Summaries

Monica Rosén & **Inga Wenersson**, 1996: **Knowledge pattern and gender: On the necessity of quantitative feminist research in education**/Kunskapsmönster och kön. Om nödvändigheten av kvantitativ feministisk forskning i pedagogik/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 1, No 1, Pp 8-24. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788.

The article has two purposes: to discuss feminist critique of quantitative methods, and to give examples of how feminist educational research would benefit by more frequent use of quantitative methods.

Today, most researchers agree on the need and usefulness of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Still, quantitative methods are often negatively contrasted against qualitative. Feminist researchers often classify methods as in either support or opposition of women's interests. Four common reasons against quantitative methods in feminist research are: The response format in questionnaires is improperly fixed, and concepts are not derived from experience. Quantitative research is male oriented by default, and male prejudice is likely to be reproduced. The method forces the researcher to put certain questions and to avoid others. Users of quantitative methods objectify persons studied.

The feminist critique is to some degree unrejectable, but in essential parts also misdirected. First, the construction of questionnaires is often preceded by qualitative phases. Second, no research, qualitative or quantitative, is completely objective or true. Third, no method is suited for all kinds of questions. Fourth, male perspectives have been dominant, also in qualitative research. That research is male dominated and have omitted women's perspectives does not imply that women always would have put different questions or come to different conclusions.

Quantitative methods are particularly well suited for the study of questions concerning human variation, and questions concerning structures and relations between variables. Such questions need data from representative samples. However, statistical tools demand competence beyond the educational research context, which may be a hindrance for some researchers.

The critique also seems to have led feminists to reject numbers as such. Numbers tend to be interpreted as "evil" and/or "male". This is an unfortunate form of "guilt by association". Figures are neither evil, nor male. Neither has quantitative methods (the use of numbers) anything to do with how the researcher regard people or knowledge. Questionnaires actually honor peoples integrity and time more than methods were the researcher needs to get very close to the individual.

Misinterpretations of quantitative methods are quite common, and the article reviews a few. The need of quantitative studies in the educational domain is also put forward in several examples.
Roséns study (1995) of gender differences in patterns of cognitive abilities, is reviewed in some detail to illustrate how feminist knowledge can be enriched by the use of advanced statistical tools. The study also illustrates that the researchers interpretation and not the method is critical in deciding whose interests are supported.

The study assumes that abilities are competencies that emerge and develops in a socio-cultural context. Competencies that underlie learning and problem solving are of great interest in society. However, such abilities are surrounded by values and intentions favoring some and disfavoring

others. Historically male superiority in cognitive abilities was assumed and repeatedly "proved". The current order in terms of power and access to the social resources was then regarded as natural and fair. In modern research the pattern of gender differences looks different and so does the interpretations and conclusions.

Rosén reanalyses data from a data base of about 1200 13-year-old students, designed to investigate individual differences in learning strategies in 1980. Observed scores from 13 rather well established ability tests and standardized achievements tests in Swedish, Math and English are analyzed with a multivariate latent variable approach. This technique enables recognition of multi-dimensionality in the tests. Modern theory argues that no test is unidimensional. It is now empirically established that a test always reflects more than one ability dimension along with test specific variance and measurement error. These things are in Roséns' study sorted out in terms of latent variables.

The analysis is guided by a theory, developed successively during the last century, arguing that cognitive abilities are hierarchically ordered with three levels. At the apex is general intelligence, influencing all cognitive performance. At the intermediate level a few very broad abilities are identified. Crystallized intelligence is a broad verbal-cultural ability dimensions developed mainly in the school context and reflected in school performance. General visualization is the broadest spatial dimension, influencing all types of spatial tasks. At the bottom of the hierarchy there are narrow dimensions, influencing specific tasks. The test battery was composed in order to investigate this theory.

The hierarchical model fitted the data quite well. Each test turned out to reflect in part general intelligence, a broad dimension and at least one narrow dimension. No gender differences in the structure of cognitive abilities were found, but there were differences in means and variability in the latent dimensions.
The most controversial finding was a substantial female advantage in general intelligence. Females also showed a higher average on the broad cultural-verbal dimension, which was expected. Females have often been found to perform better in school. Males showed higher means on the broad and several narrow spatial dimensions. More males also had an almost extreme advantage on the narrow numerical dimension as well as on the narrow verbal dimension.

"The greater male variability hypothesis" relies on findings of greater variability among males in intelligence. It has often served as an explanation of the lack of female geniuses, and as a legitimation of male dominance. Feminist scholars call it "a pernicious hypothesis", and argues that variability is not an explanation, but needs to be explained. In our study, no variability differences were found in general intelligence, in the broad crystallized intelligence, or in most of the narrow ability dimensions. However, greater male variability were found in the broad spatial dimension and in a few narrow spatial dimensions.

Almost none of the described differences are visible when traditional univariate techniques are applied.
From the findings in the study we conclude that females more than males tend to develop their general abilities, with the exception of spatiality. Could this pattern to some degree explain the broad competence that appears common among females? And that the price is invisibility due to the lack of contrasts? Males tend typically to develop specific abilities. The pattern could be interpreted as a tendency among males either to specialize or to restrict themselves. Special competencies stands out and become visible due to contrasts in everyday life. Since variability is greater among males in

spatiality, it is not correct to talk about males as a group. It is obvious that a special group of males stands out.

The chosen study does not show any obvious gender bias in choice of ability dimensions, in the test items or in the sample. One may however think that intelligence is too narrowly defined.

Looking back at the feminist critique of quantitative methods, we conclude that none of it is relevant for the chosen study. The tests are developed through experience. There is no obvious presence of male prejudice in assumptions, tests or sample. Method, theory and problem seem linked in a desirable way. The purpose of the study indicates an interest in understanding different individuals which means that the persons involved are viewed as subjects.

Finally we argue that more feminists need to understand and use advanced statistical tools. This is necessary in order to gain more knowledge about various problems, and to participate in the scientific debate in a responsible and reliable way. Finally we conclude that the feminist rejection of quantitative methods is based on incorrect assumptions and thus not constructive. Other criteria than 'method' is needed when judging whether a study is interesting from a feminist perspective. We call research 'feminist' if it recognizes the necessity of gender perspectives and acknowledge that the imbalance in power between males and females is unjust and needs to be changed.

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Ingemar Emanuelsson & **Bengt Persson**, 1996: **Special education in compulsory school - a contradictory enterprice**/Specialpedagogik i grundskolan - en motsägelsefull verksamhet/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 1, No 1, Pp 25-39. Stockholm . ISSN 1401-6788.

In Sweden there is a common agreement on the compulsory school to be "a school for all". The consequences of this according to concepts like learning difficulties, impairments, students with special needs etc. have been under debate more or less since the beginning of the comprehensive school reform in the 1950's.

The proportion of students referred to special education in the mainstream schools greatly increased during the 1960's, and has stabilized on a high level. Recent statistics maintain that approximately one third of all students in a year cohort for shorter or longer periods and with more or less intensive interventions receive some kind of special education. Yet at the same time many students with very similar preconditions never recieves any such support.

Another question, much less discussed though, is the vague definition of what needs special education shall respond to. Should it be a response to the needs of the student or needs of the system (i.e. regular teaching) or both? There is a clear tendency to concentrate on labelling individual characteristics, often called deviations, as the most important basis for students difficulties. The resulting diagnoses are individual-bound, and so are the measures taken. Once a child has been labelled as deviant he or she usually recieves "pull-out" educational services. An analaysis is seldomly conducted of the regular teaching methods or other environmental

characteristics of the student's school situation, which may be contributing factors to the problem. Therefore "the school need part" of the definition of special needs is not fully realized and dealt with. There appears to be a tendency for school classes to have a certain number of students with "special needs". Thus the preconditions for referring students to special education differs substantially between schools and classes.

Ever since 1991 Sweden has experienced considerable cut-backs in school resources. The 1991 School Act however maintains that priority for resources must be given first hand to those with the most explicit needs. The average number of students per class/teacher has increased, resulting in a larger work-load for teachers. This has been followed by an increasing request for specialist help with problematic students. In this situation, the question of definitions, concerning what and whose needs that are to be met by special education, have become more problematic and important. Thus even if the governmental allocation guidelines remain the same, the local resource allocation discussions become more difficult and complex as the total amount of resources decreases. These discussions also lead to prioritizations about which pupils should get what. It is therefore important to scrutinize how these matters come into practice in local schools.

The aim of the study reported here is to analyze the ways in which different groups of professionals in the Swedish comprehensive school system conceive and describe the special education activities taking place in their schools. The following problem areas will be elucidated:

€ Significant differences between special education and regular education
€ Motives for special education measures to be taken and organized
€ The relationship between individual needs and demands of the school.

The main method used for gathering information was taped interviews. These were semi-structured and combined with information taken from relevant school documents, when available. The investigated schools varied with respect to preconditions for school work located in e.g. big towns, suburbs, smaller cities and rural areas. The interviewees (27 special education teachers, 35 classroom teachers and 18 principals) were well established and had been employed at an average of about ten years in their school.

The results indicate that special education activities are highly dependent upon the policies of the local school. When there existed harmonizing policies supported by the principals, the special education teachers were encouraged to widen their focus of work to include not only the pupil, but also the environment encircling the pupil e.g. the class or the entire school and, what is more, the ways of planning for and working in regular teaching.

Due to the deteriorated economic situation in Swedish schools a tendency to give up those pupils who appeared to have learning difficulties requiering extraordinary resources, was remarkable. It was questioned by some of the interviewees if it was worthwhile allocating extra resources to this group at the cost of resources for those who were supposed to have longer learning odds.
The most common reason for pupils receiving special education appears to be that they exhibit difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics. It also turns out that the proportion of pupils with socioemotional problems, who need special education is steadily increasing. Troublesome pupils often create such difficulties in the classroom that the regular teacher needs help to master the class. An essential responsibility resting on the

special education teachers thus is to help the class teachers to solve acute situations by separating the pupil from his/her class.

Many special education teachers express experiences of conflict as they are expected to give pupils with special educational needs basic skills and knowledge, and at the same time to get them prepared to go back to the ordinary class after some period of extra training. The two aims are not possible to comply with at the same time. Another dilemma is that they have to be aware of the risk that regular teachers want special educational support for pupils as a cover for a tacit desire to get rid of the problem. This inofficial discourse appears to be part of the inherent anomalies in the comprehensive school system and thus special education serves different and more or less hidden purposes.

This study also indicates that special education often works as a self-contained body within the school. The special education pupils often recieve the same, though a simplified version of the curriculum as their peers. Teaching is executed at a slower pace and with immense patience from the special education teacher, though more or less segregated from the ongoing work taking place in the regular classroom. Still there is no clearly outspoken hope for the target students to catch up to the "average" level of knowledge and skills. Notwithstanding statements in national decrees and guidelines concerning e.g. university programs for special education teachers, special educational competence is frequently utilized in a restrictedly and stereotyped manner. A main task seems to be to keep pupils apart either in order to protect the ²special needs pupil² from an hostile environment or protect the work in the classroom from disturbing elements. A common outcome of this pull-out system is labelling, or segregating classification, which may serve other more doubtful purposes than educational and appearing to be very hard to get rid of.

Our findings suggest that special education should be characterized as a fully integrated part of schools' educational practices thus contributing with deeper knowledge, by which pupils' difficulties can be understood as consequences from something more than just individual characteristics and so called deviances. This means that the connection (or lack of connection) between special and regular education needs to be on focus. Only then the functions, roles and effects of special education can be fully understood.

It also appears that definitions of target groups for special needs education are more or less decided randomly. Especially so, if they are related to patterns of resource allocation between and within schools. Our study implicates, that it is worthwhile going into further details on these matters by more intensive studies of school planning and working processes, including the consequences of these matters for special education.

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Tomas Englund, 1996: **The tasks of educational research - to develop knowledge about socialization and communication as meaning-creating processes.** Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 1, No 1, Pp 40-53. Stockholm . ISSN 1401-6788. (inaugural lecture)

In my view, Swedish educational research has for a long time neglected the study of socialization and communication as meaning-creating processes. In

the last decade, however, two approaches within educational research have tried to develop this theme. The first of these is a sociocultural approach to learning, which has evolved from the work of a research group concerned with learning and organizing the world about us.

The second approach, which is dealt with more extensively in this paper, involves a sociopolitical perspective on teaching and education. This perspective places the creation of meaning in a context which implies a sense of community, while viewing the constitution and the limits of the community as contingent, rather than given.

Among the communitarian forerunners of this approach, mention may be made of Aristotle and Hegel. It also has later, modern antecedents within the sociology of knowledge, such as Durkheim's view of the moral meaning of socialization and Mannheim's perception of world-views as expressions of ongoing struggles between social forces. Other important sources of inspiration are pragmatists like Dewey and Mead, who stress the communicative character of socialization processes.

The sociopolitical perspective on teaching and education is elaborated through two questions, first stated in my dissertation 'Curriculum as a Political Problem' (Englund, T. 1986: Curriculum as a Political Problem. Changing Educational Conceptions with Special Reference to Citizenship Education. Uppsala/Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell/Studentlitteratur) the institutional question and the question of selection of content. The key term as regards the first question is the civic curriculum code, historically constituted by political democracy, public education as a social citizenship right for every child, and a common curriculum. The civic curriculum code implies that the curriculum is a political compromise and that there is room for different interpretations. The key terms concerning the second question, that of selection, are the determinants of citizenship education and the three conceptions/metadiscourses of education: patriarchal, scientific-rational and democratic.

Research on the selection question since 1986 is exemplified by completed dissertations and ongoing research by myself and colleagues within the research group 'The content of socialization and dimensions of citizenship'. These studies can be characterized as operating within the fields of curriculum theory/history, didactics and text analysis.

The institutional question, for a long time settled (in Sweden) with reference to the civic curriculum code, has been given new preconditions in recent years by an educational policy which permits and even encourages private schools, and by a view of education as a civil citizenship right for parents etc. The rhetoric of 'freedom of choice' also has certain consequences in education.

However, an alternative, and traditional, rhetoric can also be presented as a contrast. This contrast makes the parental right look more problematic.

the right of the child to encounter the pluralist society within the individual school	**vs**	the right for parents to decide the values governing the socialization of their children
<="" td="">= public education		<="" td="">= private education

By linking my analysis of the institutional question to recent political philosophy, and especially to the 'communitarian' movement, it is possible to sketch out a new set of questions relating to the needs of the multicultural and pluralist society: Who should have the authority to decide on educational issues? Is education a public question or a private one? For which community, if any, is education intended?

Special reference is made to what Seyla Benhabib (1994: Autonomi och gemenskap. Kommunikativ etik, feminism och postmodernism. Göteborg: Daidalos) characterizes as the 'participationist' communitarian view, represented by Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer, which sees 'the problem of modernity less in the loss of a sense of belonging, oneness and solidarity but more in the sense of a loss of political agency and efficacy' (Benhabib 1994, p. 77).

Finally, I once again refer to some of the closing words of my dissertation, in which I quote James Giarelli (1983: The public, the state and the civic education. I Bagley, A. (red): Civic Learning in Teacher Education. College of Education, University of Minnesota: Society of Professors of Education (SPE) Monograph Series) on the tasks of teacher education and the research associated with it. If the task of teachers is to create preconditions for developing 'reasonable citizens discharging their civic purpose, the formation of new publics' (Giarelli 1983, p. 35, cf. Englund 1986, p. 329), what is the task of research into (teacher) education?

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