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School inspection and state-initiated professionalisation of elementary school teachers in Sweden, 1861–1910

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of school inspection in the early (1861–1910) professionalisation of Swedish elementary school teachers. International research on school inspection has focused on educational reform, but rarely on the role of inspection in teachers' theoretical and practical development. The paper's theoretical assumption is that school inspection was initiated by the Swedish state as part of its effort to professionalise teaching in the 1860s. Using inspectors' reports, the paper examines two specific areas: (1) the quality of teaching observed in the classroom and inspectors' recommendations for improvement, and (2) the development of teachers' seminars and continuous pedagogic development. The results demonstrate that, although faced with various challenges, inspectors contributed to teacher development, indicating the benefit of state intervention in elementary school education.

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Introduction

From the nineteenth century, systems of mass education were introduced with varying success in many parts of the world. In Sweden, the first general school statute (1842) introduced the main structure of primary schooling, and in 1861 a system of state school inspections was established to monitor schools and support educational reforms that aimed to follow the curriculum more fully.¹ Key duties of the inspectors were supervising and evaluating elementary school teachers – duties that became increasingly important as national curriculum plans were implemented in the late nineteenth century. The introduction of the inspectors marks the beginning of what I refer to as 'state-initiated professionalisation', in which the teacher's role began to develop a complex relationship with state and local authorities and the teachers' collective. Although not successful in every respect, teachers embarked on a path towards greater professionalisation from the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.² The role of school inspectors and their reports have rarely been used to explain these changes – a situation the present study seeks to remedy.

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¹Olof Wennås, 'Skolans styrning genom tiderna: en översikt', in *Utbildningshistoria 1998*, ed. Stig G Nordström and Gunnar Richardson (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 1998), 22–3; Jakob Evertsson, 'History, Nation and School Inspections: The Introduction of Citizenship Education in Elementary Schools in Late Nineteenth-Century Sweden', *History of Education* 44, no. 3 (2015): 264–6.

²The theoretical perspective will be discussed in more detail below.

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This study has two main aims: (1) to contribute to developing theory by analytically discussing the professionalisation of elementary school teachers from 1861 to 1910, and (2) to demonstrate how the state contributed to reforms and facilitated professionalisation through having school inspectors monitor teaching in local schools. Although the primary focus of the study is on state-initiated reforms, I also consider the practical complexities and limitations of effecting educational reform at the local level.³ It should be noted that the inspectors' reports make certain areas of interest accessible for study, but obscure others such as the teachers' internal organisation and local school governance. Some challenges facing both inspectors and teachers become obvious in the cases investigated in the study. I operationalise the perspective of state-initiated professionalisation by investigating the following areas: (1) evaluation of teachers' pedagogic skills and practices, and (2) teachers' educational levels and training.⁴ These areas were selected because they were included in the school inspectors' instructions for visiting schools and were important elements in Swedish teachers' early move towards professionalisation.

Previous research

Previous research offers a rich view of different aspects of elementary school teachers' roles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A theme largely ignored is that of supervision and state inspection of education. Some international studies have briefly discussed relations between inspectors and teachers, but more comprehensive studies on this topic remain scant. In one such study, however, Scott O. Moore showed that inspectors had an important role in ensuring teacher quality in the Austrian provinces and teachers adhered to the prescribed curriculum mainly through organising courses in pedagogy and teaching methods. Bureaucratisation, however, also led to teacher critiques regarding the accuracy of inspections, as the observations were based on brief visits by inspectors who were sometimes not well acquainted with the region.⁵ In a study of the professionalisation of different occupations in Germany, Charles McClelland argued that despite challenges such as teachers' dependency on local funding, teaching began to be professionalised through increased state control from the late nineteenth century.⁶ Marianne A. Larsen, who investigated teachers' development in Victorian England, argues that inspection influenced teachers' roles by examining and refining areas such as instructional methods and quality of lessons to create 'the good Victorian teacher'.⁷ A recent study by Russel Grigg focuses exclusively on how inspection in Britain defined and measured teaching excellence during the 1840s, 1880s and 1990s. Although mainly

³Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon, 'General Introduction', in *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building c.1870–1930*, ed. Brockliss and Sheldon (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 5–7.

⁴In this paper, although they are simplifications, the term skill is usually used synonymously with practice, and education with training. The first terms (skill, practice) refer to practical abilities, and the second terms (education, training) mainly to theoretical abilities.

⁵Scott O. Moore, 'The Professionalisation of Teaching: Teacher Training and Education Reform in Austria, 1867–1914', *History of Education* 48, no. 3 (2019): 355.

⁶Charles McClelland, *The German Experience of Professionalization: Modern Learned Professions and their Organizations from the Early Nineteenth Century to the Hitler Era* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 45, 64, 102.

⁷Marianne A. Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher: A Comparative New Cultural History* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 117–18.

concerned with schools' performance, Grigg argues that good quality teaching was initially tied to broader ideologies and only gradually concretised through criteria developed as inspectors gained more autonomy.⁸

In the Nordic context, Odd Asbjørn Mediås argued that Norwegian inspection became a strong influence in outlining curriculum plans, determining teacher salaries and evaluating teachers. During school visits, inspectors guided teachers in the use of teaching methods, although some teachers questioned the limited information that could be conveyed during these brief meetings.⁹ Aaro Harju, in a study of rural school inspections in Finland from 1861 to 1921, found that teaching was reformed due to inspectors' preference for development pedagogics and that district inspectors conveyed new pedagogical and didactical ideas among the teachers at inspections and teachers' meetings.¹⁰ In Sweden, Christina Florin, in the influential book *Who Should Sit in the Teacher's Chair? (Kampen om katedern)* (1987), discusses the professionalisation of teachers, with a particular emphasis on women during the period 1860–1906. Although Florin sees state inspection as an important impetus for teaching reforms, she does not explicitly investigate inspection in relation to teachers' professionalisation.¹¹ Since Florin, several other researchers have discussed the effects of school inspection, although these studies have not focused specifically on the topics at hand.¹² In a more recently published study, Jakob Evertsson examined the relationship between school inspection and teaching in theoretical subjects such as history and geography in the late nineteenth century. That study showed that inspectors often found it difficult to introduce the new subjects, but that their efforts contributed to a gradual increase in pupils attending those classes.¹³ European research, in Sweden in particular, however, still requires further studies into the relationship between school inspection, the teacher's role and the early development of teaching as a profession. The present paper therefore seeks to develop and problematise this theme, thus contributing to a neglected field in the history of education.

Theory

This investigation begins with the theoretical concept of professionalisation, which cannot be applied directly to teachers of the late nineteenth century. The concept is largely an artificial construct and the use of universal characteristics to describe professions has been under debate in recent decades.¹⁴ Because this term is known among

⁸Russel Grigg, "'Ofsted says we are Outstanding': HMI Conceptions of Teaching Excellence in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Primary School', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 68 (2020): 7–10.

⁹Odd Asbjørn Mediås, *En 132-årig skolehistorie: skoledirektørembetet i Norge 1860–1992* (Steinkjer: NTNU, 1997), 101, 117.

¹⁰Aaro Harju, *Maalaiskansakoulujen tarkastustoimi vuosina 1861–1921* (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän University, 1988), 519–20.

¹¹Christina Florin, *Kampen om katedern: feminiserings- och professionaliseringsprocessen inom den svenska folkskolans lärarkår 1860–1906* (diss., Umeå, 1987). An English summary of the main findings of the dissertation was subsequently published: Christina Florin, 'Social Closure as Professional Strategy: Male and Female Teachers from Co-operation to Conflict in Sweden, 1860–1906', *History of Education* 20, no. 1 (1991): 17–26.

¹²See, for example, John Boli, *New Citizens for a New Society: The Institutional Origins of Mass Schooling Systems in Sweden* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1989), 230–240; Mats Sjöberg, *Att säkra framtiden skördar. Barndom, skola och arbete i agrar miljö: Bolstad pastorat 1860–1930* (Linköping: Linköping University, 1996), 185–187. Mats Ekholm and Kerstin Lindvall, 'Skolinspektioner – i tid och otid', *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige* 13, no. 1 (2008): 41–50; Johannes Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende: folkskolans förutsättningar och framväxt 1840–1900* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2014), 114–16.

¹³Evertsson, 'History, Nation and School Inspections', 264–6.

¹⁴David Crook, 'Some Historical Perspectives on Professionalism', in *Exploring Professionalism*, ed. Bryan Cunningham (London: Bedford Way Papers, 2008), 22–3.

scholars to be notoriously difficult to define, a discussion about how I use the concept in this study is needed before the article continues. On a general level, professionalisation is often defined as a process in which an occupational group pursues, develops, acquires and maintains the characteristics of a profession through creating or attaining specific education, a professional community and improved social status. Traditionally, the three learned professions were law, medicine and theology, but in the nineteenth century other professions such as engineering, architecture and accountancy entered the field. Primary and secondary teaching, however, long struggled to achieve the status of a profession. Reasons could include, among others, teachers seeming to lack expertise in a specific area, not being in control of their own educational base and often coming from a lower or disadvantaged social background.¹⁵

Different approaches may be taken to applying the concept of professionalisation to teachers. Here, I have elected to use the term *state-initiated professionalisation* in analysing and discussing elements of early teacher professionalisation instigated by the state in various countries during the late nineteenth century. As centralised state governments emerged, they claimed the right to set educational standards and impose supervision on schools through school inspections.¹⁶ The theoretical focus of this paper is therefore on the role of inspectors' evaluations of teaching practices and recommended improvements to teacher education in professionalising teaching. I argue that in Sweden school inspection had a considerable influence in these areas, but a more limited impact in areas such as school funding and local governance. As Adrian Gray argued, school inspection in Europe during this time focused mainly on the quality of the teachers and regulation as a better route to education than on school management, which was mainly left to local officials.¹⁷ Teachers often found themselves trapped between state and local controls, which restricted their autonomy and undermined their professional aspirations. This shows that state-initiated professionalisation was not a straightforward or simple process: teachers were 'indirect employees', and teaching remained in many respects dependent on the local level in terms of funding, church authority and the demands of parents.¹⁸ The introduction of formal educational systems, however, contributed over time to severing ties between teachers and the local community as the school was subjected to external inspection.¹⁹ Regular inspection and national harmonisation of education caused teachers to gradually shift some of their loyalty from local communities to their collective identity as state teachers.²⁰

Here, I analyse the early stage of teacher professionalisation in Sweden, during which teaching began to be harmonised in both theory and practice, and consider the role of state policy in this process. Some researchers have defined this period as the 'pre-

¹⁵ Rolf Torstendahl, 'Professionerna och den nya staten', in *Den nya staten: ideologi och samhällsförändring kring sekelskiftet 1900*, ed. Erik Nydahl and Jonas Harvard (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2016), 133–8.

¹⁶ McClelland, *The German Experience of Professionalisation*, 45; Grigg, "'Ofsted says we are Outstanding'", 6; Moore, 'The Professionalisation of Teaching', 339.

¹⁷ Adrian Gray, *European School Inspection and Evaluation: History and Principles* (Retford: Bookworm of Retford, 2019), 78. The inspection's focus on teaching is also evident in the inspection of elementary school instruction in Sweden.

¹⁸ McClelland, *The German Experience of professionalisation*, 101; Mats Sjöberg, *Att säkra framtidens skördar: Barndom, skola och arbete i agrar miljö. Bolstad pastorat 1860–1930* (Linköping: Linköping University, 1996), 185–6; Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende*, 114–16.

¹⁹ Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher*, 114.

²⁰ Kate Rousmaniere, 'The History of Schoolteachers and Administrators', in *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Education*, ed. John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 480–3; Florin, *Kampen om katedern*, 78.

professional age' in which teaching was less technically difficult but very demanding due to lack of resources, large groups of often reluctant learners and little reward or recognition.²¹ State inspection, it is claimed, played a crucial role in promoting higher education, providing schools with better and harmonised pedagogic practice, and contributed to a strengthened self-identity among teachers. State-initiated professionalisation promised the prospect of a wider teaching community separated, at least in some respects, from state, local and church control. It is this somewhat paradoxical pattern of teachers' early professionalisation that I analyse from the inspectors' point of view. This theoretical perspective is operationalised by analysing inspectors' monitoring of (1) teachers' pedagogical skills and (2) teachers' education over the period 1861–1910.

Method and material

The methodology builds on historical analysis of printed school inspectors' reports from the region of Uppsala in central Sweden (*Berättelser om folkskolorna i riket afgifna av tillförordnade folkskoleinspektörer*; BFSR). Based on material collected during annual school visits, these reports on schools were published about every five years in 1861–1910 and sent to diocesan chapters, the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs and all school districts, making them widely accessible.²² The reports produced in the diocese of Uppsala (Figure 1) during the period constituted about 10% of the inspectors' reports in the country, and covered eight slightly varying topics during the period, two of which were selected for this study: (1) teaching in different disciplines, and (2) teachers' skills in teaching and moral education.²³ Reports range from 24 to 214 pages depending on the region and period studied. The reports from the Uppsala diocese amount to about 1200 pages in total and all the inspection districts in the diocese apart from Stockholm are included and referred to in the analysis. After analysing the printed inspection reports, I use national school statistics to compare regional conditions.²⁴ More discussion on the Uppsala region and contextualisation will follow in the next chapter on school inspectors.

The statistics presented in the text concentrate on one of the four (later five) inspection districts that include both urban and rural areas.²⁵ This district is situated in the southern part of the Uppsala diocese. Altogether, 82 parishes are represented in this sample. The statistical analysis of the district begins in 1881 following its geographical redefinition the previous year. This district was also selected because it provides statistical analyses written by the same school inspector, Herman Emanuel Hermansson, over 30 years, providing opportunities to follow developments in one district over time. Hermansson also gave detailed statistics assessing the teachers' competence, which can be followed through the whole period he was active, 1881–1910.²⁶ Not all inspectors

²¹ Andy Hargreaves, 'Four Ages of Professionalism and Professional Learning', *Teachers and Teaching: History and Practice* 6, no. 2 (2000): 153–4.

²² A total of 950 copies of the report were printed in the diocese of Uppsala for the inspection period 1882–1886. In other dioceses, it varied from 780 to 1010 copies. National Archives, Stockholm, Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Main Archive, F5B:1, Handlingar angående folkskoleinspektionen, 1861–1907.

²³ The number of issues monitored were more limited in early inspectors' reports than in later.

²⁴ Bidrag till Sveriges officiella statistik: undervisningsväsendet 1876–1911, folkskolorna 1882–1910. Central Bureau of Statistics, Stockholm (hereafter BiSOS).

²⁵ This district comprised the deaneries of Hagunda, Lagunda, Trögds, Åsunda, Håbo, Örbyhus, Norra and Södra Fjärdhundra, the parishes in Öland and the Frösåker deanery of Uppsala County.

²⁶ Such complete statistics are lacking in the other districts in the diocese of Uppsala for this entire period.

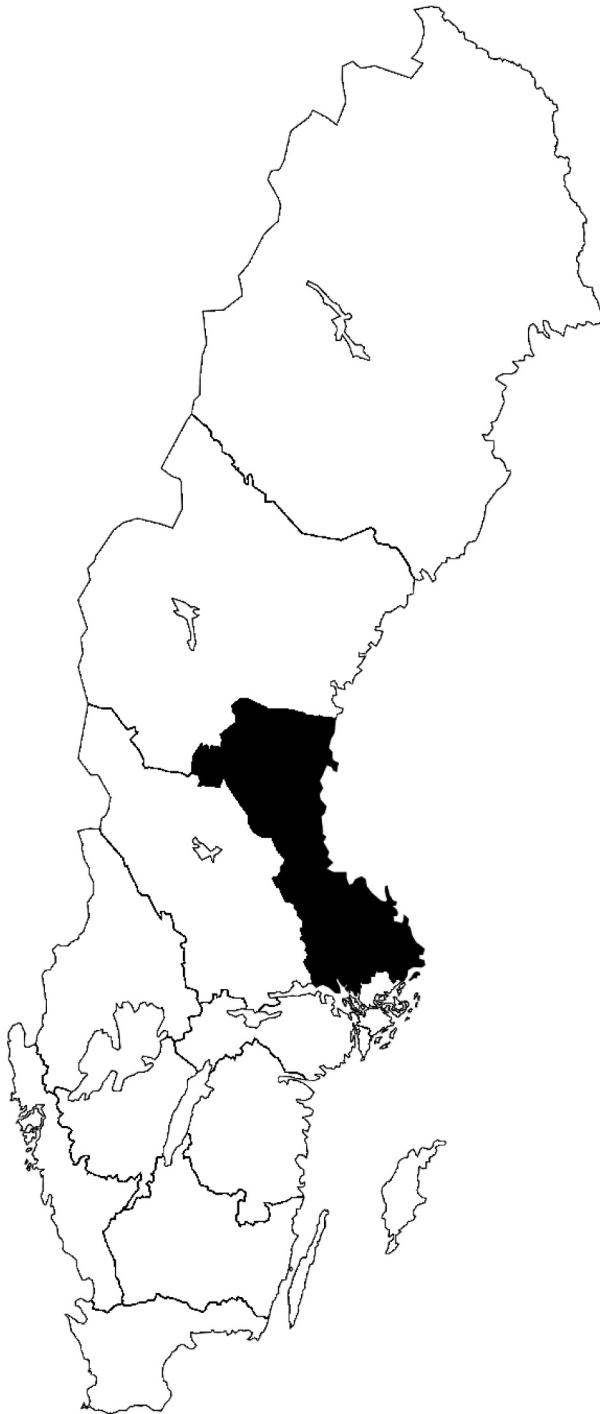


Figure 1. Map of Sweden with Uppsala diocese marked in black.

pursued their work in the exact same manner, which somewhat limits comparisons. In many deaneries, notes were not followed up by a compilation of detailed statistics but functioned rather as an overall assessment of the teaching. During the first two decades of inspection this was the norm for reporting, making inspectors' statements especially helpful. Discussions of teaching evaluations, present in all included inspectors' reports, are referred to in the text. Thus, the analysis is based on all inspectors' reports in the Uppsala region and a local sample from one of the districts in this region during the selected period.

Although these reports comprise an important and understudied primary source for analysing the implementation of educational policy, certain problems and limitations arise with their use. First, it might have been in the inspectors' interest to write reports of progress. Second, comparisons between inspections in different districts and regions were carried out in different contexts. Third, as Johannes Westberg argued, parishes might be influenced by the personality of the inspector and more willing to organise, build and fund schools if the inspector progressed cautiously.²⁷ Fourth, the reports, which relied for their official status on national inspectors' views and the national mission, decentred the interests of the local school boards and teachers.²⁸ Despite these difficulties, the material provides a richer account of school development during 1861–1910 than most other sources. Because this article investigates school inspectors' contributions, their voices are given prominence in the empirical analyses in the main sections. The material's limitations are adjusted for in critical side-by-side readings of the reports and examples representative of the inspectors as a group. Lastly, the inspectors' work is contextualised to increase understanding of their working conditions and between-district differences.

Role of school inspection in education

In 1861, 20 part-time inspectors were responsible for monitoring different inspection districts in Sweden; by 1910 that number had increased to 47, and 13 listed inspection as their main occupation. State funding of inspectors rose from 17,000 *kronor* in 1861 to 95,000 *kronor* in 1889. About half those costs were for travel expenses, which was often pointed out as a reason to hire full-time permanent inspectors,²⁹ although inspection did not become a full-time permanent occupation in Sweden until 1914.³⁰ Inspectors were to exercise their duties following instructions issued by the Department for Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Ecklesiastikdepartementet*), which included carefully monitoring the development of education, visiting the schools in person and becoming familiar with their conditions and needs.³¹ For church and clergy, inspection was nothing new, as it had

²⁷Westberg, *Att bygga ett skolväsende*, 115–16.

²⁸Inspection reports as sources have been problematised in Margareta Mellberg, *Pedagogen och det skrivna ordet: Skrivkonst och folkskollärare i Sverige 1870–1920* (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University), 75–6; Germund Larsson and Johannes Westberg, 'Child Labour, Parental Neglect, School Boards, and Teacher Quality: School Inspector Reports on the Supply and Demand of Schooling in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Sweden', *Historical Studies in Education* 32, no. 1 (2020): 73.

²⁹National Archives, Stockholm, Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Main Archive, F5B:1, Handlingar angående folkskoleinspektionen, 1861–1907, Handlingar rörande landstingens bidrag till inspektionen.

³⁰Torbjörn Nilsson, *Mellan Rådgivning och kontroll: Den statliga skolinspektionen som exempel* (Stockholm: Södertörns högskola, 2018), 14.

³¹Kungl. Maj:t nådiga instruktion för folkskoleinspektörer 15 juni 1861.

been part of traditional education. As Egil Johansson argues, it would probably have been impossible to create a completely new and secularised school inspection without the existing ecclesiastical structure.³² The inspection districts therefore followed the Lutheran state church structure of dioceses, divided in turn into deaneries. Local parish churches continued to be administratively responsible for schools, with vicars serving exclusively as chairmen of local school boards until 1930, although they could also be elected chairmen after this point. The only central authority was the elementary school bureau within the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs, created in 1864, which handled administration and pedagogy and assisted the secretary of the ministry. Regional civic county councils were created in 1862 following a reform dividing roles in parishes into civic and ecclesiastical spheres, with boards responsible for several elementary school matters such as teacher education.³³ The county councils contributed variously to funding inspections and were therefore important for the development of the institution, particularly in its infancy.³⁴

Schools to be inspected were regular elementary schools (*egentliga folkskolor*), junior schools (*småskolor*; introduced in 1858 for younger children) and minor elementary schools (*mindre folkskolor*), which were introduced in 1853 and functioned as a complement to the regular elementary school. Initially, the latter two types of school did not require teachers to be examined. They needed only to have some general skills verified by the reverend and school board. The first main assignments of school inspectors were to make sure suitable teachers were hired at junior and minor schools and see that their education was improved. Later state subsidy reforms in the 1870s and 1880s provided more funding to schools that hired examined teachers. Altogether, these incentives gradually led to more teachers receiving formal training.³⁵ Within each of these categories there were a number of ambulatory schools throughout the period, although these decreased over time, as shown later. The continuity with the church was also evident in the hiring: in 1861, of 19 inspectors hired, eight were clergymen, six grammar school teachers, two teachers of elementary school seminars, one a public notary, one in the military and one an elementary school teacher. Perhaps surprisingly, the proportion of clergymen remained almost the same in 1910: of 47 inspectors hired, 22 were clergymen, eight teachers at elementary school seminars, three folk high school teachers, one a grammar school teacher, and – notably – 13 had no other occupation.³⁶ Clergymen were often preferred as school inspectors because the bishop proposed the candidates, this being one way in which the church maintained influence over schools. There were differences between dioceses in that some favoured grammar school teachers for practical service, while others recruited clergymen with teaching credits for these positions.³⁷ Torbjörn Nilsson

³²Egil Johansson, "Mindre än minimum". Den gamla hemläsningen och föräldrarnas ambitioner för barnen i ljust av folkskoleinspektörernas berättelser 1861–68', *Forskning om utbildning* 18, no. 4 (1991): 28.

³³Lennart Tegnberg, *Folkskolans sekularisering 1895–1909: Upplösning av det administrativa sambandet mellan folkskola och kyrka i Sverige* (Stockholm: årsböcker i svensk undervisningshistoria, 1969), 17–20; Wennäs, 'Skolans styrning genom tiderna: en översikt', 21–5.

³⁴Östen Persson, 'Några anteckningar om den statliga regionala skolinspektionen', in *Skolinspektörer minns*, ed. Bengt Thelin (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 1994), 16–17.

³⁵Sven Nylund, *Småskolläroarbildningen i Sverige* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1942), 30–2, 43–4; Johannes Westberg, 'Stimulus or Impediment: The Impact of Matching Grants on the Funding of Elementary Schools in Sweden during the Nineteenth Century', *History of Education* 42, no. 1 (2013): 20.

³⁶J. Franzén, 'Historik över folkskoleinspektionen i Sverige', *Folkundervisningens betänkande III angående förändrad anordning av folkskoleinspektionen avgivet den 31 januari 1913* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1913), 135, 217.

³⁷Josef Gralén, *Folkskoleinspektionen i Örebro län: åren 1861–1914 jämte kortfattad översikt av folkundervisningen i länet före 1861* (Stockholm: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 1958), 93.

Table 1. Number of schools in Uppsala diocese 1881–1910

Year	Elementary schools		Minor elementary schools		Junior schools	
	Permanent	Ambulatory	Permanent	Ambulatory	Permanent	Ambulatory
1881	406	24	47	105	221	59
1910	614	-	173	22	500	15

Source: BSFR (1881) and BSFR (1910).

showed that school inspectors' general tasks were very similar in the early twentieth century to those in the 1860s: to monitor schools and give advice. Inspectors were perceived to occupy an upper stratum in the area of teaching, but at the same time were still undergoing professionalisation, begun only in 1914, from a part-time occupation.³⁸ They also regularly met as a group in the late nineteenth century to strengthen their own profession. National inspectors' meetings held in Stockholm with the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs discussed different aspects of school development, resulting in common statements that acted as additional guidelines for inspectors' work.³⁹

In 1868, of a total of 6919 schools in Sweden, 1206 were ambulatory.⁴⁰ Those numbers increased to 9537 (3422 ambulatory) in 1881 and to 14,900 (1679 ambulatory) in 1910.⁴¹ The Uppsala Diocese had a total of 652 schools (108 ambulatory) in 1868,⁴² 862 (188 ambulatory) in 1881 and 1324 (37 ambulatory), in 1910. The number of schools thus doubled between 1868 and 1910. Also notable is the heavy reduction of ambulatory schools in 1881–1910, while all permanent types of schools, particularly minor elementary and junior elementary schools, increased. More schools meant more work for inspectors, whose school visits had to increase to accommodate them. (See Table 1 for further detail for Uppsala in 1881–1910.)

The uneven geographical ranges of inspectorates in Uppsala also resulted in different working conditions for inspectors. In practice, some inspectors working in large inspectorates solved this problem by not inspecting each school every year, although this went against the statute. Another difference was that northern districts had many more ambulatory schools than others and it often took considerable time to harmonise these differences. In the district used as sample for the statistics, a lower proportion of minor elementary schools were ambulatory in 1881, highlighting the difference between northern and southern districts.⁴³ Although such differences persisted, by 1910 they had largely diminished.⁴⁴ In areas not well served by infrastructure such as railways, country roads and steamboat routes, inspectors were generally unable to inspect the same number of schools in a given time as those in better served areas. However, transport improved throughout the whole country in the late nineteenth century, to some extent facilitating inspection visits.⁴⁵

³⁸Nilsson, *Mellan rådgivning och kontroll*, 31, 37.

³⁹Such meetings were held in 1862, 1864, 1867, 1870, 1877, 1881 and 1894. National Archives, Stockholm, Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Main Archive, F5B:2–4, 'Protokoll vid folkskoleinspektörernas möten'.

⁴⁰BiSOS 1868, VIII.

⁴¹BiSOS 1882, tabell-bilagor, 2; BiSOS 1912, 5–7.

⁴²BiSOS 1868, Bilagor, 2.

⁴³BSFR (1881), Hagunda district.

⁴⁴BSFR (1910), Hagunda district.

⁴⁵BiSOS 1868, 2. Josef Gralén, *Folkskoleinspektionen i Gävleborgs län II: åren 1877–1914. Ett bidrag till folkundervisningens historia* (Stockholm: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 1955), 14–17.

The first inspectors' instruction of 1861 was replaced in 1886 and updated in 1892 and 1904. Some claim the gradual increase in inspectors' duties during this period also led to more administration. The changing work conditions in Uppsala may be illustrated by the case of inspector Gustaf Insulander, who served for more than 33 years (1869–1903). He was responsible for 196 schools at the beginning of his term, and at the end served as many as 350, indicating a substantial increase in his school visits. Insulander devoted an average of 150 days a year to visiting schools in his district. In 1898, he reported the two areas of organisational development on which he had mainly focused. His first goal had been to reduce the number of ambulatory schools and minor elementary schools in favour of regular elementary and junior schools, and the second was to reduce the number of pupils per teacher. He admitted to having had more success in the former area than the latter, and the same conclusion can be drawn for the districts in general.⁴⁶ The constant struggle against ambulatory schools was shared by practically all inspectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until they were finally abolished in 1940.⁴⁷ Other pedagogic changes during Insulander's long service were the gradual replacements of monitorial teaching with classroom teaching and the implementation of the phonics method in reading.⁴⁸

Relations between teaching staff and inspectors at their best were characterised by networks of personal friendships and the intense exchange of ideas.⁴⁹ An article in the *Swedish Teacher's Journal* (*Svensk Läraretidning*), celebrating inspector Abraham Rundbäck's 30 years' service as a model of good inspection, mentioned that the schools under his supervision had developed very successfully. Rundbäck was considered not merely 'the inspector but rather as the friend and adviser, someone they could always turn to with full confidence'.⁵⁰ Relations were, however, not friction-free, as evidenced in articles issued in 1882 and later. While teachers often attributed school improvements to the institution of inspection, they also voiced concerns over the competence of some inspectors.⁵¹ A critical aspect raised by teachers was that clergymen and seminary teachers generally appointed as inspectors did not always possess sufficient pedagogical skills or familiarity with local school conditions. They argued that, to provide better guidance, more inspectors should be recruited among elementary school teachers. There were also varying opinions among inspectors on topics such as which textbooks to use, 'in that what one completely dislikes and rejects, another defends and recommends'.⁵² Another article hoped that inspectors would increasingly consult teachers, instead of merely turning to the chairman of the school board, which the author reported was often the case.⁵³ Obviously, teachers had their own ideas of how inspections should function and could be improved. This was demonstrated

⁴⁶Gralén, *Folkskoleinspektionen i Gävleborg län*, 85–6, 94.

⁴⁷Persson, 'Några anteckningar om den statliga regionala skolinspektionen', 13.

⁴⁸Gralén, *Folkskoleinspektionen i Gävleborg län*, 93.

⁴⁹*Svensk Läraretidning* no. 41 (1909): 854.

⁵⁰*Svensk Läraretidning* no. 25 (1891): 265–6.

⁵¹*Svensk Läraretidning* no. 6 (1882): 41.

⁵²*Svensk Läraretidning* no. 6 (1882): 42. See also *Svensk Läraretidning* no. 4 (1885): 27.

⁵³*Svensk Läraretidning* no. 23 (1886): 187.

by the formation of the Swedish General Elementary School Teachers' Association (*Sveriges Allmänna Folkskollärarförening*, SAF) in 1880, a national unifying body for teachers and a strong voice in the pedagogic debate.⁵⁴

Assessment of teachers' pedagogic skills and practices

An essential part of school inspection was to evaluate the level of teaching and the teachers' abilities. In practice, the inspectors contributed to the professionalisation of teachers in several specific ways. Most inspectors wished for a general reform in pedagogy to continue replacing the monitorial system of peer teaching and rote learning by heart with classroom teaching aimed to provide proper insights into the subject. This reform was formally introduced in an 1864 Royal Circular stating that children should be taught, as much as possible, directly by the teacher.⁵⁵ Although this reform was not formally initiated by the inspection authority, individual inspectors had repeatedly called for it earlier,⁵⁶ in the late nineteenth century, finally resulting in the almost total abolition of peer teaching by 1876 in favour of classroom teaching.⁵⁷ This change was more gradual in some rural areas, however, and peer teaching was still used in some minor schools as late as 1900, due mainly to local conditions. As Esbjörn Larsson has argued, its gradual abolition appears to have been confirmation of a widespread pedagogic view that only adults could teach children, leading to a change towards more advanced instruction based on understanding rather than memorisation.⁵⁸ General discontent with monitorial instruction and increasing numbers of teachers led to a rapid decline in the practice in many European countries during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁹ With the advent of national curriculum plans in 1878, Swedish inspectors also saw the improvements the new classroom teaching made in the parishes, particularly in schools where these plans had been more fully implemented.⁶⁰

School inspectors frequently used praise to demonstrate positive teaching results, beginning their reports with generally positive statements regarding the teachers' abilities.⁶¹ Some inspectors even awarded selected teachers with prizes for their pedagogic skills.⁶² General assessments and detailed statistics (where available) also helped inspectors monitor the development of teaching in their districts and to some extent evaluate their own work. During the school visits, the inspector monitored the teaching during the class and later interrogated the children himself. In another common practice, the inspector took over the teaching to demonstrate a method he thought should be used.

⁵⁴ Åke Isling, *Kampen för och mot en demokratisk skola: 1. Samhällsstruktur och skolorganisation* (Stockholm: Sober förlag, 1980), 140–3.

⁵⁵ Klas Aquilonius, *Svenska folkskolans historia 2: Det svenska folkundervisningsväsendet 1809–1860* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1942), 103.

⁵⁶ BFSR (1861–63), 5–6.

⁵⁷ BFSR (1864–66), 53; BFSR (1872–76), 29. See also Mellberg, *Pedagogen och det skrivna ordet*, 32.

⁵⁸ Esbjörn Larsson, 'Mass Teaching without the Masses: Challenges during the Rise of Mass Education in Sweden, Approx. 1810–1880', in *Organising Elementary School Teaching in the 19th Century*, ed. Marcelo Caruso (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), 169.

⁵⁹ James C. Albisetti, 'National Education Systems: Europe', in *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Education*, ed. John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 152.

⁶⁰ BFSR (1877–81), 7; BFSR (1887–92), 89.

⁶¹ See BFSR (1864–66), 20; BFSR (18697–1), 93; BFSR (1877–1881), 36; BFSR (1887–92), 67.

⁶² BFSR (1867–68), 25.

Table 2. Assessment of teachers' pedagogic skills in the district of Hagunda and other deaneries, 1881–1910

Year	Good	Average	Below average	Total
1881	83 (35%)	116 (49%)	36 (16%)	235 (100%)
1886	106 (40%)	131 (49%)	28 (11%)	265 (100%)
1892	117 (41%)	156 (54%)	14 (5%)	287 (100%)
1898	158 (50%)	147 (47%)	10 (3%)	315 (100%)
1904	183 (52%)	159 (46%)	8 (2%)	350 (100%)
1910	231 (60%)	137 (36%)	16 (4%)	384 (100%)

Source: BFSR in Hagunda and other deaneries (1881–1910).

Table 3. Assessment of teachers' upholding of order and discipline in the school in the district of Hagunda and other deaneries 1881–1910

Year	Good	Average	Below average	Total
1881	72 (31%)	149 (63%)	14 (6%)	235 (100%)
1910	175 (46%)	187 (49%)	22 (5%)	384 (100%)

Source: BSFR (1877–81), 46; BSFR (1905–10), 56.

Finally, he met with the school board and discussed what should be altered or improved in the teaching.⁶³ After teachers passed certain examinations, the inspector assessed their knowledge and competence, as Hermansson reported.⁶⁴ Because the visit was vitally important both for an individual teacher's career and for the local school, the atmosphere leading up to an inspection could be frenetic and stressful, as has been shown in the English case.⁶⁵ Table 2 draws on Hermansson's rating of teachers' skills in all school types in his district and their development over time.

Teachers' pedagogic skills were commonly categorised as 'good', 'average' and 'below average'. Although it is not immediately obvious in the reports, the assessments seem to have been based, at least in general, on the school inspectors' instructions issued by the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. At national meetings, inspectors discussed teachers and teaching as a collective aimed to guide their common practice.⁶⁶ As indicated in Table 3, the number of school teachers characterised as good during the period investigated rose from 35% in 1881 to 60% in 1910. Thus, according to Hermansson's assessments, teaching levels rose dramatically during the 30-year period under study. This development can be explained in part by regular inspections and monitoring of elementary school teachers. Improved teacher education combined with a more formal curriculum also likely played a role in this development and is therefore discussed below. The number of teachers graded as average also decreased from 49% in 1881 to 36% in 1910, and the number of teachers graded below average dropped from 16% in 1881 to a mere 4% in 1910. However, during 1881–1910, the proportion of elementary school teachers remained at about 50% of the total teaching staff, which implies that examined teachers with full seminar education also stayed at the same level rather than increasing.⁶⁷ Table 2, drawn from inspectors'

⁶³Ekholm and Lindvall, 'Skolinspektioner – i tid och otid', 44.

⁶⁴BFSR (1893–98), 38.

⁶⁵Russel Grigg, "'Wading through Children's Tears': The Emotional Experiences of Elementary School Inspections, 1839–1911", *History of Education* 49, no. 5 (2020): 607.

⁶⁶The instructions mentioned as a general rule for evaluations that teachers should manage their calling with zeal without being prevented by other occupations, lead an impeccable life and state the reason for any absence or time on leave.

⁶⁷BSFR (1877–81), 45; BSFR (1905–10), 55.

reports, shows that the perceived teaching level of elementary school teachers in one district in the Uppsala region increased during the period, indicating an ongoing professionalisation of the pedagogic role not only of elementary school teachers, but also of junior teachers. Because the exact nature of this improvement is obscure in the numbers, I now move on to study inspectors' general statements concerning good teaching practices.

The inspectors' assessments give us an indication of what was considered important in the teacher role. Apart from statistics, the reports contain detailed comments on teaching competence and examples of various shortcomings that should be remedied. A common remark was that teachers were lacking in teaching experience. This problem was not automatically related to the teacher's age or years of service but was usually explained by insufficient pedagogic skills, partly because so many teachers were largely self-educated in the early 1860s.⁶⁸ By 1866, however, elementary school teachers' methods of delivering classes had developed significantly in recent years. Inspector Johan Petter Westin argued that the teaching had been improved, he wrote, because 'the thoughtless learning by heart [had given] way more and more to teaching that concerned the development of children's internal capabilities and more vivid knowledge'.⁶⁹ The ability to read was no longer a mere mechanical skill, but was also related to language proficiency and training with shared expressions that allowed those who went to elementary school more easily to continue their own education.⁷⁰ As Margareta Mellberg argues, a more formalistic oral culture diminished with a growing writing culture more focused on understanding. A contributing factor in this change was the replacement of the spelling method by the phonics method, which also facilitated the use of readers. Above all, however, the teaching of Christianity was transformed from rote learning of the catechism to reading biblical stories, thus elevating the story-telling and explanatory functions of the teacher.⁷¹ Inspector Hermansson claimed in 1881 that monitorial teaching had been abolished in all schools of his district. Furthermore, the national curriculum of 1878 had helped by introducing more order and harmonising teaching among the different schools.⁷² An important part of inspectors' teacher assessments at this time was how well they had implemented the national curriculum. In their national meeting in Stockholm that year, the inspectors discussed various issues related to teaching, but focused especially on the national curriculum's implementation, any problems related to this plan in any of the subjects, whether any new teaching materials were necessary and how meetings with teachers had been organised.⁷³

Another pedagogic shift in the later years of the period investigated saw classroom teaching accepted as the norm and emphasised teachers freeing themselves from a rigid teacher-centred order. Now, the focus was more on the role of the classroom teacher and the adaptation of teaching to the child in line with the progressive pedagogic ideology of the period. Pedagogic reforms towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the

⁶⁸BFSR (1864–66) 147.

⁶⁹BFSR (1864–66) 53. Westin was inspector for the deaneries of Nördinghundra, Olands, Lyhundra, Sjuhundra, Erlinghundra, Semminghundra, Östra and Vstra Roslagen.

⁷⁰BFSR (1864–66) 53.

⁷¹Mellberg, *Pedagogen och det skrivna ordet*, 56–9.

⁷²BFSR (1877–81), 37. The importance of implementing the curriculum plan was also pointed out by Hermansson in later runs of inspection. See BFSR (1882–86), 39.

⁷³National Archives, Stockholm, Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Main Archive, F5B:1, Handlingar angående folkskoleinspektionen, 1861–1907, Protokoll vid folkskoleinspektörernas möten 1877, 1881, Frågor vid folkskoleinspektörernas möte i Stockholm den 17, 18 och 20 juni 1881.

twentieth centuries in many countries recommended placing children at the centre of education, rather than forcing them to adapt to the school's structure.⁷⁴ These ideas came to be advocated by central school authorities such as Fridtjuv Berg (Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs) and school inspectors from different parts of Sweden.⁷⁵ In 1910, Inspector Ernst Westberg pointed out two common mistakes in classroom teaching: (1) teachers allowed the most knowledgeable children to answer questions too often instead of distributing questions among the whole class, and (2) teachers spoke too much instead of allowing children to explain the content more coherently.⁷⁶ Inspector Westberg had earlier claimed that

a difficult but very important matter in all teaching is to practise children's ability to work independently. In this regard a rather big difference can be noted between different teachers. ... Teaching children to '*think long thoughts*', the most difficult art of teaching, is promoted if a distinction is made between the teacher's transmission of knowledge and the children's reproduction of the knowledge they have acquired.⁷⁷

This implied that deeper knowledge could be aided, for example, by visual teaching technologies, which were a breakthrough in the late nineteenth century. As previous research has shown, inspectors were very involved in distributing to schools visual aids such as biblical wall charts and encouraging their pedagogic use, indicating that teachers initially needed to master visual instruction.⁷⁸ In spite of such reforms, some claim that until the end of the nineteenth century a main purpose of Swedish elementary education was to indoctrinate children in Christianity.⁷⁹ Discipline and morality were important components of many European educational systems at this time. Russell Grigg argues that, in the British context, evaluations of teachers' knowledge, instructional skills and classroom discipline took place within the social and moral principles of a Christian education.⁸⁰ In Sweden, one result of values-based seminar teaching until the late nineteenth century was that forms of teaching and methodologies were often given more prominence than content.⁸¹ This was underscored by Inspector Insulander, who claimed that teachers 'too little were concerned with the moral side of their function and too much considered the school as merely an educational institution'.⁸² Hence, an important part of teachers' work assessments was how well teachers upheld discipline and order in the classroom. Inspector Hermansson's statistics show the percentage of teachers graded 'good' in this regard increased from 31% to 46% from 1881 to 1910, those graded 'average' dropped from 63% to 49%, and those graded 'below average' remained stable. Inspectors of the period would have considered the first two changes significant improvements.

⁷⁴Kent Häggglund, *Ester Boman, Tyringe helpension och teatern: Drama på en reformpedagogisk flickskola 1909–1936* (Stockholm: HLS förlag, 2001), 126.

⁷⁵Häggglund, *Ester Boman, Tyringe helpension och teatern*, 131.

⁷⁶BFSR (1905–1910), 150. Westberg was an inspector from the northern district of Hälsingland.

⁷⁷BFSR (1899–1904), 108.

⁷⁸Jakob Evertsson, 'Classroom Wall Charts and Biblical History: A Study of Educational Technology in Elementary Schools in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century Sweden', *Paedagogica Historica* 50, no. 5 (2014): 674–6.

⁷⁹Ödman, *Kontrasternas spel*, 502.

⁸⁰Grigg, 'Ofsted says we are Outstanding', 6.

⁸¹Isling, *Kampen för och mot en demokratisk skola*, 135.

⁸²BSFR (1877–81), 117.

In the liberal political philosophies of the nineteenth century, teachers were themselves considered moral pillars of the local community, responsible for guiding not only students' learning, but also their ethical development.⁸³ 'Immoral' teachers with various character faults were seen as harmful to students as they could neither act as role models nor improve students' moral character. Incompetence, laziness and lack of spirit might lead to disorder in the classroom; therefore, appropriate methods ought to be used to uphold order in the classroom.⁸⁴ Indeed, educators and pedagogues argued that education without moral training was fruitless as it could not form students' characters according to the duties and principles of Christianity. Women were seen as especially equipped for teaching morality as their idealised role included patience, tenderness, gentleness and caring.⁸⁵ Given the importance of moral education in Europe at the time, inspectors monitored teachers not only for their pedagogic abilities, but also for their general conduct, making examples of both those who misbehaved morally and those who failed to meet the standards of good teaching. Inspector Johan Albert Dahlström, for example, argued for the dismissal of a non-satisfactory teacher who

with each year and each term [is] becoming increasingly incompetent . . . [He] should, where he does not notice or acknowledge his weakness and low standards, be reminded by the school board, the sooner the better, to leave room for a more worthy and conscientious ability.⁸⁶

Female students, at least at the seminars, were considered morally better behaved, and very few received low grades in conduct. Male students, on the other hand, more often found themselves in trouble during their studies, usually for heavy drinking or fornication.⁸⁷ At the same time, female junior teachers could be fired without notice, while male elementary school teachers could not be deposed so easily, even after inspectors issued numerous warnings.⁸⁸ Not complying with behavioural norms (showing up drunk in public, for example) was seen as such a serious offence that offending teachers were excoriated in the teachers' journal.⁸⁹ This clearly underscores the importance of morality and the teacher's role as a model of behaviour for the children.

Other examples of poor teaching or unacceptable behaviour were being dull in the classroom and teaching by rote, especially among those who were lacking a seminar education or had personal problems such as disease or alcohol abuse or little aptitude for teaching. The late 1860s diary of a young elementary school teacher, Sven Kinberg, however, expresses his disappointment with the difficult situation (in what was described by Per-Johan Ödman as a rigid catechism school⁹⁰) in which, despite his seminary education and 'good' teaching ratings, he felt trapped with his pupils. Other possible reasons for poor teaching could include the pressure on elementary teachers to teach new

⁸³ Moore, 'The Professionalisation of Teaching', 346.

⁸⁴ Larsen, *The Making and Shaping of the Victorian Teacher*, 65–8.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90–5.

⁸⁶ BFSR (1867–68), 36. Dahlström was inspector of the districts of Gästrikland and Hälsingland östra kontrakt.

⁸⁷ C. O. Arcadius, 'De svenska folkskoleseminariernas uppkomst och utveckling', *Folkundervisningskommitténs betänkande I. Folkskoleseminarierna band 3: bilagor* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & söner, 1911), 152.

⁸⁸ *Tidning för lärarinnor* 24/3 1899, 93–4. An example of this is demonstrated by Inspector Hermansson, who in 1904 sharply warned three male elementary school teachers for immoral behaviour and only one of them resigned: BFSR (1899–1904), 45.

⁸⁹ Kerstin Skog-Östlin, 'Den goda läraren', in *Föreställningar om den goda läraren*, ed. Tomas Englund (Gothenburg: Daidalos, 2019), 69.

⁹⁰ Ödman, *Kontrasternas spel*, 522–3.

subjects such as history, which were both unfamiliar to them and opposed by the public, and the inability of more senior teachers to retire, which likely required some to work until they were too old to manage the job.⁹¹ As professional demands on teachers increased at the inspections, in part because of more detailed teachers' guidelines, the situation of those considered incapable of managing their duties for various reasons became problematic.⁹²

Seminar education and continued learning

Closely related to improving teaching were the elementary school teacher seminars on educational theory, where a pronounced 'seminar spirit' and teacher culture formed the students into teachers with a continuing task. According to Mats Sjöberg, a completed elementary school teacher degree was evidence of the student having passed the first test. The second test was obtaining a teacher's position in which to start teaching in real life. After that, the execution of their teaching duty would be a continuous examination.⁹³ Despite spending several years studying for this degree, however, elementary school teachers were often seen in learned circles as only half-educated.⁹⁴ Teachers were not considered to possess any exclusive knowledge and had no connection to scientific activity. It was not until 1910 that teachers obtained formal access to an academic knowledge base through the institution of the first professorship in pedagogics at Uppsala University.⁹⁵ Their ambitions and efforts were sometimes ridiculed in caricatures and ironic pieces in newspapers. Schoolteachers often found themselves caught between academics' contempt and peasants' stubborn thriftiness.⁹⁶ As has been shown in the Finnish case, teachers' formal education and the spreading of citizen patriotism drew criticism from local parish populations who accused them of walking on the leash of the authorities.⁹⁷ This type of critique might be seen as evidence of ridiculing a new and socially rising occupation.⁹⁸

Against this background, school inspectors contributed to raising teachers' professional self-esteem through encouraging further theoretical and practical education. Scott O. Moore, in a study of Austria, pointed out that an important part of inspectors' work was to make sure that teachers 'adhered to the prescribed curriculum and taught

⁹¹BFSR (1882–86), 19. For challenges in introducing history teaching, see Evertsson, 'History, Nation and School Inspections', 269–71.

⁹²For early examples, see Wilhelm Norlén, *Kristendomsundervisningen i folkskolan: metodiska anvisningar* (Stockholm: A.L. Normans förlagsexp., 1864); Karl Kastman, *Metodiska anvisningar för den första undervisningen i modersmålet* (Norrköping: M.W. Wallbergs förlag, 1867).

⁹³Mats Sjöberg, 'Den andra prövningen: kommunen, lokalsamhället och det goda folkskollärarskapet', in *Samhällsbyggare i närmiljön: kvinnliga och manliga folkskollärares insatser i det lokala samhällslivet 1860–1960*, ed. Ann-Kristin Högman, Lars Petterson and Sune Åkerman (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 2010), 132–3.

⁹⁴Sixten Marklund, 'Läraren i skolan: utbildning och yrkesambitioner', in *Ett folk börjar skolan: folkskolan 150 år 1842–1882*, ed. Gunnar Richardson (Stockholm: Fritzes, 1992), 148.

⁹⁵Ulf P. Lundgren, 'Noteringar kring grunderna för den framtida pedagogikhistorien', *Studies in Educational Policy and Educational Philosophy* 1 (2005): 10–11.

⁹⁶Torgny Nevéus, *I katedern på orgelstolen vid bikuporna: En folkskollärares verksamhet för hundra år sedan* (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 2009), 59.

⁹⁷Henrik Meinander, 'The Role of the Schoolteacher in the Making of a Civic Society: Two Cases from the Grand Duchy of Finland', in *Nordic Lights: Education for Nation and Civic Society in the Nordic Countries, 1850–2000*, ed. Sirkka Ahonen and Jukka Rantala (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2001), 96.

⁹⁸Sofia Persson, *Lärarkretsens uppkomst och förändring: en sociologisk studie av lärares villkor, organisering och yrkesprojekt inom den grundläggande utbildningen i Sverige ca 1800–2000*. (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, 2008) 210.

according to approved methodology'.⁹⁹ In many European countries, school administrators assumed that teachers performed their duties well, but at the same time sought to implement a teacher training system to produce good educators.¹⁰⁰ In Sweden, the first regulations of elementary school teacher education came in 1862 and 1865, stating that teachers 'with a Christian mind' should be provided with both 'theoretical insights and practical skills'. Above all, it was important that they mastered pedagogic methods and the content of the elementary school course.¹⁰¹ During the decades following 1870 the teacher education curriculum was consolidated by cautious reforms that preserved a basic set of values. As Agneta Linné argues, however, during the 1880s the 'mechanical moral curriculum code' based on catechism and a narrow range of secular knowledge was challenged by the recently developed sciences of biology and psychology, and the role of the individual child gained importance, while the previous uniform content transmitted by seminary teachers began to wane.¹⁰²

According to the school inspectors, teachers should now demonstrate their professionalism through interest in the task and attaining a proper education. The distance to the local community at this time should also be emphasised, as teachers were subordinate in the local distribution of power.¹⁰³ This is in line with Mediås' argument in the Norwegian case, where the inspector, representing the state, worked towards setting national school norms at the expense of local freedoms.¹⁰⁴ Seminar education was seen in this respect as a way to create a more professional teacher. Inspectors in Uppsala consequently worked actively towards increasing the number of seminar-educated teachers and improving the level of teaching, although these goals faced certain difficulties. A notable difference existed between older and younger teachers, with the latter often more acquainted with pedagogy and teaching methods than the former. Inspector Richard Norén maintained that

Natural as it is, there is a notable difference between the older and the younger, or between those who have undergone the seminars during their first stage and those who have been certified during the last decade. In particular, this difference is apparent in methodical practice, in which the more senior teachers are generally considerably behind the younger.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, Norén admitted that there were prominent exceptions and that several of the senior teachers made extensive efforts to keep up with the times, assimilating advice and recommendations.¹⁰⁶ Inspector Hans Norborg argued that most teachers were inspired in their calling and that, except for some older ones 'worn-out from age', it seemed most teachers took their calling seriously, especially those who had recently finished their seminar education.¹⁰⁷ The younger and seminar-educated teachers were

⁹⁹ Moore, 'The Professionalisation of Teaching', 336.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁰¹ Kerstin Skog-Östlin, *Pedagogisk kontroll och auktoritet. En studie av den statliga lärarutbildningens uppgifter enligt offentliga dokument kring folkskollärarutbildningen, läroverkslärarutbildningen och lärarhögskolan* (Stockholm: Gleerup, 1984), 22.

¹⁰² Agneta Linné, 'Morality, the Child, or Science? A Study of Tradition and Change in the Education of Elementary School Teachers in Sweden', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 31, no. 4 (1999): 436–9.

¹⁰³ Sjöberg, *Att säkra framtiden skördar*, 185.

¹⁰⁴ Mediås, *En 132-årig skolehistorie*, 133–4.

¹⁰⁵ BFSR (1872–76), 107. Norén was inspector for the northern district of Hälsingland.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁰⁷ BFSR (1869–71), 70. Norborg was inspector of deaneries in Stockholm County.

often presented as a positive example in contrast to older and non-certified teachers. Such a comparison might have been used to argue for the need for more certified teachers to replace older teachers who, apart from age and failing health, also had a lack of skill.¹⁰⁸ In the Hagunda district in 1881, however, only eight of the 118 elementary school teachers were over 55 years of age, while more than half were aged 25 to 40 years.¹⁰⁹ The image of the 'old teacher' that had emerged earlier in the nineteenth century, as Carin Bergström showed, was nevertheless used to push for pedagogical reforms, although the average age in the investigated region similarly was only 38 years.¹¹⁰

At the seminars, opportunities to learn about new teaching methods and more recent approaches were available during longer or shorter stays. Therefore, inspectors argued that teachers should first and most importantly be certified in a seminar, for which interest-free loans could be obtained. Inspector Gustaf Insulander urged the county council to work towards providing such loans to any student at any of the elementary school teacher seminars who would commit to serving a certain period of time at the schools in the county.¹¹¹ Although most of the three-year course seminars (in 1877 four years) were only open to men, seminars for female students were available in an increasing number of towns during the nineteenth century, improving women's chances of attending a seminar during this period. Hence, six elementary school teacher seminars were, according to the seminar statute of 1864, open to male students and two to female, the latter increasing to five in the 1870s.¹¹²

Geographical proximity to the teacher training college has been pointed out as another important factor in pursuing such studies. In England, this was particularly the case for working-class students who had domestic responsibilities and depended on family support.¹¹³ Poverty was also widely a problem among students at the Swedish seminars and even forced some to retire from their studies.¹¹⁴ In this context, other temporary pedagogic solutions were available. Inspector Fredrik Laurell pointed out the possibility for teachers to audit (observe) classes during the summer holidays to improve their skills. Beginning in 1883, such courses were offered over four weeks in the summer, and several teachers had attended them to improve their teaching practice and learn about newer pedagogic methods.¹¹⁵ Inspectors also invited teachers to regional teacher training meetings in which pedagogical aspects were discussed and practised, but such gatherings also served to organise teachers as a collective.¹¹⁶ As has been pointed out in the Russian context, auditing summer classes was a way for teachers to improve their pedagogic knowledge while retaining their teaching position. These courses were monitored by inspectors and contributed to the growth of a professional movement among teachers.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸Larsson and Westberg, 'Child Labour, Parental Neglect, School Boards, and Teacher Quality', 80–1.

¹⁰⁹BSFR (1877–81), 46.

¹¹⁰Carin Bergström, *Skolmostrar och läsmästare: lärare på landet före folkskolereformen 1842* (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2000), 54.

¹¹¹BSFR (1882–86), 70. See also BSFR (1887–92), 97.

¹¹²Anna Sörensen, *Det svenska folkundervisningsväsendet 1860–1900* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1942), 257.

¹¹³Roy Fisher, 'Gender, Class and Schoolteacher Education from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to 1970 from a Town in the North of England', *History of Education* 48, no. 6 (2019): 807.

¹¹⁴Sörensen, *Det svenska folkundervisningsväsendet*, 270–1.

¹¹⁵BSFR (1882–86), 20. Laurell was inspector of the district of Uppsala and deaneries surrounding the city.

¹¹⁶BSFR (1887–92), 97; BSFR (1893–98), 138. Åke Isling, 'Lärarna organiserar sig', in *Ett folk börjar skolan: folkskolan 150 år 1842–1992*, ed. Gunnar Richardson (Stockholm: allmänna förlaget, 1992), 163–4.

¹¹⁷Scott J. Seregny, 'Power and Discourse in Russian Elementary Education: The School Inspectorate 1869–1917', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 47, no. 2 (1999): 168.

Table 4. Number of students attending elementary school teacher seminars in Sweden

Year	Male	Female	Total
1870	586 (77.4%)	171 (22.6%)	757 (100%)
1875	605 (71.9%)	237 (28.1%)	842 (100%)
1880	991 (66.6%)	498 (33.4%)	1489 (100%)
1885	809 (60.5%)	528 (39.5%)	1337 (100%)
1890	463 (56.3%)	359 (43.7%)	822 (100%)
1895	662 (56.2%)	515 (43.8%)	1177 (100%)
1900	749 (58.3%)	537 (41.7%)	1286 (100%)
1905	818 (58.2%)	587 (41.8%)	1405 (100%)
1910	965 (60.1%)	640 (39.9%)	1605 (100%)

Source: Folkundervisningskommitténs betänkande I. Folkskoleseminarierna band 3: bilagor (Stockholm: P.A Norstedt & söner, 1911), 396–7.

As shown in Table 4, although the total number of students attending full-time elementary school teaching seminars in Sweden from 1870 to 1910 fluctuated, the total number more than doubled from 757 to 1605. One reason for the sudden increase in teaching students in 1880 was the opening of new seminars in Sweden in response to a shortage of teachers. The drop in students in 1890, on the other hand, was due to limits placed on the number of students when far fewer teaching vacancies were available during this decade. Along with these changes in teacher supply and demand, the long wave of people aged 15–30 years emigrating from Sweden in 1880–1893 also reduced the number of applicants to the seminars. What is clear is that female students increased substantially, from 171 (22.6%) to about 528 (40%) from 1870 to 1885 and then remained relatively stable until 1910. However, the proportion of women attending seminars peaked in 1895, and after this point decreased while more men were once again admitted to such education.¹¹⁸

Notably, prospective junior school teachers were increasingly trained at junior school-teacher seminars, even though that course was much more limited in content than the one for elementary school teachers. In the 1860s, few such seminars were available, and the training was often in the form of even shorter courses during the summer or as temporary classes within the elementary school teacher seminars. From the 1870s, however, junior training was extended, and the temporary courses were transformed into proper seminars run by the state, the county council or private actors. Seminars run by the state or county council rose from six in 1870 to 23 in 1910, and private seminars increased from five in 1870 to nine in 1910.¹¹⁹ An important reason for the establishment of more regulated junior teachers' seminars was that the state subsidised the salaries of junior school teachers, but only for those who had received at least seven months of education.¹²⁰ This made inspectors push for studies at these seminars in their reports. Inspector Hermansson announced in 1877 that training seminars for female junior school teachers had been extended to a full eight-month course. The number of students examined in this course was sufficient to fill all the vacancies in the junior and minor schools in the inspection area, hence demonstrating an increasing number of certified female teachers.¹²¹ The seminars were also open to male applicants but came to be dominated by women as early as the 1870s. However, in some regions in the north of Sweden, male junior

¹¹⁸Arcadius, 'De svenska folkskoleseminariernas uppkomst och utveckling', 132–6.

¹¹⁹Mellberg, *Pedagogen och det skrivna ordet*, 140–1.

¹²⁰Florin, *Kampen om katedern*, 123.

¹²¹BFSR (1877–81), 47.

teachers remained numerous throughout the nineteenth century. State finances underlay a substantial increase in junior schools as the workforce became more affordable, and therefore more attractive to the state and municipalities.¹²²

Inspectors argued that practical teaching skills were especially important, often even more so than intellectual ability, indicating the importance placed on pedagogy. Richard Norén maintained that pedagogical/practical aptitude, constant self-criticism and dutiful perseverance were more important in teaching than intellectual talent or extensive theoretical insights.¹²³ Another form of further education proposed was therefore the opportunity to audit (observe) the elementary school teacher seminar in Uppsala. The county council allowed a smaller grant for somewhat more experienced elementary school teachers to audit the training at the seminar.¹²⁴ If it was not possible to travel to the seminar, one might at least observe the teaching of nearby colleagues. Carl Oscar Roos could not stress enough

the benefit that teachers in a school district get from days assigned during the year when they could visit and listen to the teaching in fellow teachers' schools. This practice has been taken up in Gefle and in Thorsåker and has most certainly contributed much to the greater skill and uniformity by which the teaching in these elementary schools is carried out.¹²⁵

Participating in other teachers' teaching and in seminars, through either visiting colleagues or staying temporarily at a seminar, could provide teachers with new ideas concerning teaching and insights into theoretical and pedagogic perspectives. As Andy Hargreaves points out, in pre-professional times new teachers mastered teaching by apprenticing with someone more experienced and skilled in the craft.¹²⁶ Inspector Insulander also noted that smaller gatherings were even being more practically beneficial for schools than larger ones, as schools in different regions often had very different conditions.¹²⁷ In his discussion of Finnish school inspectors, Aaro Harju claims that the inspectors had good opportunities at teachers' meetings to transmit new pedagogic and didactic ideas, although they could not improve the standard of teaching in a revolutionary way.¹²⁸

Inspectors also emphasised the importance of teachers maintaining their theoretical knowledge while serving in the school, especially towards the end of the nineteenth century when more teachers were examined as both elementary school teachers and junior teachers. Differences on this existed between teachers, however. As Inspector Fredrik Lundgren pointed out, 'while some follow their time and study recently published literature, mainly the pedagogic, other [teachers'] bookshelves reveal great poverty'.¹²⁹ To encourage self-education, teachers at the seminar were given suggestions on literature suitable for future reading. Inspector Ernst Westberg thought it would be good if teaching students received a manual along with instructions on suitable books for self-study. It was common, he explained, that during the inspection visits teachers sought

¹²²Florin, *Kampen om katedern*, 40–2.

¹²³BFSR (1882–86), 83.

¹²⁴BFSR (1872–76), 40.

¹²⁵BFSR (1867–68), 56. Roos was inspector for the central district of Gästrikland.

¹²⁶Hargreaves, 'Four Ages of Professionalism and Professional Learning', 155.

¹²⁷BFSR (1887–92), s. 97.

¹²⁸Harju, *Maalaiskansakoulujen Tarkastustoimi Vuosina 1861–1921*, 519–20.

¹²⁹BFSR (1893–98), 57. Lundgren was inspector for the eastern district and the deaneries of Vestra Roslagen, Svartsjö and Östra Roslagen.

advice on purchasing such literature.¹³⁰ This idea was echoed by inspector Carl Edquist, who stated that teachers should continue to improve themselves in their profession throughout their lives:

To transmit good and interesting teaching necessarily requires that the teacher has so penetrated the subject that he [*sic*] can liberate himself not only from the textbook, but also from the constraints which insufficient knowledge always imposes, and thereby put his personality to the issues that are treated. But in this regard, not [even] the best seminar education would be enough. The teachers' 30-year service must be a 30-year study period.¹³¹

The inspectors clearly called for teachers to continue their education in pedagogy and teaching methods after completing the seminar. Teachers without such formal education were encouraged to participate in courses during the summer or at least visit other schools. The image presented by the inspectors was that of a schoolteacher whose education would never be finished. Instead, teachers were encouraged to learn continually and in a variety of ways, which contributed to raising teachers' levels of education and teaching practice.

Concluding remarks

This article has considered the professionalisation of Swedish elementary school teachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mainly through the lens of school inspectors' reports from the central Uppsala region. Starting with the idea that state inspection had a central role in educational reform, the theoretical term 'state-initiated professionalisation' was used to investigate teachers' early professional development and demonstrate how state school inspections contributed to teaching reforms. Empirical cases were selected to operationalise the theoretical perspective in two of the central areas of inspectors' reports: (1) evaluation of teachers' pedagogic skills and practices, and (2) teachers' educational levels and development. Despite some variations in the exercise of their duties and educational backgrounds, inspectors had a common understanding of their assignment based on initial instructions, recommendations from national inspectors' meetings and national curricula.

The study showed that school inspections had a definite impact in these areas, though the exact nature of this influence is difficult to define from the material. The evidence does show, however, that the state-initiated professionalisation of education began with inspections in 1861 and affected teachers' roles throughout the period studied. Inspectors worked to improve pedagogic practice, increase teacher employment and elevate the level of education in the Uppsala region. Inspection visits contributed to harmonising teaching through encouraging seminars for teachers, organising teachers' meetings, and implementing class teaching and curriculum plans. Inspectors also highlighted teachers' obligations as moral role models within the context of the state religion, Lutheran Christianity. Statistics from one district showed that inspectors perceived teachers' pedagogic skills and competence in maintaining classroom to have improved through inspections and education. Meanwhile, inspectors faced challenges of their own, such as

¹³⁰BFSR (1899–1904), 107.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 65.

working part-time, needing to travel through vast districts with limited resources and having limited influence on decisions such as school funding, which relied in Sweden on the support of local school boards.

Previous research on school inspection tended to restrict itself to analysing inspections' general impact on elementary education, but more comprehensive studies on specific contributors to teacher professionalisation have been scarce. In relation to previous findings in Europe, and particularly in Sweden, this study adds theoretical knowledge on the impact of state inspections on teacher development and provides new empirical evidence regarding how inspectors did, and could continue to, contribute to professionalising teaching. Further insights into this area could be generated by studying a wider range of empirical sources and applying other perspectives. It would be particularly interesting to investigate the effect of increasing feminisation of the teacher's role and strong local school organisation and funding in relation to various challenges school inspectors faced in implementing reforms at the local level. Such a study might give us more understanding of the difficulties of initiating reforms from above in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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