

Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession

Mellan osynlighet och avvikelser
Nyanlända elever med kort skolbakgrund i
grundskolans senare årskurser

av

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Abstract

Title: Between invisibility and deviation – Newly arrived students with limited school background in the later grades of compulsory school
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The education of newly arrived students in Swedish schools has garnered increased attention in research, media, and policy discussions in the last couple of decades. This doctoral thesis explores the educational situation for a subgroup of these students, namely newly arrived students in the later grades (6-9) of compulsory school with limited educational experience. The dissertation investigates how newly arrived students with limited educational backgrounds are positioned, and whether and how they are established as a distinct group with particular needs. The four articles included in this dissertation explore whether and how the educational backgrounds of newly arrived students are made significant within educational practices, how students and teachers navigate potential discrepancies between student needs and educational practices and what is thereby made (im)possible in the school's work with newly arrived students with a limited school background.

The material was produced through ethnographic fieldwork in the later grades (6-9) at three compulsory schools and through the analysis of policy texts. The material was analyzed using analytical tools from theories of normalization (e.g., Foucault, 1987; 1998; Butler, 2004; 2009) and stigma (Goffman, 1990), and critical perspectives on age (Ambjörnsson & Jönsson, 2010) and race (Bonilla-Silva, 2015).

The findings show that the positioning of newly arrived students with limited school background is complex: on the one hand, they are seen as challenging the education system, having both comprehensive and specific needs. On the other hand, these students tended to be obscured within the broader category of newly arrived students, thus primarily positioned as “slow” or “weak” Swedish learners. Students' educational experiences are thus both acknowledged and made invisible. The findings further indicate a connection between the obscuring of educational background and a silence regarding subject knowledge that permeates parts of the analyzed material. This silence meant that when newly arrived students with limited schooling and their needs were discussed, it was common that other discourses, such as culture, cognitive ability, and inclusion, were articulated and dominated the conversation. In the thesis, it is argued that the utilization of a knowledge discourse can contribute to a demystification of newly arrived students with limited school background.