Stina Thorstensson is a registered nurse and a registered midwife. She has experience from working within different parts of health care, mainly childbearing as antenatal, delivery and maternity care, but also with youth centres and management. Since 2003, Stina works as a lecturer at School of Life Sciences, University of Skövde, and during the last five years she has been teaching midwife and nurse students, while pursuing research studies at School of Health and Medical Sciences, Örebro University.

Support in childbearing is important to women, their partners and their families, and this thesis focuses on professional support. Professional support in childbearing can promote a positive childbirth experience and a positive development of mothering and fathering. However, women and their partners sometimes experience a lack of support in childbearing. Since support is an interactive process, professional support was explored from parents’, students’ and professionals’ perspective. The process of childbearing is complex and offering professional support can be described as a challenging act of balance. Professionals need to balance the woman’s support needs as well as those of her partner. Professionals also need to be aware of all different aspects of support, such as emotional, appraisal, informative and instrumental. A combination of evidence-based lectures, collegial discussions and individual reflection contribute to develop professional supportive skills, which may buffer negative effects of caesarean birth in relation to the baby.

This thesis highlights the importance of professional support in childbearing for women and their partners as well as the relation to the baby. The result of this thesis also emphasizes the significance of education and reflection to enhance professionals’ supportive skills, and for professionals to reflect about their attitude and which ideology should rule their practice.