RECENT DISSERTATIONS

AGNETA BOSTRÖM, 2003:

Chemistry students' narratives. The nuclear submarine that went down, the road of the chocolate bar towards the garbage station and the boiler deposits that looked like a sandwich. (Licentiate's dissertation)

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Abstract

The purpose of the thesis is to study how and why chemistry teachers in the upper secondary schools in Sweden use narratives when teaching their subject. The specific questions investigated are:

- How do the chosen narratives add to the content of Chemistry?
- Why did the teachers choose the narratives they used?
- How are the classroom narratives connected to the teachers' life histories?

The theoretical framework is based on social constructivism as discussed by Cobern and Solomon but also on Bruner's understanding of narrative cognition. Narratives are regarded as part of what Shulman has discussed as teachers' PCK, pedagogical content knowledge. The content of science is discussed in terms of Roberts's knowledge emphases that answer the question "Why should we learn Science?" The perspective of Ogborn et al. where scientific explanations can be regarded as narratives or stories, is also adopted.

The data consist of interviews with six experienced teachers. The data were collected over a period of a little more than one year. The data were analysed by means of Russian formalism and narrative analysis and a categorization of the teachers' narratives was made.

The results from the individual interviews show that experienced chemistry teachers use narratives in order to help the students make sense of chemistry. They do this in different ways; it is shown that their narratives are intimately connected to their individual life stories. Their narratives embrace a number of different curriculum emphases and enrich the content of science being taught in the classroom.

The categories of narratives found are the big narrative concerning how everything is connected, narratives concerning nature, narratives concerning ourselves, narratives concerning our society, narratives concerning the atom and its parts as agents and finally narratives that concern the entire world. Further categorizations are suggested and it is shown that teachers' narratives allow more curriculum emphases to be presented in class.

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