

**INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLANS IN SWEDISH SCHOOLS – FORMING IDENTITY  
AND GOVERNING FUNCTIONS IN PUPILS’ DOCUMENTATION**

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*The documentation of pupils in Swedish schools is extensive and a documentation culture has come to characterize the schools in recent years. In the context of decentralization and changing governance, focus has increasingly been directed towards assessment, follow-up and evaluation of pupils’ learning and social development. This article examines the Individual Educational Plans (hereafter IEP) used for pupils with special educational needs in Swedish compulsory schools from the perspective of text analyses based on discourse theory. The aim of this study is to shed light on how pupils are constructed in the school’s documentation. The study examines how these IEPs are used as a pedagogical technique for new ways of governing in order to impose self-regulation, individual responsibility and social control. The documents, which comprise the empirical material in this article, are gathered from 14 different schools and consist of documents for a total of 136 pupils with special educational needs.*

In Sweden, there has been an increasing interest from schools and the whole educational system to use extensive documentation regularly for the assessment and follow up to control pupils’ individual progress. Since 1995, all Swedish compulsory schools have been required to establish Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs. IEPs should include written goals and strategies, which must be recorded and evaluated. Furthermore, while IEPs only target pupils with special educational needs, since 2006 an individual development plan has been required for all pupils, including summative assessments in all school subjects (Ministry of Education and Research, 2010). Thus, pupils with special educational needs must have two documents, a regular individual development plan as for every pupil and an additional IEP for their special needs documentation. One substantial consequence of these procedures is the massive amount of paperwork and documentation following every child through the compulsory school system. At least 18 documents in the form of Individual Development plans are established for every child and in several cases many more if called for. Since a written assessment is established for every child in every school subject as well as the individual development plan, and in some cases also an IEP, the amount of assessments becomes almost insurmountable.

Requirements for teachers to record students’ performance have greatly increased during the last 20 years and the documentation is now recorded in a number of ways, in the form of Individual Development Plans, Individual Educational Plans, Educational Action Plans, Individual Studies Plans, written assessments, portfolios, etc. (Andreasson & Asplund Carlsson, 2009; Vallberg Roth & Månsson, 2008; Isaksson, Lindquist & Bergström, 2007; & Hofvendahl, 2006). In these documents, school staffs write about qualities, abilities and subjectivities of all individuals from preschool to upper secondary school. The educational system has thus taken on the task of organizing *learning histories* or *student biographies* to quote Lindgren (2007). This amount of plans and written documents serve as a family of documents where official policy documents, the municipality, the institution of school, teaching and the pupil’s individual situation meet and sometimes even clash. The documents serve as an interpretation (Hall, 1996) to the child’s individual conception of him/herself as a school pupil, referring to success or failure in various subjects.

In this article we investigate how pupils with special educational needs have their identities formed and constructed through the documentation in school. The article also discusses the implications of the governing functions of IEP.

#### *Educational policy and the role of IEP in Sweden*

The school system in Sweden has a far-reaching commission and during the expanding period of the Swedish Welfare State, the school's responsibility for pupils who were assessed as having difficulties in school also increased. Equity is a cornerstone and founding value of the Swedish curricula and educational legislation. Equal opportunities for all children must be provided regardless of disability, socioeconomic background, creed, gender or ethnicity being a fundamental premise in education policy. Fostering values of equity and raising democratic citizens are principal functions of schools.

In the 1980s -90s Sweden changed the governing of the school system from steering by rules to steering by objectives. Responsibility for the progress of the pupil was thereby decentralized to the schools, while the demands for planning and documentation increased (Englund, 2004). The increased demand for evaluation and documentation has been explained and justified in various ways from policymakers. References are made to the opportunity of following and supporting each child over time, early identification of special support need, improving the individual information for continuity of learning, participation and parental influence (Ministry of Education and Research, 2001).

The phrase *a school for all* has for a long time been a goal in Swedish educational policies. The aim is to integrate all pupils within regular education, irrespective of disability or difficulties and to adjust teaching to individual needs. However, an increasing number of children in the ordinary comprehensive school are defined as having some form of difficulty and it is estimated that about 20% of all children in the compulsory school are in need of some form of special support (Giota & Emanuelsson, 2011). The reasons vary, but often pupils at risk do not achieve the educational targets in one or more subjects. Both knowledge and behavioural difficulties are stated as common causes of difficulties in school. Schools therefore need to deal with a range of learning and behavioural difficulties.

There is a strong argument in research literature and policy documents that pupils with special needs should be taught in mainstream settings as far as possible (see Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn & Christensen, 2006). However, research shows that more and more pupils with special needs, socially disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with immigrant backgrounds are marginalised from mainstream settings (Berhanu, 2008). The increased diversity among pupils, in recent years, has also placed additional demands upon teachers as they strive to raise the attainment outcomes of individual pupils. Thus, planning on an individual level has been a common argument from policymakers to meet this challenge. But research also shows that organising pupils into small groups according to their abilities and special needs has become a common response in the Swedish schools, representing a move away from whole group teaching (Giota & Emanuelsson, 2011).

According to the Swedish Education Act (Ministry of Education and Research, 2010) a pupil shall be given remedial tuition if there is an expectation that s/he will not reach the educational targets or if the pupil needs special support for other reasons. Additionally, IEP for the planning, follow-up and evaluation of the special support should be drawn up in consultation with the pupil and his/her parents. IEPs are thus drawn up in a special context with the goal of guiding a pupil's learning or behaviour in a certain direction. According to the guidelines from the National Agency for Education (2008) the IEP should contain information about the pupil's school situation including teaching and learning. It also states that the goals and interventions must be evaluated. Furthermore, the investigation of pupils' needs has to be done on both individual, group and school level. However, several studies show that difficulties are often described in the IEPs as individual shortcomings and deficiencies of the pupil and that the interventions have their roots in behavioural psychology. Other results from studies in Sweden in recent years, have showed that the IEPs often focused on pupils' own responsibility, self-regulatory assessments and that the personal review so these plans are plentiful although the National Agency in its general guidelines writes that the documents should not contain values of the pupil's personal characteristics (Andreasson, 2007; AspOnsjö, 2006; Isaksson, Lindqvist & Bergström, 2007; National Agency for Education, 2003; Persson, 2004; & Vallberg & Roth, 2008).

Results similar to the Swedish studies presented above, are also found in international studies (cf. Banks et al., 2001; & Shaddock et al., 2009). In an international review of almost 300 studies, Mitchell, Morton

and Hornby (2010) demonstrated that there is some general criticism against IEPs that seems to recur in different contexts. They point at the undue influence of behavioural psychology and the over-emphasis on the individual in the IEP's. They also found an overall criticism in the studies on the unproven efficacy of IEP's. Millward et al., (2002) also discuss the influence of behavioural psychology in the IEPs and note that it fits well with the emphasis on educational accountability. They are also critical against behavioural psychology as not updated by modern theoretical perspectives.

#### *Governing relations in the IEP*

One way of interpreting the intensified documentation and focus on progression and continuous control of the individual is to understand it as a form of education governance, using the documentation as a pedagogical technique. However, this eagerness to document in schools cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon but is a characteristic feature in several areas in contemporary society and a result of the changing ways of governing in post industrialized, 'advanced', liberal democracies (Rose, 1998). Governing is done in an indirect way; it seeks to shape the conduct of others by structuring the field of possible action (Foucault, 1982). The state governs, but the individuals govern each other as well. Likewise, the individuals govern and conduct themselves through an act of subjection (Foucault, 1992), by an individual internalization of the norms of how to be, in order to become the expected subject. Thus, pupils' documentation can be seen as a pedagogical technique for governing in order to impose self-regulation, individual responsibility and social control.

This tendency intersects with current international debate on education from the perspective of governmentality that builds on an analysis of the exercise of power by focusing on the development of governmental rationalities and related governmental technologies. These studies look at ways in which individuals conduct and govern themselves and others in the light of specific *truth games*. The assumption is that there is an intrinsic relation between educational technologies on the one hand and the way in which political power is wielded in our societies and the way in which we govern ourselves on the other (Foucault 2000; 1991a; 1988; Burchell, Gordon & Miller 1991; Simons & Masschelein, 2006; & Pongratz, 2006). Furthermore, it intersects with the construction of identity (Hall 1996; 2003), as well as the influence of the experts and institutions, to form and govern the subject (Foucault, 2000; Rose, 1998).

According to Foucault, the exercise of power is not only a relation between individuals but also a way in which actions influence each other. But power relations are, according to Foucault (1990), simultaneously goal-oriented, i.e. there is no power that can be exercised without intentions and goals, although this does not mean that it is subject to an individual subject's choice or decision; instead, 'power's rationality is rationality in methods' (1990, p.105). It is thus a question of introducing technologies for regulating other people's actions. Such a political rationality strives to describe assumptions about what reality looks like in such a way that its truths are made amenable to intervention, i.e. control. The description of the problem in the documentation could be understood as one such technique for describing assumptions about what reality looks like to pupils who are assessed as having difficulties in order to legitimise a certain type of intervention.

The documents registering individual progress or achievement (or lack of these elements) are thus permeated by a control mentality, the purpose of which is to induce the pupils to think and act in a way the school considers necessary for their development into 'good' school pupils and members of society. The discourse is based on a number of conceptions and held-for-true statements from which difficulties in school are constructed. But the ability to utilise disciplinary techniques requires experts with knowledge of the individual and of people's behaviours. Based on ideas about pupils' needs and with a rhetoric concerning pupils' development, the pupils are categorised as *normal pupils* or *pupils with special educational needs*. But here there are also power processes at work on different levels within the institution, in interpersonal relations and based on normalising power techniques (Foucault, 1990).

#### *The Documents*

The documentation providing the empirical material in this article was gathered from 14 different compulsory schools. The documents were collected within the framework of two studies submitted by the Swedish National Agency for Education. The schools in the study were selected by Statistics Sweden (SCB) on the basis of geographical location, school year, size and principal. The empirical material consists of IEP: s for a total of 136 pupils, 86 boys and 50 girls, who were assessed as having difficulties in school. As several IEP: s could have been drawn up for one and the same pupil; the material consists of 358 documents (246 for boys and 112 for girls) in all. School staff, pupils and parents have been

rendered anonymous in the text material by the schools before it was collected. Only gender and age were given to us when the documents were collected.

The method of analysis could best be described as a text analysis based on discourse theory. After having read through the documents a number of times, we found certain recurring themes in the descriptions of the pupils. These themes were tested against the documents a second time and readjusted. Finally the adjusted themes were tried against the documents until further adjustment felt unnecessary and provided no more information. A further elaboration of the themes could claim that these themes articulate the identities of the Other (Hall, 1996). The underlying discourse is based on assumptions of the identity of the *good* or normal child, being academically, socially, behaviourally and physically (bodily) well adjusted, whereas the children described in the material are deficient in some ways and thus the identity articulated according to the discourse emanating from the plans is subject to reformation and correction.

The results emanating from the text analysis are presented herein after in the four different themes or discourses in terms of academic, social, behavioural and bodily features. The purpose of the documentation according to the Education Act should above all be knowledge related, since it mainly concerns the pupils' academic progress, however, the plans may also, if necessary, contain remarks on and assessments of the pupils' social development and progress. Thus, issues of knowledge development and social progress are to be expected in the plans. However, we also found several instances of remarks on behavioural problems and some even on bodily conduct with basis neither in the curriculum nor in the legislation. In the following section we analyse and critically examine the four discourses from our findings; academic achievement, social achievement and assessment, behavioural difficulties and bodily conduct.

#### *Academic Achievement*

Although academic achievement and knowledge based learning should be the main targets for the individual development of the pupil, this feature is not always the most salient in the plans. However, whenever academic achievement is focused, this is particularly the case when achievement towards goals in literacy (especially reading) and mathematics is absent and less often in other subjects, like history, geography or science, which can of course be explained by the fact that reading (and writing) and mathematics are considered being the basic subjects for learning in other areas.

Erik has problems with his learning to read and write. He finds it difficult to focus which does not make things better ... Erik thinks, in spite of his difficulties, that school is fun. Apart from the breaks, maths is most fun. He says he is good at woodwork.

Martin has difficulties with reading and writing. He changes the words, adds and substitutes letters. Martin stutters and repeats words he has already read. He adjusts the sentences. Martin reads real texts better than nonsense words. He finds longer words more difficult and needs more time. He is best at orthographical words.

On the whole, the assessment of the pupils is mainly summative, i.e. the writer of the documentation assesses the child's achievements as they present themselves in a status quo, or even makes a diagnosis of the child's difficulties. We also found that writers tend to avoid formative assessment, although it would be easy to take the difficulties as a point of departure and write about the child's possible development instead of repeating his/her problems.

Martin is a good example of how the attitude to the child shines through. The first four sentences describe Martin's difficulties and his reading strategies – substituting letters, repeating words and changing the sentences into his own language. However, as a possibly positive remark, the writer states that Martin prefers real texts from story books and meaningful reading assignments before the nonsense words which are part of the reading tests presented to him. On the other hand, this could also be interpreted as a weakness on Martin's part. According to teacher's guidelines, Martin's strategies could be seen as part of his reading development and the question now is how the teacher could support him in his development.

The whole issue of writing development plans in the Swedish school system has undergone a tremendous change with the new system of documentation, since both a summative and a formative assessment should be made in connection with and as a basis for the child's Individual Development Plan/Individual Educational Plan, and as a basis for an informative dialogue between teacher, child and parent(s) about future support and future achievement. Thus, Martin's teacher should focus more on his achievement and possible development and less on his failures and shortcomings, according to the instructions.

On the whole, the theme of academic achievement is the most elaborated in the documentation analysed in this study, which is not surprising. However, this overwhelming focus on difficulties and shortcomings ought to be supplemented with comments on further development and further support made available for the child, in accordance with the legislation.

#### *Social Achievement and Assessment*

Several children in the material, who were found lacking in their academic achievements, were also commented on their social shortcomings. The Swedish Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011) contains a section where the school is obliged to give pupils an opportunity to become responsible of their own learning, to work together with their peers as well as on their own and show respect and tolerance towards others. This may be explained why so many plans contain comments on children's (lack of) social skills.

Social difficulties which can be shown in permanent troubles and violent oral attacks... (one target) could be social competence if he could learn to control his actions.

He seldom takes part in group activities but redraws or throws himself on the ground, refusing, screaming and opposing (target) to learn to adapt to social life in school if possible

These excerpts describe three different children out of the 48 who were found deficit in this aspect. On the one hand, it is understandable that schoolwork becomes much easier when the pupils behave in an accepted way, on the other hand, the recent changes in the legislation show that there is a limit to the evaluations of behaviour suitable to be mentioned in the IEP.

More often than not, the theme of social development contains no suggestions of support or of development at all, but frequently utterances of complaint, tediousness and in some cases desperate cries for help from teachers with the situation in the classroom. There will always be children who will not reach the social targets of being able to work in groups and this implies a failure to all concerned. However, the rather meagre comments on what kinds of support or interventions the school could or should provide are practically non-existent.

#### *Behavioural Difficulties*

An extensive theme in the IEP was the theme of behavioural difficulties.

Mike does not collaborate with schoolwork. His note book is not always at school and he does not use it.

Adults at school find it difficult to catch Owen's attention... often he is far off in his own thoughts.

Most of the time he pokes around with his pen or eraser. It takes a long time for him to get started with the simplest possible tasks.

In this theme, the child's behaviour is seen as a huge threshold in becoming a school pupil. These descriptions are fully context free, i.e. they do not describe anything about how the teaching situation looked like at the time. According to the national guidelines, the pupil's learning should be highlighted in relation to the teaching that takes place. With the intention of the documentation to serve as a plan for development of the individual, it is hard to see how children could benefit from these descriptions of their shortcomings and failures, especially since there are no real valid ideas about how development should take place and could be supported.

You could say that these comments on behavioural deficiency serve as interpellations (Hall 1996) where the identity afforded to the pupils is that of the Other, the misfit or the alienated outsider.

#### *Bodily Conduct*

The fourth theme found in the documents is far from legitimate according to the national guidelines and the legislation. The personal reviews are plentiful. The writers of these documents comment on children's bodies, their composure, their standard of hygiene, etc. These comments are meant as corrections of the children's bodily presence in the school room, the way they sit, the way they stand or run, how much they eat and how fast, their personal hygiene and their bodily functions at large.

A quick stand up in the classroom is OK but there is a demand on his own responsibility, practicing not to find the *wrong* friends or disturb the others working.

Provide good table manners and a good ground for daring to try different dishes and consistencies ... and always to wipe his mouth after dinner.

Sitting needs improvement with some aid to bring the chair closer (to the table) and the chair more straight, more *correct*...

To control his behaviour in the dining hall: He could eat big portions by swallowing the food too fast quickly.

The analysis shows that teachers construct a detailed learning history often including the social development for children in school. In these documents the pupils are made visible and deal with the development of the *whole child*. They include self-government, responsibility, participation and consciousness but also social dimensions such as to be happy and positive and not having a negative attitude towards school work.

#### *Tests and the Gaze*

In the results from this study, it emerges that pupils who are assessed as having knowledge-related difficulties are primarily identified by means of tests. By referring to statistical measurements of what is assessed as normal, the pupils are divided into normal or exceptional pupils. Power and knowledge are thus united in order to determine which pupils will be categorised as pupils in need of special support.

The teacher's normalising 'gaze' (Foucault, 1991b) instead identifies pupils, who are assessed as having difficulties of a behavioural nature. The norms according to which the pedagogue differentiates the pupils are part of a network of conceptions concerning childhood, development, ethics, learning, teaching, curricula, syllabi, etc. on which the discourse is based. Children are placed in different categories and end up within or outside the boundary of what is regarded as 'normal' in school. But these conceptions also create boundaries for what is possible to think and do and pupils, who are assessed as having difficulties, thus risk being placed in problem categories that have already been constructed (cf. Levinas, 1969). This means that pupils, who do not meet the expected knowledge requirements or transgress the school's behavioural norms, are more or less as a matter of course placed in a certain category and this is not questioned. Established courses of action and routines such as drawing up plans in an institution may then contribute to describing pupils in a certain way in the documentation without reflection and awareness from the writer's side.

The findings also show that the texts focus on the child and his/her characteristics rather than, for instance, the circumstances in the teaching or the organisation of the school leading up to the problems observed. Hjörne and Säljö (2004) found in an analysis of the work of pupil welfare teams in three comprehensive schools a consistent lack of argumentation and critical analysis when the team discussed a particular child.

The participants contribute by adding illustrations that confirm and extend the account that is evolving. This is followed by implying that there is a cause within the child itself that is likely to produce inappropriate behaviours. This is a very clear, and powerful rhetorical figure in the reasoning employed (Hjörne & Säljö, 2004 p.18)

There is a high degree of consensus in the description of the pupils in the documentation which indicates that the discourse is well established and accepted in the institutional practice. The same words and categories are often used in the construction of normality in the texts. In Bernstein's (1996) terms the instructive discourse in the classroom is embedded in a regulative discourse, *i.e.*, a discourse of moral and values is mixed with a discourse of what pupils should know, learn and do.

#### **Discussion**

At the policy level the aim for these documentation activities is to strengthen school-home relationships and support pupils' participation in school work for further achievement. However, the analysis shows that the pupils described in the plans are articulated as identities of the other. This means that the underlying discourse is based on assumptions of the identity of the *good* or normal child. Thus, as a conclusion one could say that *the good child* is constructed in the plans as the absent but desired pupil:

- Academically - working towards and reaching the target on time
- Socially - interacting with adults and peers

- Behaviourally - focused, with the right equipment, on time, in place
- Bodily – controlled and neat

In the present school discourse, the school should form self-regulating, independent, flexible, responsible and creative pupils who possess social competence and are able to seek their own knowledge (cf. Lundahl, 2002; Börjesson&Palmlblad, 2003). The pupils targeted in the documentation analysed here are constructed in the school discourse through differentiation, in relation to the other and based on how they are not in relation to the school discourse's ideal pupil. They are constructed by a clarification of their shortcomings and characteristics.

The ideal pupil described in the documentation, on which the pupils with the educational action plan should be modelled, is a self-regulating and autonomous individual who is expected to take responsibility for his or her learning. Important social fostering goals for the pupils with an IEP to achieve are thus taking responsibility for their schoolwork, being motivated, improving their social competence, becoming more independent but also becoming aware of their own learning process. And the body should also be controlled.

The pupils described in the analysed plans need to be changed and formed so that they can function in this *new* pedagogical discourse. There is a great need to satisfy this *new* pedagogical requirement concerning how pupils should be in the school practice, which could then result in the social fostering goals taking priority in the texts.

The results from this study also show that the pedagogical investigation that precedes a plan contains elements of *pastoral power* (Foucault, 1990). These dialogues, which take place at school in connection with drawing up a plan, can be compared with Foucault's 'practice of confession' and in part constitute the basis of pastoral power. Guidance or counselling is thus given by the schools' 'experts' to parents and the pupil and in this relation, a number of techniques can be utilised to form the pupil into a 'good school pupil'. A common support intervention found in the plans is having several adults around the pupil, e.g. a teacher assistant who stays with the pupil through a large part of the school day. Such an intervention provides many opportunities for heart-to-heart conversations with the pupils, which, from a Foucauldian perspective could be seen as part of this practice of confession. But according to Dean (1999), pastoral power does not solely involve exercising power over others but also reflecting on how we can control ourselves. The texts could then be a pedagogical technique used for this self-regulation.

As a result of this increase in teachers' control in the plans, pupils are continuously assessed and in the event of unacceptable behavior, the pupil is also able to reflect on his/her behaviour together with the adult, who can be said to be a part of the self-control. This notion may also be present as a target in the pupil's plan.

The reasoning about self-control includes ideas about autonomy and freedom and leads us to Foucault's concept of governmentality and liberal control. This control emphasises the 'free' subject who is expected to control his/her own behaviour in an appropriate way (Foucault, 1988). In the school's world, 'free' means an unspoken expectation that the pupils will form themselves in accordance with the school's order. According to Foucault, these 'technologies of the self' (1988,p.18) imply both greater knowledge of oneself but also working on oneself to become the 'good subject', *i.e.* self-control through self-knowledge and reflection.

We could state that this documentation is a governing practice. The results point to a number of different types of this self-control, which are present in the plans. These are the pupils' logbooks and different types of notes, although some of the proposed interventions in the plans can also be regarded as a type of self-control. For example, in the plans, the pupils could agree to practise a change in their behaviour in dialogues with an adult. But it is gentle governance, in the name of freedom (see Rose, 1998). The social control is thus a question of forming a desirable citizen in order to realise the ideas cherished by society about how individuals should be. The school participates in this social control, which aims to produce the discourse's ideal pupil. But society is constantly changing and the latest change in the Western societies is often described as a transition to late modern society. In late modern society, several significant changes which can be described with words such as globalisation, service production, decentralisation, disparity, cultural diversity, personal development, entrepreneurship, creativity and individuality, have been made apparent. Based on the analysis of the documentation in this study there is some uncertainty as to how the school practice is handling these ideological changes. The results indicate that varying

ideologies are present in the texts, which could thus indicate a certain amount of discontinuity. The problem formulations as well as the proposed interventions show that traditional approaches and ways of working dominate at the same time as the ideal pupil described as desirable is part of the *new* discourse.

This discussion thus brings up questions about the professional role of teachers. But from Foucault's governmentality perspective, the teacher is also subject to social governing. The teacher is thus not outside this held-for-true discourse and in this way, the discourse also has the function of disciplining the teacher. The ideological changes that have taken place thus mean that the teacher has less authority while pupils have more individual responsibility. This change, however, means that subjects must be responsible and self-regulating if pedagogues are to be able to carry out their knowledge mission in today's school. The pupils not belonging to this group, such as the pupils needing special support, may thus be regarded as obstacles to the school's and the teachers' mission as mediators of knowledge. The question then is whether the teachers have enough *tools* to reach all the pupils in accordance with the inclusive framework in the school and to be able to carry out their knowledge mission for the benefit of all pupils. This implies questions of how the pupils, who are not autonomous and self-regulating, can be given adequate supportive interventions by the school in order to achieve their knowledge goals without first having to be formed into this *new* subject. This implies making links beyond education and attends to broader issues of social inclusion.

We argue that, based on the results from this study, there is a need to bring out and discuss the school's role as a mediator of identity in the pupil documentation produced. This requires an awareness and knowledge of the importance of language for the formation of pupils' identity as well as a discussion about the ability of language to produce change. Being careful about how one describes another person could be extremely important when it comes to the individual pupil's encounter with him/herself as reflected by the other. In addition, the pupils involved most often read through and sign their plans and presumably it is difficult to resist an appropriation of the identity afforded in the document, since they are repeatedly, in one plan after the other, formulated based on the same behaviour and difficulties.

However, we must also be aware of the increasing amount of documentation for the teachers to write. Writing this documentation is included in the teacher's assignment according to the Education Act, but no extra time is allocated. Consequently, teachers have to take that time from something else. They may even have to take time from their teaching.

Although a complex issue, the power of the written word must nevertheless be acknowledged by teachers. Knowledge about the gender order and other social orders is also important as an understanding of the significance of providing descriptions of individuals in texts for immediate or later use and how this description can affect children's identity constructs.

In conclusion, the formulation of problems that emerges in the documentation concern pupils' knowledge, attitudes, abilities, skills and behaviours in many different areas. The written texts thus include not only knowledge-related and pedagogical issues but also documentation of social and ethical aspects and these different aspects (psychological, medical, pedagogical and ethical) are interwoven in the descriptions of the problems. The positioning of pupils in the IEP: s illustrates the role of these plans as a technique of governance in contemporary societies. The plans produce discourses that regulate children and their families. Blurring the boundary between private and public, is an important ingredient in these processes. But it also means exercising power.

Finally we would like to quote Foucault (1991) in his notion of *docility*.

...a general theory of dressage, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility', which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved (Foucault, 1991b, p. 161)

Linked to the different types of goals in the plans, they are in line with the school's focus on knowledge and social improvement formulated in the Swedish legislation. The question is: When do they pass the limit?

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