

Leva och lära demokrati?

En etnografisk studie i två gymnasieprogram

Carina Hjelmér

Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i N320, Naturvetarhuset, fredagen den 18 januari, kl. 10:00. Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Maj Asplund Carlsson,
Institutionen för individ och samhälle, Högskolan Väst.



Institutionen för tillämpad utbildningsvetenskap
Umeå universitet
Umeå 2012

Organization

Umeå University
Department of Applied
Educational Science

Document type

Doctoral thesis

Date of publication

21 December 2012

Author

Carina Hjelmér

Title

Live and learn democracy? An ethnographic study in two upper secondary school programmes

Abstract

The aim of this study is to acquire knowledge regarding democratic education in upper secondary school programmes with different gender and social class profiles. It covers the teaching in and about democracy, pupils' power-positions and their attempts to affect routine school activities. A particular focus of attention was processes of influence, through which the pupils themselves pursue issues in school. The analysis is based on theories and previous research focused on gender and class perspectives of fostering democracy. Basil Bernstein's theories regarding power, control and pedagogic codes, in combination with feminist theories (principally those of Arnot, Reay, Skeggs, Gordon and Walkerdine), form the basis of the theoretical framework. Ethnographic methods have been applied, including participatory observations, conversations, interviews, and analysis of relevant documents over one academic year. Two Swedish upper secondary school classes were followed: one from the vocational Child and Recreation Programme and one from the academic Natural Science Programme. Teaching students about democracy and invitations for them to exert influence appeared generally to be unplanned and were marginalised in school. The few invitations that occurred had an individual stamp and focused on pupils' choices, responsibilities and duties, rather than on their rights in school. Democracy was presented in the form of facts about formal democracy and formal participation in democracy in the future, while a more critical attitude and possible influence strategies for youths were marginalised. Pupils in both classes wished and attempted to influence teaching, primarily through informal means. There were, however, significant differences between the classes in what they were able to influence. Analysis of pupils' voices in relation to the pedagogic context revealed that the power relationships in these influence processes depend partly on the focal academic subject. More importantly, they also differ between the upper secondary school programs, which differ in strength of classification (*sensu* Bernstein), demands, pace and difficulty levels. These differences are related, in turn, to whether the programmes are intended to prepare the pupils for higher education and/or a vocation after school. Generally, the Child and Recreation pupils exerted influence more successfully when they wished to reduce the pace and difficulty of lessons than when they wished to get more out of their education, while the opposite applied to the Natural Science class. Who had influence over what was principally related to the programmes' gender and class profiles and the pupils' expected positions in society.

Keywords

Pupil influence, pupil voice, democratic education, democracy fostering, Swedish upper secondary school, gender, class.

Language

Swedish with an
English summary

ISBN

978-91-7459-514-7

ISSN

1650-8858

Number of pages

224