Normalization and knowledge
As a contribution from the expanded field of literary studies to the project “Challenging normalization” my study focuses on aspects of normalization that is imbedded in the construction and understanding of knowledge within the Swedish school. Through a reading of the report of the Swedish Commission of Inquiry on Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination (2006), and with special attention to the partial report that concerns the field of education, I analyze how the construction of normality is being revealed and understood. The method is thus interpretative and critical (in a deconstructivist sense), in that it tries to find the deeper discursive conditions behind normalization and discrimination, as they become visible and readable in the report. Within the separate studies in the report one finds several different and conflicting answers to the question that is initially stated as the most important: Why does the school system reproduce patterns of discrimination, despite its explicit ambition not to? The question, together with the different answers, points to an aporetic structure, the identification of which enables us to investigate how the school discourse is being constructed through exclusions and blindnesses, categorisations and phenomenalisations. One aspect is the way “the normal” – by way of its ability to convert structures of meaning into fact – functions as a means to decide what counts as authentic identities. Another is how “the normal” pragmatically establishes certain values as unquestionable principles, and how multiculturalism, in all its relativism, therefore can reproduce discriminating structures.