
Abstract

Title: They know what they are talking about. An interview study concerning pupil notions of the concepts of power and social change.

Language: Swedish with an English summary

Keywords: Pupil conceptions, abstract concepts; power, social change, phenomenography, sociocultural theory, hermeneutic theory of cognition, qualitative research, interviews, qualitative differences, learning situations.

ISBN: 91-7346-443-0

Problems and Aims

The aim of the study is to describe pupil conceptions of two central social science concepts, namely power and social change, with regard to sixteen year old pupils in their final year of compulsory school. The idea of taking on such a study emanated from experiences as a teacher in compulsory schools, senior high-schools and teacher education. These personal experiences led me to reflect on how the students perceived abstract words of different kinds, which we were using in teaching. Misgivings arose now and then, that the students understanding of these words was often inadequate. It therefore was of interest to find out what their own conceptions were.

Method

The theoretical approach is labelled as a mix of phenomenography and sociocultural theory. These two approaches are related. Phenomenography emphasises that knowledge arises by way of the individuals interactions in, and with, the world. The conceptions, then formed, depend on the sociocultural environment, which constitutes their field of experience. The method used is the semi-structured interview, which, provided it is efficiently executed, enables access to authentic conceptions. 24 interviews with 16 year olds, each one lasting about an hour, were carried out.
