Standardization in fluid contexts.
Methodological constraints in large-scale video studies of teaching quality.

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There is a growing consensus on the importance of teaching quality as a central factor for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Hattie, 2009). Accordingly, educational researchers aim to identify factors that correlate with more efficient learning, to understand how instructional factors interplay with different contextual factors, and to identify areas for professional development of teachers. In order to make cross-country comparisons and utilize powerful statistical analysis, large-scale datasets are necessary. Part from being both time consuming and expensive, large-scale data collection also requires a great deal of standardization in order to generate variables that are "clean" enough to be subjected to statistical analysis. In this presentation, we raise a set of methodological issues that relate to the standardization of large-scale video observations of teaching. They concern the fluidity of educational settings that may interfere with the ambition of standardized observation and monitoring of students' learning progress related to flexible study groups, two-teacher systems, cross-disciplinary work, sub-disciplinary work and digitally distributed learning. We discuss to what extent the fluidness of contexts such as group, lesson, subject, and material are characteristics of Nordic schools, and what it means for empirical research of teaching quality. The identified cases of mis-match are often related to ideas of professional collaboration as means for developing teaching quality. The observed practices are related to ideas about professional communities of teachers that are widespread in Nordic schools. Yet, they deviate from the points of departure in the research design when researchers try to capture data by protocols that expect one teacher-one group-one subject relationships. Thus, these observations represent methodological constraints that call for further discussion.