

DEN FÖRHANDLADE MAKTEN

Kulturella värdekonflikter i den svenska skolan

Studier i politik 127

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

för filosofie doktorsexamen i statsvetenskap som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden vid Göteborgs universitet framlägges till offentlig granskning fredagen den 18 november 2011, kl 13.15 i sal 10, universitetsbyggnaden, Vasaparken, Göteborg

Abstract

Sjögren, Fredrik *Negotiated Power. Cultural Value Conflicts in Swedish Compulsory Schools* (Swedish title: *Den förhandlade makten. Värdekonflikter i den svenska skolan*). Swedish text. English summary. Göteborg Studies in Politics 127. 247 pages. Göteborg 2011. ISBN 978-91-89246-53-9. ISSN 0346-5942.

This dissertation argues that, in order to understand how teachers in compulsory Swedish schools deal with what they regard to be cultural value conflicts, an important aspect is negotiations about definitions between teachers, pupils and parents, this directing focus towards power relations in the actual schools rather than formal decision making procedures. The aim is to elaborate a theory on the foundation of power theories that provides an understanding of the negotiation process and its effects in relation to cultural value conflicts.

In relation to the four faces of power (decision making, agenda setting, preference shaping, and Foucauldian power analytics) the dissertation views the first three aspects as the force that makes the negotiation come about. For analyzing the actual power structure of the negotiation as well as the effects of the negotiation, it relies on a Foucauldian perspective. The dissertation views the process when the definitions come about as a framing process, but connected to a Foucauldian perspective rather than an agenda setting perspective. It therefore focuses on normalization and disciplinarian processes. The dissertation identifies five different frames in earlier research: individual sphere, public sphere, religious sphere, sexuality and gender sphere, and science sphere. It is argued that those spheres are abstract entities that provide particularities with a meaning by including them in existing story lines. By doing so, they also provide possible solutions, point out individuals or groups as authorities, and decide the hierarchy of ethical and normative goals.

It is further argued that, in order to understand the negotiation, insights into the overall context of Swedish schools are important, and especially the structures vertical autonomy (the teacher's dependence on the state), horizontal autonomy (the teacher's dependence on parents and pupils), teacher role, and ideas about cultural diversity and ethnicity.

Long semi structured interviews have been made with a total of 39 teachers from four different schools. Three different types of questions are studied: societal value questions (as democratic values and opinions on sexuality), knowledge questions and questions about pupils' behaviour in classroom.

The findings show that there is no hegemonic discourse in Swedish schools regarding the issues studied; similar questions are frequently framed differently by different teachers and on different schools. The findings of the empirical study further indicate that many negotiations ends up with the individual frame (this is the case for all three different types of questions). It is argued that this individualization reduces potential conflicts and is therefore preferred when the actors want to connect a question to different speheres. It is also argued that the results of the framing depends on power relations: if there is a societal consensus about a phenomenon (e.g. democracy), teachers are more reluctant to frame it as an individual question. If there is no such consensus (e.g. opinions on homosexuality) the teachers are more prone to direct it to the individual sphere.

KEYWORDS: SWEDISH SCHOOLS, VALUE CONFLICTS, CULTURE, POWER, FOUCAULT, FRAMING, NEGOTIATION, LANGUAGE, SPHERES, INDIVIDUALIZATION, ADMINISTRATION REFORMS