

Institutionen för pedagogik, kommunikation och lärande  
Project work, independence and critical thinking

av

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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## Abstract

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This thesis studies how students do projects in a Swedish upper secondary school. The students have to produce products and at the same time prove them self as independent in relation to the teachers, and negotiate the requirements of the project setting and the written instructions within the group. The study focuses on what comes out as problematic for the students, how they solve these dilemma situations and what resources are used in order to do so.

A choice was made only to analyse student group interaction in parts of the project process where the teachers were not physically present thus filling a research gap.

The empirical material was collected during three years in six secondary school classes through filmed sessions of groups or pairs working with their project.

Each of the four articles primarily focuses a special dilemma; structure, independence, instructions and critical thinking. By combining Goffman's frame analysis with the concepts of risk and uncertainty from a Risk – society perspective, issues related to what it means to do project work as independent, critical 21st-century learner are illustrated and discussed.

The choice to look only at situations in which students have to manage without the aid of a physically present teacher illuminates several practical consequences like an unwillingness to go to the teacher and ask questions and an increased concentration on and interpretation of the written instructions. A development of Miller and Parlett's (1974) discussion of student approach to cues are suggested. The concept of the cue choosing student are constructed in order to better respond to demands from an individualised interaction society. The study also emphasises how the students have to balance different frameworks in order to be both authors and assessed students. By implementing a risk society perspective new ways of analysing and understanding independence and classroom interaction is suggested and a recontextualization of critical thinking proposed.