Dwelling at the outskirts of the normal study pace or pursuing an alternate path

– narratives of teacher training students who postponed their studies

In relation to the ideal visions of successful student trajectories found in current educational policy and debates, it can be questioned whether the opportunities to access higher education, to be mobile, efficient and successful are the same for all students. The student has to move in and out of financial systems (labour market, student finance) as well as managing time, deadlines, keeping up, and the timing of important events during one’s educational career. Lately, there has been an increased political focus on student enrolment, efficiency and completion in higher education, which increase pressure for HEIs to be more efficient and ensure student success. However, this case study focuses on the situation when students (for a range of different reasons) do not follow the normal study pace in the courses as the “normal performing” students do. In the administrative HE discourse the situation is framed as at risk students in relation to dropping out from their studies. Students who do not register for next semester is understood as a dropout in the administrative follow up statistics. But, what kind of existences do the at risk dropouts experience and what are the reasons for not continuing their studies? The current study *contrasts* the results from an analysis based on administrative HE discourse and different policy discourses, with a critical sociological analysis of the lived experienced from 31 at risk dropout students from the Swedish teacher programme at a Swedish university, (21 female students and 10 male students).

The interviews of the group of students were both analysed in line with the administrative HE discourse and different policy discourses and resulted in a typology of stragglers based on two dimensions; *commitment* to and *ability* to pursue the studies in the outskirts of the normal study pace. The typology and its’ dimensions were then contrasted and analysed through the student biographies in which the educational choices, crossroads, success and failures in their studies, encounters with the style of education (Alheit, 2009) were reflected on and were narrated into the their daily life and future horizons of their careers, teacher careers or other career paths. In the analysis a central theme has been how the students have been able to mobilise resources, i.e. from inherited educational capital. Two thirds of the students had low levels of inherited educational capital (Bourdieu, 1984) while one third had high levels of inherited educational capital.

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