

## ABSTRACT

Title: Adolescents' perceptions of school and reasons for learning  
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The first purpose of this thesis is to study how 13-year old pupils in Sweden perceive school and education and what kind of own reasons (i.e. motives and goals) they have for going to school. The aim is, in particular, to examine, whether there exist general categories of motives and goals and thus different types of pupil motivation for going to school. The second purpose is to study how general categories of motives and goals relate to achievement over time. The thesis aims in addition to problematize different perspectives on pupil motivation and achievement and to discuss complementary perspectives and changes in the methods used. The first purpose has been investigated by the use of an open-ended question: "Why do all children in Sweden go to school?" while the second one has been investigated by a standardized achievement test in mathematics from grade 6 and grades in fourteen school subjects from grade 8 in the Swedish compulsory school. The nationally representative data was collected in 1995 within the Swedish longitudinal project "Evaluation Through Follow Up" and Statistics Sweden.

The content analysis of the responses to the open-ended question (n=7391 or 97%) suggests that pupils hold different types of motivation towards school and education. Two of them concern going to school in order to fulfil own short- or long-term motives and goals such as learning, improvement, self-development and making choices with respect to one's life as adult. Two other types of motivation concern going to school in order to fulfil the demands or expectations set by others (e.g. the state, parents and the labour market), or the demands set by oneself in order to prevent different feared-for-situations in the future such as unemployment and social failure. Some groups of pupils are found to integrate various internal and external sources of motivation with respect to going to school and try to pursue a mixture of motives and goals simultaneously (e.g. learning and performance goals). Others are critical towards school and education and argue that school is meaningless to their life in a here-and-now as well as in a long-term perspective.

The different types of motivation that pupils hold towards school and education are found to relate differentially to achievement in grade 6 and 8 and to gender. The most successful pupils both in grade 6 and 8 are those who try to fulfil the demands and expectations set by others and who also try to prevent own feared-for situations with respect to the future to become reality. The next most successful pupils are those who try to fulfil externally and internally motivated reasons for going to school simultaneously (e.g. performance and learning goals). These motivation groups are found to comprise more girls than boys. Moreover, pupils with future orientations show higher achievements in school in general than pupils who are here-and-now focused. The type of motivation that shows the biggest conceptual similarities with intrinsic motivation and mastery goal orientation (i.e. pupils who quest for self-determination, mastery and improvement in a here-and-now perspective) is negatively related to achievement in grade 6 and 8. Pupils with this orientation demonstrate the lowest achievement over time together with pupils demonstrating a critical, or rejecting attitude towards school and education. These motivation groups are found to comprise more boys than girls.

These results suggest that there is a need for developing comprehensive theoretical frameworks and to study pupil motivation as a multi-dimensional construct situated in a here-and-now as well as in a future perspective.