

Abstract

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The research problem in this study concerns a certain kind of documentation for pupils who, for different reasons, are considered to be in need of special support. This documentation was given the name Individual Education Plan (IEP). This thesis focuses on how these IEPs are constructed in the school's practice. An IEP is a written document formulated on the basis of discussions between school staff and the pupil and his/her parents. A central goal of collaboration in drawing up an IEP is to increase the participation of pupils and parents in the process (Board of Education, 2001). As regards the study as a whole, the research interest is focused on attempting to understand the process whereby IEPs are drawn up on the basis of different interests and in different local contexts.

The study is divided into two parts, a quantitative questionnaire study and qualitative case studies. First, the questionnaire study was constructed, which then partly formed the basis of the selection of six different case studies.

When it comes to the theoretical perspective as regards the study of the different dialogs during the construction of IEPs, I take the view of language as dialogical (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986) as my starting point. When analysing the dialogs, Goffman's theatre metaphor and his concepts of *team*, *regions*, *back-stage* and *front-stage* have been used as analytical tools together with his conceptual framework for so-called *facework* (Goffman, 1959/1974). An ethnographic method is used in the case studies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). More specifically, I apply a microethnographic approach focusing on the analysis of dialogs (Bergqvist, 1990; Bryman, 2004).

It is concluded that when teachers assess the pupil's and the parent's participation as relatively substantial, they consider at the same time that they have succeeded in reaching the goals laid down to a much larger degree than would otherwise have been the case. The political goal of a greater degree of participation seems to be a relevant one. It is also concluded that there are different ways of talking and thinking in the team. These different discourses influence the ability of pupils and parents to participate. It is also considered that the process of drawing up IEPs most often consists of two different dialogs. In these "double dialogs", parents' and pupils' influence in the process is limited. Important decisions are usually made prior to the meeting they participate in although this is not mentioned openly. Some of these dialogs hide the fact that the staff are "pursuing a specific line of argumentation" and that the aim of the dialog is, rather, to get the parent and the pupil to agree to the measures proposed. A conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that a lot remains to be done if the political goal is to have a real impact on the school's everyday activities.