



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# MÅL, MATEMATIK OCH MENING

## Om identitet i mötet med gymnasieskolans yrkesprogram

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### Akademisk avhandling

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Goals, mathematics and meaning –  
about identity in the meeting with upper secondary school's vocational program

**Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to contribute knowledge about vocational students' encounters with upper secondary school, with a particular focus on mathematics and students' ability to achieve the goals. Central is students' identity formation in the environment that the upper secondary school's vocational education entails. The thesis presents two studies that build on each other: The first study examines school staff's (teachers, student health and principals) descriptions of what may affect vocational students' goal fulfillment. Based on the results the second study examines students' own stories with focus on students' identity formation, analyzing their narratives based on four dimensions; personal-, social-, subject- and professional dimensions.

Overall, the results show that other aspects than subject-didactic factors seem to play an important role in vocational students' goal fulfillment in mathematics. The identity formation seems to be one such aspect: Mathematics failures during former school, the importance of vocational students' sense of belonging as well as prevailing discourses in school and society about vocational education and the subject of mathematics, seem to have a significant impact on students' identity formation.

Being a student in upper secondary vocational education encompasses a web of relationships and connections between personal identity, social identity, subject identity, and professional identity, which means that learning and development takes place in all these four dimensions. Therefore, social and emotional processes as well as students' identity formation should not be forgotten in the discussion about how vocational students' goal fulfillment in mathematics can be improved. Conclusions that can be drawn are that if school difficulties arise, i.e. vocational students are at risk of not reaching the goals, supportive efforts should focus on all four dimensions of vocational student identity.

**Keywords**

Identity, mathematics, vocational education, VET, upper secondary school, narrative

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