

Summary

The Government's and The National Agency for Education's knowledge dissemination in schools (RiR 2013:11)



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Audit background and question posed

According to Chapter 1 of the Education Act (2010:800), teaching in schools shall be equal in all parts of the country and be based on science and proven experience. The principal organisers bear the main responsibility for this, but the State can and should also play a part in promoting such a development. Several investigations have highlighted problems and potential for improvement when it comes to the State's role and initiatives.

The National Audit Office has, as part of the ongoing audit strategy for the education field, assessed if the State's dissemination of knowledge is effective and helps ensure that teaching in schools is based on science and proven experience. The audit mainly concerns knowledge dissemination initiatives within the framework of the Swedish National Agency for Education's development assignment, but also includes initiatives within the Agency's norm-making work, and the Government's steering of this work. The development assignment include that the National Agency for Education shall support municipalities and other principal organisers in their teaching and other educational operations. The National Agency for Education shall also contribute to improving their conditions for developing operations to better meet established objectives.

Knowledge dissemination is one of many terms that are used in this field. What the National Audit Office refers to are initiatives for promoting systematic and continuous development by using scientifically grounded knowledge and proven experience in schools.

Question posed in the audit

The following question has been posed for the audit:

- *Is the State's dissemination of knowledge effective in promoting an education which is based on science and proven experience?*

Audit results

The audit has been conducted with the aid of interviews, document studies and surveys among principals and teachers.



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The audit shows that the National Agency for Education conducts its knowledge dissemination work in a way which, to a great extent, results in the knowledge reaching and meeting the needs of principals and teachers. In this sense, the knowledge dissemination is effective. However, the audit also shows that there is potential for improvement, both when it comes to the Government's steering and the way that the National Agency for Education works.

The Government's steering of the National Agency for Education's development assignment needs to be changed and become less detailed. The Government's monitoring of the National Agency for Education's development assignment also requires developing to allow the Government to attain an overview of how well the National Agency for Education's knowledge dissemination works and what utility it creates. The National Audit Office believes that the Government could do this by requesting more reporting of results.

According to the Education Act, teaching shall be based both on science and on proven experience. The National Agency for Education is currently tasked with compiling and disseminating knowledge on scientific findings, but the Government has not tasked the Agency with doing the same when it comes to proven experience. It is of great importance that the National Agency for Education utilises proven professional experience in a structured way.

The National Agency for Education needs to increase the accessibility to and usefulness of initiatives and material. The National Agency for Education needs to reach out to teachers to a greater extent, and keep working with improving the Agency's website. The National Agency for Education's internal monitoring needs to be developed and systematised. This can be done by having the Agency formulate qualitative and quantitative objectives and then continually follow up on the results of the knowledge dissemination. The National Agency for Education's dissemination of knowledge can thereby be more effective when it comes to encouraging an education that is based on science and proven experience.

The Swedish National Audit Office's recommendations

The Swedish National Audit Office recommends the Government to

- Steer the National Agency for Education's national development assignment in less detail and more strategically, in order to make better use of the Agency's role as an expert authority.
- Give the National Agency for Education an additional assignment in its ordinance with instructions (2011:555) to compile and disseminate knowledge regarding the results of proven experience.
- Request reports on the impact of the National Agency for Education's initiatives and supporting material, and what utility they provide in the school system.



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The Swedish National Audit Office recommends the National Agency for Education to

- More actively request the Government to adopt a simplified and adapted steering which allows the Agency to increase the effectiveness of its initiatives within the framework of its development assignment.
- Measure and assess the utility of its knowledge dissemination work as part of its development assignment, and to make an overall assessment of the extent to which the Agency is reaching its target groups – teachers in particular.
- Assess whether the changes to the Agency's website have led to it meeting the visitors' needs to a greater extent.

