Fostering Agents of Change: Governing, Crime Prevention and Teaching for Security

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ABSTRACT

The article scrutinises a specific intervention for crime prevention through education, launched in one municipality of Sweden, in regard to how such education is set-up, the motives for initiating such education, and the kind of subject that such education is about to produce. Influenced by Michel Foucault’s thought on governing, the article is based on interviews with actors involved in establishing principles for security and carrying out specific interventions at school. The analysis illustrates what could be characterised as a will to activate in the intervention in focus, that is, a particular form of governing mobilising the student’s motivation and will to make active choices and active standpoints – in the name of freedom, responsibility, and security.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 May 2019
Accepted 10 October 2019

KEYWORDS

Security; crime prevention; governing; technologies; confession

Introduction

In the last decade, there has been a heated debate concerning criminality and a situation that is described in terms of an increase of violence and insecurity in society. In Sweden, the challenge of how to deal with a widespread sense of insecurity in order to promote a sense of security in society is one of the most urgent topics in public debate (Wahlgren & Andersson, 2018). In this debate, specific attention has been paid to the school, its challenges and potential in terms of crime prevention. One of the issues that has recently been the subject of intense debate is the occurrence of violence and bullying, another is the increase of police reports in school, involving also students in lower ages (Odenbring & Johansson, 2019; Vainik, 2017).

Not least in the wake of extensive media reports on “gang violence”, shootouts, burning cars and stones thrown at police and rescue vehicles, specific attention has been put on the urban peripheries and particularly on suburban youth as the subject of social disorder (Sernhede, Thörn, & Thörn, 2016). In this debate, an alarmist rhetoric has gained momentum. Calls for “being tough on criminality” has become more and more normalised, as well as proposals for more repressive measures to be taken (Hermansson, 2017; Wahlgren & Andersson, 2018), not least targeting the suburban youth (Sernhede et al., 2016). Similar policy developments have also been noted in other countries (Dikec, 2017; Eick, 2011; Graham, 2011).

As a means of responding to this noted “security problem”, a broad repertoire of measures based on cooperation between a range of actors have been initiated, including not least the police, rescue services, social services, and schools (Forkby, 2018; Söderberg & Johansson, 2018). In the last decade, initiatives for crime prevention based on collaboration have become more prominent in Sweden
(Popkewitz, Olsson, & Petersson, 2006; Wahlgren, 2014), as well as in other countries (Choukri, 2009; Eckes, Russo, & Osborne, 2012; Saltmarsh, Robinson, & Davies, 2012).

The following article focuses on measures for creating security (trygghet) directed specifically at schools – arranged in cooperation between local actors. The article is based on a research project on cooperation as a means of crime-preventive work in suburban areas in Sweden (cf. Dahlstedt & Lozic, 2017). The aim of the article is to further analyse a specific intervention for crime prevention through education, launched in one of these areas, in regard to how such education is set-up (e.g., through which technologies), the motives for initiating such education (i.e., the challenges it corresponds to), and – finally – the kind of subject that such education is about to produce (i.e., the abilities and characteristics of this particular subject). The starting point for the analysis is a theoretical approach influenced by Michel Foucault and his notion of governing, and in particular how this notion has been applied to issues concerning school, learning, and education.

Schooling and Crime Prevention – Continuity and Change

The school as an arena for promoting security in society is not a new phenomenon. In Sweden, during the 1950s and 1960s, the school was seen as an important part of crime prevention, mainly based on its potential to “observe, discover, and attend to the students that might be at risk for developing criminality” (Wahlgren, 2014, p. 95). Not until the 1970s, the school’s potential in terms of working with norms and values was emphasised in crime prevention. Such notion of the school as an arena for crime preventive education rendered a huge impact. The pedagogical mission of the school was now defined as a part of a long-term societal project where young people were to be fostered into democratic citizens. Here, the ambition was that such education should contribute to structural changes in society (Wahlgren, 2014; cf. Carlbaum, 2012).

However, this notion of crime prevention and the school’s role in this context was about to change (Hörnqvist, 2010; Wahlgren, 2014). These changes may, in turn, be seen in the light of a wider transformation of the Swedish welfare state (Andersson & Nilsson, 2017; Dahlstedt, 2009). Instead of focusing on structural changes, crime prevention came to focus more on surveillance and control (Sahlin, 2000). In this shift, there is an increasing focus on the individual, and the individual’s responsibility – the individual is seen as both the problem and the solution (Wahlgren & Andersson, 2018).

Into the new millennium, according to such rationality, crime-preventive education in schools takes the form of an “activating pedagogy with a focus on making students involved” – and thus “the student emerges as a responsible subject” (Wahlgren, 2014, p. 202). Educating students to become responsible subjects is no longer part of a wider societal ambition to achieve long-term structural changes, but rather of a more short-term ambition to identify risks in everyday life, throughout the social body (Andersson & Nilsson, 2017; O’Malley, 2012; Vainik, 2017). Such education aims at “teaching the students to think in terms of security, for example how to prevent and attend to insecurity”, and “learn how to discover what makes them insecure” (Wahlgren, 2014, p. 203). Here, a wide range of actors in the local community, ranging from public to private and voluntary, are mobilised in the continuous work with identifying and managing potential risks. Thus, crime prevention is spread out and encompass all of society (Goddard, 2012; O’Malley, 2012; Tomczak, 2017).

This transformation of the understanding of crime prevention and the role of the school is, in turn, related to an emerging idea concerning the importance of individuals working with themselves – or rather their selves – and becoming more aware of their limitations and abilities, improve their

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1In Swedish, the words that are most usually used in the context of crime prevention is trygghet and otrygghet, translated to security and insecurity in English. The meaning of trygg is “free from dangers” and “security”, in a broad sense, for instance in terms of financial resources, while the meaning of otrygg is “phenomena that are worrying or threatening” or “feeling worried or threatened” (SAOL, 2019). In the educational setting, the meaning of trygghet in terms of the promotion of trygghet usually refers to measures such as the fostering of students and the building of trust, rather than measures associated with the English security, such as locking doors and the usage of guards and CCTV cameras.
self-confidence and learn how to manage their feelings (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). Developing a sense of security within the individual is an important purpose for such work. Furedi (2004) has described such focus on working upon the self in terms of a “therapeutic culture”, based on a psychological understanding of the individual and society. A therapeutic model that has gained success is CBT, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. CBT aims at changing ourselves and how we imagine our objectives and wishes (Andersson, 2004). The key to success, according to the CBT concept, is to focus on possibilities, rather than problems.

Since the 1990s, different therapeutic models, inspired by CBT, has spread within a range of areas, such as psychiatry, treatment of offenders, social work (cf. Härnbro, 2019; Hörnqvist, 2010), and not least schools. The spreading of “therapeutic education” (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009) has been noted in Sweden (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2014; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2013; Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Olson, 2016; Löf, 2011), as well as in a number of other countries (Brunila & Siivonen, 2016; Gundersen & Svartdal, 2006). Thus, broadly, a range of methods are initiated in schools, with the purpose of developing certain norms and values for creating security – in schools as well as in the surrounding society. The following article focuses on how security work in schools may be arranged, based on a specific study of crime-prevention work in four suburban areas in Sweden. Before we go further into the analysis, we will present the analytical approach guiding our analysis, as well as the empirical material analysed.

**Analytical Perspective**

The article is based on an analytical approach developed in line with Michel Foucault and his theories of governing (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). Here, one crucial concept is *governmentality*, a composition of the words *govern* and *mentality* describing a more complex form of governing than the one usually referred to with the term government (Rose, 1999). One main difference to a conventional understanding of governing is not least that those who are the objects of governing are not seen as passive targets. Instead, Foucault emphasised that governing, in itself, forms the very object of governing. The term governmentality captures the mentality of governing, that is how conceptions, conventions, and thought systems relate to different kinds of political interventions (Dean, 1999).

From such approach, the meaning of being a good citizen might be seen as a result of a wide repertoire of governing techniques, distributed all over the social body (Foucault, 1991). The exercise of power is productive, but simultaneously limiting. Here, Foucault (1988) makes a distinction between *technologies of power* and *technologies of the self*. In this article, our starting point is research applying such approach to governing in dealing with issues regarding school, learning, and education (see e.g., Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). The school has here been approached as one of the many domains in society where this education of “good citizens” take place (Popkewitz, 2008). The school is an important arena in the building of society and can be seen as a junction for various governing techniques, involving a range of different actors, both within and outside schools.

Education is based on normalisation, where certain abilities or characteristics are approved as good, desirable, and worthy, in relation to others, that are characterised as incomplete, problematic, and in need of re-education (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). In other words, it is a particular kind of citizen that the school sets out to educate, formed according to and adapted for contemporary expectations. In the “advanced liberal” society of today, this means a citizen who is flexible, adaptable, and responsible (Carlbaum, 2012). If, earlier in history, the school was a strong force for discipline, where students were educated to become citizens through a number of disciplinary means of governing, “technologies of the self” have taken a more prominent role in school. In recent decades, a large part of the pedagogic work carried out in schools has come to been dedicated to motivating the students, strengthening their self-confidence and will to take initiative (cf. Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Olson, 2016; Terning, 2016).

In this article, we will further investigate one specific educational setting where this kind of education operates, that is, the school as an arena for education to create security. More specifically, we
direct our attention towards the set-up of one specific public programme for crime prevention through education, illustrating how education may operate as a means of governing subjects at a distance. In our analysis, we will highlight the mobilisation of a range of pedagogic technologies – of power as well as of the self. The analysis is based on a study conducted in a municipality close to one of the larger cities in Sweden, between December 2015 and March 2016. In the study, a total of 25 interviews were made with local actors involved in the local crime-prevention work – such as democracy developers, project managers, security coordinators, social workers, staff from schools and youth recreation centres, principals, police, and representatives from NGOs. This article focuses on a specific intervention, made in relation to schools in the specific municipality, where 16 interviews are analysed, carried out with some of the social workers, security coordinators, area developers, teachers, principals, and police collaborating around this intervention. In our analysis, we focus primarily on how the interviewees talk about the value of and the carrying out of the intervention.

Analysis

In the following analysis, we will illustrate how teaching for security is arranged in the intervention investigated, the motives for such teaching, and the kind of subject that this education is about to produce. Firstly, we focus on the background and motives for the intervention, based on reports of widespread violence on the streets and in school. In response to such challenges, the school is emphasised as a crucial domain for locally based security work to be carried out. Secondly, on the basis of this understanding of the challenges of insecurity and the potential of the school to deal with these, we focus on how teaching for security is set-up within the intervention, in terms of how the classes are arranged and how teaching is organised. Thirdly, within this educational setting, we then direct attention to the formation of students involved in the teaching activities suggested. As illustrated, the students are constructed as specific kind of subjects, referred to as agents of change, with certain abilities and characteristics. As characterised, these agents are motivated for taking responsibility, making the right choices and actively promoting security in the local community.

Challenges and Initial Motives

The principal for a public primary school in the municipality describes the main motive for initiating the intervention as follows: When he took office a couple of years ago he soon noticed that there was a, as he describes it, “really high frequency of violence” in the school. The principal tells that he already during the three first weeks in the secondary school around 10–12 assault and battery police reports were made and between two and three reports to the social services were made – each week. A social pedagogue at the same school describes the disturbances that concern everything from fights, to gross violence, and criminality. Furthermore, the social pedagogue points out the parental role as very important, describing the challenges of involving the parents for instance for specific meetings arranged in the following way.

There occurred a lot of very extreme violence among the students. Here, we speak about year one and three … gross violence among the younger students … a huge problem […] the parents are not at home with the students as they have been before. With parents who are involved it is different. We call a parental meeting and only three parents come.

The principal also describes, in terms of self-critique, a situation where there has been a divide between the school management and the parents for many years. “The principal’s door was always closed”. “Action plans were defined as a decree”. As described by the principal, for a long time, such arrangement in turn has contributed to create an insecure environment at school, for student as well as employees. Though, the situation was not unique for this school. Similar reports came also from other schools in the municipality and these reports in time led the municipality to initiate a number
of measures in order to break the negative trend and try to promote a more secure environment in the municipality.

Several of these initiatives were specifically targeting the schools in the municipality. In one of its action plans dedicated for security, the municipality describes the schools, the pre-schools, and the school care centres as together forming “an important base for social prevention”. “The violence in the family, the violence in the school yard, between students, all is connected to the violence in the streets”, notes a social worker in the unit responsible for the preventive work in the municipality.

Discussions between representatives for the social services and principals from some of the schools in the municipality began already in 2012, and these discussions resulted, among other things, in a security-based project, involving several primary schools in the municipality. The decision to initiate the intervention was taken by the social welfare committee of the municipality, in the early 2014. Shortly thereafter a number of representatives followed a Swedish delegation on a study trip to the US and Scotland, where the model for crime prevention work which the project is based was first developed and implemented. At this time, there was an interest in finding concrete models for conducting security-based work with a focus on school also among other municipalities throughout the country. In 2015, the project started in the municipality and was to be evaluated each year. After three years, municipal representatives expect that the project, based on the experiences from these evaluations, will be developed to involve all schools in the municipality.

The intervention is organised by a social service unit with a specific responsibility for preventive work in the municipality, on the basis of cooperation between local actors, such as the social services, police, and rescue services. Together, these actors form a reference group, that follows and supports the development of the intervention. Each actor has its specific assignment, responsibility, competence and way of approaching issues regarding security and insecurity. But from the point of view of the involved actors, the cooperation is seen as a strength as regards putting different resources and competences together, creating an added value in the work of crime prevention as carried out in school.

**Setting Up Teaching for Security**

The intervention is organised on the basis of a model that includes several objectives such as the identification of factors that increase the risk for individuals to use or become exposed to violence. This means that the intervention is based on a risk prevention strategy, according to which the individual is placed within a framework consisting of three different levels: relations (family members, friends, and acquaintances); local environment (schools, working place, living area); and society (socio-cultural norms and terms generating conflicts). On each level, there is a number of risk factors, that affect the individual’s values and actions.

Specifically, the model is based on a norm-critical approach, focusing on stereotypes, gender roles, and gender equality. Current norms concerning gender roles in society at large are interpreted as a risk for conflicts and violent relations, as such norms are expressed at school and in public places, as well as in close and private relations. The primary objective of the intervention to increase students’ awareness concerning verbal, psychical, and sexual violence among young people, and to contribute to change of current norms concerning gender roles. Even if the objective is to contribute to change, the purpose is not to change the students, underlines the manager of the unit responsible for the preventive work in the municipality: “We are not changing the children, but ourselves. We are to give the children the opportunity to become what they want, without being categorised by our expectations”. The aim of the intervention is rather to, step by step, change the expectations of the adults, teachers and parents alike. We will return to this matter further on.

An important part of the set-up of the intervention is the involvement of mentors in the participating schools, that is, students becoming actively involved in the crime prevention work in the schools. Similar practices are used also in other settings for crime prevention, not least in prisons, where previous inmates act as mentors (cf. Brown & Ross, 2010). In the educational setting analysed
in this article, mentors are recruited from students in year 8, who later, during year 9, should be able to conduct teaching in classes for students in year 6. Here, age is a criterion for selection, as it is seen as important to make sure that the mentors selected have reached a certain level of maturity. These mentors are chosen by teachers at the school, on the basis of the system of assessment and evaluation authorised in the school, concerning students’ suitability and maturity to work as role models for other students. According to this procedure, the students who are considered suitable as mentors have to attend a course arranged by special reference groups formed at each school, consisting of staff from the school as well as representatives for police and rescue services. In most cases, the courses are held during a number of days in facilities of the social service. The programme is running during the regular school schedule and contains eleven sessions. The staff make sure that the mentors follow the course. During the start-up phase, social workers are holding the sessions together with school staff. Representatives from the police and rescue services participate on occasion, depending on the specific theme for each session.

After the course is finished, it is time for the mentors to hold classes for students in year 6 in the school. The class is divided into groups of around 15 students, each group led by 3 mentors, with different roles during classes. One of the mentors speak, one writes on the blackboard, and a third is keeping the time – since every class is separated into different modules, calculated to last for a certain time. The class begins with one of the mentors giving an account of the rules for the class, for example stating that it is not allowed to interrupt the mentors. Then a short introduction follows, regarding the contents and set-up of the class.

As support for teaching, the mentors use a specifically produced manual, with concrete proposals for organisation, with a set of practices and questions. Each class is 45 min long and focus on a specific theme that in different ways concerns security and insecurity, in school, during leisure time, in the area or in other locations. The theme is usually illustrated by a video, shown at the beginning of the class. The videos might come from Youtube and are sometimes in English and sometimes in Swedish. Another example of videos that can also be shown is a series of eight short films in all, Being friends (Vara vänner), produced by Swedish Public Service television (Utbildningsradion). The films are produced for compulsory school, and are free to access online. One of the films illustrates the theme bullying and tells a story about a child who is bullied in a new school. The film is concluded, just like the other films in the series, with another scenario, showing how the children at school could or should have acted to welcome the new student. Thereafter, these scenarios serve as a base for discussion between mentors and the students in the class, on the basis of the theme illustrated in the film. The discussion often focuses on issues regarding norms and values, attitudes, and behaviours. Based on the scenario, the discussion often deals with what students could or should have been doing, instead of what happened in the video or film shown.

The principal in one of the schools describes the organisation of the teaching as follows:

For example: You and your friend walks in a corridor when your friend pushes a girl into a wall. The girl just walks on. Like, what do you do? Do you laugh too? What would you say to your friend? Would you speak to the girl afterwards?

If the students cannot come up with anything to say and are silent, the manual offers a set of examples the mentors can choose between. The class is concluded with the students planning a role play illustrating the theme of the day.

With such organisation, the main responsibility for carrying out educational work is transferred from the teachers to the mentors and the students. Such work is carried out by means of mobilising a wide repertoire of technologies of the self, whereby the students are in various ways invited to mobilise their own powers and wills. The rationality for such preventive work is described as follows by a principal at one of the schools involved in the initiative: “The children are to be made aware of how to behave towards each other. Should we do it like this? What can I do to change it?”. According to such rationality, the idea is to let the students have the initiative, as they are seen the ones having the opportunity to actually create security. The prerequisite for creating security is thus active...
participation of the students. As explained by the principal: “When you are active yourself, you start changing norms”.

**The Formation of Agents of Change**

In line with such line of argument, the students involved in the intervention are described as “agents of change”, as subjects who are actively promoting change, not only in the classroom – but more importantly – in the surrounding society. “They are to be agents out in the school yard”, one teacher involved in the programme explains. “If they notice violence or hear something they should either go to a teacher they feel secure with or try to solve the conflict themselves”. The hope is that by taking part in the teaching, students will feel secure themselves and in turn contribute to create security, by identifying as well as responding to any risks and insecurities in their lives. According to such rationality, one principal describes the initiative as a way to get children to “help each other to see how you can be active and stop the troublesome things occurring”. In this way, the principal explains, the child becomes “agents of change”, “not just a passive spectator”. Such agents carry the powers to actively intervene in order to create security. Thus, there is a hope that the teaching carried out within school will reach far outside the classroom. According to a police officer, the intervention makes it possible to reach into and also to influence family life.

If the children are affected in year six, they go home and can affect their families […] What if the children get knowledge of the discussion regarding the prohibition of striking children and come home and might see another family where someone is beaten. “That is not OK”. I would be cool if the children spoke out: “Mum, I saw the dad in that family beat her. I’m going to report it to the police. I want you to help me with the report to the police”.

In the quote, it is illustrated how the family in a way becomes part of a wider pedagogic rationality, were both children and parents are involved in the crime-preventive work initiated in the classroom (cf. Dahlstedt & Lozic, 2017). As illustrated in the quote, students emerge as agents of change not only by means of technologies of the self, where the inner powers and will to self-regulation of the students are mobilised. Agents of change emerge also by means of technologies of power, whereby students are encouraged to regulate also other people, by actively intervene in their surroundings, and thus contribute to creating security. One important means of doing so is by engaging in surveillance, that is, identifying various risks and insecurities in everyday life. In the quote above, students are encouraged to report an incident of beating in another family to the police, thus turning students into informants in the neighbourhood.

In the interviews, the intervention is described as very successful. In the first qualitative evaluation carried out by the municipality, a positive change of the students’ attitudes to violence and a generally reduced level of violence in the schools was noted. In the evaluation it is reported, among other things, that students participating in the intervention feeling more secure as they move in the surroundings as compared to other students. Further, one of the schools involved in the intervention reports that students, after one year’s operation, experience less violence at school. In addition, one principal tells us that the number of reports to the social services are significantly reduced, from one or two per week to two per term. When it comes to teaching students how to become agents of change, one principal tells the following story as an illustrative example of what he sees as the positive effects of the intervention.

It was late one afternoon when some student mentors were playing tennis. A mother comes with her four-year-old son. She is going to get her older child from our school care centre and they suddenly hear how she, quite forcefully, hits the four-year-old in the head, twice. The first thing they do is go up to the mother and say: “What are you doing? You are not allowed to hit children”. She answered something like: “Never mind. Don’t mind my kids”. […] Most adult would have been satisfied with that and said: “Well, that mother is mean”, or such. But they didn’t do that. They went up to the school’s office and told them: “We saw this, and it was this mother with the boy in this class”. They said: “We will stay as witnesses for the police report”. They agreed to be witnesses to
the assault. We could also go into our camera system. It was possible to see how the students in the ninth grade intervened in this event.

This specific episode, as retold by the principle, illustrates how agents of change emerge by means of technologies of the self as well as technologies of power. The idea is that change comes from within, from the students’ own motivation and will to change. According to the line of argument, change cannot be forced upon students by people from the outside. However, change is not only directed inwards (to change the self of the student), but also outwards (to make a change in the surroundings). As described in the episode above, the gaze of the students makes it is possible to survey the surroundings and identify potential risks and insecurities, which in turn may make further change possible. In the quote, the gazing students are described in relation to the surveillance apparatus of the school, in the form of the camera system, which in itself illustrates the importance of mobilising technologies of power as a means of making the suggested changes possible.

As explained by one of the teachers, the scenario is used as a specific pedagogic means to invite students to reflect on the choices they have in different situations in their lives. By such reflection, the idea is to provide students with the possibility to listen to other ways of thinking and then to conclude how they are to “act in the right way” in concrete situations.

The children are to start reflecting on real situation which has happened to at least one student. […] The children may reflect freely on what happens in a situation and how they are to act to do the right thing. They begin thinking about it. Otherwise … “You cannot do that! Stop doing that!” … This entails a really good opportunity where the children can reflect and listen to what their friends think and then build on how to act in the right way.

Here, reflection is thought of as a crucial pedagogic technology, for individual students as well as for the group at large. The idea is that the students, through engaging in dialogue with others, are learning how to reason with themselves and others, where they get to know how to express their experiences and opinions, to respect the opinions of others, and how to, in dialogue with others, both revise and stand for what they believe in. Through such dialogue, the students in time may find out what they should do in order to do “the right thing”. Through this process, the students are activated, while their norms and values are simultaneously made visible and related to current norms. Thus, students are provided with possibilities to form themselves into active subjects, engaged in the continuous work of controlling both themselves and others, in relations to the current norms (cf. Axelson & Qvarsebo, 2014).

When students are offered possibilities to activate themselves, and through accepting such an offer by revealing their inner thoughts, we can say, referring to Foucault (1988), that there is a technology of the self being mobilised. What is played out in this situation is a form of confession, where students are invited to decipher their selves. And through such procedure, students are provided the possibilities to change themselves, their thinking and behaviour, towards what is seen as normal. The ability to constantly reflect on themselves, in relation to the surrounding world, and to share these reflections in dialogue with others, is one of the main characteristics of the learning subject that the intervention is about to produce.

Even though the teachers are not the main agents of change, they are not completely absent from the teaching activities arranged. However, the role of the teachers is mainly to support and facilitate the free reflection of the students. One teacher explains that one way to help students to reflect over right and wrong and learn how to think and act differently might be to make the students look back on events that has occurred, asking them: “What happened?”.

When students get into trouble … then I have learned a technique: “What happened?” And then the student can tell what happened. Ok! And what could you have done differently to change the situation, to avoid hitting the student? And then the student can tell me what he should have done differently. […] Okay, then I will tell, the next time, if a similar situation occurs. Then you know what to do! The student becomes aware that what you did was not okay … but what could you have done differently? […] It is good training for the future, since you cannot use violence when you become an adult.
By asking such simple questions in class, the teacher provides students with possibilities to learn that they always have a choice, and that they always can do something different. Thus, the students are not victims of their circumstances. They always have a choice. In this way, the students are construed as responsible subjects. However, the insight that the students always have a choice, does not come from the teacher, but from within the students themselves, through their own power of reflection. The idea is thus that students, through reflection, will get to see as well as to accept the consequences of their own actions, to take responsibility for these and not to have others take this responsibility (Löf, 2011). In this way, the rationality follows the one found in other therapeutic approaches, where individuals are also prompted to identify themselves as responsible for their own lives, for better or for worse (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2014).

Concluding Reflections

This article has addressed a topic that is one of the most urgent in public debate today: the challenge of how to deal with a widespread sense of insecurity and how to promote a sense of security in society, with a specific focus on the school, its challenges and potential in terms of crime prevention. In response to such challenges, a range of measures based on cooperation between different actors have been initiated, involving not least the school. Informed by a Foucauldian governmentality approach, we have in this article drawn attention towards measures for creating security, directed at schools. We have specifically focused one local intervention in Sweden. But as illustrated in previous research, in schools all over the country – in different versions – a range of similar interventions are made (cf. Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2014; Löf, 2011). This means that although we do not claim to draw generalisable conclusions, the results presented may be productive in discussing a modus operandi in preventive education programmes more broadly.

From the analytical approach adopted, the school may be understood as a domain for establishing norms and thus for governing both subjects and society at large. On the basis of interviews with local actors involved in the intervention analysed, we have identified a particular form of governing, a will to activate, mobilising the student’s motivation and will to make active choices and active standpoints – in the name of freedom, responsibility, and security. However, as illustrated in the analysis, there is one right choice and one right way, based on current norms, that students are to be taught to choose, by themselves. The responsibility to make the right choice is the student’s own (cf. Löf, 2011).

The form of governing made possible by the intervention consists of a range of different technologies, where technologies of the self as well as technologies of power are mobilised. In the analysis, we have not least highlighted one such technology, confession. Confession, in the form of reflection, is a central part of the security-creating work conducted in the schools focused in this article. However, confession is not forced upon the students. Rather, the students are invited to participate actively in continuing reflection, based on their own freedom. By reflecting on their own actions and the actions of others, the students come to take part in the governing of their own behaviour, at the same time as they take part in governing the behaviour of others. Through self-regulation and changing their selves towards what is assessed desirable, they reproduce current norms of good behaviour and, thus, they also participate in governing the behaviour of others. In this way, governing of the self is intimately related to governing of others. One of the specific means through which the confession is made possible is the scenario – prompting the individual student to take a stand, that is, to make a choice and to reflect around these choices (cf. Wahlgren, 2014).

Another technology mobilised is the mentorship. The mentorship could be described as a kind of role model rationality, based on governing of both self, and others. The mentors operate as role models, whose good example the other students are encouraged to follow in their own thoughts and actions. Thus, the mentor gets a central pedagogic function by pointing out the road to the good and desirable, that the other students need to adopt and embody (cf. Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2018). Accordingly, the mentors contribute to governing not only themselves but also other students.
As mentioned previously, the mentors are in themselves the result of the school’s assessment system. If they are to act as role models, they need first to be chosen by the teachers, as role models. And then, they need to be formed into role models, that is, taught to choose what is seen as “the right way”. The mentors are described by the interviewed as particularly important in the preventive work, due to their age. As they are young, they are regarded as having an easier time to relate and reach out to young people than adults (cf. Brown & Ross, 2010). Then the young people are reachable, and at the same time made governable.

In line with the specific model on which the intervention is based, a set of factors are identified as increasing the risk of violence: relations (family members, friends, and acquaintances); local environment (schools, place of work, living area); and society (socio-cultural norms and terms generating conflicts). In the teaching for security initiated it is primarily the close relations, above all located in the local environment of the school that is focused. Based on concrete examples from the local environment, students are invited to engage in various forms of reflection. In time, as suggested, engaging in such reflection could make them into “agents of change”, with powers to challenge relations and socio-cultural norms existing in the contexts where they move, in as well as outside school. However, in order to release such powers, the act of identifying risks is of great importance, which can be seen as an extensive mode of surveillance in the local environment. Accordingly, the education made possible in school could render effects also far outside the classroom. Thus, society as a whole is made reachable for pedagogic intervention and, in a way, becomes a school for continuous education for security. The agents of change that the intervention is about to produce could then be seen as a result of governing, based on technologies of both self and power, where the governing of the self is intimately related to the governing of others.

At the same time, the set of risk factors existing outside the school – situated in the surrounding society, its structures and social conditions – seem to fall outside the scope of the teaching for security initiated in school. The activities initiated are primarily directed at the students’ selves, aiming at changing their behaviour and to create a preparedness and will among the students, to achieve change for themselves. Thus, in line with the argument of Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) work directed inwards is not connected to a wider societal work, directed outwards, aiming at changing unequal social conditions that could create tension and conflict. It is rather the students themselves that are made into agents of change, with responsibility to create change and security themselves (cf. Brunila & Siivonen, 2016; Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Olson, 2016).

In this article, we have analysed interviews with local actors engaged in setting up the intervention investigated, with a specific focus on their talk about the value of and the carrying out of the intervention. This means that we cannot draw conclusions concerning the implementation of the intervention, that is, how it is actually carried out in everyday pedagogic practices in and outside of the classroom. Neither can we draw conclusions concerning how the technologies mobilised in the intervention actually contributes to the subject formation of students, that is, how students form themselves as subjects in the educational settings investigated. However, the analysis presented may be helpful in both highlighting and problematising recurrent notions of (in)security, the formation of security by means of therapeutic interventions in school and the political rationality of such interventions.

The specific intervention investigated in this article is, in a way, symptomatic. It illustrates a wider transformation in the rationality of governing taking place during the past decades, in Sweden as well as in other countries throughout the world. In line with this change, as illustrated in policies of crime prevention (Sahlin, 2000; Wahlgren, 2014) as well as in welfare policy more broadly (cf. Dahlstedt & Lozic, 2017; Hörnqvist, 2010), a stronger focus is put on the individual, as a bearer of problems as well as the solution to these. The change can be discerned within the school, but in other parts of the welfare state as well. Inclination to change and adaptability is part of a contemporary citizen ideal, conveyed through the school and society in general (Carlbaum, 2012). To reach success in today’s society, the individual is prompted to concurrently make-over and adapt to current ideals, expectations, and requirements, strengthen their competitive force.
In all, it is such an understanding of the citizen and society that is the basis for the kind of teaching for security conducted in the intervention that we have drawn attention to in this article.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Vetenskapsrådet [grant number 721-2013-885].

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