

# **Editorial Nordidactica 2024:1**

**Anuleena Kimanen & Martin Ubani**



**Nordidactica**

**- Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education**

**2024:1**

Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education

Nordidactica 2024:1

ISSN 2000-9879

The online version of this paper can be found at: [www.kau.se/nordidactica](http://www.kau.se/nordidactica)

## Editorial Nordidactica 2024:1

Anuleena Kimanen & Martin Ubani

Welcome to the newest issue of Nordidactica, in which we launch the first quarter of 2024 with the Nordidactica mission firmly in sight: to provide a platform for scientific discussion within geography, history, social studies and religious education. It is especially illuminating to see how these four subjects share similar perspectives and theoretical approaches, yet also differ from each other in enlightening respects. We invite our readers to find inspiration from this platform, where research on these four subjects is published side by side. Which theories, findings or questions could we usefully apply across subjects?

For example, in the current issue, Pia Mikander, Harriet Zilliacus, Lili-Ann Wolff and Arto Kallioniemi analyse the discourses on non-human animals in worldview education (religious education and its secular counterpart) textbooks. Their results show that non-human animals are constructed as ‘others’ and caring for them is often based on utility. A critical approach, to consuming meat, for instance, is left out from ethical considerations. In addition to ethical and worldview topics, the representation of non-human animals could also be critically reviewed in other subjects, such as social studies and geography.

Cathrine Sjölund Åhsberg explores middle school students’ views on historical significance. Based on focus group interviews prompted by a picture selection task, Sjölund Åhsberg suggests adding ethical and affective dimensions to previous frameworks of historical significance. The students employed both national narratives and counter-narratives of silenced and alternative histories. Similar stories can probably be found also in other subjects – might it equally be of value, for example, to study what kinds of narratives religious education and geography entail, and how students relate to them?

Historical significance is very close to historical consciousness. In Jimmy Engren’s contribution, historical consciousness refers to diverse ways of interpreting history and seeing its significance for the present. He uses letters written by young people to Ilona Enqvist, a former concentration camp prisoner who in the 1990s visited Swedish schools as a living witness of the Holocaust. The research shows that meeting a survivor of genocide effectively engaged the students with moral questions, but less so with the historical dimension and context.

Encounters with real people with experiences relevant to educational goals are also under focus in Gunnfrid Ljones Øierud’s and Richard Aas’s article on teacher and faith representative perspectives on excursions to religious communities in the context of religious education. Reducing prejudice both cognitively and affectively seemed to be the key goal of these excursions, resulting in numerous adaptation requirements to the faith representatives hosting the visits so that the encounter would not be in too harsh contradiction with the secularized surroundings. Similarly to the lack of depiction of the

historical dimension and context related to the Holocaust, was there a challenge in engaging fully with the religious dimension in these visits?

The affective dimension of history and religion addressed above relates to attitudes. Kjetil Børhaug and Mona Langø examined social studies teachers' self-reported assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes, but found that attitudes or values were hardly ever mentioned. They designed an extensive categorization of knowledge, skills and attitudes in social studies education, and even identified new skills mentioned by teachers, especially reflective skills. Might open, personal reflection as a goal of instruction and a target of assessment deserve more attention also in religious education? Whereas social studies education aims at engaging students in forming opinions about civic issues without guiding them too much towards specific opinions, religious education aims at encouraging reflection on moral and perennial questions, so similar assessment practices could be used.

The practices of teachers are approached by Ådne Meling from the perspective of social studies teacher education. Based on interviews with social studies student teachers, Meling questions the dichotomy between theory and practice. The student teachers expressed a need for an instrumentalist theory to point out the relevance of content knowledge and to help them design lessons on social studies topics. Such instrumentalist theories are at the core of subject didactics, and both common and discipline-specific theories can probably be found among humanities and social science disciplines.

Finally, the research group of Malin Tväråna, Ann-Sofie Jägerskog, Mattias Björklund, Sara Carlberg, Patrik Gottfridsson, Therese Juthberg, Robert Kenndal, Bodil Kåks, Marie Losciale, Per Sahlström and Max Strandberg analysed students' discussions on visual models of society. They conclude that the key stages to proper understanding of a model are seeing it as a whole rather than as many parts, viewing the relations between the units of the model as reciprocal, understanding that the represented system is constructed and thus subject to change, and connecting external factors to the represented system. Visual models are especially prominent in social studies, but might similar didactic goals of visual literacy be beneficial also to history, geography and religious education?

We hope you enjoy the current issue and find support and new ideas for your own research!