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A Left/Right Convergence on the New Public Management? The Unintended Power of Diverse Ideas

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ABSTRACT: While it might appear self-evident that the trend toward the New Public Management (NPM) in the public administration systems of many Western countries is an outgrowth of neoliberalism, the case of Swedish education suggests that policies can have widely different and counterintuitive sources. Ideas about education from both sides of the political spectrum appear to have paved the way for NPM in the Swedish school system. This possibility casts the ideological basis for NPM reforms in a new light, at least in the context of the Swedish school system.

Keywords: Christopher Hood; deprofessionalization; education; neoliberalism; New Public Management

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Twenty-five years have elapsed since Christopher Hood (1991) first introduced the term “New Public Management” (NPM) in an influential article. This article makes a novel contribution to the discussion of the ideological roots of NPM, which have almost invariably been regarded as neoliberal. I propose that such a one-sided analysis neglects the left’s contributions to the introduction of NPM. I use a case study of the weakening of intrinsic motivation among teachers in Sweden to demonstrate that both the left and the right contributed to the conditions that led to the introduction of NPM. Sweden offers an interesting case study of this subject because NPM is one of the high scorers on NPM emphasis in the public sector (Hood 1995; Pierre 2009). The Swedish school system, in particular, is one of the areas in which NPM-inspired principles have been applied to the greatest extent (Jarl, Fredriksson, and Persson 2012).

After an introductory discussion of the concept of NPM, previous research, and methodology, section 1 introduces the current state of the teaching profession and the impact of NPM. Section 2 discusses the significance of intrinsic motivation among teachers in the past. Section 3 analyzes the ideas of the left that paved the way for NPM in the school system. Section 4 briefly discusses the ideas of the Swedish right to demonstrate their congruence with the left’s view. The last section summarizes the findings and presents the conclusions.

NPM was Hood’s umbrella term for the incorporation of norms and practices pertinent to the private sector by public agencies and service producers in the mid- to late 1970s. Although admittedly a “loose term” (Hood 1991, 3), Hood’s definition and operationalization of NPM have become a point of reference for international research on the

introduction of market principles in government agencies and public services, e.g., schools and hospitals, in many Western countries. Hood's seminal article establishing the term is the most widely cited article in the NPM literature (Boston 2010).

Hood (1991, 4–5; emphasis in original) suggested that NPM has seven elements:

1. *“Hands-on professional management”* in the public sector.
2. *Explicit standards and measures of performance.*
3. *Output controls*, i.e., resource allocation and rewards linked to measured performance.
4. *Disaggregation* of units in the public sector.
5. *Competition* in the public sector.
6. *Private-sector styles of management practice*, i.e., a move away from traditional “public service ethics.”
7. Greater *discipline* and *parsimony* in resource use.

NPM should be understood in its broadest sense. All seven elements do not have to be present, or fully implemented, for a case to be classified as an NPM-inspired reform (Hood 1995). Instead, NPM should be viewed as a phenomenon governed by Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance, in which entities are connected by a series of overlapping similarities and no one feature is necessarily common to all.

Although scholars have connected NPM with a variety of theories and concepts (Stark 2002), and some believe that NPM does not have one single intellectual underpinning (Boston 2010), the consensus seems to be that in political terms, NPM emerged from the

neoliberal ideology and laissez-faire economics that came to the fore in Britain, the United States, and many other countries in the 1970s and 1980s (Bevir 2010; Boston 2010; de Vries 2010; Greenaway 1995; Guerrero-Orozco 2014; Leicht, Walter, Sainsaulieu, and Davies 2009; Lorenz 2012; Marobela 2008; Ranson 2003; Rhodes 1996; Savoie 1994; Ventriss 2000). Some of the earliest scholarly articles (Aucoin 1990; Hood 1991) identified the school of public-choice economics (Niskanen 1971) as part of the core of NPM. Even in case studies of countries where left-wing or social-democratic governments have applied NPM reforms, scholars claim that neoliberal ideas have been highly significant causal forces (Dale 2001; Johnston 2000; Lewis 2004; Mascarenhas 1993; Robertson and Dale 2002). The perception is that neoliberal ideas have either strongly shaped the discussion of welfare policies through a coalition of external influencers, or have colonized the bureaucracy from within and made public-service managers sympathizers with an NPM agenda (Hood 1995).

I will suggest, however, that both left and neoliberal worldviews ushered in NPM. I concur with Hood (1991) that in the absence of traditional public-service ethics, there is a need for other management principles, such as NPM. Thus, when various right-wing and left-wing agents joined forces in the 1960s and 1970s (and thereafter) to question and criticize the public-service ethos of teachers, effectively dismantling this ethos, the way was cleared for NPM to enter the school system. As Steven Kelman (1987, 93–94) writes, “Norms are crucial. They can also be fragile. Cynical descriptive conclusions about behavior in government threaten to undermine the norm prescribing public spirit.”

By reviewing the debate on teaching and education during politically formative periods, this study also finds that both left- and right-wing ideas about these issues are congruent with Hood’s definition and operationalization of NPM.

The evidence in this study comes from many diverse sources, including authors and works that are known to have had a strong influence on public thought and opinion; political party documents; and material from public-sector trade unions. These sources can be grouped and understood as “thought collectives” (Fleck [1953] 1979), schematically called “Left” and “Right”, that share ideological beliefs and “thought styles.” As such, the Left in this article comprises both Swedish writers, administrators, and intellectuals and influential international thinkers within and outside the Social Democratic Party, which, during the twentieth century, governed Sweden almost continuously after 1932. The Right as a thought collective consists of writers, administrators, and intellectuals within and outside the largest center-right party, the Moderate Party. During the center-right coalition government of 1991–1994, the Moderate Party was in charge of education policy and enacted the free school reform, among other changes to the school system. Although a more comprehensive study would be needed to establish causality, this article considers some crucial relationships between ideas in the two thought collectives that influenced public policy. These relationships suggest that a causal connection between the ideas discussed and the rise of NPM is plausible.

Despite what one might suppose, the hypothesis presented here has not been previously examined. Other scholars—e.g., Michael Barzelay (2001) and Christoffer Green-Pedersen (2002)—have indeed said that the Social Democrats introduced NPM reforms into the Swedish welfare state in the mid-1980s, but they have also claimed that the party was forced to co-opt liberal market ideas for macroeconomic and strategic reasons. There is no suggestion in these works that left-wing ideas supported NPM reforms. Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert (2011) do not mention anything to this effect. Only John Clarke and Janet Newman (1997) and Hans Hasselbladh (2008) suggest, *en passant*, that public-

management reforms in Britain and Sweden, respectively, were preceded by critiques of public servants by the Left. Hence, this is the first article to identify the left-right ideological symbiosis that originally set the stage for NPM.

I. THE “KIDNAPPING” OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

In marked contrast to the past, only 5 percent of Swedish teachers think that their profession is considered prestigious, and barely half of them would choose the same occupation again (Swedish National Agency for Education 2014). Why has this fall in status occurred?

One significant underlying cause may be that teaching has become “proletarianized” (Bottery 1996), in the sense that it is micromanaged and routinized. Today there is little professional autonomy in teaching, in sharp contrast to the traditional understanding of the profession (Helldén 2002; Sehested 2002). Since the beginning of the 1990s, tight controls on teachers and monitoring through documentation in line with NPM have increased, mirroring similar developments in other public professions. The unions for teachers, police officers, and physicians claim that their professions have been “kidnapped” by NPM models and that trust in professional responsibility has been replaced by bureaucracy, comprehensive gauging of performance, and financial incentives (Jansson, Nitz, and Wedin 2013).

How Teaching Has Changed

In 1991, the Swedish school system was decentralized to the municipalities, which enjoy greater autonomy in Sweden than in many other countries. The national government now merely sets goals and objectives. The municipalities are free to decide how to achieve these

goals and objectives, which expose teachers to arbitrary decisions about the curriculum and the school organization that can weaken or limit their professional room to maneuver. In conjunction with this decentralization reform, the presence of managers in schools, i.e., principals, increased substantially, and they were increasingly recruited from sectors other than education (Lewin 2014). The school principal has since become a profession separate from teaching, which has changed the power relationship in the Swedish model of education, in which teachers used to be at the center of decision making (Jarl, Fredriksson, and Persson 2012).

Typical of the decline in teachers' autonomy is the fact that they are now obligated to remain on school premises even when they are not teaching. They are expected to spend much of their non-teaching time documenting what they do in the classroom and the intellectual trajectory of their individual pupils. This has reduced the share of work time at school spent on teaching to barely a third (Lewin 2014).

Teachers' pay used to be centrally determined based on experience and position, but another significant consequence of NPM in the school system is that pay has become individualized and based on "performance" (Lewin 2014). Thus, extrinsic rewards and "carrot and stick" management now characterize teaching.

Finally, under the banner of NPM ideas, the school system has been deregulated and opened to private competition. For-profit schools funded by vouchers were first allowed in 1992, and the market has since boomed. There is evidence of grade inflation (OECD 2015, 156) which suggests that there is competition for students based on generous grading rather than high-quality education. This diminishes the role of teachers to mere grade givers.

A recent interview study of teachers in Norway and Sweden found that Swedish teachers' professional identity puts comparatively less emphasis on professional autonomy, knowledge, and ethics (Helgoy and Homme 2007). Building on this and other findings, it seems that teaching in Sweden has over time become less of a vocation and more of a regular job, creating a need for NPM to replace the old management principles of ethics and trust, which demanded very little explicit top-down monitoring. A mark of this shift is that the two teachers' unions (writing together with the current minister of education) maintain that a high salary is what makes teachers effective (Fridolin, Jansson, and Sirén 2014), in stark contrast to the professional ethos that previously guided Swedish teachers (Sjöberg 2006a).

II. THE PROFESSIONAL ETHOS

The term “profession” is elusive (Abbott 1988), but in an early description of the characteristics of professions, Harold L. Wilensky (1964) maintained that the work of the professional is based on technical craftsman-like competencies, acquired through long training and then passed down; and on a set of professional norms. These norms encourage, for instance, physicians or teachers to perform high-quality work and to commit themselves to “a service ideal” rather than pursuing personal or commercial gain. Thus, the marks of a profession are both exclusive technical knowledge and “adherence to the service ideal and its supporting norms of professional conduct” (Wilensky 1964, 141). Other scholars, such as Ernest Greenwood (1957), have offered additional criteria, such as professional autonomy, sanction by society, and internal regulation and control of members. However, at least in the traditional theory of professions, all these criteria rest on professional norms, ethical codes, and an emphasis on disinterestedness and selflessness. Interestingly, in this respect, Staffan

Selander (1989) notes that an English thesaurus links “profession” with taking ecclesiastical vows.

Such an ethical framework creates “a sense of mission” (Wilson 2000) and encourages members of a profession to excel in their vocation. “Professional ethos” (Reeder 2006) and “public service ethos” (Macaulay and Lawton 2006) are umbrella terms that encompass these ethical values, standards, and intrinsic motivations. With a strong professional ethos, public servants can be trusted to perform to the best of their abilities without supervision or codified rules, in the traditional manner in which, police officers, physicians, scholars, and teachers have operated (Sehested 2002; Wilson 2000). In other words, the autonomy of professions stems from their professional ethos. Without such an ethos, less-autonomous management principles are called for, and extrinsic rewards become a more important incentive for job performance.

Swedish Teachers

In a study of obituaries and birthday eulogies of male teachers published in teachers’ journals in 1930 and 1956, Mats Sjöberg (2006a) analyzed the identity and self-image of the Swedish teaching community at the time. Vocation stood out as an important motivating factor and was perceived as something separate and different from paid work: a representative of the teaching profession “regarded his task ‘*as much as a vocation as an occupation*’” (Sjöberg 2006a, 170, emphasis original). Duty, fervor, and self-sacrifice were virtues that schoolteachers emphasized among themselves. According to Sjöberg (2006a, 172–173), teachers saw themselves as public servants committed to an ideal of service above self: “The task was larger and meant something more than the individual.” They even dressed the part,

as evident in the pictures of impeccably groomed teachers accompanying the obituaries and eulogies. Schoolteachers were expected to display good character, honor, and integrity toward others and civic engagement in churches, local cultural societies, etc. Their goal was to teach their pupils to become similarly competent individuals and to impart knowledge to new generations. Sjöberg (2006a) notes that most teachers believed that they embodied something important, and that obituaries often painted pictures of passed-away teachers as fallen warriors.

That the teacher-training program instilled this kind of ethos in teacher candidates is evident from a study of Sweden's teacher-training system since the beginning of the 1900s (Sjöberg 2006b). The state went to enormous lengths to ensure that teachers were qualified for their task. The demands on intellectual agility and even physical fitness were high. Because teachers were regarded as the new priesthood in the secular society, with great normative importance in Swedish culture, only the best could be admitted. The same was true in neighboring Finland at the time (and until the late twentieth century), where schoolteachers were regarded as "the vanguard of the nation" (Heller Sahlgren 2015, 23). According to Sjöberg (2006b), candidates were trained in the vocation and "behavioral ethos" of teaching; thus, when they finished their training, they all shared a common spirit of serving their society.

After 1968, however, the state abandoned its search for the best teachers. Instead, the weakest candidates were eliminated on the basis of their grades and nothing else. Thus, Sjöberg's studies suggest that a strong professional ethos among Swedish teachers was sanctioned and encouraged by the state until it was abandoned. How and why this abandonment occurred will be discussed in the remainder of this study.

III. THE IDEAS OF THE LEFT

The emergence of the 1968 movement in Sweden had a significant transformative impact on social, cultural, and political life and decisively changed Swedish education policy and teachers' working conditions (Helldén 2002; Lindelöf 2015). According to one observer (Helldén 2002, 29), “a sophisticated contempt for ‘facts’” and knowledge was symptomatic of the dominant views of the period after 1968. Another important characteristic of that time was the wide-ranging spread of “critical, Marxist-influenced political thinking” that worked toward abolishing differences between social classes and groups (Östberg 2002, 62).

Marxism and the new contempt for traditional knowledge morphed into a theory holding that “true knowledge” is to be found only at the bottom of society—among “the exploited,” such as children with bad grades, prostitutes, and criminals (Helldén 1982, 52; Lukács 1971).

From the humanistic psychology movement, the left-wing wave also adopted a romantic streak that favored the liberation of the “authentic individual” from all forms of oppression, both inner and outer, into a life of ecstasy and self-actualization (Sjöberg 2007). In this context, it was not surprising that intellectuals soon targeted teaching and education for leftward political change. “School, like the inheritance of culture generally, was now perceived merely as a ‘bourgeois’ bastion, which ought to be destroyed” (Helldén 2002, 26).

To criticize the institution of school was, by extension, a way for left-wing thinkers to criticize contemporary Western society and its values (Vinterhed 1979). Many from the 1968 generation also went into teaching with the intent of changing social relations (Broady 1981). A group of socialist “school workers” proposed (Socialistiska skolarbetare 1970, 113) that it was considered possible to use education to “create, or at least work for a new society.” A

telling summary of this these currents of thought can be found in Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner's book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (Postman and Weingartner 1969, xiv; published in Swedish in 1973; emphasis in original):

The institution we call “school” is what it is because we made it that way. If it is irrelevant, as Marshall McLuhan says; if it shields children from reality, as Norbert Wiener says, if it educates for obsolescence, as John Gardner says; if it does not develop intelligence, as Jerome Bruner says; if it is based on fear, as John Holt says; if it avoids the promotion of significant learning, as Carl Rogers says; if it induces alienation, as Paul Goodman says; if it punishes creativity and independence, as Edgar Friedenberg says; if, in short, it is not doing what needs to be done, it can be changed; it *must* be changed.

Postman and Weingartner's book became highly influential in Sweden—according to Arne Helldén (2002, 44), it was “almost a Bible” to the educational Left. The book is discussed in more detail here since it is emblematic of the Left's view on teaching and education, and demonstrates that the Left also promoted NPM-like ideas.

Postman and Weingartner argued that the traditional concept of teaching was no longer relevant in the modern age. Teachers “who think they are in the ‘transmission of our cultural heritage business’” (Postman and Weingartner 1969, 13) were hopelessly out of date. Instead of learning dead “knowledge” and being shaped by their teachers “to be docile

functionaries in some bureaucracy” (ibid., 67), students should be exposed to ideas relevant to the “nuclear-space-age” of the 1960s and 1970s, such as “psychology and psychedelics, anthropology and anthropomorphism, birth control and biochemistry” (ibid., 14). If students continued to be taught antiquated concepts and materials, they would invariably suffer from “future shock” after leaving school.

The authors contended that in consequence, the role of the teacher should no longer be to impart knowledge but to retreat into the background and allow students to develop their own techniques of learning. The word “education,” and the idea that it represents, should be abolished in schools and replaced with “the inquiry method” (Postman and Weingartner 1969, 34–35): “The inquiry teacher is interested in students’ developing their own criteria or standards for judging the quality, precision, and relevance of ideas. He permits such development to occur by minimizing his role as arbiter of what is acceptable and what is not.” In this new school, teachers, rather than students, are supervised and regulated. Postman and Weingartner (1969, 137–140) presented “a list of proposals that attempt to change radically the nature of the existing school environment,” many of which are consistent with the stick-and-carrot management of NPM and with market thinking. In particular, a proposal to base a teacher’s salary on the number of students he or she attracted was strongly market-oriented. “In this proposal, we are restoring the American philosophy: no clients, no money; lots of clients, lots of money” (ibid., 139).

Other suggestions by Postman and Weingartner leading to reduced autonomy included: “limit each teacher to three declarative sentences per class, and fifteen interrogatives”; “prohibit teachers from asking any questions they already know the answer to”; and “classify teachers according to their ability and make the lists public.” In an attempt

at derision, the authors proposed that teachers should be required to undergo psychotherapy and to “provide some sort of evidence that he or she has had a loving relationship with at least one other human being.” Graffiti in the school toilets should be “reproduced on large paper and be hung in the school halls” (ibid., 140). Postman and Weingartner also suggested that teachers should document their own psychological status, write down their reasons for giving students particular grades, and record everything that happens in the classroom. Teachers should even keep a record of each time they used certain words, such as *right* and *wrong*. These demands are congruent with the way teachers in today’s NPM-oriented schools are expected to document in detail what they do in the classroom.

The ultimate goal of Postman and Weingartner’s proposals was that teachers would begin questioning themselves. The effects of teachers engaging in self-examination had been observed first hand in the authors’ pedagogical seminars (Postman and Weingartner 1969, 206):

Such self-examination can be most unsettling, as you can well imagine. English teachers have discovered that they hate Shakespeare; history teachers, that everything they know about the War of the Roses is useless; science teachers, that they really wanted to be druggists. The process, once begun, leads in many unexpected directions but most often to the question “Why am I a teacher, anyway?”

The quoted paragraph sounded harsher in the Swedish edition of the book (Postman and Weingartner 1973), in which the word “druggists,” referring to pharmacology, was mistranslated as “junkies.”

Although Postman and Weingartner’s criticisms would inadvertently erode teachers’ public service ethos, their main intention was to reform traditional pedagogy. Two other books on teaching and education that garnered considerable attention in Sweden after 1968—*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by the socialist theorist Paulo Freire (1970; published in Swedish in 1972), and *Deschooling Society*, by the Austrian anarchist Ivan Illich (1971; published in Swedish in 1972)—were more clearly concerned with criticizing the teaching profession as such. Consistent with left-wing ideas that were popular at the time, both of these books described teachers as having a bad influence on students and being an extension of the social oppression wielded by the bourgeois class. They are discussed here as representative of the Left’s views about the motivations of teachers.

Freire (1970) developed “liberation pedagogy” as a means to mentally free impoverished, illiterate adults in Chile and Brazil. He criticized “the banking concept” of traditional education, which, according to Freire, stipulates that culturally alien “knowledge” from Western colonial powers should be “fed” to students in the same way that funds are deposited in an empty bank account. This antiquated concept of education is a tool for oppression in the hands of teachers who view their students not as contributors or participators in education, but as empty vessels to be filled. Inspired by Erich Fromm’s ideas about “necrophilous characters,” Freire also contended that the “banking” concept of education is supported by the disturbing psychology of teachers themselves (Freire 1970, 64): “The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also

necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power.”

Traditional teaching is, in Freire’s terms, “the exercise of domination” and hence must be replaced with a new model of education built on creativity, reflection, and dismantling the hierarchy between teachers and students. Students would thus be emancipated from teachers’ coercive power, and teachers would be forced to re-evaluate their previous assumptions and approaches (Freire 1970, 67): “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.”

Illich (1971) expressed even more radical views. He wanted to outright abandon the institution of school, in favor of what he called “learning webs” of individuals who would meet spontaneously and exchange information. According to Illich, school is not necessary, because people learn most of what they know outside of their formal education anyway. The function of school is merely to discriminate against individuals on the basis of age and to indoctrinate them toward economic growth, increasing consumption, and profit maximization. Illich (1971, 30) claimed that “schools create jobs for schoolteachers, no matter what their pupils learn from them.” The teacher’s principal role, he wrote, is that of a warden or a watchman. The teacher’s influence on his or her students is not only harmful to the individuals affected, making them feel worthless, but is also in conflict with the values of a liberal society (Illich 1971, 31):

The safeguards of individual freedom are all cancelled in the dealings of a teacher with his pupil. When the schoolteacher fuses in his person the functions of judge, ideologue, and doctor, the fundamental style of society is perverted by the very process which should prepare for life. A teacher who combines these three powers contributes to the warping of the child.

According to Donald Broady (1981), Freire was an important inspiration to many of those in the generation of 1968 who entered teaching. In particular, Freire's pedagogy was regarded as a way to help the "oppressed" children of the working class, who did not feel at home in school. Such thinking was in line with homegrown Marxist ideas about how schools should undermine Sweden's class society.

An example is the collective volume *School in Class Society* from 1969, which was widely read and discussed (Lindelöf 2015). The authors, a group of students and academics on the Left, claimed that schools and teachers reproduce the hegemonic social order and its bourgeois cultural norms, disadvantaging working-class children. According to one of the contributors to the volume, "teachers put their stamp on the school with bourgeois values, attitudes of contentment and middle-class language, all blurred into something called 'manners', which naturally favors pupils from their own social group" (Wernström 1969, 83). Some of the views expressed in this volume were not only derogatory to the teachers' professional ethos but also anticipated many of the principles and methods of NPM. For example, since teachers were regarded as indoctrinators and hence could not be trusted, the pupils were encouraged to monitor their teachers and were specifically advised to "keep close records of classroom activities" (Sondén 1969, 172). In a similar vein, the Norwegian

sociologist Nils Christie (1972) claimed that because schools play a vital role in the reproduction of class society, authority over them should be decentralized to students and parents, disrupting the old hierarchical and authoritarian model of education, in which teachers and administrators are at the top and pupils are at the bottom. Christie's book, *If School Did Not Exist*, was important in the discussion of school reforms in Sweden (Vinterhed 1979).

Discussions of education in Sweden after 1968 were heavily influenced not only by Freire's and Postman and Weingartner's proposals, but also by those of Illich (Vinterhed 1979). Public officials took a strong interest in these books and found them highly relevant to Sweden's education system. This is confirmed by a preface to the Swedish edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was written by Freire's translator, Sten Rodhe— university lecturer, an author of textbooks for upper secondary education, and an expert at the Swedish National Board of Education (which would be abolished in 1991). Rodhe wrote that both Freire and Illich are interesting and thought-provoking, and that “the Swedish education debate has reason to study them both, to be stimulated by both” (Freire 1972, 22), and that “the applicability of [Freire's] ideas should be considered everywhere, including Sweden” (ibid., 25). Rodhe was married to Birgit Rodhe, who was the minister of education in the center-right government of 1978–1979 and was, as such, responsible for abandoning a curriculum in which the Western cultural heritage was prominent (Helldén 2002).

The works and ideas of Postman, Weingartner, Freire, and Illich influenced public policy at the highest level (Ekerwald 2008; Hägg 2005; Lindelöf 2015). “The teachers' authority was questioned. Student councils were created. Silence during lessons was interpreted as the teacher oppressing the students” (Ekerwald 2008, 147). “In the schools,

advisers who in part resembled Mao's Red Guards arrived. They mocked more senior teachers' methods and demanded more chaos, play, clamor, jest" (Ekerwald 2008, 147). Looking back on the 1970s, Knut Lindelöf (2015, 52) writes: "New work models had been introduced on ideological grounds. . . . [School] should no longer only be concerned with teaching and conveying traditional knowledge. From now on nothing should be 'traditional.'"

The school-reform ideas of the Social Democrats were similar to those of the 1968 movement in general. The new curriculum enacted in 1969 stressed that traditional teacher-centered education and the imparting of knowledge was of lesser importance than stimulating the students' active role in the learning process and their emotional well-being (Swedish National Board of Education 1969). All terms associated with the teaching of traditional knowledge, such as "culture" and "education," were removed from the curriculum by the Department of Education (Hadenius 1990). From the perspective of the Social Democrats, the goal of school was not to teach basic subjects but to create harmonious students collaborating with each other. In a report to the party congress, a de facto governmental document, Alva Myrdal, one of the Social Democrats' leading thinkers on education, declared that "individual performance in school must be given less prominence, while greater weight is placed on the child's ability to work together with others. The training of the ability to collaborate is an important foundation for the development of equality in society" (Myrdal 1969, 61–62).

With this new direction for Sweden's schools, teachers were no longer necessary in their old function as persons knowledgeable in their subject matter. Indeed, Myrdal wrote, "The role of the teacher is undergoing a material change. . . . The teacher's primary task will

not be to act as an authority in his field, but to be an inspirer and coach to the students and gradually try to broaden their fields of interest” (Myrdal 1969, 69). The curriculum stipulated that the pupils themselves should take as much responsibility for their own learning as possible. According to Kerstin Vinterhed (1979), as pupils were to decide for themselves what they needed to learn, the aim during the 1970s was to create an exchangeable “comprehensive teacher,” who instead of being specialized in a particular subject could work in all classes and at all grade levels.

To the extent that teachers were still expected to play a role in school, it was a far cry from the old teacher ethos. The curriculum placed restrictions on how teachers could perform their responsibilities; these restrictions inhibited the professional autonomy that most teachers considered one of the crucial aspects of their job (Sveriges Lärarförbund 1971). Teachers were also directly instructed by Myrdal’s report (Myrdal 1969, 68, 69) to practice “equality ideology” and “democratic teaching methods” in the classroom and, in line with NPM principles, to carefully document the progress of individual students instead of giving grades. According to a survey about the curriculum conducted in 1970 by one of the teachers’ unions, Sveriges Lärarförbund (1971), the new demands on teachers, perhaps unsurprisingly, made many want to leave the profession.

However, the restriction of teacher autonomy is just one way in which the Social Democrats helped dismantle the professional ethos of teachers. In tandem with the trade-union movement, the party also challenged the ideas of vocation, personal responsibility, and self-sacrifice in public-sector professions such as nursing and teaching. A representative of the nurses’ union was quoted in a newspaper in the mid-1980s as saying, “For many, the job is still a vocation. We will banish that attitude” (Eiken and Hökmark 1986, 63). This

statement was emblematic of the dominant attitude of the unions and social democracy in general. According to the nurses' union, the traditional view that nurses work out of a sense of duty and calling was an excuse to underpay them (SHSTF 1986). For the unions, including one of the largest teachers' unions, work was a means to a material end and not a source of personal fulfillment or an outgrowth of the ability to help others (Grenholm 1987; Sveriges Lärarförbund 1981).

The imperative for public-sector employees to view their jobs as a vocation was also eroded by new legislation. In 1975, the Social Democrats freed state public servants—of which teachers then were one of the largest groups—of their personal responsibility for misconduct. According to the Social Democrats, public servants should have neither special responsibilities nor special status in labor legislation but should enjoy the same rights and privileges as regular employees in the labor market, such as the right to strike. The purpose was in all likelihood not to destroy intrinsic motivations among public servants, but to increase identification among electoral groups in the middle class with the Social Democrats' political agenda (Bergström 2004; Esping-Andersen 1989). However, this legislation was a significant move toward deprofessionalizing public servants, teachers among them, and ultimately weakening their public-service ethos.

Thus, the left-wing thought collective adopted many overlapping ideas concerning teaching and education that plausibly undermined intrinsic motivations among teachers. First, traditional teacher-centered education was deemed anachronistic and outdated. Second, teachers were considered to have their own political agenda and interests that must be policed and regulated. Third, schools' main objectives were held to be extra-educational, making

teachers with an educational vocation superfluous. Fourth, public-sector unions and the Social Democrats emphasized extrinsic values and rights at the expense of intrinsic values.

IV. THE IDEAS OF THE RIGHT

Free-market criticism of the public sector flared up in many Western countries during the 1970s and 1980s. In the United States and Britain, President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher waged a political campaign against “the greedy and parasitic public sector,” in Mrs. Thatcher’s words, and sowed distrust against public servants (Coyle 2011, 248). The free-market Right, here distinguished from the conservative Right (Scruton 1980), believed that the growth of the public sector crowded out civil society and the market—not only in Britain and the United States, but in Sweden (Burenstam Linder 1983) and other countries (Friedman and Friedman 1980).

The public-choice school of economics crystallized the Right’s view of the public sector. Public choice, founded by James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock in an attempt to create an economic political science, holds that politicians and public servants always act out of self-interest. According to Buchanan (1975; published in Swedish in 1988), public choice sets out to study “politics without romance” and rejects the notion that (so-called) public servants are guided by a public-service ethos. Buchanan explicitly wrote that public choice would, if successful, undermine public faith in the benevolence of government (Buchanan 1987). Tullock, too, claimed that the behavior of public servants is dominated by self-interest—for example, in *The Vote Motive*, which was translated and distributed by the influential Swedish free-market think tank Timbro in 1982. There Tullock (1976, 28) listed the materialist and self-regarding values that, in his view, motivate public officials. Tullock’s

reasoning perfectly mirrors the trade unions' view that vocation and professional ethos are a faulty or antiquated motivation for work, and that extrinsic rewards are far more important.

In line with their selfish interests, public servants, according to Tullock, act as budget maximizers. Budget maximizing is the public sector's equivalent to the profit maximizing of the private sector (Niskanen 1971). Because public-choice economics "subsumes all government activity under a calculus of individual greed" (Hodgson 2013, 218), all public bodies appear in its analysis as parasitic. Consistent with this reasoning, it is logical to impose NPM-like controls to monitor the activities of public servants. Among Tullock's own suggestions were the introduction of competition between public sector units and exposing the public sector to private competition (Tullock 1976). Paralleling the Left's ideas about counteracting the agendas of teachers, public servants, in the Right's view, needed to be supervised and disciplined.

Buchanan and Tullock's theory was specifically applied to teachers in Milton and Rose Friedman's seminal book, *Free to Choose* (Friedman and Friedman 1980; published in Swedish in 1980). It was the Moderate Party's main source of inspiration for the 1992 free school reform, according to Odd Eiken (2014; personal communication) and Anders Hultin (2014; personal communication), who were instrumental in the enactment of many school reforms in their capacities as state secretary and political advisor, respectively, in the Department of Education. The Friedmans took the public-choice view, arguing that teachers and bureaucrats had acted together to replace a well-functioning education model based on private initiative with a "socialist" public school system. For purely selfish reasons, teachers had acquired power over education while parents and students had lost theirs. The Friedmans wrote:

In schooling, the parent and child are the consumers, the teacher and school administrator the producers. Centralization in schooling has meant larger size units, a reduction in the ability of consumers to choose, and an increase in the power of producers. . . . Their interest may be served by greater centralization and bureaucratization even if the interests of the parents are not—indeed, one way in which those interests are served is precisely by reducing the power of parents.

(Friedman and Friedman 1980, 157)

To rectify this state of affairs and restore student and parental influence over school, the Friedmans proposed a voucher system in which funding would follow the individual student to the school of his or her (or his or her parents’) choosing. This, the Friedmans imagined, would create an education market in which schools compete for students and “only those schools that satisfy their customers will survive—just as only those restaurants and bars that satisfy their customers survive” (Friedman and Friedman 1980, 170). Indeed, this is what happened in Sweden. Although originally envisioned as a “symbolic” reform (Hultin 2014), vouchers and free schools created an education market worth billions in profits in which schools attempt to attract students with free driver’s licenses, personal computers, and promises of good grades.

The Friedmans also discussed the need for placing controls on teachers and diminishing their authority. Redefining the relationship between teacher and student as a relationship between producer and consumer would transfer power over education to the

pupils. This was congruent with the Left's ideas about letting children assume responsibility for their own learning, which is at odds with the professional ethos of teachers.

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Twenty-five years ago, Hood (1991) identified and named an institutional arrangement, NPM, in which market norms and practices were incorporated into the governance of public services in many Western countries. There is consensus among most scholars that NPM is now a dominant paradigm, but the political prehistory of NPM has been underexplored, as it has been too easy to assume that only neoliberal ideas inspired NPM. This assumption overlooks the possibility that both Left and Right thought collectives (Fleck [1935] 1979) contributed an ideological basis for the implementation of NPM.

This seems to have been the case in Sweden with regard to the public schools. Hands-on professional management and explicit standards and measures of performance, two core NPM principles, were consistent with both the Swedish Left's and the Right's desire to control teachers and reduce their professional autonomy. In the Left's view, traditional teachers were performing the wrong type of teaching and had personal political agendas that needed to be curbed. Thus, it was proposed that teachers should become subordinate to their students and be denied influence over educational decisions. The Right similarly asserted that teachers abuse their authority to the detriment of freedom of choice in education, and that public servants' self-centered interests must therefore be controlled. In addition, both the Left and the Right favored control through financial incentives—a third NPM principle. The Left suggested that a teacher's salary should be based on the number of students attracted to his or

her classes, while the Right proposed that a voucher system would force teachers to work in the interest of students and parents. Fourth and finally, both political camps denounced traditional public-service ethics and the teachers' professional ethos. The Left described teachers' motivation as malevolent and undermined the professional identity of teachers by eroding their traditional role as persons knowledgeable about their subject matter. The Right would later describe public servants as bureaucrats motivated by budget maximizing, power seeking, salary, and material working conditions.

In the Swedish case, I have found ideological support for the remaining three principles that Hood associates with NPM—decentralization, greater financial discipline and parsimony, and a shift to greater competition in the public sector—only on the right side of the political spectrum, namely, in the ambition to reduce the size and increase the efficiency of the public sector. The Left's ambition to delegate key decision authority to parents and students seemed to be motivated more by concern over the alleged misuse of teachers' authority than failing efficiency or performance. However, support for four of the core NPM principles among both the Left and the Right is striking. This finding opens up a new and improved understanding of the ideological basis for NPM reforms in Sweden, at least in the context of the school system. It remains to be seen if this analysis can be extended to other countries and cases of NPM reforms.

While the prevailing and intuitive view has been that only neoliberal ideas inspired NPM reforms, public policies can have widely different and counterintuitive sources. We should be wary of trusting what may appear as self-evident truths about the origins of political initiatives.

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