Facilitating communicative spaces for learning. Exploratory conversations between teachers and researchers about a connected teaching practice

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This paper focuses on a model for collaboration between teachers and a research group, focusing on joint learning about teaching qualities connected to the digitalisation of teaching at a Swedish lower secondary school. The purpose of the conversations was to shed light on transformation processes in various school subjects in a so-called 1:1 school, part of the CCN -project, where teachers were encouraged to use digital resources in their teaching. Eight focus-group discussions between researchers and teachers were conducted over four school years. As a point of departure for the discussions, the researchers had selected examples from video recordings from the participants' different classrooms in order to stimulate analytic discussions around different key aspects of teaching.

Theoretically, the arrangement was designed in relation to ideas about creating communicative spaces for learning (Kemmis et al.; Rönnerman et al., 2015) focused on possibilities and challenges in using digital technology in teaching. From this perspective, researchers and teachers were seen as equal participants although from different epistemic positions. The focus-group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed, and analyzed with the qualitative analytic software NVIVO to discern physical, semantic and social dimensions (Kemmis ibid.) of the discussions. As a next step, we used conversation analysis (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013) in order to make visible epistemic aspects of the social interaction between the researchers, the teachers and a so-called middle leader that had a double role as both a leading teacher at the school and as a project assistant in the research group.

The analysis sheds light on possibilities and constraints that this model for teacher-researcher collaboration contains. The long-term design over four years, including home-schooling during Covid-19, meant that the discussions reflected extensive changes in use of digital technologies during the period. Through our analysis we find that the conversation arrangements supported learning processes both during and between the occasions that the group met. Hence, they had a potential to bridge disruptions in continuity related to different organizational changes at the school. Another important finding concerns the central role of the middle leader, who thanks to belonging to both the teacher colleague and the research group bridge different social positions in the group. As for knowledge about digitalisation from different subject perspectives, the analysis shows that the group composition with teachers from different subjects did not favor the deepening of subject didactic aspects of the digitalisation of teaching. Instead more general and common pedagogical aspects became developed.