

## English summaries

**Ann-Christine Vallberg Roth & Annika Månsson, 2008: Individual development plans as expressions of regulated childhood – equivalence with variation/ Individuella utvecklingsplaner som uttryck för reglerad barndom – Likriktning med variation/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 13, No 2, pp 81–102. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

In Sweden individualization is highlighted in the 1998 curriculum for preschool and school, and individual development plans begin to appear on the municipal level in the late 1990s. Individual development plans, which are occasionally designed as *agreements-contracts* and signed by parents/carers, teachers and children, may be seen as the strictest kind of regulation on the individual level in the history of preschool and compulsory school. This is interesting, since we are talking about a deregulated school these days. Regulation seems to have changed in character, away from school towards individuals and from school regulation towards individual regulation and self-regulation. The phenomenon of *individual development plans* is spreading to various sectors and social spaces and tends to cover large parts of children's lives as well as those of adults.

On 1 January 2006, individual development plans (IDPs) were made obligatory in the Swedish compulsory school in an addition to the Compulsory School Act (2005). This means that teachers in the compulsory school are responsible for establishing individual development plans for all pupils in the compulsory school from year 1 to year 9 in connection with development talks. Teachers are to compile this document in a dialogue with the parent/carer and the pupil. The most important reasons for introducing these plans were to make it possible for a larger number of pupils to reach the national goals set up in the curricula and syllabi and for parents/carers to obtain an increased influence on the content of pupils' work at school.

According to the recommendations and directions of the Swedish National Agency for Education (2005), the individual development plans are to set up goals for what the pupils should achieve in the short-term as well as in the long-term perspective. They should also concretely describe what efforts should be made by the school, pupils and parents/carers in order for the pupils to be successful in their schoolwork.

Although preschool and preschool classes are not regulated by the additions to the Compulsory School Act, they have been setting up individual development plans on the basis of existing municipal and local initiatives since the late

1990s. In the last five years, the introduction of individual development plans into preschool has increased from 10 to 48 percent of the Swedish municipalities. According to the Swedish National Agency of Education, preschool is not to »establish individual development plans against the parents' wishes».

The aim of this article is to study individual development plans (IDPs) as an expression of a regulated childhood and institutional practice. An individual development plan is a phenomenon that has an impact on the individual's possibilities to act as a subject within the framework of societal structures, institutional practice and current ideologies. In previous articles we have studied individual development plans as a phenomenon of time, society and school with a focus on IDP templates that had not been completed. It is now essential to proceed to discussing the goals and content of individual development plans that have actually been completed and compiled.

What content is chosen and constructed in individual development plans for children in preschool and preschool classes? What influence and responsibilities do children, parents/carers and teachers seem to have in compiling individual development plans? What attitudes to children, learning and assessment are expressed in the individual development plans? What expressions of children's possible identities and subject positions can be discerned? All these questions can be coordinated in a critical didactic perspective. In sum, children are studied as subjects in relation to content, form and assessment in the individual development plans.

Guiding question: »What critical didactic signs can be discerned in individual development plans for younger children?»

The IDP material was collected in October 2006 in three urban municipalities and one rural municipality in southern Sweden. The three urban municipalities comprised municipal areas that were ethnically relatively homogeneous and heterogeneous, respectively. The material consists of 82 randomly chosen plans for children in preschool and preschool classes.

Even though we are not dealing with exactly identical types of plans and documents, we can observe that there seems to be a transnational trend and a tendency towards similar standardized systems of documentation, contracts and tools for regulation on the individual level. In English-speaking countries the denomination IEP, or Individual Educational Plans/Programmes, is used.

As we interpret it, this is mainly a counterpart of programs of measures, since it occurs in texts about special education. IDPs and programs of measures are frequently similar and, in many cases, identical documents under different headings. Individual diary is another concept used in British preschool activities. »A profile of each child and their progress is kept in their individual diary which is available at all times to the parent/carer». In Norway the concept of ILP, or *individuelle laereplaner* or *individuelle opplaeringsplaner*, is used. Like IEPs, they seem to have a background in special education. The Danish counterpart is called *individuelle laeseplaner*. The IDP movement in Sweden is characterized by »forward-regulating» plans as public docu-

ments for all children (as opposed to programs of measures for certain children only, or retrospective and summative assessment).

The concept of *regulation* may refer to »giving rules for«, »arranging«, »adjusting«, »correcting«. In our study, the concept of regulation is linked to the steering documents for preschool and school at different levels, with a focus on the individual level. Individual development plans can be seen as expressions of legal as well as ideological regulation. Sahlin-Andersson discusses the emergence of the auditing society with transnational regulation. She claims that the new steering system (decentralization, goal-related education and local leadership) has resulted in the emergence of a new kind of regulation focusing on auditing the achievements of local practice, which results in a great and increasing amount of documentation, evaluation and standardization.

This new kind of regulation is characterized by being transnational rather than national, being linked to expertise rather than democracy and developing in networks rather than hierarchies. Moreover, it is voluntary rather than obligatory to a large extent, and the people who are regulated are often those who have requested the new regulation most eagerly. According to this researcher, the rules emerge in an interplay between the regulators and those who are regulated, and their implementation requires the active participation of the parties regulated. The characteristics of this transnational regulation can be related to our study, where different parties are to cooperate in establishing individual development plans, and where the initiative initially emerged on the municipal and local levels.

The analysis in the present study falls into three distinctive main categories, or »normalities«, that display varying types of regulation. The concept of *normality* refers to what is common as well as to what can be interpreted as being desirable in the individual development plans: (i) Normal children regulated by school subjects – in relatively homogeneous areas in urban municipalities. (ii) Socially and monolingually regulated multicultural children – in relatively heterogeneous areas in urban municipalities. (iii) Monocultural children primarily regulated by need – in rural municipalities.

We would like to underline that the individual development plans reveal a high degree of steering and standardized templates with different orientations as well as desirable self-regulation and a low degree of influence on the part of children and parents/carers. Overall, something of a multi-contextual regulation of childhood and institutional practice emerges. The children's subject formation seems to be a matter of equivalence with variations depending on where they happen to grow up.

We ask ourselves in what ways these shifting normalities lay the foundations for limiting or expanding the possibilities of being active in society and whether this creates inequality or equality in the so-called *knowledge society*. Contrary to national directives that individual children's achievements should not be evaluated and assessed, assessment in the plans that are oriented towards school subjects tend to be linked to grades. Assessment in the plans oriented towards social training and primarily care-oriented plans, however,

tends to be linked to personality and is sometimes on the verge of violating integrity.

The Barnombudsmannen (children's ombudsman) emphasizes that the skills required from children and young people in our days must be highlighted and discussed. Since, according to the Barnombudsmannen, society is changing rapidly, it is placing increasing demands on everyone's ability to search and critically analyze information, take initiatives, question and present information orally as well as in written language. Our study of a number of individual development plans indicates that laying the foundations for certain of these abilities and skills is lacking to a large extent. We ask ourselves whether these extremely standardized documents contribute to the development of critically-creative citizens.

**Ulrik Lögdlund, 2008: Adult Learning Centres as Brokers of Higher Education/ Lärcentra som mäklare av högre utbildning/. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, Vol 13, No 2, pp 103–122. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

Adult education has been subjected to sweeping changes in recent decades. One of the more far-reaching reformations of adult education in Sweden has been the *Adult Education Initiative* lasting until 2002. The initiative aimed to raise the level of education, lower unemployment and reduce educational divisions as well as promote growth strategies. In the wake of governmental initiatives, a large number of education providers have been formed, bringing extended access to adult education at secondary and compulsory school levels.

This development includes an establishment of a large number of adult learning centres distributing higher education to rural districts that lack access to nearby educational facilities. In 2001, approximately 45.000 individuals were engaged in studies at 225 local adult learning centres and in 2004 almost 90 percent of the municipalities in Sweden had some kind of centre established for the provision of adult education. (This includes adult learning centres, higher education centres, centres of knowledge, centres of competency, etc.)

This article examines the relation between five adult learning centres and the organisations in the public and private sectors in a region in southern Sweden. Policy documents present adult learning centres as environments of learning and strategic nodes in the economy, which organise and distribute higher education locally. The terms *broker* and *engine* are used throughout as well as *meeting place*, indicating the role of the adult learning centre as a focal point of diverse interests. It has been proposed that opportunities for local access to university studies will enhance the attractiveness of rural districts, promote schooling and the economy and prevent individuals and businesses from moving away from municipality.

Assessments made point out how the organisation of adult learning centres run into difficulties in introducing adult education in the market and establishing good relations to business. This may be an issue of varying interests of actors on the market taking different standpoints on education and competency. The relation between these actors may also be weak due to diversity in the demand and supply of education or because of inadequate strategies aimed at establishing contacts activities. The aim of this study is to examine these three aspects of the relation between adult learning centres and the organisations in the public and private sectors. What are the different perspectives on education, competency and learning and how could different interests impact on the role of the adult learning centre as a broker of higher education?

The starting point of this article is a case in which five municipalities collaborated in organising municipal adult learning centres in a region. The project began in 2001 and finished in 2006; its concept was to develop a material structure of educational facilities. The study is based on interviews conducted in 2005 and 2006 with eight project actors and seven representatives of business and politics. In addition to interviews the project's policy documents, comprehensive application forms and minutes of meetings have also been scrutinised for better understanding the activity of the project. Finally, a survey addressing all the organisations in the public and private sectors in the region was launched.

The response frequency was 319 out of a total of 2005 possible responses. The distribution of responses in the case of organisations comprises private employers (72 percent), public services (22 percent) and others (6 percent; this involves e.g. voluntary organisations with at least one employee). The majority of the responses came from the manufacturing industry. This category is also the main target group indicated by the project organisation and even though a low percentage of responses make it impossible to further generalise to the total population the survey nevertheless indicates attitudes towards adult education, competency and qualifications among respondents.

The results from the study show how the occurrence of personnel training becomes a mediator of symbolic values to the public and private sectors in the region. 74 per cent of business and 82 per cent of the public service organisations claim that opportunities for personnel training improve the status of the organisation. Legitimacy of one's own organisation is achieved by a correspondence of values between the organisation and surrounding actor networks, such as public authorities, the mass media and trade unions.

A similar attitude is displayed by representatives of the adult learning centre as well as by politicians, who see education as being valuable for the individual's freedom of action on the labour market and beneficial for the development of local business and economy. Both the survey and the interviews point to a shared progressive perspective among the different actor networks in which access to services provided by the adult learning centres benefits individuals, business and municipalities.

The common standpoint presented above is less obvious when we refer to the practice of education. The businesses community seems more interested in

the cost of production rather than in symbolic values gained from having personnel training. 66 per cent of businesses argue that personnel training have to lead to increased productivity to compensate for costs arising from training. The effectiveness of educational investments and the earning capacity of personnel training are more important to business than for public authorities. The nature of knowledge and the place of learning are other issues that complicate the practice of adult learning centres. Industry asserts that learning is intimately connected to work and that knowledge is bound to the context or the situation. Public service organisations lean towards a different opinion, seeing knowledge as obtainable in situations outside the direct place of work.

Turning to the question of supply and demand of education in the local market, the study uncovers significant differences between what is offered and what is asked for. The adult learning centres provide courses in higher education that have a common or a generalised character, such as computer knowledge, pedagogy, care/nursing and economy. This kind of general knowledge seems to be much more appealing to public service organisations than to trade and industry.

In contrast to the actual supply of courses offered by the adult learning centres, the survey shows how the demand for competency by industrial enterprises, agriculture, restaurants and hotels is closely related to practice. This form of expert knowledge is not provided by the adult learning organisation. The results from the questionnaire also show how more than half the respondents feel that the supply of courses is not applicable to their own business. The survey points to a lack of balance, which also affects the relation between the adult learning centres and the public and private sectors in the region.

As regards the question of what contacts have been made between the adult learning centre and the business community, the results of the survey show a low degree of activity. The questionnaire shows how less than 16 per cent of the public and private sectors have come into contact with the adult learning centre in their municipality in the last four years. According to the survey, public services utilise adult learning centres to a greater extent than trade and industry. It is also the former category that is more interested in future cooperation with the local adult learning centre.

Interviews with representatives of the adult learning centres give several reasons for a weak relationship. First, they claim that the business community is short-sighted in that it does not see the benefits of education in the long run. Second, personnel training is an issue of increased costs rather than the benefits for the individual and the enterprise itself. Finally, representatives of the adult learning centres argue that business community ignores the change of generations and they experience a »sluggishness» in marketing mainly due to the use of different language based on differing ideological standpoints.

This article sheds light on three aspects of a specific link between different actor-networks; the adult learning centres' organisation and the public and private sectors. The composition of an actor-network can be explained in terms of a series of heterogeneous elements that are linked to one another for

a certain period of time. The links that bind an actor-network require a two-way flow in order to maintain good relations. A lack of similar interests may weaken the flow of existing links and result in obstacles to establishing new links.

The study shows how the adult learning centre organisation fails to act as a broker due to diverse interests between the actor-networks involved. The business community claims that personnel training is a question of productivity and learning a process intimately connected to practice. Trade and industry organisations show little interest in courses offered by the educational actor-networks. The adult learning centres cannot redirect the supply of courses and are subject to the whims of the university colleges in the region. We can see how the adult learning centre encounters one-way flows from two directions and their attempts to create new links could be made almost impossible due to an inability to exert influence on surrounding actor-networks.

Another problem when trying to establish new links to business arises when using a single uniform marketing strategy for different actor-networks. Courses that seem appealing to public service organisations make less sense to trade and industry and vice versa. The role of the adult learning centre is forced into that of a mediator, which challenges the concept of being a broker of knowledge and competency.