

English summaries

Helena Hill: “Norm critical vaccine” - Norm criticism and norm critical pedagogy in reports and advices from the Swedish National Agency for Education 2009 – 2014

The article examines recommendations and advices from the Swedish National Agency for Education to schools and preschools that they should use “norm critical pedagogy” to promote equality and prevent discrimination and harassment. Based on a poststructuralist understanding of policy and political governance, I do a policy analysis (WPR) of texts dealing with equality, discrimination, and harassment between 2009 and 2014 published by the National Agency for Education. The results show that norm critical pedagogy is often presented as a technicalized method that should be used and that it is both "easy" and "simple". Criticism of norms is even described as a "vaccine" against discrimination. The problem that is constructed and taken for granted in the texts is that teachers and students are unaware of existing norms and creating awareness of norms therefore becomes an important method. The underlying premise is that everyone, both teachers and students, has the same interest in transforming discriminatory norms and thus there is a risk that power relations and unequal structural conditions are made invisible.

Robert Ohlsson: The concept of meaning in Education: A reflection on domains and modalities of meaning

The concept of meaning is often presented as closely related to learning and central when defining the subject of education as scientific discipline. The

purpose of the article is to provide an overview of how this concept is construed in different theoretical traditions that are of importance to educational research and to shed light on important similarities and differences between these conceptualisations. In order to organize the overview two analytical distinctions are initially made. The first distinguishes between three *domains of meaning* that are addressed in theories of (1) signs and language use, (2) lifeworld experiences, and (3) human actions and temporality. The second distinction concerns how meaning in each domain can be regarded as (a) latent or immanent, or as (b) realised, actualised or thematised. The presentation of notions regarding meaning and meaning making in the first domain mainly draws on the traditions of semiotics and hermeneutics that focus on signs, texts, discourse and speech acts. 'Meaning potentials' of linguistic signs and texts are here differentiated from actualised meaning in discourse and interpretations of texts. Turning to the second domain of meaning, the article relates how phenomenological and socio-cultural theories construe meaning making as a feature of how the individual experience the world. Focus is placed on the phenomenological notion of 'intentionality', and the socio-cultural understanding of how cultural tools 'mediate' sense making which render objects intelligible. 'Apophantic meaning' of equipment and 'affordances' of objects and cultural tools are taken to exemplify the immanent modality of meaning within this domain. This is juxtaposed to the realized meaning of a reflexive attitude, and the meaning that is actualised in application of cultural tools in perspectival acts of meaning making. The third domain of meaning includes meaning as something that is constitutive of human actions as well as a result of interpretation of actions and events. Theories that suggest how reasons and intentions are intrinsically related to the meaning of actions are presented, as well as narrative theory that accounts for how meaning is conferred to actions and events when they are represented as part of a larger narrative. Meaning in unreflective actions and narrative structure on the one hand, and interpretations of actions on the other, here corresponds to different modalities of meaning. In the final section of the article these different ways that meaning and meaning making are conceptualized theoretically are discussed in terms of similarities which include: co-constitution of meaning, the role of mediational means, and the situated nature and perspectival relativity of meaning. The article concludes by claiming the centrality of the concepts of meaning and meaning making for both definitions of the object of study in educational research and methodological reflection on this research. Meaning is posited as an inevitable feature of learning processes where the individual interacts with the world in ways that lead to changes in her capacities or dispositions. It is claimed that meaning making, in some form, is part of these interactions and that the concept of meaning therefore is essential for defining the research objects of education as a scientific

discipline. Further, since scientific praxis can be understood as a project of interpretation, the concept of meaning is also indispensable to the methodological reflection on educational research, whether the aim of research is formulated in terms of ‘understanding’ or ‘explanation’.

Anna Ehrlin and Ulrika Jepson Wigg: Ticking Boxes – a Punctual Perspective Grammar in Revising Reception Plans for Newly Arrived Students

The purpose of this article is to describe and analyse what teachers view as important to develop in their work with transitions between introductory group and ordinary class for newly arrived students, when formulating this is in the school’s plan for reception. The research questions guiding the analysis are: 1. What perspectives are included and excluded when the plans for reception are formulated? 2. What impact does policy documents regarding newly arrived students have on the teachers’ work with the schools’ plans for reception?

The analysis utilizes a curriculum theory perspective focusing on the terms the formulation arena, the transformation arena, and the realisation arena. National curricula can be said to be political compromises regarding what knowledge and values schools should promote, and this level is called the formulation arena. The documents formulated on the formulation arena must then be interpreted by the teachers, and this interpretation takes place in the transformation arena. The understanding of policy, which is created at the transformation arena, must then be realised by the individual teacher in the classroom. School development, in our interpretation, takes place in the transformation arena, and with the help of von Wrights (2000) concepts punctual and relational perspectives, we have analysed the grammar that guides the teachers’ transformation work. A punctual perspective is prevalent in many policy documents and answers the question of *what* the student is. A relational perspective, in contrast, offers insights into *who* the student is. A focus on the student as a *what*, gives the teacher tools for assessing what has already taken place, whereas a focus on the student as a *who*, creates possibilities for a meeting here and now, and opens up for unexpected things in the future.

In Sweden, all schools are mandated to have a plan for receiving newly arrived students. Schools also have to assess newly arrived students’ knowledge before placing them in a class. Swedish authorities, among others the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, have found that education for newly arrived students overall is lacking in equality and comparability. The empirical

material in this article was gathered during a research- and development program aimed at schools developing their work with newly arrived students. The program involved a research institute, three schools in a municipality and us two researchers, and took place over 3 years. During the program, we were involved both as researchers and as responsible for meetings in a form of collaboration called *research circles*. It is a method often used in collaborations between schools and researchers. The idea that underpins the method is that the practitioners themselves must define areas of development, and the researcher is a resource during the meetings and not merely an observer. The material analysed consists of the recorded research circle meetings, our field notes and the documents developed by the participants.

When the teachers and principals involved in the R & D-program talked about the newly arrived students and their teaching, they did so in a way that clearly demonstrates a relational perspective. The analysis also shows that the teachers express both a punctual and relational perspective in their discussions when revising the plans for reception. Despite this, the guidelines and policy on the formulation arena, and the demands on documents that can be “ticked” and easily evaluated, steers the teachers towards a punctual perspective. That creates a focus on the student as a *what* rather than a *who*. The demand to formulate plans according to the guidelines does not seem to leave room for creating routines that emphasize the student as a *who*. Further, the analysis shows that a punctual perspective risks enhancing a deficit model thinking in relation to newly arrived students.