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Quality Indicators for Social Science Teaching in Nordic classrooms

This presentation addresses results from a project on quality in social science teaching (QUISST) carried out by a Nordic group of researchers in social science didactics, which is part of the Nordforsk financed Quality in Nordic Teaching (QUINT). The group consists of members from University of Helsinki, Karlstad University, University College Lillebælt and University of Southern Denmark.

In the presentation we propose quality criteria for social science teaching in grades 5-7/8-10. The practical aim of the project is to provide a theoretically informed guide and operational quality indicators for QUISST observations in Nordic social science classrooms. Indicators of quality can refer to either the process, the content or the function of the teaching. One important basis for QUINT is the LISA-project (Linking Instruction and Student Achievement) conducted at Oslo University and Karlstad University, focusing on generic qualities associated with the process of teaching (the how-question) i.e. the clarity of the teachers' presentation of a theme, dialogue or non-dialogue etc. However, these types of "how"-qualities are always related to the quality of what is taught and why. In addition, we will therefore focus on subject specific qualities related to social science content (the what question) and function (purpose - the why-question)

In a recent work, Christensen & Christensen (2015) identify four types of social science. Type 1 (social science as 'talk' and lifeworld), type 2 (social science as method), type 3 (social science as current knowledge about society) and type 4 (social science as science) referring to four corresponding societal domains proposing that all four domains should be present in all social science teaching, but with different weight depending on the level. Each domain represents different knowledge forms (everyday knowledge, methodological knowledge, professional and current knowledge, social science knowledge) and corresponding languages (and other semiotic resources) from everyday language to social science language (and other social science semiotic resources).

We will present and discuss the understanding of quality in social science teaching we have achieved so far, and we will present suggestions for observation categories to be used in Nordic social science classrooms