

Abstract

Title: Border-less teacher. Four studies of foreign teachers in Swedish schools.

Language: Swedish

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'Foreign teachers' are teachers born and educated in their respective country of origin, where they worked as teachers before they moved to Sweden. The four studies comprising the empirical core of the thesis focus on the foreign teachers' 'translation' of professional competence from one cultural and societal context to another. 'Translation' is used as a metaphor throughout the thesis. The 'text' to be translated is teaching competence. The 'reader' is the school and society in Sweden.

The overall aim of the thesis is to analyse and to understand the strategies necessary for foreign teachers to succeed as 'translators' and become successful teachers in school in Sweden. The aim is also to analyse what is needed from the Swedish educational institutions to facilitate the 'translation' and to analyse individual and structural obstacles. The analyses start from some common concepts in the political and ideological discourses about foreigners or 'immigrants'. The concepts are diversity, integration and interculturalism.

Approximately 60 foreign teachers, 10 mentors, 10 teacher educators and 15 school-leaders have been interviewed in different contexts. Other sources of information have been a questionnaire to 102 foreign teachers one to five years after their complementary education, and assessments by teacher educators and school-leaders of video-recorded sequences of lessons from five employed foreign teachers. The interpretations in all four studies have a hermeneutic character.

Foreign teachers are great assets to Swedish schools if they manage to 'translate' their teaching competence to the new cultural context. There is more to a 'translation' than just the language of instruction. There is a demand for knowledge of the Swedish national curriculum, which states the aims, goals and values specific to the new country. The language of instruction is the single most important and also most difficult factor to cope with in the view of foreign teachers. The perspective of the 'circle of readers' or the 'receivers' of the foreign teacher's work and actions is discussed in terms of two central concepts, *Diversity* and *Integration*. Different parts of the 'translator' competence are summed up in terms of intercultural competence. The need for Sweden to regard foreign teachers as a valuable asset in the multicultural society is stated. These teachers can give Swedish pupils a glimpse of the multicultural adult society in Sweden. They are also needed as identification models in schools, where pupils seldom meet adults with their own ethnic and linguistic background.