

## English summaries

**Angerd Eilard, 2004: Gender and ethnicity in a reader in the Swedish multi-ethnic school /Genus och etnicitet i en »läsebok» i den svenska mångetniska skolan/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 9, No 4, pp 241–262. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

In this article I explore the constructions of gender and ethnicity in a reader used in the first grade of the Swedish comprehensive school. This school is officially recognised as multiethnic. Consequently my purpose is also to give an example of how an analysis of textbook content in intercultural settings can be carried out.

There are two main reasons for my choice of book: it is quite new, and it depicts the contemporary multicultural Swedish school setting that is the focus of my interest. New and complex social structures, ultimately related to globalisation and international migration, are reflected in Swedish schools today. The schools have become meeting places for different cultural views and various aspects of the emerging social patterns, not least regarding expressions of gender. The main characters in the analysed book, a girl and a boy, are shown in interaction with other children of apparently different ethnic and social backgrounds. At first glance, therefore, this book gives the impression of being a good example of a kind of symbolically represented equal diversity that makes it accessible to pupils/readers irrespective of gender and ethnicity.

However, the pedagogical framework of educational situations means that hegemonic views are mediated in school and are further reinforced by similar massmedial messages in the children's everyday life. Although multiethnic schools have been the focus of recent Swedish research, only a small amount of this research actually explores the impact of the majority culture on Swedish education. I agree that it is time to question our own ideals and norms instead of focusing on what, from an ethnocentric perspective, seem to be deviations. As I try to demonstrate this is important, not least to be able to understand the consequences of certain symbolic representations in school-books and the mass media.

All the circumstances mentioned above encourage an approach of discourse analysis. Thus, inspired by critical discourse analysis and postcolonial theory, I deconstruct text and illustrations as a whole – and as part of a greater societal context – in order to make visible messages, ideals and values hidden in the so-called preferred (hegemonic) readings as well as the way they all combine to construct gender and ethnicity in the analysed text. This does not, however, mean that the messages I find are the same ones that the pupils receive. Their

interpretations depend, among other things, on the actual teaching situation and maybe, above all, on other (similar or contradictory) messages from the environment. Nevertheless, my reading shows how, despite good intentions, unconscious attitudes in the deep structures of our own culture may find their expression and be reproduced in texts, even schoolbooks, e.g. as stereotypes and certain patterns and »truths» that are taken for granted. At the same time, my reading demonstrates how both historical and contemporary discourses may influence text content and create contradictory meanings and identities as well as certain power relations.

I use quotations from the analysed book to focus on how various aspects of a Swedish principle of equality rather take on the function of a mandatory homogenizing practice, thus resulting in an average kind of ideal that is reproduced and made visible in the symbolic gender representations in this reader. I also focus on the way (gendered) ethnicity is constructed as a deviation and as a picture of »the others», contrasted to an unarticulated adult Western male norm and therefore inevitably positioned as subordinate in relation to it.

All the children in the book are partly stereotyped in the story, as a consequence of the narrative. In the case of majority-ethnic children this does not seem to matter, except for the book's tomboy, who is negatively stereotyped in contrast to »normal» girls. As we cannot associate the stereotypes to any other group, they do not have any real function other than a purely stylistic one. However, in the portrayal of the pathetic Black macho boy and the veiled Muslim girl, two traditional gendered immigrant stereotypes are reproduced, with their origins in the colonial and oriental discourses, respectively. These are a couple of surviving historical discourses that are frequently contrasted, throughout the story, with the contemporary Swedish discourses of emancipation and equality, thus creating a picture of »we» and »they», where »we» stands for modernity and open-mindedness, while »they» represents backwardness, poverty and oppression. The preferred reading automatically transforms Swedish ways of behaving into a norm and something »better».

The minority children's popularity among their classmates, and with the two main characters in particular, is indeed emphasized in different ways in the story, and they are described as nice and friendly. However, this is not sufficient to change the stereotyped pictures that have already emerged. The unarticulated contrasts in relation to the »normal Swedish» create a moral undertone, recognized as a »poor them» attitude. Children who are not fully assimilated in the Swedish culture are to be pitied.

This power relation between »us» and »them» is reinforced, as the protagonists seem to be middleclass majority children. In addition, all the alternative boy and, especially, girl positions are more or less ridiculed or suppressed. Consequently few alternatives remain other than Swedish hegemonic masculinity, as represented by the male protagonist, and a traditional feminine role, partly represented by the female protagonist (who, on the other hand, like the tomboy, also stands for oppressed resistance) and reinforced by a common Western young-girl ideal, articulated in some illustra-

tions. In my opinion, the difference is that the position of the boys is more flexible and open to variation than that of the girls. The boys are allowed to be childish and soft, while the girls tend to be encouraged to be women, or at least teenagers.

In sum, the analysis of this reader can, above all, be seen as a manifest example of how an undoubtedly well-intended message of diversity, i.e. an attempt at breaking class and gender barriers, may simultaneously reproduce an implicit educative message including a Eurocentric as well as an androcentric order. Certain parts of the text actually contradict the vision of equality as articulated in the Swedish curriculum.

**Stefan Thorpenberg, 2004: Conceptions of quality concerning educational science /Kvalitetsuppfattningar om utbildningsvetenskap: En intervjustudie/. Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 9, No 4, pp 263–286. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

A Swedish White Paper from 1999 suggested the establishment of a Committee for Educational Science, which should be incorporated in the new Swedish Research Council. An earlier White Paper (Forskning 2000) had suggested that the Council should be divided into four different scientific councils, each promoting and supporting one research area, humanities and social science, medicine, natural science, and engineering science, though the present Council has merged natural and engineering science, resulting in only three research areas and a Committee for Educational Science has also been introduced, to promote the new research area of educational science, a term which has a broader meaning than research in Pedagogics. The new term implied that not only researchers in Pedagogics could apply for funding from the Committee, instead all who were involved in research on education and teaching had the right to do so.

This decision has a background in Swedish research policy, which for some years has been supported by ideas of the advantage of trans-disciplinary collaborations and the need for closer contacts between researchers and financiers. These advantages were also thought to be achieved by the construction of a new research area. The changes have been supported by a view of general changes of research and society, expressed in the theories of *Mode 2* and *Triple helix*, but these terms have their focus on natural science, medicine and technology. The disciplinary isolation in these areas has sometimes been huge compared to Pedagogics in Sweden, which always has had a closer contact with the school system, and consequently has been generally more »applied».

The changes in the research systems, and the construction of research fields, were from the Government's side clearly said intended to make it easier for

Government to steer university research. The other scientific councils in the Research Council had also members representing society in general, like trade unions etc., but in the Committee for Educational Sciences these members were representing sector councils, which in Sweden have a close contact with government authorities. This design of the Committee for Educational Science leads to an interest to investigate how close the contacts with Government are and the view of the Committee being a place where different interests in research meet.

The term used is taken from Karin Knorr-Cetina who saw the world outside the research labs as a »trans-epistemic arena«, where researchers had to negotiate their views and interests in research with Government and industry. Knorr-Cetina's view of a trans-epistemic arena was somewhat vague, and the article at hand tries to develop a more precise model which defines the social interests in science according to a cultural and structural model. The different academic disciplines are seen as having different »cultural« habits in publishing and organization etc., which are not seen as depending on an external society. However, the same disciplines also have different contacts with the surrounding society; they are »structurally« dependent.

The study covered 13 interviewees who were researchers and committee members, and they were asked questions on their view of the general development of the research landscape, on the changes of the researcher's role, the importance of independence towards financiers and the role for the new Research Council. Finally questions on the outcome of the construction of the new research area, and the Committee for Education Science, were asked.

The view of a cultural and structural dependence for researchers, described above, has some explanatory power for this study: the researchers often saw the importance of being independent and critical, which is close to what social scientists has seen as their specific role for some centuries. At the same time they were not hostile towards applied research and their activities having an impact on the school system in Sweden. Many were however skeptical towards theories on Mode 2 and Triple helix, which were often said being better suited to technological and natural science. Since research in Pedagogics has had an applied character for many years, it was instead said to be important to develop its scientific value.

When asked about the aim for their present research many had relevance oriented answers; it should have some importance for the development of the Swedish school system etc. When instead asked what »good research« was, a majority answered with scientific criterias, i.e. originality and basic theoretical issues were seen as »good research«. Only the committee members who were representing sector councils continued to give relevance oriented answers, a finding which is supporting the idea of the Committee for Educational Science being a »trans-epistemic arena« where different social interests in research will meet.

Due to the broader definition of education research the allocation of resources in the new Committee was criticized by some of the interviewees. It was said that the idea of a new research field meant less resources to the discipline of Pedagogics that was weak already from the start, and that the allocation of

resources to other disciplines was just a sign of its weakness. This view had no support among the members of the Committee, who often instead saw this critique being biased by a professional interest. The Committee members often explained the result of the allocation as a misunderstanding of the aims for it, and were satisfied with a number of less than 50% of applications coming from researchers in Pedagogics. Researchers who were not members of the Committee instead often explained the result as a struggle between different theoretical directions.

The socio-cultural perspective was strong, as was postmodern discourse analysis and qualitative methods, but empirical studies, quantitative and statistical methods were weaker for the moment. The opinion that the allocation was a fraud was also heard among the interviewees. With the international changes of the research financing systems, and the gradual transition from faculty funding to external resources which always must be applied for, the view that allocation committees are biased or steered by personal interests is quite common. This view must be seen as a threat to the national research systems. Researchers must have a general trust for the working procedures in the allocation committees; they will not spend weeks and months on an application if they suspect it will not be treated in a fair and unbiased manner. A development towards fewer applications to the national Science Council would probably lead to a final collapse of the idea of a »research push» for society's further development.

**Anita Nordzell & Mats Börjesson, 2004: »Softies», »technique freaks», »new staff» and »characters who do as they please»: categorization in school leader management meetings /Flummare, matte-no-nördar, nyanställda och dom som gör som dom vill: Kategorisering i en grundskolas ledningsgruppsmöten/ Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige, Vol 9, No 4, pp 287–307. Stockholm. ISSN 1401-6788**

In this article we analyse the conversations that take place in school leader management meetings. Our focus is on the speakers' use of categorization in conversation, with particular attention given to how school leaders describe themselves and other individuals and groups in the school. We identify the categories used in the conversations as well as the activities, attributes and qualities that the participants ascribe and attach to the categories.

The understanding of what constitutes an organization differs from one person to the next and has been studied from various perspectives. In this article we are not concerned with the formal organization as shown on paper, nor do we proceed from the assumption that organization is something constructed in advance. We begin rather with the notion that it is people who contrive and discursively shape the organization. Social objects or phenomena

such as organizations have no obvious or uncomplicated existence independent of our understanding of them (Chia 2000). They must, from our constantly changing experience, be conceptually established and named to gain general currency in the interactive exchange between people. It is through this process of differentiating, establishing, naming, labeling, classifying and relating that social reality is systematically organized.

The notion that reality is socially constructed has become an accepted truth, but how that reality is constructed and what upholds, maintains and supports the construction is less studied (Chia 2000, Börjesson 2003). There has been an increase in recent years of research on talk and interaction in institutional settings (see e.g. Drew & Heritage 1992, Mäkitalo, 2002). When it comes to the study of school administrators, however, research on talk and interaction is relatively undeveloped, even though much of what takes place among people in the school is based on linguistic interaction (see Lepper 2000). A case in point is school leaders' use of categorization in the talk they produce in school organizations (e.g. Lepper 2000).

According to Boden (1994 p 8), talk is »the lifeblood of all organizations«, and we can arrive at an understanding of an organization in action through the talk of the organization's members. We suggest here that studying how the members of an organization talk about themselves and others provides an opportunity to see how the organization is constructed and reconstructed in the interaction among its participants. We study talk as action, how talk is used in everyday conversations, how people actively and creatively use talk as a resource in concrete interaction, how »truth« is constructed, and how the participants, individually and sometimes jointly, create categories in their conversations.

The empirical material consists of seven recorded school leader management meetings (a total of eight hours) in a Swedish nine-year compulsory school (the pupils are between six and sixteen years old). Attending the meetings are a representative of the headmaster and seven team leaders. The team leaders are teachers with a special responsibility for a group of teachers, a team; the team leaders regularly take part in the school leader management meetings. For the analysis we have used Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) together with sequence analysis from Conversation Analysis (CA).

In our analysis of some conversation sequences, we show how categories are used and created in the interactions among the members at the meeting. We show that categorization work is of great importance in the interaction between the members, and that the members orient their actions (responses or lack of response) in relation to the categorizations made by preceding speakers. Different categories are used to create understandings about the questions being discussed. The school leaders used, for example, the categories *new staff* and *characters who do as they please* in a discussion about teachers who have violated the rules of the school. Teachers in the two categories used the staff room for personal development meetings with pupils, which was depicted as an illegitimate action in the management meetings.

The division of a group of teachers who perform the same illegitimate action into two categories throws new light on our understanding of the two cate-

gories. *New staff* becomes a category comprising individuals who violate the rules of the school, but the category is not on an equal footing with *characters who do as they please*. The latter is understood as comprising individuals who should know the rules, and a negative moral meaning is ascribed to their action. It is not so immoral to violate the rules if you are ›new staff‹. But it is if you are one of the »characters who do as they please«.

Several categorizations are made in the school leaders conversations, and in another conversation sequence the analysis shows how the categories *softies* and *technique freaks* are produced in the negotiation about what can be characterized as a »good teacher« or a »good pedagogue«. In the conversations the *technique freaks* among the teachers become those who are more »subject-matter oriented« and who want to give the pupils »real teaching«, whereas the *softies* stand for »team building«. What can be ascribed or attributed to a »good teacher« is negotiated in the talk during the management meetings; it is not established in advance. In the attributions that school leaders give the teachers, categorizations of the school leaders themselves are produced, for example as moral leaders who can correct other teachers and ensure that the rules of the school are followed.

In addition to the categorizations of individuals and groups, spatial and temporal categories are used to establish which actions are legitimate and which are illegitimate.

The meaning, characteristics and actions ascribed to the categories change in different contexts; the essence of the categories is not established in advance. Besides ›Formal‹ categories, which can shift in meaning, new categories are constructed with a special meaning to fit the moment. Categories are used in different ways in different situations to create different actions in the interaction. The school leaders discuss, negotiate and legitimize the meaning of the categories, and the linguistic categories are available as rhetorical resources in the interaction. Through the everyday language of the school, we can see how individuals organize the ›reality‹ of which they are a part. What emerges is an image of a »school in action« as practised and expressed in everyday life. A school in constant change, continually being created, constructed and coming alive »emerges« in the school leaders' co-produced talk.