The construction of the ideal pupil –
teacher training as a discursive and
governing practice

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Abstract
In this article Foucault’s theoretical concept of governmentality is used to scrutinise the ways in which the ideal pupil is constructed, governed and positioned in and through teacher training in Sweden. The analysis focuses on the construction of subject positions as well as governing technologies and techniques operating in the shaping of the ‘ideal’ pupil. The result shows how teacher training plays an active role in the construction of the entrepreneurial subject, a discursive subject position that constitutes a solution in Sweden’s aim of being competitive in the international education market.

Keywords: the competent child, policy, governmentality, discourses, performativity

Introduction
In Sweden, as well as in other countries, education and learning practices nowadays are highlighted as being substantially important for the progress, prosperity and competitiveness of society. In Sweden, for example, the political focus on education and educational practices is strong, not least after the change of government in 2006. The new right-of-centre government has launched a number of new policies in the field of education, including the introduction of new curricula (from preschool to upper secondary school), new grading systems, new quality and inspection systems and, finally, an overhaul of teacher training. The explicit purpose of the overall reform package is to be more competitive in the ‘international educational market’. Combined, these reforms have resulted in a far more recentred and performative-regulated governing practice, with a special focus on the individual as a performative learning subject (Ball 2003, 2012; Larsson, Löfdahl and Perez 2011; Sjöberg 2011). Further, the ideological changes have made the individual and market rationality thoroughly apparent in a range of practices, such as the right to choose which school a child will attend (Erixon Arreman and Holm 2011). The Swedish school system has thus become strongly marketised in several ways (Swedish National Agency for Education 2012a).

In the same period, since the 1990s, there has also been a shift in the discourses of childhood and the discourses of children. Previously, children were mostly

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constructed as ‘becomings’, while today they are, to a greater extent, considered as
‘beings’ (Qvortrup 1994). To view the child as a ‘being’ implies that children should
be seen as social actors participating in the formations of their social reality, and not
only as objects in the socialisation of adulthood (Ellegaard 2004). This also implies
that both the influence and agency of children are highlighted as important features
in institutions where children attend, for example in preschools and schools. Besides
the Nordic countries (Brembeck, Johansson and Kampmann 2004; Dahlberg 2009),
this movement has been internationally spread (James and Prout 1997; Lee 2001;
Sommer 1998; Corsaro 2011) and is explicit, for example, in the pedagogy of Reggio
Emilia and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As a consequence of the shift in the discourses of childhood, and not least the new
neoliberal discourses of schooling, several studies have been made which problematise
these shifts. Sommer (1998) argues that the symmetry between the child and
the adult is changing as a result of the discursive shift, which may imply that the adults
in educational institutions might abdicate from the responsibilities they have as
professional adults. In several studies within preschool settings, Vallberg Roth and
Månsson have noticed that the child within these new discourses has become a self-
regulated subject, not least as a result of the new documentation practices developed
during the last years (2009, 2011). Practices of self-regulation or discourses of in-
dividualisation and entrepreneurship in the ‘new’ school policies which construct,
position and shape the ideal child and/or pupil have also been noted by researchers
such as Krejsler (2006), Fejes (2008), Simons and Masschelein (2008), Bartholdsson
(2008) and Sjöberg (2011). Finally, some research projects show that the new Swedish
educational reforms, and the new discourses of childhood, have had an impact on
both the ideological and organisational aspects of the daily work of teachers and
pupils in schools and preschools in Sweden (Dovemark 2004; Beach and Dovemark
2009; Asp Onsjö 2011).

**Teacher training in Sweden – a background to the study**

Teacher training in Sweden has been reformed quite a few times over the last 50 years.
A new government has more or less resulted in a new teacher training reform. Since
the turn of the millennium, Sweden has seen two teacher training reforms, both with
substantial differences regarding organisation and ideology (partly due to different
governments) (Sjöberg 2011). The first reform was introduced in 2001, and the second
as recently as 2011 (with the new right-of-centre government in 2006). This study
focuses on the student teachers affected by the teacher training reform introduced
in 2001, and the empirical material relates to student teachers starting their teacher
training in 2003 or 2004. A key issue in the 2001 reform was comprehensiveness.
Teacher training was at this particular teacher training institution consequently
organised so that different categories of teachers were in the same teacher training
programme, with part (three semesters out of seven or nine) of the programme taken together. The student teachers in this study would, thus, after completing their training, teach various age groups and subjects, from preschool to upper secondary school. Most of the student teachers in the group in the study, and in the programme, were preschool teachers, primary and middle school teachers (years 1–6) and teachers in before- and after-school clubs.

**Research question**

The purpose of the study presented in this article is to highlight and problematise the ways in which the ideal pupil is constructed, governed and positioned in and through teacher training. More specifically, the article will show how student teachers at a local teacher training institution construct, govern and position the ideal pupil through a special examination practice known as ‘My personal credo’. The assignment’s content and structure imply that student teachers have to describe, or confess (Foucault 1998) – for themselves, their fellow students and their examiners – how they envisage their future ideal school practice. The name of the assignment, ‘My personal credo’, with its religious/pastoral connotations encapsulates and further confirms this idea.

**Theoretical framework and method**

As a theoretical and methodological basis for the study, a Foucault-inspired discourse analysis is combined with the theoretical concept of governmentality. Further, Ball’s notions of policy and policy technologies are used since I regard the student assignment texts as local policy texts. The focus on the assignments as local discursive policy texts means that the examination assignments are studied as a text practice, but also as a producing, normalising and disciplining practice that designs and fabricates ‘truths’ about both schools and society, and also positions pupils in various subject positions (Foucault 1980, 1982; Ball 1994; Rose 1999).

The notion of governmentality is particularly relevant since my interest in this study concerns the *how*-perspective of governing, that is to say, how the governing of the ideal pupil is shaped in and through student teachers’ examination assignments. According to Dean (1999/2010), the governmentality perspective rests on an understanding of governance in the sense that:

> Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes (Dean 1999, 11).

According to the theoretical concept of governmentality, governing operates not only through sovereignty but also through an intertwined practice, combining
sovereigning and disciplining technologies. As a consequence, governing can operate as a kind of friendly, yet very productive, exercise of power. The disciplinary aspect of governance correspondingly implies that the governance is directed towards the individual. In that way, the governance of a population operates through its individuals. Foucault expresses this as an individualising and totalising perspective of government. Governing practices, according to Foucault (1991), operate particularly through and according to the mentalities of both the governed and those who carry out the processes of governing. Foucault terms this “conduct of conduct”, i.e. how the conduct of individuals and groups proceeds in various ways, for example by self-regulation practices and self-government (Foucault 1991, 48). Effective government is, according to the governmentality concept, dependent on the individual’s experience of freedom (to govern oneself) also see Rose 1996, 37 and the concept of ‘advanced liberal governance’. Finally, the economic dimension of governing is highlighted in the use of the concept and, in particular, in the elaborated concept of the “governmentalization of the state” (Rose and Miller 2010, 286). This concept captures the intensification of market practices in contemporary society and the neoliberal dimension of governing, where public services (i.e. schools) have been affected by economic and market rationalities and solutions, and where quasi-market principles (such as New Public Management) dominate, turning individuals into consumers and customers (Ball 2012).

The empirical material for the study consists of seventy-two course assignments², each of about five to seven pages, from student teachers at the very end of their teacher training³. This assignment is, as previously stated, entitled ‘My personal credo’. In the assignment, the student teachers are expected to express their personal visions of their future educational practice in terms of the experience and knowledge they have gained during their teacher training. The task is formulated in a very open-ended manner to give students maximal ‘freedom’ to describe their own ideal future teaching practice. The empirical data were produced in 2008, which was the last year this particular assignment was used in that particular course (the last course in the teacher training programme). However, this type of assignment, where student teachers reflect on their own teaching practices, is still a relatively common feature of the teacher training practice.

In the analytical process, all seventy-two course assignments were critically reviewed several times, using the following analytical questions as a framework for the analysis:

- What form of thoughts and rationalities are employed in the (local policy) texts and how do they operate as practices of governing?
- Which discourses and technologies of government operate in and throughout the texts?
The first analytical reading was conducted on a relatively open-ended basis whose aim was to get to know the material and identify common patterns in the texts. During this process, a reflection was that, although the target of the assignment was their future ideal educational practice, the student teachers answered by primarily representing the ideal child, the ideal pupil and the ideal teacher. Further readings were conducted with this in mind, searching for significant representations of how the ideal child/ideal pupil, as a subject position, was represented and shaped in and by the texts. These subject positions were sorted into dominant discursive themes such as responsibility taking, lifelong and stimulating learning and documentation practices. At the same time, I also searched for representations and explanations which were said to be the basis of the representations of the pupil as a subject position. The way I conducted the analytical process resulted in visualisations of dominant representations and discourses. Inconsistencies and counter discourses were, in this case, not processed that clearly.

As a methodological reflection, it is important to bear in mind that the texts are examination data. The student teachers are most likely aware of the discourses operating in the teacher training institution and behave in accordance with those discourses in their credos. Even if they are not explicitly aware of the discourses, they are likely to know how to formulate the requested answers. Course literature, lectures and former examination practices have probably shaped their picture of what their teachers want them to express in their personal credos. No matter what their influences are, the examination texts show the discourses of the ideal pupil subject in contemporary Swedish teacher training practice.

**Educating the competent child – discourses within teacher training practice**

In this examined assignment, students were asked, based on what they had learned and experienced during their teacher education, about their visions of future professional practice. In the students’ responses a substantial focus was placed on the presentation of images of what the ideal pupil *is or should be*. This was one of the first and most striking findings made when analysing the material. The presentation of the results of the study thus takes this finding as its point of departure, with a primary presentation and problematising discussion of the representations of the ideal pupil. This is followed by a discussion of the student teachers’ constructions of the pedagogical practices which are based on this particular subject position.
The discourse of the competent child

When expressing their visions of their future teaching practice, the student teachers often begin by expressing how children or pupils are, i.e. constructing the subject positions of their future pupils. There is a very consentient picture presented in the credos, shaping how the ideal pupil should be and behave in preschools and schools. A large group of student teachers states that every child is (or should be) competent. Mikaela (primary school student teacher) expresses this by claiming that her understanding of children is that: “Every child can and wants to learn”. Asta (preschool student teacher) also claims that children: “… are naturally curious about the world and they want to know and understand the world they live in”, while Susanne (preschool student teacher) agrees by claiming that the general approach to childhood today is that: “Children are not born as blank canvases, but as small researchers”. These student teachers thus articulate a very positive rationale of children’s prerequisites and conditions for learning in preschool and school. The construction of the ideal pupil, and in this case the ideal child, as competent, rests on discourses present in teacher training practice as well as in the Swedish educational curricula as well in the new discourses of childhood (Qvortrup 1994; James and Prout 1997; Lee 2001; Sommer 1998; Corsaro 2011).

On one hand, the student teachers’ constructions are built on a very positive rationale of children as ‘human beings’, being active agents in the world with their own rights. On the other hand, the discursive statements of competency, as they appear in the studied texts, implies special expectancies on the children and pupils. So, unproblematically, the discourse of competence can, at the same time, imply that children and pupils have an overall individual or personal responsibility not just for their own learning situation, but also for their success and failure in life (Ellegaard 2004).

The discourse of competence in the student teachers’ texts constructs, shapes and positions the ideal pupil in at least two ways: first, it constructs and positions the ideal pupils, i.e. those pupils who are sufficiently competent to be accepted in the competence discourse; second, and more problematically, the same discourse operates by shaping and positioning the ‘less-than-ideal’ and ‘undesired’ pupils, i.e. those pupils who, despite the all-encompassing competence discourse, cannot be classified and positioned as competent (‘the Others’) (see Popkewitz, 2008, and the notion of abjection). As Ellegaard (2004) claims, this is a paradox because, despite the competence discourse, every child cannot possibly fulfil the expectations of the competent child/pupil. Another problematic dimension is that it is the individual child who creates and shapes his or her own inclusion or exclusion within the competence discourse. Every single child will, in this way, be responsible for his or her own success or failure, making the shaping of the subject personalised (Hartley 2007; Beach and Dovemark 2009; Ball 2012).
The competent child and teaching practices
The discourse of the competent child is related to other discourses about teaching practices, meaning that some teaching practices are suitable, appropriate and right, whilst others become inappropriate or outdated. In the material, three themes, or discourses, connected to the discourse of the competent child and relating to pedagogical practices, emerge. These are:

- responsibilisation for individual learning
- documentalisation and performative practices
- the need for stimulating learning opportunities and play

Responsibilisation for individual learning
The construction of the competent child/pupil implies that pupils, without doubt, have a capacity to handle their learning almost by themselves. The student teachers are also quite consentient in their representations of pupils' responsibilities for their own learning, and for that matter, pupils' prerequisites for taking responsibility for their learning. Given the representations of the almost inherited capacity both to be able to learn and to have the attitude needed and the will to learn, the competent pupil is positioned as in need of responsibility for his or her own learning. According to the student teachers, the educational settings and working models must therefore be founded on these prerequisites. In concrete terms, this means that pupils have to take individual responsibility for planning, realising and evaluating their own learning practices at school. Being able to evaluate and reflect on their own learning and self-development is, according to the student teachers' accounts, a particularly important competence: “Pupils should also be trained to reflect on how they have worked, what they have learnt and what could be done better. By evaluating and reflecting, pupils discover the best way of learning for them. It is always important to be aware of one's own learning” (Maria, secondary and upper secondary school student teacher).

The student teachers state in their credos that creating these pedagogical settings is justified by the fact that learning, as well as pleasure and wellbeing at school, functions best when pupils can influence their work situation. Erika (before- and after-school club student teacher) demonstrates this by saying that: “Children are supposed to have more influence on their school work. They will grow with the responsibility, and become more self-confident with more responsibility”. As is the case with the discourse of competence, the discourse of responsibilisation is highly unproblematised in the credos, with very few critical discussions of the relationship between responsibility on one hand and the potential for positive or negative well-being and self-confidence on the other. Another reason for creating
these educational settings is the idea of an increasingly uncertain future. The student teachers argue that today’s uncertain future is forcing them to create a teaching practice that makes students responsible and flexible. This teaching practice will equip them for a future that is unstable and uncertain. However, the idea of an uncertain future, according to Hultqvist (2006) and others, operates as a powerful governing technology, shaping both contemporary learning subjects and the future.

The rationalities for the implementation of this type of teaching practice are thus justified both by the characteristics of the individual (the competent child who is in need of influence and responsibility) and societal conditions (the curriculum and the discourse of an uncertain future). The discourse of responsibilisation for individual learning is thus closely related to other powerful discourses. This network of discourses makes each discourse even stronger, and together they operate as a powerful governmental self-regulating practice shaping the learning subjects to the personalised entrepreneurial subject (Foucault 1991; Rose 1996, 1998; Krejsler 2006; Hartley 2007; Simons and Masschelein 2008).

**Documentalisation and performative practices**

In addition to individual responsibility for learning and educational practice, the student teachers highlight the need for documentation and visibility. The use of portfolios, i.e. folders showing the pupils’ schoolwork and knowledge development, is for example highlighted in every one of the seventy-two course assignments. These portfolios, and other documentation practices, will, according to the students, be used for several purposes: to make the learning process and results visible to the pupils, teachers and parents; as a motivating force for further learning; as a tool for self-regulation; to facilitate metacognitive competencies; and finally, as Monica (primary school student teacher) argues, as a tool for increased self-confidence: “Portfolios show both the progress and engagement in the pupils’ work. Documentation also increases the children’s confidence”. As with the discourse of responsibilisation, this statement also reveals the unreflected side of the educational visions in the credos. Problematising discussions of the pros and cons of different educational practices, and discussions of individual solutions, are quite rare. Some educational practices are instead put forward as universal panaceas, the portfolio being the primary example.

Another aspect of documentation is that everything involving the pupil – even things that are far removed from school work, such as the child’s hobbies, physical abilities and (at preschool) capacity to take care of their personal hygiene etc. – can and should be visualised and documented. Agneta (preschool student teacher) articulates this by stating: “By constantly documenting the children you can show their progress, as for example: now you can get dressed by yourself and now you can go to the loo”. The digital camera here functions as a panoptical artefact in the
pedagogical documenting practice, monitoring and colonising the children’s and pupils’ lives.

The growing demand for both the visualisation and documentation of both everyday life and outcomes in schools (and elsewhere) is part of a technology of performativity (Ball 2003, 2006) or documentality (Steyrl 2010; Asp Onsjo 2011). The documentation practices produce truths about those being documented, in this case the pupils and their educational life, their knowledge and personal interests and abilities. The performativity and documentality practices are thereby very powerful technologies in governing and shaping the subjects, especially since they also enable the creation of a special mentality in the pupils, with self-regulation as an important technique (Foucault 1991; Dean 1999/2010). As the student teachers claim above, the documentation practices provide opportunities for self-regulation, revision and comparison, and the auditors of the documentation can be the children themselves, but also friends, parents, teachers, politicians etc. With the ever greater potential for the publication of documentation outcomes in different media settings, the truths about pupils, and the potential for controlling and assessing different aspects of a child’s schooling, can be more widespread and public. Finally, and as Lindgren (2010) notes, the culture of documentation enables a mode where pupils also learn to communicate, visualise and sell themselves in the educational market, using the portfolios as an “educational wallet” (Simons and Masschelein 2008, 411).

Creating lifelong learners with help of stimulating learning and play

As my final theme, I will raise the discourse of the need for stimulating learning (lustfyllt lärande) and play in the context of creating lifelong learners (Fejes and Nicoll 2008). The discourse of lifelong learning is both an implicit and explicit discourse in the student teachers’ texts. Sofia (primary school student teacher) explicitly expresses it by saying: “The new understanding of knowledge means that we learn all the time” and continues by stating that: “Lifelong learning is based on the will to learn and the joy of learning and trying to learn new things”. The discourse of lifelong learning here rests on two complementary rationalities. These are, first, not separating school learning activities (and subject knowledge) from the everyday learning, i.e. not separating public and the private aspects of life, and, second, that the lifelong learner has to learn the right (positive) attitude to (lifelong) learning, in this case facilitated by providing pupils with pleasurable learning settings in school. With those rationalities the teachers, and the schools, can contribute to meeting the all-encompassing societal aim of creating individuals who are always prepared to learn and adjust to the changing circumstances of society, both today and in the future (Fejes 2008; Fejes and Nicoll 2008). Elina (primary school student teacher) describes this as follows: “Children should feel that they are not getting enough of learning”.

Several minor discourses and techniques are to be used in the pedagogical practice to attain the goal of producing lifelong learners. An important discursive technique emphasised in the texts is play, as playing is regarded as a key way of creating stimulating learning practices. Jessica (preschool student teacher) argues, for example, that: “In play, children can learn everything” and Ellen (preschool student teacher) expresses this discourse by claiming that: “Play is the foundation of all learning”. An interesting feature in these representations is that play within this rationality becomes an instrumentalised technique for making learning more effective. Minna (primary school student teacher) exemplifies this rationality as follows: “I believe that play, pleasure and learning are important parts of the prerequisites for effective teaching/learning in early years education”.

As with the documentation of the children’s private lives discussed earlier in this article, the (formerly private) activity of playing has in this way been colonised within these other discourses, and play is consequently used as a technology for effective learning. Another result of these discourses and rationalities is that children who, due to different circumstances, do not play the right games are constructed and positioned as play-incompetent and as children at risk, and consequently in need of special pedagogical training or as Linda (preschool student teacher) says: “Children who don’t play are a pedagogical challenge for us as teachers”.

**Discussion**

The aim of this study has been to visualise and problematise how student teachers at the end of their teacher training portray discursive constructions of the ideal pupil, and hence how the ideal pupil is constructed, governed and shaped in and by the teacher training in Sweden. The results show that the ideal school subject created and shaped by the student teachers, and by the teacher training institution, is a responsible, self-governed, performative and self-reflective learning subject. The ideal pupil is thus constructed as being a learning subject with both an inherited and unlimited ability to learn in every learning situation. The ideal pupil also has an infinitely positive attitude to learning, and appreciates visualising his or her educational progress through various kinds of documentary practice, especially the portfolio. The discursive label of this pupil is the ‘competent child’. The discourse of the competent child in this study is in line with the discursive subject position of the lifelong learner, which is a subject position shaped in many practices today (see, for example, Fejes and Nicoll 2008). Both these subject positions share the features of instrumentalism and entrepreneurialism, making the subject ready for the diverse demands of the labour market as well as the knowledge society and the knowledge economy (Simons and Masschelein 2008; Ball 2012).

The picture given by the student teachers of the everyday life in schools looks very neat and nice at first glance, with an explicitly positive understanding of the potential, and rights, of the individual child. On the other hand – and especially
since it seems to be handled without almost any critical reflection or problematisation – this friendliness simultaneously operates as a gentle, but very productive, governing practice, with possibilities of constant monitoring and governing of the individual child. The features of governmentality, I also claim, operate here with some special apparent governing technologies:

- **Individualising and self-regulation technologies** – The responsibility for planning, realising and evaluating the work in schools, but also the planning of strategic long-term educational matters (choice of school, and other educational choices etc.), is placed on the individual child (and the family), making the individual child responsible for his or her own success or failure.

- **Performative technologies** – The pupils are obliged to visualise their success or failure in all sorts of documentation practices, and can potentially be monitored, evaluated and assessed by almost everyone: teachers, friends, family and political or administrative personnel at different administrative levels. Everyday life at school, including the results of pupils, has become a matter of public interest and is used in various ways, making the individual an ever-accountable subject.

- **Institutionalising and pedagogising technologies** – More and more of the aspects of everyday life are nowadays handled by various (pedagogical) institutions, be this as realisers or as supervisors. The line between what can or should be a public and/or private matter is also blurred by new governing principles and new technologies (such as digitalised IEPs and other communication systems) (Sjöberg 2014). This being the case, the entire subject (and his or her family) can be controlled by the educational system.

- **Economic or market technologies** – The rationalities and principles of New Public Management (and other market rationalities) are operating throughout the education system, from the international arena to the individual classroom. The goal of competitiveness and strivings towards a knowledge economy enable a special subject position to develop, for example the entrepreneurial subject (Simons and Masschelein 2008).

Current Swedish governmental policy formulation has created a range of techniques built on these technologies and rationalities. These include, for example, extended testing and grading practices, individual education planning systems (IEP), new inspection systems (the school inspection) etc. These governing techniques each operates as a powerful governing practice in relation to the school as an organisation, not least in the form of governing and shaping practices in relation both to teachers and pupils, shaping the teachers and pupils into special subject positions and identities. When the discourses, technologies and techniques overlap and interact, governing becomes even more powerful.
Evaluative studies, by for example the Swedish National Agency for Education (2009, 2012b), have shown that the results of both the restructuring process and the new (individualised) discourses of education have had a major impact on educational practice in Sweden. The Swedish National Agency for Education, for instance, shows how Swedish pupils’ results have deteriorated due, in part, to the restructuring process started in the 1990s, where more emphasis was placed on individualising principles in classrooms, and the opportunity to choose which school to attend. Their surveys also reveal a striking increase in educational segregation in Swedish schools, where Swedish and immigrant children attend different schools and ultimately have different school outcomes (results). In a bid to manage this difficult situation, the Minister for Education have made political statements in favour of cutting back individualistic activities in the classroom and using more of a ‘pulpit teaching’ approach. Other solutions to the problems have been the introduction of more proactive, as well as reactive, controlling technologies: a curriculum with less potential for local interpretations, and expanded national testing and control of both pupils and schools. At the same time, the political goal of creating entrepreneurship all the way through from preschool to upper secondary school has been introduced in the education. The political situation in Sweden is therefore relatively ambivalent and contradictory. Nevertheless, the aim of being ‘top of the class’ in educational matters still remains the same!

Based on the results in the current study, which show how the ideal subject in teacher education is an individualistic, performative and entrepreneurial learning subject with substantial responsibility for both their own learning ability and results – coupled with the educational policy currently pursued in Sweden, with its clear return to a collective teaching culture, a more developmental psychological and constructivist view of the pupil, but with clear performative demands (Sjöberg 2011), it can be asked what future discourses are likely to be developed in Swedish teacher training? In 2011 a new teacher training reform was introduced whereby previous traditions and discourses meet new political demands. Thus the ways in which, in this meeting, the new pupil subject is constructed will form an interesting question for future research.

Finally, the consentient pictures provided in student teachers’ credos also say something about the discourses and governing practices operating in teacher training. In their texts, the student teachers assume a governing role. At the same time, they are also the governed. On the basis of the consistent picture articulated by the students in their credos, the question has to be asked as to how free, as individuals, they have been to present their own ‘personal’ opinions. This examination setting is, in itself, a governmentality practice or an example of advanced liberal governing, where the student teachers – through a confessing, and performing, practice – are obliged to present both their knowledge and their visions of their future teaching strategies, and are evaluated and graded on the basis of their idealising visions (Foucault 1991,
The consistent pictures expressed by the student teachers in their credos also say something of the (subtle) power of discourses and governing technologies and techniques, in that the discourses and governing technologies presented in the texts have a status that make them almost inaccessible for critical reflection, not only for the student teachers but also for the staff and researchers in the field of teacher training, and others. However, in the final analysis, this is not that surprising since this is how discourses are able to operate!

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Notes

1 Some student teachers also had a longer training, depending on their choice of age group and subject.
2 26 students focused on preschool, eight on before- and after-school clubs, 31 on primary and middle school (years 1–6), and seven on language teaching in lower and upper secondary school.
3 119 student teachers were registered for the course during this particular semester. For various reasons, some of the assignments were not archived and consequently not available for analysis. The available assignments, however, well reflect the distribution of students who completed teacher training at the institution during the year.
4 The discourses and constructions of the ideal teacher are, however, omitted from this article. This study has also been published in a Swedish journal, *Ubildning & Demokrati* [Education & Democracy], where the construction of the ideal teacher is included.
5 This is not as explicit in preschool and before and after school clubs, however.
6 At the same time, it changes the teacher subject. The discourse of the responsibilisation of the learning subject changes, or even reduces, the professional status of the teacher.
7 These technologies of government simultaneously function as rationalities or logics of the government.
8 As an overarching perspective in all education and as explicit courses in the vocational programmes at upper secondary school.
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