

Anna Larsson & Björn Norlin (eds.)  
*Beyond the Classroom: Studies on  
 Pupils and Informal Schooling Pro-  
 cesses in Modern Europe.*

Frankfurt: Peter Lang  
 2014, 235 pp.

In Sweden, we have great faith in schools and classroom teaching, so much so that we believe different social problems or adolescent problems are best solved by school - good traffic sense, sex and relationships, bullying, drugs, environmental issues, internet hatred. School is to take care of everything! How liberating to read a book about how we acquire knowledge about life and society without school having direct control over what we learn. Instead this book focuses on the pupils and what they chose to teach themselves and what insights they have gained beyond the institutional intent of their schools. Educational historians Anna Larsson and Björn Norlin at Umeå University have succeeded in bringing together a group of Swedish and international researchers who have addressed interesting questions about what goes on “beneath the surface” in an educational context in a new book entitled *Beyond the Classroom: Studies on Pupils and Informal Schooling Processes in Modern Europe*. We are able to share the lessons learned and the attitudes that were thrown in for free, so to speak, in the teaching. This is a book about informal schooling, the subject that no curriculum creator had thought out in advance. Instead, the pupils themselves were the players, at least to some extent.

Judging by the essays in the book, the research field of history of education follows the conventional historiography of the subject of history. There is a strong focus on “changes of direction” – cultural, affective, biographical, identity-creating, linguistic or discursive – the same epistemological process that most humanities subjects have gone through in recent years. And why not? Teaching is a matter of passing on, from one generation to another, not just knowledge but also ideas, views of the world, norms, symbols and practices. When this “passing on” involves children and adolescents, new processes arise: emotions, resistance and counter-cultures begin to live their own lives and new discourses and ideas are

created. If any part of the subject of history is well suited for a postmodern search for knowledge, it is the history of education. There can be no doubt that school is a meeting place for a string of different social and cultural phenomena. Socialisation takes place just as much in the playground, corridors, changing rooms, at clubs and societies or in school newspapers as in the actual classroom. Moreover, the research that is done today is more focused on studying cultural rotation and more complex environments and processes. This perspective is very palpable in this anthology.

In the first chapter, Larsson and Norlin provide an excellent and useful overview and theoretical analysis of the international development of the field of history of education from the mid-1900s to the 2000s. Their focus is on the dynamic change in the way scholars approach and interpret what schooling and teaching is and what it does to us. What was the best way to bring up and nurture children and adolescents? What was the best pedagogical method? How could school children be controlled outside school? What things characterised childhood and adolescence? Research questions of this kind became interesting even back in the 1960s when researchers became interested in the informal schooling sphere, usually called the invisible or hidden curriculum. The term “socialisation” began to be used to denote the learning process we acquire without being aware of it. It seemed as if the discovery of adolescence as a specific period of one’s life after childhood began to influence institutions in the other direction, almost anti-clockwise. Reform politicians took on board new pedagogical ideas where children were given a more central position. In the 1970s, sociologists and ethnologists became interested in comparing education systems and pupils in relation to cultural and social “systems” outside school. Different reproduction processes – particularly those based on class – were identified and investigated in order to find out how pupils reacted to this system. The relation between school and society thereby came into focus and was theorised.

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was renewed interest in school life inside the walls: the informal processes, the teacher-pupil relationship, friendship ties between pupils, violence during breaks and

playground games. What was the significance of all these things and what additional knowledge did the pupils acquire by themselves? The boarding school milieu was investigated in many studies and it was in this context that gender theory finally penetrated the history of education. Since then, various research projects have investigated the fact that pupils were of two different genders and that school was a miniature gender system where masculinity and femininity were created. In particular, masculinity research took its starting point in boarding school milieux where elite upbringing and masculinity were in focus.

The overview ends with some reflections on the general changes this field has undergone. Larsson and Norlin see a paradigm shift from structuralism, social control and class analysis to postmodern, theoretical perspectives, from the view of children and adolescents as recipients and predetermined players to freer and more autonomous subjects that have become co-creators of their own upbringing. The view of school as an institution has thereby also changed. Research nowadays views the school environment not only as a total institution for social control; it is also an arena for autonomous processes where the creation of social meaning, the construction of identity and the expression of culture takes place. It is also clear that in history of education research, it is the middle class that has become a favourite object of study, presumably because it was the middle class that was most eager for education and had resources to build up good archives.

Is this theoretical and methodological renewal apparent in the anthology's eight papers, which delve deeply into the latest history of education research? Very much so, in my opinion. The book is very cohesive, more so than is usually the case with anthologies. Its focus is on studies based on materials from sources about pupils and students. There is a clear shift of interest towards cultures, emotions, ambivalences, the creation of discourses, moral dilemmas and agency.

The first paper has been written by Sian Roberts who examines the pupil culture and moral upbringing at a progressive experimental school, Hazelwood school, which was founded in the 1820s in Birmingham, via the school newspaper which has been

preserved. This school was intended to give middle-class youth useful and practical education in preparation for future jobs. It had been inspired by the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. It is apparent from the pupils' own contributions to the school newspaper that they learned how to take on responsibility and assume leading roles in preparation for their future positions in bourgeois life. They were given control of economic resources, they participated in court-like activities that enabled them to practise the assessment of evidence and gave them civic training, and they acquired practical knowledge about philanthropic activities and administration. Robert's article gives examples of how pupil-directed activities through the newspaper gave the pupils knowledge for their future lives, not just for school.

Esbjörn Larsson's paper begins with a discussion about Ervin Goffman's term *total institutions* which refers to the notion that some institutions such as mental hospitals and prisons are totalitarian insofar as their inmates do not have any freedom at all and are cut off from the rest of society. The patient or prisoner gradually loses his/her own self or own identity when all personal things are gradually taken away. Larsson wants to test this theory and poses the question: Can boarding schools be viewed in the same way as totalitarian, closed worlds? He investigates Kungliga Krigsakademin (Royal War Academy) in Stockholm (Karlberg) during the 1800s and gives a yes-and-no answer. On the one hand, there are many elements in the cadets' training that indicate total submission and obedience, primarily how the cadets increasingly adapt to the regulations system and the culture of violence within the school. On the other hand, Karlberg is not a school that can be called a totalitarian institution. Usually, it was the older pupils who used violence which must have meant that as the younger pupils got older and more experienced, they would start to use the instruments of violence themselves. The internal culture was in part a product of the cadets themselves and not part of a totalitarian system.

In Björn Norlin's article too, the emphasis is on the pupils' power of initiative and independence. He writes about the notion of Nordic unity during the period between 1870 and 1914 and how that era gave rise

to an active youth movement within Nordic grammar schools. This movement, which encouraged trans-Nordic nationalism among youngsters, promoted the pupils' autonomous activities within the education system. Norlin discovered that a proper *social movement* in Nordic transnationalism came to rise when youngsters met at national and Nordic level on their own initiative and with a cultural ambition that was beyond the usual. A whole landscape of newspapers and different publications was established which Norlin interprets as an example of the ability of these grammar school youngsters to become co-creators of their own lives. He sees this youth movement as an indication that research on school and education must take pupils and their activities very seriously.

Marieka Smit begins her chapter with an epistemological statement. She wants to access the inner life of school (like the other writers in the book) and she does so by studying the pedagogical practice in a Dutch, Catholic girls' school (*Fons Vitae*). To do this, she uses the school archives' narrative sources, pupil memoirs, interviews, memories of teachers and diaries. In that way, she finds out what the female pupils' thoughts were about the acquisition of knowledge, school life, religious ponderings and the inconsistency of behavioural codes. She can also see the dual gender message presented in the school: is it possible to aspire to be an academic, intellectual professional woman while still standing up for traditional female values? How could Catholicism and feminism be united? Marieka Smit ends her chapter by expressing source criticism regarding her own study. How can we know that the narratives found in this personal material come any closer to reality than those that are more cherished by the old critically analysing school of history: protocols, rolls, official letters etcetera? This is a question I want to come back to. Moreover, any personal materials have been sorted and removed from the archives and saved in a tendentious way.

Anna Larsson's chapter "Remembering School" is based on famous people's autobiographies about how they perceived their school years. What do they think about their schooling after all this time? Is the era or type of school of any significance? She has selected two generations of famous peo-

ple in Sweden who wrote about their school years. Some were born between 1910 and 1925, others during the 1960s and 1970s. She finds that certain themes are found in both generations' autobiographical writing about school. The "eternal" themes are a desire to feel part of a group, being able to have secrets without any interference from adults, not being harassed or excluded, being acknowledged and feeling friendship. It is quite clear that in hindsight, people perceive their school as being a place full of emotions. Not fitting in was difficult, as were vulnerability and shame, but happiness and success after doing something well are also clearly noticeable. However, there are differences between the generations. The younger autobiography writers talk more about comradeship and its significance than the older ones do. This can be explained by the fact that the younger group of writers had written their memoirs at a time when precisely that part of school life was cherished and the problem of bullying had been put on the agenda. Larsson also places the study in an emotion-theoretical context in an interesting way.

Joakim Landahl bases his article in the book on his book on Norra Latin's summer school. This was a kind of social experiment in Stockholm's archipelago where the sons of financially needy parents who attended the Norra Latin boys' grammar school could get out into the countryside during the summer holiday and live a sort of genuine community life. As time went by, this summer school became increasingly ambitious and began to resemble a mini-society with a hospital, newspaper publication, radio station, telephone exchange, party headquarters, court, its own money system etcetera. The intention was that the young men would learn how society worked by trying out for themselves how to live and work in this experimental community. It did work to some extent but how similar was in fact this summer school to real life? Well, the school was controlled in a stiffer and more narrow-minded way than society as a whole and the hierarchies were more diffuse because the distribution of work was unclear. It was possible for many types of leadership to develop. Rewards in the form of money and punishments in the form of fines maintained discipline and order, but fines for trivial offences also indicated that

this was a society that needed more basic moral upbringing. The summer school culture probably did not turn out the way it was intended to; instead it was full of contradictions and ambivalences. Much of the upbringing that was intended to be of use for future life out in society seemed to work more as a way of maintaining order in the social experiment as it was in progress.

Emmanuel Droit's chapter is about schools and pupils in East Berlin in the 1950s where SED (Germany's Socialist Party) wanted to put their ideological stamp on the entire education system. Droit challenges the standard picture of the East German schools as being totalitarian institutions where the pupils were brainwashed into the right doctrine. It is true there are many public documents that describe how the new socialist civilisation was to be built up and the socialist human being created – a sort of educational dictatorship – but in reality, this period was not at all as simplistic and controlled from above as it has been made out to be, at least not during the first decade. If school and education are viewed as being a mixture of different players' practices and interaction – pupils, teachers, party members, politicians and parents – and one then searches for information in these different groups' historical sources, one finds more complex patterns than have previously been seen. Droit claims that the ideology about East Germany being the promised land of socialism originally included a large portion of optimism as regards education and faith in the future which was different from the intentions of the SED politicians. The pupil parliaments that were held during the 1950s demonstrate many provoking actions against the perceived ideologising of school but the stigmatising of the rebels made it more difficult for them to hold out against the regime in the long run. When it was no longer possible to fully control the youngsters' thoughts and souls in school, they were controlled instead on a large scale via youth organisations. But as far as identity was concerned, East Germany's socialistic project was never totally accepted.

The last chapter of the book is Lisa Rosén Rasmussen's analysis of three generations of school adolescents' experiences of their early schooldays from a material, bodily and emotional perspective. The investigation shows how the schoolwork was shaped in

an ongoing conflictual meeting between material, discursive and emotion-triggering processes. Rosén Rasmussen claims therefore that there is no stable "ordinary schoolday grammar" that is always the same. The three generations in her study had perceived the school's materiality and emotions in rather different ways. In their descriptions of corporeality and space, it emerged, for example, that the rooms for disobedience changed from generation to generation, that the classroom expanded more and more, and also that some pupils were taken out of class and put in smaller, more private rooms such as reading clinics and mathematics clinics. The playground and breaks were an integrated part of the pupils' schooldays which shows how pupils can view school as an institution very differently from the way teachers may do. The interviews with the pupils also clearly show how pupils and teachers together are always something that is "doing" or "becoming" or "coming". *They are the actual school* with all that that entails: learning methods, material experiences, relationships to teachers and classmates, and everything is linked to a specific period and social context.

It has been very rewarding and interesting to read Anna Larsson's, Björn Norlin's and their co-writers' anthology *Beyond the Classroom*. It gives me pleasure to see that Swedish history of education is of such good quality and that it can be presented in an international context. It is seldom one reads an anthology that is as cohesive as this one and with a group of writers where everyone is pulling in the same direction, both theoretically and methodically. The articles seem to be well worked out which indicates the editors and the group have devoted time to making the book consistent. The authors show what opportunities educational historians have to investigate the everyday life of school and pupil culture through the profuse availability of sources of a personal nature such as diaries, memories of school, biographies and collections of letters. In short, this is an excellent book.

However, I would have liked a commentative analysis that presented more clearly what the authors *as a group* have observed and what reflections the common points of departure and the pupil-controlled material have led to when it comes to general results. Has this joint project resulted in broadened

scholarly views about pupils and informal schooling? The book's introduction gives a presentation of the content of each chapter but not a summarising comment about the new, general knowledge this pupil-controlled and informal perspective has resulted in. This is a fascinating and complex subject and it would be interesting to read more about how this method differs from a more traditional study based on protocols, rolls, catechetical examination registers etc. As a historian of the old, knowledge-realism school, I wonder: Will future research always conclude that "everything is complex and full of contradictions and ambivalences"? I would also have liked to see the issues of power and hierarchies more explicitly focused in the book – although I am aware of course that education and its need for discipline is always something that meets counter-power, rebellious emotions and new discourses and that this is what this book has wanted to capture. But the category of "pupils" is surely not a uniform group with the same rights, resources and voices? This aspect could have been problematised even more.

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Karen E. Andreasen, Mette Buchardt, Annette Rasmussen & Christian Ydesen (eds.)

*Test og prøvelser: Oprindelse, udvikling, aktualitet*

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2015, 304 pp.

**E**n amerikansk bok om kunskapsmätning från 1950-talet inleds på följande vis:

From birth to death almost every aspect of our daily lives is touched by measurement in its numerous forms. At birth the record of that important event is carefully made according to the nurse's watch. During the next few days measurements of the baby's weight and temperature are part of the daily routine of the hospital. Ever afterward, whether in school or outside, watches, clocks, balances, thermometers, money systems, and other forms of measurement play prominent roles in the life of every human being.

Ross & Stanley, 1954, s. 3

Systematisk bedömning av individers förmågor, kunskaper och kompetenser tillhör det moderna samhällets tydliga kännetecknen. Utbildningsväsendet kanske mer än något annat har gjort bedömning till signum för hela sin verksamhet. Isaacs (2010) visade till exempel att engelska barn genomgick 105 externa formella bedömningar i skolan (dvs. utöver lärarnas bedömningar) till det att de fyllt 18. I vilken utsträckning bedömning sker och vilka olika tester och prov som används varierar dock mellan länder. Därför är det viktigt med nationella, historiska och kulturella perspektiv på text och bedömning, men även jämförande. I antologin *Test og prøvelser: Oprindelse, udvikling, aktualitet* beskrivs omsorgsfullt tolv olika sammanhang för testning och bedömning i en dansk kontext. Därtill beskrivs i två av dessa artiklar även de internationella PISA-testen. Fokus ligger på nutida test- och bedömningspraktiker men flera av kapitlen har gedigna historiska bakgrundsavsnitt. Några kapitlen är främst samtida och bygger på etnografiska studier och eller intervjuer. Syftet med boken är att genom bredd och fördjupning bidra till en diskussion om "nutidens udbredte testpraktisser" (s. 13). Även om boken har en bred ansats är den tydlig i sina avgränsningar. Det handlar exempelvis inte om lärares egna prov eller om examina-