

## Introduction

There are a number of myths about education. One of these is that education is a stable entity that needs to be engineered for change; another is that it is a common social good with a positive value for each individual in society and a third is that it is a general good for society itself. These things are socially constructed myths. Education has never been a stable and uniform enterprise in any nation or region. It has always been an outcome of a resolution of different economic, social, productive, ideological and other cultural forces, constantly in flux (Peters et al, 2000). Moreover, education has no given positive value in and of itself, for individuals or the societies they are a part of, and nor has the value of education ever been evenly spread across societies for all social individuals. Lenin for instance described the value of education in respect of the distinct social classes that make up capitalist society. In his rendition an education for the masses was valuable in terms of its use in a struggle to counter the hypocrisy and lies of the bourgeoisie. The value of education for the bourgeoisie was oppositely indexed, in terms of its use as an instrument of class rule imbued with the bourgeois caste spirit. Here an ability to supply obedient lackeys and able workers to the capitalist economies of goods and signs in the interest of profit was central. Moreover, even within bourgeois concepts of education, there was never one kind of education that operated in the common interests of all (Beach, 2005a, b). Instead, there has always been one education for the poor masses of the population, one for the rich inheritors of wealth and yet a third for the middle classes, such as the book-keeping bureaucrats of the capitalist order (lawyers, accountants etc), who were to orchestra affairs in the dominant class interests.

Sometimes this 'trinity' of class reproductive education has taken very open and obvious organisational proportions, such as within the tripartite system of State education operating in England and Wales for much of the middle portion of the previous century, and the parallel school system operating in Sweden during most of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These different school 'types' catered to the needs of the capitalist State with respect to its distinct social classes in school systems that were supplemented by an emphatic private sector of elite public schools and other private and quasi-private institutions, particularly in England.

However, at times the organisational form of education and its correspondences with the capitalist State are less obvious and more subtle than

with respect to the tripartite system in England and the parallel school system in Sweden. Such is the case in current education provision through independent and State schools at secondary and upper-secondary levels in both Sweden and the UK (Broady and Börjesson, 2005; Ball, 2003; Beach, 1999a, 2001, 2003a, b, 2006c; Korp, 2006). The present book looks at these education practices and processes on the ground inside Swedish schools in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

These present day school forms are local outcomes of long national and global processes of development, which was accomplished in two stages in most European nations (Beach, 2005a). First through the development of church and voluntary organisations and second by the ‘absorption’ of the activities of these organisations into an expanding public domain as public services, by way of which the teaching labour originally carried out mainly by women within a system of kinship relationships and small family groups in the home, but also by men in association with productive labour, have successively been moved into the general economy: mainly as female work but in some sections also as male. This socialisation of labour and the creation of a new lower-middle class is described as occurring in the previous century in most European countries, earlier for some and later for others. Current developments are more in line with a massive habituation of education and the influx of neo-liberal principles of control (Beach, 2005a).

### **Organisational principles of democratic schooling in Sweden**

The three general principles of parity, equal access and equality of qualifications that should have been governing school policy since the 1950s in Sweden are questioned by the suggestions of class division introduced above. These principles and their current negations in practice are ethnographically described in the present book. The following table summarises the principles and our main findings in respect of them:

Table 1: Principles of education in Swedish education policy and there negations

Principles	Concrete negations of principles in practice
All citizens should have access to an equivalent education regardless of gender, social class, and geographic background	There is a myth about ‘one school for all’, but little equivalence in the education availed of by different classes
All public education should be free of charge to individuals	Education consumption is always privately subsidised and supplemented. ‘Subsidies’ are unequal between classes

Principles	Concrete negations of principles in practice
All curricula, examinations and grading should be valid nation-wide	As access is socially skewed there is little class equality in school qualifications

The three principles described above have been discoursed very differently in policy over previous decades and have led to different local and national State measures and reforms. Lisbeth Lundahl (2002a, b) has examined these issues (Beach and Dovemark, 2005a). She characterised Swedish education policy up to the end of the 1970s as centralised and regulated in collective interests, noting reforms that included mechanisms such as detailed national curricula, earmarked State subsidies and tight central control over the constitution of organisational resources, curricula, staff time and learning practices. More recent State strategies are depicted in opposite terms by Lundahl. Things are becoming less collectivistic with more individualised instruction and increased moves toward deregulation and decentralisation (Gustafsson, 2003; Wass, 2004; Sundberg, 2003; Dovemark, 2004a; Dovemark and Beach, 2005a; Henning-Loeb, 2006; Båth, 2006). There has been a transition from governing by rules to governance by objectives (Lindblad et al, 2005).

Lundahl names three distinctive organisational periods from the second half of the previous century onwards. These are 1945-1975, *Construction of the (strong) modern welfare State*; 1991-1998, *Recession and Reform*; and 1999-2002, *Educational Problems Remain*. The latter period, from 1991 onwards, is the one we are most concerned with. This period represented a period of neo-liberal economic restructuring in welfare State education, with experimental roots from the mid-late 1980s (Beach, 2005b; Beach and Carlson, 2005; Carlson, 2005). Within it Sweden's schools were transformed from being amongst the most highly regulated education systems in the world to being amongst the least regulated. Restructuring took place in two phases, or by two means (Beach, 2004a; Wass, 2004; Lindblad et al, 2005; Dovemark, 2004a; Henning-Loeb, 2006; Båth, 2006). These were firstly discursively, through new ways of discoursing schooling, and secondly in social and material terms. The present book uses ethnographic research to consider what this has involved on the ground for teachers and learners in school.

### **The discursive and social practices of restructuring**

From having been recognised at home and abroad as one of the World's most successful post-WW2 national economies and most egalitarian societies (Ball and Larsson, 1989; Beach, 2005b), in the beginning of the 1990s, a new public discourse emerged about Sweden as a nation in economic recession with high unemployment rates and increasing poverty. This discourse described financial and political needs of change and put pressure on the public sector to transform in accordance with what was conceived of as a new set of global political realities (Henning-Loeb, 2006; Båth, 2006). The public sector as a provider and regulator of services was questioned (Wass, 2004), even on the ground amongst practising teachers (Henning-Loeb, 2006), and the highly egalitarian system of strongly State funded and regulated education was no longer officially expressed as a politically and economically feasible project (Lindblad et al, 2005). The highly socialised and low-commercialised public service sector came increasingly under media threat and was also successively challenged. A new discourse emerged about the value of public choice in a new 'third way' welfarist society. A new concept of Stakeholder Welfare emerged.

The deconstruction of strong welfare State education politics and the mobilisation of resources supporting a new 'stakeholder form of welfarism' (Loxeley and Thomas, 2001) marked a clear break with past ideologies and democratic interests in Sweden (Båth, 2006) and the Nordic countries more generally (Gordon et al, 2003), because despite the continuing class-markings of and in education during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (Beach, 2003a, 2005b), the socialisation of education as a public service in a collective (folk-home) interest had still formed a main kernel of development there (Beach, 2003a). This applies also according to Lundahl (op cit.) and is apparent in several other European countries (Beach, 2005a), where the establishment of a welfare State and the inclusion of education in the public welfare system has created massive infrastructures of education supply through State efforts to (at least on paper) improve educational standards and generate an informed political debate and democratic involvement in political processes (Ball and Larsson, 1989). Through restructuring these infra-structures are being exposed to market forces and successive waves of privatisation (Beach, 2005b), firstly in the ancillary service sections and increasingly in terms of the privatisation of education supply.

This (re-)privatisation follows on from the development of welfare systems in Sweden as well as elsewhere in Europe and other parts of the world (see

also Roskam, Ed, 2006; Beach, 2005a, b) and is at times referred to also as (re-)commodification. For education and care in the wealthier sections of the national populations this (re-)commodification means really very little, in the senses that to greater or lesser extents these sections of the populace have constantly exploited private facilities anyway. But with respect to education and care as projects within a service economy for the mass of the population it means a great deal, as a significant step in a process of conversion of the initially domestic (socially useful) labour (of women in the home) to firstly socialised labour in the public services of the State and then to an objectified form of labour in privatised, commercialised services on a service market (Beach, 2004a). Also significant is that this restructuring of production relations has taken place in a relatively short time period (Beach, 2005a, b). Teaching and education, from being practices and sites of useful labour (in the home) have been quickly transformed into practices and sites of firstly socially useful and publicly available (socialised) labour and then economically productive labour. Education is expanding rapidly as a direct factor of economic production that is carried out in private economic interests and arrangements.

The terms *productive and useful labour*, as discussed for instance in Marxist literature, are important concepts. In Marxist use these concepts differ from the understanding generally employed in bourgeois economic theory, as in Marxism productive labour is a concept very distinct from that of useful labour. Useful labour is an activity which meets a human need other than the accumulation of capital. Productive labour is labour that is *productive principally in the economic sense* by creating a profit for someone. It is the antithesis of useful labour in this sense and is the unpaid part of labour measured in proportion to the capital invested in and acquired from production that is expropriated from workers and distributed by various means among the capitalist class. The two concepts of useful labour (and its concomitant value form of *use value*) and productive labour (and its value form of *accumulated economic value*), although not always openly referenced on every page of the present book, are important to just about every last word that is written on education, teaching and learning in it. The book is in this sense an ethnographic study of the cultural production of education value inside local school communities. The book is essentially Marxian in its analyses. As Sayers (1990) points out, one of the key tenets of Marxist dialectics is that in order for us to understand things as they concretely exist as part of material reality, it is vital to see them in the context of their interconnections (p. 143).

### Changing Swedish schools

A lot is happening in education in Europe at the present time, and most of it is related to the above pointers regarding (first) the socialisation of useful labour and (then) the habituation, (re-)privatisation and commercialisation (or commoditisation) of that socially useful labour as a form of economically productive labour. This is seen not the least in the strong common currency of restructuring in education in Europe at the present time (Beach, 2005b), where despite always being a potential variable (Dale, 1997; Whitty et al, 1998), education re-structuring almost always seems to share common characteristics of a transformation of education supply through the introduction of a market model of delivery in which services are deliberately altered so that a market concept and envisaged practices of competition can become the arbiters of provision (Beach, 2004a, 2005a, b). Zambeta (2004) speaks here of a concept of education as part of a Schumpeterian State, in which liberal ideas about markets are exploited in an attempt to reconstruct education supply in line with certain preconceived economic interests (Hill, 2006).

The present book ethnographically names, identifies, describes and discusses numerous grounded issues connected with the development of Schumpeterian State education policies and politics in Sweden's schools. It highlights and discusses some of the political decisions that have been made and the changes that have been introduced through education policy in areas such as the curriculum, teachers' work conditions, rights and duties, job stability, student learning, the creation of education markets and grading and assessment practices. The book looks both at 'common schools' and adult education. It closes with a discussion of the meaning and significance of the developments highlighted as a characterisation of globalisation processes and the de-regulation of State intervention.

Lindblad et al (2005) have described changes in education in Sweden as related to the development of new forms of discoursing. The following table summarises some of the main developments in State discourses:

Table 2: Some significant changes in schooling and education since 1980

*Decentralisation and deregulation*

In 1980 the national school curriculum for the compulsory school (Lgr 80) was introduced to replace the curriculum from 1969 (Lgr 69). From 1980 each school was obliged to present a work plan for how it aimed to achieve centrally formulated national education goals. Each school was to be organised in work units or teams,

and the teachers were expected to meet regularly in these teams. Local management of school and local development became the new model for controlling school. Emphases on constructivist and socio-cultural concepts of learning, personal flexibility, creativity and responsibility for learning were clarified further in the curriculum reforms of the 1990s and were developed and promoted in government discourse, as was a suggestion about a need for new understandings of quality in learning. Individual responsibility and freedom of choice were to become the means to help produce creative, motivated, alert, inquiring, self-governing and flexible learners and discerning producers and consumers of knowledge for Sweden in the present and future European knowledge economy.

#### *Devolution*

Devolution means the transfer of rights and responsibility by a central government to local authorities. It has been part of Swedish education policies since the 1980s. For instance, employer responsibilities were transferred from the State to local authorities in 1989, when teachers became municipal (local State) rather than (central) State employees, via the Municipal Education Act. The MEA was strongly contested by the teachers. It divided the central and the local level, delegated more decision making to the local arena and thereby weakened the relationship between the national State government and the teachers. Previous national policies prescribed how the teachers were expected to do their job, now the State only set the goals and the frameworks of education (through funding). Teachers and school management were to find the ways to fulfil these goals. This move towards an enhanced local management of schools was common in Europe at the time.

#### *Economic control and refurbishment*

State payments to the municipalities for education were altered in 1993 when State support became a lump sum, together with support for other aspects of the public services (health, education, social services, child-welfare). The municipal council distributed these resources to the various services in terms of their interpretations of local requirements, needs and fluctuations.

#### *Individualisation and the new curricula*

New curriculum guidelines were established in 1994 based on recommendations from a 1991 government committee. These recommendations, published in SOU 1992:94, gave rise to new curricula for the compulsory comprehensive (Lpo 94) and upper-secondary school (Lpf-94). The new curricula enhanced the devolution of education power and control from the centre to the peripheries and comprised national goals rather than detailed prescriptions about teacher work. Distinctions between school aims—as ‘targets’ to give direction and ambition (*strävansmål*) and ‘attainments’ (*uppnåelsemål*)—were introduced. Individualisation of teaching was emphasised. A new grading system with a new marking scale was also introduced in 1994 and the new curriculum was also extended into the preschool years. The pre-school obtained increased pedagogical responsibilities in 1994 and its own

curriculum in 1998 (Lpfö 98). The curriculum of the compulsory school also comprises the preschool class and the school-time leisure-centres.

#### *Life-long learning*

Education consumption has been extended in national and international education policy across the life-cycle from early childhood to late adulthood for ever broader cross-sections of the population and ever larger numbers of people in relation to ever increasing areas and aspects of life (including love, labour and recreation). And discourses have been appropriated and engineered to encourage and perhaps even terrorise people and groups (including even governments themselves) to consume this education. In the present moment education has become discourses not only as a stepping stone into the knowledge-based society. It is also a medium for life-long learning and a ticket (voucher/qualification) of access to valuable psychological tools (Proposition 200%1:73; OECD, 2002).

#### *Marketisation*

In 1992 the almost complete State monopoly on school education was broken by the new conservative-coalition government when independent schools, defined as schools that are accountable to authorities other than municipalities, county councils or the national State on primary and secondary levels, were established through tax money. This introduced a system of competition between schools on a quasi market. Only 2 or 3 elite private schools had existed before 1992. The independent schools were meant to be open for all pupils and there were no fees. A voucher system was introduced to allow pupils and their parents to choose between different schools. This did not eliminate distinctive class and geographic markings involved in school availability and selection.

#### *New Public Management*

Demands for consumerism, value for money and accountability gathered pace in education during the 1980s and became one of the main planks of the new conservative coalition government in the early 1990s. Education became increasingly described as a sub-system of the economy by this government rather than a component of the welfare system, and parents (on behalf of their children) became described as consumers in an education market with the power to increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. Marketisation was to be used as a means to create 'the best school system in Europe', as the then Minister of Schooling (Beatrice Ask) phrased it. Put simply, education was to be governed according to criteria of cost-effectiveness and efficiency through a system of public choice that was claimed to stimulate rationalisation in accordance with individual needs in the allocation of scarce resources. A system of quality auditing for schools was introduced in 2003 via the Swedish National Agency for Education (Rgr 2001/02: 188). The audits were intended to stimulate teachers to change their dispositions to act and think in relation to the performance indicators, steering technologies and evaluations of NPM.



*New ways of discoursing teacher and learner roles and identities*

New policy discourses constitute a major portion of the discursive order of the 'renewal' of education in Sweden. They address three things in particular. First the need for teachers to become co-creative and interactive knowledge workers, who are 'instrumental' in the production of the conditions of production for new kinds of learner subjectivity and new consumerist learner identities, together with learners. These things are obviously conducive with the new (commodity) concept of life-long learning. Second a new ideology about the learners' inner power to learn and awakening a 'lust for learning' has developed as a bandwagon for the new commodity form of flexible, renewable, changeable education on expanding education markets. Third statements about the need and values of helping students learn how to become responsible individuals who can identify their own needs, and who can make 'the right choices' in their education now and in the future is also extensively evidenced.

### **Researching the restructuring of schools and the re-culturing of teachers**

As suggested in table 2, the organisational framework and concepts for teaching and learning in Sweden's schools have been successively changed in the past fifteen to twenty years through national school policies, from pre-school levels to the compulsory comprehensive school and the upper secondary school. These suggested changes were stated as having specific purposes. Most often mentioned was the intention to increase the flexibility of the system (Lindblad, et al., 2005) and to stimulate creativity and the development of life-long learning and new learner identities (Gustafsson, 2003; Beach, 2006a; Båth, 2006). Not included in the table, but no less apparent though, are similar changes in the discoursing of adult and higher education (Beach, 1997, 2004a, 2006b; Carlén, 1999; Wass, 2004; Fejes, 2006; Henning-Loeb, 2006). Wass (2004) made a critical discourse analysis of the renewal of Swedish adult education. She identified several discourses at play within the discursive order of that part of the educational field. These were a discourse of marketisation, a discourse of co-operation, a discourse of individualisation and a discourse of learning. 'Flexibility' and 'validation' were other key words. As she suggested there are parallel developments in school and higher education.

The suggested changes to the education system have had significant implications for the work, responsibilities and roles of teachers and schools (Lindqvist, 2002; Nordanger, 2002; Dovemark, 2004a; Wass, 2004; Båth, 2006; Henning-Loeb, 2006). Marianne Dovemark's (2004a) thesis examined these issues in some detail in a comprehensive school. Dovemark studied discourses

about a new concept of schooling, learning and teacher professionalism. Aspects such as what the image of school, education and its claims look like and how they are talked about and materialised in everyday work and interaction by pupils, teachers and school managers were the ethnographically researched central themes.

Dovemark pointed to contradictory structures and discourses as what was most characteristic for schooling at the time. Solidarity and equality as targets of the new school, she wrote, were implemented in a school where competition and exclusion were the main driving forces. Schools and their teachers were to provide extended possibilities of freedom of choice for students and to produce creative, motivated, alert, inquiring, self-governing and flexible users and developers as opposed to just recipient reproducers of knowledge. However, according to Dovemark, a field of tension existed in schools between this new idealism and a practical realism of standards-based-assessment and performance-based control and selection with both deep historical roots and new forms of support from the new-right. The present book has been developed from ethnographic research projects which have focussed on what this tension may mean for Sweden's schools, their pupils and teachers, and their respective commitments and identities. It is based on cooperation between two researchers, Dennis Beach and Marianne Dovemark, aided by national and international collaborators in five ethnographic research projects.<sup>1</sup>

These five projects are very much related ones. They are concerned with making ethnographic sense of issues of education change in late capitalism, from early childhood education up to upper-secondary schools and adult education, in terms of what the noted education changes involve, mean and lead to for the people involved and the societies they are part of. The projects are part of a larger project series that started with PhD research in teacher and other forms of higher education in the mid 1980s (Beach, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000) and that is still ongoing in relation to two current research projects.

The first of the five research projects involved in the book was an ethnographic investigation based on participant observation over one full school year on a half-time basis in one specifically selected Swedish upper-secondary school in 1998 and 1999, after the 1994 Curriculum Reform (Proposition 1990/91: 18;

1 One of these researchers, Marie Carlson from Göteborg University has been particularly involved as joint project holder, together with Dennis Beach, on one of the ethnographic research projects on which the book is heavily based. This project was funded by a grant from the Swedish Research Council (VR) section for Research in the Educational Sciences (UVK: Competing Ideas in the renewal of SFI - An Investigation of Discursive Practices in an SFI-education during Restructuring: Swedish Research Council Section for Research in Educational Sciences: 2001-5181).

SOU, 1996: 1; 1997: 1; Beach 2003a, b, 2004). This project included interviews with teachers and students on strategies, experiences and ideas about how to work within a context where schooling is on the one hand described in terms of new, shared responsibilities for local development, self-determination and freedom of choice, through a reduction in central regulation, but is also, on the other, carried out in a formal context that has traditionally supported other value positions regarding the need of hard standards and performance assessment, and is now also emphasising the need for more tightly economically managed systems (in terms of both the proximity, invasiveness and detail of management). Conversations with teachers, head-teachers and students at the school and from four other sites in 1999, 2000 and 2003 were important in the research. The upper secondary school Natural Science and Trade and Commerce programmes were given particular attention. The research was supported economically by grants from the Swedish National School Agency and the European SOCRATES programme.

The second project was a PhD study at the Department of Education and Education Research at Göteborg University, sponsored by a grant from the University College of Borås (Dovemark, 2004a). This research was concentrated on the development of responsibility for learning, on learner creativity and on learner self-determination in the compulsory comprehensive (6-16) school. The research was conducted in one particular school in Western Sweden (Dovemark, 2004a, b; Dovemark and Beach, 2004; Beach and Dovemark, 2005b, c) and involved participant observation in one class on an *intermittent basis* (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004) over a two year period between 2001 and 2003. The students/pupils were in grades 7 and 8 of the school at the time.

The third project is a recently completed European Union SOCRATES initiative termed the CLASP (Creative Learning and Student's Perspectives) project (Jeffrey, 2006). This project used ethnographies of school creativity (Jeffrey and Woods, 2003) as a common research platform and had 9 European partners and three main aims. These were: (i) to identify the strategies teachers and students use to develop creative learning in educational contexts, (ii) to examine the effectiveness of incorporating student perspectives into the evaluation and development of creativity in teaching and learning and (iii) to highlight the advantages in this process of examining cross European practices. Within the Swedish CLASP component data and analyses emanating from the two previous projects were reanalysed and re-examined in a new case study upper-secondary school called New School. Research in this school involved

intermittent visits spread out over a twelve month period and comprising 120 hours of participant observation, together with a number of formal interviews and informal field conversations.

The fourth project is a Swedish Research Council project concerned with the complexities of steering and control within restructured adult education. SFI education (literally Swedish as a Foreign Language for Immigrants) within a particular Municipal Region in Sweden that we have termed Hillfield formed the main case study context. Research was conducted in two particular organisations (also Beach 2006b) and has primarily been concerned with the consequences of education restructuring for teacher values and practices, learner identities, commitments and constraints, education discourses and the value practices of humanist education and creativity in adult SFI-education contexts (Beach, 2004a, 2006b; Beach and Carlson, 2004; Carlson, 2004, 2005).

These four projects and other earlier ethnographic investigations have identified what Ball (1994, 1998) describes as a new policy context for education and education work (Gustafsson, 2003; Beach, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003a, b, c, 2005a, b; Dovemark, 2004a, b; Beach and Dovemark, 2005a, b; Lindblad et al, 2005). National policy documents such as the new school curricula (e.g. Lpo, 94; Lpf, 94; Lpfö, 98), the 1995 collective agreement for teachers in the public education system ('The School Development Agreement, termed 'en satsning till 2000') and its commentary materials from the two teacher unions and the employer organisation (The Association of Swedish Municipalities; TASM), the *Municipal Education Act*, and the Commission Reports these documents and developments have been based on (e.g. SOU 1990: 20), form one corner of this policy context.

This 'corner' of policy development is present in vernacular forms across Europe at the present time (Beach, 2005a). It emphasises decentralisation, diversity and the need of change in the education system, toward greater flexibility and freedom of choice (Lundahl, 2001; Lindblad et al, 2005).<sup>2</sup> However, in order to result in anticipated and hoped for changes, this policy corner needs accompanying policy technologies that can stabilise necessary *social relations* by providing *material environments* to help co-ordinate the activities of agents in arenas of implementation (also Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Ball, 1994; Jeffrey and Woods, 2003; Wass, 2004; Henning-Loeb, 2006).

2 What is described is a neo-liberal shift toward loose procedural control, tight substantial control and a belief service-system composed by regulated quasi markets (Beach, 2003a, 2004a; Beach & Dovemark, 2005a). This shift in governance is also occurring in European higher education according to for instance Lazzeretti and Tavoletti (2006).

One such policy technology was developed as an amendment to the 1991 *Sector Funding* for schools, when the earmarked money provided by the State to municipalities was transformed from a specific to a general purse for the welfare sector (i.e. child-care, education, elderly care and health care combined) more broadly. Local municipalities decided on distributions. Also significant was the abolition of the School Boards in 1991, which were replaced by the National School Agency. The shifting of curriculum control from steering by rules and directives to steering by objectives and results is a further example.

Despite these new policy technologies the realisation arenas provided by modern schools may still not always provide comfortable spaces for the new policy ideas, and both policy collapse and contradictory practices can often be identified (Beach, 2003, a, b; Dovemark, 2004a, b; Beach and Dovemark, 2005a; Loxely and Thomas, 2001). This has been accounted for in previous research on at least three foundations. One is the unwillingness of agents to engage wholeheartedly in teaching and learning experiences in line with new idealism. This is sometimes referred to as teacher conservatism. Another is comprised by the social and material conditions of the education context and a third relates to forms of policy interference (Beach, 1997).

The ideas about policy tensions from previous research have been re-interrogated and re-explored in a new project called the *Hybrid Classrooms* project. This project is financed by the Swedish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences<sup>3</sup> and is the fifth component project in the present book. The project interrogates the current discourses of creativity and performativity in education and asks on what (empirical, philosophical and linguistic) grounds and by what methods they are made convincing. As well as critical ethnography, critical discourse analysis is used (Chouliarki and Fairclough, 1999) and the learner identities, professional identities and subjectivities involved in managing education policy ideas in actual education circumstances are given space. Dennis Beach and Marianne Dovemark are involved in this project together with Dr. Jan Gustafsson and Professor Elisabet Öhrn from Göteborg University and Borås University College respectively.

### **The disposition of the book**

The book comprises eleven chapters in addition to the introduction. The first of these, *Labs and the Quality of Learning*, comes from research on the upper-secondary school curriculum reform from the mid-nineties onwards. This project

3 Creativity and performativity in teaching and learning. VR-Project 2004-7024.

was concerned with what happens to student learning in education when the main education objective that guides this is caught between contrasting policy rhetoric involving the new self-reliance and creativity discourses on the one hand and performativity on the other. The aim of learning in the context of the creativity discourse was said to be about self-directed studies and valorising personal and subjective education desires and initiatives as objective education capital. But as the chapter shows, under influence from the performativity discourse within a restraining material context and conservative education tradition of a banking form of education (Allman, 1999), this main goal 'transmutates' and becomes instead to arrive at pre-set answers within an exchange-based educational economy, for the purposes of passing a course and obtaining a good education qualification (also Beach, 2003a, b, 2006a). The chapter considers two different classifications of laboratory work in science education as arenas for the issues discussed. Both of these forms of lab-work were identified from ethnographic data and analyses.

The second chapter, *School as a Market*, has been developed from an analysis of school mathematics. It is based on a specific case study in mathematics courses from the project described above. Talk and behaviour inside mathematics classrooms are examined and a specific correspondence between school value practices and foundational societal values (specifically a market value relationship) is identified and critiqued. What is suggested is that the ideological elements of neo-liberalism and market capitalism have begun to infiltrate the discoursing and social practices of education in classrooms through processes of the *liquidation* of education subjects (*both learners and content*) in social discourse and (other) social practices. Also suggested is that there is broad hegemonic support for neo-liberalisation even from groups who are clearly disadvantaged by its principles in practice.

The third chapter, *Creativity as a Cultural Commodity*, is about the concepts of individual responsibility, self-regulated learning and life-long learning from the new education policy discourses of the late-nineteen nineties and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this chapter we discuss these 'new' ideas against data produced from participant observation and student interviews in a critical ethnographic investigation with three classes of students. These are a mixed ability class of 15 year-olds from an urban comprehensive school in West Sweden and two classes of upper-secondary pupils.

This investigation has been primarily concerned with what it means to learn according to the verbal expressions and social and physical practices of

the learners themselves. It suggests again that a tension exists between new curriculum aims for creativity and self-regulation in learning and the demands stabilised by an education discourse of performativity. Moreover, the chapter suggests that the discourse of performativity is more deeply engrained in (and resonant with the social and material demands of) formal school culture than is the creativity discourse and that there is very little evidence of a positive relationship between the two discourses in practice.

The fourth chapter, *Pupil Responsibility*, is more openly Marxian in its points of departure than the first three, which are somewhat more interactionist. It is concerned with issues of value mediation in relation to what Ainley (2000), Allman (1999) and Brosio (1994) all describe as the two fundamental present day roles for modern-day schools within capitalist States. These are the ideological and material roles (Althusser 1971), where schools produce ideologically compliant workers and consumers for a new corporatist economy on the one hand, and form part of a corporate business plan for the accumulation of private capital in the welfare sector on the other (Hill, 2006). However, the chapter also suggests that the existing nation-State also has a declared and even sometimes materially supported democratic mission within education that can make the execution of these two roles difficult (Brosio, 1994). A further point is that the neo-liberal State does not fulfil this mission, because its policies of welfare restructuring support the corporatisation of welfare not its social improvement (Beach, 2005b).

Neo-liberal support for the corporatisation of the welfare is apparent in education in at least two ways according to the chapter, which is based on ethnographic studies and student interviews. These data help suggest that whilst rituals that previously indoctrinated individuals into submissive behaviour in school, through forms of subordination and the mechanical memorisation of other's facts, have been replaced by outwardly self-monitored activities and self-determined learning, some things remain the same. Students are still graded, separated and characterised by teachers in terms of being weak or superior products and students still adopt these labels in their self-understanding, with negative effects on school performances and self-concept (Jost, Kruglanski and Nelson, 1998; Maki, 1998; Yates, Lee and Shinotsuka, 1996; Jonsson, 2004; Dovemark, 2004a, b). The curriculum that is meant to stimulate creativity and inclusiveness dampens creativity and positive involvement (Beach, 2003a, b; Jonsson, 2004). There is also a tendency toward social reproduction.

The fifth chapter, *Re-structuring Adult Education: A Local Case Study*, is about the marketisation of adult education in Sweden as seen through an ethnographic case study and is also openly Marxist. The chapter takes up a concrete example, the rise and fall of an adult education company called Studium Ltd.<sup>4</sup> This company was created in 2001 from the municipal adult education service (Komvux) and was the largest deliverer of adult education in 2001, until it lost its contracts during tendering in 2003 and effectively went into bankruptcy in 2004. The local tax-based economy footed the bill of the conversion processes and salary costs of under employed Studium employees, who all had tenure as public service officials due to previous labour agreements. This kind of situation, where public funds are used in order to pay for the conversion of public services to private is a consistent element of education restructuring according to international research (e.g. Sharpe, 2003; Whitty et al., 1997, 1998; Whitty and Power, 2003; Dale, 1997; Beach, 2004a, 2005a; Beach and Carlson, 2004). The chapter provides a bottom-up account of restructuring in a particular space-time location; adult SFI education in a particular local education authority.

The next two chapters, *Myths of Change in Adult Education* and *Creativity and Performativity in Adult Education*, respectively; are also taken from the adult education SFI project. The first is concerned with issues of adult education as a discourse and its discursive practices. It uses ethnographic data based mainly on field interviews and conversations to suggest that there are clear differences both within and between the talk and thought developed by differently positioned agents in processes of education restructuring, as well as consistencies. One dominant pattern concerns the need for a flexible workforce in the new work order *not a specifically educated one*. This way of discoursing represents the interests of employment and production. It is the discourse that is developing most in adult education today, according to our analyses, where these words obtained material consequences that challenged and overpowered the previous *comprehensive and humanistic* education discourse (Wass, 2004; Beach and Carlson, 2005; Fejes, 2006; Henning-Loeb, 2006). 'Flexibility' and the short term needs of trade, industry and employment are primary (Beach and Carlson, 2004, 2005; Carlson, 2005; Carlén, 1999).

4 The restructuring of adult education is the subject of three successive chapters. This restructuring was initiated on the basis of local decisions in 1999 to tender out adult education in order, formally, to reduce costs and make adult education more responsive to a new service economy, new employment needs and the needs of individuals. These decisions came into full force in 2002, after the completion of the National Adult Education Initiative (the AEI). They followed guidelines for franchise in the public sector, as per the 1992 Purchasing Act, and had consequences for all education suppliers, but in particular one of them.



The third SFI-chapter is supported by three of the ethnographic research projects named earlier: *the adult SFI project*, the SOCRATES CLASP project and the *Hybrid Classrooms* project. Most of the research was done in the first project at two sites called by the pseudonyms SWALL and StudiumF (also Beach, 2006b). Two levels of analysis have been important: (i) a surface level of analysis of everyday interaction and negotiation processes relating to oral, visual or written proposals for action and material resources in use and (ii) a deeper level of analysis concerning the structural orthography of learning and the rules, regulations and cultural interpellations of social technologies, social relations and social practices of communication. The two levels helped identify and name two distinct metaphors for creativity (novelty and change) and four pillars of humanism in education (thoughtfulness, reciprocity, authenticity, negotiation). The chapter suggests that the dividing line between creativity and routine are blurred, but that intuition and embodied experience always played a major role in educational decision making when humanism and creative teaching and learning was involved.

The next ethnographic example provided in the book, *Accommodations of Creativity Discourses*, is based on collective work in the *Hybrid Classrooms* project by Dennis Beach and Marianne Dovemark in relation to the above discussed theme of teacher professional identities, but this time with a cross section of working professionals from the secondary and upper-secondary school portions of the education system (grades 7-9 and 10-13 respectively, comprising pupils of 13 to 16 and 16 to 19 years of age). Extracts from interviews with teachers who have worked within the new policy context at these respective school levels are considered in particular. A tension is identified between the new *idealism* of the creativity discourse and a new realist discourse of managerialism and performativity. The research again suggests that there is little evidence of a positive relationship between the two discourses.

The final ethnographic chapter, *Teachers and New Education Aim*, again uses interview and conversation materials from the *Hybrid Classrooms* project. These have been produced during ethnographic engagements in three schools to provide a more bottom-up account of what the new forms of discoursing education in Sweden mean for teacher identities and teacher work. The extracts are supplemented by conversation materials and contextualising participant observations and have helped identify a number of different ways in which teachers express their subjective understanding with regard to things like the role of the teacher and new teacher and student identities. The chapter

concerns in this sense the workings of ideology and discourse in education in relation to creativity and performativity policies in practice arenas and is about the conditions of development for the new forms of expression regarding professional practice artistry and professional identity. It identifies issues of repression and reproduction and also shows evidence of some subjective deconstruction of the contradictions embedded in education policy. A possibility for creative (resistant) agency is suggested.

The final substantive chapter, *New Schools and New Pedagogy*, sums up the restructuring of the Swedish education system as constructed by our ethnographic work. The main theme is that of whether what we can see in current school reform is new schools and new pedagogy, and if so what kind of schools and pedagogy, or new ways of continuing social reproduction, or perhaps in some way a hybrid comprising elements of both. A main policy/reform vector is identified. This concerns political expressions in formal policy about the need to reconstruct schools in line with neo-liberal ideas where concepts of freedom of choice and individual responsibility in the curriculum, deregulation and decentralisation are emphasised. However, the contradictions of these ideas in practice are considered and the chapter actually points at contradiction as the current main characteristic of the condition of education in welfarist society. It suggests that this applies throughout the education system in Sweden and is also pretty characteristic of education in general in many European countries today (Beach, 2005a). This chapter is followed by the final chapter in the book, which is a short chapter on the ethnographic methods we have used in our research. We describe our work as a serial form of critical ethnography of education.