Yrkesutbildning, klass och kunskap
En studie om sociala och politiska implikationer av innehållets organisering i yrkesorienterad utbildning med fokus på 2011 års gymnasiereform

av

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Akademisk avhandling

Avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i Pedagogik, som kommer att försvaras offentligt fredag den 27 september 2013 kl. 13.15, Hörsal P2, Örebro universitet

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Abstract


The overall purpose of this thesis is to critically contextualise the organization of content in Swedish upper-secondary vocational education by highlighting its social and political implications in relation to social class. Policy documents concerning the content of vocational education in Sweden from 1971 to 2011 serve as the main empirical source, with particular attention given to the reform of 2011 (Gy11). The thesis is comprised of four studies that each represents a different context that reveals social and political implications of the selection and organisation of content in Gy11. The content structure of Gy11 is thus analysed in relation to (a) the school’s role of fostering democratic citizens and the overarching societal function of education, (b) knowledge distribution among social classes, (c) a class context, including key historical and contemporary reforms, and (d) a modern historical context, focusing on how two previous structural reforms (1971 and 1994) organised power and control over educational content.

The study results show that, in terms of its content structure and underlying principles, Gy11 represents a historical break with previous reforms in many respects. Fundamental organising principles of past reforms, such as students’ preparation for active citizenship, critical thinking and entry to higher education, have been given less importance while the content is more context-bound than in previous reforms. The Gy11 reform can thus be seen as a part of a broader policy trend that is detracting from earlier efforts to give all social classes equal access to an equivalent education and reduce social imbalances in education. This new way of shaping vocational education is, it is argued, likely to exacerbate class inequalities by both reducing social mobility and rendering knowledge distribution in society more asymmetric.

Keywords: curriculum theory, vocational education, class, education policy, knowledge, curriculum codes, upper-secondary school, Bernstein, Englund, Olin Wright.

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