Vad gör kvalitet med utbildning?
Om kvalitetsbegreppets skilda innebörder och dess konsekvenser för utbildning

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract


The aim of this dissertation is to investigate what linguistic meanings the concept of quality is imbued with in different educational arenas and to discuss the consequences of such meanings for education. From this aim the main research question is: What does the concept of quality do to education and what does education do to the concept of quality? The question indicates an interest in understanding how the concept of quality and education mutually influence each other.

The empirical material consists of national texts written by the government and the national school authorities, mainly between the years of 1997 to 2008, as well as interviews with different people from three local school authorities and schools. Theoretically the approach is inspired by Quentin Skinner and speech-act theory as well as Reinhart Koselleck and conceptual history. While Skinner is mainly interested in the rhetorical use of concepts, Koselleck’s interest lies in investigating how concepts carry historical time. For this study, some analytical concepts are lifted from these two theories and are applied to the empirical material.

From the analysis, four concluding criteria of application are formulated: education quality, result quality, market quality and system quality. The result shows that certain meanings, which for a long time have been connected to education and, in this study, are incorporated under the umbrella criterion education quality, have been challenged and partly marginalized. Instead, the dominance of result quality, market quality and system quality lead to an acceptance of new social perceptions in education. The different national and local structures that are developed to measure quality have a high impact on local practice. As a consequence of a shift from goal to result, overriding goals are clarified and made juridically controllable. The changes also lead to consequences for the different actors in the education system, as well as for teachers, national politicians and for national and local school administrations.

Keywords: education, concept of quality, educational policy, municipality, independent school, speech-act, conceptual history, Sweden.

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