

Institutionen för pedagogik, kommunikation och lärande

# Bäst i klassen?

Lärare och elever i svenska och europeiska policytexter

av

Lena Sjöberg

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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## Abstract

Title: Top of the Class? Teachers and pupils in Swedish and European policy texts  
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This thesis takes its departure in the recent criticism directed to the Swedish school system and its schools, teachers and pupils, but especially the epidemic of policies produced in order to develop and improve Swedish schools, in particular after the change of government in 2006.

The general aim of this thesis is to study how teachers and pupils are represented, and thus constructed, regulated and positioned in a number of current key policy texts. The study also involves a discussion of the construction and regulation practices regarding the school, and its role in society.

The main context for the study is policy texts and policy practices related to teacher education. Four studies form the cornerstone of the thesis. Through these policy texts different institutional practices are analyzed. These range from European union policy to examination data from a local teacher education institution in Sweden.

A main source of inspiration to the theoretical framework of the study has been provided by the work of Michel Foucault. However, in addition to Foucault's constructionist and post-structural basis, theoretical and methodological approaches drawn from Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, Mark Olssen's social-materialist analysis of policy and Stephen J Ball's policy sociology are also included.

The first study examines the constructions and governing technologies in four policy texts within the European Union working programme 'Education 2010'. The second study takes a historical perspective in the construction of teachers and pupils, based on teacher education policy text since 1948, and how the ideal teacher, pupil and school are constructed and positioned genealogically. The third study explores the discursive notions of teacher professionalism and how the regulation of teachers operates through this and other discursive practices by the Swedish government and the Teacher union (Läraryrket) during two different time periods, 1995-2000 and 2007-2008. The final study examines student teachers' examination assignments, as a local policy practice, and how the student teachers position the ideal pupil and themselves as ideal teachers. It examines how different policy discourses operate in relation to positioning practices.

The thesis shows that current neoliberal discourse order in educational policy today is partly challenged by neoconservative rationalities. Secondly, the thesis shows how each teacher and pupil is governed through several discourses, governing technologies and governing techniques, and how these three entities function relationally in the governing of the subject. In common for discourses, governing technologies and techniques are that they are often very 'seductively packaged', which implies that it is almost impossible to resist and oppose them. Finally I claim that the current discourse order, and its discourses, and governing technologies and techniques imply structural inequalities for teachers, but especially between different pupil groups.