

# Social studies teachers' reflections after participating in an experimental study on deliberative teaching

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**Keywords:** Teacher change, social studies, field experiment, deliberative teaching

- Participation in a research study does not automatically change social studies teachers' approach to teaching.
- Information about learning outcome does not changing social studies teachers' teaching.
- Teachers' personal beliefs about teaching are important for their teaching practice.
- Teachers highly value variation in social studies teaching.
- The understanding of what makes teachers change their practice needs to be developed.

**Purpose:** This article examines teachers' reflections during and after their participation in a teaching experiment focusing on how different teaching methods affect student learning in the social studies/civic education.

**Method:** In the field experiment, classes and teachers were randomly assigned to a teaching syllabus based on the theoretical ideal of deliberative teaching or a conventional syllabus that served as a control. Building on Guskey's model of teacher change (1986/2002), the participating teachers were interviewed to investigate the occurrence of possible change sequences.

**Findings:** The results showed that the teachers were not interested in changing their teaching practices due to the result of the study. While the teachers were keen to develop the material from the experiment, they preferred to do so in their own way based on their personal beliefs about what constitutes good social studies teaching.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

What makes teachers change has been a subject of debate for decades. Models of teacher professional development have been created with the aim of understanding the settings that support and promote development, as well as capturing the process by which teachers grow professionally. Studies following various projects (notably, professional development programs for mathematics teachers) have demonstrated the complexity of teacher change (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 1986; Hollingsworth, 1999). However, few studies have examined the professional development of social studies/civics teachers in order to understand the factors that may induce social studies teachers to change their teaching. This may be partly due to the lack of empirical tests of different social studies teaching models. The present article focuses on teachers' reflections upon their participation in a teaching experiment investigating the effects on students of two social studies teaching methods, deliberative teaching and conventional social studies teaching. The teachers' views on all aspects of the field experiment (the syllabus, the student exercises, the actual teaching, and the classroom experience) are analyzed from a teacher change perspective. Departing from Guskey's seminal model of teacher change (1986), teachers were interviewed to determine if and how participating in the field experiment and being informed of the associated student learning outcomes changed their way of teaching social studies. The research was guided by two key questions: how did the participating social studies teachers perceive the teaching methods, and how did the experiment's results affect the way they plan to teach social studies in the future?

The article begins with a description of the teacher change literature and an outline of the theoretical model used in the analysis. This is followed by a description of the social studies teaching experiment and its objectives. The study design, the repeated interviews with participating teachers, and the analytical framework are then explained. Finally, the results are presented and discussed.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – TEACHER CHANGE

The point of departure in the classic teacher change literature is that teachers have professional weaknesses that can be addressed by training. Change may result from professional development efforts in which teachers participate to expand their skills and knowledge. Modern approaches to teacher development are based on this idea. Teachers' professional training is a priority for many governments, creating a billion-dollar business involving national and state officials, institutes of higher education, and consultants. It is often argued, especially in countries that have done poorly in international knowledge assessments, that teacher development programs are urgently needed to improve educational outcomes (Wilson, 2013). However, a central question about all programs of teacher change is "what actually works?"

The original theory of teacher change was that teachers engaging in educational efforts, i.e. planned professional development, would develop their knowledge and attitudes, which would in turn change their classroom practice in a way that would ultimately improve students' learning. This theory was criticized in the late 1980s, mainly because researchers were able to demonstrate clear inefficiencies in education efforts (Guskey, 1986; Wood & Thompson, 1980). Specifically, multiple studies showed that teachers did not incorporate the new knowledge they acquired into their classroom praxis. The consequence of this criticism caused teacher change research to focus on teachers' lifelong professional development rather than identifying professional deficits.

Despite empirical evidence against linear models of teacher change, such models remain popular (Desimone, 2009). The most influential model is probably that of Guskey (1986), who argued that documentation of outcomes is essential in educational efforts targeting teacher change. According to Guskey, teachers need evidence of effects, for example on student learning, before adopting new teaching ideas; it is unsurprising that teachers are reluctant to change their attitudes and behaviors if researchers cannot demonstrate such results or do not even try to obtain them. Thus, according to Guskey, teachers' attitudes will only change if researchers can convincingly demonstrate that, for instance, teaching method x is better than method z. This requires transparency: teaching methods must be tested in classroom contexts, and both the tests and the methods' effects on student performance must be fully documented. Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and teaching practices will only change if they are presented with such clearly documented processes and results (Guskey, 1986).

Although Guskey's article is highly cited and major teacher change programs since the mid-1980s have focused on changing teachers' classroom practice, many programs continue to have significant deficits in terms of incorporating feedback on students' learning progress. For example, the recent large-scale national Swedish teacher change programs "the Mathematics-lift" and "the Reading-lift", which were intended to develop teachers' classroom teaching, do not include feedback on student outcomes (Österholm et al., 2016, Carlbaum et al., 2016, 2017). Two decades after first making his argument, Guskey felt forced to republish his article, repeating the importance of giving teachers feedback on students' learning outcomes (Guskey, 2002).

Guskey's argument has since then been elaborated by other researchers, who have highlighted other factors required for successful teacher change. One such factor is the importance of teachers using their own contexts when participating in tests of teaching models. Such designs are considered to have stronger effects on the inclination to change (Cobb, Wood & Yackel, 1990).

A barrier to further discussion and/or development of Guskey's argument is the lack of studies addressing all of the model's steps. Without such comprehensive studies, it is hard to draw conclusions about if and how participating in development programs affects teachers' praxis. In particular, meaningful follow-up studies on teachers' attitudes and behaviors can only be conducted if the studied teachers first participated in a teaching intervention that yielded robust and relevant conclusions (for example, a finding that a certain teaching method has more favorable effects on students' knowledge development than alternative methods). Only a few studies have followed Guskey's causal chain in its entirety (Desimone, 2009; Kennedy, 1998; Yoon et al., 2007).

Furthermore, studies on teaching effects have mainly focused on math and science. However, even in these contexts, there has been a serious lack of follow up on both student learning outcomes and teacher change. In a review of 1300 teacher development studies, Yoon et al. (2007) showed that only 9 investigated the impact of teaching on students' learning performance. These 9 studies showed that intense and sustained long-term professional development among teachers influenced students' learning. However, all 9 studies were conducted in elementary schools; none examined upper secondary (high school) students.

It should also be noted that some researchers have criticized the effectiveness approach, arguing that research on teachers' professional development should primarily focus on understanding the settings that support and promote teacher development, and on capturing the process by which teachers grow professionally. One strategy used in teacher change research is therefore to record teachers' thoughts and views as they work through development programs. Studies using this strategy usually emphasize the complexity of teacher change; authors commonly argue that the causal model of change may be poorly suited to studying teachers' reflections and enactment processes (Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002).

While there is a severe shortage of studies involving teacher follow-up in math and science subjects, the situation in the social studies/civics is worse still. The Swedish school subject social

studies (or social sciences) is often described as being fragmented, unclear, and lacking connections to established university traditions (Ekman & Pilo, 2012; Skolverket, 2011). Didactic research, which focuses on the actual teaching of the subject, is significantly stronger in other subjects than in social studies. Lesson- and learning-studies, which have become increasingly important in education research, have not yet become established in social studies education. Consequently, social studies teaching has been less studied compared to teaching in other subjects, leaving teachers to develop teaching practices on their own (Bronäs & Selander, 2002; Johansson-Harrie, 2011; Schüllerqvist & Karlsson, 2011).

This paper addresses the scarcity of research on teacher change in social studies teaching by presenting the results of a study that followed a group of social studies teachers participating in a large field experiment that evaluated two teaching methods. The field experiment included all components of Guskey's (1986) causal model – an intervention with participating teachers, results relating to student knowledge development, and transparent communication of those results and the study's methods to the participating teachers – creating a unique opportunity to study change among social studies teachers. The study thus provides new insight into the potential impact of field experiments on social studies teachers' attitudes to teaching. Because the participating teachers were interviewed repeatedly, the study also provides new data on changes in teachers' attitudes and practices over time during and after an intervention.

### 3 METHOD

#### 3.1 Summary of the field experimental study

The design, methods, and results of the field experiment have been reported in full (Persson, Andersson, Zetterberg, Ekman & Lundin, 2019), and are therefore only briefly summarized here. The project was conducted in 2015/16 in southwestern Sweden. Social studies classes and teachers in the participating upper secondary schools (gymnasieskolor) were randomly assigned to a deliberative or a conventional teaching syllabus. The deliberative syllabus was based on the theoretical ideal of deliberative teaching, while the conventional syllabus was included as a control. The syllabus included 7 lessons covering the first four weeks of the mandatory social studies/civics course (samhällskunskap 1b/1a1) in the Swedish upper secondary curriculum. In total, 59 classes in 25 schools were randomly assigned to either the deliberative or the conventional teaching syllabus. The students completed surveys before and after the four weeks of teaching, as well as one year after the start of the course. In total, 1283 students participated in the project.

Teachers participating in the field experiment were first contacted in the spring of 2015. An inquiry of interest with a brief description of the project was distributed to social studies teachers in 93 upper secondary schools in postal areas 2, 3 and 4, which extend over the southwestern and southern parts of Sweden. Interested teachers received additional information about the design of the experiment, explaining that each of their classes would be randomly assigned a syllabus and that they would have to follow that syllabus when teaching that class (consequently, if a teacher taught multiple eligible classes, he/she might be obliged to follow one syllabus with one class and another with a different class, with each syllabus having its own teacher's manual and exercises). In total, 36 eligible teachers volunteered to participate in the project in the autumn of 2015. Early in August 2015, three weeks before the start of the semester, these teachers received a package including teaching manuals and a set of exercises and surveys for their students.

The field experiment included two equally long syllabuses (covering 7 lessons each) with specific instructions on how to teach social studies using the deliberative and conventional styles. Both syllabuses covered the same content, with 3 lessons on human rights and 4 on democratic

decision making. The students also read the same textbook. The deliberative and conventional approaches primarily differed with respect to the instructions for the student exercises and the guidelines for the teacher.

### 3.1.1 Experimental syllabus – deliberative teaching

The deliberative teaching syllabus was operationalized based on the theoretical concept of deliberation (Englund, 2000, 2006; Hess & McAvoy, 2009; Parker & Hess, 2001). The basic idea of deliberative teaching is to use conversation as a transformative force, highlighting different perspectives and views among students that could potentially reshape their preferences. To enable such conversations, the teaching material for the deliberative syllabus consisted of student exercises highlighting cases referred to as scenario-dilemmas that were designed to support problem-solving in small groups. Students were required to discuss these scenarios while following certain conversational rules (specifically, the rules required students to both argue their own position and listen to the positions of others), helping each other to develop arguments, respecting one-another's opinions, and not offending each other. The teachers were to oversee these discussions and ensure they progressed in an orderly manner, encouraging understanding and different opinions.

Each lesson included 2-3 deliberation scenario-dilemmas. All dilemmas had similar deliberation instructions; a typical instruction set is presented below:

“In this task you will talk about how human rights are to be maintained in our everyday lives. You should read the story below and think about what to do. What do you think? Then start a conversation in the group. Do you have different opinions? Help each other by asking ‘how do you mean?’, ‘can you clarify?’, ‘do you have any examples?’ Respect each other's positions. Try to find an agreement or at least agree on what you disagree about. Summarize and write down the group's perception.”

In addition to overseeing the discussions and instructing the students to act responsibly, the teachers were also required to encourage the students to test as many arguments as possible. The human rights dilemmas related to issues such as discrimination, prejudices, freedom of speech, religion, and legal security. In total, 8 dilemmas were presented to the students in the first four lessons. The dilemma given in the first lesson was:

“When Anton enters the school, he hears whispers. But he knows that no one would dare say anything or to talk to him. The whispers are about his shirt, which says “Whites rule”. The message is manifestly racist, but can be interpreted differently. Anton has worn the shirt a few times and the teachers have spoken to him to try to encourage him to stop doing so. Anton chooses to act as if the message is innocuous. The headmaster also tried to talk to him about the school's rules. Anton claims, however, that he can wear whatever shirt he wants. Right now, the situation is in a deadlock.

You are a student at the same school as Anton and one day the headmaster contacts you. He describes the situation, which you are well aware of. He asks you if you have any good ideas. He says “You have just read about democracy and human rights, what do you think we should do about Anton and his shirt?” What do you say?”

After the four lessons on human rights, the students studied democratic decision making. The deliberative syllabus included nine deliberative scenario-dilemmas designed to target the

decision-making process or to problematize decision-making. The scenarios concerned problems internal to the class, such as how to decide where to go on a field trip and schedule planning (whether the class should end earlier on a certain weekday). There were also more society-oriented dilemmas relating to issues such as the handling of anti-democratic forces and civil disobedience. An illustrative democratic decision-making dilemma was:

“The class has received a lot of money to do something fun to improve the group's cohesion. A number of suggestions have been made; most were rejected, but three remain. The first is to watch the Swedish men's national football team play a game in Gothenburg. 13 students support that option. The second is to participate in a computer game event, also in Gothenburg. 5 students support that idea. The third is to postpone using the money, collect a little more, and take a three day trip to Copenhagen. 9 students support that option. 3 students are undecided but have declared that they will not support any option involving sports. You should develop a strategy and provide suggestions on how to handle the decision-making procedure. What's the strategy? Is the majority principle applicable?”

All of the exercises in the deliberative curriculum were based on dilemmas that were to be solved collectively by students. The instructions of the exercises and the guidelines for the teachers in the teaching manuals were designed to promote deliberative conversation in the student groups.

### **3.1.2 Control syllabus – Conventional teaching**

The same scenario-dilemmas were used in the conventional syllabus, but in this case there were far fewer discussions between students. Instead, the students were asked to reflect individually and write down their thoughts. After this individual reflection, the teacher started an I-R-E sequence – initiating questions about the dilemma, letting the individual students respond, and then opening the discussion up for evaluation by the class and the teacher. At the end of the I-R-E sequence, the teacher summarized the main outcome, commenting on individual ideas. The instructions in the teacher's manual for the conventional syllabus were designed to contrast the deliberative approach and to promote a more traditional teacher-centered type of lesson focusing mainly on individual student reflection and dialog between the teacher and the class. The instructions for the exercises (the scenario dilemmas) were very different from those given in the deliberative syllabus; a typical conventional teaching exercise included the following instructions for a scenario dilemma:

“When you read, think about how you want to solve the situation, and write it down. Consider why you answer the way you do, that is, what are the arguments that you use? Try to think through these arguments and make them as clear as possible. Ask yourself the question ‘could I convince someone with these arguments’? Keep in mind that the teacher may ask you to develop your arguments.”

### **3.1.3 Results of the field experiment**

The analysis compared the effects of deliberative teaching and conventional teaching with respect to the students' demonstration of a set of civic competences. The student surveys included questions related to political values, political interest, political knowledge and intended political participation. Overall, the differences between the two groups were small, but students who had been deliberating showed little higher levels of political knowledge than those in the conventional teaching groups. This effect persisted at least until the end of the school year

(when the follow-up survey was conducted). In addition, a heterogeneity analysis was conducted to investigate differences in effects between students enrolled in vocational and theoretical programs. This showed that the effects of deliberative teaching were stronger among students in vocational programs. Moreover, deliberative teaching increased the vocational students' political interest and desire to participate in politics<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.2 THE INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

We now turn to the way the participating teachers perceived the teaching methods and reacted to the result. The 36 teachers who participated in the study completed questionnaires before and after the field experiment. The main purpose of these questionnaires was so-called stimuli control. The teachers were asked whether they felt they had successfully implemented the teaching method they were assigned. Ninety-two percent reported that they had done so to a fairly high or very high degree. One question dealt with the two kinds of teaching methods in more detail. Ninety-six percent of teachers assigned to the deliberative teaching method, and one hundred percent of those assigned to the conventional method, felt they had successfully followed the instructions. In other words, the teachers were convinced that they and their students had implemented the teaching methods as instructed.

Ten of the 36 teachers were randomly selected for further interviews. In the first step, during the spring term of 2016 and after the field experiment was completed, these teachers were contacted and asked if they would be willing to participate in complementary in-depth interviews. The interview questions were intended to assess the teachers' attitudes to teaching and to make them reflect on the field experiment. The first three questions asked the teachers to describe the implementation of the teaching methods, i.e. how they and their students responded and acted. Then the teachers were asked to reflect on whether participating affected their own attitudes, and whether it had influenced their teaching practice. Finally, they were asked whether or not this influence (if it existed) was related to the experiment's outcome. Each interview took about 30 minutes.

A year later, in the spring of 2017, the teachers were contacted again. A brief summary of the study's results and the analysis was sent to the teachers by email, and they were asked to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. For various reasons, three of the ten teachers could not participate in the follow-up. The seven interviewed teachers were initially asked whether they had used the teaching methods and materials during the year, and if so, in what way. Then they were asked to describe their thoughts about the results and finally, whether the study's outcomes were likely to affect their future social studies teaching. The telephone interviews were shorter than the interviews in the first step, lasting for about ten minutes each.

In total, the analyzed material consisted of transcripts of ten teacher interviews that were conducted after the field experiment but before the results were presented to the teachers, and transcripts of seven teacher interviews conducted after the study's results had been communicated to the participants.

The analysis followed established procedures for processing interview data. The summary technique known as "concentration" was initially used to help manage the data by summarizing each teacher's answers to the questions in shorter paragraphs (Kvale, 1997). Then a variant of the so-called "essence approach" was used to capture the core of the teachers' answers concerning A) their attitudes towards, and reflections on, their participation in the field experiment, and B) the experiment's effects on their future social studies teaching (Esaiaasson et al., 2012 ). In sum, the analysis focused on revealing the central attitudes and beliefs held by the social studies teachers who participated in the field experiment.

## 4 RESULTS

This section begins by presenting the results of interviews conducted immediately after the end of the field experiment. Three key issues and themes emerged from the teachers' experiences: i) The extent of the materials and exercises ii) the theme of "Doing my own thing", and iii) the theme of "A good mix is always better". Finally, the teachers' reflections upon being informed of the experiment's results are discussed.

### 4.1 The extent of the material and the monotonous exercises

The 'teacher manuals' were highly appreciated by the teachers. They especially stressed how well the material, exercises, and texts were linked to the upper secondary school social studies curriculum. They described the exercises and texts as being up to date and relevant. They also emphasized that the implementation of the material required no revision before classroom use. There was no indication of errors or misunderstandings.

"I liked that it (the material) began with human rights. I thought that was good. Also, the topics ... the questions and exercises were great." (Teacher, both teaching methods)

"I noticed that they (the students) really enjoyed the exercises. They really liked it." (Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

"There were many (students) who said that they found it interesting in their evaluations of the course." (Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

Yet, two points recurred in the interviews: the extensiveness of the material and the monotony of the exercises. It was clear that the teachers felt that the material was very extensive. The teacher's manual suggested that three exercises could be covered in a one-hour lesson. The interviewed teachers followed this recommendation but noted that the material was sometimes too wide-ranging.

"I thought it was very interesting and fun. I tried to follow the planning, but in the end it became impossible because I felt that the lessons were too short. I removed some of it because we didn't have time." (Teacher, deliberative teaching methods)

"It was an incredibly rich material. It also depends on the class, of course. I had a very verbal class, asking thousands of additional questions." (Teacher, deliberative teaching methods)

"I pushed quite hard in the beginning, but then I felt that ...wow. Maybe I used three quarters of the material." (Teacher, both teaching methods)

In other words, it seemed that the teachers felt a need to emphasize that they had tried to follow the instructions, but that the extent of the material was problematic. They implied that the teaching might have been better if they had greater freedom to pick and choose material.

The teachers also stated that the tested teaching methods became monotonous in the long run. They especially emphasized that they (the teachers) felt that the methods became overly uniform, but also noted that some students found it hard to maintain focus because of the similarity of the exercises.



"I thought it was a small problem... they (the exercises) became very similar. The students did two-three such exercises during a lesson, first read a bit and then write. It became a bit uniform. In the end the lessons may have gone a little faster."  
(Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

"It was fine at first. But then the students got a bit tired. Up until the third lesson it went well, but then it became somewhat monotonous. It was as though the same lesson was being repeated over and over, albeit with new things to consider."  
(Teacher, both teaching methods)

"Spontaneously, I think the lessons were very alike. You do not work like that normally, only using one teaching method." (Teacher, both teaching methods)

In summary, the teachers perceived the teaching materials to be useful and comprehensive, but found the suggested implementation of the methods to be monotonous. All of the interviewed teachers raised these points in some way. When discussing the implementation of the methods, the interviewees consistently said that while they really appreciated the exercises and texts, they would have liked the freedom to use the material in different ways, preferably by mixing the conventional and deliberative exercises, and by using things they themselves had developed. This brings us to the second issue.

#### 4.2 Doing my own thing

All the interviewed teachers argued that the teaching would have been better if they (the teachers) had been given more control. While they recognized that the project's purpose was to compare different teaching methods in their "pure" forms, they argued that the material would have had more potential if they were free to use it in "their own way," for example by selecting exercises based on the composition of the class and focusing on those exercises that worked best.

"It was a bit dependent on which students were in which groups. So, after some exercises, you knew more about which students were likely to take over verbally."  
(Teacher, both teaching methods)

"There was no 'sideways communication', which I found a little strange. Usually, when I teach, if a student says something or makes a comment, I say 'what do you think about that?', and so on." (Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

"I think that when I do this again, I will use the material in a different way. I will include more variation and maybe slightly fewer exercises, but I will keep using the exercises because they were very good." (Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

The teachers were clearly keen to adapt the material and incorporate it into their own future social studies teaching. The teachers also suggested many ways in which the material could be refined, for example by replacing or adjusting some scenarios in the exercises. In addition, several teachers suggested that they would adopt a meta-perspective during class discussions in the future, asking students questions such as 'in what way are we talking to each other right now?', 'why are some arguments raised and others not', and 'what are you writing at the moment?'

The last quote represents a common theme in the teachers' reflections and is linked to something they perceive as being central to social studies teaching, namely variation and its importance. Variation in both content and form was something that all teachers mentioned as a

key component of social studies teaching. According to this line of argument, the field experiment was limiting because it constrained the teachers' ability to vary their teaching.

### 4.3 "A good mix is always better"

In the interviews, teachers returned to the importance of variation in social studies teaching. To some extent, it appeared that the teachers assumed variation (that is, variation in content, in type of exercises, over a series of lessons, and so on) to be an essential element of good social studies teaching. Few teachers offered explicit arguments supporting this assumption, but their belief in the importance of variation appeared to be held so firmly that it would not be changed regardless of the field experiment's results.

The teachers also emphasized the importance of variation during interviews about the study's outcomes and the impact of those outcomes on the teachers' working practices. It appeared that the teachers initially attempted to make arguments that were "appropriate" (i.e. aligned with the study's objectives and the idea that teachers should update their working practices when empirical evidence suggests that it is warranted). However, they quickly returned to arguments based on variation.

"I think ... I do not know if that (the result) will affect me that much. Possibly, in the sense that I feel that a good mix is always better. / ... / In my teaching, I try to vary both my teaching style and the examinations. Give the students opportunities to show their best qualities and also show them my best qualities." (Teacher, both teaching methods)

"Mm, hmm ..., I usually use both methods – first write, then discuss. So, usually I use both. So ... there's really a third method that should be tested as well... to find out which teaching method works best. But yes, I think it will affect me." (Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

"Yes, I believe so ... but then ... there weren't that many classes in the project, were there? But, if there is a huge difference, like wow!... Because that is really interesting, if you do research on teaching and observe clear effects. But then, maybe I wouldn't just use one method, I need to vary things." (Teacher, both teaching methods)

The teachers thus returned to their arguments based on the importance of variation in social studies teaching when discussing the possible impact of the results on their own teaching work. Several teachers claimed that variation increases the likelihood that all students will engage with at least some parts of the teaching. Partly (and perhaps more significantly), there was also an argument for reducing feelings of boredom among teachers. Consequently, the results of the field experiment alone did not induce the teachers to change their working practices.

### 4.4 Teachers' thoughts about the results

The final follow-up interview confirmed the conclusion that teachers were affected more by participating in the field experiment (and thus implementing the tested teaching methods and discussing the material with colleagues, etc.) than by the results it produced. The teachers paid attention to the information but didn't emphasize that the results were that interesting. Overall, they were quite cautious when asked if and how the study's results might affect their teaching. They rather wanted to talk about how they had used and developed the material during the year since the experiment's completion.

The teachers were generally unsurprised by the study's results. They argued that they did not expect that much of a difference, and if one of the methods were to have some advantage, it would be deliberative teaching.

"The result was as I expected. After many years' experience with both types of teaching, I have noticed that group discussions are extremely effective at promoting students' development and knowledge." (Teacher, conventional teaching methods)

"I cannot say that I thought that much about the results after participating in the study. But it seems reasonable. I probably thought it would turn out like that." (Teacher, both teaching methods)

"Yes, but it's probably what I expected... Social studies teaching requires..., can be taught well with different methods, but the best way is to vary." (Teacher, deliberative teaching methods)

The teachers then discussed how they had used the material during the year after the field experiment. It became very clear that they had done what they said they would when interviewed immediately after the field experiment. They once again emphasized the importance of variation in social studies teaching, and stated that the material had become more effective when they had *carte blanche* to shape and reshape it when teaching.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The study focused on understanding how participating teachers perceived the conventional and deliberative teaching methods and the study's outcome. Because multiple teachers were interviewed repeatedly during and after the field experiment, the study targeted teacher change over time.

As noted in the introduction, the study included all of the stages that are argued to be important for teacher change, namely a field experiment in which participating teachers tested different teaching methods and that produced an outcome relating to student outcome. The field experiment provided an ideal scenario for teacher change based on Guskey's (1986) model: participating teachers were involved in the entire process, teaching in their own classrooms, and were informed about the experiment's outcome. Moreover, the study's processes were fully documented to maximize the opportunity for change.

Despite this, participation did not greatly change the social studies teachers' approach to teaching. The follow-up interviews conducted to assess the participating social studies teachers' perceptions of the study's content and outcomes indicated that the situation is somewhat more complex than is assumed in Guskey's model. The teachers seemed to have been affected by their participation and said that they planned to continue using the teaching material provided during the experiment. However, their reasons for doing this do not appear to be particularly dependent on the study's outcome. Instead, they saw their participation as an opportunity to further develop the kind of varied teaching that they see as the grand standard of social studies teaching.

That said, some shortcomings of the study are to be addressed. As noted in the method section not all of the 36 teachers participating in the field experiment were interviewed. Further, the study did not include observations following the teachers' actual social studies teaching. Nevertheless, the result from the analysis of the teacher interviews suggests that it may be reason for reconsidering some assumptions of teacher change and to seek new theoretical understandings of the factors that make teachers develop their teaching.

Some researchers have sought to advance beyond Guskey's model by treating teacher change as a nonlinear phenomenon. One example is the so-called Interconnected Model of Clark and Hollingsworth (2002). This model suggests that in any given situation, teachers will make choices based on a number of domains. Their model is based on four domains and the connections between them: the personal (defined by the teacher's knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about teaching), the practical (defined by the teacher's daily teaching practices), the domain of consequence (the salient outcomes, i.e. the issues of importance to the teacher), and the external domain (the inputs available to the teacher, which are the materials and results of the field experiment in this case). There are processes of continuous transfer between these domains based on reflection and enactment, whereby teachers participate in something, test it, and make it their own. Reflection and enactment are the mechanisms that enable change in one domain to create change in another.

Clark and Hollingsworth's (2002) model is thus less straightforward than Guskey's. However, it may help explain the processes displayed by the teachers in this study. The teachers' statements about their participation in the field experiment and its likely impact on their future social studies teaching seemed to be primarily reflective. Broadly, the process that appeared to be operating can be summarized as follows. The teachers received input from an external domain (the instructions and exercises in the field experiment) and applied it in the practical domain (by implementing the material in their classroom teaching). While teaching, they reflected, critically reviewing the material and its relationship to their personal beliefs about teaching (reflection between the personal and external domains). In addition, they reflected on how they themselves define good social studies teaching and what they actually do when they teach (reflection between the personal and practical domains). Because the field experiment delivered an outcome, they also had to consider that. However, the outcome did not strongly influence the domain of consequence (issues the teacher considers important in social studies teaching), and so did not prompt immediate change in the practical domain.

Some teachers said that the outcome would affect the practical domain (i.e. their classroom teaching). However, changes in teaching practice did not seem to result simply from consideration of the field experiment's results. Instead, change appeared to be possible first after the teachers had reflected on their own adjusted versions of the teaching material and tested them in practice, i.e. once they had adapted the exercises and texts to align better with their own personal experience of good mixed social studies teaching.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Neither participation in the field experiment nor its results appeared to greatly change the teaching practices of the participating social studies teachers. From one perspective, this may be surprising; given the limited research on social studies teaching, teachers should be more open to changing their teaching to align with new research findings. Conversely, one could also argue that this lack of research (and the fact that differences between the two groups appeared to be modest) makes social studies teachers hard to persuade. It may be that simply making them reflect on their teaching practice and experiences during the experiment is sufficient to induce long-term benefits, however. As mentioned previously, research on social studies didactics is scarce, leaving social studies teachers to develop teaching practices on their own (Bronäs & Selander, 2002; Johansson-Harrie, 2011; Schüllerqvist & Karlsson, 2011). However, the interviews with the teachers showed that they appreciated the opportunity to participate and that the material from the field experiment probably will continue to be used and discussed at their schools. In other words, the field experiment seemed to have contributed to discussion and reflection among social studies teachers about how to teach social studies. In the ongoing debate about what works in teacher change this is probably an important issue to take in to

consideration. In order to fully understand change, more longitudinal studies of teaching development programs, following teachers' reflections and experiences over time are needed. This is especially true when it comes to studies of social studies teachers.

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**ENDNOTE:**

- <sup>1</sup> For more information on the analysis, see (Persson et al. 2019). The heterogeneity analysis is however not included in the article from 2019, but was presented in a working paper that was communicated with the teachers.