool, would bring more clarity to the policy ideas.

So, what makes the more extensive interplay or broader consensus during the education policy development possible? Based on the analysis, the assumption made in the Advocacy Coalition Framework could be confirmed. The results namely indicated that when the policy core beliefs are shared, it is easier for policy actors to agree on the secondary beliefs or negotiate the development of policy in general. Yet, it is not possible to determine if the policy core beliefs are enough to explain interplay. The analysis also found the overlapping of governments and government’s willingness to negotiate with its opponents as of significance to understand a broad agreement during a policy process. This discussion can further be connected to a more general discussion about the difficulties in understanding if an actor, or several actors, really reject a policy because the policy ideas are diverse, or if it is a part of the political game to not agree. The same goes the other way around for actors that might be in a more stable coalition and therefore agree to agree, rather than agreeing because the policy ideas are matching.

## 5.1 Recommendations for Future Research

The emphasis in this thesis has been on understanding how the development of education policy has been shaped by the interplay between parties and unions. A recommendation for future research, based on the research aim, is to broaden the perspective and include more policy actors, in order to reach a more holistic understanding of the educational policy process. With more resources and time, it would be possible to study coalitions as consisting of particular single actors, instead of applying the group perspective as was needed in this study. It would also be fruitful to study the interplay during more cases, in order to see if the interplay patterns identified are stable. Another recommendation is to combine the policy development perspective with the policy effects of interplay. This would enable a study of how the interplay actually effects the implementation, such as which

consequences disagreement from teachers in the unions can have for the output in the education provision.

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