

A school for all, is it? On discursive dilemmas in a (im)possible value based project

The aim of this thesis is to discuss the possibility for schools in Sweden to be “a school for all”. More specifically, the study follows a four-year long project at a secondary school, aiming at implementing the idea of being “a school for all.” The Swedish education system has long engaged with the idea that education systems should be for all pupils and that teaching should be adapted according to pupils’ differential needs. There is wide recognition for such adaptive and inclusive education within Sweden and internationally. However, there is little conceptual consensus, among scholars and educators, on the practical educational and administrative characteristics of “a school for all”. This openness means that the efforts to be “for all” can be interpreted in different ways and be translated differently by actors within schools. This dissertation is based primarily on document analysis, observations, and interviews with actors related to the project. The study shows that “a school for all” is variously understood by school staff through discourses of rationality, giving rise to discursive dilemmas related to justice and inclusion. As the Swedish education system is founded on the notion of an “ideal” pupil, these dilemmas make “a school for all” a practical impossibility. This study contributes the conceptual framing of “a school for everyone’s learning”. This is supported by a model depicting the dimensions forming schools’ possibilities of being “for everyone’s learning”. Also, the discourses underlying the understanding of “a school for all” need to be discussed. The combination of these measures is suggested as a means to increase the possibilities of reaching an education system fit for all pupils. That is where the discussion needs to start. If it does not, it will be difficult to reach consensus regarding how the Swedish school will be “a school for all”.