

Confessions of an individual education plan

Lena Sjöberg

Try to sing a little more. There are some songs that I think are fun but a little embarrassing to sing, so that's why I don't always sing along. But now I am going to sing as well as I can even if it is fun, boring, embarrassing or time goes slow. MUSIC is fun, and if you sing every time we have music and listen carefully to things, then you'll know quite a bit about it. And you'll know lots of songs.

This is how the Swedish fifth grade girl, Sara, responds to the question about what she needs to be better at in school in relation to music. The words spoken here are taken from her individual education plan (IEP). The ways in which the IEP is used as a form of confessional practice, subtly, yet forcefully objectifying, normalizing, subjectifying and governing pupils, forms the focus of this chapter.

The individual education plan was introduced as a mandatory assessment and documentation practice in Swedish schools in January 2006. The political motives behind the introduction are multifaceted and include, for example, enhanced participation, equality and goal attainment. The IEP should, according to the National Agency for Education (2005, 2008), be a pedagogical document that functions as a point of departure for pupils' learning. In concrete terms, the IEP should be updated at least once a year in conjunction with discussions about the pupil's development where, in addition to the pupil and teachers, parents also take part. Since 2008 the IEP comprises two parts: one where teachers provide written evaluations of the pupil's knowledge in every subject, and a second where areas for future development are articulated in the form of a learning contract between the teacher, parents and the pupil. The Swedish IEP differs from the pupil documentation practices in most other countries in that a plan should be drawn up for all pupils, that is not just for pupils in need of special support.

The ways in which assessment, grade assignment and the documentation of pupils' knowledge and learning is to be carried out has, since the end of the 1990s, been elevated to an increasingly prominent position in Swedish educational politics, not least in relation to the fact that the educational performance of Swedish pupils in relation to that of pupils in other countries has, in international surveys, consistently declined. In addition to grade assignment, which is a summative

aspect of assessment, so-called formative evaluation has received much attention. The purpose of formative assessment is, among other things, to ensure that the individual pupil is able to demonstrate knowledge and abilities in order for these to develop in a positive direction (Black et al. 2003; Hattie 2009).

Since the implementation of the reform several commercial enterprises have launched administrative solutions to the IEP practice. One of the companies providing IEP solutions in Sweden is *Unikum*. Based on the goals of the IEP, which, in part, are that it should be a document that forms the point of departure for the pupil's learning process, and in part that it should enable participation on the part of the parent and the pupil, *Unikum*, and other enterprises offering similar services, have created digital systems. These not only make visible teachers' judgements of pupils' learning and learning avenues for the pupils to pursue, but construct web-systems in such a way that pupils may, or more correctly are invited to, articulate their reflections on how they are as people, how they function in interaction with others, the diligence with which they do schoolwork, and the experiences they have in relation to school subjects. Parents are given the opportunity both to take note of their children's reflections, and give their own written comments on these and the teachers' judgements. An important characteristic of this web-based solution that makes it especially interesting to study is that it makes possible a confessional dialogue between pupils, teachers and parents, which furthermore, due to the principle of open access to public documents in Swedish law,¹ makes it a public practice.

The IUP practice, as it has developed in Sweden in recent years, is consequently a distinctive example of what can happen when different discourses and political visions such as, for example, individualization, accountability, transparency and effectiveness, are inserted within an educational practice and what can happen when private actors, as in this case *Unikum*, create systems that concretize these political discourses.

IEP confession as a governing technology

In common with the other chapters in this book, the analytic approach recognizes that people in diverse practices and contexts are objectified, positioned, subjectified, disciplined and thus governed through subtle practices, which are exercises of power. The point of departure is Foucault's theorization of the construction and governing of individuals and populations in contemporary society (Foucault 1991, 1998, 2003a).

From this approach, confession is seen as a part of the technology of pastoral power that is operational in many different ways. Confession generates information and knowledge that can function as an effective base in the continuing processes of governing, both in terms of the governing of the confessing individual, but also in the governing of others and other things as for example the school practice, encompassed within the confession. In this way the confession operates as a 'technology of power' in which relations and situations outside the

subject create the conditions for governing (Foucault 1991, 1998). Also, and equally importantly, the practice of the confession functions as a technology where the person confessing, in a very concrete and active manner, participates in processes of both creating and displaying the self. The confession functions as a 'technology of the self', where governing is effected through the individual on him or herself. Through the confession the individual creates a narrative about him or herself that s/he is then implicitly or explicitly expected by the receivers of the confessions and by the subject itself to inhabit and make a part of his or her own 'truth' (Foucault 1991, 2003b). The identity of the individual is thus constructed through confessional practice. Foucault argues that it is through the alignment of technologies of power and technologies of the self that processes of governing take powerful effect in contemporary times.

IEP practice, as seen through both the dialogical and public systems that *Unikum* make possible, is a distinctive example of a practice where confession functions as a governing technology, through which the pupil is objectified, constructed and normalized as subject. This is either one that is ideal in relation to educational norms, or as a subject that is constructed as excluded. Through this technology, both for one's self and for others, the ideal or alternatively the undesirable pupil is created and shaped. In this way school functions not just as an institution conveying central knowledge to pupils, but in fostering attitudes, competencies and qualities seen as desirable for the ideal citizen of the future (Cruikshank 1999). The competencies and qualities that in today's school in Sweden are regarded as desirable for the future are visible both through the questions put to pupils in IEP documentation, and participants' response.

Study of the IEP is interesting also since it exposes a reconfiguration of the previous relation between school and home, and extension of disciplining power. The format of the IEP means that pupils can access them both in school and at home. The structure and manner of address of the IEP is familiar from web-based forms of social media (e.g. Facebook) that comprise an everyday aspect of many pupils' lives. Here a meeting is brought about between an institutional (school) and a private practice (the pupil's home environment). The easily recognizable and everyday appearance of the practice, the opportunity to formulate one's thoughts without direct contact with the intended recipient, as well as the fact that the recipients are well known, and, in the case of teachers, professional adults, creates a context where, in all likelihood, confessions are relatively easy to formulate. In that school is a public institution where attendance is compulsory, it is in addition hard for pupils – and for that matter parents – to distance themselves from IEP practice by for example refusing to participate.

The competencies, attitudes and qualities made desirable through the IEP practice and the different rationalities and approaches that the different categories of participants (pupils, teachers and parents) take in the practice of writing the IEP forms the focus of this chapter. The empirical material presented has been gathered from 118 IEPs from a medium-sized community in Sweden in 2011. The participant pupils were aged between 11 and 12 and were enrolled in the fifth school grade.

IEP from a pupil perspective

Unikum's IEP starts off with a large number of questions that pupils should reflect on and which are about who the student *is*. The heading here is 'About me'. Questions are posed under the subheadings 'My personal and social development', 'The development of my learning' and 'How I take responsibility'. Some examples of the questions are presented in [Figure 5.1](#). In this example, you can see how the part

About me	
My personal and social development	
I spend time with both girls and boys	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I am thoughtful and help others	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I let others join in when I am playing	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I listen when others are talking	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
When I am angry or sad, what do I do?	
My comments	
The development of my learning	
In lessons I do my best	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I finish the work I am given	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I know what I have learnt	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I can concentrate during lessons	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
What do I need to particularly think about for my learning to go well?	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I need to be better at	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
My comments	
How I take responsibility	
I arrive on time	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I keep my things in order	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I look after my own and other people's things both in and outdoors	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I do my homework	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
I make sure that my parents get the weekly information sheet and other information	☹ ☺ ☺ ☺
My comments	

Figure 5.1

'About me' looks. This part of the IEP is constructed in such a way that the majority of questions are of a multiple-choice type where the student marks how they see themselves in relation to the question on a four-point scale. The points on the scale are represented by faces indicating great sadness to great satisfaction. There is also an opportunity for students to include written comments for some of the questions and at the end of each question area.

The purpose of this part of the individual development plan is that the pupil should be given the opportunity to reflect upon themselves as an individual, in their learning and their personal development.²

Consequently, the document starts off with a section where the pupil (subtly) is shown how he or she ought to be in order to live up to the qualities of an ideal pupil. Moreover, this requires that the pupils, both for themselves and for others who have access to the documentation practice (in particular teachers and parents), should demonstrate how they have reflected on and defined themselves based on this ideal image. In this context the IEP practice operates as a combination of external and self-regulating governing technologies – in Foucault's terms the '*technology of power*' and the '*technology of the self*' (Foucault 1991, 1998) – where the pupils are shown the pupil characteristics defined by the school as desirable, and offered the opportunity to confess to how well they live up to these norms.

What do pupils do when confronted with the confession and governing practice in the IEP? In the IEPs examined in the study, three overarching approaches can be identified in the pupils' responses. They may:

- subject themselves to the confessional practice by confessing to their shortcomings;
- show how they already live up to the norms of the ideal pupil;
- give voice to a resistance to the confessional and governing practice.

Pupils confessing to their shortcomings

Sara's approach in the quote that introduces this chapter is a clear example of how a pupil submits to the confessional practice to which the school has subjected her. She reveals her failings in her approach to music lessons and, moreover, promises that she will become a better pupil. Sara describes how she would be happy to sing a little more although she finds certain songs somewhat embarrassing, giving this as a reason why she has not always done her best in music lessons. She then suggests how, from here onwards, she will improve her approach by listening more closely and being more active in music lessons. Through the confessional practice of the IEP Sara subjectifies herself as a pupil who currently doesn't live up to the standards of the ideal music pupil and how with the help of the self-regulatory technology she will become the ideal music pupil.

Other pupils also promise to become better pupils and/or better persons. In response to the question about what they can be better at, a number of pupils answer, for example: '*to listen and not to be careless*', '*to be able to decide and not to*

take several sheets of paper for one thing and not to be careless when we make sketches' and 'to understand'. In response to the question about what they need to think about for their learning to proceed well, pupils answer, for example, 'to really do my best', 'be quiet' and 'listen to the teacher'.

To judge from the answers it is first and foremost pupils' behaviour and approach in school that form the focus of their confessions about themselves and what they need to improve (Hirsh, 2011). It is also the type of self-regulatory question that characterizes a large part of the initial battery of questions in the IEP document. There are, of course, exceptions, one such being the boy who says that he needs to be better at understanding things in school. This boy thus not only situates his approach in the classroom as being part of his own responsibility, but also that he himself ought to see to it that he understands what the teaching is about in a more focused manner. In this way he shows that he has also internalized a demand for pupils' individual responsibility for their learning in school that is central to discourses of lifelong learning (Fejes and Nicoll 2008; Fejes and Dahlstedt 2013).

Pupils showing their idealness

Some of the pupils adopt an approach where, through the IEP, they subjectify themselves as close to the ideal pupil subject. One particularly prominent approach is to show how you have a positive approach to everything that takes place in and outside school. Maria, for example, writes about herself saying:

I love reading, English, Maths, Social sciences, Science and being with friends. And I like sport. I like singing. And I like watching fun and exciting films. I like being with my grandmother. I like shopping. I like sleeping. I like life.

In writing in this way, Maria, in response to school's subtle messages about how one should be as an ideal person, demonstrates a generally positive attitude to herself and her environment. Some other approaches adopted by pupils show that they really do what is expected of them in school and in this way live up to the ideals of the desired pupil: 'I try and do the best I can in Science'. Others demonstrate how in their free time they do things conducive to school work: 'I think it is fun to bake and do things in the kitchen. I always help Mum with the shopping.' Some pupils also show that teachers and the content of teaching is particularly good for them and/or for pupils in general:

I like that Åsa [the teacher] does well . . . I have never ever made a snack at home, so it is really good that we have this in home economics, because it's not just me who learns but all the others too.

Pupils' resistance to participation

There are also some pupils who show, in my interpretation, resistance to participation in the 'confession game'. This is an approach observed more frequently

among boys in the IEPs examined in this study. Resistance involves, in different ways, avoiding giving a response to the questions that demand reflection and/or confession, altering the balance of power by, for example, confronting the teacher and/or instruction, or resorting to humour when responding to the questions. Avoidance is revealed, for example, in that students respond evasively to the questions. Pupils can for example respond '*I don't know*', '*no comments!*' or '*different things*' to the questions about how they should develop socially and cognitively. Other pupils seem to confront the system and the teacher. Cathrine has opinions about the amount of information that has to be taken home: '*I think that it works quite well, but there are too many papers that have to go home and back to school. It's not easy to keep track of things.*' In this way she can be seen as trying to distance herself from the responsibility of functioning as an information channel between school and home. The final approach that emerges in the material is the use of humour. In these cases pupils 'joke away' the demand to confess to the teacher. When Michael has to answer questions about other things that are important to know about him, he responds '*have Facebook*'. Filip, on the other hand, in response to the question about what he needs to think about in order for his education to go well, chooses to answer '[I] *try to have fun even though it sucks =(?*'

IEP from a teacher perspective

For teachers, the opportunity to express views in the IEPs that display resistance are more limited. The potential resistance approaches used by the teachers thus probably find expression in different ways than through the documents themselves, as the teachers are required to use the tools and systems that the school principal and/or local education authority demands of them.

One thing that does emerge in the documents is the role of the teacher in relation to pupils' confessions. Thus this section focuses on the way in which the teachers react in their role as the person to whom confessions are made. In the analyses of the IEPs in focus, four different approaches can be seen:

- responding to the confession by emphasizing the importance of always trying to do one's best and never giving up;
- responding to the confession by explicitly handing over responsibility to the pupil;
- responding to the confession by indicating that the pupil needs to change in a particular way;
- not responding to the pupil's confession in any way.

The importance of always trying to do one's best and never giving up

Demonstrating a positive attitude and a sufficient level of engagement with school work, and to keep on going even in the face of adversity, is an approach the pupils

themselves reveal when responding to the self-evaluation part of the IEP. That a correct approach is important is also something that the teachers reveal in their responses to the pupils' confessions. One example of this is how Karin in her self-evaluation indicates that she feels that she is not so good at sports and that she should work more on improving her stamina. The teacher chooses not to comment on her goal of achieving better stamina, but, rather, focuses her evaluation on the pupil's experience of not being good enough: *'What a shame that you don't think you are good at so much, because I think that you can achieve more if only you try.'* To keep struggling in spite of the feeling that something is difficult seems, generally, to be an appropriate approach, and, when pupils succeed in doing this, teachers indicate that such efforts should be praised: *'You have found digital time difficult, but now you have shown that you have managed even this. You've managed this by working hard and not giving up and now this has paid off.'*

Handing over responsibility to the pupil

For those pupils who do not live up to the image of the ideal pupil, two approaches employed by teachers are particularly noticeable. One of these is to make it clear to the pupil that the onus is on them to change their behaviour in ways that mean that they can live up both to knowledge and responsibility demands. Ali provides a good example of this type of pupil response. In his self-evaluation he writes that he needs to be better at working out sums and that maths is difficult for him. In her response, Ali's teacher writes:

Not so strange that you think that maths is difficult, Ali, since you have missed about three months of teaching and working. It is going to be difficult for you to make up for this and reach the goals for year five.

According to the IEP document, Ali has been absent from school because of a journey to his family's home country. The responsibility both for Ali's absence and the lack of attainment that this trip is likely to lead to is here placed squarely on the pupil himself. In this way the teacher clearly indicates that the school does not bear responsibility for Ali's results. Taking control for one's own studies, and having the right attitude to coping with individual responsibility for learning is revealed here – and for that matter in many of the other IEPs – to lie with the individual pupil.

Pupils needing to modify their behaviour

Another teacher response that pupils can encounter in IEP work is that they must change or modify their behaviour in a particular way. The types of modification can concern the pupil's behaviour and way of acting, their responsibility, or the need to have and take care of equipment used in teaching. When Klara expresses that she finds the changing rooms the class uses when they have Sports unpleasant,

the teacher responds by saying that she is not properly equipped: *'What's so creepy about the showers? You try hard in the lessons. You don't have any gym shoes. You need these otherwise you will injure yourself.'* Thus, rather than focusing on Klara's confession about finding showering unpleasant, the teacher ignores this and instead focuses on her lack of proper equipment. Thus the thing that Klara sees as important to discuss with her teacher instead makes way for something that the teacher sees as a problem that needs correcting. Stina is another pupil who expresses that she would like to be able to concentrate better in order to be able to *'give everything I've got'*. Her teacher however has other ideas about what Stina needs to develop:

I agree with you on most points but not the point where you say that you do your best, that's not how I experience things. You talk with the others and you come late to several lessons, you leave lessons and can be away for up to 10 minutes. You can sit and draw instead, for example in the Social Studies material. Sometimes when you are in the group room you mess about and don't do anything at all.

These responses to confessional practices reveal the ways in which the power imbalance is inherent. Irrespective of the content of the pupil's confession, it is the teacher who, in her role as an institutional expert, has the right to define both who the pupil is, and the shortcomings that the pupil needs to rectify (Hofvendahl 2006).

Adopting an avoidance approach to pupils' confessions

One of the motives for using digitized IEPsystems, as does *Unikum*, is the possibility to have a dialogue between the pupil, the parents and the teacher. These kinds of dialogue are quite uncommon and the written communication between the pupil and the teacher often ceases after the pupil has reflected on her/his assets and shortcomings as a pupil in school. This is apparent in that, for example, teachers often ignore the statements pupils make. One example of this is in Lisa's IEP, where she describes how in Swedish she needs to improve her handwriting. The response she gets is completely detached from the initial question and what Lisa herself feels she needs to improve (cf. also the extract from Klara's IEP above). Instead, the teacher's response to Lisa is as follows:

You have developed your ability to apply the norms of written communication, to write, to use the computer as a resource and to participate in conversations. You can develop your ability to work with your texts and reflect on how you learn things.

One reason why a dialogue between teachers and pupils is not apparent in the IEPs is that the evaluations that the teachers write about the pupils are, within the

pupil group that they teach, more or less standardized and extremely similar in terms of both form and content. Thus the individuality in the IEPs is primarily that expressed by the pupils, a finding in line with other studies (Vallberg Roth and Månsson 2009). The IEPs thus appear as comprising two somewhat different types of practice where the pupils' practice, in part, involves revealing their reflections about themselves and their successes and failures, and in part involves an awareness of what teachers think about their performance in school and their self-evaluation (Hofvendahl 2006). The teachers, on the other hand, have, through the format of the IEP, gained an additional arena within which to gain information about their pupils and, as will become clear in the following section, also their home situation.

The IEP from a parental perspective

The third participant category able to make their voice heard is the pupils' parents. In all, relatively few parents have made use of this opportunity in the IEPs in the sample. The parents who participate in the IEP work do so from a particular position where they oscillate between, in some situations, assuming a subjugated role towards the teacher and the school (and thus functioning as co-confessors on the same level as the pupils) and in other situations functioning as an additional recipient of the pupil's confession and, in this way, playing a clear role in the social fostering of the child. An additional position that parents can take involves different types of resistance to the school, the teachers and teaching. These three positions evolve from four different approaches to their response:

- participating in the teacher's disciplining of the pupil;
- positioning the pupil and/or the family as 'ideal';
- participating in the confession by positioning the family as weak;
- resistance through the IEP.

Participating in the teacher's disciplining of the pupil

Some of the parents whose presence can be detected in the IEPs position themselves oppositionally to their children. They put themselves on the side of the teacher and participate in a jointly accomplished social fostering of the child. This type of social fostering can, in the case of Olle (below), be about how the pupil conducts her-/himself in school generally, or in relation to a particular subject. Olle's mother supports the teacher in her views about Olle's difficulties in concentrating by pointing out that '*Olle needs to think about concentrating on the thing he is doing at the time and not on everything else going on around him.*' Something that is interesting in this case is that the parent uses a type of language not dissimilar to the institutional language used in school, thus contributing to further strengthening the superordinate position of both teacher and parents in relation to the child.

Subjectifying the pupil and/or the family as 'ideal'

In those cases where parents have made their presence felt in the IEPs it has often been in the sense of positioning the child as an ideal child, or positioning the family as ideal in relation to the content and demands of school. When it comes to the positioning of their child, parents use an approach similar to that of the pupils themselves, that is to say giving expression to the positive attitude the child has to school and what goes on there. Fatima's father emphasizes, for example, his daughter's positive attitude and approach to work when writing that '*She really likes music! Fatima works hard doing homework and wants to be better.*' Other parents show, additionally, how they participate in the work of the school, either through doing homework together with their child, or doing things that are beneficial to their children's attainment. Filippa's parents show, for example, how work she does in English has an impact at home at the family dinner table:

Filippa thinks that English is one of the most fun subjects. She does her homework with great enthusiasm and she really enjoys the homework they get in English. The whole family often becomes involved at the dinner table when Filippa gets going talking and asking questions in English.

Subjectifying the family as weak

That the IEP is a public institutional practice developed as a dialogical practice which crosses into the private sphere has previously been discussed. This change has an impact on the content that is highlighted, discussed and, consequently, made public through the IEP. The combination of the IEP's somewhat informal form and its institutional framing can mean that content that might not normally be exposed in pupil documentation is presented in an open domain. An example of this is where Carl's mother describes her concern about her son's descriptions of how he currently experiences school:

I became very, very sad when I see how he has rated this with these faces. Concerned and really worried. That things are difficult for Carl at home is probably the reason why he can be a little annoying at times, there are many worries pressing on him.

While Carl's mother turns here to the school and to the teacher to demonstrate her frustration and worries about her son, at the same time she places the responsibility for things that are happening, both in school and at home, on herself and her family. In this way she positions herself, Carl and the family as on their own unable to cope with day-to-day worries.

One problem that many of the parents in all likelihood are unaware of is that as public documents the content presented and discussed in the IEP can be disseminated to a wider group of people than perhaps was anticipated at the time of production. Here the positioning of Carl and his family becomes more pub-

lic than Carl's mother would likely have been aware of when she formulated her response.

Approaches of resistance to and through the IEP

As with the pupils, there are also parents who use the IEP as a means of demonstrating a resistance towards school and teaching. Not writing any comments can, just as in the case of the pupils, be read as a way of expressing reluctance to be involved in this type of confessional practice. Whether or not this is the case is, of course, not possible to say in the current study. Some parents do however use the opportunity to indicate dissatisfaction with what takes place in teaching. Emil's parents, for example, see the Maths teaching provided by the school as unsatisfactory:

Emil often needs help with explanations and homework. He hasn't really understood what Karin [the teacher] has explained and shown on the board. I show him in the way that I myself learnt in school and often he understands immediately. These new ways of doing calculations in maths are really tricky and hard to figure out, in my opinion. I teach him according to the old way instead. The answers are of course the same and Emil understands the logic.

IEP as a confessional and governing technology – a summary

IEPs have now been used in Swedish schools for about a decade and the study presented in this chapter shows that this practice of pupil documentation has consequences that were not articulated, or maybe anticipated when the reform was introduced. One of the motives behind the creation of the IEP practice was said to be to increase influence and participation for both pupils and their parents. According to the results of this study the IEP on the contrary has resulted in another technique of governing and shaping the pupils, and also some of their parents. The form of the IEP documents and the methods used in working with them, suggest function as yet another subtle way of gaining information about pupils and their home situation, and of shaping and subjectifying pupils and parents by both 'technologies of power' and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1991, 1998). Through the IEP practice, the school, and people who get access to these documents, have potential to receive information about the beliefs and reflections of the pupils; what they think about themselves, about their school situation, and in some cases about their family life. My argument is built on the fact that almost every pupil in the received IEP plans responds to the confessional demands of the school. With the exception of some pupils, the majority of whom are boys, the pupils' responses show how they exert themselves to show they subjectify or govern themselves towards the behaviour of the 'normal' and ideal pupil.

An important point of departure for this governing practice is the format of the IEP. The formation and content of the plan impacts on the ways in which

teachers, pupils and parents can understand and make use of it. The IEP as studied here – primarily the types of question asked to the pupils – means that the pupil is forced to subject him- or herself to a confessional practice that, as a point of departure, requires reflection on the self and regulation of the self in terms of what is regarded as ‘normal’ and ideal. The questions used in the IEPs are, almost exclusively, questions of a self-regulatory character, and not questions that in any sense allow pupils to influence their school situation. Furthermore, and no less importantly, the digital format and its interface (similar to other social media in the pupils’, parents’ and teachers’ everyday life, such as for example Facebook) blurs the distinction between private and institutional settings, implying that information of a private character becomes more easily articulated and official.

The power dimension also concerns the different positions that the participants can adopt in the IEP process, where pupils, and sometimes parents, confess and the teacher functions as the recipient of the confessions. A clear power relation arises, in part through the information of and about the confessing pupil, and in some cases about the parents, that emerges in the IEP, and in part as a result of the teacher’s mandate to choose which way the confession will be met and the type of information that will be presented about the pupil (Hofvendahl 2006). Lisa and Klara are just two examples where the teachers neglect the confessional expressions made by the pupils and instead point to things that are more important in the teacher’s opinion. The parents have a very particular role in this IEP practice, in that they can position themselves in different ways, either as an extension of the teacher’s authority, alongside the pupil as a co-confessor, but also as a resistor or a defender of the child.

When it concerns certain pupils’ IEPs, it is possible to consider whether teachers use the IEP as a means of venting frustration about and shifting responsibility for pupils’ unsatisfactory goal attainment or undesirable ways of behaving in school (see for example the way that the teacher writes about Ali and Stina). The positioning of these pupils as undesirable is particularly apparent. One question that could be asked is whether the ‘everyday communicative approach’ that *Unikum* and other companies offer in their IEP practice, means that information that, usually, would only be conveyed orally, is now also presented in a written, and therefore a public form. One problem that this expanded form of documentation practice brings with it is that things that are said about and by pupils become both geographically and historically enduring (Andreasson and Asplund Carlsson 2009). The content of the IEPs, particularly in that they are public official documents, can be read by many more people than those who are actually participants in the dialogues. Furthermore, the IEPs are stored permanently, meaning that this information is available in the future to anyone who wishes to consult it and the subjectivity work then becomes more or less permanent. Another reflection of mine when analysing the material, is that the governing of the subject within this practice simultaneously gets closer to and more distanced from the subject than earlier pedagogical evaluation and documentation practices. As said earlier, the IEPs can be spread and stored at a greater distance from the pupil, but at the same time the

governing gets closer and closer to ‘the inner self’ of the subject. In this sort of confessional documentation practice, it is not just the knowledge and behaviour of the pupil that is documented, but also the inner thoughts – the attitudes and dispositions – of the pupil regarding their learning and behaviour. In that case the governing and shaping of the subject gets almost unrestricted with regard to both time and distance. The governing practice then becomes ‘atmospheric’ in regard to the pupils’ life, which makes the result of the governing, for example the subjectification, even stronger. The atmospheric aspect of the governing practice is also a reason that makes these practices almost natural and impossible to resist.

As mentioned earlier, my study shows that most of the pupils in this study participate in the governing practice without resistance. Just a few pupils, and parents, show that they don’t want to play this ‘confession game’. When confessional practices, like the IEP, are used in obligatory environments like the compulsory school, the use of these technologies, I will finally argue, is additionally problematic. The reason is that the institutional framework, which reinforces the internalizing result of the confessional and/or governing technologies, makes the confession impossible for the pupils to avoid. In this way school has become an important actor in creating a new learning subject, willing to confess, to make itself visible and accountable, and to allow itself to be governed, today and in the future.

Voices problematizing and criticizing these normalized governing practices then get very important, no matter whether it is the pupils using the IEP in a reluctant or even obstructive way, as Cathrine, Michael and Filip are doing, or the researcher who aims at examining the effects of these confessional and governing practices, as is the case with the authors of this book. Resistance and a problematizing approach towards governing practices are necessary to achieve an open and reflective society.

Notes

- 1 The legislation implies that every formal document instituted in an authorial setting, which school counts as, must be available to the general public. It means that everyone who is interested in these documents can contact schools and receive IUPs, grading documents and other formal documents.
- 2 There is a certain degree of variation between the different schools in the sample when it comes to the types of question that have been selected from the battery of questions provided by *Unikum*.

References

- Andreasson, I., and Asplund Carlsson, M. (2009). *Elevdokumentation: om textpraktiker i skolans värld*, Stockholm: Liber.
- Black, P., Harrison C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. and William, D. (2003) *Assessment for Learning. Putting it into Practice*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Cruikshank, B. (1999) *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*, New York: Cornell University Press.

- Fejes, A. and Dahlstedt, M. (2013) *The Confessing Society. Foucault, Confession and Practices of Lifelong Learning*, London: Routledge.
- Fejes, A. and Nicoll, K. (eds) (2008) *Foucault and Lifelong Learning: Governing the Subject*, London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1991) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1998) *The History of Sexuality. Vol 1: The Will to Knowledge*, London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (2003a) 'Governmentality', in P. Rabinow and N. Rose (eds), *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (2003b) 'Technologies of the self', in P. Rabinow and N. Rose (eds), *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, New York: The New Press.
- Hattie, J.A. (2009) *Visible learning. A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement*, New York: Routledge.
- Hirsh, Å. (2011) 'A tool for learning? An analysis of targets and strategies in Swedish individual education plans', *Nordic Studies in Education*, 31: 14–30.
- Hofvendahl, J. (2006) *Riskabla samtal: en analys av potentiella faror i skolans kvarts- och utvecklingsamtal*, Linköping: Linköpings universitet.
- National Agency for Education. (2005) *Allmänna råd och kommentarer. Den individuella utvecklingsplanen*, Stockholm: Fritzes.
- National Agency for Education. (2008) *Allmänna råd för den individuella utvecklingsplanen med skriftliga omdömen*, Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Vallberg Roth, A.-C. and Månsson, A. (2009) 'Regulated childhood: equivalence with variation', *Early years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 29: 177–90.

Visualization, performance and the figure of the researcher

Naomi Hodgson

Introduction

Foucault described Western man as a confessing animal (Foucault 1998). Following this, our condition today has been described as that of the confessing society (Fejes and Dahlstedt 2013: 1): ‘there are numerous contemporary practices in which we are invited to speak about ourselves, making our dreams, wishes, aspirations, fears and faults, for example, visible to ourselves and others, not least in the media’. Fejes and Dahlstedt argue that: ‘Verbalization (disclosure) . . . is one of the most prominent features of the confessing society’ (p. 2). In this chapter I explore these ideas and suggest that today, visualization as well as verbalization of our dreams and aspirations, as well as more mundane aspects of our lives, to ourselves, forms a central aspect of how we come to understand ourselves. The proliferation not only of television shows such as *Big Brother*, talk shows such as *The Jeremy Kyle Show* or *The Jerry Springer Show*, lifestyle programmes such as *Super Nanny* or *The Life Laundry*, but also social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, indicate that aside from the content of what is being broadcast, a common factor in confessional practices is their consumption and production on screen. Today, we see an increasing individualization and personalization in our relationship to the screen, as increasingly we consume and produce content on personal, portable devices or at a time convenient to us. Today, the screen is incorporated into our daily lives (Decoster 2013).

The ways in which we verbalize and visualize ourselves today are taken here to be constitutive of our mode of subjectivation. More concretely, practices of verbalization and visualization are considered with reference to those in higher education, using examples of one-to-one (Fulford 2012) and online tutorials (Ross 2011). I then turn to look in more detail at the figure of the researcher. The articulation of ourselves online and on screen is discussed here in terms of performance, with reference to the way in which devices for the performance measurement and management of the researcher constitute her as such. The notion of confession-as-performance is suggested to express the particular way in which performance operates in this mode of subjectivation. My discussion of our relationship to the screen and of performance will suggest that ‘research’ and the attitude and