

Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik

Curriculum in the Era of Global Development

Historical Legacies and Contemporary Approaches

av

Benjamin Knutsson

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som med tillstånd av utbildningsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid
Göteborgs universitet för vinnande av doktorsexamen i pedagogiskt arbete
framläggs till offentlig granskning

Onsdagen den 11 januari 2012, klockan 13.15 i Kjell Härnqvistsalen,
Pedagogen, hus A

Fakultetsopponent: Docent Johan Öhman, Örebro

ABSTRACT

Title: Curriculum in the Era of Global Development – Historical Legacies and Contemporary Approaches

Language: English

Keywords: Curriculum, education, didactics, global education, development cooperation, globalization, sustainable development, Policy for Global Development

ISBN: 978-91-7346-715-5

In the last decade there has been an avalanche of policies and political rhetoric worldwide, stressing the importance of equitable and sustainable global development. The Swedish Government's response has been the inception of a coherent Policy for Global Development (PGD). In the aftermath of these policy reorientations, a renewed interest in how school curricula should respond to the global challenges of our time has emerged. In Sweden, one obvious effect has been an increasing prevalence of programmes, subjects, courses and projects where global development issues constitute a central knowledge content. This knowledge content constitutes the object of study in this dissertation and throughout it is referred to as global education. Despite the invigoration of global education in recent years it is not a new phenomenon in the Swedish curriculum. There is in fact a tradition that can be traced back to the 1960s. Yet, global education in Sweden has been relatively neglected by didactic research and this thesis attempts to redress some of this neglect.

The thesis is based on two basic assumptions. Firstly, that the historical place and character of global education in the curriculum can only be understood in relation to the evolution of Swedish development cooperation. Secondly, that the curriculum should primarily be understood as a political, rather than pedagogical, problem. The overall aim of the thesis is to examine historical legacies of, and contemporary approaches to, global education in the Swedish school system. The thesis is composed of three sub-studies. The first is a desk-study, which outlines the intellectual history of development (1945-2008) with some specific references to Swedish development cooperation. The second sub-study sketches the history of global education in Sweden (1962-2008) based on documentary research and interviews with 15 informants. The third, contemporary, sub-study exposes different ways of conceptualizing and approaching global education by means of constructing a five-fold didactic typology based on interviews with 15 upper secondary school teachers. Through abductive data-theory interplay, the dissertation has further developed a theoretical and conceptual apparatus largely inspired by development theory and curriculum theory.

The dissertation can be thought of as a didactic contribution in its entirety. However, breaking it down, five basic contributions can be discerned. Firstly, a conceptual contribution is offered through the introduction of a new operational definition of global education. Secondly, some theoretical contributions are offered via the abductive process. Thirdly, a historiographic contribution is offered through the comprehensive history of global education in Sweden. Fourthly, contributions of relevance to professional practice are offered through the construction of a didactic typology and through critical input as regards Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Finally, a few policy-relevant contributions are offered in terms of critical reflections regarding Sida's information work, PGD, ESD, and international exchange programmes in the education sector.