

ABSTRACT

Title: Excluding for inclusion? Negotiating school careers and identities in pupil welfare settings in the Swedish school
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The purpose of the present study is to contribute to the understanding of institutional reasoning and categorising practices in schools when dealing with pupils who are experiencing difficulties. The empirical analyses focus on three aspects of the pupil welfare system in the Swedish school. The first concerns categorising practices in the context of pupil welfare team meetings. This is a central mechanism for institutional problem-solving and decision-making in relation to pupils with alleged difficulties. The second issue concerns the uses of the particular diagnosis of ADHD/Damp. This category/diagnosis has been chosen as interesting to study, since it is frequently used when accounting for pupils' difficulties. It is important to see when, and how, it is invoked as a resource for making decisions and for understanding pupils' assumed difficulties. This issue has been studied in pupil welfare team meetings and in pupil welfare conferences. In the latter context, institutional representatives discuss with the parents issues that relate to their child. Finally, the third issue concerns the pedagogical response to the diagnosis ADHD/Damp. The focus here has been on exploring, by means of a case study, the pedagogical practices developed in school in order to match the diagnosis.

The theoretical perspective employed is a sociocultural/dialogical one. A feature of a sociocultural perspective is the interest in the sociogenesis of discursive tools, and how categories are used to mediate between interests of collectives and individuals.

The second part of this thesis contains the four studies where the research is reported. In study I, the analyses of the pupil welfare team meetings show that certain institutional categories are well established as functional tools when accounting for a 'pupil in need of special support'. In the second study, the *in situ* use of the biomedical diagnosis ADHD/Damp is scrutinized. It was found that the category ADHD/Damp is used to account for a broad range of problems. A shared understanding of the problem as being of an organic nature was easily established and adhered to. The third study concerns the interactive work between the institution and the parents. It is illustrated how the institutional voice gains priority over the arguments produced within the voice of everyday life used by the parents. In study IV, the pedagogical practices deployed to match the diagnosis ADHD/Damp are explored. The concept of 'structure' was found to play an important role as an argument for organizing activities in routinised patterns. To what extent this will prepare the pupils for a return to their regular class, which is the objective, remains an open question.

It is concluded that institutional reasoning in pupil welfare predominantly moves within a tradition of argumentation, which systematically individualises pupils' problems, and where biomedical accounts of difficulties are seen as valid. The discussions rarely consider other alternatives, or elaborate on how school practices could be organised so as to meet the needs of these pupils and improve their possibilities of returning to their regular class.