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Article

Observing and interpreting quality in social science teaching

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Keywords: social science subject didactics, social science teaching methodologies, quality of teaching, classroom observation

- Quality in social science teaching
- Social science subject didactics
- Social science teaching methodologies
- Form, content, and goal (intended function) of social science teaching
- Tool for observing and interpreting quality in social science teaching

Purpose: The purpose of the article is to contribute to a discussion about quality for social science teaching and in continuation hereof to develop a tool for social science classroom observation and interpretation, for both direct and video-based observation.

Design/methodology/approach: Classroom teaching is communication. Therefore, it is crucial that an analysis of quality of social science teaching includes a focus on communicative quality. The theoretical basis of the article is therefore threefold. 1) A Bakhtin-inspired communicative approach, 2) sociocultural ethnographic classroom research and 3) social science didactics / social science teaching discourse. Discourse is not only understood as language, but as language in context, which means that it's not only communication as spoken words, utterances, but also communication as actions (doings) that count as disciplinary work.

Findings: It is concluded that communicative quality in social science teaching, and perhaps in teaching in general, can be observed as utterances in the classroom analysed for their coherence between form, content, and goal (intended function), which accordingly are the basic elements of an observation tool developed. When utterances are recurring and thus form patterns, they are called practices. The tool aims to keep focus on form, content, and goal (intended function) of the basic subject discourse, which functions as an underlying structuring of classroom communication. It is also concluded that the normative basis for social science teaching can be operationalized and thus serve as a guidance of interpretations of observations made in the classroom of the form and content of teaching.

Research limitations/implications. The tool is designed to focus specifically on social science quality. It is not a suggestion to disregard generic conditions in the teaching, and therefore the use of the tool presupposes that this is done in connection with a generic observational focus. The tool has not been tested on a large scale, and therefore it must be expected that it will have to be further developed during use.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The article develops a tool for observation and interpretation of social science teaching. The tool is based on a Bakhtin-inspired communication theory, which focuses on utterances that are understood as both verbal and non-verbal. Utterances in the Bakhtinian sense, are always answers to something that has presided and they always consist of form, content and goal. It is the goal, or the intent, in Bakhtins wording 'the speakers will' that makes sense for an utterance. The main idea is that what a classroom observer can observe are utterances, leaving us with a problem of understanding what they mean. It requires an interpretation, and in order for the interpretation not to be random and based solely on how the observer understands the utterance, a theoretical framework within which they can be interpreted is needed. The article uses a sociocultural and ethnographic approach as part of the framework. This is inspired by the English linguist and ethnographer, Roz Ivanič, who belongs to the new literacy studies tradition. The article adopts her way of analyzing utterances, which means that when you find utterances recurring, and they thus form patterns, they can be considered as practices that are linked to classroom cultures. The second part of the theoretical framework is social science didactic theory. Interpretations of observed utterances or practices take place abductively, as a pendulum between observation (inductive perspective) and theoretical framework (deductive perspective).

2 OBSERVING AND INTERPRETING QUALITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHING[1]

The purpose of this article is to contribute to a discussion about quality for social science teaching and in continuation hereof to develop a tool for social science classroom observation and interpretation, for both direct and video-based observation.

Classroom teaching is communication. Therefore, it is crucial that an analysis of quality of social science teaching includes a focus on communicative quality. The theoretical basis of the article is therefore threefold. 1) A Bakhtin-inspired communicative approach, 2) sociocultural ethnographic classroom research and 3) social science didactics / social science teaching discourse. Discourse is not only understood as language, but as language in context, which means that it's not only communication as spoken words, utterances, but also communication as actions (doings) that can count as disciplinary work.

Teaching quality is not an easy concept to work with, because it implies many normative connotations. Nevertheless, it is still the aspiration of the Nordic research group QUISST (Quality in Social Science Teaching), which is part of a center for Quality in Nordic Teaching (QUINT), from which this article originates, to try to conduct descriptive analyses. For this to be possible, the normative element must be well-defined and delimited in advance, whereby it can be included in the analysis as an object.

According to an article on quality in teaching frequently quoted within QUINT by Fenstermacher & Richardson (2005) quality teaching consists of at least two aspects:

impact on student learning, and teacher competence in the representation of the academic content, and they distinguish between successful teaching and good teaching. Successful teaching occurs when students learn what is taught. But if what is taught is incorrect or unethical, we cannot call it good teaching. Nor can we call teaching 'good' when what is taught is correct and ethically sound, but students learn nothing from it. Likewise, teaching can be intentionally good but realized unsuccessful. Fenstermacher & Richardson draw on the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle's (1949) distinction between task and achievement to clarify the concept of quality. Here, the concept of the task is used to indicate whether an academic subject is competently represented through teaching practices. This comprises both specific knowledge, skills and normative intentions. Achievement refers to the student learning element. Fenstermacher & Richardson suggest the term good teaching for when a subject is taught competently (task quality), and successful teaching for when the students learn from it (learning quality). However, as I will argue, both good and successful teaching are the results of teaching communication, and therefore communicative quality must be the basic concept of teaching quality.

3. A BAKHTIN-INSPIRED COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Teaching is communication, but certainly not accidental and unstructured communication although such communication exist and mixes with targeted subject specific communication and communication around classroom management and pedagogical matters What we are after here, is the part of the communication that is targeted and structured by the subject discourse, which is about why a specific subject should be taught (goal / intended function), what should be taught (content) and how to teach (form). Therefore, a significant aspect of teaching quality is how appropriate classroom communication construct the coherence between form, content, and goal (intended function). In practice, we must realize that classroom communication is exposed to many internal and external and often not subject relevant impulses and therefore potentially unfolds in many directions. The classroom observer therefore needs tools and skills to analytically keep the different communications separate, otherwise interpretations of subject quality will be random and without firm grounding. The teacher's and students' structuring of the classroom subject-targeted communication is an indisputable focal point of teaching quality, and the subject discourse is an indispensable mediating tool for this.

Communication is the exchange of utterances. Bakhtin criticizes classical linguistic theory of languagefor focusing only on the sender in this exchange, and thus the recipient becomes a passive participant.

"Language is regarded from the speaker's standpoint as if there were only one speaker who does not have any necessary relation to other participants in speech communication. If the role of the other is taken into account at all, it is the role of a listener, who understands the speaker only passively." (Bakhtin 1987 p. 67).

Bakhtin sees the sender, and not only the receiver, in a communication as receptive. Any utterance is an answer or a reaction to something that preceded.

“Moreover, any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater og lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances – his own and others’ – with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (builds on them, polemicizes with them, or simply presumes that they are already known to the listener). Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances.” (Bakhtin 1987 p. 69)

This means that when we study teaching as communication, we need to focus on utterances, and we need to interpret them as responses or reactions to something, and it is important to try to understand what 'this something' is, and whether it is temporally and contextually directly related to the teaching situation, or whether it is located outside it.

Bakhtin further says that an utterance in its entirety has a form, content and a goal or intended function

> “… the wholeness of the utterance, guaranteeing the possibility of a response (or of responsive understanding), is determined by three aspects (or factors) that are inseparably linked on the organic whole of the utterance: 1. semantic exhaustiveness of the theme; 2. the speaker’s plan or speech will; 3. typical compositional and generic forms of finalization” (Bakhtin pp 76-77).

It means that when teachers plan and conduct their lessons, they connect form, content, and goal (intended function). But often an utterance is not unambiguously. The speakers ‘will’ is unclear, it contains traces of multiple goals or different voices, which disturbs the clarity or the coherence of form, content and goal. If for instance, a student wants to say something wise and at the same time wants to impress his og her peers, the resulting utterance will contain various and sometimes contradictory elements. Another example is an observation of a teacher who holds a monologue about how important it is for the students in a democratic school to be active participants in the class discussion. We can assume that there are several bits of utterances mixed together here. One is presumably about the importance of participation in democratic processes, another may be the teacher's response to (continuing) a prevailing teaching tradition, a third may be the teacher's concern that a classroom discussion will become academically unfocused, etc. All the interpretations seek to answer the question about what the teacher's utterance is an answer to, and they can all be true. It is therefore necessary to analyze utterances carefully, and not just take them for their face value.

In line with another linguist, James Paul Gee (2009), we extent communication or chain of utterances, which he denotes discourse, to include actions (or doings) that can be considered non-verbal communication. Gee denotes discourses that includes both words and actions with a capital D (Discourses). Students raising their hands in a classroom tells

wordless that they have something to say. Therefore, it is considered an utterance. It has a form (hand-raising), a content (I have relevant knowledge to share) and a goal or function (student participation). In a different context, for example on the football field, it means a different thing, hand-raising (form) can for example mean I am injured (content), stop the game (goal or function). In this broad understanding Discourse include ways of acting that are recognized in the context as appropriate ways to express oneself. In a social science teaching context it makes sense and it is a meaningful communication to make statistical calculations, to conduct inquiries, to establish and test hypothesis, to use sources and source criticism, to follow deliberative norms of debate, to write in specific genres, to use specific types of concepts (classifying or metaphorical) (Shanahan & Shanahan 2012) and to communicate by a wide range of other actions (doings) that mark the subject's ways of doing (Carter 2007). Even a perfectly worded utterance can be meaningless or absurd if it is out of context, for instance, if a student uses an intimate family dinner discourse in a social science lesson or vice versa.

If we accept the premise that to convey a subject is about using the accepted terminology and accepted doings, then quality subject teaching is about communicating by use of the subject Discourse. The question therefore is, when is a student's or a teacher's utterance considered relevant in a social science classroom, and when is it considered irrelevant? The simple answer is that the utterance must fall within the subject's Discourse to be taken seriously, but what does it take for it to be recognized as such? The Discourse may be considered an internal construct, or internal underlying communicative structure, of the subject. In research it may be approached in various ways, for instance by analyzing utterances related to the formal social science curriculum, or the subject's teaching traditions. However, here the focus is a more technical one, namely on how social science classroom utterances connect form, content, and the goal (intended function). This focus assumes that specific (accepted within the subject) composites of form, content, and goal (function) constitutes the core of a subject's Discourse. Form comprises the ways of doings and sayings that are the acknowledged in the subject culture, content comprises the central themes and substances recognized as the important ones, and the goal (intended function) comprises the recognized intention of the subject.

An illustrative example is about reasoning. Social science Discourse is not (only) about being able to establish true arguments, it is also (and perhaps especially) about being able to establish useful and meaningful arguments for decision-making, in both controversial and uncontroversial situations, that is, practical or strategic arguments, and also ethically sound arguments. It is also about being able to use an argument in deliberation, where you listen to and respect your opponent's argument, to reach a joint decision. If we are to identify a general difference between social science Discourse and mathematical Discourse in form of reasoning it is that in mathematics the core of an argument is logic, whereas in social science there is an element of negotiation about which argument is most appropriate. Regarding goal and function, a key difference between language arts (LA) and social science is that ultimately, social science aims for strategic and democratic

decision-making, and LA ultimately aims to use language and understand cultural forms. The differences to these two other subjects are of course hard drawn, to clarify the point. The differences have a profound influence on what is recognized as valid utterances in the subjects.

Utterances always have a form, content and a goal or intended function (Bakhtin 1987, 76ff), and when teachers plan and conduct their lessons, they connect form, content, and goal (intended function) in ways that are acknowledged by their respective subjects, whether they are aware of it or not. And this is exactly where we will be able to observe and judge communicative quality of social science teaching.

4. SOCIOCULTURAL ETHNOGRAPHIC FRAMING OF OBSERVATIONS

Anyone who has observed teaching will be familiar with the sense of confusion about what precisely to observe, as the lesson begins. The first thing that may happen may be that a plan handed out by the teacher in advance is discarded, because something unexpected comes up, and when the teacher resumes the planned teaching, so many things happen simultaneously that it may be difficult to maintain observational focus. If the observer is not well-prepared, his or her attention may easily wander from one focus to another without really grasping anything of importance, let alone understanding the depth of what is happening. To obtain useful data, it is crucial to base observations on a predefined focus, and for observation techniques to be established (see for instance Hopkins 2008), in addition to having prior insight into the purpose and structure of what is happening. Within QUINT a lot of studies uses an observation manual, the PLATO manual (2021), to focus observations.

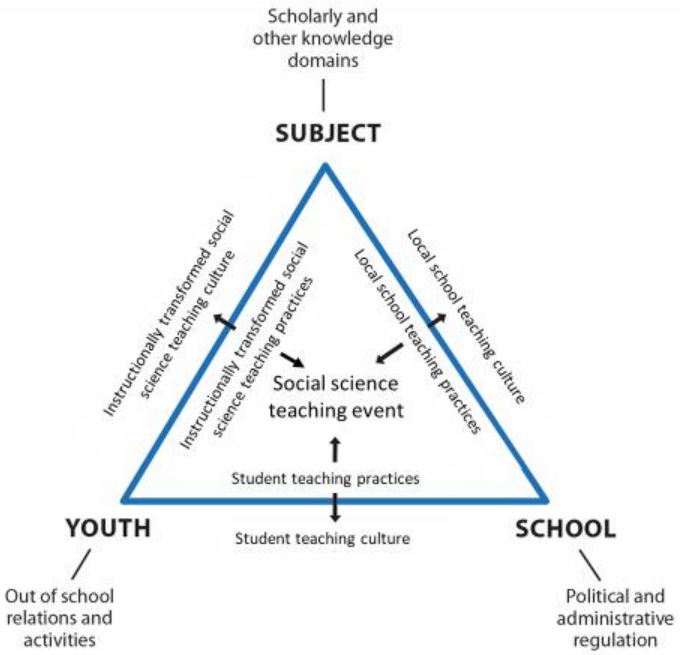
The overarching goal or intended function (the plan or speech will) of social science as a subject is to help to form a democratic citizen. This means that teaching must extend beyond the narrow classroom and connect with the surrounding community locally, nationally, and globally. In social science, this goal may be narrowed to political and economic Bildung (see below). But ofcourse, we cannot observe Bildung as such. What we may observe are actions (utterances) during teaching events and the contexts of teaching events (Ivanič 1998 p. 64), and we may consider how these are structured. A teaching event is here defined as a coherent sequence of teaching consisting of several utterances and practices. The question is, are the form and content of a teaching event connected in ways that fulfil the subject's goal (intended function) (Krogh & Jacobsen 2019)? But, as noted above, an utterance can be ambiguous, and you may therefore have to look for the subject aspect of the utterance. Thus, high quality may be understood as a question of whether the content and form of teaching practices directly or indirectly contribute to the goal (intended function). Content encompasses knowledge, skills, and values to be addressed; form comprises ways and modes of addressing knowledge, skills, and values in the classroom. 'Ways' are observed as social actions in the classroom; 'modes' are observed in the use of artefacts, both intellectual (concepts, knowledge forms) and physical (textbooks,

technology, classroom architecture etc).

In her ethnographic research, Roz Ivanič focuses on literacy events, which take texts as their focal points (written, oral, graphic representations, videos, etc.). She refers to Fairclough (2010), who suggests that texts and discourses should be analyzed in the context of the values and power relations that they express. Ivanič analyses interactions in the classroom as practices embedded in these contextual discourses. Practices are understood as recurrent patterns of actions (utterances). I suggest adopting Ivanič's observational and analytical strategies, except that we replace literacy events with social science teaching events, which of course also means a shift in the context for the events.

In a longitudinal study of writing practices at Danish lower- and upper-secondary schools (Krogh & Jacobsen (eds.) (2019) we drew on Ivanič's work to develop a school-writing model for analyzing writing events, which proved to be a powerful frame for focusing classroom observation. Although this article focuses on the subject, we also need to recognize that the teaching of subjects takes place in a wider context, which here in particular consists in the fact that it takes place in schools which are political and administrative regulated and have developed their own internal culture (that's how we do things here), and it is directed at young people (adolescents), who are not only students, but also influenced by their lifeworld (family, friends) and activities (sports, use of social media) outside school. Therefore, subject culture (or subject Discourse) is not simply transferred into the classroom; it is modified by the other cultures (or Discourses) as indicated in Figure 1 below. In the center of the framing triangle of the model we have the social science teaching events, and the frame illustrates the cultures (or Discourses) that are particularly influential.

Figure 1: The social science teaching model (see Christensen, T. S. et al. 2014 p. 43)[2]



Teachers represent their version of the subject culture, which here (with a very long term) is called instructionally transformed social science teaching culture. That is, their way of working with the subject in relation to the group of students they have. Teachers also represent the school culture, which is described as local, because there are both general and school-specific (local) norms for how the teaching is to be organized. Finally, there is the student culture, which is an expression of how students act in the classroom. These cultures are present in the teaching utterances, and if they are recurring and thus form a pattern, they are called practices. But since teaching events are always the result of an interplay of these culturally conditioned practices (utterances), they will be dynamic and thus also in the long run ultimately change the cultures (illustrated by doble arrows in Figure 1). In this way, for example, an element from the student culture can affect both the subject culture and the school culture, even if it may only be a modest influence.

5. SOCIAL SCIENCE SUBJECT DIDACTIC THEORY

This section is about the norms and standards of social science teaching and steps towards operationalize them, i.e., the 'why-question or to use a Bakhtin-reference the plan or speech will of utterances in social science teaching, which in this article frequently is named the goal (intended function).

The overarching goal of social science teaching will not be explored in detail here. We must content ourselves with ascertaining that throughout many Western countries, we find similar formulations regarding the formation or development (Bildung) of the democratic citizen as a principal goal of both primary and secondary education, and social science's contribution being political and economic Bildung. That goal encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to the social sphere, knowledge of decision-making in society, critical thinking about society and ability to act socially, politically and economically in society (participation) based on democracy (Westheimer & Kahne 2004, Crick et al. 1998, Banks 2008, Detjen 2002, Bernmark-Ottosson 2005, Pantzar 2008, Halinen 2018: 81, Hansen 2021, Christensen, T S, 2011a, Christensen, A S, 2017, Mathé & Elstad 2020, Solhaug & Børhaug 2012, Tønnessen & Tønnessen 2007, Sandahl 2015, Wicke 2019, Gudjonsson et al. 2016, Edelstein 2010, Icelandic national curriculum 2014:200ff)[3].

There are differences in perceptions of what political Bildung means in practice, and whether the aim of student participation in society should be transformative (change society), or if the goal is to empower students to participate in the existing society. That question is self-evident in connection with topics such as climate change, social justice, and other major societal challenges, because challenges of that caliber invite to work for change, but also call for cooperation and unity. The democratic and politically educated citizen must be knowledgeable and able to make independent and democratically justifiable decisions concerning complex and often contradictory issues. Not all decisions and actions are acceptable just because they are knowledge-based, competent, legal, or

economically advantageous. In that sense, they would not be 'good' (cf. above on Fenstermacher & Richardson)

Decisions are rarely, if ever, unproblematic from a democratic standpoint. There will always be a balancing of the pros and cons, which may sometimes be quite problematic. An example is the relationship between health and employment during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which is taking place as this is being written. If the fundamental values we wish to support are the health and well-being (welfare) of all citizens, how is that to be achieved? Ethical judgements and decisions are not black or white: they need to be realistic and balanced, and they should always be open to criticism, in other words, provisional. That is an ambitious overarching goal, but it is ultimately the goal of social science as a school subject. All forms of activity (lectures, classroom discussions, reading texts, writing assignments, seeking information, working with statistics, undertaking group-work or projects, conducting investigations, student presenting) and all content related areas (news, political attitudes, social conditions, economic development, or concepts and theories taught) must directly or indirectly work to this end. We may say that the norms and standards of social science (the 'why') determine that the content (the 'what') and form (the 'how') of teaching contribute to the overarching goal of shaping democratic citizens.

5.1 Steps towards operationalizing the overarching teaching goal

To be able to interpret the quality of observed utterances/practices in social science teaching it is necessary to operationalize the goal (intended function) or at least to take some steps towards a concretization thereof. There are several ways to approach this, for example, by formulating typologies for citizens' involvement in society (Westheimer & Kahne 2004, Detjen 2002, Detjen et al. 2004, Amnå & Ekman 2013, Ekman 2013, Banks 2008), and let these types be the goal of the teaching, for instance, the goal of developing active and knowledgeable citizens. Westheimer & Kahne list three types of the good citizen, which they deduce from an empirical study in American classrooms: the personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented. They argue that only the last two can be seen as real democratic goals for the teaching of social science in democratic countries. The first is more general and will also apply to teaching in non-democratic countries. Here, however, we apply a four-layer model based on Danish historical data (Christensen 2011a and 2011b), which provide a framework for understanding the basic goals of civic education. Each layer represents a historical ideal type of citizen, and the sequence presents the changes in the ideal types from the early nation-building of the nineteenth century, through the development of modern society and democracy in the twentieth century, to globalization in contemporary late-modern society. The changes in ideal type make it clear that although we may assume that the overarching goal of social science teaching is relatively stable, it has, in fact, developed over time. The four stages of citizenship, which are to be understood as cumulative developed types.

The loyalist, whose actions are determined by loyalty to the nation–state, which holds the germ of modern democracy.

During the nation-building era, in the nineteenth century, civic education was intended to develop national identity – one might say, the sense of belonging to 'the people' (demos). As Korsgaard (2005) has pointed out, there are two aspects to the term 'people': a cultural aspect connected with the idea of the nation, and a political aspect connected with idea of the state. In the significant tradition of Danish folk high schools, the ideas of the independent citizen and of the nation merged, and democracy began to be built from the bottom up (Skrubbeltrang 1949, Mouritzen & Olsen 2013). Many scholars have argued (Solhaug 2013, Lödén 2014) that citizens' trust and support are essentially what hold nation and state together.

The informed voter, the information-seeking supporter of the representative system.

With Denmark's parliamentary development in 1901, and the gradual extension of the franchise to more groups in society, political parties and elections grew in importance, and so did the need for an informed voter. In his important dissertation, Harry Haue (2003) cites the prevailing view held in the first decade of the twentieth century, that special attention had to be paid to developing the Danish state's 'constitution and governance' through history as a school subject. This led to the establishment of social science as an independent part of the history subject by government decree in 1906. The idea was to include legislative and constitutional questions, and political and economic development in the school curriculum (Haue, 2003, 261). Previously, civic education had formed a less systematized part of other school subjects, primarily history and geography, as demonstrated by Lorentzen (1986) in the somewhat parallel Norwegian case.

The participant, involved in democratic activities in political, economic, and social contexts.

Two significant, converging influences put the participating citizen on the agenda: one from politics and one from political science. The need for active citizens became vital during the fascist era of the 1930s and 1940s, when states failed to defend democracy, and thus citizens' trust in the state as the protector of democracy was undermined. According to Hal Koch, a leading figure in the Danish resistance during the German occupation, and a highly respected philosopher of democracy, the official Danish political line that there should be no engagement with politics during the occupation was a serious mistake (Andersen et al. 1946). Interest in political participation also evolved significantly in the field of political science in these years and has remained strong since (van Deth 2016).

The self-governor, the independent thinker and innovator.

In the global era, with the boundaries of the nation-state partly breaking up, the individual inevitably encounters problems that are (partly) beyond the control and influence of their own nation-state. Individuals are, so to speak, left to lean on a weaker democratic infrastructure than the nation-state, if any exists. Therefore, they are left to act democratically, often, even in undemocratic contexts (Christensen, T. S. 2011a).

Implicit in the foregoing model is that changes from one ideal type to another are to be understood as due to structural changes in the conditions of democracy. However, the underlying hypothesis is that all four layers of citizenship are active simultaneously, and interact in complex ways, which makes the overarching goal of social science, complex.

6. A TOOL FOR OBSERVING AND INTERPRETING TEACHING QUALITY

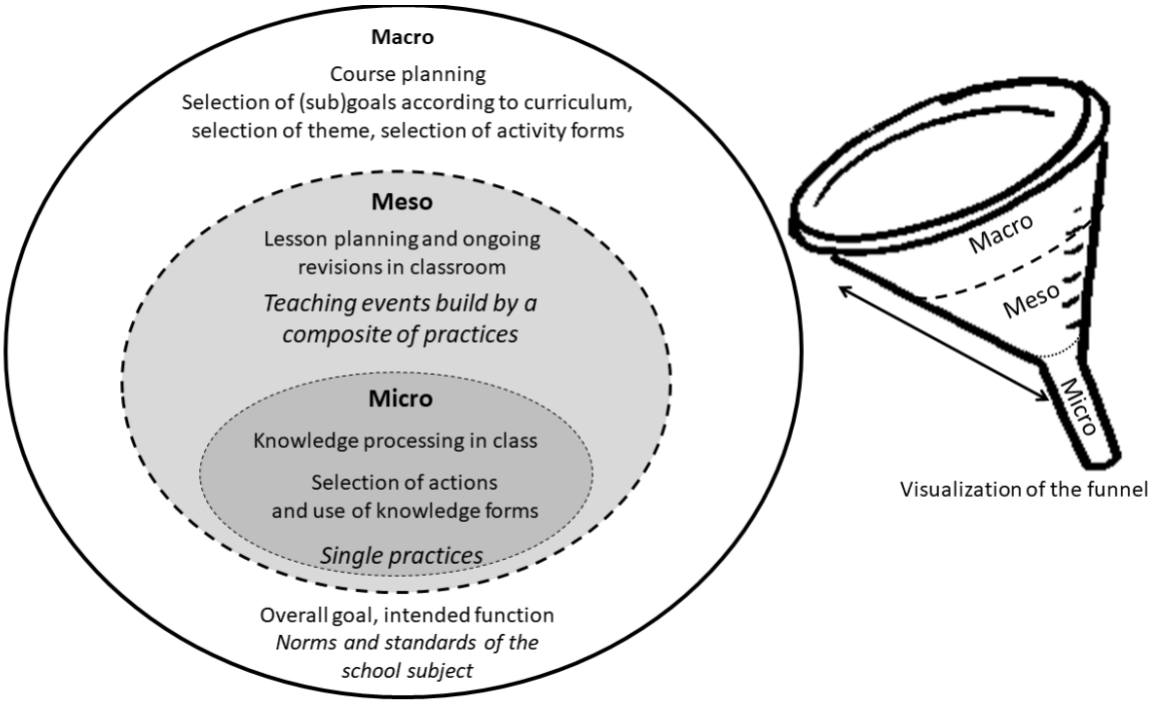
In this section we will develop a tool for observation and interpretation of quality in social science teaching. The social science teaching model presented above (Figure 1) is an overall framing which serves to ensure that the utterances and practices are seen as parts of teaching events that emerge in the interplay between subject-, student- and school culture. Although teaching events may be recognizable over time because teaching is organized more or less in the same way course after course, they are also constantly redesigned in lesson planning, in teacher presentations, in class dialogue, in writing assignments, in project work, in experiments etcetera, and thus constantly changing, even if these changes may seem small and insignificant. The question is, however, how we observe teaching events and interpret their meaning and judge their quality, whether we look at them one by one or when we look at them as they appear in whole course? For this purpose, the funnel model has been developed (Figure 2 below) as a tool for the classroom researcher.

The basic idea of the funnel model is to capture the communicative structure (the coherence between form, content, and goal (intended function)) of the teaching at micro, meso and macro levels. Quality assessment is based on whether form and content mutually support each other and make a meaningful contribution to the goal be it a sub-goal or the overall goal. At the micro level focus is on single practices, at the meso level focus is on teaching events in a lesson or part of a lesson (a composite of single practices) and finally, at the macro level focus is on an entire teaching course. Does form, content and goal (intended function) in teaching events (composite of practices) mutually support each other or not? And, at the macro level, does form, content and goal (intended function) in a whole course mutually support each other or not? And finally, is the course in accordance with the overall goal (intended function) of curriculum. Looking for quality in this way is looking for cohesion between form, content and goal (intended function) at all levels. And this is the core of the tool suggested for observation and interpretation of quality in social science teaching, and possibly for all teaching.

Form is about ways the teaching is conducted, content is about the about the theme

being taught, and goal (intended function) is about the reasons why a particular content is taught, and why particular forms are used. It is therefore clear that the logical starting point for planning and conducting teaching must be the why question – the norms and standards of the school subject. It is the answer to that question that can guide teacher and students to relevant themes (content) and appropriate ways (forms), and therefore also the key for the researcher to interpret the meaning of practices and teaching events. But what the observer sees in class is utterances and practices, and to interpret the social science quality of them is therefore an abductive process, or you could say a constant alternation between an inductive perspective (the observation) and a deductive perspective (the social science teaching goals and subgoals). It is possible to focus on single practices at the micro level (for instance a teacher writing on the blackboard, a student raising the hand, students writing notes etc.), it is also possible to focus on composites of practices (teaching events), the meso level, and finally it is possible to focus on the teaching course in its entirety, the macro level, and abductively analyze the coherence between them.

Figure 2. The funnel: model for observing and interpreting teaching events in academic subjects - focus on the task quality of social science



In the model at the micro level mentions knowledge processing in class. We return to this in section 7.1 below. But first we will analyze a teaching event from a QUISST video.

6.1 A sequence one from a Danish social science lesson in grade nine

Below is a short teaching event from a social science lesson in a Danish nine-grade analyzed. Focus is primarily on the micro level. The transcribed excerpt of the class discussion below, is from two synchronous video recordings. One camera pointing at the teacher and one camera pointing at the students as shown at the pictures below.

Figure 3. Two camera positions – QUINT-LISA video data.

The decor of the classroom in the teaching event analyzed differs, however, from the standard decor of the classroom shown in the picture as the students are placed in a semicircle (horseshoe) so they have eye contact with each other and the teacher who moves in the center of the circle.

Teacher: We earn more today - and do you remember this subject-term - when a Mars bar [Caramel bar] or a Snickers used to cost four kroner. What is the subject-term for this development?

Student: Currency

T: Hmm, it's money of a kind – currency

S: Consumption ratio?

T: Consumption what?

S: The ratio

T: The consumption ratio, I'm not sure it’s a word I know. Hmm…

S: That word – inflammation?

T: Hmm … almost - inflation! Inflation is thus that the price rises, and wages rise in such a curve [draws a graph in the air with his finger]. It will likely increase around 2% - I think I heard once. Can you think of any examples where inflation has been too severe? Do you know any examples?

S: Venezuela – hyperinflation

T: Well, that was not what I had in mind, but a super example. Is there anyone who can guess - uh, come up with another example?

S: Germany after World War One

T: Yeah, exactly, that's what I had in mind. I was thinking of the historical example

where Germany after World War one where their economy went bankrupt. But Venezuela is a great example.

(Excerpt from transcription of a Danish QUINT LISA Nordic-video - dks03sa12 seg 2, Sep 2019)

The excerpt shows an IRE practice (micro level) of the class dialogue (Teacher Initiative, Student Response and Teacher Evaluation) (Cazden 200 pp 30ff.), which can be understood as a practice expressing the school culture and or instructional transformed social science teaching culture. The teacher tries to get the students to come up with the 'correct' answer, the students respond, and the teacher evaluates the answers. Signs of the instructional transformed subject culture also shows in the teacher's practice of using subject concepts, which he tries to make understandable to the students. Signs of the student culture shows in students' behavioral practices (visible at the video). Most are reluctant to participate. We do not know why, but one gets the impression that they have not prepared the lesson, or perhaps that they do not want to show their lack of understanding. Only a few of the students bid with answers to the teacher's questions. The majority look in the text, remain silent and do not try to attract the teacher's attention by raising hands or otherwise. No overall goal is stated for the lesson. The lesson is about economics and based on our observation of the exchange of words, we can infer that the sub-goal (at the meso level) is to make students acquainted with basic economic relations and concepts. This sub-goal can be understood as a contribution to an overall goal of enabling students to understand and participate in the political debate in society (macro level).

We can ask the following questions to judge the quality of this sequence: Is the IRE structure an appropriate form to promote students' understanding of content? Is this combination of form (IRE-structure and few student participants) and content (economic relations and concepts) suited to promote an overall goal of enabling students to understand and participate in the political debate in society?

Ofcourse, we must consider that the excerpt only represents a small sequence of the lesson. But within this small sequence we can observe what can be interpreted as a mismatch between the form and content. The observed form (IRE) and the practice of few students participating do not seem to support the goal of enabling students to understand and participate in the political debate in society. Only a few students participate in the IRE-practice, those who do participate are trying to guess what answer the teacher wants (also a possibly practice) instead of giving elaborate answers (a practice that would support the goal). It seems like they mostly provide answers that they remember from the textbook (a practice). However, there is one student answer (the mentioning of Venezuela) that is outside what the teacher expects, and which shows a potential for an actual dialogue with the student (a possible change of practice). The teacher also explicitly acknowledges this, but he quickly moves on to his own prepared content of Germany after World War One (sticking to what is planed could be a teacher practice). Also, the students' efforts to suggest relevant economic terms could invite the teacher to engage in a dialogue (change of practice) with students. But the teacher does not follow up on this invitation.

In terms of quality, we can interpret the bits of communication we have access to in the excerpt as an instance of mismatch between form (IRE-sequences) and the content (concept learning), because only a few students participate, which further leads to a mismatch in relation to an assumed sub-goal of understanding economic development in society. The form seems to have potentials for the active students learning of content in the instances, where they are inviting the teacher to go beyond what is planned. Actually, an invitation to change practice into a more dialogically form, which the teacher doesn't follow up on, though. What we cannot see is why the teacher is not exploiting this potential. One possibility is that he is afraid of losing the many silent students.

Below we will elaborate on what we can understand by the overall goal / the intended function in social science teaching.

7. SINGLE TEACHING PRACTICES – MICRO-LEVEL OF THE FUNNEL

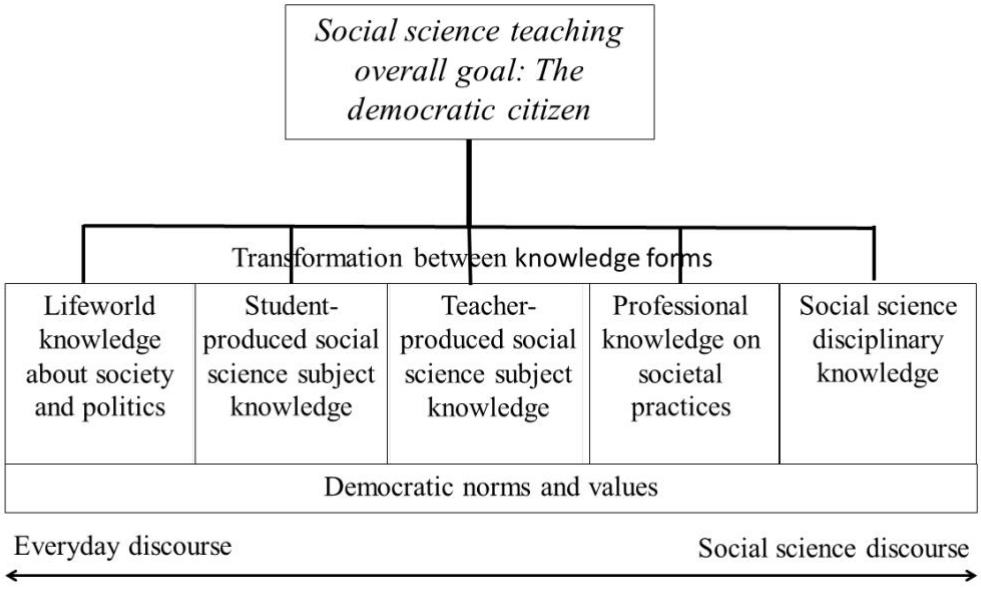
At the micro level of the funnel model, we observe utterances as potential practices. It is the level for the *doings* and *sayings* and thus for *knowledge processing* in the classroom.

7.1 Form as discursive knowledge processing

In a very thorough review of curriculum theory, Deng and Luke (2008) argue that the most fundamental curriculum question is 'what counts as knowledge?'. This gives rise to the question of which knowledge forms count in social science teaching, and how they count? The concept of social science knowledge forms has in particular been developed by Tilman Grammes (1998, 2009, see also Långström and Virta 2011) and a model developed by Christensen and Christensen (2015, 45ff). As Deng and Luke suggest, knowledge is not just any knowledge: it must be knowledge recognized as valid knowledge within a community of Discourse, in this case, a social science Discourse community. Knowledge about society may be presented as scientific knowledge, which requires the use of scientific concepts and discourse such as logic-based reasoning, calculations, statistical significance, and specific genres. Utterances in this form of language will be recognized as valid by the community, if they also meet the requirements for truth seeking, transparency, controllability and for peer review. In the model below (Figure 4) this is termed *social science disciplinary knowledge*. In contrast, we have utterances presented as *lifeworld knowledge about society and politics,* which we also find in a social science classroom especially from the students. This discourse uses everyday language, the reasoning is not necessarily logical, and it is characterized by everyday concepts. It may take the form of 'plain talk', perhaps even gossip, but sometimes it may include the sharing of valuable personal and collective experiences. Student engagement – an important element of social science as a subject (Christensen, A. S. 2017, Børhaug & Langø 2020) – is probably to a high degree rooted in lifeworld knowledge. Between these two extremes, we have intermediate forms, such as news that may be characterized as *professional knowledge*, depending on the publisher, and how tightly edited and checked

it is. It may also be argued that investment decisions and political decisions must necessarily be based on such professional knowledge combined with scientific knowledge. In the model below, this is termed *professional knowledge of social practices*. This is very valuable, and probably the most used form of knowledge for government and corporate decisions in society. It is probably also the knowledge form that most frequently occurs in social science teaching. The process of teaching involves two more forms of knowledge, *student-produced social science knowledge* and *teacher-produced social-science knowledge*. These knowledge forms all exist in society, although the last two forms of knowledge can be described as didactic, as they belong to teaching processes and the school context.

Figure 4. Knowledge forms in social science teaching



The ability to work with knowledge forms, combine them and transform knowledge from one form to another is a fundamental skill and a thinking tool that a competent democratic citizen should possess (a goal for social science teaching), especially in connection with the normative knowledge form: the democratic norms and values that are explicit in the overarching goal of the social science subject, and which should be implicitly present in the students' use of the different forms of knowledge – as a basic premise.

We find a similar way of understanding the processes of transformation between knowledge forms in the conceptual change theory (Vosniadou 2013, Davies 2019) which understand the learning process as a movement from everyday understanding to scientific understanding of the world by exceeding thresholds, where a scientific understanding of concepts replaces an everyday understanding. This process is slow, and the idea is that the learning processes are strengthened when the learner stays on the threshold for a long time and thus opens the gaze to a more complex understanding of a phenomenon that a scientific concept give.

Verbal utterances are necessarily made in one or a mix of knowledge forms and many activities take place using language linked to one or a mix of knowledge forms, for instance statistical calculations. When a particular knowledge form or particular ways of transforming between knowledge forms are used in utterances again and again, we will also refer to them as practices. Ability to understand the concept of knowledge form and the ability to transform knowledge from one form into another, can be interpreted as a subgoal contributing to the formation of the democratic citizen. An observational study from a ninth-grade class in social science teaching provides a good example of how an utterance can lead the observer on the trail of a specific form of knowledge. A student exclaims, after searching the internet sites and reading articles about EU, which she discussed with a peer: “We found all sorts of things and it made no sense” (Christensen et al. 2021). The interpretation is, that she was able to read the articles. She knew the words, but she lacked a conceptual understanding of EU, and therefore the texts she read made no sense to her. She read the articles using everyday language and everyday concepts (lifeworld knowledge about society and politics), and she did not have the tools to transform her understanding into a social science disciplinary knowledge.

7.2 Analysis of sequence two from a social science lesson in grade nine

If we look at the continuation of the teaching event analyzed above, we can add that the teacher, when asking the students about economic concepts, only draws upon social science disciplinary knowledge. He is not inviting the students to share their lifeworld knowledge, but he is apparently disturbed in his train of thought when a student mentions Venezuela, which he acknowledges as a good example, but otherwise does not follow up on. This might have been an opportunity to incorporate other knowledge forms and to establish transformations between them. But as we can see in the continuation below, this does not happen. Instead, the teacher continues with more scientific economic concepts, boom and recession (social science disciplinary knowledge forms). Students come up with other concepts, such as growth, devaluation, unemployment benefits. The teacher takes up these concepts but tend to remain in a social science knowledge form, and partly in a professional knowledge on societal practices, when he takes up a student's suggestion of 'building a bridge'. But we can see that in connection with the concept of devaluation, he actually tries to illustrate it in a lifeworld knowledge form. It can therefore be concluded that he to some extent tries to establish transformations between forms of knowledge.

T: What does ‘boom’ mean? And there I would like more… I hope you prepared it [at home]. It is fairly easy to define using the text, if you prepared it. It is actually explained. What does the financial boom mean?

[Pause – a few students raise their hands, but the teacher apparently is waiting for more students to raise their hand and he repeat]: What does ‘boom’ mean? … Pause… You can just whisper with your neighbor… if you have a bid. [Students talk to each other]

T: Okay. We try again and I ask, what does ‘boom’ mean?

S: Unemployment is low and the economic…

T: The economic what?

S: Growth

T: So, unemployment was low, you said, and there is high growth in society. So, this is where you can say that things are going well or that there is momentum - there is steam on the boilers. And what does recession mean then? Perhaps it is self-evident.

S: It's like that, where there is an economic crisis, there are many unemployed.

T: Yes, and that makes me curious. It's not really something I have asked about, but what is it one can do if there is a recession in a society? Then there is such a… I do not know if you can remember the subject-concept, but there is such a classic solution, it can be said almost in one sentence, what can you do? … Is it a hand?

S: Devaluate

T: Devaluate. We do not do that anymore. One can devaluate the value of the krone. We do not do that anymore. The value of the Danish krone is locked to D-Mark, which is now part of the EURO, so the Danish krone is always worth 7.4 EURO. … Conversely… a EURO costs 7.4 kroner, but otherwise, it is really historically possible to devaluate the krone - in principle? But what can one do if there is a recession - that there is lacking jobs? Jacob has nothing to do, which means that he does not really buy anything in Thomas' mother - in the shop, Camilla …

S: Unemployment benefits

T. What. Then you get unemployment benefits, that's right… But it does not get the economy going, it just ensures that Jacob does not go on the ass [slang for ‘go bankrupt’) But if we are to get the economy going, then there is an example…

S: Build a bridge

T: Build a bridge! Let’s look at an example. The Little Belt Bridge is an example of the fact that if you want to get the economy going in a society, the public sector starts something, such as building a bridge. Reach. And there… do anyone remember what it's called, that subject-term. So, build a bridge, what is it you do when you do that kind of…… do you have a bid?

S: … Makes his own solution

T: Hm…, yes. And that's what a state does. Goes in and kind of solves the problem. It's called expansive economic policy, if the state goes out and burns money off, to get the wheels moving, so that Jacob has something to do, so that he will have some money he can earn and spend and so on.

(Excerpt from transcription of a Danish QUINT LISA Nordic-video - dks03sa12 seg 2, Sep 2019)

8. TEACHING EVENTS (COMPOSITE OF PRACTICES) – MESO-LEVEL

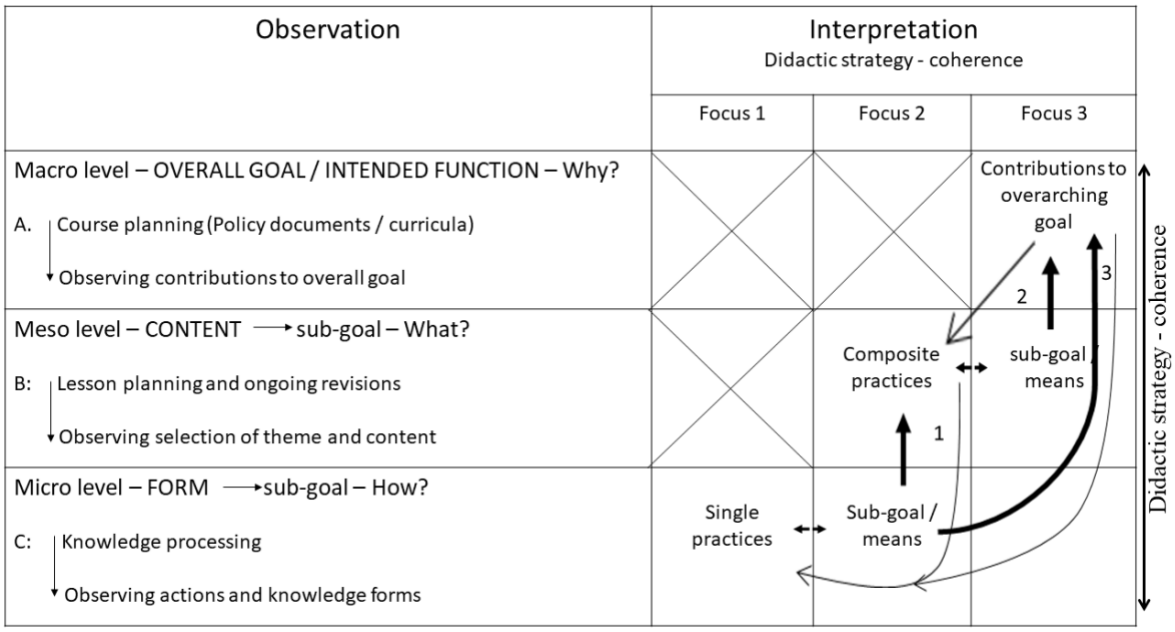
At the meso level of the funnel model, we may observe teaching events in relation to the lesson plan and its ongoing revisions in the classroom. The (sub)goals at this level have two functions: partly, they are important goals in themselves, and partly they function as means or contributions to the overall goal. Teaching events will probably tend to be directly aimed at developing knowledge and skills at the sub-goal level (meso-level) than at the overarching-goal level (macro-level). Teaching events may address how to seek information, how to read texts concerning society, how to express complex social, political, and economic matters orally and in writing, how to think critically about sources, how to use writing genres for specific purposes, how to work with statistics and scientific concepts, how to understand modelling and use theory. They may address how to manage one's finances, and how to understand the national economy. And they may address political decisions, international cooperation, social conditions and one's rights and duties to society. All these may be considered composite practices, as they are composed of several single practices. Knowledge and skills taught through such teaching events are important in themselves but are also sub-goals/means that shape the democratic citizen, who can then defend qualified positions and decisions concerning what is happening in society. There is also an important ethical dimension, here, which requires the individual citizen's value-based (democratic) judgement as the basis for their decisions and actions.

9. CONNECTING OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS – AN ABDUCTIVE PROCESS

An aim of this article is to develop a tool to help judging quality in social science teaching. The tool suggested is the Funnel-model (Figure 2). What Figure 4 (The Observation-Interpretation Model) add to the Funnel Model is primarily an emphasis on the fact that both observation and interpretation take place in qualitative classroom studies, and that it is very important analytically to separate them. The observation part focuses on which single practices and composite practices (teaching events) the communication in a concrete social science classroom (the micro and meso levels) consists of and how they are connected.

The interpretive part consists of an assessment of the extent to which these practices contribute to the subject's overall goal (the macro level). In addition, a careful description of single and composite practices provides an insight into the internal communicative structure of the observed discourse, which makes it possible to identify inappropriate connections between form, content, and sub-goals and overall goals.

Figure 5. The Observation-Interpretation Model – an abductive process



The Observation-Interpretation Model shows that form, content, and goal are connected in complex ways. Use of the model involves a reciprocal process between observation and interpretation, which starts with, and is continuously anchored in observation. Alternation between observation (inductive perspective) and social science goal and sub-goals (deductive perspective).

10. CONCLUSION

This article argues that observation should initially focus on teaching events, cf. the social science teaching model (Figure 1) and establish a framework for understanding the impact of the underlying cultures (subject culture, student culture, school culture). Next, focus should be on identifying the didactic strategy, understood as coherence among form, content and the overarching goal, as illustrated by the funnel model (Figure 2). Here, quality is understood in terms of the extent to which teaching events contribute to the overarching goal and the extent to which single practices contribute meaningfully to the teaching events (composite of practices): that is, the extent to which the content and forms selected support the overarching goal and each other. The focus is not directly on the formal curriculum, but on its transformation into planned courses (macro level), lesson planning and ongoing revisions thereof (meso level) and finally at utterances which is expressed through actions and use of knowledge forms.

It is concluded that communicative quality in social science teaching, and perhaps in teaching in general, can be observed as actions and utterances in the classroom analyzed for their coherence between form, content, and goal (intended function), which accordingly are the basic elements of the observational tool developed.

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ENDNOTES

[1] This article is written in connection with research in a Nordic research group Quality in Social Science Teaching (QUISST). QUISST is part of a NordForsk financed of Centre of Excellence for Quality in Nordic Teaching (QUINT) (https://www.uv.uio.no/quint/english/projects/lisa-nordic/). One of QUISST's key efforts is to develop a tool for both direct and video-based observation of social science teaching.
[2] Unfortunately, the English-language publication contains only a later version of the model (p. 27). However, the model is available in Danish in Christensen, T. S. et al. 2014 p. 43.
[3] The two Icelandic publications by Gudjonsson et al. 2016 and Edelstein 2010 address the role played by schools in the development of democratic citizens. They are not focused on social science subjects, or on academic subjects in any way, but the thinking related to education and democracy are consistent with the other publications referenced.

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