Transformation through Integration

An Activity Theoretical Analysis of School Development as Integration of Child Care Institutions and the Elementary School

Monica Nilsson

Department of Business Administration and Social Sciences
Blekinge Institute of Technology
Our conception of learning is still very much based on the idea of the learner as an individual actor and learning as what can be remembered from what has been transmitted from the teacher or the text book.

This thesis discusses and examines processes of learning in the context of integration of Swedish child care institutions and the elementary school – a reform that is aimed at changing this very assumption of learning.

By employing the concept of “expansive learning” which implies that learning is also about collective creation of new activities, tools, and concepts, the integration reform can be perceived as an arena for learning, change and development. Now the teachers are the learners and are given the task to develop an entirely new practice – an integrated activity.

The metaphor of learning as a lone act of receiving facts also conveys an illusion that learning takes place unmediated, that is, without employment of conceptual and material tools. However, in an analysis based on a two year ethnographical case study influenced by action research, I come to the conclusion that if this arena is to be utilized for learning and development, tools are needed. The teachers in charge of developing a new practice – an integrated activity – need what I call “conceptual” and “communicative” tools. Supplied with such tools, a new perception on learning in the context of schooling might have a greater chance to emerge in the frame work of integration.