

# Abstract

Title: Qualification and Citizenship Education. A study of reform texts with reference to the social mission of the upper secondary school.

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The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the mission of the upper secondary school is expressed and how it changes in accordance with how the abilities the students are expected to develop. I have foremost studied official texts linked to the reform of the upper secondary school during two different periods, the 1960s and the 2000s. I have also compared the texts on education to other policy documents formulated in other social environments during the same period. This comparison has the intention of trying to understand the main changes in the upper secondary school in a broader social context. I was then able to tackle the questions that emerged while speaking with students, teachers, parents and politicians when checking the grading system drawn up by the National Agency for Education; i.e. the starting point of this study.

What kind of social project is school part of? What kind of people and what type of society is school contributing to developing? Important questions are: What kind of competences and abilities are stated as being most important? How are these motivated, how is the argumentation taking form and to which contexts are they related? Does the meaning of the words capacity or ability vary over time? Which competences and abilities are said to be new?

The method used is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The two analytical units framing the study are The Qualification Discourse and The Citizenship Education Discourse. The ideas of Competence and Ability are parts in the struggle to carry out the social mission of the upper secondary school. The result shows that "Åtta vägar till kunskap – en ny struktur för gymnasieskolan" (SOU 2002: 120) could be described as a mix of four themes: Social change, uncertainty/instability, individual responsibility and knowledge as tools for developing competence related to lifelong learning. The study reflects upon competences launched as new, compared to older documents on learning: the capacity for acquiring new knowledge, information retrieval and processing, environment information, computer skills, a reflecting attitude, creativity, flexibility, independence, working under uncertain conditions plus talent for entrepreneurial skills. Here, it is also possible to find an explanation of the increasing use of the terms Ability and Competence. By making the student responsible for the result of his/her learning, the focus is on what knowledge contributes to developing: i.e. Ability and Competence. Competence is the term that has increased the most in frequency in education documents.

The Discourse of Qualification is the main theme of the documents from the years just before and after 2000. These documents are characterized by the ideas of new liberalism in contrast to documents from the 1960s based on social democracy/social liberal traditions. This Discourse of Qualification is articulated in a partially new way where The Discourse of Citizenship Education contributes to creating a hybrid discourse.