

Subproject 1 – subject construction through formal and informal transformation

Subproject 1 focuses on formal and informal aspects of transformation processes in different school subjects. With regard to formal aspects, we plan to study how subjects are constructed and manifested in national tests of four subjects (English, History, Mathematics, Swedish), and regarding informal aspects the plan is to explore how subject content and enactment take shape in various network discussions in social media, especially Facebook. In relation to the formal aspects of the transformation of school subjects, we can note that national tests in Sweden have lately come to play an important role in monitoring and evaluating how students and schools succeed. Preparing, implementing and following-up the tests take a great deal of the teaching time and the tests also define for the teacher what and how subject content is relevant and important. Several reports show that teachers appreciate the national tests (Swedish National Agency for Education 2013; OECD 2011), which means that the tests probably have a great influence on the teachers. However, exactly how this control mechanism and transformation work is not clear. The project centres on teachers' perception of the complex relation between conceptual definitions, type of tasks, and assessment guides. The project starts with a combined qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the different test components in terms of frames, tasks and assessment guides. This is followed by the teachers' conceptions of the test components and the role of the tests in shaping the teachers' understanding of their respective subject over time. The focus is on the national tests in grade 9 (final year of lower secondary education).

Conceptions of subject will also be studied from a different perspective than the inherently formal monitoring of national tests. There is a growing trend in teachers' professional development that needs attention, namely informal fora in social media, including both large and small groups of teachers discussing different types of professional issues. In contrast to the national tests, which can be said to centralise subject-specific issues, these groups decentralise subject-specific issues. The study has a focus on Facebook groups where teachers of English, History, Mathematics and Swedish exchange tips and advice on lesson content, lesson design and assessment issues. In these discussions subject content aspects as well as their enactment are transformed in the teaching situation. The project will therefore uncover how knowledge formation may take place in collective subject-specific informal learning environments without formal monitoring of school administrations or school authorities. The project is expected to make clear the roles of different stakeholders and actors in these informal groups. We intend to observe 10-15 different school subject fora regularly in the period 2012-2016 to get an overview of the informal professional development trend online. Then we will further highlight Facebook postings and comments during one year (2017) using data from Facebook groups that we consider especially interesting in terms of the transformation perspective. We also aim to conduct focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews with teachers to find out more about the participants' conceptions of subject conceptions and the relation between formal and informal aspects of collegial learning and different transformation processes.

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