

# Summaries

**Ulla Johansson, 1996: Praise be the talented pupil. The social construction of the grammar school pupil 1927-1960/Till begåvningens lov: Läröverkseleven i lärardebatten 1927-1960/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 1, No 3, pp 129-144. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

In the 19th century the Swedish grammar school, läroverket, was built on the principle of class and gender segregation. The girls were barred from these schools, and most of the pupils were middle class boys. However, the Education Act of 1927 meant that grammar school at least in principle opened up for girls, and the aim was also to broaden social recruitment. The proportion of pupils who proceeded to grammar schools gradually increased, and consequently the meaning of the category grammar school pupil changed. In this article I will examine those changing meanings in the discourse of grammar school teachers. How did the teachers define a true grammar school pupil? And what social groups were thereby excluded explicitly or implicitly?

My analysis is inspired by postmodern theories of how social categories are constructed by discourses and discursive practices. More specifically, I have applied Joan W Scott's model of analysis, originally designed for the analysis of gender, to the category of grammar school pupil. According to Scott, such an analysis is carried out on four different levels, i.e. the symbolic, normative, institutional, and the subjective level. Within this framework the following questions are put: How was the grammar school pupil defined by state regulations of grammar school education (the normative level)? What meanings did teachers attach to the notion of the true grammar school pupil, and what groups of pupils were thereby excluded (the symbolic level)? Were there any mechanisms of exclusion built into the very organisation of schooling (the institutional level)? The analysis presented here is mainly based on opinions expressed in Tidning för Sverige läroverk 1927-1960, a journal published by the grammar school teacher union.

Until the end of World War II there was a main theme in the debate: the grammar school pupil was a talented and gifted pupil, a symbol for the intellectual elite of society. This opinion corresponded to the rules regulating the admission to grammar schools according to which the presumptive pupil had to pass an entrance test. In fact, some of the pupils who passed this test nevertheless failed the yearly exam, and they were required to take the same course for another year or leave the school. In the 1930s measures were also taken in order to direct less talented pupils to vocational schools.

The notion of the talented pupil was also grounded in the meritocratic ideology, according to which education would serve the purpose of sifting the wheat from the chaff. In reality, however, there were several mechanisms that excluded certain groups of pupils on other grounds than their lack of talent. One such mechanism operated on the institutional level and was due to the very organisation of education. Firstly, the young people from the country were disadvantaged since grammar schools were situated only in larger towns. Secondly, the girls were not admitted on the same terms as boys. For instance, the very existence of girls' schools with a gender specific curriculum indicated that girls were not seriously expected to go to grammar school.

On the normative level there were rules prescribing that every pupil had to pay various fees, and consequently poor pupils faced difficulties in financing their education, no matter how talented they might be. Furthermore, while there were certain political doctrines according to

which education was declared to be a citizen's right, there were also strong cultural norms prescribing that the woman's place was at home. There were also proponents of the principle "The cobbler should stick to his last", and consequently education should not be a means of social upward mobility.

From a gender perspective, the contradictions were very prominent at the symbolic level. In the journal, the female pupil was pictured as a symbol of a far too ambitious pupil risking her health by studying too hard. At the same time, girls were depicted as pleasure-seeking in ways that were detrimental to their education. Furthermore, academic studies were supposed to make girls consider it beneath their dignity to carry out domestic work, but at the same time, girls were also pictured as facing special difficulties with doing their lessons since they had to help their mothers with household chores.

Neither did the working class boy correspond to the true grammar school pupil. According to some teachers, he was put into grammar school by stuck-up parents, and eventually he came to regard himself as the king of the home. Furthermore he symbolized the spectre of the learned proletariat since the labour market would not be able to absorb all students. In the 30s there was also a surplus of academically trained labour.

However, after World War II the discourse shifted significantly. Some of the conservative opinions of the 30s had been compromised due to the fascistic ravages in Europe. The overall goal of schooling was now to serve the ideal of democracy. At the same time the surplus of academically trained labour turned into a shortage of qualified labour.

These are some of the reasons why the category of the grammar school pupil became more inclusive after World War II. It no longer consisted of a highly selected elite, because, according to the teachers, everyone should have the right to get the highest possible education he or she could manage. It was even claimed that the parents, and not the teacher, would decide if the child was talented or not. It was the teacher's duty to adapt his or her instruction to the pupils' capacities.

The girls were no longer regarded as anomalies of the grammar school. Their alleged tendency to be more industrious and ready to study harder than boys had earlier been regarded as an indication that girls should not attend grammar school; e.g. these "female" characteristics actually disqualified them as grammar school pupils. But now measures were proposed in order to help the boys to keep up with the girls. However, it should also be noted that there seemed to be no doubt that eventually the boys would win the race.

Finally I try to relate the discursive shifts to changing economical, political, and ideological conditions by using Pierre Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital and field. The efforts in the 30s to keep the category of grammar school pupil very exclusive must be regarded in relation to the market value of the cultural capital institutionalised in grammar school. In the 30s, when there was a surplus of skilled labour, the risk was potentially high that this value would be reduced. When the demand for qualified labour gradually increased, the category of 'grammar school pupil' became more inclusive. No longer would anyone risk salary cuts or unemployment least of all the teachers who would play an important role in preparing all the students for university studies.

During the late 40s there was an ongoing restructuring of the education field. Evidently, compulsory school attendance was going to be extended, and the elementary school teachers now involved themselves in the struggle

over the values of the field. Instead of fighting the spectre of a learned proletariat, the grammar school teachers had to defend themselves against the elementary school teachers. This was, among other things, a struggle for the positions within the walls of the comprehensive school.

The discourse of the teachers did not only mirror the changing economical conditions, but also the changing ideological and political power relations. After World War II conservative ideologies had lost their credibility, and there was an overall support for the ideals of democracy and equality. When the Social Democrats, the ruling political party, began to regard education as crucial to realize the just society, it was no longer negotiable to, a priori, exclude certain groups of people. The discourse was also affected by social scientists, even if it could be questioned to what extent they were independent of the political field. Anyhow, there is no doubt that putative scientific truths used to legitimate a restricted selection to grammar school, were replaced by scientific findings indicating that a larger proportion of young people were talented enough for grammar school studies.

Thus, on the discursive level the category of grammar school pupil gradually dissolved at the same time as its meanings shifted. This corresponded, from the perspective of Bourdieu, to a transformation of the education field, which in its turn meant that new positions were established within the field and that crucial field values were redefined. Therefore, Scott's poststructural perspective and Bourdieu's theoretical perspective can be said to converge.

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**Marie Carlson, 1996: Language and learning as a social cultural construction. Low educated imigrants in the Swedish knowledge arena/Språk och lärande som sociokulturell konstruktion: Lågutbildade invandrare på den svenska kunskapsarenan/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 1, No 3, pp 145-152. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

A salient feature of the Swedish so called "knowledge society" is high tech literacy with a continuous and overwhelming flow of information and knowledge. To aim at an advanced level of education is often regarded as an important goal from an individual as well as from a societal perspective. But many contemporary citizens in Sweden originate from foreign cultural environments where literacy is not so widespread and different views on knowledge prevail. There, oral transmission of knowledge and everyday face to face interaction dominate over formalized education (Goody 1968, Ong 1990 and Street 1984). That is clearly brought out in for example recent anthropological studies which have revealed that literacy is not an unitary phenomenon, but decidedly embedded in intricate sociocultural contexts including power relationships (Barton & Ivanic 1991; Bloch 1989; Heath 1983; Kulick & Stroud 1993; Street 1993, 1995).

During the last decennium, there has been a lot of international research within many academic disciplines where literacy and knowledge is analyzed in their cultural contexts both inside and outside educational institutions. In general terms language education, reading and writing is not any longer regarded as a neutral technology disengaged from norms, values, and attitudes but rather as a specific social construction (e.g. Cook-Gumpertz 1986, Bourdieu 1984, 1991, Street 1984, 1993, 1995).

Nevertheless, there is hitherto precious little Swedish immigrant linguistic research informed by a critical examination which also pays due attention to social and cultural factors, and this applies particularly to adult education.

To be incorporated into the Swedish educational system where a certain view of knowledge as well as of reading and writing usage is taken for granted is thus problematical. Frustration and failures will all too often ensue. In their countries of origin the low educated citizens might occupy a high status position based on practical and social competence. In Sweden, however, formal education is the preferred norm. Consequently the low educated immigrant is likely to be regarded as a person lacking a number of desired characteristics which through the agency of the Swedish schooling system should be conveyed to him or her. Deeply rooted in the Enlightenment tradition, the Swedish educational authorities and policy makers want to create "critical and competent members of society" (Carlson 1995). Language becomes in this connection an important symbolic force in the social evolution of Sweden.

Since also low educated immigrants are most likely to hold culturally specific ways of viewing knowledge, language and learning, it is not surprising that a silent "battle of knowledge" can be discerned. My current research project within the field of educational sociology is informed by the critical approach mentioned in rough outline above. From an actor perspective I would like to bring out culturally specific ways of organising, handling and transmitting knowledge. Within the Swedish educational system I mainly intend to focus on the basic education for adult immigrants (sw: sfi-undervisning). This sphere of education is regarded as a sociocultural practice embedded in a certain ideological context.

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has in an innovative way tackled these issues in his analysis of language, notably in his penetrating discussion of language habitus (Bourdieu 1984, 1991). Habitus is, simply stated embodied patterns of thought and action which effect the individual. In addition I have also found another interesting model in the prolific writings of the anthropologist Brian Street, i.e. his "ideological model" (Street 1984, 1993, 1995). His model lends itself to application on a nuanced literacy in practice and it can also accommodate other theoretical concepts and perspectives (e.g. Bourdieu's analysis of language).

Language usage should thus be seen as embedded in various social contexts; discursive differences are clearly connected with social differences. Language is used for distinguishing purposes and furthermore to sustain these distinctions. A linguistic habitus can be said to express and maintain the position of an individual or a group in a social hierarchy. It is very much a question of having the "right" social and cultural competence. Those who are cut off (alienated) from existing sociocultural competence as well as from the "legitimate" language are easily marginalized.

The emphasis on a legitimate or standard language at the expense of other variants is by Bourdieu seen as a part of a political strategy. The educational system itself takes a central position in the struggle for linguistic hegemony and interpretive preference. So even if the authority appears as purely pedagogical, it is strictly speaking an offshoot of power relationships. In the Swedish case one might perhaps ponder over if the problematics of language concerning adult immigrants is not dependent on the economic situation at hand (at least to some extent). <> It is frequently stated that "decent Swedish" is today a basic requirement even for unqualified jobs such as charring work. But who decides what is to be considered as "decent Swedish"? It is interesting to notice that until

quite recently a largely monolingual situation prevailed in Sweden; something which might impede a tolerant attitude towards linguistic plurality. In spite of multicultural ambitions in various official education documents it seems as though the sfi-education is filtered through a decidedly Swedish normative screen.

Does this imply that I maintain that learning Swedish is irrelevant for low educated immigrants? Not at all, but what I would like to see is a somewhat more nuanced and penetrating discussion about knowledge acquisition and perhaps more educational alternatives where the needs and qualifications of the course participants are more heeded than today. A critical, self reflexive and interdisciplinary approach is thus needed when it comes to research on language acquisition and the education of immigrant 'students' from other, often radically different sociocultural settings.

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**Bo Dahlin, 1996: 'Didaktik' - an education of the senses or an instrument of socialisation? On the misery of cognitive socialisation/Didaktiken - bildningsväg eller socialisationsinstrument? Om kognitionssocialisationens elände/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 1, No 3, pp 153-164. Stockholm ISSN 1401-6788.**

The most recent review of the National Curriculum in Sweden (1992) emphasised Bildung in the classical, neo-humanistic sense. However, this idea has not been followed up by Swedish research in didaktik (eng. didactics). The thesis of this essay is that didaktik within Swedish educational research and teacher education has become more of an instrument for socialisation than a way to achieve Bildung or genuine education.

This thesis is underpinned by the following arguments: the historical development of the school-system; the lack of distinction between the concept of socialisation and that of education or Bildung; the lack of a genuine educational psychology (Bildungspsychologie); and the relative absence of critical, historical and philosophical reflection in Swedish teacher education.

As for the historical argument, it is first pointed out that during the 20th century the compulsory school-system in Sweden has been increasingly required to perform the role of socialiser. Since didaktik provides the theoretical explanations for what is happening and/or is supposed to happen in schools, it seems likely that its theoretical contents also come to deal more with socialisation than with Bildung. Secondly, if we widen the geographical and temporal horizons, a similar development can be said to characterise the whole of educational thinking and practice in Europe during the last 500 years. Looking back at the thinkers of the Renaissance we may note great enthusiasm for study, whereas being taught or instructed was regarded as of less value. Thus, Michel de Montaigne warned of the danger of becoming dependent on the teacher. Teachers could deliver knowledge, but only active self-studies would lead to genuine education in the sense of understanding and a sound, critical judgement. In those days instruction certainly took place, but mostly within 'trivium', a word from which "trivial" is derived. Pupils were often impatient to get through the stage of being instructed in trivium in order to move on to the stage of 'quadrivium', which was based on their own reading and reflection.

With the emergence of the modern epoch in the 17th century, the idea of general compulsory schooling of the whole growing generation was born and propagated by such thinkers as Comenius. This idea, and its realisation two centuries later, shifts the focus of educational thinking from study to instruction. The whole *raison d'être* of obligatory schools is the instruction that takes place in them, not the studies that the students engage in. The question "What can we offer the students to study?" is transformed into "What shall we instruct the students in?". This shift of focus is parallel to a shift in emphasis, from *Bildung* to socialisation. *Bildung* is an individual and self-regulated process and thus in accord with self-study. Socialisation, in contrast, is governed by external influences and accords with being taught or instructed.

It is noted in passing that during the 20th century, when socialisation has come to dominate what takes place in schools, the moral grounds for the process of socialisation have themselves gradually eroded. The "erosion of tradition", pluralism and multiculturalism undermine the normative grounds for stable socialisation.

The argument about the loss of distinction between the concept of socialisation and that of education or *Bildung* is developed with reference to David Nyberg and Kieran Egan. According to Nyberg and Egan, the goals of socialisation are clear and well defined. The realisation of these goals makes people alike and social life possible. In contrast, the goals of education are vague and difficult to define. However, the realisation of such goals make people different and social life worth living.

Nyberg and Egan also point out the lack of a genuine educational psychology. Most of what falls under the label of psychology of learning and mental development should properly be called "socialisational psychology". It is not for nothing that research in cognitive psychology in the US is largely supported by military funds. In military training, socialisation is of primary importance, not *Bildung*.

In a true educational psychology, the relations between means and ends must be internal, dialectical. *Bildung* is both a process and a product, therefore the way to the goal is not separate from the goal itself. However, in the latest National Compulsory School Curriculum (1994), only aims and purposes are stated. The means for their realisation are left to the teachers to invent. This seems to be based on a technological figure of thought, telling the professionals what one wants them to achieve, and expecting them to construct the technical means. This thinking is in line with the nature of socialisation, but not with that of *Bildung*. If it is transferred to teacher education, didaktik will become more of an instrument for socialisation than a way to genuine education.

In a genuine educational psychology (an example of which Egan himself has developed in several books), fact and theory, on the one hand, and values, on the other, must also be internally related. This follows from the concept of education itself, which is a value-loaded concept. The theories of a didaktik for *Bildung* must therefore build on a hermeneutic reconstruction of "objectivity", as developed by, for instance, Hans-Georg Gadamer. For Gadamer, *Bildung* means a consciousness of "effective history", used as a basis for genuine and adequate self-determination. Such an education implies an awareness of and an ability to reflect upon the historical and cultural contingency of one's knowledge.

Applying Gadamer's concept of *Bildung* to teacher education might mean letting student teachers reflect on the text of the latest Curriculum as an historical document, constructed within the horizons of our history, society and cultural tradition(s). This rarely seems to happen. The

Curriculum is more often regarded as something to be "professionally implemented" by the teachers.

Two main schools of didaktik in Sweden today are evaluated against this background. The first is a kind of 'curriculum theory', developed at Uppsala University. Here, among other things, textbooks in Natural Science are analysed and perspectivised from historical and philosophical points of view. However, the concepts of socialisation and Bildung are not distinguished, but used together almost as synonyms. Thus, the confusion of the two concepts is maintained. The second school was developed at Göteborg University. It is based upon research into students' conceptions of subject matter. Here, descriptions of students' conceptions are taken as the starting points for various instructional designs. The ultimate purpose of these designs is to lead the students to the "scientifically correct conception". However, there is little or no discussion of the ultimate educational value which would thereby be realised. Thus, it seems that the concept of genuine education or Bildung is lacking in both these schools.

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