



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

A SCHOOL SUBJECT UNDER PRESSURE

Understanding the changing means and ends of Swedish physical education and health

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i Hörsal F, Hum.D.220 - Hjortronlandet, Humanisthuset, fredagen den 24 maj, kl. 10:00.

Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor, Kjersti Mordal Moen,

Seksjon for idrett og kroppsøving/Høgskolen i Innlandet, Elverum, Norge.

Organization

Umeå University
Department of Education

Document type

Doctoral thesis

Date of publication

03 May 2024

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Title

A school subject under pressure- Understanding the changing means and ends of Swedish physical education and health.

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with exploring changes in the organization of Swedish PE, seeking to understand why certain aspects of the subject undergo alterations while others remain relatively stable. The ongoing debate surrounding the need for change in PE has placed the subject in a vulnerable position, susceptible to influence from various interest groups, and more likely to change according to their demands. Despite existing research focusing on various aspects of change within the subject, there remains a gap in knowledge concerning how underlying ideas regarding the purpose and realization of PE are incorporated into its means and ends. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to understand how shared ideas of appropriate practices in PE contribute to altered or retained organizational principles, with potential consequences for how education is realized. Employing institutional theory, the first research question examines how the research field of PE shapes legitimacy in practice, by identifying 15 dominant research topics. The second research question seeks to understand PE teachers' actions within a broader societal context. This exploration demonstrates how four institutional logics guide PE teachers' decision-making processes. In relation to the third research question, an institutional work perspective sheds light on processes driving certain actions towards change. Through interviews with school leaders, the results highlight four types of institutional work employed as they navigate government-initiated policy. The fourth and final research question delves into how PE teachers navigate the diverse institutional pressures affecting both symbolic and material conditions for implementing change. Employing an institutional logics perspective, the findings show that PE teachers respond to the various pressures in four different ways. The discussion scrutinizes how the actions of organizational members influence institutional structures and vice versa, enabling both change and stability within PE.

Keywords

Physical education, organizational institutionalism, institutional logics, institutional work, organizational change, policy implementation

Language

English

ISBN

print: 978-91-8070-369-7
PDF: 978-91-8070-370-3

ISSN

0281-6768

Number of pages

118 + 4 papers