Den subtila ojämlikheten
Om grundskolors materiella förutsättningar och elevers utbildningsmöjligheter

Pär Isling Poromaa

Akademisk avhandling

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

Fakultetsopponent: Professor, Nihad Bunar,
Avdelningen för barn- och ungdomsvetenskap, Stockholms universitet, Sverige.
The aim of this thesis is to examine compulsory schools’ material conditions in relation to students’ learning opportunities and schools staffs’ opportunities to educate. The thesis consists of four published peer-reviewed articles. The empirical data was collected through extensive fieldwork during 2010-2011 in three Swedish schools (ages 14-15), characterized by different social demographics. The material is primarily classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and policy documents. Analysis in the thesis draws mainly on Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, but also on contemporary developments institutional habitus by Diane Reay and positional capital by Jacques Lévy. Also, materiality as an educational concept is used to reflect and discuss schools’ prerequisites as institutions of education. The first article investigates how school practice emerges for pupils and the importance it has on their perceptions of their own lives in the school, it also considers and discusses the utility of the theoretical tool school habitus. The study was furthermore a critical examination of the reproductive and/or social levelling effects that school practice could have on pupils. The second article explores and compares the schools’ access to ICT and classroom teaching. The third article examines the role of the family and its importance for school staff and pupils in the daily operations of the school. In addition, it scrutinizes how socioeconomic conditions affect the middle- and working-class schools’ abilities to navigate in relation to families. The fourth article examines material conditions in all three schools with a focus on pupils and school staffs’ perceptions and actions in school practices, and how materiality shapes schools’ institutional habitus. The analysis displays that schools’ materiality has major significance for the forms of institutional habitus and which ideals and values about education are developed in the different schools. It also displays that schools’ material conditions are closely interwoven with pupils’ educational backgrounds and the socioeconomic structure of the local neighbourhood. Schools’ material preconditions affect the pedagogical work of the teachers in classrooms and principals’ acting space to follow and implement the schools’ missions according to steering documents. Viewed as preworld, the local area and resources in the schools shape pupils’ sense of worthiness and thus their visions of a possible future in regard to educational and working life carriers. The thesis discusses and concludes that the title The Subtle Inequality illustrate a process where phenomenon such as school choice, teacher shortage or schools’ abilities to compete are taken for granted. They are seen as “natural” and given, thus they hide the existing, objective material preconditions as the sources that shape differences in the educational system. To overcome these differences, the thesis reflects on the need to give all schools in Sweden equal material starting points.

**Keywords:** institutional habitus, materiality, pedagogy, compulsory school, social class

**Language:** Swedish

**ISBN:** 978-91-7601-450-9

**ISSN:** 0281-6768

**Number of pages:** 92 + 4 papers