

A Change of Interpersonal Relational Capital: Achieving equity through mentoring relationships and homework activities

Our presentation considers the role of relational values in the aspirations for higher education of a group of ethnic minority and socially disadvantaged students, many with special educational needs. Drawing on data from an ethnographic case study of an underperforming junior secondary school, we conclude by tentatively suggesting the importance of relational and social capital at different educational strata that can broaden new life opportunities.

Research indicate that there is disproportional representation in special education in Sweden. Members of minority ethnic groups (particularly where these groups have migrant status), males, and children from poorer homes are at greater risk than their peers of being placed in special education.

This study is part of a larger project to investigate the effect of ‘enriching’ activities such as community development in the form of helping immigrant youth in schoolwork (home works) in order to raise motivation, achievement levels and enhance inclusiveness in the larger social fabric. The aim of this study is to explore interpersonal relational aspects, between participating pupils and mentors. The research questions are:

Why do pupils and mentors actively choose to attend homework support?

What does the interaction look like between pupils and mentors?

What values do the participants see in the activities?

The project is successful in many ways and has attracted media attention. The analysis in the present study based on *interpersonal relationships* shows even a minimum support, in the form of homework and extracurricular activities, can make a difference in the pupils’ school performance and wellbeing.

The project appears to reinforce positive towards education and most of the previous participants are currently in upper high schools and pursuing their choice of study/career path. The data presented in this research appears to suggest that students are able to generate new relational and social capital in their own right.

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