

The Degree Project-Course in Swedish Teacher Education - Deliberative and Transformative Perspectives on the Formative Assessment Practice

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Abstract : The overall aim of this study is to highlight how the degree project-course in teacher education has developed over time at Swedish universities, above all regarding changes in the formative assessment practices in relation to student's opportunities to take part in writing processes that can develop both their independent critical thinking, subject knowledge, and academic writing skills. Theoretically, the study is based on deliberative and transformative perspectives of teaching academic writing in higher education. The deliberative perspective is motivated by the fact that it is the universities and their departments' responsibility to give the students opportunities to develop their academic writing skills, while there is little guidance on how this can be implemented. The transformative perspective is motivated by the fact that education needs to be adapted to the student's prior knowledge and developed in relation to the student group. Given the academisation of education and the new student groups, this is a necessity. The empirical data consists of video recordings of teacher groups' conversations at three Swedish universities. The conversations were conducted as so-called collective remembering interviews, a method to stimulate the participants' memory through social interaction, and focused on addressing issues on how the degree project-course in teacher education has changed over time. Topic analysis was used to analyze the conversations in order to identify common descriptions and expressions among the teachers. The result highlights great similarities in how the degree project-course has changed over time, both from a deliberative and a transformative perspective. The course is characterized by a "strong framing," where the teachers have great control over the work through detailed instructions for the writing process and detailed templates for the text. This is justified by the fact that the education has been adapted based on the student teachers' lack of prior subject knowledge. The strong framing places high demands on continuous discussions between teachers about, for example, which tools the students have with them and which linguistic and textual tools are offered in the education. The teachers describe that such governance often leads to conflicts between teachers from different departments because reading and writing are always part of cultural contexts and are linked to different knowledge, traditions, and values. The problem that is made visible in this study raises questions about how students' opportunities to develop independence and make critical judgments in academic writing are affected if the writing becomes too controlled and if passing students becomes the main goal of education.

Keywords : formative assessment, academic writing, degree project, higher education, deliberative perspective, transformative perspective

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