

Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik

Gymnasielärares mentorshandlingar

En verksamhetsteoretisk studie
om lärararbete i förändring

av

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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Abstract

Title: Upper Secondary Teachers' Mentoring Actions.
An Activity-Theoretical Study about Changes in Teachers' Work.
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This thesis sheds light on Swedish teachers' work in upper secondary school during times of restructuring. The aim of the study is to examine what teachers try to accomplish in their activities besides classroom teaching, here termed mentoring work. Departing from a dialectical activity-theoretical approach, the study analyses teachers' work in a cultural historical context. Today virtually all Swedish 16-20-year-olds are engaged in upper secondary education, and over recent decades the school system has also taken a neo-liberal turn, including, for example, market-based customer choice and individualisation. The data consists of interviews and field observations of twenty-four teachers' everyday actions at two different upper secondary schools, as well as policy documents.

The results reveal how political and societal expectations have created an ambiguous instability in teachers' work that is hard for teachers to handle. The mentoring work tends to be time-consuming, unpredictable, and hard to define and schedule. The reason is that the teachers' mentoring actions to a great extent are influenced by the mentoring students' individual wishes and needs. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates how teachers' mentoring actions are directed towards two different, partly overlapping contradictory objects. Firstly, the teachers try to stabilise school activity by trying to integrate the mentoring students into the ordinary education provided. Secondly, the teachers try at the same time to create an individualised flexible school organisation, to prevent dropouts and ensure the economic survival of the school. These overlapping contradictory objects demonstrate how the mentoring actions to a great extent are unpredictable and control division of labour, content and time in teachers' work.