

Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession

Skriva historia

Literacyförväntningar och elevtexter i
historieämnet på mellan- och högstadiet

av

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Abstract

Title: Writing history – literacy expectations and students’ texts in compulsory school history

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The importance of developing subject-specific literacy is emphasized in linguistic and didactic studies. This thesis contributes to the knowledge on literacy in compulsory school history, by comparing expectations for reading and text production in school years 4 and 9, as expressed through tasks and texts. The thesis consists of three empirical studies, where the first concerns text production in year 4 (10–11 years of age), while studies two and three concern the national tests for year 9 (15–16 years of age), 2013.

Study 1 analyses the resources for text production in a year 4 class producing history booklets on the Middle Ages. The results reveal two divergent teaching aims: a written practice aiming at critical awareness and an oral practice maximizing engagement and empathy. Study 2 is a critical analysis comparing subject-specific literacy expectations in the national tests for history and geography for year 9, 2013. The demands for reading longer, coherent texts are low, while the expectations for text production show the reverse pattern, with extensive demands for writing explanations and arguments. Study 3 analyses responses to a test task prompting students to critically evaluate historical documents on child labour as sources for writing. The analysis illustrates how 29 students’ use of appraisal resources affect the historical voice characterizing the texts in each group.

In sum, the results confirm previous studies by showing that the literacy expected in year 9 is considerably more subject specific than in year 4. The results reveal that students are expected to shift from retelling to discussing, explaining and evaluating historical events, a widening of the writing repertoire known from international studies, but new to Swedish studies. A general conclusion is that compulsory school teaching would benefit from focusing on how different semiotic resources are meant to support students’ text production, as well as strengthening their awareness of subject-specific features.