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Tensions and dilemmas of cross-sectoral cultural policy: the case of Skapande skola, Sweden

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As public entities are increasingly asked to cooperate in order to provide welfare services, policies tend to become more complex, as problems and challenges stretch over more than one policy area (Hordern 2015). Wicked problems increasingly demand cross-sectoral policies and policy implementation. For example, the arts have since 2008 been seen as an aspect of several policy areas by the Swedish government, resulting in views that the arts and aesthetic expressions should be accessible in all of society, not only in a specific sector and designated institutions. Culture should make a difference throughout society, the conservative government in power between 2006 and 2014 argued. How this ‘aspect policy’, as it was described, has been designed and implemented is explored in this paper through a case study of a policy aiming at increasing aesthetic experiences for school children during

school hours in Sweden. The policy was implemented through the establishment of a state grant called Skapande skola, and was introduced in 2008. In particular, we are interested in finding out what characterises cross-sectoral policies and how cross-sectoral policy implementation differs from intra-sectoral policy design in this specific case. Research on cross-sectoral policy making and implementation has so far mostly been done within the area of sustainability and environmental policy. This paper uses knowledge from other areas to explore this topic which has not been researched in any significant extent within the broad area of cultural policy and implementation.

Introduction, topic and contribution

As public entities are increasingly asked to cooperate in order to provide welfare services, policies tend to become more complex, as problems and challenges stretch over more than one policy area (Hordern 2015). Wicked problems increasingly demand cross-sectoral policies and policy implementation, and have become a regular feature of public policy and governance. The third generation of policies are designed to meet challenges that cannot be met by single-area policies; the most explicit example is sustainability policies following on the awareness of traditional policy areas as too limited to confront the phenomenon of climate change individually. Much research on cross-sectoral policies is consequently within the area of sustainability.

But cross-sectoral policies are more frequent also in the cultural sector. The arts in Sweden have since 2008 been seen as an aspect of several policy areas by the Swedish government, resulting in views that the arts and aesthetic expressions should be accessible in all of society, not only in a specific sector and designated institutions. Culture should make a difference throughout society, the conservative government in power between 2006 and 2014 argued. How this 'aspect policy', as it was described, has been designed and implemented is explored in this paper through a case study of a policy aiming at increasing aesthetic experiences for school children during school hours in Sweden.

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In particular, we are interested in finding out what characterises cross-sectoral policies and how cross-sectoral policy implementation differs from intra-sectoral policy design in this specific case. Research on cross-sectoral policy making and implementation has so far mostly been done within the area of sustainability and environmental policy. This paper uses knowledge from other areas to explore this topic which has not been researched in any significant extent within the broad area of cultural policy and implementation. Particular with the Skapande skola grant scheme is that it originates from the Ministry of Culture, and therefore qualifies as cultural policy, whereas it is implemented in schools, which sort under the Ministry of Education. The implementation of the policy instrument therefore crosses both ministerial and administrative boundaries.

The research area of cultural policy implementation is small and fragmented, and especially descriptions of Nordic empirical data reflecting the unique 'messiness' of local, regional and national government policies help develop research in the Nordic countries and are of value in an international research context. This paper contributes to cultural policy research through analysis of policy implementation in a cross-sectoral setting, there by expanding the focus of cultural policy research. The case illustrates recent developments in cultural policy towards instrumental uses, but points to differences between a Nordic welfare approach to cultural policy as compared to a more directly market-oriented Anglo-Saxon tradition of cultural policy as evidenced in the last decades in especially the UK but also in Australia. In this way, the paper contributes to a Nordic body of research on policy implementation in cross-sectoral contexts.

Previous research on policy implementation and art in schools

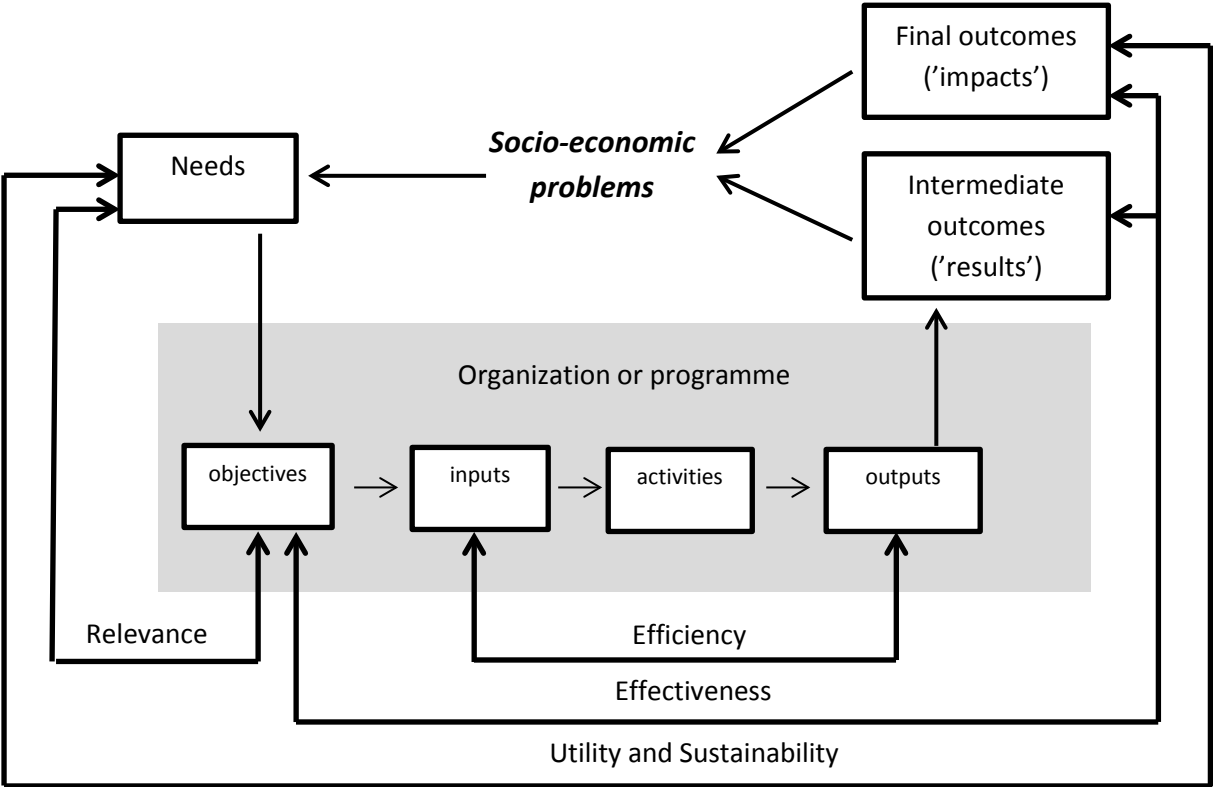
This section will address both issues of policy implementation in cross-sectoral contexts, and initiative to expand the use of the arts and aesthetic experiences in schools beyond traditional arts education in schools.

There is research published internationally on policies relating to the arts in schools relating to regular art education, such as music, drama and visual art, but as this paper is about a policy aimed at increasing the experience of the arts in schools beyond arts classes, this research will not be referred here. As regards arts projects that aim to add to other parts of the curriculum, there are mostly publications regarding individual cases or projects presented as case studies in research (Hall et al., 2007; Nevanen et al., 2014), and some literature on educational aspects of the arts and aesthetic experiences and how these relate to learning in school settings, especially across the curriculum (Duma & Silverstein, 2014; Snook & Buck, 2014). Furthermore, there are some publications, in principle all evaluations, of policies similar to the Swedish one has been designed in the UK (Creative partnerships, 2002-2011; and Arts across the Curriculum, 2005-2008) (Sharp et al., 2006; Coutts et al., 2009).

In order to understand public policy implementation, public management researchers often describe the policy process as containing inputs, activities aimed at achieving policy goals (throughput), output in the form of resulting services or products, and these outputs can be evaluated in relation to resources used and/or goals achieved. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The policy process is generally often described also as a sequence of stages or phases, during which policy takes ideational shape and later is translated in actions and resulting effects.

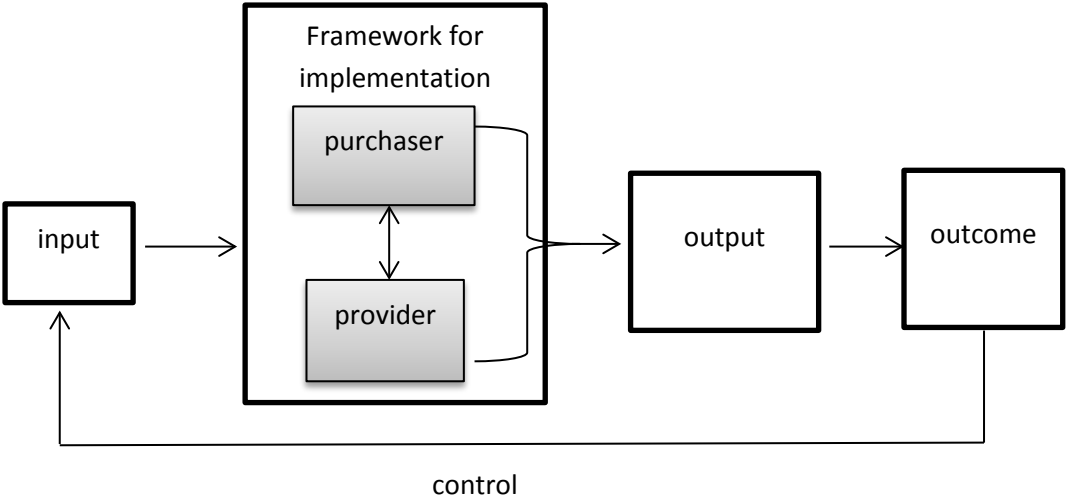
In our time of governance rather than government, there are several modes of organising policy implementation. These are based on central organising principles in society, namely hierarchy, market and network. Many previously publicly provided welfare services have been reorganised, often several times. One popular reform of the delivery of public services is

Figure 1. The input/output model of public management. Source: Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000: 13).



the marketisation creation of quasi markets, where services formerly provided only by public bodies, are put out for tendering. Different actors then compete for commissions on contract basis. An illustration of this principle is given in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Model of policy implementation with a purchaser-provider solution for public services.



Governance researchers have reported on an increasing use in Europe of market based governance modes. In contrast to private markets, quasi markets and tendering or contracting out as mode of governance is a top-down (hierarchical) arrangement similar to centralised government, as government dictates the framework for what is to be delivered and the compensation for it, along with other specific conditions (Klijn, 2002). According to van Berkel et al. (2012), marketization does not necessarily mean privatisation, and often marketization reforms lead to a hybrid governance mode rather than to the complete abandonment of previous modes of governance.

The quasi-market for cultural services related to Skapande skola is not completely similar to the quasi-market in the areas of healthcare and social services, where the public sector has a much larger role in the provision of services (van Berkel, 2014). Quasi markets can be defined as markets where

monopolistic state providers are replaced with independent ones competing with each other for customers of purchasers. (van Berkel et al., 2012: 275)

or, as Le Grand (1991: 1260) originally defined them

not-for-profit organisations competing for public contracts, sometimes in competition with for-profit organisations; consumer purchasing power in the form of vouchers rather than cash; and, in some cases, the consumers represented in the market by agents instead of operating by themselves.

In the school sector, marketization has been shown to increase inequality (Savage et al., 2013), and it will be interesting to see how a market solution for the implementation of a policy for increased access to culture for all school children will perform in this respect.

For non-profits, marketization of services traditionally provided by non-profit organisations in the social sector has led to concentration of providers to larger organisations in Australia, a trend well-known from private markets (Butcher & Dalton, 2014).

Material and design of study

This paper is based on ongoing work with an evaluation of some effects of the state grant Skapande skola, a scheme for allowing for participative or other cultural activities in Swedish schools.¹ The information on which the paper is based was collected through interviews, formal documents and publications, as well as accounts of projects available through the Swedish Arts Council. Interviews were undertaken with a range of stakeholders, from officials at the Arts Councils and municipal employees and coordinators to staff at individual schools. Interviews were undertaken both individually by the researchers and together. Recordings of some of the interviews, those assessed most central, were made. In the other cases minutes were taken during the interview. To date, c. 30 interviews have been conducted with different categories of respondents, and interviews have lasted from 30 minutes to more than one hour. We have also read previous evaluations and reports on Skapande skola, and collected data on municipal services to schools within the arts.

Research on cross-sectoral policy implementation has mostly been conducted within the field of sustainability, and this policy area differs quite a lot from the cultural area on the operational level and as regards the content of policies. As we have not found any specific existing model that could explain tensions in policy implementation in the cultural sector, the case will be analysed on the basis of our empirical studies and our preceding knowledge of policy implementation and public management. We therefore refer to several different theoretical models in our analysis of the case. The models help explain the tensions described by the respondents in theoretical terms.

The case

The state grant was launched in 2008, when the then conservative government were reorienting the national cultural policy towards more market oriented types of support, away from what was perceived as too much dependence on public support by artists and cultural professionals. Shifting from direct grants to stimulus of markets was one way of avoiding the passive dependence on public support in the cultural sector.

Over time, the scope of the state grant has been expanded, from the ages 12-15 down to 6 year-olds. In five years, from 2008 to 2013, the sum of money allocated to Skapande skola has increased from 27 million SEK in 2008 to 175 million SEK in 2013. The number of involved cultural professionals and artists have increased from c. 1 000 to more than 5 000 (not unique actors, but total amount of actors commissioned in the same time period.

3,101 schools in Sweden took part in activities funded by the Skapande skola grant in 2013, with a total of 651 000 children between 6 and 15 years of age (year 0-9). Out of the total number of schools, 271 were privately owned, and 2 state schools, whereas the remaining 2 926 schools were municipal.

The aim of the grant is twofold, as is stated in the formal government decision to introduce the grant:

2§ The purpose of the state grant is to contribute to

1. the long term integration of cultural and artistic expressions in classes 0-9, with a point of departure in the task of schools as regards culture (skolans kulturuppdrag) that is described in the law (förordning) SKOLFS 2010:37 about the curriculum (läroplan) for primary and secondary school (class 1-9) and preparatory class (class 0), and [fritidshemmet] that are stipulated as part of the goal achievement of schools, and
2. an increase in professional cultural activities for and with pupils, so that access to all forms of expressions of culture and the possibilities of pupils to partake themselves in cultural expressions increase. Law (förordning) (2012:900).²

There are other ways apart from Skapande skola in which pupils encounter cultural expressions during school hours. Municipalities in general in their cultural budget allocate monies for the purchase of cultural experiences for school children. Such cultural experiences mostly consist of the purchase of different kinds of performances, mostly within the performing arts or related to music. These performances can be experienced either at cultural

institutions or stages in the possession of the cultural professionals, or in the school in question. There is sometimes also regional support for schools to be able to take part of cultural offers in the region. As regions as well as municipalities design their support to culture and schools independently, there is variation across the country as regards support and opportunities. In fact, Skapande skola as a state grant is intended to complement municipal investments and expenses in professional artistic expressions and experiences for pupils, and these are generally more traditional in their form, where artists perform something for the pupils. Municipal offers of cultural experiences for school children are often made in the form of offers to all schools, public as well as private, in a municipality, to take part in at least one cultural experience per school year. These offers are in general sent out to schools by a coordinator at the municipal Office of Culture, and are in general free of charge. There might, however, be a cost involved for individual schools for transport to cultural institutions or other venues to be able to access these experiences. Some municipalities, therefore, even offer support for transport to such events.

Most schools have cultural ambassadors (kulturombud), who receive information from the municipality and other organisations within the cultural field regarding current programming and opportunities. These play an important role for the distribution and sharing of information between the individual school and the range of offers available during a school year, and that is distributed by municipal coordinators for culture or Skapande skola, where such exist.

Mostly schools with good resources and interest in the arts have applied for Skapande skola grants. This is the weakness of the market model, which does not aim for equality in absolute terms, but based on voluntary action.

Paradoxically, in order to achieve equity, the municipalities have to step in as regards planning and applying for Skapande skola grants. This because it is the weakest schools who do not have the resources for applying, and therefore cannot take part in cultural activities offered with the help of the state grant.

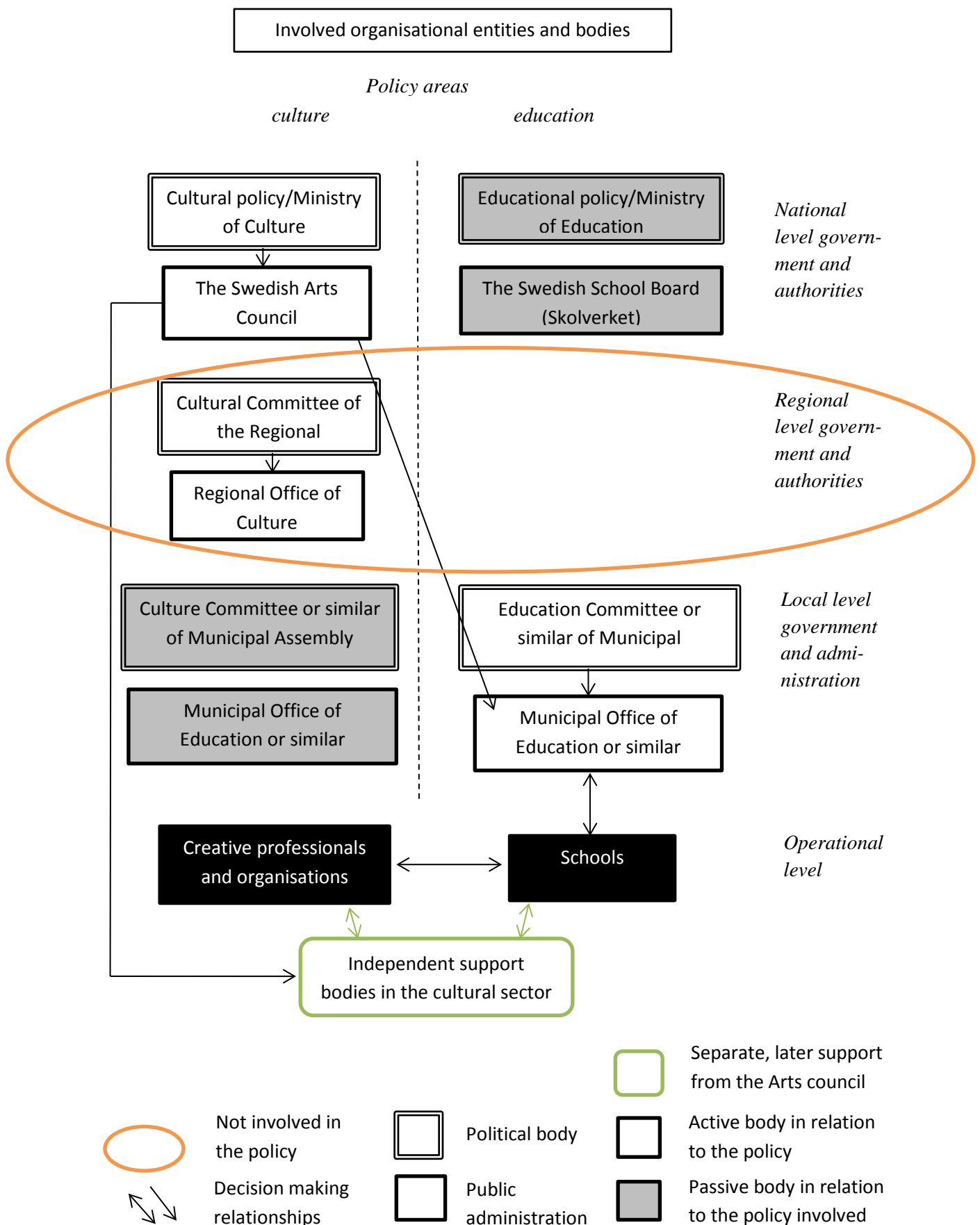
Tensions and dilemmas in Skapande skola

The focus of this paper is on tensions and dilemmas in cross-sectoral policy implementation, and we can identify two main tensions or dilemmas with the Skapande skola grant as a policy tool. The first relates to the unclear priorities between the two purposes of the grant. The second relates to how the grant has been constructed to operate. Figure 3 displays a schematic illustration of the construct of the structure for implementing Skapande skola, and here the division between different policy areas stands out. As has been pointed out in previous research (), collaboration across organisational borders complicates interaction and generation of effective outcomes. Nevertheless, in the case of Skapande skola, the tension is not so much in problems of collaboration at political and administrative level, as only one side is actively engaged in implementation. Interestingly enough, at the national level it is the cultural area that is active in policy design and implementation at framework level, whereas at the municipal level it is the educational area, in the form of Offices of Education and corresponding officials being engaged in coordinating projects and applications for the grant.

The first tension or dilemma arises from the policy being designed to solve problems in two distinct policy areas, that of culture and that of primary and secondary education. In Skapande skola this is manifested in the combination of a purpose to stimulate the work market of artists, and a purpose of allowing school children to experience culture in schools. The second is that of implementation of a policy tool creating a quasi-market for cultural services and products in schools, with tensions relating to competitions between self-employed cultural professionals and cultural organisations on one hand, and public institutions on the other, which are both commissioned for Skapande skola projects.

The basis for the first dilemma or tensions is that it is designed by the Ministry of Culture, but is to be implemented in primary and secondary schools, the curricula for which the Ministry of Education is responsible (schools are municipal or private). The fact that the policy was designed by the Ministry of Culture is indicative as such of the orientation of the policy. It was, apparently, designed foremost as a cultural and not an educational policy,

Figure 3. Organisational map of bodies involved in Skapande skola.



allowing for more cultural experiences (also) in schools, where children (or their parents) cannot choose whether to participate in cultural activities or not. In other words, the policy is a way to level out differences in cultural experience between different social groups.

Reading the phrasing of the purpose of the policy, it points to the first purpose being primary, with the second purpose indicating how it should be undertaken, in other words by using cultural professionals with the aim of securing all forms of cultural expressions and increasing the opportunities for pupils to engage in creative activities.

Secondly, the Minister of Culture presented the policy as a tool for the creation of an additional work market for artists. The minister presented the reform as a way to expand the work market for artists and cultural professionals, but from the phrasing of the purpose of the policy, it can be concluded that the main purpose of engagement of cultural professionals is that pupils get access to cultural forms of expression and have the opportunity to engage in own creative practice.

The second dilemma concerns the way the grant and support is constructed to operate. The grant is constructed so that schools commission cultural professionals to engage in projects with school classes according to a plan of activities presented by the individual school or school district or similar, to the Arts Council that administrates the grant and controls implementation. In this way, schools employ cultural professionals for various kinds of activities. In other words, the grant functions as a marketization tool, where cultural professionals get work opportunities based on the demand of schools, rather than directly from the state to develop activities designed by the cultural professionals themselves with pupils as target group. The idea is that all cultural professionals and organisations compete for the work opportunities presented by schools.

The marketization aimed for requires substantial public support in order to make the quasi-market work. The question is if there is less dependence on public expenses on culture than before. What is clear is that children are enjoying more culture in schools, even though

aesthetic dimensions have been reduced in ordinary school work. There is, as a result, a projectification and an “application-ification” of culture. Our study shows that for schools to be good (informed) consumers of cultural activities bought from cultural professionals, substantial support from municipalities and the state is needed, and whereas municipal cultural activities are sometimes difficult to plan for in schools, Skapande skola as state grant requires a lot of coordination and engaged individuals at schools and in municipalities or private school owners. The policy tool requires control of both consumers (schools) and providers (cultural professionals), and also requires public support to help especially small and individual cultural providers to design their market communication in a way that is accessible to school cultural coordinators.

The issue of marketization has been discussed for several welfare services in developed countries, and especially the Nordic welfare countries. Both the cultural and the healthcare sectors have significant degrees of public support for services provided, and can therefore be described as quasi markets. This means that public support goes into support of services so that both public and private providers can offer services at prices lower than costs proper, and be compensated by the state, region or municipality for costs. This means that prices to consumers of the services do not reflect real costs.

Interestingly enough, there have been no quantitative goals or performance measures linked to Skapande skola. Evaluations of effects and experiences have been collected, and the qualitative goals of the policy have been evaluated in 2013 (). The marketisation form of implementation of the policy at operational level has been combined with more traditional forms of hierarchical governance through the Arts Council and its administration and control of the various restrictions and conditions for receiving grants, and through the fact that it is governors of schools, i.e. municipalities or private owners (whether non-profit or for-profit) that have been accountable to the Arts Council for received monies.

At the same time the operational level of the implementation is clearly constructed around a provider-purchaser model, where schools demand cultural activities on a market consisting

of both private and public actors competing for commissions. As on other markets, transaction costs are substantial, as pointed out by previous research (Larsen & Wright, 2014). Transaction costs consist of costs for finding information, administering the tendering or purchase process including specifying the service to be purchased, and assessing incoming bids. For Skapande skola projects, there was from the start a shift in this transaction cost from schools to municipalities (and private school owning parties), in the form of their responsibility for the application procedure. We do think we can discern indications of a development of solutions to lower transaction costs is discernible over the last years among cultural actors involved in Skapande skola. This solution consists of modules being offered based on general knowledge of demands of schools, allowing arts organisations to calculate reasonable prices based on the average amount of grant per pupil, for modules typically including a professional presentation part and a workshop part with children. Our interpretation of this development is for cultural actors to lower their transaction costs, but still be flexible as regards the contents of activities, and on the scale of activities based on number of concerned children.

Nevertheless, a cumbersome bureaucracy of Skapande skola burdens all involved parties from individual schools and municipalities. In fact, all respondents we have interviewed (a small sample of all taking part in the programme), have commented on the administrative demands as very large, and the time period between application and realisation as too long from a school perspective. Skapande skola seems an excellent example of “centralised decentralisation” as described by Evans et al. (2005).

The intended benefit of activation policies, even in the form of the Skapande skola grant, is to make subjects (in this case individual schools and teachers as well as school governors) active in order to access benefits. Instead of distributing equal amounts of grants to all schools in Sweden, the idea was that schools can themselves be active in designing and realising their individual arts related project in the everyday school environment and linked to the curriculum, and not passively accept a selection of arts experiences decided by someone else.

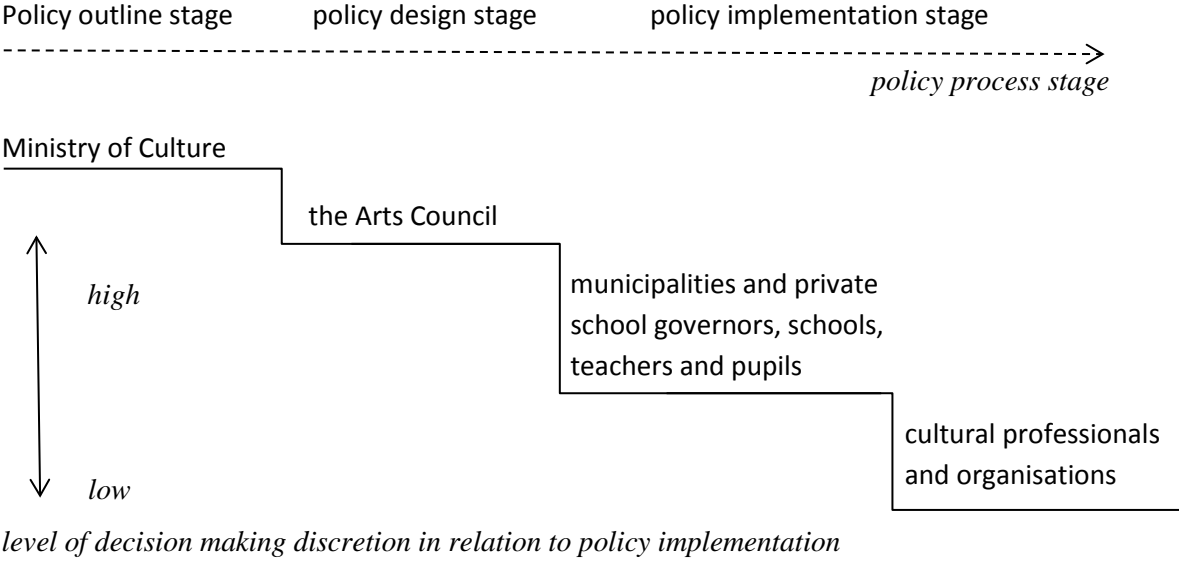
So schools (or schools governors on behalf schools) are purchasers, and creative professionals and organisations are providers who offer their services in competition with others for commissions. Also Skapande skola as policy tool can be described with the words of Evans et al. (2005: 78),

The benign language of “partnership” hides a steeply hierarchical and centralised relationship of power embedded in a contractual arrangement between the state and those agencies increasingly responsible for the delivery of public goods and services.

Over time, municipalities have started to emphasize equity, and to centralize application procedures, in order to secure equal access to received funds between stronger and weaker schools in terms of resources in a broad sense. This was a clear orientation of the Swedish conservative government in power 2006-2014. In this orientation the studied policy was not unique internationally. Neither was it unique in its centralized decentralization. But it was somewhat unique in terms of having all qualitative and not quantitative goals.

To summarise, the tensions identified in the studied policy are found at two levels or stages. Firstly, tensions are found at the policy design level, where the Ministry of Culture outlines a policy for access to cultural expressions for children during school hours, the latter is the domain of another ministry. Secondly, tensions have appeared at the policy implementation stage and at operative levels where the actual services are purchased and provided. Here, the tensions are of partly a different kind, partly of a similar kind as at the policy design level and stage.

Figure 2. conceptual map of policy stages and levels of decision-making discretion in the studied case.



As Skapande skola is a state grant, it follows a tradition within the cultural sphere to provide grants to cover for market failure. In other words, as there is no demand, or low demand, from schools themselves as regards cooperation with cultural professionals, a grant to the purchaser (school) in this case of cultural services, is a way to make sure cultural policy goals are met, especially as regards pupils’ right to a voice as regards their own cultural experiences, and as regards plurality of expressions. The Arts Council as authority directly controls the use of the grants by accepting or declining applications from school governors according to stipulated criteria. In fact, applications from school governors have been declined due to these being, according to the Arts Council, unclear as to aim, context and sometimes content.

The market-element in the grant relates to the mechanism by which cultural actors are chosen to participate in the project at schools. They are not accepted based on artistic qualifications, or a combination of artistic qualities and level of cultural policy goal attainment, as is the case for traditional grants to the arts, but on a market basis, where several actors compete to provide a service demanded by the purchaser, the schools/school governors in this case, based on the wants and needs of pupils.

But the marketization in terms of separation of purchasers and providers in the cultural sector, as far as regards Skapande skola is rather clear, as Kulturskolan, the municipal after-school cultural education body in most municipalities, is not allowed to deliver services within Skapande skola projects. However, other municipal actors have not been forbidden to offer Skapande skola activities to schools. It is also important to recognise that profit maximisation is not necessarily a goal for providers of services on quasi-markets. In the social services, there is a long tradition of non-profit private providers of services. Neither is always the end consumer or user of the services the purchaser of the services. This role is instead typically taken on by local public agencies. Finally, the state is often involved in the funding of services through budgets or vouchers.

Another tension or dilemma is that the policy is presented as addressing both the school sector and the arts sector, but the Swedish Ministry of Education has not given any commission to the related central authority within primary and secondary education to be operationally involved in the implementation of the policy. Thus, the framework of the programme asks the cultural professionals to adapt to the conditions of the school curriculum. In practice, then, the policy implementation is all placed on the Arts council as the responsible authority within the arts, whereas the Primary and secondary education authority is not involved in implementation. Cross-sectoral implementation thus in this case is reliant only on the ability of arts sector partners to implement arts activities in schools adapting to the requirements of the educational sector. This in turn has led to a preference by schools on educational activities of cultural professionals with pupils based on active participation of the children themselves. Whereas this kind of decision is well in line with the aims of the programme and the role of schools as purchasers of cultural services, some cultural professionals have seen this focus as not in line with intentions with the policy. This relates to a statement by the then Minister of Culture (Lena Adelsohn-Liljeroth) that the programme was a way to broaden the work market for artists.

The preferences of artists here counter the preferences of schools, and they are somewhat different. As schools need to link cultural activities to the curriculum in order to justify cultural activities within the limited time frame of the school year, professional artists have expressed the opinion that they struggle to compete for school engagements alongside professional arts educators. There is then competition between professional artists and arts educators, and schools in general seem to prefer educational or combined activities before only arts activities for children (such as traditional school adaptations of plays and similar).

Comparison of Skapande skola and Creative Partnerships in the UK

In its construction, the Swedish Skapande skola model is similar to that of the Creative Partnerships programme in the UK in use between 2002 and 2011. In contrast to the UK government, however, the Swedish programme has not been set up with distinct goals of the activities having an impact on learning and skills of pupils. The purpose of the Creative Partnerships programme was eventually to train pupils for work in the creative industries. This is not the aim of the Swedish grant programme, but rather to give pupils access to cultural expressions, and the aim is to secure access to a multitude of cultural expressions as a way to support the task of schools to secure cultural experiences to children living in Sweden. The UK programme aimed at stimulating future development of the creative industries through encounters between creative professionals and pupils in deprived schools. Both creative professionals and schools were selected for the programme. Furthermore, there were national and local coordinators in place to administrate the schools applications for participation. There was not so much direct contact between creatives and schools before the actual activities were undertaken, as local coordinators designed the projects and had budgetary control. In the first stage of the Creative Partnerships programme, schools were selected that had already an arts orientation.

The Creative Partnerships programme was centralised, with employed coordinators essentially administrating the programme for schools and creative professionals. Thus, there was not, as in the case of Skapande skola, a bottom-up approach to project development, and there was no creation of a market of offers directly offered to schools.

In a sense, the Skapande skola scheme can be understood as an activation policy for both schools and cultural actors as regards pupils' access to cultural expressions. As regards cultural actors, the idea with opening a work market for engagement in school activities, is to lower the level to which cultural actors are dependent on public support and tax-exempt (meaning pension-exempting) income by offering a market where the cultural actors can meet demand from schools, as many cultural professionals have low income, a topic that has been debated for years. The idea of activation on the part of schools is to allow individual schools to drive demand, as they are perceived by government to be more knowledgeable about pupil demands and needs than other actors, and are also the unit where pupils directly can have an impact on decisions. The idea with Skapande skola is to supply schools with fund so that they can demand cultural projects based on needs and wants in each individual school.

Notes

1. A formal report will be presented in October 2015, and be publicly accessible.
2. **2 §** Ändamålet med statsbidraget är att medverka till att
 1. kulturella och konstnärliga uttryck långsiktigt integreras i förskoleklass och grundskolans årskurs 1-9 med utgångspunkt i skolans kulturuppdrag som i förordningen (SKOLFS 2010:37) om läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet anges som en del i skolans måluppfyllelse, och
 2. öka den professionella kulturverksamheten för och med eleverna, så att tillgången till kulturens alla uttrycksformer och möjligheterna till eget skapande ökar. Förordning (2012:900).

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