

Fighting against vertigo: science, ethics, politics, and poetics of Social Studies teaching

Jan Löffström, University of Turku

The demands directed to Social Studies as a school subject can be experienced as overwhelming when we read how the objectives of teaching and learning are described in the core curriculum in basic education and in the upper secondary school, at least in Finland. Further, the circumstances where Social Studies is taught today are – maybe – in some respect more challenging than before. In this paper it is explored how the demanding task of Social Studies teachers could helpfully be mapped by sorting out its dimensions so that they concern four kinds of issues: i) teaching social-scientific perspectives – *Social Science*; ii) focusing on student's moral development – *Ethics*; iii) addressing the political motivation and consequences of teaching – *Politics*; and iv) recognising the power of narrative truth in the classroom – *Poetics*.

The first connects with the questions of epistemology and disciplinary foundations of Social Studies that has been the topic of analyses for some time. The second relates to questions about how to take into consideration insights of moral psychology (social psychological study of morals) in the Social Studies classroom. This dimension has been discussed extremely rarely. The third is a topic that has been touched in research rather more often: the (oftenmost) implicit ideological or political preassumptions in Social Studies teaching. The fourth theme again is a only more recently raised and not yet so much addressed in research: the question of taking into account the role of affects and emotions in the classroom and how these can be both a support and a problem to the aims of advancing critical reasoning about societal issues.

These four question areas or perspectives will be looked into from the point of what demands are placed on teachers in the classroom and, particularly, on Social Studies Education (samhällslärens didaktik) as a field of research and teaching, so as to develop school students' and future teachers' competences and capabilities to deal with them.

Time: Monday 4.4, 14:50, room E610