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Title

Exploring the transformation of actorship among students at a small Swedish university : background, actorship and achievement / Anders Nelson

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Abstract

With an aim to better understand higher education's potential for fostering personal development and social change, this study explores how students' actorship in studies and civic engagement changed over time while enrolled in undergraduate programs at Halmstad University, Sweden. Additionally, it explores the relation among these students' actorship, structural and psychosocial influences, and consequences in terms of formally obtained and self-reported achievements. Data were collected using three questionnaires in a time-step designed study, initially including 2004 students from 16 programs. Analyses revealed a trend of stable or decreasing actorship. Actorship was found to be strongly associated with gender and what programs the students attended, but not with social background factors such as parents' education and family type. Psychosocial influences and actorship were marginally related to students' achievements in terms of obtaining credits, but were more positively related to students' own reports about gaining the knowledge and skills that would be useful for their future life and work. This, in combination with the students having high intentions to actively influence their future work, was interpreted as an indication of readiness to be social actors. This in turn suggests that readiness is a significant dimension in higher education, which might be further interpreted by applying theories about the Zone of Proximal Development..(HRK / Abstract

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