

Chapter 1

Unfolding the context and the contents: Critical perspectives on contemporary Nordic schooling

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Nordic schooling ten years on

The Nordic countries have traditionally been regarded as archetypal representatives of social democratic welfare states. Such states are characterised by universalism whereby welfare policies target not only the neediest citizens, but also take into account the population as a whole, including high-level economic transfers and social insurance necessary for societal well-being (Esping Andersen, 1996). However, especially from the 1990s, the idea of universal welfare and education has been increasingly infused with neo-liberal ideas and technologies. Marketisation, new public management and an emphasis on individualism and individual responsibility have profoundly changed the relationship between the state and its citizens, but the extent to which this has happened and the expressions of it vary from one Nordic country to the next.

Ten years ago the volume *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges* by Nordic ethnographers analysed the Nordic situation in relation to more general European trends (Beach, Gordon and Lahelma, 2003). Based on ethnographic case studies, the authors showed how diverse educational contexts were affected by new politics that emphasised accountability, standards and individual choice. But the book also suggested that there was room for creativity and resistant agency, as well as for negotiation and withdrawal. Nordic countries still had the reputation of being equitable societies, especially in terms of gender and social class; they were still social, still democratic (Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006). Based on recent Nordic ethnographic research, and raising similar questions as those voiced in *Democratic Education: Ethnographic Challenges*, the present volume explores and discusses Nordic developments ten years on. The focus is on three of the Nordic countries: Finland, Norway and Sweden.

We begin this introductory chapter with a short overview of changes in educational politics and school practices, particularly the intersection between policies of inclusion and equality on the one hand with those of competitiveness

and excellence on the other. We briefly discuss the methodological perspectives adopted. Finally we present the chapters of the book, grouped in two thematic sections, the first on individualisation, democratisation and marketisation of education; the other on spaces, bodies and hierarchies of knowledge in producing difference.

Changes in the educational landscape

New public management technologies

The European dream of becoming 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' (European Council, 2000) has marked the transformation and modernisation of social welfare and education systems. By the late twentieth century, quantitative data in terms of administrative records, pupil testing, efficiency surveys and international projects had gained enormous influence in education systems through the work of the OECD, the European Commission and national system agencies; the creation and flow of data have thus become powerful governing tools in education (Lawn, 2013). Comparisons between pupils, costs, regions and states have grown ever more important, and particular attention has been directed towards academic standards in school and cultivating the cognitive dimensions of children. These changes have also taken place in the Nordic countries (cf., Arnesen and Lundahl, 2006).

When policies and institutional practices based on competence, efficiency and competition are stressed, ideals such as equity and social community tend to become secondary (Arnesen, 2011). Even if 'a school for all' and equality in education are still emphasised in the school curricula, performance and a range of related instruments such as national tests, benchmarking and international comparisons (e.g. PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS) tend to be at the forefront of education politics. For example, 'the competent and knowledgeable child' has become a more and more important aspect of curriculum reforms, even with regard to very young children, as in Norway (Arnesen, 2011, 2012). International comparisons have been used to construct school-in-crisis discourses, especially in Sweden and Norway, resulting in reforms such as *Knowledge Promotion* in 2006 in Norway and a number of curriculum, grading and quality assessment reforms in Sweden. Finland, with its success on the PISA tests, has been better able to resist the trans-national policy of testing and ranking. Simola et al., (2009) suggest that this is because of Finnish hostility to ranking combined with a bureaucratic tradition and a developmental approach to quality assurance

and evaluation, all strengthened by radical municipal autonomy. However, the disappointment with the latest PISA survey in 2012 has already aroused some school-in-crisis media discourses in Finland as well, even if Finland's scores—unlike those in Sweden and Norway—were still better than most countries, as emphasised in the Finnish report on PISA (Kupari et al., 2013; see also OECD, 2014).

School choice and educational markets

The extent to which Sweden, Finland and Norway have adopted school choice and market policies clearly differ, with Sweden being the extreme in this respect.¹ Within a very short period of time—the major reforms were undertaken in the 1990s—Sweden went from having a strong state-governed and uniform school system to one of the most decentralised and marketised systems in the OECD countries. Since 2000, the rapid growth of tax-funded, privately-run school companies that were allowed to extract profits for their owners is the aspect that has caught the most attention, even internationally. Equally important, however, is that *all* schools compete for students and funding (Erixon Arreman and Holm, 2011; Lundahl et al., 2013).

The growing differences between schools and pupils in terms of social composition and academic performance have been related both to changes in schools' social contexts (such as residential segregation, larger income gaps and immigration) and to the decentralisation and school choice reforms of the 1990s. The latter fosters segregation, especially as more resourceful groups of parents are in a position to make favourable choices for their children (e.g. Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012), but segregation is also promoted through school processes (e.g. Lund, 2008; Öhrn, 2012). In Finland, plans to initiate school-choice reforms similar to those in Sweden were halted when the first, highly positive PISA results were published.

Differences between schools, however, have also widened in Finland, especially through the growing profiling and specialisation of schools that started in the late 1990s (Seppänen, 2006; Rajander, 2011). Increasingly, middle-class parents are choosing classes with a special focus on such subjects as foreign languages or sciences. Most students in densely populated rural areas attend the school closest to them, but in the cities local politics are now making school choices available

1. It would be more correct to speak about quasi-markets, i.e. the establishment of market-like dynamics in the public sector with the goal of promoting choice, quality and efficiency.

in varying degrees, with significant impact on the differentiation of schools (Varjo and Kalalahti, 2011). Meanwhile, increasing spatial socio-economic and ethnic divisions contribute to segregation, even polarisation, in neighbourhoods and schools in Helsinki (Bernelius and Kauppinen, 2011). The possibility of choosing a school for one's child has had an impact on families and children by placing more emphasis on individuality; school choice represents education as a private rather than a collective good for which parents and pupils must compete, as suggested in an ethnographic study by Silja Rajander (2010).

Similar profiling and specialisation of compulsory schools does not exist in Norway. Norway has, however, witnessed repeated attempts to break up the 'unified school model' and introduce private, competition-based solutions. While the number of private actors has grown in the field of early childhood education over the last few decades, the share of free schools at compulsory and upper secondary levels is still low (Berge and Hyggen, 2011). Since 2013, with the new conservative government in Norway, steps have been taken to provide for more school choice and for private actors on the school scene.

Celebrating the competent child: Preventing and managing school failure

In Norway as well as in Sweden, early childhood education has increasingly become a strategic site for early intervention, aimed at reducing social inequalities and preventing exclusion. In a White paper entitled '... and no one was left behind' (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), it was argued that early investment in learning for young children, identifying the 'needy' and preparing them for school would prevent problems later on. Critical voices have been raised, e.g. that kindergarten seems to be moving away from the traditional social pedagogical tradition of Nordic kindergartens (Solbrekke and Østrem, 2011). Notably, there has been a shift with regard to how intervention is performed, as well as its objectives, context and knowledge basis (Arnesen, 2012; Solli, 2012). Language testing and cognitive learning goals tend to be stressed at the expense of other goals with equal educational importance (Østrem et al., 2009).

More focus on students' academic competencies and on performance that is based on common standards implies a greater risk of vulnerable students being marginalised and excluded in terms of failure in school and possibility of drop-out. Considering that school underachievement serves as a basis for social inequalities, the increasing gaps between those who succeed and those who fail in school are alarming (Bakken and Elstad, 2012). This is seen clearly in Sweden (e.g. Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012), and in Norway,

where more students than ever are leaving compulsory school without full qualifications (Bakken and Elstad, 2012). One interpretation is that the new curricula are too ambitious for a greater number of students, and the increase in special education provisions and exemption from formal assessment in some selected subjects may have been a reaction to this. The increase of students with incomplete qualifications has a distinct relationship to socio-economic status (*ibid.*, 2012). This further translates into increased risk in upper secondary education of more students dropping out early or completing school without having gained a relevant upper secondary qualification.

Bridging the gap between school and work

Employability has become a core concept of educational policies, even in the Nordic countries. Entrepreneurship has emerged as a central aspect of education in Sweden and Norway, and it is perhaps especially strong in Finland (e.g. Komulainen, Naskali, Korhonen and Keskitalo-Foley, 2011). In Finnish upper secondary education, closer relations between education and working life have become visible, especially in vocational education (Koski, 2009; Isopahkala-Bouret, Lappalainen and Lahelma, 2014).

The policies of vocational education and training in the Nordic countries have varied historically, and still do. The Finnish system of vocational education is organisationally segregated from general, academically orientated upper secondary schools in both curricular and spatial terms. It is structured rather strictly and was school-based earlier than in many other countries (Antikainen, 2006). While academic and vocational upper secondary education in Sweden has been more integrated than in Norway, Denmark and Finland, stronger demarcations between the two have been introduced since 2011 (Lundahl et al., 2010; also see the chapter by Hjelmér, Lappalainen and Rosvall in this volume). By contrast, in Norway the comprehensive system has implied more academisation of vocational education.

Dropout or, more commonly, failure to complete upper secondary school, poses a growing problem in all three countries, despite important differences with regard to the educational situations and on the labour market. Young Swedes thus run much larger risks of unemployment than Norwegian youth. Not only have the Norwegian labour market conditions been more favourable than the Swedish, but also Norway has been more proactive and has taken more comprehensive approaches to facilitate the transition between school and

work, e.g. efforts to promote life-long learning and develop special education, counselling and guidance (Lundahl, 2012).

In Finland, the contrast is striking between high academic performance and young people's well-being *vis-à-vis* their difficulties in getting established in the labour market. Finland thus shows the largest gap in the OECD countries between achievements and well-being, and the dropout and unemployment figures are high (Salmela-Aro, 2012). The Finnish Government recently expressed concern about the exclusion of young people from the labour market. In its *Development Plan for Education and Research* for the years 2011-2016 the Government included an action programme for promoting equal opportunities, with the following objective: 'The Government will undertake comprehensive action to even out gender differences in learning outcomes, participation in education and completion of studies and to minimise the effect of the socio-economic background on participation in education.' (Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, 10). In this statement gender and socio-economic background are emphasised as dimensions of inequality to be addressed, without notions to intersections with other dimensions (Lahelma, 2014).

Changed educational practices?

In this educational landscape, certain aspects stand out, such as the focus on the individual, competition, knowledge, performance and assessment. What does research say about the workings of these aspects in educational practice and what would be the implications of democratic influence? Do we find expressions of agency in terms of negotiations and resistance as in the study of 2003, *Democratic education: Ethnographic challenges?*

Education in, for and through democracy

Traditionally, democratic education has been more broadly defined in the curricula of the Nordic countries than elsewhere to mean teaching about, for and through democracy, with an emphasis on active participation by the students. International comparisons also suggest that students experience a rather open classroom climate in the Nordic context (Davies, 2002). Generally, however, Nordic studies indicate that students have rather limited options for influencing their schooling, apart from minor factors, such as the timing and sequencing of content and assignments. This is demonstrated, for example, in the chapters by Rönnlund and Anker in this book.

In all three countries student councils should constitute an arena for learning about democratic participation, an ambition that, however, seems to have remained largely unrealised (Børhaug, 2007; Council of Europe, 2011; Öhrn, Lundahl and Beach, 2011; Harinen and Halme, 2012). In Norway, for example, students may undertake initiatives and work with a broad range of school-related issues, but they have no voice in the decision-making beyond what is accepted by the school leadership (see the chapter by Anker in this volume). In its policy review on child and youth participation in Finland, the Council of Europe (2011) concluded that school councils do not exist at all school levels and, according to the children involved, often do not seem to have much power to influence decisions made in the schools.

Swedish research indicates that there are relatively few instances of formalised teaching about how young people themselves might exercise influence in school or on the wider society; rather, the teaching concerns the principles of representative democracy and its procedures and representation nationally and in the EU (Öhrn, Lundahl and Beach, 2011). Aid and advice on how to exert influence seem to be offered to the students mainly after they themselves have initiated targeted action. This kind of teaching thus presupposes student initiative, which is in line with students' views that they are responsible for exerting influence in school (*ibid.*; see also Rönnlund in this volume). Norwegian surveys of students' participation and influence show similar tendencies (Wendelborg et al., 2013).

The marketisation of Swedish schooling and the emphasis on performance and competition have resulted in new practices of student influence, stressing choice rather than voice, and a calculation of 'what's in it for me?', which governs the actions of students more than previously (*cf.*, Beach and Dovemark, 2011; Lundahl and Olson, 2013). Furthermore, both students and teachers experience rather limited options for expressing criticism, as they are required to show compliance with and loyalty to the activities and norms of their schools in order not to compromise its chances to attract students (Wyndhamn, 2013). Highly individualised teaching might also be said to favour individual voices of influence, as it provides few arenas for the formation of collective ideas and groups (Öhrn et al., 2011). Students have also been found to act against this individualisation by developing collaborative forms of work (Schwartz, 2013).

Increased focus on academic subjects and measurable outcomes

The global trend of stressing accountability is also clearly visible in the Nordic countries, in particular with regard to academic standards and 'basic skills' at

primary and secondary levels; meanwhile, teaching assessment has been given increasing attention all over Scandinavia (Telhaug et al., 2004). Sweden has gone furthest in (re-)introducing national tests, more frequent grading, individual development plans, school inspections, quality assessment and making schools' academic performance public. Finland is situated at the other extreme, hesitant to introduce standardised testing and evaluation and using tests only as diagnostic and improvement instruments (Hudson, 2007).

A stronger policy focusing on the subject areas included in national and international tests has had clear implications for classroom practices. Since 1997, for instance, the increased number of teaching hours in Norwegian schools has been devoted exclusively to strengthening academic subjects, while aesthetic, practical and social training have lost ground (Imsen, 2004). The broad aims of education and social inclusion are under pressure, and teachers are pulled between different and sometimes contradictory and competing interests in their daily work (Arnesen, 2011).

Inclusive schools and classrooms?

In their overview of inclusive education in Scandinavia, Egelund et al. (2006) identify some common trends in the period 1990 to 2005: a development towards more individually adapted instruction, a common discourse of a 'school for all' or 'inclusive schools', yet also a break in the long-term trend to reduce the segregation of some pupils in special schools, with the argument that inclusion has gone 'too far'.

Hence, in the last ten years growing numbers of children receive special education provision in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2013), and an increasing proportion of these children and young people are taught alone or in separate groups outside the regular classroom (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training/GSI, 2013).

Sweden has gone far in adopting a certain kind of individualisation of education, with less teacher-led instruction and more hours of 'pupils' own work' than in many other countries, something that has been related to the far-reaching decentralisation, management-by-objectives and an ideology of self-governance (e.g. Eriksson, 2009). However, this approach is far from ideal for all pupils, and in the analysis of Sweden's declining academic results in the 2013 PISA study, insufficient teacher support has been singled out as one of the causes.

Because of the official aim of preventing youth exclusion, there is pressure in Finland to encourage all students to continue their studies in upper secondary

schools, a goal that is demanding for teachers and counsellors (Lappalainen, Mietola and Lahelma, 2013). Pre-vocational education and training in various kinds of programmes and projects are used more and more to prevent educational and social exclusion and school dropouts, yet these programmes do not necessarily lead pupils to further education, but often to another project (Niemi and Kurki, 2013). Also, recent Norwegian studies on students at risk in vocational upper secondary school (Bruin and Ohna, 2013;) suggest that alternative pathways, which students may have chosen themselves, may still turn out to exclude them as these pathways may not provide the young people with relevant vocational competencies that lead to employment.

Critical, multi-sited ethnography

For us, ethnographic educational research takes place in educational institutions through observation and participant observation (Gordon, Holland and Lahelma, 2001). In this context the researchers need to acquaint themselves with educational settings through immersion in the daily lives of the participants. In that sense ethnographers are themselves implicated in the research process, as they observe, learn and understand local cultures through their experiences in the field. Organisational aspects, practices, cultures, conflicts and making sense of the actors involved challenge the ethnographer to understand cultures through learning while remaining detached as participants (Beach, Gordon and Lahelma, 2003).

Ethnographic research has always included critical voices and theoretisation of tensions between structural constraints and human agency, as well as tensions between actors in the field. Critical ethnographers are interested in dimensions of difference that are infused with relations of power. They have addressed traditional practices in schooling, gender differentiation, inequalities based on social class, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, sexuality and age in the hope that their research can contribute to social change. The changes that we argue have been taking place in Nordic educational politics and policies are demonstrated in the choice of the concept 'critical' for the theme and title of this book. For us, this means that power relations in education are addressed with the political aim of social inclusion and democracy. Along with being critical, this ethnographic perspective is also feminist (e.g. Skeggs, 2001). The authors were expected to address diversities and differences and make interpretations informed by intersectional understanding of gender, ethnicity, social class and ability. The

concept 'critical' also turned out to be problematic, as suggested in the chapter by Andreas Ottemo.

Our perspective is cross-cultural rather than comparative (Lahelma and Gordon, 2010). We have benefited from the methodology of policy ethnography obtained in an earlier Nordic project (Beach, Gordon and Lahelma, 2003). Our work has tendencies of multi-sited ethnography in which, as George Marcus (1995) has suggested, ethnography moves from its conventional single-site location, contextualised by macro-constructions of a larger social order, to multiple sites of observation and participation that cut across such dichotomies as the 'local' and the 'global'.

The contributions in the present volume

The volume is divided into three sections, the first consisting of this introductory chapter. Section II discusses different processes of individualisation, democratisation and marketisation in education, with chapters by Maria Rönnlund, Trine Anker, and Lisa Asp-Onsjö and Ann-Sofie Holm. Section III includes articles that focus on spaces, bodies and hierarchies of knowledge in producing difference: Carina Hjelmér, Sirpa Lappalainen and Per-Åke Rosvall write on spaces; Päivi Berg addresses embodiment; Tarja Palmu and Tarja Kankkunen tackle gendered school subjects; and Andreas Ottemo focuses on problems of critical ethnography when 'researching up'.

Individualisation, democratisation and marketisation of education

Individualisation is one of the aims of the neo-liberal restructuring of education. School choice, increased competition, testing and demands of self-regulation are concrete outcomes of this politics. These tendencies were also demonstrated in an earlier Nordic study (Beach, Gordon and Lahelma, 2003), for example, in chapters by Beach (2003) and Sundberg (2003). In the present volume, perspectives of individualisation and marketisation are discussed from different perspectives.

Students' democratic participation has been one of the cornerstones of the Nordic educational policies. However, as Maria Rönnlund argues in her chapter, under the influence of neo-liberal market thinking, promoting student participation has more and more come to mean cultivating children as individuals in order to respond to market-orientated demands. Schools are increasingly viewed as instruments for fostering active and independent individuals. The findings from Rönnlund's ethnographic study in three Swedish lower secondary

schools suggest that students' participation is only weakly translated into real influence and that participation is rather individual in character.

Discussion of school rules is one of the examples Maria Rönnlund uses in her chapter. Students were asked their opinions about rules, but they were not invited to participate in the decision-making. Rules are also the focus of Trine Anker's chapter, which draws on an ethnographic study carried out during a school year in two sixth and seventh grade classes in one Norwegian school. She highlights the ways in which rules as codes of conduct are made and enacted in everyday practices and shows how the students 'keep', 'break' and 'challenge' the rules. Classroom noise and a call for better classroom management have been emphasised in Norwegian public discourse and academic discussions (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2003; Kjærnsli et al., 2004) which in some schools, as in the school Anker studied, has led to a stricter regime of disciplinary regulations. Anker concludes that the students generally had limited influence over their school life, and few students participated in making and revising rules. She argues that the regime of rules at the school she studied contradicts the aim of a democratic education in three ways: the students do not participate fully in making and changing the rules; there is limited opportunity for constructive negotiations when they want to criticise the rules; and the rules are applied differently to different pupils, particularly with regard to gender and ethnicity.

While rules are one aspect of sanctions and discipline regulating school life, school marks are another aspect, more directly connected to academic achievement and performativity. The latter are aspects of individualised and neo-liberal governance of education that are analysed in the chapter by Lisa Asp-Onsjö and Ann-Sofie Holm. The authors explore discourses of gender and study achievements in two secondary school classes, with special attention to how the importance of marks and performance is communicated by boys, girls and teachers in the classroom. They suggest that the culture of performativity affects pupils' behaviour and that the documentation practices increase the activities that emphasise the measurable and instrumental dimension in school. The image of the strong and creative individual fits this neo-liberal discourse, in which each person is to be his/her own entrepreneur (Holm, 2010). In this 'education market', some pupils are more valued, such as girls, high-achieving students, as well as those with motivated or supportive parents (Ball, 2001).

Spaces, bodies and hierarchies of knowledge in producing difference

In the age of marketisation and knowledge capitalism, older hierarchies of knowledge are reproduced and partly transformed, supporting older and newer divisions in school and society. For example, the current discourse of life-long learning, flexibility and employability indicates newly valued knowledge and skills.² In the third section of the book spatial and embodied divisions and the hierarchical structures of school subjects are discussed.

Carina Hjelmér, Sirpa Lappalainen and Per-Åke Roswall analyse how school space is formed and used in the context of vocational upper secondary education and what limitations and opportunities space creates for students' agency. Of special interest are students' spatial agency and questions about equality and power in relation to the intersections of class and gender. The chapter is based on ethnographic studies in three upper secondary vocational institutions, one of which is located in Finland, where upper secondary education is organisationally and spatially strictly divided, and two are situated in Sweden, where academically and vocationally orientated programmes take place in the same building. They argue that it is not enough to put students on the same premises in order to even out social inequality. Disrupting inequalities presumes counter-politics in education, which challenges normative understandings of knowledge, practices and subjects of education (see Youdell, 2011).

Päivi Berg draws on an ethnographic study carried out in a Finnish secondary school to address issues of gender and class-related border work in physical education, which in Finland is typically a gender-divided subject. Berg explores various dichotomies in physical education, with the mind-body split being a central one that relates to other dichotomies, such as academic-vocational and masculinity-femininity. She concludes that boys' physical capital is acknowledged as superior by both teachers and students and is used to construct boundaries between genders. However, the students also challenge such boundaries by use of carnivalisation and irony. Furthermore, Berg explores the classed connotations of physical education and argues that sports are not necessarily physical capital relating to the working class, despite the associations with the male working-class body. Prowess in physical education was seen by the teachers in Berg's

2. Cf., the eight key competencies of the EU reference framework, e.g. digital competence, learning to learn, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2006/962/EC.

study to relate to organised leisure sports activities, which were achievable only for students with economically well-off parents. Hence, students' positioning in physical education was strongly related both to gender and to social background.

Tarja Palmu and Tarja Kankkunen analyse two school subjects, arts and Finnish language as gendered subjects from an historical perspective. Together the authors re-read their ethnographic data from classes in the arts (Kankkunen) and Finnish (Palmu) from the 1990s, analysing how these school subjects were defined as girls' subjects. They illustrate how gender becomes significant in classrooms in differences in styles of being and doing, aesthetic values, reading, writing, subject matter and the craft of student artwork. It becomes an issue when the teacher assigns tasks or gives instructions or when the visual and literal representations of men and women in school textbooks or magazines and other media material enter classroom conversations. Palmu and Kankkunen's studies were conducted before the excellent achievement by Finnish girls on the PISA tests in literature had once again raised concerns about Finnish boys (Lahelma, 2005; Arnesen, Lahelma and Öhrn, 2008). Their findings, in light of newer analyses presented in some of the contributions to this volume (especially the chapter by Asp-Onsjö and Holm, as well as Berg's), suggest the persistence of gendered patterns and how these reappear in different school subjects. The specific question here for the current educational debate is in the effects of increased possibilities for subject choices. Whereas in the study of the Finnish language students' lack of motivation has little effect on the gender ratio (owing to the number of obligatory lessons), in arts, a lack of motivation means that a majority of boys end their art studies after the seventh grade.

Most of the chapters in the book are directly or indirectly based on a critical ethnographic tradition intended to shed light on the processes of power and social inequality. They reveal how power not only influences, but also infiltrates and organises students' lives. The authors explore the shifting relations of power, justice and agency in the context of educational structures and limitations. Although few contributions are specifically intended to empower individuals or groups, or provide tools for emancipatory struggles, they imply a message of siding with the underprivileged and those at risk of being marginalised. Criticality is usually associated with social justice and critical theory and studying the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Andreas Ottermo questions this basis for criticality in his study, which focuses on researching 'privileged' masculinities in higher technology education. Hence he sets out to explore what it means to be critical in research by turning his

attention towards norms that privilege rather than disprivilege, studying cultures of power and influence rather than powerlessness; what Nader (1972) calls 'studying up'. The author addresses some of the practical, theoretical, political and ethical problems that arise from his understanding of critique, and explores some alternative notions of critique that he thinks might be fruitful in relation to 'studying up' from a post-structural perspective.

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Our names, as editors of the book and as authors of the first chapter, are in alphabetical order. So are the names of Lisa Asp-Onsjö and Ann-Sofie Holm in their chapter and the names of Carina Hjélmer, Sirpa Lappalainen and Per-Åke Rosvall in their chapter.

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