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teaching quality

TITLE: Towards a conceptual framework for

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Title of your paper: Towards a conceptual framework for teaching quality

Abstract (300 words)

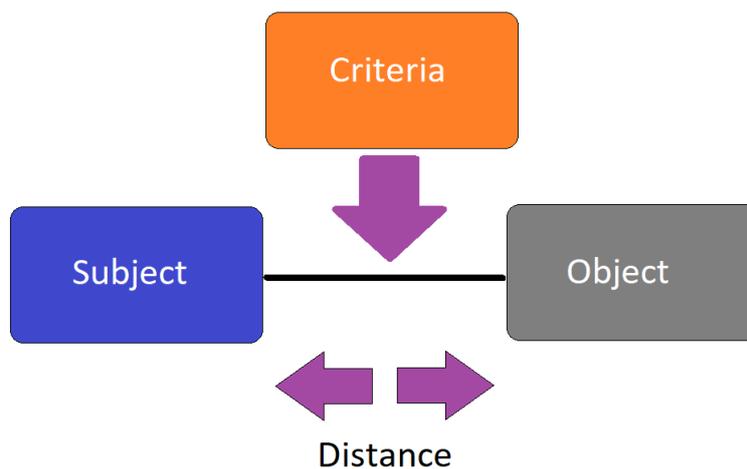
In this paper we propose a conceptual framework for teaching quality. The framework is a meta-theoretical and heuristic device and is designed to facilitate the comparison and mapping of different substantive approaches to teaching quality. The aim of the framework is to provide researchers within and outside the Quality in Nordic Teaching center of excellence (QUINT) with a map of the dimensions along which different quality conceptions vary. QUINT researchers can use the map to locate their own and others quality conceptions and, thus, become more aware of how specific quality conceptions relate to each other. The four main dimensions sketched out by the framework are: (1) the subject of a quality judgement (the person(s) who judges quality), (2) the object of a quality judgement (an aspect of teaching), (3) the criteria used by the subject to judge the object, and (4) the socio-temporal distance between the subject and the object of a quality judgement. After presenting the map proposed by the framework, we use it to locate and compare two widely differing quality conceptions: Fenstermacher and Richardson's (2005) theory of teaching quality and the conception of quality at work in the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations (PLATO). The illuminating application of the framework to two widely differing quality conceptions, lead us to the tentative conclusion that the map is broadly applicable, and hence might constitute a useful comparative tool for the QUINT community which encompasses a multitude of theoretical approaches with varying ontological, epistemological, and practical foundational assumptions.

Extended summary (1000 words, excluding reference list) Include introduction, theoretical background, methods, aims, preliminary findings/findings, results, theoretical and education significance, relevance to the QUINT ambition and the reference list.

Aim of the framework: Our aim is to propose a shared theoretical tool that can facilitate structured comparisons between the widely differing theories of teaching quality applied within QUINT. We hope that the framework will contribute to an increased awareness of the differences and similarities among seemingly incommensurable quality conceptions, and hence, facilitate dialogue on teaching quality across research traditions and established research fields. Such dialogue and increased collaboration has recently been called for by several researchers working within the field of teaching quality (see e.g. Charalambous and Praetorius 2020).

Sketch of the framework: The point of departure for the conceptual framework of teaching quality proposed here, is to view the act of determining teaching quality as an evaluative judgement made by a subject about an object by use of a set of criteria (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The dimensions of the act of judging teaching quality.



The four main dimensions of the framework (and their sub-dimensions) are, thus, related and assumed to constitute different components of teaching quality. They comprise: (1) the subject, making an evaluative judgement of teaching quality; (2) the object of the evaluation which is some aspect of teaching; (3) the criteria used by the subject to make the evaluative judgement, and (4) the social and temporal distance of the subject to the object.

The subject of the quality judgement is the person or institution who judges the quality of a specific aspect of teaching. The subject may include different educational stakeholders such as students and their parents, teachers, school leaders, educational policy makers, and researchers of education (see e.g. Elf, 2019; Harvey & Green, 1993). When conducting research on teaching quality, the researcher can adopt either a descriptive or a normative approach. If the researcher is not making the quality judgement herself but rather studies the quality perceptions of other stakeholders (third person perspective on quality judgements), the study has a descriptive character. If, however, the researcher is engaged in creating new quality criteria or applying existing ones to particular cases, the research conducted is either implicitly or explicitly normative in character (first person perspective on quality judgements).

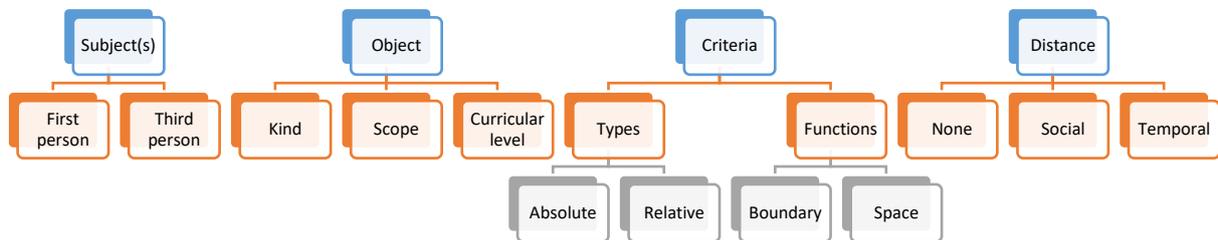
The object of a quality judgement is an aspect or instance of real-world teaching. Real-world teaching varies with respect to kind (e.g. social studies teaching vs. mathematics teaching) (Klafki, 1995; Krogh, 2011), spatial scope (e.g. teaching in one classroom vs. teaching culture of an entire country), temporal scope (e.g. a single lesson vs. an entire school year), and curricular level (e.g. the

formal curriculum vs. the completed curriculum (Christensen, Elf, Hobel & Qvortrup, 2018; Goodlad, 1979:50-64)).

The criteria for evaluating quality can be of different types and functions. *Types* of criteria include absolute criteria and relative criteria. Absolute criteria pertain to the substance of the elements of teaching (contents, methods, and/or purposes) and are discernable in various theories and methodological approaches to teaching quality such as the [Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations \(2021\)](#), [Fenstermacher and Richardson \(2005\)](#), and [Christensen and Christensen \(2015\)](#) to mention just a few. Relative criteria pertain to the relations between the elements of teaching (contents, methods, and/or purposes) as well as the effects they generate for students and society. For examples of relative criteria, one might consult [Biggs and Tang \(2011:274\)](#) and [Praetorius, Klieme, Herbert & Pinger, 2018](#) among others. *Functions* of criteria denote the different ways in which quality criteria are used to judge the quality of teaching. Criteria can be used to set an upper boundary (an ideal condition) or a lower boundary (a minimum requirement) in relation to which actual teaching can be placed. Alternatively, criteria can be used to define a space within or outside which one can locate real teaching. When quality criteria are used to define a space, the central question is whether, or alternatively, to what extent actual teaching fulfills the criteria used to define the space. Examples of quality conceptions that describe the functions of criteria are given by [Harvey and Green \(1993\)](#).

The social and temporal distance between the subject and the object of the quality judgement is assumed to impact the epistemological nature of the judgement. The kind of knowledge a teacher can have about the quality of her own teaching is likely to differ from the kind of knowledge a school leader can have about the quality of the same instance of teaching (example of social distance). Similarly, the kind of knowledge a teacher can have about the quality of her teaching when it takes place is likely to differ from the kind of knowledge the same teacher can have about the quality of that teaching after it has taken place (example of temporal distance). One approach that emphasizes the significance of varying temporal distances of quality judgements is the quality conception developed as part of the Danish KiDM project (Quality in Danish and Mathematics) (see [Hansen, Elf, Misfeldt, Gissel, & Lindhardt, 2020:41](#)).

Figure 2. A schematic overview of the conceptual framework for theories of teaching quality



Preliminary findings: The quality judgements made by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) were straightforwardly located on the map sketched out above, and the analysis indicated that Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) articulate some dimensions of teaching quality much more explicitly than other dimensions. Applying the framework to the PLATO manual (Klette & Blikstad-Balas, 2018; Protocol of Language Arts Teaching Observations, 2021) revealed two differing quality judgements of interest. One is the quality judgement made by the Stanford research team who created PLATO based on criteria of effectiveness (relative criteria). Another is the quality judgement made by researchers who employ PLATO to empirically assess or describe specific segments of teaching. These researchers operate with the PLATO manual's absolute quality criteria that pertain to the contents, methods, and purposes of teaching. We tentatively conclude that the proposed framework is capable of shedding light on the differences and similarities of two widely differing notions of teaching quality, and, thus, has the potential to facilitate productive dialogues and collaboration between researchers in the field of teaching quality.

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