European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2025, pp. 141-164

Swedish adult education policy and the world of work: Two generations of human capital influence

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Abstract

Public policies in adult education have been shaped by two generations of human capital influence, each reflecting different assumptions about the relationship between education and the economy. While the first generation, emerging in the post-war decades, has received little scholarly critique, the second has faced extensive criticism for its neoliberal orientation. Tracing these lines of thought internationally, we emphasise the need for a broader historical-institutional perspective to understand what was at stake and why the world of work remains a central component of contemporary Adult Learning and Education (ALE) policy. Using historical institutionalism and the concept of pressure points, we analyse Swedish adult education policy from the late 1950s onward. We show how its adult education system, shaped by both economic and social demands, emerged and has remained largely intact despite grand societal changes and political shifts. At the same time, evolving policies have paved the way for private providers within welfare services, hybridising the Swedish welfare-state-model.

Keywords: policy analysis, human capital, adult education, Sweden, historical institutionalism

Introduction

The role of human capital theory in shaping adult education policy has been widely debated, yet its historical evolution is often overlooked. There are two distinct paradigms of human capital thinking, each one with far-reaching consequences for educational

ISSN 2000-7426

http://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.5869
www.rela.ep.liu.se

policies. The first dates to the late 1950s and runs until the early 1980s when it was gradually replaced by a paradigm that offers a fundamentally different perspective on the link between work and adult education. In contrast to the second generation, which has faced sustained scholarly criticism, the first generation of human capital theory is rarely commented on in adult education literature – a gap we return to below.

The criticism targeting the second generation of human capital theory broadly falls into two categories. First, there is strong resentment against what is seen as a colonisation of adult education and its humanistic and liberatory traditions by an 'economistic' agenda, promoted particularly by the OECD and the EU. Second, this objection is often tied to broader shifts in the political economy, where a neo-liberal value system associated with deregulation, marketisation of public services, reductions in government spending (Marginson, 1997), has been seen to justify policy changes, leading to an abrupt shift in the direction of adult learning systems.

While much of this criticism is valid, it fails to engage with the position of radical adult education scholars. These scholars proclaim that the conditions of work play a fundamental role in the liberatory project that aims to realise working-class peoples' aspiration for economic and social equality and, ultimately, a dignified life (see e.g., Holst, 2021). Further, the criticism directed to the 'economistic' political agenda does not distinguish between different generations of human capital reasoning in adult education throughout the 20th century, nor does it distinguish between geographical and institutional contexts.

To better assess the impact and reach of what is widely regarded as a 'planet-speak' discourse of lifelong learning (Fejes, 2006), a stronger focus needs to be granted to the national conditions within which public policies are introduced, converted and enacted. It is against this background that this article analyses Swedish policy on adult education and its relationship to the role of work during the two paradigms of human capital influence from the 1950s and onwards. Throughout our discussion we argue for the need to anchor the understanding of shifts in adult education policies in the two concepts, pressure points (Brown, 1999) and power mobilisation (Korpi, 1983), set in a historical institutional framework (Thelen, 2004; Desjardins & Kalenda, in press), where the Swedish case helps us understand the pivotal role of partisan politics, labour-market-driven policies and visions of industrial democracy promoting workers' engagement in decision making through a system of co-determination.

The article starts with a brief review of how the link between economic growth and investment in education was understood in the first and second generation of human capital influence. This is followed by an exploration of the criticism directed at the dominant policies on adult education policy during the second generation. Next, we outline the theoretical perspective that is informing our analysis of how Swedish policies on adult education have been linked to the world of work. Our purpose with this article is not to probe the theory of human capital as such. Rather, the article examines human capital as a fundamental dimension of how the dominant understandings of the links between adult education and the world of work has been influencing Swedish public policy. Additionally, we highlight how the political processes and institutional frameworks that emerged in the post-war political economy have remained characteristic of the Swedish Adult Learning System (ALS) while being updated, hybridised and revived over time.

The linking of economic growth and investment in education

In the 1950s economists working within recent developments in human capital theory pointed to a strong link between investments in education and economic growth for both individuals and countries, and argued for the necessity of investing in education and training to respond to technological advancements (Denison 1962; Schultz 1960, 1961). With its promises of achieving both efficiencies and equality through investment in education, human capital was central to the Keynesian political economic paradigm that dominated at the time. The OECD quickly became the prophet of this doctrine, which then served as the topic for the first ever OECD conference on education, Economic Growth and Investment in Education, held in 1961 (OECD, 1961a). At this conference, few perceived any conflicts between economic efficiency and social and economic equality and the broader role of education in a democratic society. As A. H. Halsey notes:

> The new alliance between education and economics holds out the promise of a richer life for millions who would otherwise exist far below their potential human stature. The challenge to governments and their economic and educational advisers to pursue this promise is a noble one. (OECD 1961b, p. 45)

It was not until well into the 1970s that the human capital argument began to be seriously questioned. The labour market had increasing difficulties in absorbing the great influx of graduates with secondary and tertiary education, and not much had been achieved in the struggles against economic, social and, more specifically, educational inequalities (Husén, 1979; Karabel & Halsey, 1977). While educational systems at a post compulsory level had been ‘massified’ in many Western countries, researchers observed how internal cleavages and differentiation mechanisms helped to preserve the very same social structures that the massive educational expansion was meant to combat (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979; Trow, 1973).

When the human capital argument returned to the forefront of policy on education it took on a new guise. Instead of addressing economy-wide growth patterns, as had been the case in the 1960s, second-generation human capital was grounded in a micro-economic outlook focused on the individual firm. Economists now argued that technological change functions as a mediating factor promoting public demand for education which should be viewed not only as an investment but also as a factor of production (Welch, 1970; Bartel and Lichtenberg, 1987). Public concern for equality of opportunity, however flawed and fractured it may have been, was soon replaced by calls for greater 'responsiveness' to labour market needs. Hence, the second generation of human capital theory shifted the policy discourse away from adult education as a public good and resulted in a more expansive understanding of educational activities including, initial education, vocational training, workplace learning, and skills development (Brown et al., 2020; OECD, 1989).

The criticism of the economisation of lifelong and adult education

It is notable that the first generation of the economistic argument on human capital does not seem to have been met by much objections from the educational research community, including those from adult education. On the contrary, the first wave of the human capital revolution was embraced and used to argue for establishing institutional opportunities for the adult education population that had not had the chance to pursue post-compulsory

education (Husén, 1979; Härnqvist, 1958, for the Swedish case). This changed profoundly in the 1990s and the criticism has continued unabatedly ever since.
A relatively early article by Bagnall (2000) reflects the common criticism within adult education circles. His concern was that the lifelong learning discourse became the product of economic determinism and that the progressive sentiments of lifelong learning has moved to the background. While Bagnall was observing the situation in Australia, some twenty years later Mandal (2019) made a strikingly similar statement about the situation in India. In the UK, Martin (2003) suggested that lifelong learning enabled the dismantling of welfare through the deconstruction of citizenship. As a result, he argued that adult education had lost its ability to contribute to a more equitable distribution of material and cultural resources among the countries citizens.

Regardless of time and place, the shift towards a neoliberal world view is commonly seen as the main villain in the economisation of adult education policies. However, Griffin (1999a, 1999b) reviewing the European Union's (EU) lifelong learning policies reaches a partly different conclusion. He shares the view that EU's policies have been reduced to employment policies and continuous workforce training where learning has been incorporated into economic and employment policies. Where Griffin stands out is in that he does not automatically equate this development with a neoliberal policy agenda. Instead, he suggests that the supranational organisations reflect what he labels a 'social democratic approach' to lifelong learning where education and training fulfils a welfare function and assumes a major role for the state. In contrast to such a broad social democratic framework, national policy in the UK at this stage appears to reflect more of a 'neo-liberal' approach and, according to Griffin, has become a smokescreen 'to disguise the systematic undoing of the welfare state and social democratic basis of education systems' (1999b, p. 432).

Although contemporary scholars of adult education may disagree on the nature and extent of the neoliberal revolution, there seems to be a dramaturgical meta-narrative unfolding here where the scholarly exercise often boils down to exposing or unveiling neoliberal policy discourse. In recent years, however, a more balanced view has begun to emerge and there has been a healthy debate about whether national and/or supranational policies have softened the hard neoliberalism of the 1980s and early 1990s (cf. Bromley et al., 2023; Elfert & Ydesen, 2023; Mahon, 2010). While few would argue that the political-economic pendulum has returned to the Keynesian or post-Keynesian era – when much of the adult learning infrastructure in the western world was established – there is growing recognition that institutional histories and national policy contexts deserve more analytical attention. This study seeks to support that shift in perspective by examining what in adult learning systems (ALS) in Sweden reflects broader global transformations in the political economy, and what is shaped by distinct national and institutional legacies. Before turning to the Swedish context, we first outline the theoretical framework guiding our analysis.

Theoretical perspective

This study is informed by three partly overlapping theoretical frameworks: Brown's concept of pressure points and trade-offs (Brown, 1999), Korpi's (1983, 1998) writings on power mobilisation and the historical institutional perspective as outlined by Thelen (2004). The basic idea behind Brown's model of skill formation policy is that it reflects both political struggles domestically and the positional competition between companies and among countries on a global scale. Furthermore, the handling of these pressure points tends to reflect dominant tenants of any given political economy, as well as the relative

strength of the various interest groups in any given time and place. To deepen the understanding of the effects of the shifting balance between interest groups in the formation of collective skilling regimes, we turn to classical power mobilisation theory (Korpi, 1983, 1998). Korpi departs from an assumption that in advanced capitalist societies a division exists between the exercise of economic power and the exercise of political power, that is, between markets and politics. In the economic sphere, the main power resource is control over capital assets and the principal beneficiary is 'the capitalist class'. This is not necessarily the case in the political sphere, where power can come from the strength of number of people mobilised through the democratic process (Korpi, 1983). This reliance on numbers and organisational strength favours large collectivises, traditionally that of organised labour. Power resources theory thus argues that labour has potential access to political resources 'which can allow it to implement social reform and alter distributional inequalities to a significant degree' (O'Connor & Olsen, 1998, p. 8). According to Korpi (1998), 'the extent of bias in functioning of the state can vary considerably as a reflection of the distribution of power resources in these societies and thus that politics can be expected to matter, e.g., for the distributive processes in society' (p. 54).

Framed within historical institutionalism, the power mobilisation and build-up of pressure points at a given moment are shaped by foundational conditions that have created specific political institutional arrangements. These arrangements, in turn, guide countries along particular developmental paths (Thelen, 2004). Historical institutional theory thus helps us understand path-dependent trajectories of policy formation while leaving the possibility open for critical junctures and shifts in power relations. Political actions concerning adult learning and education systems tend to take place under certain path-dependent consensus-like rule-conditions that limits the range of possible policy alternatives (Thelen, 2004). Thus, while institutions continue to evolve, they tend to do so in ways that are in line with the routinised path trajectory, something that will be illustrated in the forthcoming sections that address the adult education and learning policies in Sweden during the two generations of human capital influence. However, first we offer a brief description on the sources on which the analyses are based.

Methodological considerations

In order to capture societal pressure points, identify critical junctures and trace the emerging trade-off effects in Swedish public policy on adult learning during the two generations of human capital influence, we examined a range of sources such as Swedish Government Official Reports (*Statens offentliga utredningar*, SOU), responses to these reports, primarily from unions and employer organisations, publications issued by the latter, as well as official statistics from Statistics Sweden. To begin with, we compiled a range of Swedish Government Official Reports on adult education and labour market policy from the post-war period (for a full list, see Appendix). These state-commissioned inquiries were typically led by researchers and policy professionals and were always initiated and financed by the government (Johansson, 1992). The framing of priority issues and public problems in official government inquiries offers a useful indication of which societal pressure points have entered the realm of policy-making. Although the depth and ambition of these state inquiries have faded somewhat over time (Mattson, 2016), they still provide a unique entry point for longitudinal policy analysis, as it remains standard practice to launch government inquiries prior to the preparation of new legislation.

The tradition in Sweden is that organisations representing different societal organisations are invited to provide written response (a so called *remissvar*) to these Official Reports initiated by the Government. Typically, the minister responsible addresses the remissvar in the Government Bill, which provides a clear indication of whose ideas have influenced the proposed policies. In the work presented here we have been particularly interested in the reactions and interventions from the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (*Tjänstemännens centralorganisation*, *TCO*) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (*Landsorganisationen i Sverige*, LO) as well as those from the Swedish Employers' Confederation (*Svenska arbetsgivareföreningen*, SAF, later renamed *Svenskt Näringsliv*). The remissvar from 1997 and onwards are accessible online (ESV, n.d.), while the previous responses have been collected from the Swedish National Archives (*Riksarkivet*). In addition, a comprehensive longitudinal dataset on the public financing of adult education and enrolment was created using official statistics and old datasets from previous research. This dataset was used as supplementary material to validate interpretations of policy priorities and investments into various types of ALE over time (Nylander & Rubenson, forthcoming).

First generation of the human capital influence: Linking the world of work and adult education policy in Sweden

The human capital framework of the late 1950s and 1960s came to have a profound impact on Swedish policies on adult education, which has to be understood in the context of the reigning political institutional framework. In alignment with general OECD recommendations of the time, the Swedish government initiated a major expansion of secondary and higher education which also opened up new possibilities for the adult population to acquire formal education.

Institutional context

The Swedish political institutional framework during the era of the first generation of human capital influence was characterised by a tripartite policymaking regime governed by a flourishing state-capital-labour cooperation. Although the so called Saltsjöbaden Agreement (*Saltsjöbadsavtalet*) from 1933 between SAF and LO is often referred to as the beginning of the Swedish model, it has a longer history (Rothstein, 1992). Already at the beginning of the 20th century the state showed an openness to the emergent working class and its political ambition (Rothstein, 1992). This position was in line with the revisionists and reformists working-class movement in Western Europe that emerged in the late eighteen hundreds in opposition to revolutionary Marxism (Hansson, 2019). Inspired by these ideas the Swedish liberal-social democratic government set up a committee exploring industrial democracy as a compromise between capital and labour under the leadership of Ernst Wigforss in 1919. While Wigforss's ideas for the development of industrial democracy were not embraced at this turbulent point in time, they are reflected in Saltsjöbadsavtalet and the Swedish model as it evolved in the postwar period.

Faced with complex challenges and the need to reach decisions through compromise, politicians adopted a corporatist strategy that became a cornerstone of the Swedish model. In this model much of decision making over crucial policy areas like education and labour market policies were left to national boards where labour and employer associations were

represented. As Claus Offe (2018[1984]) notes, this model assumes a secure state not feeling threatened by the various associations or political opponents.

The cornerstone in the post-World War II Swedish model is the so-called Rehn-Meidner (hereafter R-M) doctrine, which was introduced at the 1951 Congress of the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO, 1951). By combining an active labour-market approach and solidarity-based wage policy with a restrictive macroeconomic policy, the R-M model aimed at full employment, price stability, growth, and equity (Erixon, 2010, Lundberg & Turvey, 1952). An active labour market policy was seen as a necessary condition for price stability and promoting structural change as a precondition for wage solidarity. A solidarity wage policy relies on coordinated wage bargaining and assumes that workers with similar work should receive the same pay regardless of the profitability of companies and industries (Lundberg & Turvey, 1952). Wage differences should reflect variations in working conditions and be related to skill demands which in turn would provide incentives for education. A key assumption, according to Erixon (2010), was that equal pay for equal work would put pressure on companies and industries with relatively low profit margins to rationalise or disappear, thus freeing resources for the expansion of dynamic companies and industries. Rehn and Meidner's central thesis, on which they broke with traditional Keynesianism, was that wage solidarity leads not only to equity and structural change but also to price stability (Government of Sweden, 1955). As discussed below, the institutional framework shaped by the R-M model offered a broader perspective on the relationship between adult education and the labour market compared to the dominant neo-liberal discourse. Thus, the R-M model policies integrated economic efficiencies with a concern for broader equality in society resulting in a broader understanding of the kind of adult education that was needed.

Policy context and reform strategy of the 1960s and 1970s

By the 1960s and 1970s two societal pressure points, skills upgrading and social inclusion, came to dominate the policy agenda. The urgent need to address skill shortages in the adult population had its roots in a highly selective and hierarchical educational system. As a result, the proportion of university graduates and high school completers among Sweden's economically active population in 1960 was low compared to other industrialised nations (Sohlman, 1976). While Sweden's labour market resembled West Germany's, its educational attainment mirrored Portugal's. School reforms in the late 1950s and 1960s expanded the system but also exacerbated intergenerational inequalities. LO and TCO therefore argued that those who were paying for the expansion of primary, secondary, and higher education should receive their 'fair share' of the educational resources generated through public taxation (TCO, 1964; LO, 1969). With industry getting increasingly worried about human capital deficits in the Swedish workforce, the unions demanding that something be done to address intergenerational educational gaps and research revealing that there existed a large 'intellectual reserve' in the adult population (Härnqvist, 1958; Piepenburg & Lundahl, 2024), the government was ready to act.

A municipal adult education system (*komvux)* was introduced, providing adult education equivalent to that offered by primary and secondary schools (Government of Sweden, 1967). This legislation is emblematic of the adult education policies of the era, emphasising that the bulk of resources should be allocated to forms of education most likely to enhance the economy. However, this focus should not be interpreted as a narrowly economistic stance. Instead, it represented a continuation of the R-M model's ambition to achieve full employment. Low-skill, low-paying jobs were being

systematically replaced by roles requiring higher levels of education, with the overarching goal of gradually raising living standards to a middle-class level for all.

Adult education was no longer a marginal activity. The creation of special departments of adult education within the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education, along with the establishment of a separate budget post, signalled its recognition as an integral but distinct part of the educational system. However, LO and TCO were unsatisfied with the 1967 reform and demanded that more radical steps were needed to encourage their members to engage in adult education (TCO, 1973). Labours' demand for action in the realm of adult education was not an isolated event but part of the much broader radicalisation of the trade union movement in the late 1960s. This shift challenged the longstanding 'reformist' strategy that had traditionally guided Swedish Social Democratic governments and pushed legislation toward the priorities of workers, unions and, to some extent, state bureaucrats and largescale industrial organisations.

At its most radical, these developments represented a profound reassessment of the labour movement's relationship to the question of economic democracy. Rather than continuing to base politics on the assumption that possession of political power alone would provide sufficient opportunities for fundamental changes in working life, there was growing support for the Marxist vision of abolishing private ownership of the means of production altogether. Fuelled by post-war developments and the left-leaning *zeitgeist*, LO too, began to push for more far-reaching measures in order to democratise not only political and cultural life but also the economic sphere. Legislatively, this meant that decision-making processes within enterprises and workplaces was also subject to democratic regulation (Government of Sweden, 1975a).

The government responded swiftly to labour movement demands, setting a new course for Swedish adult education (Government of Sweden, 1970, 1975b). The minister acknowledged the significant influence of LO and TCO: 'Some of the most instructive contributions, in my opinion, have been provided in reports by the Central Organization of Salaried Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO)' (Government of Sweden, 1975b, p. 164, our translation). This underscores the trade union movement's growing role in shaping adult education policy, particularly its evolving focus on the relationship between work and education. Notably, SAF also supported many aspects of these reforms, including workplace outreach by union representatives to recruit workers for study circles which at this time began to be embedded in the formal educational system (SAF, 1965, 1970, 1974). The use of adult education as a policy instrument for redistributing resources and mobilising civil society organisations to empower individuals thus gained support across a broad political spectrum well beyond the power nexus of LO, TCO, and the Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokraterna*).

In the new climate adult education was widely recognised and endorsed from left to right as a tool to empower individuals and strengthen populace of the industrial democracy. In the early 1970s, the go-to government's strategy emphasised redistributing cultural and democratic resources and improving the position of the working classes. The key policy initiatives presented at this time include many efforts to increase the enrolment of so called 'non-traditional students':

- Social benefits for adult students
- Subsidies for outreach activities
- Study assistance for part-time learners
- Legislation on study leave and workplace outreach by shop stewards

Popular education organisations were given a significant role in recruiting blue-collar workers. These measures aimed to shift attitudes toward education and ensure access to continued learning. Between 1970 and 1975, adult education funding increased by 76%, while higher education resources decreased by 19% (Olofsson & Rubenson, 1986). Much of this growth occurred in popular education (*folkbildning)*, reflecting its central role in democratisation efforts, including in working life.

Returning to the theoretical framework, the shift in policies on adult education during the first paradigm of human capital influence should be understood in the context of Korpi's theory on the unions ability for mobilising political power. Similarly, Brown's concepts of pressure points and trade-offs can explain the integration that took place in the way the two dominant pressure points, skills and inequality concerns, were addressed in the adult education policy reforms. Finally, the interaction between state, unions and employers were shaped by an institutional regime with its roots in the 1930s corporatist tradition. This is being reflected in the support, not only by the unions, but also by the employers for most of the adult education reforms during this period.

By the late 1970s, a mix of economic crisis, shifting political priorities and institutional frameworks marked the final departure from ambitions of the early 1970s reforms. The emergence of a new human capital framework in the 1980s brought a significantly altered perspective on the relationship between work and adult education, to which we will turn next.

Second generation of the human capital influence: Linking the world of work and adult education policy in Sweden

The skill formation policy during the second generation of human capital can broadly be divided into two distinct phases, the 1980s through the 1990s, and 2000 and onwards. During these periods the Swedish system of skill formation is undergoing a process of hybridisation, where active labour market policies and universal funding arrangements for adult learning are paired with more rampant marketisation in the provision of welfare services.

Institutional context 1980-2000

The two traditional pillars of the Swedish model, the R-M economic framework and the tripartite policymaking tradition, gradually came under pressure. In 1976, after forty years of uninterrupted Social Democrat reign, Sweden got a centre-right coalition. However, the Social democratic party soon returned to government again in 1982 and immediately introduced a radial new initiative: the Wage Earner Funds (*löntagarfonder)*. This initiative, originally proposed by LO in 1970, aimed to shift ownership from the private to the collective of employees under the auspices of the trade unions. However, this aggressive reform agenda was seen as a threat to private ownership and resulted in a radicalisation of the employer's association who, in contrast to a long tradition of promoting employer-union dialogue, began to withdraw from the corporatist tradition of consensus-oriented policymaking (Lundahl, 1997).

At this time cracks also started to emerge within the powerful LO collective, particularly between the high earning male-dominated metalworkers' union and unions representing the low earning female-dominated sectors (Lundqvist, 2019). In 1983, the metalworkers' union chose to negotiate their own wage agreements, bypassing LO's standardised approach of collectively setting pay increases across the board. Equally

problematic, popular support and backing for trade unions had started to decline, although membership rates have remained very high seen in an international perspective (Kjellberg, 2022). Another challenge to the Swedish model was that the public sector was becoming increasingly questioned and instead of being seen as the solution it began to be regarded as part of the problem. With the political power of the unions weakened, the old institutional model slowly began to change.

Policy context and reform strategy of the 1980s and 1990s

During this period, the pressure points shifted as the economy gradually transitioned into a more post-industrial form. The policy agenda focused on addressing the challenges of a deteriorating economy, marked by sharp increases in unemployment and growing skill deficits driven by structural changes to the labour market. Sweden experienced rising budget deficits and declining productivity throughout the 1980s, culminating in a severe economic crisis in the early 1990s. As a result, the previous radical notion of equality with its redistribution of economic, cultural and social resources in the population, was no longer on the policy agenda. Similarly, the idea of industrial democracy with its aspiration to extend democratic rights to the workplace, was basically a lost cause from here on forward.

Instead, the concern shifted towards economic efficiency, which brought the internal structure of public governance to the forefront of the policy agenda. As the state bureaucracy and public institutions were deemed inefficient there was a growing readiness to experiment with introducing a stronger element of market-mechanism within the provision of welfare services. This resulted in a shift in how public services were organised and caused a gradual marketisation of labour market training and later, also of municipal adult education. The regional offices of the Swedish Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) were instructed to cease offering labour market training programmes exclusively through public educational institutions. Instead, they were to utilise the provider deemed most appropriate to deliver the training, regardless of whether the institution was public or private. The government was of the view that making a distinction between the ordering authority and the provider would introduce a healthy competition between providers, which in turn should result in a more efficient and flexible system (Wennemo & Hagnefur, 2007). To support this shift toward market-oriented provision, the Swedish government transformed the Labour Market Training organisation (*AmuGruppen*, later renamed *Lernia*) into a state-owned public corporation in 1993. The aim was to reduce inefficiencies in state administration, introduce competition, and stimulate innovation in the adult education and labour market training sector (Ringarp, 2020).

To fully understand the Swedish policy context during the second generation of the human capital influence, it is essential to point out that the neo-liberal marketisation trend came with a specific Swedish twist. Thus, despite the neo-liberal influences, the marketisation did not lead to a reduction of the state's readiness to universally fund the adult education activities (Nylander & Rubenson, forthcoming). Further, although the introduction of austerity measures at the beginning of the 1980s hit adult education hard, the cuts were not more severe than what compulsory and secondary education had to face. Finally, the adult education reforms that were introduced during this period in response to the increasing unemployment suggests that the Swedish welfare model was still present, although now weakened, as we show below.

Up until the late 1980s the Swedish discussions on the need for increased participation by the workforce in adult education and training had taken place within a

full employment situation. However, the labour market conditions quickly eroded in the early 1990s resulting in a doubling of unemployment. The response by the newly re-elected Social Democratic government was to introduce the Adult Education Initiative (*Kunskapslyftet*) (Government of Sweden, 1996). It is worth noting that the Bill was not put forward as an educational bill but as a cornerstone of the Bill entitled Special strategies introduced in order to half the unemployment by year 2000. The ambition of this bill was to get the rate of employment back to the levels prior to the economic crises. While Swedish unemployment rate did fall back considerably at the end of the 1990s, the reform itself also had other lingering effects on the Swedish ALS.

The Adult Education Initiative (AEI) can be conceived of as a blend of the old and the new. By today's standards it was a gigantic five-year reform programme that had the ambitious aim to reach 15 percent of the Swedish labour force. The AEI signalled a fundamental broadening of the role of adult education and training in the Swedish active labour market policy. Instead of expanding the traditional labour market training programmes, with their strong vocational focus, the AEI was attempting to raise the general level of education of unemployed and low-educated adults. The ear-marked funding for the AEI initiative allowed the Social Democratic government to once again initiate measures aimed at helping to reach adults who traditionally did not participate in adult education and training, e.g., a new special adult education grant. The AEI was primarily intended for unemployed persons who had not completed a three-year upper secondary programme and who intended to study at a compulsory or upper-secondary school level. While these measures overwhelmingly focused on responding to the need of the labour market, the improvement of educational qualifications among those with a short formal education not only improved their chances to be employed but strengthened their situation more generally

As a consequence of the AEI, the state support for municipal adult education came to triple compared to its support for popular adult education (Government of Sweden, 1999, part 1, Table 4.1). In fact, state support for popular education, adjusted for inflation, decreased by 10 percent during the 1990s. This shift is significant, considering the earlier emphasis on popular adult education as a means to encourage economic democracy through reforms of working life.

During the first generation of the human capital influence employer sponsored education and training was never a public policy issue. This all changed during the second generation, as the ALE landscape began a fundamental reconfiguration. Between 1975 and 1993 the proportion of people involved in employer-sponsored education and training almost tripled and now had more participants than the study circles organised by popular adult organisations (Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2019). As data started to become available in the late 1980s on who received employer-sponsored education and training it was evident that participation was very unevenly distributed and that the 'LO collective' was not well represented. Moreover, not only did the rate of participation differ greatly by level of occupation but so did the nature of the educational training. As a result, the trade union movement came to see the control over education and training of the work force as one of the most central issues to be resolved. This resulted in a debate similar to what had occurred in the late 1960s causing the unions to once again demand that government intervene in adult education (LO, 1991; TCO, 1988). According to Brown's pressure points perspective and Korpi's power mobilisation theory, it is precisely this kind of push from a strengthened labour union collectives, here represented by Swedish LO and TCO, that puts the issue on top of the Governments' policy agenda. Hence, in response to these external forces the Social Democratic government struck the 1990 Parliamentary Committee on Competencies (Government of Sweden, 1992).

After difficult deliberations and being unable to reconcile the unions' demand for state policy with employers' resistance to stronger regulations, the government presented a national strategy to improve employer-sponsored education and training (Government of Sweden, 1992). The Committee proposed reforms, including increased state involvement in employer-sponsored education. However, with a newly elected right-wing government prioritising other labour market reforms and a weakened trade union movement not able to mobilise enough political resources to change the situation, these proposed reforms were rejected. While this whole proposal fell, it returned in full force some twenty-five years later, but now under a partly different institutional context.

The reappearance of a consensus on upskilling and reskilling

Institutional context 2000-

The tension between the Social Democratic party and LO, on the one hand, and SAF on the other, had subsided during the early 2000 and a softer form of corporatism re-emerged. Driving this development was a diminishing ability of the labour movement, particularly LO, to impact government policies. In accordance with Korpi's (1983) power mobilisation theory we largely see this weakness as a result of declining membership rates. Kjellberg (2022) notes that in the early 2000s, the unionisation rate among private sector employees was comparable to the rate of private sector employers being members of an employers' association. Two decades later, the figure for the former stood at 65%, while 81% of all enterprises were members of an employers' association. This indicates that while Swedish enterprises have remained particularly well-organised, trade unions have seen declining membership. Another shift that affected the education and training of the workforce stems from the changing structure of the Swedish labour market. Over time the dominance of a few large-scale industrial firms has given way to a growing number of small companies in the service sector, which have less possibilities to deliver their own training (Kuuse, 1986; Lundqvist, 2005).

At the end of the 1990s, the social democratic government successfully helped reorganise the business sector through a relaxation of microeconomic regulations, which was met with strong approval from business (Heyman et al., 2019). As a result, the employers were once again prepared to engage in tripartite cooperation – this time from a strengthened position in terms of their ability to exert power in the labour market. In 1997 the social partners completed an Industrial Agreement that laid out the negotiation process for new era of collective agreements. The treaty stipulated that it is the sector's economic conditions that should serve as the starting point for negotiations and that the parties must consider the consequences of wage formation on inflation, employment and competitiveness, a reflection of the employers strengthened position (Korpi, 1998; Wennemo, 2020).

Further, after long negotiations an historical agreement, the Transition and Retraining Reform (*omställningsstudiestödet*), addressed a crucial issue that had remained unresolved for almost thirty years, namely employer-sponsored education and training. The agreement governs reformation of working life, employment security and education and training. In response to demands from LO the framework agreement, reached in 2020, stipulated that it would only take effect if the government agreed to implement certain measures to protect certain rights of the workers. To highlight the significance of the agreement it was dubbed as the New Saltsjöbaden Agreement (*nya Saltsjöbadsavtalet*) and signed in the same place as the historical 1938 agreement between

the social partners. As part of the agreement LO (and the other unions) paid a significant price for the settlement and had to accept many of the employers' demands for a softening of labour regulations, e.g., in employment security.

Contemporary policy context and reform strategies

Two pressure points (Brown, 1999) were particularly acute during this period. The first concerned the growing need for continuous competency development of the labour force aimed at addressing shortages and mismatches between labour supply and demands. In contrast to the 1960s and 1970s this was now less an issue of having to address the consequences of a previous restricted school system but concerned continuous upgrading of the workforce in a globalised knowledge economy. Concerns regarding the provision of competencies have run like a red thread through the last twenty years of the Swedish policy discourse and are being promoted by government, industry and unions alike. The 2002 report from the Ministry of Enterprise (*Näringsdepartementet*) can be seen to have set the tone when it proclaims that because of structural changes knowledge and competencies were becoming ever more important for the individual, companies and society (Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, 2002). While the discourse has been promoted by all sides of the political spectrum there have been some noticeable differences in what kind of reforms different groups are looking for. Thus, LO repeatedly stressed that it would not be enough to improve access to employer-sponsored training, but also wanted the state to expand adult education and labour market training opportunities more generally (Wennemo & Hagnefur, 2007), while the employers looked for something less ambitious. At the same time, neither unions nor the enterprises seemed very vested in the role popular education could play for competence development.

The second acute pressure point relates to the integration of immigrants, particularly refugees, into Swedish society and the labour market. As the number of immigrants increased by as much as 2.5 times between 2000 and 2016, this increasingly became a politically charged issue. The tone was set by the media that gradually came to frame immigration as being primarily an issue related to the economy and public finance and not, as before, a responsibility rooted in human rights, diversity and multiculturalism (Hurtado Bodell, 2024). This should be seen as a signal that Sweden's exceptionalism within this area was waning (Schierup & Ålund, 2011; Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2019).

In view of the dominant pressure points, it should not come as a surprise that adult education policies during the present period have emphasised vocationally oriented education and Swedish for immigrants. The new emergence of a consensus on vocational upskilling and reskilling seems to have centered on what is now called Higher Vocational Education, HVE (*Yrkeshögskolan)*. This is an institution that began in 2001 with the establishment of a National Agency for Advanced Vocational Education and Training (*Kvalificerad Yrkesutbildning, KY*) within the Ministry of Education (Government Offices of Sweden, 2001). This initiative included a special budget earmarked for KY education and consolidated previous advanced vocational programmes within secondary education, as well as some shorter higher education programmes, under one umbrella with the intention of establishing a closer connection with the working world. KY was later replaced by a more permanent fixture in the Swedish educational landscape, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education.

As noted in the Parliamentary Committee on the future of higher vocational education, HVE has gradually been prioritised as a cornerstone in the lifelong learning system and is an essential component in the reorganisation of working life (Government of Sweden, 2023). HVE is a decentralised form of education with many providers where

the offerings are planned and implemented in close contact with the employers. They are generally between one and two years in length. The increasing marketisation of the Swedish Adult Learning and Education system is in full play in the HVE sector. While there are still municipalities where a balance exists between private and public providers, particularly in larger urban areas, the landscape is predominantly dominated by private, for-profit organisations.

Turning to the availability of employer-sponsored education and training, the Transition and Retraining Support introduced a new type of student support programme (Government of Sweden, 2022). This programme consists of a public grant and the option of a loan. It can be awarded to individuals aged 27-62 who have worked for at least a total of 96 months over the past 14 years. Additionally, the studies must include at least one week of full-time study. Under this publicly funded study programme students can get 44 weeks of study paid for as long as government authorities determine that the training will enhance the person's future employment prospects and align with labour market needs. Roughly half of the public expenditure during the first budget year of Student Financing for Retraining scheme went to studies in the HVE sector, whereas much of the other recipients obtained training via universities.

Statistics on the recruitment to the expanding segment of HVE show its recruitment has already seen a rising average age of participants as more programs have been rolled out. In 2005, the majority of participants were aged 18-25, but by 2019, this age group made up only 33% of the participants (Ye et al., 2022). This trend of higher average age is likely to continue, given the more generous state subsidies introduced by the new Transition and Retraining Support (UKÄ, 2024). The success of HVE and its integration of workplace learning as a core component have made it a model for other post-compulsory vocational education in Sweden, which has traditionally been more school-based (Dobbins & Busemeyer, 2015). However, more challenges await the HVE sector in breaking the heavy gender-polarisation, which over time, and in contrast to explicit policy aims, has increased (Chudnovskaya et al, 2023).

The second major initiative in the adult education sector during this period relates to Swedish for immigrants. The growing numbers of immigrants, particularly refuges, put much of the focus on the language training: Swedish for Immigrants (SFI). This system has undergone several iterations since the first formal courses for refugees begun at the end of the 1950s. In the 1960s most of these were organised by the popular adult education's study associations. In 1976, a law regulating SFI was enacted, and responsibility for most of the courses was transferred to the labour market sector. As a result, instruction was largely relocated to Labour Market Training centres (AMU-centres) operated by the state.

In 1986 this training was transferred to the National Board of Education. Finally, in 2014 it became part of the municipal adult education system that now came to consist of three separate pillars: elementary adult education, secondary adult education and Swedish for immigrants (Government of Sweden, 2013). The rationale for the reform was a need for a holistic system. By moving the three parts together in a unified system there would be a natural progression for those who first required Swedish for immigrants. By moving SFI into the municipal adult education sector the students would get access to a larger number of providers offering the programme. The price for this seems to have been further marketisation with the municipalities increasingly entrusting private providers to provide the programmes (Andersson & Muhrman, 2022; Holmqvist et. al, 2021).

The effect of ethnic stratification in the labour markets on opportunities for adult learning is also visible in the area of employer sponsored training. While the participation in non-formal employer-sponsored education among the foreign-born population dropped

from 41% in 2011 to 28% in 2022, the native Swedish population saw a much smaller decline, from 62% to 55% (Statistics Sweden, 2024). Similarly, in terms of educational backgrounds, non-formal employer-sponsored education continues to be tilted towards occupations that require higher education qualifications (Statistics Sweden, 2018). An explanation for the low participation rates among foreign-born could be that they often work for smaller companies or are self-employed. So, while recent reforms have improved accessibility to employer sponsored training it is important to stress that there is a persistent pattern of inequality in accessing continuous employer-sponsored education along both class and ethnic lines.

In summary, the way adult education policies have been linked to the world of work in Sweden during the second generation of human capital influence reflects some of the neo-liberal impacts that have been brought up in the international criticism of the dominant policy trends. However, the findings also reveal how the path-dependency of the Swedish welfare model mitigated these influences, something that will be discussed in the concluding section.

Conclusion: Reassessing ALE policy in relation to human capital, neoliberalism, and the world of work

The persistent criticism over recent decades regarding the dominance of economic concerns in adult learning and education (ALE) policies (cf. Bagnall 2000; Brown et al., 2020; Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Martin, 2003) forms the backdrop to this study. It analyses how the world of work has influenced Swedish ALE policies over the past sixty years. In the international literature, Sweden is often seen as a vestige of progressive adult education exemplified, primarily, by a richly financed adult education sector providing generous public funding for popular adult education that serves civil society as an extensive system of second-chance education and a well-developed study aid scheme that covers both shorter and longer studies.

As discussed above, at the heart of the international criticism of ALE policies is a warranted worry that progressive sentiments of lifelong learning and adult education have gradually moved to the background of public policy. However, our case study of Sweden challenges a key assumption in much of the critically oriented scholarship, namely, that economic influence inevitably leads to the colonisation of adult education by a narrow economistic agenda. What has to be acknowledged is that the Swedish policies partly have their roots in another strand of human capital influence that includes the political visions of strengthening democratic influence over labour relations. In fact, the analyses reveal that economic considerations and progressive ambitions run like a red thread through the last half century of Swedish adult education policies.

The findings presented in this study support Griffin's position (1999a, 1999b) that it is a fallacy to assume that adult education policies promoting labour market training must necessarily be driven by a neoliberal agenda. Moreover, such policies do not inherently reflect a narrow view of the role of adult education in labour market training. As illustrated in our results, over a long period of time general adult education programs in Sweden have played a central role in its active labour market policies. This was evident in the 1960s with the introduction of Municipal Adult Education (*komvux*) and again in the 1990s, under the reform agenda of the Adult Education Initiative (AEI). The latter is a particularly interesting case as it occurred during a time when many other western countries were in the midst of neoliberal reform agenda (Bromley et al., 2023) and the Swedish welfare model was significantly weakened (Lundahl, 1997; Erixon, 2010;

Wennemo, 2020). Thus, these reforms, aimed at providing broad formal adult education as a form of labour market training, have served multiple purposes while withstanding some very testing times. Importantly, their role in Swedish policy is not limited to assisting individuals in accessing the labour market. It is also intended to support the restructuring of the labour market itself, by gradually replacing low-paying jobs with better-paying ones, while simultaneously improving the underlaying tax base.

Equality and economic considerations have remained dominant pressure points for policy changes throughout the period. Notably, during the 1970s – arguably the most progressive period in Swedish adult education – funding for popular adult education was greatly expanded. This expansion was repeatedly promoted under the umbrella of economic democracy and labour market reform. This agenda had its roots in the understanding that to further democratise the Swedish society there had to be a gradual democratisation of the economic sphere. This marked a departure from the dominant post-war social democratic strategy which had, up until then, primarily focused on advancing democracy in areas outside the workplace.

The findings suggest that economic considerations in Swedish adult education policy have been shaped by an institutional context that balances economic priorities with equality ambitions. Moreover, our analysis suggests that the Swedish case continues to exhibit strong elements of path dependency (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, 2015). This can be seen in the policies of the centre-right coalition that came to power in 1976 after forty years of Social Democratic governance. Despite expectations of a policy shift, the new government offered little support for reform proposals coming from the Employers Federation and largely maintained the policy direction of the previous social democratic government (Blyth, 2001). This episode illustrates how the institutional logic of the Swedish model constrained political alternatives – even in moments of apparent political change. Similarly, the approach over time to popular education, adult learning, and continuous competence development is another example of path dependency and the persistent survival of the Swedish model. This resilience can be traced to the historical institutional context within which the model was established and remains embedded. Even after a weakening of the Swedish model the historical pathway still governs the taken-for-granted-approach to policy, as the recent historical accord, the Transition and Retraining Reform in 2022 between the social partners and the state speaks to.

However, it should be noted that the survival of the Swedish model has involved some far-reaching compromises. While the AEI in the late 1990s shared some characteristics of the old structural reform of the postwar period, it also pointed to, and prompted, the subsequent development of rampant marketisation based on public choice principles. Despite this neo-liberal shift, state funding has not been seriously questioned or rolled back. Instead, neo-liberal influence is for the Swedish case mainly reflected in the dramatic increase in the outsourcing of public goods and services to private providers. As a result, Sweden today has one of the most ‘marketised’ adult learning systems in the world with private corporations running public services in education through procurements, vouchers and individual choices (cf. Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Holmqvist et al, 2021; Ye & Nylander, 2024). Thus, while our overall findings speak to the survival of the Swedish Welfare state in the postliberal era, this survival has come at the ‘cost’ of the gradual re-commodification of public services and the disembedding of market forces.

Our findings highlight the important role the Swedish corporatist traditions, with its well-organised central unions and employer organisations, have played time and again. The social partners have been able to coordinate the problems of competence development by reaching broad and long-term agreements on these issues (Kjellberg, 2022). These negotiations have always been contingent on shifts in the power balance

and might break down again if either party's deterrence weakens (Korpi, 1983, 1998). Furthermore, the findings suggest that for the Swedish Model to function effectively, a certain balance of power must exist between the partners representing labour and capital interests. Thus, the crisis in the Swedish model, triggered by the introduction of the Wage Earner Funds (*löntagarfonder*) scheme in the early 1980s, resulted in a temporary, but significant, disruption to the model as it had previously been understood. This was a reform launched at the peak of LO's dominance, forcing the traditionally pragmatic Social democratic government to introduce far-reaching reforms that could have drastically changed the ownership structure of the Swedish economy. When LO became weaker and its influence waned, their ability to pressure the government diminished, leading to a normalisation of the balance between the partners. The resolution of this crisis resulted in the gradual evolution of the corporatist tradition and the conflictual consensus often associated with the Swedish model (Lundahl, 1997, Rothstein, 1992; Wennemo, 2020). This reappearance of a new consensus model on vocational education and competence development is hitherto not fully discussed in the power mobilisation literature, which along the lines of second-generation human capital critique, tends to frame the more recent developments in a gloomier light.

On a final note, the conventional concepts such as path dependency, displacement, and critical junctures (Thelen, 2004; Desjardins & Kalenda, in press) offer some useful insights into institutional change, they are less well equipped to explain how policy issues rise and fall in salience, how actors mobilise power, or how conflicts are negotiated. To address this and the dynamics of the Swedish case, we have sought to combine traditional institutional theory with Brown's pressure points framework with Korpi's power-resource theory. This combination allows us to concretise how specific policy agendas emerge in response to political contestation, while also tracing the long-term conditions that have enabled Swedish trade unions to exert considerable influence across shifting institutional arrangements in the adult education sphere. To conclude, this study underscores the deep interplay between adult education, the economy, and democracy. Against the backdrop of the strengthening position of capital interests in current struggles over public policy, we are reminded of Ernst Wigforss's compelling motto from the 1920s that struggles for democracy cannot halt at the factory gates (Wigforss, 1924) – a principle that remains as relevant today as it was a century ago.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship or publication of this article.

Funding

Erik Nylander acknowledges that this article was written with the generous financial support of a long-term Consolidation grant awarded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), grant no. 2022-04460_VR.

Acknowledgement

The authors are grateful for the feedback received on earlier drafts of this article during various conferences and symposia, particularly at RWL13, held at Linköping University on June 17-19, 2024. Special thanks to Minna Levin for all her hard work in the copy-

editing of the manuscript. We would also like to thank Richard Desjardins, Maren Elfert, Rebecca Ye, and the two anonymous reviewers of RELA for their valuable comments at different stages of the research and writing process.

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Appendix

Table 1. Swedish commissions addressing ALS topics, 1948-2023, with number of mentions in bills and propositions

SOU (Swedish Government Official Reports)	**Title**	**Number of mentions in bills/propositions**
SOU 1948:27	*1946 års skolkommissions betänkande med förslag till riktlinjer för det svenska skolväsendets utveckling* [1946 school commission report with proposals for the development of the Swedish school system]	8
SOU 1954:11	*Yrkesutbildningen* [The vocational education]	7
SOU 1963:74	*Rätt till studiemedel* [Right to student aid]	11
SOU 1965:9	*Arbetsmarknadspolitik* [Labour market policy]	5
SOU 1966:3	*Yrkesutbildning* [Vocational education]	8
SOU 1968:63	*Huvudmannaskapet för de gymnasiala skolformerna* [Responsibility for upper secondary school forms]	3
SOU 1970:21	*Vägar till högre utbildning* [Paths to higher education]	9
SOU 1971:24	*Vuxenpedagogisk forskning och utbildning* [Adult education research and training]	1
SOU 1971:62	*Högre utbildning och arbetsmarknad* [Higher education and the labour market]	1
SOU 1971:80	*Vuxna. Utbildning. Studiefinansiering.* [Adults. Education. Study financing.]	3
SOU 1973:2	*Högskolan* [Higher education]	15
SOU 1974:54	*Vidgad vuxenutbildning* [Expanded adult education]	8
SOU 1974:62	*Studiestöd åt vuxna* [Study support for adults]	9
SOU 1974:79	*Utbildning för arbete* [Education for work]	5
SOU 1975:1	*Demokrati på arbetsplatsen* [Democracy in the workplace]	20
SOU 1979:85	*Folkbildning för 80-talet talet* [Popular education for the 1980s]	3

SOU 1982:29	*Komvux* [Municipal adult education]	7
SOU 1986:2	*En treårig yrkesutbildning* [A three-year vocational education]	5
SOU 1990:54	*Arbetslivsforskning* [Work life research]	4
SOU 1990:65	*Folkhögskolan i framtidsperspektiv* [The folk high school in a future perspective]	4
SOU 1992:7	*Kompetensutveckling – en nationell strategi* [Skills development – a national strategy]	1
SOU 1993:85	*Ursprung och utbildning* [Origin and education]	5
SOU 1999:39	*Vuxenutbildning för alla? Andra året med Kunskapslyftet, del 1 och 2* [Adult education for all? Second year of the Adult Education Initiative, parts 1 and 2]	14
SOU 1999:141	*Från Kunskapslyftet till en strategi för livslångt lärande* [From the Adult Education Initiative to a strategy for lifelong learning]	3
SOU 2000:28	*Kunskapsbygget 2000 – det livslånga lärandet, del 1-3* [The knowledge structure 2000 – lifelong learning, parts 1-3]	3
SOU 2001:40	*En ny yrkeshögskoleutbildning* [A new higher vocational education]	4
SOU 2001:107	*Yrkeshögskoleutbildning – inriktning, utformning och kvalitetskriterier* [Higher vocational education – orientation, design, and quality criteria]	3
SOU 2003:28	*Ekonomiskt stöd vid ungdomsstudier* [Financial support for youth studies]	3
SOU 2003:37	*Geografisk rörlighet för sysselsättning och tillväxt* [Geographic mobility for employment and growth]	5
SOU 2003:77	*Vidare vägar och vägen vidare – svenska som andraspråk för samhälls- och arbetsliv* [Further paths and the way forward – Swedish as a second language for society and working life]	7
SOU 2003:92	*Unga utanför* [Young people outside]	10
SOU 2003:94	*Folkbildningens särart? Offentlighet, forskning och folkbildares självförståelse* [The distinctiveness of popular education? Publicness, research, and popular education educators' self-understanding]	3
SOU 2003:108	*Folkbildning och integration* [Popular education and integration]	3
SOU 2006:115	*Eftergymnasiala yrkesutbildningar - beskrivning, problem och möjligheter* [Post-secondary vocational education – description, problems and opportunities]	1
SOU 2008:29	*Yrkeshögskolan – för yrkeskunnande i förändring* [Higher Vocational Education – for changing professional skills]	0
SOU 2009:28	*Stärkt stöd för studier – tryggt, enkelt och flexibelt* [Strengthened support for studies – secure, simple, and flexible]	6
SOU 2011:72	*Gymnasial lärlingsutbildning – med fokus på kvalitet! Hur stärker vi kvaliteten i gymnasial lärlingsutbildning?* [Upper secondary apprenticeship – with a focus on quality! How do we strengthen the quality of upper secondary apprenticeship?]	3
SOU 2013:20	*Kommunal vuxenutbildning på grundläggande nivå – en översyn för ökad individanpassning och effektivitet* [Municipal adult education at basic level – a review for increased individual adaptation and efficiency]	13
SOU 2013:76	*Svenska för invandrare – valfrihet, flexibilitet och individanpassning* [Swedish for immigrants – choice, flexibility, and individual adaptation]	4

SOU 2015:70	*Högre utbildning under tjugo år* [Higher education over twenty years]	7
SOU 2017:82	*Vägledning för framtidens arbetsmarknad* [Guidance for the future labour market]	3
SOU 2018:71	*En andra och en annan chans – ett komvux i tiden* [A second and another chance – a timely municipal adult education]	2
SOU 2018:78	*Ökad attraktionskraft för kunskapsnationen Sverige* [Increased attractiveness for the knowledge nation Sweden]	4
SOU 2019:4	*Framtidsval – karriärvägledning för individ och samhälle* [Future choices – career guidance for individuals and society]	5
SOU 2019:69	*Validering – för kompetensförsörjning och livslångt lärande* [Validation – for skills supply and lifelong learning]	6
SOU 2020:33	*Gemensamt ansvar – en modell för planering och dimensionering av gymnasial utbildning* [Shared responsibility – a model for planning and dimensioning of upper secondary education]	5
SOU 2020:66	*Samverkande krafter – för stärkt kvalitet och likvärdighet inom komvux för elever med svenska som andraspråk* [Collaborative forces – for strengthened quality and equity in municipal adult education for students with Swedish as a second language]	6
SOU 2021:5	*Ett förbättrat system för arbetskraftsinvandring* [An improved system for labour immigration]	6
SOU 2022:34	*I mål – vägar vidare för att fler unga ska nå målen med sin gymnasieutbildning* [At the goal – further paths for more young people to reach the goals of their upper secondary education]	4
SOU 2022:53	*Statens ansvar för skolan – ett besluts- och kunskapsunderlag* [The state's responsibility for the school – a basis for decisions and knowledge]	1
SOU 2023:31	*Framtidens yrkeshögskola – stabil, effektiv och hållbar* [The Higher Vocational Education of the future – stable, efficient, and sustainable]	1