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Internal marketisation and teachers defending their educational setting – Accounting and mobilisation in Swedish upper secondary education

Ingrid Henning Loeb & Karin Lumsden Wass*

Abstract

The article shows how, today, internal marketisation processes are intrinsic to Swedish educational municipal managerialism, and how accounting practices are continual, frequent and dispersed and part of teachers’ professional work. A case study is presented as an outline of a teacher teams’ response to an accounting request and their mobilisation to defend their pedagogical activity for pupils ineligible for regular upper secondary education. The accounting response involves translating, collective editing and inscribing the pupils and the pedagogical activity. We show how teachers have become skilled practitioners of accounting practices. Our case provides an empirical example in line with research on performance management: there is no possibility for teachers not to involve themselves in the techniques in use and employing the right signifiers when defending their pedagogical activity. As accounting practices are dispersed and teachers have acquired accounting skills, the practice of accounting is continuously reinforced and strengthened.

Keywords: upper secondary education, internal marketisation, accounting, teacher professionalism, performance management, mobilisation, plot

Introduction

During the last two decades the Swedish public sector has gone through a number of reforms which organisation theorists and economists refer to as New Public Management (e.g. Hood, 1991; Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Diefenbach, 2009), in which market-like principles have been adapted. The changes in the Swedish field of education can be traced to the early 1990s (Govt. Bill, 1990/91:18) when detailed state regulation was brought to an end and the role of the state was transformed into providing objectives and frameworks for education. The responsibility for carrying out these aims was handed over to the people who worked in the municipalities, and the municipalities were assigned the responsibility for schools and the employment of teachers. This restructuring with deregulation, decentralisation and steering by goals has been conceptualised as “new governance” (Lindblad, Johannesson & Simola, 2002; Lundahl, 2002) and also includes privatisation. During this period, vouchers
were introduced to strengthen the choices of parents and students, and a system of tax-funded independent schools was introduced. After a slow start, the number of independent schools has grown immensely and, by the late 2000s, 48% of Swedish upper secondary schools were independent schools; an average of 22% of students is now in independent schools. In the larger cities, the figure is higher (Skolverket, 2010). This marketisation trend has – as shown by e.g. Erixon Arreman & Holm (2011) and Lundström & Holm (2011) – created municipal competitive school market ‘battles’, especially in upper secondary education.

As argued by Pollit (1995), Flynn (2000), Goldfinch and Wallis (2010) and many others, “New Public Management” (NPM) is not a converging globalised model or set of prescriptions. There are different pressures and priorities in different local circumstances. Regarding the Swedish field of compulsory and upper secondary education, NPM started out as decentralisation reforms with deregulation to the municipalities which at that time centred around management by objectives, responsible and professional teachers interpreting and concretising educational goals (cf. Carlgren and Nilsson McPhersson, 2002; Lundahl et al., 2010). In policy documents such as the school development agreement of 1995 between the Swedish Association of Municipal Co-operation and the teachers’ unions, collaborative work among teachers was emphasised, and from the mid-1990s teachers have increasingly become organised in teacher teams (cf. Carlgren & Klette, 2008). The development during the 2000s shows ‘a second wave’ of NPM, with increasing result measurements, evaluation, and control (e.g. Hudson, 2007; Houtsonen et al., 2010). A national example of this is the Swedish National Agency for Education which was reformed in 2003 and given a supervisory and regulatory role with responsibility for educational inspection, and the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of schools and student performance. In 2008, this was reinforced by the establishment of a new independent agency: the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, with the task of carrying out educational inspection through regular supervision and thematic quality evaluations.

In this article the scene and its context is a municipality and we will show how within this second wave of NPM in the Swedish educational system, accounting practices are intrinsic to Swedish educational municipal managerialism, and how such practices are dispersed to teacher teams. Teacher teams within the same municipal educational unit serving ‘the same’ students are thus drawn into internal marketisation processes in which they have to defend and ‘legitimise’ the continuous existence and ‘quality’ of their pedagogical activity. The study presented here is part of a larger study within a research project funded by the Swedish Research Council on the organising of educational settings for adolescents who attend a programme for youths ineligible for regular programmes in upper secondary school. Our research interest has been to study the organising and re-organising during a period of major national reform of the Swedish upper secondary school, beginning in the academic year of 2011 (Govt. Bill, 2009/10:165). The specific municipality where this field study was conducted has
some 1,200 ineligible students not enrolled in upper secondary programmes: i.e. 9 % of the total number of students in upper secondary education. These students attend educational settings provided by the municipal upper secondary school administration and budgeted by the municipal board of upper secondary education.

Our field studies presented here took place during the spring of 2009. Two circumstances are important regarding the space-time context (Hägerstand, 1970). The first is that the government had not yet decided on the structure of education for students ineligible for upper secondary education programmes. The initial idea of the Ministry of Education was that this was not going to be a part of upper secondary education, but transferred to compulsory school. This idea was also initially proposed by the Upper Secondary Education Reform Commission in a green paper (SOU, 2008:27). However, the consultation process provided evidence that this was complicated and the Ministry of Education extended its investigation on how to restructure studies for non-eligible students. During this specific period, i.e. spring 2009, the future for upper secondary education for ineligible students was shrouded in uncertainty.

The second circumstance is that, at that time, the municipal board of education had decided on the closure of several municipal school buildings. Over the years, student numbers attending upper secondary independent schools had increased, and in 2009 42% of the students in the municipality attended independent schools. Due to the reduction in the number of students in municipal upper secondary education, the closure of schools, moves of programmes and mergers of staff and students from different municipal upper secondary school units were planned by the municipal upper secondary education administration. At the time of the studies presented here, no decisions had been made, or at least the details had not yet been presented.

The plot of the story presented in this article could therefore be said to be about municipal managerialism and accounting practice as a means of organising. However, it is also a narrower story with dramatic features: about a teacher teams’ struggle and mobilisation for their students and the continuous existence of their pedagogical activity. It concerns a certain student group – students ineligible for regular national upper secondary school programmes and who are in need of special resources. These students and their educational activities often have a history of being neglected, having to put up with poor equipment and inadequate premises, e.g. located in the attic, in the basement or in a separate, remote school building. The story has a theme of how this student category needs to be ‘named and numbered’, in accordance with principles of accounting. It is also a story of new performances, changes in the roles of teachers and about the skills teachers have acquired in this – what we call – second wave of NPM in Swedish education. In Sweden, ideas of “professional teachers” and “extended professionalism” have been continuously reinforced in Swedish policy documents and by the teacher unions since the early 1990s. The meanings, dimensions and implications of these concepts have been analysed and problematised by a number of researchers (see e.g. Lundahl, 2005; Lundström, 2007; Sjöberg, 2010).
However, there is a lack of close-up studies showing how teachers and teacher teams respond to and act within the current forms of evaluation and control.

The research questions that guide us and that we will return to in the concluding parts of the article are: What are the features of accounting practices in Swedish upper secondary education? How do teachers mobilise – successfully – in situations of internal marketisation and accounting requests? How do accounting procedures affect the professional talks about students? What are the changed roles of teachers and which skills are they acquiring within the second wave of NPM?

The accounting and new performative roles of Swedish teachers

We focus on a specific task the teachers in our study were engaged in during an intense period – a task of producing “facts and figures” about the ongoing pedagogical activities of their specific educational setting, including statements about students’ performances and contextual factors framing the setting. We conceptualise these activities of producing facts and figures as a practice of accounting. By adopting this position we are guided by the approach of studying processes of “fact fabrication” as outlined, for example, by Frandsen and Mouritsen (2008), Frandsen (2010, 2009, 2004), Chua (1995), Hines (1988), Preston et al., (1992), and Hoskin (1996). In their studies, they explore how accounting is accomplished, what humans do when engaged in such practices, the role of accounting devices and how this also shapes and transforms the humans involved. Following this line of argument, accounting is understood as something more than a question of credits and debits. As argued by Ezzamel and Hoskin, accounting is always a form of valuing (2002).

A historical view of accounting, and methods for assessment and evaluation, has in a Swedish education context been illustrated by e.g. Hjörne (2004) and Lundahl (2006). Categorisations of the “normal” versus the “abnormal” child (Lundahl, 2006), or the “deficient child” (Hjörne, 2004) were, at an early stage, used in the school system in order to separate and classify students and their achievements. Thus, the categories had powerful consequences for the way in which children were given access to education. Categories and categorisations are in this context not neutral tools. On the contrary, as Mäkitalo argues, they have “material consequences for individuals as well as collectives and are intrinsically political through their constitutive and perspective-setting features” (2002:20). Although different kinds of sorting, comparing, making distinctions and classifications have been part of the educational system and pedagogic activities for a long time, our approach to this issue is within a second wave of New Public Management context. Thus, our main focus is not on the way students are being classified or categorised, but on current accounting practices and the way teachers are called upon and involve themselves in producing facts and figures about their educational setting, the students and the pedagogical activities. As argued by Frandsen and Mouritsen (2008), the practice of accounting is an im-
important part of “performance management”. Performance management, they argue, is “not concerned primarily with describing the world; it is more importantly concerned with intervening in the world and transforming it” (Frandsen and Mouritsen, 2008:155). Things that were previously separated can by way of accounting be put together, integrated and combined through writing, recording and counting. However, these operating activities of putting things together also enable and suggest “that ‘the underlying reality’ could be different” (ibid.). Hereby, there are openings and possibilities of other aspects of performance management. By other ways of accounting, other aspects of “the underlying reality” can be described and thus the future can be intervened and transformed. As argued by Boedker, “accounting is not merely designed to follow or implement predefined intents. It is also a catalyst of expansion, transformation, even surprise” (2010:595). As will be shown in this article, teacher teams which involve themselves in performance management and accounting practices do create possibilities to intervene in the future of their educational setting.

However, such practices not only involve acquiring new skills but also a change of professional identities. Speaking in the terms of Engeström (2001), this can be conceptualised as a transformational or expansive learning process. In her studies of nurses’ accounting practices, Frandsen (2010) shows how accounting “produces” a way of thinking and valuing that modifies professional identities. Being involved in accounting practices is thus a matter of internalising values and ways of thinking about certain activities. Ball (2003) analyses the consequences of performativity processes that teachers are involved in, and shows how this way of regulating work affects how professionals in education organise themselves and their work in order to respond to evaluations and targets, and how this creates a demand for “fabrications”. Fabrications are, in the words of Ball, “versions of an organization (or person) which does not exist – they are not ‘outside the truth’ but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts – they are produced purposefully in order ‘to be accountable’” (2003:224). And, as Ball also shows, this involves processes of using the right signifiers, and a change of professional roles and vocabulary.

To be relevant, up-to-date, one needs to talk about oneself and others, and think about actions and relationships in new ways. New roles and subjectivities are produced as teachers are re-worked as producers/providers, educational entrepreneurs and managers and are subject to regular appraisal and review and performance comparisons. We learn to talk about ourselves and the relationships, purposes and motivations in these new ways. The new vocabulary of performance renders old ways of thinking and relating dated or redundant or even obstructive. We must become adept at presenting and representing ourselves with this new vocabulary and its prescribed signifiers and the possibilities of being ‘otherwise’ to or within it are extremely limited (Ball, 2003:218).

The analytical focus of this article centres on the actions by a teacher team responding to an accounting request. The teachers had to find and fabricate “data” and “facts” about their educational setting and to present themselves and their setting in a
performative way. We will show and analyse how this accounting practice is carried out, which kinds of actions the teacher team take, and how they mobilise in “fact fabrication” that had an impact on how their pedagogical activity was stabilised. As we will return to in the latter part of the article, this positive outcome – the stabilisation that the teachers accomplish – depends on how they as professionals are adept at presenting and representing the needs of their activity with a certain vocabulary, using specific student categorisations.

Theoretical framework
We will depict how the teacher team put different elements together and how they thereby manage to intervene in and transform the educational conditions they are part of. We present this as a narrative. In the words of Czarniawska, “[a] narrative in its most basic form requires at least three elements: an original state of affairs, an action or an event, and the consequent state of affairs” (Czarniawska, 1998: 2). Our narrative of the accounting request, the mobilisation of the teacher team and the outcome is built on “critical incidents” (Flanagan, 1954) that are put forth and analysed as a plot. As argued by different narrative researchers (Czarniawska, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1995; Ricoer, 1985), a narrative needs a plot to bring about a meaningful whole. Inspired by the work of Bruno Latour (1998) we use two key concepts for our emplotment and analysis: the concepts of “programme” and “anti-programme”. These concepts are fruitful when analysing how connections are made and how humans succeed in mobilising and making themselves strong. The point that Latour makes (ibid.) is that this is a matter of creating alliances with other “actants” (humans or not-humans). In our case, the management of the school is an actant making an accounting request. We regard this accounting request as a programme: during a management meeting the actant has allied itself with another non-human actant, with negative figures in a budget. The human actant wants an explanation about why the allied non-human actant is in such a bad shape (with bleeding red numbers). The anti-programme is the response of the teacher team, i.e. their mobilisation. The anti-programme is carried out in the same way as the programme: by a human actant allying itself with non-human actants, consisting of figures and categorisations.

Three concepts that are part of this theory of how human actants mobilise, and how organising connections are made, are the concepts of translating, inscribing (packaging) and editing. The core idea of translation in this sense is that people are involved in translation processes not only of words (and ideas) into (other) words, but also of words into objects, images and actions (Czarniawska, 2008; Lindberg & Czarniawska, 2006). Yet the reverse also applies: objects, images and actions are constantly translated by people into words (ibid.)

When translations are being materialised into “numbers, lists and tables” they make, in the words of Latour, an “inscription” (Latour, 1987) or, in the words of Lindberg & Czarniawska, a “package” (2006). In our case students, subjects, staff,
teaching activities and so on are translated and collectively edited into numbers, lists and tables – and materialised into an inscription, a package. Such entities work as non-human actants, that human actants ally themselves with and that “do things” or “make things happen”.

The educational setting, research context and research method

We call the educational setting in focus here “The three-year alternative” which has 60 students in the age range 16–20, and 10 teachers (7.3 full-time, spring 2009). Upper secondary school studies in this municipality were at the time structured in two different tracks, one with a vocational profile and the other being a so-called Preparatory Centre: two separate economic and organisational units located in different parts of the city. The three-year alternative was part of the Preparatory Centre unit, with some 800 students in all, and with a basic organisation for some 300 students, and a handful of smaller profiled settings serving students with more specific needs. The three-year alternative was one of these, but there were also other settings in the municipality, recruiting the same (or almost the same) category of students. It was not located in the main building of the Preparatory Centre, but in an annex in one of the city centre upper secondary schools, and has been in this location for seven years. This is the fifth location it has been in.

The three-year alternative has a history of 15 years – and has had very much the same concept from the beginning and during several municipal reorganisations. All of the teachers have worked there for several years, and three of them from the start. In a text for a health project, the teacher team describes the setting in the following way:

The three year alternative is an individual programme where one studies core subjects and programme-specific subjects from the business and administration programme and/or the arts programme. Our upper secondary school education is directed towards students with different forms of learning disabilities, intellectual restrictions and neurophysiatric functions.

The student is given adequate time for learning without stress, in a calm and secure environment. The studies are pursued in smaller groups (max 15 students) and at a slow pace. We have subject teachers, teachers with a diploma in special needs education and home classrooms. The studies of core subjects make it possible for the student to make up for and complete studies in Maths, Swedish and English of the compulsory school. The student also has the possibility to take the so-called A-courses of the core subjects of upper secondary school.

Structured lessons are combined with field visits, group work and thematic studies. Excursions, camps and culture days are also part of the school year. In the third and final years of the programme, education and career counselling is increased. We also provide the possibility of weeks of work placement.

Our aim is that there shall be a plan for the time after The three-year alternative. We have the possibilities of arranging contact with the employment office, with folk high schools and other forms of adult education in order to continue studying.
During a short period (March 09 – October 09), the teacher team became engaged in three different accounting procedures, and was asked to account for issues such as the number of students, their needs and their diagnostic disorders, the subjects they provide, the outcomes of students, predicted outcomes in subjects, the amount of teaching hours of the teachers, and their pedagogical profile. These three accounting procedures were independently initiated by three different but nevertheless proximate levels or departments in the municipality: from the political level and the Board of Education, from the administration level and its planning department, and from the school unit level and the head principal. We regard these separate, yet inter-related levels that initiated the accounting procedures as “centres of calculation” (Latour, 1987; Miller & Rose, 2008).

The plot and analysis in this article focuses on the accounting procedure initiated by the head principal. The time for a response lasted for a month (mid-March – mid-April 2009), a period when we spent much time in the setting – observing in the classrooms and corridors, eating with students in the canteen, visiting students doing workplace training, collecting documents, shadowing and interviewing teachers. We were also present at the teacher team meetings. Responding to the accounting request was regarded as important by the teachers, but was subordinated to “ordinary” work. The working hours were mainly taken up with teaching, preparing lessons, and handling daily matters concerning students. Spending time in the staff room enabled us to see how questions concerning students frequently came into focus, questions that had to be dealt with immediately.

One of the busiest tasks during this period was the admission process of students beginning the following autumn. This proved to be quite an elaborate routine that has been developed over the years, including information meetings for students, parents and study counsellors from compulsory school, and follow-up visits of students interested in attending. The activity of producing the accounting response was not the main question during these weeks. However, although it was not the main task for the teachers they put time and effort into working out how they should respond to the request from the “centre of calculation”. So, on one hand, this meant that the amount of time the teacher team spent on this task was considerable. But, on the other, they did not allow the task to “colonise” (Hargreaves, 1994) their ongoing main activity – organising teaching and learning and taking care of the students. And although they were initially frustrated by the request, there was no questioning of the need to produce a response and send a package off. We sensed what could perhaps best be described as a tension that was balanced, and we will return to this in the concluding parts of this article.

The results and analysis in this article are based on this accounting response and the actions the teacher team took in this process. We have structured a plot consisting of eight chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter is emploted by means of an incident or a course of events which we consider as critical in the producing of the accounting response. Embedded in the narrative description of the incidents and events in each chapter is a narrative analysis with theoretical concepts.
A plot of teacher mobilisation – the making of an anti-programme

1. The beginning: A budget with minus posts and a vague accounting request

One of the union representatives drops by the educational setting one afternoon in March. She has been at the monthly meeting with the head principal and the union representatives. The budgets of the educational settings at the Preparatory Centre were discussed and compared. The three-year alternative has minus posts, and they have to specify what they are involved in. “The principal wants to know more about the different posts … what the costs are … where cuts could be made … what courses are currently running … what kind of students participate in the courses … how many take what courses … the compulsory school level and upper secondary school level … This needs to be specified”. A teacher comments to the researcher: “We thought that we already had done that, and information about courses and levels is shown in our detailed study plan, but we need to show it again”.

Narrative analysis:

This is the beginning of the plot. The “centre of calculation” consists of several human actants: management (the head principal and the economists) and professionalised-based actants (teacher union representatives). At this specific meeting the budget becomes an important actant as some figures are negative. This stipulates action, and the figures of the three-year alternative are minus compared to others. The discussion of the minus posts ends in a request for accounting. This accounting request we regard as a programme: the human actants have formulated a demand where they have made connections to a non-human actant (the budget) and have allied themselves with this actant.

The union leader – the professionalised actant – is the one who brings the message to the teacher team and who urges them to specify and give an account. This shows that the situation is not solely one with an imposition – on the contrary, there are openings and possibilities for the teacher team to act. The vagueness of the request creates possibilities: something is to be accounted for in a detailed way, but what and how is not clarified. In other words, how to respond to the programme is now in the hands of the teacher team.

2. Translating and the start of mobilisation

Some days later, the weekly teacher team meeting takes place and the vice principal is there too. He attends these meetings on a regular basis and his leadership is talked about as dialogical and invitational. Today, however, there is tension in the air. The sheet with the posts with minus numbers for the activity is on the table and is discussed and questioned by the teachers. “How can this post be minus? We had a stop
on purchases all autumn.” ... “And how can it be minus here: We already cut down on X (staff)”. The discussion of the posts goes on, and arguments on how to count for the student voucher are put forward. The teacher team refer to a decision made by the municipal board of education some years ago about a student voucher that was higher for their students than for students in regular programmes and programmes for ineligible students. In the end, the teacher team not only decide to respond to the account, but also to formulate a text which they call their “assignment”.

**Narrative analysis:**

A new actant (the vice principal) appears in the plot. In this situation he is part of “management” and is expected to account for figures as he takes part of the translation process of the minus posts. The translation process is about unpacking the package, the inscription from the centre of calculation. The accuracy and truth of what this inscription represents is contrasted with other ways of naming and numbering the educational setting: categorisations of students, numbers of students, staff, teaching hours, costs of purchasing textbooks.

The ambiguity of the minus posts and the old decision from the municipal board trigger the teacher team to collective action with the intention of keeping their educational setting and its resources stable. They will mobilise by producing an account and formulating their assignment. We regard this mobilising response to the programme as the anti-programme.

**3. Collective actions and finding non-human actants to ally with**

The next day: Two teachers start preparing the text that they shall write on their assignment. The two teachers also search for and find a report, a task that was assigned to them by the head principal two years ago in which the students, the various student categories with their problems and diagnoses were to be presented. They tell the researcher how they worked on the task days before the summer break, and that they never got feedback on the report. The teachers study the document and say that the picture is the same. Although they do not have the same individuals any longer, it still accounts for same status of the setting and its students. They mean that, since they worked hard on the task and never received any feedback regarding their report, they can supply the same document again.

**Narrative analysis:**

The collective actions begin by connecting to an already existing document that explains the identity and status of the educational setting. We regard this as a non-human actant that the human actants ally themselves with. The document includes the categorisations and principles of sorting that are in use in the administrative vocabulary, and also asked for by the centre of calculation. This is a document in which students have been translated and labelled as numbers, numbers represent-
ing different kinds of diagnoses or indicating certain kinds of disabilities. Although somewhat dated, this document is a strong non-human actant as it speaks the same language as the actants in the programme.

4. The making of templates and beginning of a reversed translation process

The same day: Another teacher sits by the computer, prepares a Word table and starts working on templates for accounting. He ponders on issues such as: What shall the template include? Who studies which courses? Or the results of each course? Or a combination? What shall the template look like? He designs a template, prints it out, looks at it, shakes his head, makes a new one, compares to the first, and creates different versions. He has agreed to make some examples they can discuss in the teacher team.

Narrative analysis:
The process of working out the form and content of the template of accounting has started. A reversed process of translation begins. This time, the compilation of numbers is in the hands of the teachers as they translate their students, the courses etc. But what kind of numbers the table should consist of is still not established.

5. Collective editing and collective decisions on the template of accounting

The following week: The text of the assignment and different templates are discussed and revised several times in the staff room and during informal coffee breaks. At the weekly teacher team meeting they decide on the content and form of the template of accounting: The decision is that the template is to specify how many students are attending what courses, and not, for example, stating the grades of the students. They argue that management can easily obtain information about grades in the municipal grade database.

Narrative analysis:
This is a week of collective editing and collective decisions on the template of accounting. These editing processes include both informal discussions and formal decisions. The decision is to produce tables showing how many students are attending what courses. The decision to not provide the grades and outcomes of the students shows that the actant (i.e. the teacher team), although willing to ally itself with the techniques and practices of accounting, mobilises by valuing and producing facts and figures that are regarded as important by the actant.
6. **Inscribing**
The following week: The head teachers for each group fill in the template.

*Narrative analysis:*
A collective standard procedure has been agreed upon. The translation of students and courses into numbers is now a matter of the head teachers inscribing numbers in the right table and column.

7. **Trying to build strong alliances**
The same week: At the weekly teacher team meeting, the teachers and the vice principal continue their discussion about the minus posts that were presented two weeks previously. The vice principal has received some additional information, that the teacher team asked about in their meeting two weeks before. The interpretation and discussion of the numbers continue and once again the teacher team provides arguments based on the old decision by the municipal board about their student voucher.

After the teacher team meeting, the teachers have a meeting with teacher union representatives. They remind them about the old decision by the municipal board, they present the text they have written on their assignment and discuss this. After this, the text of their assignment is further collectively revised.

*Narrative analysis:*
The continued translation process of the minus posts is an outcome of the meeting with the vice principal two weeks earlier. Although there are thorough discussions, no consensus is reached. The process of collective translation and editing now also includes the teacher union representatives. We regard the meeting with the union representatives as a connecting of these actants to the anti-programme, involving them and preparing them for the translation process that is expected to take place at the centre of calculation when the package will be unpacked. Here we see how the human actants of the anti-programme work on building alliances with human actants in the programme in order to make their anti-programme stronger.

8. **Sending the package off**
Friday the same week: The text of the assignment and the templates of accounting are sent to the union representative who came by less than a month before and told them about the need to account for their activity. Apart from these two documents, a copy of the report written two years ago is included. Tuesday the following week is the monthly meeting of the head principal and the representatives of the unions.

*Narrative analysis:*
This is the end of this plot of mobilisation in which the teacher team has: 1) formulated their assignment, 2) translated and collectively edited their students and their educa-
tional activity into numbers and tables; 3) allied themselves with a historical report that works as strong non-human actants; and 4) allied themselves with human actants such as the union representatives. The package is delivered on time, before the next meeting.

**Epilogue:**
The package was delivered but not unpacked: there was no discussion at the meeting concerning this issue. As one of the union leaders explained to us in an interview later, there were other issues on the agenda that prioritised themselves. However, the teacher team had no budget cuts during the rest of the term. During these months the other accounting procedures initiated by the political level (the Board of Education) and the administration level (the planning department) were also completed.

A year later: the three-year alternative had been merged into the unit of the city centre upper secondary school where it is located, and had been budgeted a higher student voucher relating to the old decision by the municipal board.

**Conclusion**
In this article about municipal organising within a context of what we call the second wave of NPM in Swedish education we have presented a story about an accounting request and a teacher teams’ mobilisation for their students and the continuous existence of their pedagogical activity. The research questions that have guided us are: What are the features of accounting practices in Swedish upper secondary education? How do teachers mobilise – successfully – in situations of internal marketisation and accounting requests? How do accounting procedures affect the professional talk about students? What are the changed roles of teachers and which skills are they acquiring within the second wave of NPM?

The features of accounting practices in Swedish upper secondary education we mean are continual, frequent and dispersed. We have shown how Swedish educational “centres of calculation” (Latour, 1987; Miller & Rose, 2008) enact accounting procedures continuously as a means of organising and planning for the future. The teacher team did not have to produce a new document of their students’ diagnoses and disorders, they had already produced such a report after a request by the headmaster two years previously. Accounting is continual and frequent: During our field visits the teacher team was exposed to no less than three accounting procedures within a period of six months, initiated by three inter-related centres of calculations. We have also shown how calculating practices are dispersed. This is in line with the critique that Czarniawska (2004) formulated against the ideas of a “centre” in a “centre of calculation”. She argues that the accounting of today has no “centre” – it is instead a dispersed practice, moving around in different settings. We have closely studied and analysed accounting and mobilising in one of the many educational settings for students who are not eligible for regular programmes, but all such settings in the municipality were involved in various accounting procedures during this period.
This brings us to our second research question, i.e. how teachers mobilise – successfully – in situations of internal marketisation and accounting requests. As we stated initially, we regard the accounting request and response as a matter of internal marketisation processes and performance management. We have shown how teachers and teacher teams within the same municipal educational unit serving ‘the same’ students continuously and frequently have to account for and ‘legitimise’ the existence and ‘quality’ of their pedagogical activity. The teachers have to involve themselves in fact fabrication and the techniques in use, and must mobilise if they want to defend their educational setting. As Ball points out, the possibilities of being otherwise are extremely limited (2003:218).

Just as there is no way of not involving oneself in the techniques in use, it is, as Ball also argues (op. cit.), difficult to reject the use of a prevailing vocabulary. This brings us to our third question, how accounting procedures affect the professional talk about students. The translation of students into certain categories with certain labels affect the way teachers, educational staff, local politicians and others talk about students, their achievements and shortcomings. As shown by e.g. Ezzamel and Hoskin (2002), Frandsen and Mouritsen (2008), Frandsen (2010) “naming and numbering”, or “writing, recording and counting”, is always a form of valuing and generate specific references that soon become taken for granted in daily work. In our case, ‘the package’ included different kinds of categorisations of diagnoses and disorders – categories already in use and thus established as ‘neutral’ ways of defining students. By translating the students into these already existing categories, these categories were reinforced as a favourable way of representing.

The document the teachers wrote which they call “the assignment” also includes what Ball would call “prescribed signifiers” (2003:218). By this they “make themselves different” and make their activity “stand out” from others. One can also say that they thereby “contribute to the competitiveness of the goods and services they produce” (op. cit.). However, as we just stated, mobilising and defending one’s students and one’s educational activity means involving oneself in the techniques in use. This also means that there are limited possibilities of presenting and representing in different ways than the already prescribed signifiers. This brings us to our fourth and concluding research question of the changed roles of teachers and the skills they are acquiring within the second wave of NPM.

Our study shows how the teachers carry out the collective editing and the inscribing in a professional way. We previously argued that the accounting response was a task that was handled, it was a tension that was balanced and did not colonise their regular daily activities (Hargreaves, op. cit.). However, engaging in accounting practices and learning to master such new skills is also a matter of transformation or, what Engström (2001), would call “expansive learning”. Professional teacher roles in Sweden today are expanded as teachers are engaged in accounting activities and develop accounting competencies. Teachers’ performance management is crucial in
order to successfully defend one’s students and one’s educational setting. Hereby one can also understand how the practice of accounting is continuously reinforced and strengthened in the Swedish field of education.

**Epilogue:**
We have presented a story with a positive outcome for the educational settings, the teachers and the students. However, within internal marketisation there are “winners and losers”. As we have demonstrated, accounting practices are continual, frequent and dispersed. This was one of several educational settings that we studied, and all were involved in accounting procedures. We could have told a different story about a professional teacher team involved in accounting procedures, defending their students and their educational setting, but where the outcome were cuts, and less resources to students with the same needs as the students in the three-year alternative. Teachers’ performance management and the involvement in accounting procedures are intrinsic to internal marketisation processes, but a positive outcome is not guaranteed.

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**Endnotes**

1 Henning Loeb, I. & Lumsden Wass, K: 2009-2012, SESAN: Successful Educational Settings as Action Nets.
2 The eligibility requirements for so-called national programmes are the grade Pass in three subjects: Swedish/Swedish as a second language, English, and Mathematics. The eligibility requirements are subject to change in the new upper secondary school. From 2011, pupils attending vocational programmes need the grade pass in at least eight subjects, including Swedish/Swedish as a second language, mathematics and English, and the grade pass in at least 12 subjects if attending a higher education preparatory programme.

**Appendix A:**

**Facts and information about the Individual Programme**

Since 1998, at least the grade Pass in (1) Swedish/Swedish as a second language, (2) English, and (3) Mathematics is required to be eligible for a national programme in upper secondary school. The Individual Programme is the option for pupils lacking these eligibility requirements.

The Education Act (Chapter 5, Section 4b) defines the Individual Programme as follows:

An individual programme shall primarily prepare the pupil for studies in a national programme or a specially designed programme.

An individual programme may

1. be specially directed at studies in a national programme or a specially designed programme (programme-directed individual programme),
2. make it possible for young persons through apprenticeships to combine employment aimed at vocational training with studies in certain subjects in Upper Secondary School, and
3. satisfy the special educational needs of the pupils.

An individual programme with the objective referred to in the first paragraph may be designed for a group of pupils. A programme-directed individual programme shall be designed for a group of pupils.

The education in an individual programme shall follow a plan, which shall be determined by the local education board. As regards individual programmes referred to in the second paragraph 2, the Government may order that the education in the school shall include at least certain of the subjects (1999:887).
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