

Paper session 1A | Analyzing teaching quality through classroom

Room: Tetra

Discussant: Kirsti Klette, University of Oslo

Classroom discourse in social studies: Opportunities and obstacles related to content and student participation

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Classroom discourse in social studies has multiple purposes. Dialogues, discussions, and debates can be used to help students understand or co-construct knowledge about social studies topics and learn to engage with others. Classroom discourse is thus considered critical to offer students experiences of democratic practices in the classroom. However, classroom research has repeatedly demonstrated that classroom discourse that combine attention to subject knowledge on the one hand and active participation on the other is difficult to implement for teachers. My interest in this presentation is to discuss what characterises classroom discourse in social studies lessons which provided students with access to both complex explanations of subject knowledge and substantial possibilities to partake in classroom discourse.

This study adopts a research design inspired by the QUINT project video data from naturally occurring teaching from social studies classrooms in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. 80 social studies lessons across the three geographical contexts were analysed

using the Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation (PLATO). To identify lessons that dealt with both subject content and opportunities to engage in classroom discourse, I used the Representation of Content and Classroom Discourse elements. Only lessons that scored at the high end on both elements in at least one 15-minute segment in the lesson were sampled. This paved the way for more in-depth thematic analysis of a subsample of 12 lessons.

In the thematic analysis, I found that subject content was not always leveraged in classroom discourse although present in the lesson, suggesting a distinction between content and structure featured of classroom discourse in the observed lessons. I discuss this finding term of democratic education, including strategies educators and teachers can use to systematically leverage both knowledge and student engagement in social studies classroom discourse.