

# **State School Inspection Policy in Norway and Sweden (2002–2012): A reconfiguration of governing modes?**

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## **Abstract**

There is growing research interest in school inspection throughout Europe, however there have been few comparative studies between Swedish and Norwegian school inspectorates. Such a study is necessary since little is known about how inspection policies are shaped through “governing modes” in the two Nordic countries. This paper explores the similarities and differences between state school inspection policies within the two countries from 2002 to 2012. Based on a rigorous, comparative document analysis of 23 policy documents, a particular focus is given to how school inspection adheres to professional-bureaucratic control as a mode of governing and/or details national expectations through performance audit, potentially intervening into school practices. We demonstrate that even if the cases of public administration seem to be somewhat homogenous from the outside, there is substantial evidence of major differences in the inspection policies of these two countries which can be explored by comparative analysis. Specifically, this paper contributes both conceptually and comparatively to understanding how a study of purposive and evaluative modes of governing can add to the field of school inspection studies.

**Keywords:** school inspection, policy, modes of governing, comparative research

## **Introduction**

Research on education policy addresses key questions about governing and accountability that target the practices of schools and classrooms. A range of issues are currently under discussion, such as the underlying demands of data-based governance (Grek et al. 2009) and how testing regimes create new foundations for top-down “major policy steering systems” (Lingard, Martino, and Rezai-Rashti 2013).

Recently there has been growing research interest in school inspection as a policy tool. The issues currently under discussion focus on, how inspection adjusts to international and transnational policy (Rönnerberg 2011; Ozga 2012; Lawn and Grek 2012), how school inspection plays out through modes of governing (Perryman 2006; Segerholm 2009; Ozga 2012; Rönnerberg 2012; Rönnerberg, Lindgren, and Segerholm 2013), and finally how school inspection is perceived and enacted by school principals (Gaertner, Wurster, and Pant 2013). There is also a growing body of research into how policy expectations are strengthening the intervening impact of school inspection in different countries (de Wolf and Janssens 2007; Ehren and Visscher 2006; Gaertner, Wurster, and Pant 2013). In this case school inspection serves as a tool for policy steering by consciously influencing actions of those involved.

While substantive research has been carried out in Sweden, studying how state school inspection corresponds with policy requests (Rönnerberg 2011; Rönnerberg, Lindgren, and Segerholm 2013), far less is known about Norwegian school inspection with regard to the same parameters. A notable study, however, is Helgøy and Homme's (2006, 142–143) examination of education policies in Norway and Sweden, and where they e.g. examine school inspection in relation to two sets of tools: input regulations and accountability tools. They argue that regulation may be defined as the set of techniques by which governmental authorities wield their power in their attempt to ensure support and effect social change (Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, and Vedung 2007; Helgøy and Homme 2006).

Regulation is commonly referred to as a government's "stick", accomplished by regulatory instruments, such as Education Acts, which are used to define norms and acceptable behaviour, or to limit activities within a given society (Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, and Vedung 2007, 59). However, this limitation does not necessarily mean direct impact on actors' actions, since regulation often sets the frames for what is not allowed without guiding concrete practices (Hopmann 2008). Within education policy research, school inspection is, by tradition, viewed as part of a formal government, where state authorities play a leading role through regulation and control (Gaertner, Wurster, and Pant 2013; Engeland 2000; Mediås 1996). However, as part of current policy, quality assessment and evaluation are adopted (Maroy 2012; Segerholm 2009; Sivesind 2008), as well as market-regulation of the educational sector, which might alternate state school inspection through different governing modes (Rönnerberg 2011, 690). Hence,

there are different ways regulation and inspection can govern action and therefore control how local and regional educational authorities “play out their legal practices”.

The first aim of our paper is to describe current school inspection policy in Norway in view of parallel changes in Sweden. Secondly, we explore the similarities and differences between school inspection policies in Norway and in Sweden, to search for answers about the ways in which these policies combine different forms of governing, or what we define as “governing modes”. Referring to Kooiman (1993), we define governing as all activities of social, political and administrative actors that can be seen as *purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage* (sectors or facets of) *societies*. On the other hand governance refers to *discursive patterns that emerge from the governing activities of these actors* (Kooiman 1993, 2). Finally, *steering* may refer to a mode of control which involves setting a norm, and then correcting deviations from it (Rhodes 1996, 655). Hence, in this paper we focus on modes of governing rather than governance as such.

By focusing on modes of governing, we are particularly interested in the regulative side of school inspection and the interplay between state authorities and surrounding policies, e.g. European networks and national boards and agencies. However, it is here necessary to point out that the inspectoral systems in each of the two case countries are not homogenous, but rather express different configurations of governing modes. Hence, our analysis seeks to project how key actors from different stances, different intentions and varying contexts have all contributed to how school inspection policy has evolved during the period 2002-2012.

We furthermore base our discussion on international research literature which focuses on how school inspection policy adjusts in accordance with transnational scripts and frameworks developed by international organizations and expert networks (Ozga 2012; Lawn and Grek 2012). Through our analysis we might expect that even if public school administration in Norway and Sweden appears to be somewhat homogenous as a result of international influence, major differences in the inspection models between the countries seem to exist.

This paper is organized into six sections. First we present the theoretical framework which we use in order to illuminate the field of school inspection. We then outline our methodology, which is a comparative-institutional approach to policy analysis with a focus on “governing modes”. After summarizing the main findings of a

quantitative analysis of 23 policy documents from Norway and Sweden, we examine how school inspection is expressed in White Papers, Green Papers, and official reports. Following a discussion of how inspection policy in the two countries is shaped by legal statutes and formal regulation, we then elaborate on how national inspection reports and supreme audit reports are expressing changes in education policy in this particular field. Finally, the paper summarizes and discusses the main findings and implications of the study.

### **Complementary modes of regulation in school inspection policy**

Studies which focus on Europeanization processes seem to agree that current national inspectorial policies are not fully separate and divided, but are interdependent through, for example, international networks and cooperation (Lawn and Grek 2012; Rönnerberg 2011, 2012). This is visualized through the annual European SICI<sup>i</sup> meetings where national inspectorate bodies convene and discuss the role of school inspectorates in member countries. Agreements and meetings of this kind might encourage inspectorate bodies to find shared solutions to common problems across Europe. A growing body of research supports the claim that policy travels across countries and that models and scripts are borrowed from abroad (Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow 2012). Through such transition processes, countries are inspired within a shared policy space and “learn” from their neighbours (Lawn and Grek 2012). Moreover, researchers argue that such processes are not necessarily enforced through world-defined cultures of globalization, but motivated from below, as a response to locally experienced problems. As Steiner-Khamsi puts it: “Globalization is not an external force but rather internally induced and reflects, more than anything else, the domestic policy context” (2010, 332).

Adjustments to Europeanization processes and globalization within a world-wide context are evident. Nonetheless, national state policy seems to prevail by expressing its own histories, narratives, and contextual specificities as well as being authorized by state governments, as underlined within comparative educational research (Steiner-Khamsi 2010). While globalization and Europeanization processes arise through international networks, comparative researchers argue that nation states uphold their status as separate units with their state authorities and national or federal governments.

This inquiry seeks to discuss how school inspection policy can be understood as a configuration of governing modes, authorized by the state as well as adjusted in line with international policies and processes. We take Olsen's (2005) description of public administration as a point of departure. Based on a historical review of public administration theory, he claims; "Several organizational forms co-exist, but the mix changes over time" (2005, 27). He also argues that two conclusions can be drawn: a) it is unlikely that public administration can be ruled by one principle alone, and b) bureaucratic organization is a part of a repertoire of overlapping, co-existing forms in contemporary society, as well as their market-oriented counterparts (Olsen 2005, 26).

This stance is also supported by Maroy (2012, 75) who points out: "We are now in the process of witnessing partial convergences of national policies that maintain strong specificities, despite the effects of trans- or supranational models, due to e.g. processes of translation and hybridization of models with local elements". He portrays contemporary modes of governance as "defining good ways to *steer* or govern the educational system" (Maroy 2012, 67). Based on empirical studies of how modes of governance have evolved in five European countries over the past three decades, Maroy furthermore argues that we are moving towards a "post-Weberian" society, where "new tools for coordination and control are appearing and becoming more complex" (Maroy 2012, 69). Finally, some scholars have shown concern to how the state now *steers* organizations, governments and networks rather than directly providing services through state bureaucracies, or by *rowing* (Rhodes 2012, 37).

By "modes of governance", Maroy refers to theoretical and normative models which, in addition to classical-bureaucratic rules, serve as cognitive and normative references. Thus, he includes a reference to Weber (1922, 1978) who argues that the "purest" form of legitimate rule is bureaucratic, legal authority, where the key principle of formal rationality is central. However, without outlining details, there is reason to point out the underlying relation between on one hand formal and substantive rationality, and axiological and instrumental rationality on the other (Weber 1922, 1978; Boudon 1998; Sivesind 2008). A common feature of public administration is that professional bureaucracy is structured by legal mandates, following the concept of formal rationality that is considered legal within political institutions (Sivesind 2008, 199).

Following Olsen's (2005) and Maroy's (2012) arguments outlined above, an ideal formal-legal, professional-bureaucratic system in the Weberian sense is in contemporary society in itself insufficient to explain how decision making in public administration takes place. We are moving towards a post-Weberian society (Maroy, 2012) where deliberation and debate are part of the process of public administrations. This implies both pragmatic orientation to problem solving, and evaluative approaches to increase the legitimacy. Within a contemporary, professional bureaucracy, leeway is created through the mandate in which public officials make their decisions, prone to legal discretion. However, within a system of the 'evaluative state', not only public officials define policy, but actors and agencies of surrounding environments.

In society's adjustment toward post-bureaucratic governance, Maroy (2012) identifies two alternative models: a) quasi-market regulation and b) the evaluative state. The term "quasi-market" describes what we are witnessing when the logic of the market enters the public sphere (Rönneberg 2011, 690). Evaluative and performance-oriented modes of governing are on the other hand not in the least associated with school audit and control. In the neo-institutional public sector, the goal of audit systems as a part of school inspections is to evaluate, and thus control, policy in a particular field, however, which may also imply formal regulation and legal standards. According to Power (1997, 44) the "hollowing out of the state" by the New Public Management (NPM) "regime" generates a demand for audit and other forms of evaluation and inspection to fill in "the hole" (Rhodes 1997). Furthermore, such systems focus on processes which involve either "compliance" or "non-compliance", where the regulative state aims at controlling legal practices (Pollitt et al. 1999; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Helgøy and Serigstad 2009).

Furthermore, in a quasi-market system, the state does not retract but it does delegate autonomy to schools, meanwhile upholding control through regulation (Maroy 2012). Thus, we argue that inspection includes both compliance-oriented modes of governing as well as performance-oriented modes of governing which are attached to evaluative systems and markets.

Summing up, evaluative policies demand certain regulations, although do not necessarily replace bureaucratic governing. On this backdrop, we raise the following question: Do national school inspectorates in our two case countries focus on "compliance" or "performance", or rather a combination of the two, possibly implying

mixed views on what is considered as the best way to steer or govern the educational system? Rather than claiming the existence of single systems of public administration, there seems to be evidence of multiple, overlapping modes of governing in the two countries, expressed into mixed modes, where the emphasis of single modes and their contents varies. How these governing modes overlap is therefore not only a theoretical question, but more an empirical problem for comparative research.

### **Method and conceptual framework**

Within the field of educational leadership, documentary research might be considered primarily as a data collection strategy for case studies, and therefore not seen as a way of examining documents in a historical sense (Fitzgerand 2012). However, in this paper we argue that historical research methods applied for text analysis may open up the area of policy-making in a new and fruitful way. Texts may be defined as data consisting of words and images which have been recorded without the intervention of researchers (Silverman 2011). However, it may be argued that many of the policy documents in this study have been, at least indirectly, influenced by current research and thus may be “expert-defined” in a particular sense. Nevertheless, documentary analysis is a form of qualitative text analysis that requires researchers to locate, interpret, analyze, and draw conclusions about the evidence presented (Fitzgerand 2012, 298). Moreover, policy documents contain both text and actions and cover, therefore, what is enacted as well as what is intended (Ball 1994, 10).

In this paper, we view policy documents firstly as written texts and secondly as the results of the contexts and processes they are applied to, also attributing to particular roles and functions. Thus, our study is not one of discourse, but based on textual and contextual analysis which includes conceptualizations of realities. Moreover, the goal of this paper is to demonstrate how these different policies have evolved historically within the national context from which they derive and, at the same time, whether they are adjusting to models from abroad by reconfiguring governing modes.

As the analysis reveals, we acknowledge that policy documents may have different functions beyond their formal status, and that one document not necessarily or consequently follows another. Additionally, it should be pointed out that we inquire into how different key policy documents are devised, coupled to political processes, and not directly how they are implemented in local administrations or schools.

Interpreting historical policy documents is a demanding task for a single researcher or even, as in this study, for two researchers. Therefore the textual analysis has been discussed in various moots, aiming to accomplish communicative validity (Grønmo 2004). Moreover, coherence is ensured through the systematic use of computer analysis (NVivo 10). The general consensus in discussions concerning data-analysis has been to include a sufficiently wide enough selection of policy documents in order to fully analyze the institutional arrangements behind the configuration of governing modes and the current inspectoral systems in both countries. This strategy is suggested by Ragin (1987):

Historically oriented interpretive work attempts to account for specific historical outcomes or sets of comparable outcomes or processes chosen for study because of their significance for current institutional arrangements or social life in general.

(Ragin 1987, 3)

The processes leading to today's school inspectoral systems in Norway and Sweden are in this analysis viewed as a result of certain historical, as well as contextual, circumstances which are significant to the current institutional frameworks in which they exist. By drawing on historical methods (Kjeldstadli 1999), we view the policy documents firstly situated within their particular national context, and secondly through examining how policy processes have shaped how school inspections are (re)configured over a period of time, from 2002 to 2012, both nationally and in view of cross-national models.

In social science the term "comparative method" is according to Ragin (1987) typically used in a narrow sense to refer to a specific kind of comparison, namely the comparison of large macro-social units. However, the contribution of comparative research is rather to examine patterns of similarities and differences on a meso-level across a moderate number of cases (Ragin and Amoroso 2011, 135). The comparison in our study aims to articulate the commonalities and differences within and across school inspection systems in the two Nordic countries, where the inspection systems were are studying, are treated as two separate cases. The documents are compared in view of their preferences for compliance-oriented control (purposive) on one side and



performance-oriented control (evaluative) on the other side, relating on modes of governing which works out as an analytical term, and furthermore with regard to the authoritative and operative statuses of the documents, which differ in terms of their intentions but also their roles and functions. Thus, we group our documentation into different text-corpus in our analysis.

From this base, we discuss how the policies might imply modes of governing control, also potentially targeting educational practices within the school context. This might challenge traditional modes of governing within the two countries as well as the boundaries between levels of control within each case, such as the established differentiations between policy and practice. We also see the possibility for increasing similarities between cases as potential implications of merging policies across the cases (Lawn and Grek 2012). As a matter of fact, comparative studies can in themselves be regarded as creating such emerging similarities. In this case, we will also see our own study as conceivably affecting the future policies of school inspection.

From a methodological point of view, theory cannot be seen as detached from the research methods in question. In our case, the analysis draws upon analytical models from governance research and neo-institutional theory in order to clarify policy as it is expressed in the two countries. By using a theoretical lens, researchers are provided with an overall scope – in our case this enables the study of the (re)configuration of governing modes within school inspection policy (Cresswell 2008).

Moreover, theory also provides ideas of how a conceptual framework can be developed. Among the informative sources used in this study, we refer to a typology developed by Kjeldstadli (1999) which focuses on past and future projections of the research object. The typology is mainly developed for historical examination. Nonetheless, we argue that it is also adequate for comparing cases with regard to analytical concepts such as performance-oriented auditing, drawn from Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004).

Normative sources may, according to Kjeldstadli (1999), either be viewed as a) evaluative, meaning they intend to tell us (in hindsight) “how things should have been” e.g. through regulation, or b) programmatic, which implies “how things should be” in the future. Additionally, he adds two more categories which are both descriptive: c) prognosis (“how things may be”) and d) narrative (“how things were”), e.g. historical chronicles. A question arises here: What were the initial intentions of the policy-makers

when they normatively described control and regulation through legal acts on the one hand, and how does school inspection policy play an evaluative role in reporting on how “things should have been”? Finally, school inspection policies can also be sources which offer narratives and claim prognosis of foreseeing future policy development.

In our study, we expand Kjeldstadli’s (1999) original types of sources according to both normative and descriptive assumptions (see Figure 1 below). Documents were examined as to how they normatively and descriptively outlined modes of governing. First, the theoretical/analytical model (Figure 1) defines policy documents through classification in two main categories as either being purposive (left-hand side of model) as part of professional-bureaucratic governing or evaluative (right-hand side of model), following what Maroy (2012) labels the evaluative state. Utterances and expressions within the documents may be purposive in the sense that they express specific, intentional goals and in this way guide actions for the future. Utterances and expressions are evaluative by scrutinizing how governing through inspection functionally accomplishes certain aims and expectations referring to a set of data. This systemic approach to governing is complementary to what we consider as a professional-bureaucratic mode of operation.

The model (figure 1) includes four sub-categories referring to the questions suggested by Kjeldstadli (1999) and allows for seeing policy as a combination of alternative modes, characterized by certain aspects : a) *legal*, which we regard in view of “how things should be” in terms of what a bureaucracy formally authorizes, b) *professional* which we regard in view of “what is possible” in terms of the substantive problems and competence fields under discussion. These two first alternatives are both purposive, but are different in that they are either devoted to political or practical matters of interest. A third category we considered as c) *expert-defined* which we regard in view of “what is accomplished” as informed by data and evidence and finally d) *pragmatic* which we consider in view of “what is going to be done”, which in we in this typology consider as a question of common sense. The two final sub-categories are defined as evaluative – either evaluating in hindsight what was done according to political issues, or more future-oriented about what should be accomplished in practice in the near future.

Moreover, in our analysis we make a distinction between the different categories of sources, such as legal statutes, official reports, and supreme audit reports, and how

they express school inspection policy. The categories of sources are primarily used for structuring the analysis into a thematic order. Still, we view these documents as serving partially overlapping functions and purposes, configuring how school inspections are portrayed in view of different matters and fields (e.g. professional vs. expert-defined).

**[Insert figure 1 near here]**

Within the limits of this article, it is not possible to give a full picture of the analysis, but here are two brief examples that add to the understanding of the theoretical/analytical model. One example which illustrates how documents express normative and purposive control is the Education Act in Norway (1998). This legal document, focusing on compliancy with legal statutes, “what should be”, regulates school inspection by defining which institutions are authorized to take part in supervision and control of the system (Government Act 1998 Sec. 14–1).

In opposition, annual reports on school inspection, produced by experts engaged by the Directorate for Education and Training, are seen as being more evaluative and expert-defined, reporting on “what is accomplished”. We view certain documents as typifying the distinction by Kjeldstadli (1999) and thus the theoretical/analytical model presented above, but we do acknowledge the possibility that some documents might serve two functions, thus overlapping each other. This addresses some of the challenges in qualitative methods using theoretical-analytical models: how to define the phenomenon in question and also how to “label” and thus categorize relationships which fit within the theoretical model (see Figure 1).

Additionally, it should be noted that the documents, or text corpus<sup>ii</sup>, in question were uploaded in NVivo 10, in order to facilitate computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS<sup>iii</sup>). One of the clear advantages of using computer-assisted analysis is enabling us to structure large amounts of text data, and thus coding pieces of text according to the categories developed in the model outlined above. This may be referred to as theme-oriented data coding, where one has to choose pieces of text data with clear relevance for a certain theme (e.g. “purposive-legal”), and then allocate a certain code to these pieces of text (Sivesind, 1999). A total of 830 references were identified in the documents and then coded according to these categories (see Table 1). Hence, table 1 serves as an operationalization of the theoretical-analytical model in figure 1. The different themes, or images (Ragin and Amoroso 2011), have emerged through close

reading of the documents. According to Ragin and Amoroso (2011, 61), images are what researchers construct when they try to make sense of or synthesize their data or evidence in regard to analytical concepts which are of equal importance.

**[Insert table 1 near here]**

In the following analysis we address how school inspection policy in Norway and Sweden has evolved and changed with regard to a centralized “quest” for governing education in terms of national policies. Thus, our aim is to see how modes of governing shaped the area of school inspection policy during the 1990s and 2000s in the two countries. We furthermore seek to understand how policy within Norway and Sweden is changing with regard to the way a purposive, bureaucratic-professionalized mode of governing (see Figure 1, left column) interacts with an evaluative mode which can appear in different forms, either more evidence-based or more pragmatic (see Figure 1, right column). We will give a brief historical overview and report on the main results based on quantitative summaries of the policy documents’ classifications (n=830). Thereafter follows an in-depth analysis of the texts, where we study and compare the three types of sources: White Papers and policy documents, legal statutes and regulations, and finally inspection reports and supreme audit reports from the two countries. Via this method of systematizing observations, we finally make conclusions about the (re)configuration of governing modes in Norwegian and Swedish school inspection policy.

### **Historical overview of the cases**

New governing modes, associated with market-regulation and evaluation policy, were introduced at the turn of the 1980s in Norway, however not by introducing a new school inspection system. Consequently, reforms in Norway during the 1980s and 1990s changed the policy rhetoric for the administrative use of output regulations in the educational sector, although not changing all the ways and means associated with marketization and the evaluative state.

Comprehensive reform efforts during the 1990s aimed at improving outcomes, as prescribed within the public report NOU 1998:28 (The Ministry of Education and Research 1998) “With reason and resolution”, however not through goal-oriented policy

aimed at steering the inner life of local school practices. During the 2000s however, this policy partly changed, emphasizing performance-focused accountability mechanisms, such as national testing. Accompanied by comparative data from international assessments, such as PISA and TIMSS<sup>iv</sup>, a new policy focusing on evaluation and standards was adopted by national authorities (Skedsmo 2009).

In parallel to this process, we observe a stepping up of inspections of public as well as private schools during the 2000s (Helgøy and Serigstad 2009; Sivesind and Bachmann 2012; Sivesind 2009). A key manoeuvre in this process was the establishment of the Directorate of Education and Training (UDIR), with a separate inspectorate office. However, even if the Directorate represents the national, professional authority on inspections, the separate County Governors' Offices are responsible for following up with local education authorities and public schools in line with policy set by the Ministry of Education and Research. Since 2006, Norwegian authorities have carried out annual, national inspections (FNT) of schools, focusing on, for example, special needs education and psycho-social learning communities.

Swedish politics underwent substantial changes during the first decade of the new millennium, moving from a Socialist to a Non-Socialist coalition government from 2006 to the present. However, the idea of a strengthened central state undertaking school inspections seems to be unchallenged politically, and the increase of external evaluation tools is argued to be a result of consensus (Rönnerberg 2011, 2012). In 2003 the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE), founded in 1991, was divided in two sections, the Swedish National Agency for Education, and the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement. ("Myndigheten för skolutveckling").

However, school inspection as such was not a new concept in Sweden, but a gradual reinforcing of this policy tool took place throughout the 2000s (Rönnerberg 2013, 179), and especially from 2006 to 2008 the terms "quality" and "equivalence" continued to be used in rhetoric describing intensified inspections (Rönnerberg 2012, 6). However, , 2007 marked a radical change in the educational sector in Sweden, where a new structure on the professional-bureaucratic level, including three separate "agencies", was on the brink of being introduced: a) The Swedish School Inspectorate (SSI), b) The Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE), and c) The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM). The previous Swedish National Agency for School Improvement was at the same time abolished, and the SSI took over

responsibility for carrying out school inspections. However, it should be noted that the new SSI was first officially opened in October of 2008, as a result of an extensive political process.

As Rönnerberg (2011) points out, since 2008, when the SSI became an independent agency, inspections were even more intensified and strengthened. Thus, we have studied how key political bodies, stakeholders, and agencies such as the Parliament, The Ministry of Education and Research, The Swedish National Audit Office, and the NAE have all contributed to the strengthening of this particular regulatory instrument. Rönnerberg (2012) has furthermore examined the underlying political motives for increasing educational control through reinforcing school inspection during two periods of political rule in Sweden. School inspection in Sweden has been politically and ideologically unchallenged during the period (Rönnerberg 2012, 8), even if there has been a “shift” from left to right within the government. Interestingly, it may be argued that there has also been political consensus in the Norwegian case during the same period, at least when it comes to “strengthening the mode of legal governing” through the inspection process of schools.

### **Results: Similar cases, different patterns**

Tables 2–4 offer an overview of the results of the NVivo analysis in quantified terms, outlining the main patterns of differences in how school inspection is expressed through governing modes in whole policy documents, as well as central sections of documents and legal statutes from the two Nordic countries which address this topic. Furthermore, tables 2-4, together with table 1, enable transparency of the analysis, so it is clear to the reader how we as researchers have carried out the whole process. The text analysis, based on the theoretical-analytical model (Figure 1) and our categorizations and code-scheme (Table 1) resulted in findings which can be summarized in three steps. First, when analyzing White Papers, Green Papers, and official reports, we see that the picture is quite diverse. One example of this is that the White Papers in Norway (The Ministry of Labor and Administration 2003; The Ministry of Education and Research 2008, 2013) all include multiple modes of governing. The general impression is that school inspections in 2002–2003 and 2011–2012 were largely projected as not only “purposive-legal”, but also “evaluative-pragmatic”, expressing terms such as “support”,

“guidance”, and “dialogue”. Swedish documents in this category express to a greater extent the “evaluative and expert-defined” and the “evaluative-pragmatic”.

Secondly, through examining regulations and legal statutes, the Norwegian Education Act (1998) predominantly portrays school inspection as being “purposive-legal”, focusing on control and compliancy. Legal statutes and regulation from Sweden portray, on the other hand, a more heterogeneous picture, focusing on an “evaluative and expert-defined” mode of governing in addition to “legal-purposive”. Interestingly, Swedish regulations (Government regulation 2008, 2011) are preoccupied, to a great extent, with “what was accomplished”, focusing on students’ achievement of targets and QAE.

Finally, we also target grey papers, such as supreme audit reports and national inspection reports, in both countries. In Norway, the NIBR reports (Hanssen, Heløe, and Klausen, 2004a, 2004b) are mostly concerned with an “evaluative-pragmatic” mode of governing, while The Supreme Audit Report (The Office of the Auditor General 2006a, 2006b) as well as the FNT report (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2012) are preoccupied with the more “purposive-legal” sides of school inspection. In Sweden, the grey papers portray school inspection, to a large extent, as “evaluative and expert-defined”, in addition to a “purposive-legal” mode of governing.

[Insert table 2 near here]

[Insert table 3 near here]

[Insert table 4 near here]

## **Governing modes in White Papers, Green Papers, and official reports**

### *Norway*

At the beginning of the new millennium there was substantial political interest in strengthening the role of the Norwegian state and inspectorate, without threatening the autonomy of local government. White Paper no. 17 (2002–2003) “On State Audit” is a central policy document, and is not in itself preoccupied with the inspection of schools, but projects a certain view of how supervision should be executed within the public sector in general:

Overseeing (tilsyn) and inspection is widely defined as a common term covering all activity or use of (regulatory)

instruments which are implemented to follow up intentions of the law. (The Ministry of Labor and Administration 2003, 23)

Thus, as this excerpt shows, compliance with the law is advocated, and may serve as a stepping stone for further development on audit and inspection within the public sector, and it is widely cited in NOU 2004:17 (The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004) which was published two years later.

The public report NOU 2004:17, “State Audit of the Municipal Sector” (The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004), focused on investigating, identifying, and reporting on the Norwegian state inspectoral systems. The committee predominantly consisted of wide range of public servants from the state, regional, and local authorities as well as academic experts. The focal point in our analysis of this report is how inspection is conceptualized from a policy point of view. Chapter 5.2 seeks to define the term “inspection” (“tilsyn”), and Chapter 5.3 follows up with several recommendations. The aim of the report (The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004) is to establish ways of organizing state inspection which, on one hand, ensure professional legitimacy, and on the other hand, take into consideration the need to safeguard coordination between inspections conducted in different fields. The committee responsible for preparing the report defines “audit” as a control mechanism of inspection, which seems to be professional-bureaucratic in terms of linking legal and professional matters and norms (see Figure 1, left side). For example, it is interesting to observe the fact that the committee emphasizes the need to downsize the scope of state audit, as it may reduce autonomy on the local level. Additionally, local authorities have to be regarded as autonomous, ruling bodies responsible for their own decision spaces according to their overall mandates and professional knowledge.

Furthermore, the report (The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004) discusses the linkage between inspection, control, and guidance and refers to the conclusions in White Paper no. 17 (2003) as well as the NIBR report 2004:4 (Hanssen, Heløe, and Klausen 2004a). The initial introduction of the NOU 2004:17 report (The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004), claims that inspection does include some elements of guidance, however not necessarily a part of supervision, thus detached from inspection: “State audit of the municipal sector



is to control if municipal (business) practice complies with the legal standards set forth in law and regulation. Guidance is not a part of audit” (Ch. 5.3, 42–43).

Although Chapter 1 of the same report reads “the state should ensure guidance in order to further develop production of services and government itself” (The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004, 12), the report concludes that guidance should not be part of state inspection. This conclusion expresses the fact that policy frames itself in regards to sector-specific practice, where dialogue is seen as vital in the relationship between the “auditors” and “auditees” (Power 1997) in the course of inspection.

White Paper 31 (2007–2008) “Quality in Schools” is considered to be one of the most influential steering documents during the first decade of the new millennium (Aasen et al. 2012). Chapter 4.5.8 in this document not only views inspection as a bureaucratic pursuit based on both purposive mandates and legal statutes (see Figure 1, upper left quadrant), it also discusses how schools are to be followed up through evaluation and support inspired by the Swedish SSI, and how they follow up schools:

In Sweden, from 2008, inspection will be conducted in all schools within a 3-year cycle. This enables comparative studies over time [...] It is not given that Norway should be just as ambitious, but a systematic method for continuous mapping and following up of school owners should be further developed. (2008, 87)

In this excerpt we see that the Norwegian government advocates a Swedish model which includes comparative studies of schools and municipalities, whilst continuing the historical practice of inspecting school owners and not the individual schools as such. Additionally, the White Paper refers to reports by the Office of the Auditor General (2006a, 2006b) which, from an expert-defined point of view, are claiming that governmental control of regional and local educational authorities is highly insufficient.

Moreover, national, regular inspections are considered to be important regulatory instruments to reveal lack of legal compliance. Altogether, these recommendations indicate that Norwegian state inspection policy emphasizes legal-bureaucratic as well as expert-defined matters, meanwhile respecting the local autonomy of school owners and the practice of schools due to a decentralized policy. Does this conclusion differ from the Swedish model during the 2000s?

### *Sweden*

Although the new school inspection model was not fully adopted in Sweden before 2008, political initiatives to revitalize the system appeared earlier than in Norway, where a new audit system was introduced in 2005. The political initiative in Sweden, by the Socialist government, led to the commissioning of an official report, which aimed at the following:

To investigate how the state, through national inspection ('statlig tillsyn') could function as a clearer and more effective governmental ('förvaltningspolitiskt') instrument, which contributes to control and executing democratic decisions'. (The Ministry of Justice 2002)

Although the commissioned report, as with the Norwegian case in this period, is not specifically preoccupied with the educational sector, it does outline the guiding principles of school inspection. An important principle of state audit and inspections in general is that their mandates are regulated through "sector-specific" legal statutes, and moreover that each specific form of inspection has designated aims, focus areas, and methods of organization (2002, 12).

As the report points out, there are many bordering terms associated with inspection, e.g. "surveillance", "compliance", "monitoring", and "control" (2002, 19). However, it is also interesting to notice that the report emphasizes the term "tillsyn", which deals directly with both legal compliance connected with the purposive sides inspection and "follow-ups", goal achievement through QAE (see top-left and top-right quadrants in Figure 1).

Systematic inspections of schools is specifically, but briefly, discussed in Chapter 6.5.3 of the report. The inspectoral process itself focuses on investigating municipalities' steering, planning, and policy documents with regard to legal statutes, as well as conducting interviews with key stakeholders such as school leaders and local school authorities (The Ministry of Justice 2002, 110). Interestingly, Chapter 6.5.3 also discusses the achievement of targets, which we regard as evaluative/expert-defined according to aims in the national curriculum (see Figure 1).

Finally, the report calls for a strengthened professionalization of the state inspectoral bodies, through establishing an “academy” in order to ensure systematic improvement of competency as well as exchange of knowledge and experience (2002, 168–169). The report argues for knowledge building in “performative” and pragmatic terms (Czarniawska 2008), directing focus to the right side of Figure 1. In 2003, the government decided to revive school inspections and make the National Agency for Education (NAE) responsible for their introduction, design, and implementation (Lindgren et al. 2012). This marks the “revitalization” of a separate school inspectoral agency, however it was not until 2008 that the SSI was established, outside the context of the NAE.

In 2007–2008 numerous key official reports and government bills were published. First, in March of 2007, the government commissioned a report which aimed at reorganizing the state education authorities, thus resulting in the SOU 2007:79 “Three new national agencies for education” (The Ministry of Education 2007b). The report suggests several fundamental amendments to the Education Act, e.g. that the municipal self-inspection as well as the NAE inspection regime should be replaced with a new authority: the Swedish School Inspectorate (SSI) (The Ministry of Education 2007b, 8). Moreover, according to the report, the “establishment of two separate educational bodies presupposes a clear distribution of roles between these authorities” (The Ministry of Education 2007b, 92).

Second, in June of 2007, the government commissioned an additional report, SOU 2007:101, interestingly tagged “Open and Transparent – Reinforcing School Inspection” (The Ministry of Education 2007a). The summary of the report outlines in detail the role of a future inspectorate, and seems to play a vital part in the shaping of today’s SSI. Within the limits of this paper, it is not possible to go into detail, but some of the main principles and suggestions in the report are detailed below.

First, emphasis is put on students’ rights and results: “In order to ensure students’ rights and make qualified judgments of school results, an inspectoral authority is necessary” (2007a, 9). Thus, the focus seems not only to be on legal compliancy, but also on evaluation and the effect of schools (upper-right quadrant in Figure 1). Second, the public report suggests that inspections should target each specific level in the educational system, stemming from each individual school’s responsibility to promote knowledge.

Third, the inspectorate should scrutinize the quality of schools and check whether their legal practices comply with rules and regulations, e.g. The Education Act. Fourth, a guiding principle is that inspection should be grounded on research-based methods and proven experience (2007a, 9-13). Interestingly, the report refers in several passages to the English inspectorate system (Ofsted<sup>v</sup>), in particular to the use of “self-evaluation” (2007a, 12), as opposed to the Scottish HMIE<sup>vi</sup>, which may have more impact today as suggested by Lawn and Grek (2012, 145–147).

Even if the commissioned report acknowledged that previous inspections led by the NAE had some strengths, they pinpointed many weaknesses, especially concerning the fact that individual inspection reports varied both in content and in focus and, furthermore, that the results depended on the individual inspectors (2007a, 95). It may be interpreted here that the commission calls for greater systemic standardization of the future SSI.

Finally, the two above mentioned reports led to the Parliamentary Committee Directive 2008:3 “Establishment of a State School Inspectorate” (The Ministry of Education 2008), the Government Bill “New School Authorities” (2008), and Regulation 2008:613 “With instructions for the State School Inspectorate” (2008), calling for a separate school inspectorate. It was stated that the SSI should take over the inspectoral role of the NAE, as well as responsibility for quality assessment and evaluation of the educational sector (Government regulation 2008, Government Bill 2008). Again, there seems to be a focus on both purposive as well as evaluative approaches (left and right columns in Figure 1) to QAE in this period. The new establishment of the SSI in the fall of 2008 marked a turning point in the Swedish educational sector.

When we compare the two cases, we find that school inspection in both countries implies bureaucratic-legal modes as well as evaluative modes of governing. At the same time, the analysis of the Swedish case shows far more emphasis on quality assessment and results – the right side of our model. Another striking difference refers to the concept of bureaucratic-professional governing and professionalization. While in the Norwegian case school inspection should guarantee professional autonomy by creating a leeway for professional control, the Swedish case demonstrates a preference for professionalization in pragmatic terms by, for example, suggesting the

professionalization of school inspectorates. This is also shown in our quantified analysis (see Table 2).

### **Governing modes through legal statutes and regulation**

#### *Norway*

In between the large-scale reform introduced during the 1990s and the new policy regime introduced during the 2000s, the new Education Act was launched in Norway.

One of the foremost principles of The Education Act of 1998 is to ensure that:

Education and training in schools and training establishments shall, in collaboration and agreement with the home, open doors to the world and give the pupils and apprentices historical and cultural insight and anchorage.

(Government Act 1998 Sec. 1-1)

Inspection of schools is covered by Section 14 of the act, defined as “State supervision and control” (Government Act 1998 Sec. 14-1). Section 14 states that “The County Governor supervises the municipal and county authorities’ fulfillment of the duties bestowed upon them”. The role of the County Governors’ Offices is, as mentioned above, to ensure those county and municipal authorities’ as well as school leaders’ legal practices are in compliance with the law. However, what is also interesting to observe is the following:

The Ministry provides advice and guidance on issues concerning activities pursuant to this Act, and shall otherwise collaborate with municipalities, county authorities and owners of private schools in order to ensure the provision of good and equivalent educational facilities in compliance with statutes and regulations. (Government Act 1998 Sec. 14-2)

Thus, normatively speaking, not only should County Governors as government representatives check that these legal standards are applied, but they should also provide, to some extent, guidance in their communication with local and regional authorities. However, as we will see below, the balance of control and guidance is not easy, and has been frequently debated.

### *Sweden*

In Sweden, school inspection during the period 2008–2010 was predominantly regulated through Regulation 2008:613 (Government regulation 2008), which included instructions on which “instruments” the SSI should use in order to carry out their inspections. However, the Education Act (Government Act 1985) was, as mentioned above, in the process of renewal. Section 24 of Ministry Series “The New Education Act – For knowledge, free choice and safety” (The Ministry of Education and Research 2009) defines inspection (“*tilsyn*”) as “an independent and unbiased investigation whose goal is to observe that the institution under scrutiny complies with requirements stated through e.g. law and EU-regulation”. Thus, control of schools’ ability to comply with regulation and legal standards is regarded as an important part of the SSI.

School inspections are specifically covered in Section 26 of the new Education Act 2010 (Government Act 2010). They are defined as “an independent investigation which is aimed at controlling if the institution under scrutiny complies with requirements stated through law and regulations”. In other words, “compliance” is again the key word. Furthermore, the act elaborates on which “sticks” or sanctions are implemented in the case of deviation from law and regulations (2010 Sec. 10-18). What is also interesting is that “the inspectoral authorities should, within the limits of the inspections, offer advice and guidance” (2010 Sec. 9). Finally, it should be noted that the act calls for quality assessment and evaluation (QAE) of the educational sector and other institutions covered in the act (2010 Sec. 19), and to a greater extent than the Norwegian case (see Table 3).

In 2011, the Swedish Parliament passed a new regulation, SFS 2011:556 (“With Instructions for State School Inspectorate”), which emphasized the aims and “instruments” of the inspectorate. Here the legislative body also added “Authorities should contribute to the development of children and students, as well as the improvement of knowledge/results of the students and adult learners” (Government regulation 2011 Sec. 1). Thus, the fact that regulation and school inspections focus not only on legal compliance but also on student results, is a new development from the Education Act passed the year before. This we see as a signal for a radical turn towards intervention, where a new evidenced-based policy might affect the inner life of schools.

## **Reports and evaluations with regard to school inspection and governing modes**

### *Norway*

In Norway, new expert actors on the professional-academic level also showed interest in “The Evaluative State”. In 2004, the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) published two reports which evaluated audit (inspection) of the municipal sector: NIBR Report 2004:4 “The County Governor’s Audit of the Municipal Sector” (Hanssen, Heløe, and Klausen 2004a, Ch. 6, Conclusion) and NIBR Report 2004:7 “The Dialogue Between Regional and Local Authorities” (Hanssen, Heløe, and Klausen 2004b, English summary, 10–14).

The first of the two is centred on interview-based case studies in eight municipalities, and concludes that audit (understood as a form of inspection) implies more than merely having a control function. NIBR identify three “inspection regimes”, and in the area of education they pinpoint a “regime” of prevention and development built upon dialogue, where there are no clear divisions between inspection on the one hand and guidance on the other (evaluative-pragmatic and purposive-professional).

The second report (Hanssen, Heløe, and Klausen 2004b), which is a case study of four County Governors’ Offices and eight municipalities based on survey and interview data, also emphasizes the need for dialogue between authorities on several levels in the course of inspection. Not only is this dialogue ensured through control and guidance, but also through mutual learning processes and “face to face” contact. At first this seems to support a purposive mode of governing, but also a pragmatic approach – personalized interaction through decentralized policy (see bottom-right quadrant in Figure 1). However, predominantly, the report supports an evaluative-pragmatic approach to inspection, where dialogue and communication are vital, not an evidence-based approach.

Most developed states have a supreme audit body (Power 1997, 44). Towards the end of the period 2004–2006, The Office of the Auditor General published a report on primary and secondary education in Norway (The Office of the Auditor General 2006a, with summary, 2006b). The role of the Office of the Auditor General is to ensure that the community’s resources and assets are used and administered in keeping with the Parliament’s decisions, through auditing, monitoring, and guidance (The Office of the Auditor General).

Nonetheless, the Office of the Auditor General plays a different role than the County Governors' Offices. Through representing the elected, professional/political level, it controls what the government enforces, e.g. the Education Act (1998), through its inspection of schools and local/regional authorities. The report concludes that the County Governors' Offices, to a limited extent, execute control through inspection of regional and local authorities' compliance to The Education Act (1998), and furthermore, their knowledge of schools is regarded as inadequate. Maybe this signals a need for a stronger, national inspectorate?

We have observed an ongoing discussion within the policy texts concerning the role of inspection and audit in the public sector, more specifically in the area of education. The National Quality Assessment System (NQAS) had already been established and ensured governmental supervision of student results through national testing, published on the "School Portal" which, according to the Directorate's (UDIR) website, is portrayed as a tool for quality assessment (Skedsmo 2009). Perhaps this is a result of the rise of NPM systems in "quasi-market" state. However, until then, inspections of schools had only played a minimal role in compliancy and performance thinking in education.

National, regular inspections (FNT) were established in 2006 as an important arena for ensuring that students' legal rights were respected, and they became a frequent part of the state's control of activities in primary and secondary education. However, regular inspections of schools were not centralized under a separate inspectorate – the inspectoral role of the County Governors' Offices was upheld. The annual increase of regular inspections in all counties in Norway reveals, in many ways, a growing belief that control of how legal standards are observed in regional and local authorities, in a direct sense through school leaders, is vital. By studying the latest National Inspection Report (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2012), published by The Directorate for Education and Training (UDIR), it is clear that there is evidence of widespread deviance from legal standards. We will not go into the scientific validity of the reports in Norway and Sweden for stating such an argument in this paper, however, we acknowledge that the reports about the degree of deviance may be used to legitimate renewal of politics in the area of school inspection policy, thus calling for continued development of the inspectoral regime based on expert knowledge (see upper-right quadrant of Figure 1).



National, regular inspections (FNT) in Norway continued in full strength and increased during the period 2010–2012. The focuses of these inspections were predominantly in regards to a specific section in the Education Act of 1998: students' right to a good standard of psycho-social learning and physical environment (Government Act 1998 Sec. 9a-1). Does this increase in inspections reveal improvement in regards to the legal rights of all students? From studying the National Report in 2012 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2012), it is clear that the results were quite negative. However, the report does claim that its overall impression is that schools, local authorities, and regional authorities had improved compared to previous reports. Thus, the policy seems to argue for upholding rather than to decrease national school inspection, conducted by the County Governors' Offices.

### *Sweden*

In the case of Sweden, which Lindgren et al. (2012) point out, the NAE (National Agency of Education) seemed, in 2004–2005, to implement a new conceptual framework by replacing the terms “evaluate and develop” with “review and improve”. Their main slogan became “The NAE inspects in order to improve” (The National Agency for Education 2005, 7). Although school improvement seems to be in focus, control is the means by which development/improvement is facilitated (Lindgren et al. 2012, 577). Finally, it is important to emphasize that the document communicates certain inspection standards which the inspectors use in their assessments; these are based on, for example, “individual student support”, “learning outcomes and student assessment”, and “leadership and internal municipal communication”.

In other words, 2005 seems to mark a clear “step-up” by central authorities on the professional-bureaucratic and political levels, “tightening the grip” through intensifying and professionalizing school inspections. Not only was the NAE looking to control schools' compliance to rules and regulations, but also to “purposively” project “what should be”, as well as “evaluatively” communicate to schools “what is accomplished” (top-left and top-right quadrants in Figure 1).

The supreme audit body (Power 1997) on the professional-bureaucratic level, The Swedish National Audit Office, published a report entitled “Equal grades, equal knowledge. A follow-up of state steering towards more equal student assessment in primary and lower secondary schools”, which specifically examined the national

assessment policy of schools on the student level (The Swedish National Audit Office 2011). The report investigated to what extent the assessment of schools was in compliance with the Education Act (Government Act 2010), concluding that assessment policy was highly inconsistent and that educational authorities on the municipal level lacked the adequate “tools” to follow up with their respective schools.

Furthermore, the Swedish National Audit Office recommended that both the SSI and the NAE increase their coordination with each other, in order to more effectively control and follow up on results (The Swedish National Audit Office 2011, 10–14). In 2013, The Swedish National Audit Office will publish a fresh report “State Inspection of Schools”, which aims to investigate to what extent the SSI inspections and QAE of schools contribute to providing students with an equal education of good quality, as well as an improvement in results (The Swedish National Audit Office). We assume from the analysis of key policy documents a possible shift from emphasis on “development and knowledge” (The Swedish National Audit Office 2011) to “equality, quality, and results” (see Figure 1, right column).

Similarly to the Directorate for Education and Training in Norway, the SSI reports annually to the government, and these reports focus on summarizing and analyzing results and experiences from school inspection and quality assessment. Within the limits of this paper, we will not refer to all four reports, but briefly focus on the most recent (The Swedish School Inspectorate 2012). According to the SSI, the fiscal year of 2011 may be summed up in a few key points in the report titled: “A school with confidence lifts all students”.

The report claims that numerous schools lack the knowledge of how to ensure individual support to all students and lack the ability to sufficiently communicate student development to their parents or care-takers. Furthermore it identifies failure in systematically evaluating student aptitude and progress in all subjects and deficiencies in preventive work against offensive behaviour. Finally, the report highlights that school leaders lack sufficient support from local authorities (The Swedish School Inspectorate 2012, 6–7). It is not our aim to regard these reports as having the same “authoritative voice” as policy documents with regard to a professional-bureaucratic mode of governing, such as official reports, but they do offer an overall picture of how the SSI views schools which have been recently inspected. In this case they may possibly influence the inspectoral system to become more evidence-based.

### **School inspection policy in Sweden and Norway (2002–2012): similarities and differences**

The main aim of our paper has been to compare the differences and similarities between inspection policies in the two Nordic countries, to explore how two neighbouring countries have developed their regimes over the last ten years. We based our study on 23 documentary sources, such as legal statutes and regulations, as well as White, Green, and grey papers. We have furthermore examined how school inspection articulates policy aims adhering to national conditions as well as expectations to accomplish certain goals and outcomes. Based on our analysis, we find professional-bureaucratic principles and guidelines as essential. School inspection is not only mandated politically by national law, but based on substantial fields and practices. At the same time school inspection policy projects future expectations for improving quality and outcomes, more heavily influenced by evaluative modes of governing. In between these two horizontal dimensions, we have also investigated the vertical axes – in what way state authorities leave space open for professional freedom or rather increase direct control intervening through evaluative standards and expert-defined strategies. Hence, practical-pragmatic solutions may be targeted.

Both the vertical and horizontal dimensions are embedded within our main conceptual framework as well as our research problem. Now we again ask: *Can changing configurations of governing modes be observed within and across national school inspection policies in Norway and Sweden during the last decade? If so, how can similarities and differences in educational governing be explored in view of our data and findings?*

First, we have demonstrated how national inspectorial policies in Norway and Sweden are shaped by concurrent governing modes and, to a large extent, by including both purposive and evaluative dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 1. In this sense, there are certain commonalities across school inspection policies in Norway and Sweden, although the configurations do vary. Second, we find that policy changes are partly formed by the interaction between political decisions expressed through legal statutes and regulation as well as White Papers, and practical concerns articulated through reference for governing and control. However, in our cases we find more differences

than similarities in how the inspection policies in the two countries are configured during the period 2002-2012.

There has been profound political change in Sweden during the last decade, with the move from a Socialist-dominated to a Conservative-dominated government. However, as Rönnerberg points out: “Generally speaking, the idea of a strengthened central state that undertakes school inspections is unchallenged politically” (2012, 8). According to Rönnerberg (2012), it seems as if the role of a strong inspectorate is relatively uncontested in Sweden (Rönnerberg 2012) with regard to party politics. However, it should also be noted that Swedish school inspection was in the midst of a profound movement during the first decade of the new millennium (Lindgren 2012, 582), culminating in the establishment of the SSI in 2008. The Norwegian system has not seen a change in movement to a similar extent, dividing between a tripartite, institutional structure such as in the Swedish system.

Through our analysis of key policy documents, we observe that there has been relatively little political debate around the role of inspection as a central tool of controlling legal practice on the regional and local levels. In Norway, the political focus has shifted from right-centre to left-centre, and has, since 2005, been dominated by a Labour Party-led government under J. Stoltenberg. Before that, the Ministry of Education and Research was led by the Conservative Party under K. Clemet, who implemented the Quality Reform and the Knowledge Promotion (LK06), which has, in many ways, shaped the area of education ever since (Aasen et al. 2012). Whether the newly-elected Conservative Norwegian government will seek to develop school inspection in a more evaluative direction, is yet to be seen. However, recent changes in the newly implemented inspection handbook (2014-2017) project a greater focus on the more evaluative approaches to intervention through school inspection. To sum up we can however conclude that party politics up to now have not lead to profound change in both Norway and Sweden, since the two cases follow trajectories in ongoing reconfigurations, as outlined in key policy documents despite differences in governmental politics.

The first step in our analysis was to examine central White Papers, Green Papers, and official reports from the two countries, in order to see how their school inspection practices project different configurations of governing modes. In the Norwegian case, White Paper no. 17 (The Ministry of Labor and Administration 2003),

adheres to a great extent, for legal compliance. Furthermore, the official report in 2004, published by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (2004), calls for professional-bureaucratic steering through legal norms and concludes that guidance should not be a part of inspection policy. However, it does not exclude a discussion of the role of dialogue between the “auditors” and “auditees” (Power 1997).

In the Swedish case, the picture is more heterogeneous, projecting more multiple configurations of governing modes. The officially commissioned report in 2002, “State Audit – Investigation on behalf of the citizens”, discusses both legal compliancy linked to purposive sides of inspection, as more evaluative sides of inspection linked to achievement of targets, as well as a professionalization of the inspectorate corps (The Ministry of Justice 2002).

Moving on to the official report in 2007 (The Ministry of Education 2007a), the quality assessment of schools and inspections based on research-based methods shows a stronger emphasis on evaluative modes of governance in the Swedish inspectoral regime compared to previous documents such as published during the early 2000s. This tendency is further highlighted in Regulation 2008:613 (Government regulation 2008) following the report in 2007, which calls for not only purposive modes, but also highly evaluative approaches to school inspection.

Thus, comparing the two cases, we find that both of the countries express the call for purposive, legal-professional modes of governing, but in the Swedish case the quantified section of our analysis demonstrates that evaluative modes are far more strongly stressed (see Table 2).

Our analysis of the Education Acts concerning inspection of schools in both countries, as well as regulations in Sweden, demonstrate that both cases are highly compliance-oriented, focusing on to what extent schools comply with regulation, which is linked to purposive modes of governing. Interestingly, it should be noted that the term “tilsyn” is used in the Education Acts as well as key policy documents in both countries, even if the SSI focuses on “inspection”, “QAE”, and “investigation”.

As we have demonstrated, the Norwegian Education Act (Government Act 1998 Sec. 14-1) regulates how school inspection is projected in the law, where “the County Governors’ (main) role is to supervise to which extent school owners and schools comply with the legal demands stated in the Education Act”. However, as we have seen, an interesting detail in the act is that not only should authorities at the regional

government level control local authorities' legal practices, but also “provide advice and guidance pursuant to this Act” (Government Act 1998 Sec. 14-2).

In the Swedish case, the two official reports in 2007 (The Ministry of Education 2007a, 2007b), as mentioned above, led to a new government regulation in 2008 (Government regulation 2008) tagged “With Instructions for the State School Inspectorate”. Moving on to the new education act in Sweden in 2010, it elaborates on which sanctions should be implemented in the case of deviations, as well as calling for “advice and guidance” and “quality assessment and evaluation”. This radical turn is further amplified through the new regulation passed in 2011 (Government regulation 2011 Sec. 1), where “development of children and students, as well as knowledge and results” is a central idea in the “new” policy. Therefore, there is clear evidence to claim that the main difference, when comparing legal statutes, is that Swedish policy projects to quite an extent an evaluative mode of governing (see Figure 1), which is up to 2012 absent in the case of Norway.

The final category of policy documents which we have analyzed is reports and evaluations, with regard to school inspection policy and to which modes of governing are projected. The NIBR reports published in Norway in 2004 (Hanssen, Heløe, and Klausen 2004a, 2004b) support inspections which combine both an evaluative-pragmatic approach (see bottom-right quadrant in Figure 1 and Table 3) as well as a more purposive, professional-bureaucratic mode of governing (left side in Figure 1).

Finally, our analysis of annual reports from the national inspectoral bodies in Norway (FNT reports) and Sweden (DNR reports), as well as reports from the Supreme Audit bodies, shows clear differences between the two countries. In the Norwegian case, inspections rest on evaluation or “what should have been accomplished” as well as “what should be”, being both evaluative and purposive-legal (see Table 3). On the other hand, the Swedish reports include a different approach, emphasizing “what was accomplished?”, not only evaluating processes but also “giving direction” by being more purposive-professional (“what can be accomplished”). A clear example which illustrates this central point is the report published by the Swedish National Audit Office in 2011, where “development and knowledge” as well as “follow-ups” are upheld as vital in school inspection policy (The Swedish National Audit Office 2011), projecting to a great extent purposive-legal and evaluative-expert-defined modes of governing (see Table 3). However, there might possibly be an eminent shift towards “equality, quality,

and results” projected through a recent report published late in 2013 (The Swedish National Audit Office 2013), which is not included in our analysis.

During the past decade there has been an ongoing process of professionalization of the inspectoral body in Sweden, through the establishment of the Swedish School Inspectorate in 2008. On the other hand, inspection in Norway has traditionally been linked to County Governors’ Offices throughout the same period. It is tempting to claim that in Sweden there has been a more “clear and transparent process”, which can be visualized on the official websites through which the policy documents have been accessed; Norway, in comparison, seems to have had a more pragmatic approach. However, it is not possible to make this conclusion through our analysis alone.

As highlighted above, our study concludes that different governing modes (Maroy 2012) indirectly define how school inspection is carried out (Figure 1). While in Norway governing has focused on legal and pragmatic approaches, Sweden has additionally emphasized professional and expert-defined approaches as well as regulative modes, which potentially intervene into school practice on the meso-level.

A possible future scenario is the additional merging of inspection regimes across the European realm, also between the Nordic countries. There may be recent signals from Norwegian central, as well as regional, authorities of a desire to “transform” the way in which school inspections are conducted, possibly to adapt to a wider “trans-European” and, more specifically, Swedish context (Lawn and Grek 2012). However, we argue that even if the “Nordic model” of public administration seems, from a distance, to be somewhat homogeneous, there is substantial evidence of major differences in the inspection regimes of these countries. Thus, the two states seem to sustain their roles in Europeanization processes formed by expert-networks and international institutions. What lies in the future is more or less impossible to predict, however we cannot rule out the possibility of a convergence between the two Nordic systems of school inspections.

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<sup>i</sup> The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) is the organization of national and regional inspectorates of education in Europe. <http://www.sici-inspectorates.eu/>

<sup>ii</sup> See Tables 2–4.

<sup>iii</sup> Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Research Analysis (CAQDAS)

<sup>iv</sup> Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). <http://www.timss.org/>

<sup>v</sup> Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). SOU 2007:101 refers mostly to the inspectorate in England, not the Scottish or Welsh systems.

<sup>vi</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE), Scotland.

**Table 1:** Modes of governing

<b>Mode of governing/ function</b>	<b>Nickname</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Purposive/ legal</b>	PURLEG	<b>'How things should be'</b> Regulations, Control, Examination, Compliancy, Surveillance, Supervision, Deficiencies, Pursuance, Fulfillment
<b>Purposive/ professional</b>	PURPRO	<b>'What is possible'</b> Information, Help, Support, Remark, Withdrawal, State actions, Proactiveness, Professionalism
<b>Evaluative/ expert-defined</b>	EVEXP	<b>'What is accomplished'</b> Evaluation, Supervision, Normative reactions, Achievement of targets, Accounting/revision, QAE, Standards, Guidelines, Follow-up
<b>Evaluative/ pragmatic</b>	EVPRAG	<b>'What is going to be done'</b> Development, Guidance, Counseling, Reflection, Cooperation, Learning, Dialogue, Trust, Reciprocity

**Table 2:** Legal statutes and regulation (1998-2011)

Norway					Sweden				
FUNCTIONS/NODES									
Number of coding references in NVivo 10 (%)									
PURLEG	PURPRO	EVEXP	EVPRAG	Legal statutes and regulation:	PURLEG	PURPRO	EVEXP	EVPRAG	Legal statutes and regulation:
83	17	-	-	The Education Act of 1998 (Section 14.1)	33	14	48	5	Government Bill. Prop. 2007/08:50 "New educational authorities" (Ch 4.3)
					43	29	29	-	Regulation 2008:613 (With instructions for State School Inspectorate/SSI)
					33	33	33	-	<i>The Education Act 2010</i> (SFS 2010:800/Skollagen) (Sec. 26)
					20	20	40	20	Regulation 2011:556 " <i>Instructions for State School Inspections</i> " (SFS Svensk förfatningssamling 2011:556)

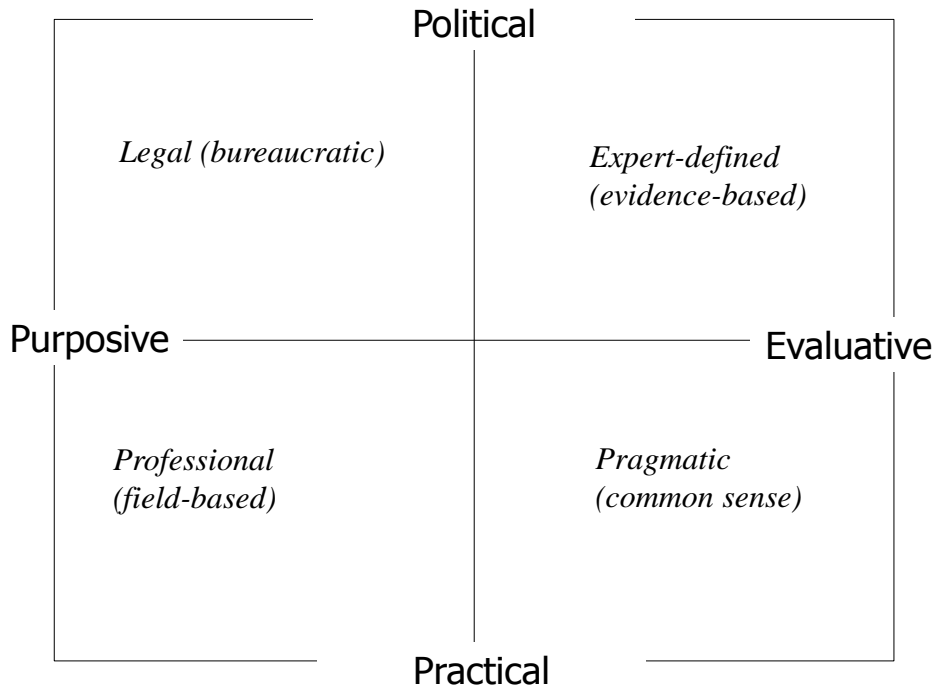


**Table 3:** White papers, Green papers and official reports (2002-2012)

Norway					Sweden				
FUNCTIONS/NODES									
Number of coding references in NVivo 10 (%)									
PURLEG	PURPRO	EVEXP	EVPRAG	White papers, Green papers and official reports	PURLEG	PURPRO	EVEXP	EVPRAG	White papers, Green papers and official reports
31	23	23	23	White Paper no 17 (2002-2003) <i>"On State Audit"</i> (Ch. 3.2-3.3)	54	-	31	15	SOU 2002:14 <i>"State Audit – Investigation on Behalf of the Citizens"</i> (Ch. 1.3.3/6.5.3/8.3)
44	13	6	33	Official report NOU 2004:17 <i>"State Audit of the Municipal Sector"</i> (Ch. 5.2. -5.3)	30	10	10	50	Official report SOU 2007:79 <i>"Three new national agencies for education"</i> (Ch. 4.2)
33	5	38	24	White Paper no. 31 (2007-2008), <i>"Quality in Schools"</i> (Ch. 4.5.8)	58	8	34	-	Official report SOU 2007:101 <i>"Clear and Transparent – Reinforcing school inspection"</i> (Summary)
50	4	4	42	White Paper no. 20 (2011-2012) <i>"On the right track"</i> (Ch. 7.4)	29	24	41	6	2008: Parliamentary Committee Directive <i>"Establishment of a State School Inspectorate"</i> (2008:3)
					41	46	-	13	2009: Ministry Series <i>"The new education act- For Knowledge, Choice and Safety"</i> (DS:2009:25), (Ch. 24)

**Table 4:** Grey papers, supreme audit reports and national inspection reports (2004-2012)

Norway					Sweden				
FUNCTIONS/NODES									
Number of coding references in NVivo 10 ( %)									
PULEG	PURPRO	EVEXP	EVPRAG	Grey papers, supreme audit reports and national inspection reports	PULEG	PURPRO	EVEXP	EVPRAG	Grey papers, supreme audit reports and national inspection reports
28	20	15	38	NIBR Report 2004:4 "The County Governor's Audit of the Municipal Sector" (Ch. 6: Conclusion)	22	20	48	10	National Agency for Education/NAE (Skolverket) Inspection for Improvement – a brochure about the National Agency for Education's Educational Inspectorate (2004/2005)
27	-	7	65	NIBR Report 2004:7 "The dialogue between regional and local authorities"(English summary: pp.10-14)	43	10	38	10	Official Report RiR 2011:23 "Equal grades, equal knowledge". A follow-up of state steering towards more equal student assessment in primary and lower secondary schools" Swedish National Audit Office (Ch. 6.2 )
48	6	18	27	Official report:"The Auditor General Office's Audit of Primary and Secondary Education" The Office of the Auditor General (Doc. No. 3:10, 2005-2006, Ch. 2.4; Attachment to Doc. No. 3:10, 2005-2006, Ch. 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 7.2-7-5; Summary of Doc. No. 3:10, 2005-2006).	30	16	42	12	<u>National Inspection Report</u> ; Report on regular inspection, Dnr 40-2012:2991 "A School with Confidence lifts all students" (SSI) ( Summary; Ch. 1-2; Ch. 10)
78	-	20	2	National Inspection Report(2012) FNT 2010-2011 (UDIR)					



**Figure 1:** Theoretical/analytical model