The Graduate School for Pedagogic practices

In autumn 2000 a new postgraduate programme was introduced at Linköping University - a graduate school for Pedagogic practices. Pedagogic practices is a multifaceted area of research that deals with issues relevant for schools, childcare and teacher training activities as well as other pedagogical practices. This research aims at problemising e.g. the school as an institution from historical, contemporary and future perspectives and thus contributing to the development of the professional knowledge of teachers. Research is ongoing in different areas that are described below. Our interests can, however, also come to embrace e.g. welfare work, non-profit organisations, international projects and political organisations. Our interests can come to include didactical dimensions in other areas of activity than those of schools and teacher training.

As a starting out point for the on-going work the following definition of the field of pedagogical work is provided

An interdisciplinary field within the branch of educational science, that integrates different disciplines in order to give a new perspective on different aspects of the work of pedagogues and the role of institutions in society and referring primarily to schools and teaching. This field is coupled to the activities of teacher training and schools.

Starting out from this definition we want to see an area of activity that will also include a distinctive dimension with research methods in close proximity to practice, a focus on professional work and the interaction between research and the field.

Behavioural scientists, humanists and sociologists are linked to the graduate school. Representatives of the different disciplines collaborate and highlight problems of relevance to society from their different perspectives and thereby guarantee both breadth as well as depth in the research.

Today over twenty persons are active in the graduate school. Sixteen doctoral students are studying in the doctoral programme and have arrived at different stages in their studies.

Two professors in Pedagogic practices and yet more researchers from other research environments are responsible for tutoring and teaching.

The growth of the graduate school and its organisation.
The graduate school is a phase in long-term work at Linköping University to build up a new research organisation and simultaneously change and couple research to the teacher training programmes.

What we can see today as Pedagogic practices and the activities associated with it, was initiated in 1995 by the University Board’s decision in principle and its action programme. In 1996 the Faculty Board decided to set up an inquiry committee on
research and research educational courses with regard to schools, learning and teaching. One aim was to strengthen the activities in teacher training. In the directives for the inquiry some key phrases used were: teachers’ knowledge and pupils’ and teachers’ work in school. The inquiry devotes a chapter to clarifying the description of the area of knowledge, “Pedagogic practices”, and states it is unsuitable to give an unambiguous definition of the concept. Instead the area should find its own form later on, through the activities that will be pursued.

The committee of inquiry summarises its views on the field of Pedagogic practices in the following way: They use the term Pedagogic practices more precisely in four senses of meaning.

- Firstly, Pedagogic practices is a summarising term for pedagogically based practice or activity. The term encompasses learning, teaching and education as well as didactical issues. They emphasise that pedagogic practices exists in different organisational contexts, of which school is one. The choice of terminology should thus indicate that the traditional perspective on the activities of a school should be enlarged.
- Secondly, the term Pedagogic practices can refer to an area of knowledge that deals with organised activities with the aim of leading to individuals’ learning.
- Thirdly, Pedagogic practices is a designation for a research area that is multidisciplinary. Knowledge from a range of subjects and areas is needed in order to illustrate the phenomenon pedagogic practices. Research is thus also a concern for others than pedagogues.
- Fourthly, Pedagogic practices is a term used for a subject area. Whoever studies the subject trains their capacity to describe, analyse and understand the phenomenon of Pedagogic practices. She or he increases her/his own practical skills in executing or organising pedagogical work. He or she also acquires the ability to construct different perspectives and thereby remain critically valuating towards his/her own activities.

Common to all the research orientations is that the starting out point is from within pedagogical practice, then later on different researchers can construct totally different perspectives e.g. pertaining to content, cultural, organisational or historical. The purpose of research is to develop new knowledge that to a great extent should be applicable and be utilised by teachers and for learning.

The two professorships are oriented towards didactics and the school as an institution and at knowledge formation, learning and the interaction between teachers and pupils.

In the proposal it is declared that, amongst other things, the starting point for the research shall be the pedagogical practice and that knowledge and perspectives from a number of disciplines and areas are necessary in order to clarify and elucidate Pedagogic practices.
The graduate school is situated at the department of Educational Sciences and the overall responsibility lies with the Board for Educational Sciences. Activities are led by the two professors. Leadership of the graduate school is enacted in collaboration with teachers and tutors from different research departments, both within Linköping University and at other universities. Professors and doctoral students hold posts in the department of Educational Sciences.

In our research environment we want to develop research methods in close proximity to practice, or a practice-oriented approach. These will be core elements in the development of the field of Pedagogic practices. By a close proximity to practice ideal we mean an interest in what the actors actually do and the practical problems and perspectives that are formulated by e.g. teachers and pupils. Our practical interest also comprises work on joint knowledge formation between researchers and practitioners with the double aim of contributing partially to practical activities and partly to knowledge formation within the framework of a fundamental research interest. This ambition will be developed in different ways within different endeavours.

**Present areas of research**
The creation of the Graduate School for Pedagogic practices should be viewed against the background of a growing need for knowledge about teachers’ work, their formation of knowledge, teaching and learning, about pupils’ socialisation patterns and everyday practices in relation to learning. The subject of Pedagogic practices has been established both within teacher training and research education. After completing the research educational programme a thesis is submitted related to the subject Pedagogic practices. The research field for Pedagogic practices is multidisciplinary and assembles and integrates theories, methods and perspectives from many different disciplines. After the first years’ activities it is however possible to discern two major orientations for research: teachers’ work, pupils’ learning and the formation of knowledge.

*Teachers’ work, pupils’ learning and knowledge creation.*

An important object of study within this orientation is the relationship between the pedagogue’s work and the learning processes. In focus here is how teachers and pupils interact, but also how teachers collaborate with one another and how pupils’ learning is moulded against the background of the organisation of the teaching and social framing factors. Starting out from the pupil and he/she who learns, questions can be posed as to if they incorporate the learning into their life situation and everyday practices.

One important area concerns the school’s weekday as it is experienced and created by pupils, teachers and other members of staff e.g. principals. Another area can cover the school as an organisation and institution, teacher’s personal knowledge and the significance of the changed teaching role. How do teachers improve themselves? What role does formal and informal learning, respectively, play? How do they utilise
research in their work? From this perspective it is important to see how school, pre-
school and municipalities organise the relationship between pedagogical leadership
and pedagogical processes. Our research interests also include analyses and
descriptions of such processes illustrated historically, i.e. institutions that can only be
accessed via documents. In this main orientation, studies of and comparisons with
other pedagogical processes than those that exist in schools can be made, e.g. in small
businesses, non-profit organisations and other forms of public activities such as
recreational activities or welfare work.

Of importance in this orientation is e.g. to study interaction in the classroom. The
classroom is the arena where different goals are to be realised and where conceptions
of what knowledge, independence, responsibility etc. mean, are produced and
mediated. How do pupils handle their school weekday? How are subjects and
schoolwork constituted by the actors involved? An urgent and important area of
research within this field concerns children and pupils with communicative disorders
that obstruct the learning processes. Issues which are of extreme relevance in this
field concern normality, separation and integration. How do professionals, e.g.
teachers and counsellors, and parents, speak of and describe different functional
disorders?

**Didactics, learning and the institutions of knowledge**

How do different historical, institutional and cultural frameworks form and influence
the content and forms of learning? Studies of the more literal institutions of learning
and knowledge deal primarily with studies of the different parts of the educational
system, e.g. the growth of different school forms and educational institutions and
their development under different historical and social preconditions and what
consequences they have had for pedagogical work. In those studies that emanate from
a more metaphorical institutional concept, activities and content areas in the
pedagogical work that by custom and tradition can be regarded as institutions, for
example the content of different school subjects and teaching methods (a didactic
interest) are studied as are culturally mediated conceptions about teacher and pupil
roles in different contexts. Are pre-school teachers and leisure-time pedagogues
responsible for pupils or for children? What does our use of terms concerning the
activities they are part of tell us? By studies of e.g. teaching materials, debates and
curricula but also of how teaching is organised and accomplished, the connection
between learning and social preconditions can be analysed.

A number of issues in this orientation concern class, gender, ethnicity and youth
cultures in school. Until the middle of the 1990s the Swedish school was comprised
of a number of educational paths that to a great extent recruited pupils by means of a
conception concerned with distinctive characteristics and a need to separate boys
from girls, or social classes from one another. During the later part of the 1990s
school politics to a major extent has been concerned with creating a school for
everyone. Research can deal with how these processes have been implemented,
historically as well as from a contemporary perspective. From a contemporary
perspective it can be e.g. interesting to pay attention to the growth of childcare and pre-schools. To the same extent as school is an arena for youth cultures it is also an arena for different professional cultures (teachers, headteachers, pre-school teachers, leisure-time pedagogues, psychologists, school nurses etc.). How do e.g. teachers and pre-school teachers create and uphold determined viewpoints and attitudes concerning their own profession and the content of pedagogical work? In this orientation it is important to study the connection between the content of the pedagogical work and its relation to goal documentation, historical preconditions for education and social knowledge formation in general. Studies of similar issues in other social institutions are also of interest to the graduate school.

Overall perspective
The above division is a rough one in many ways. Firstly, there are a number of individual research projects that do not unambiguously allow themselves to be incorporated exclusively in any of the described orientations, but belong to both in different ways. Secondly, there are perspectives and issues that are common to both orientations. An example is didactics, i.e. the questions that concern what constitutes the content of teaching, how it is mediated and why. Another core perspective is concerned with issues on fundamental values and ethics in pedagogic practices. A third common perspective concerns gender, ethnicity and class. The ongoing thesis work is also stimulated by it often being part of, or associated with, different research projects and being part of a wider circle of researchers within different research environments.

Ongoing thesis work
In the graduate school we can see that different orientations are stimulated as a result of the multidisciplinary orientation and collaboration with different subjects and themes. So far three admissions have been realised. The first admission involved nine doctoral students, the second admission two doctoral students financed by the National Graduate School for Educational work, and the third admission accepted five doctoral students. Today the graduate school has a total of sixteen doctoral students. These doctoral students have the following orientations:

The first admission
1. How school children handle the school weekday – a social anthropological perspective
2. “Problematic children” in school, an interactional perspective.
3. New pedagogical forms and new technology at upper secondary school – pupils’ work and learning
4. Children, the family and institutions, the pre-school as a normalising practice
5. Girls’ educational opportunities during the 1990s
6. Teachers’ work, knowledge formation and learning in school
7. Female principals work and leadership
8. Civil ideals in the educational politics of the 1990s, a text analysis
9. Civic ideals around the turn of the 20th century. Education at Hall prison.
The second admission:
10. Gender conflicts in the folk high school profession and male preschool teachers’ identity with special reference to gender, class and status perspectives.
11. Pupils with the diagnosis Asperger’s syndrome with the focus on interaction in their school situation

The third admission
12. Pupils’ learning from a pupil perspective
13. Upper secondary school pupils in vocational programmes and their lives and learning within the frameworks of core subjects
14. Teaching materials and objectivity
15. State, school and youth cultures undergoing change
16. Young people’s creation of identity viewed from a gender perspective

Dissertations

Graduate programme
The research studies are organised according to national regulations. This means that they are partly a continuation of the fundamental undergraduate university education, partly that they lead to a doctoral degree. The programme corresponds to four years of full-time study (160 credit points). During this time the doctoral students will also participate in the work of seeking external research grants.

The programme consists partly of courses, partly of thesis work. The courses comprise 80 credit points and the thesis work 80 credit points. These courses are partly courses in Pedagogic practices common to all doctoral students, partly individual courses directed towards the specific thesis work. The common courses are held during the first part of the programme and aim at creating a knowledge foundation for the doctoral students. This part of the studies requires the doctoral student to actively participate in the work in creating a good seminarian culture. The individual courses aim at deepening the doctoral student’s knowledge in those areas that are relevant to thesis work.

The programme takes four years, combined with duties in Pedagogic practices that can involve participating in different external assignments or teaching in the undergraduate educational programmes. Hence in reality studies comprise five years. The first year is devoted to common courses above all, years two and three to formulating and beginning thesis work as well as performing tasks within the framework of the doctoral post. The fourth and fifth years are devoted mainly to completing the thesis. The doctoral student has one or more tutors to help with the thesis work. On admission consideration is taken to what competence is available among tutors, in order to in this manner guarantee good preconditions for a successful
research project. The completed thesis work can be presented as a monograph or as an anthology. The finalised thesis is defended publicly at a disputation.

Requirements for admission and the procedures for admission
The general requirements for admission state that the applicant must have completed a fundamental undergraduate university education of at least 120 credit points or have acquired the corresponding knowledge on the whole in another manner within or outside the country. In order to qualify for the programme further in-depth studies corresponding to at least 60 credit points, or their equivalent, in a subject relevant to Pedagogic practices are required.

Financing studies
Only as many doctoral students as the graduate school has the possibility to give financial study support to, are admitted to the programme. This study support comprises either a special educational assistance grant or a doctoral post, or a combination of the two. It is most usual that the doctoral student receives a special educational assistance grant during the initial study period and a doctoral post later on. Grants or posts are given for one year at a time with good opportunities for a continuation during a total of four years of full time study. This is bound up with restrictive rules for income from other work performed in parallel with studies. The special educational assistance grant is not the equivalent of a public servant’s salary. For this reason the university has taken out collective insurance for doctoral students with special educational assistance grants.

Courses and seminars
During the first terms of the research programme the following courses are held at present:
- Pedagogic practices: 10 credit points
- Knowledge creation and learning: 5 credit points
- Perspectives on different scientific methods: 10 credit points
- Research projects – from idea to action: 10 credit points
- Scientific theory: 10 credit points

In addition courses orientated towards individual thesis subjects are held.

Furthermore, two series of seminars are held where ongoing research is presented: The “Higher Seminar” is a workshop seminar where doctoral students from the graduate school present parts of their ongoing thesis work. On most of these occasions a written outline is present. The seminar series has guest lecturers from other institutions and universities. In this seminar, texts that have been published are discussed which have relevance for the research in Pedagogic practices. The “Wednesday Seminar” is a forum where teachers and researchers from different institutions present their research.

The Masters Programme
In association with the graduate school there is a Master’s programme in Pedagogic practices that comprises 20 credit points and have an orientation towards teachers’ work, didactics, learning and the institutions of knowledge. The programme aims at
the students developing an interdisciplinary theory and method competence concerning the area of knowledge known as Pedagogic practices, grounded in the humanities as well as in behavioural and social sciences. The most comprehensive part of the programme involves in collaboration with a tutor planning and then independently executing a survey and writing an essay that comprises 10 credit points. The educational programme, which leads to a Master’s Degree in Pedagogic practices, is research preparatory. It also gives practically useful knowledge in for example being responsible for developmental work in schools or holding so-called research seminars with teachers.