6 Curriculum Coherence

Exploring the Intended and Enacted Curriculum in Different Schools

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In recent decades, curricula have held a central place in European and national education policy. Not least, curricula have become targets for politicians' ambitions to improve the goal attainment and results of educational systems and schools. Internationally, a policy movement has emerged around standards- and results-focused curriculum constructions, with the intention of driving the quality development of school activities and teaching towards aligning with the available international and national outcome measures and quality indicators (Desimone, 2013; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012). In this type of curriculum construction, the emphasis is placed on clear knowledge requirements ('performance standards') that can be evaluated at the individual, classroom, school and national levels. International agenda setters, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union, have gained increasing influence in national curriculum discourses on the structure, focus and content of curricula (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010). However, several research studies have indicated that standards-based curriculum constructions are designed according to a linear top-down model with centrally prescribed and specified knowledge requirements that are rarely applied locally in accordance with the intentions. Several national, cultural/pedagogical and political traditions and systems, as well as local conditions, affect how the curricula are understood, interpreted and translated into different teaching practices that also accommodate tensions between different knowledge views and ideologies (Bernstein, 2000; Buchmann & Floden, 1992; Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018).

The idea of policy alignment has nevertheless become a guiding principle for policy-makers around the world in the past few decades to overcome the gaps between policy and practice. In this chapter, *curriculum coherence*, as an example of policy alignment, is examined and analysed while exploring the interplay between the intended and the locally enacted curriculum. Two general models and types of definitions are identified, theoretically discussed and empirically explored regarding how they play out in different teaching practices. The first will I refer to as a *coordinative approach*, in which curriculum reforms are driven by formal standardisation (i.e. a system perspective). Curriculum coherence is foremost considered in terms of linking learning materials, teacher preparation, monitoring and supervision and so forth to national curricula – which, in turn, promotes some registers of teachers'

teaching repertoires. In contrast, the second, what I will call an *integrative approach*, is related to how goals, content and knowledge requirements and assessment are consistent across intended and enacted curricula (i.e. substantial consistency). Curriculum coherence concerns, via an epistemic and content-related framing, how various institutionalised background ideas and assumptions about knowledge, learning and assessment are linked to the intended curriculum and its various elements.

In this chapter, the two main approaches to curriculum coherence are explored and investigated with the Swedish standards-based curriculum reform as an example. The Swedish curriculum follows the transnational and European policy trend in several regards, focusing on uniform and specified standards and knowledge requirements in the curriculum in order to obtain measurable results, performance and performance indicators. The design also attempts to achieve a strong linkage of the various elements in the curriculum chain: the selection of content, organisation and assessment. This means, for example, that the standards are clearly adapted to the grading criteria (Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012). The overall purpose of this chapter is to conceptually investigate and empirically exemplify the concept of curriculum coherence, its potential explanatory values and its potential pitfalls and shortcomings. The guiding two-part question is as follows: how can curriculum coherence be understood, and how does it relate to the locally enacted curriculum in schools and classrooms in different socioeconomic and performative contexts?

Aligning with Transnational Standards in Curriculum-Making

In the past two decades, a global convergence around curricular reform talk, formal policy discourse and scripts can be observed (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). In this respect, researchers have witnessed standards-based curricula and the summative assessment of students' knowledge achievements acquiring the status of 'global education policies' that travel across nations throughout the world (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Standards-based educational reform has advanced educational policy based on the premise that a uniform curriculum, enforced by high-stakes testing and accountability policies, is necessary to improve teaching and learning and reduce inequalities in 'educational outcomes' (Sundberg, 2019). Although proponents of standardisation claim that curriculum standards make clear what students should know across educational contexts and that standardised tests provide an objective way of measuring student learning, many educators decry standardisation, arguing that it makes very little clear, other than the fact that epistemic conformity is mandatory and that test failure will be met with negative consequences (Altinyelken, 2011). Au (2007) concludes that 'standardised test results are validated based on the assumption that they can be cross-culturally applied to different populations, thus enabling the fair and objective comparison of individuals across different contexts' (p. 39).

Despite some researchers' claims to the contrary, the findings of Au's (2007) research review suggest that high-stakes tests encourage curricular alignment to the tests themselves. This alignment tends to take the form of a curricular content-narrowing to tested subjects to the detriment or exclusion of nontested subjects. The findings of the study further suggest that the structure of the knowledge itself is also changed to meet the test-based norms: content is increasingly taught in isolated pieces and is often only learned within the context of the tests themselves. Finally, in tandem with both content contraction and the fragmentation of knowledge, pedagogy is also implicated, as teachers increasingly turn to teacher-centred instruction to cover the breadth of test-required information and procedures. Au (2007) identifies three different, yet interrelated, types of curricular control associated with high-stakes testing: content, formal and pedagogic control. The formal control over knowledge content and the form the knowledge takes are also related to and associated with the control of pedagogy.

These conclusions are backed up by world society theorists, who argue that the global diffusion of common curriculum models is largely a spontaneous aspect of the development of what they describe as a 'modern world culture.' In other words, similar education policies are being adopted around the globe due to external and internal legitimation reasons – for example, complying with educational reform imperatives in the global competition on qualified workforces and investments (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Nevertheless, some others, such as the Globally Structured Agenda for Education, point out that the ideology of the global capitalist economy is the driving force behind globalisation, and that it has a significant structuring influence over what educational and curricular ideas spread around the world (Dale, 2005). Furthermore, Steiner-Khamsi (2014) underlines the importance of the 'politics' and 'economics' of educational borrowing and lending. Another important dimension of the debate on globalisation and the curriculum has focused on whether convergence around discourses and national curricular policies has resulted in the convergence of educational practices around the world (Anderson-Levitt, 2021; Nordin & Sundberg, 2021). As will be further argued in the following sections, curricular ideas imported from the West (e.g. a learner-centred pedagogy) have been recontextualised and adapted in local contexts, resulting in a diverse range of understandings, interpretations and practices. Hence, convergence has often remained at a superficial level around new rituals and practices (Altinyelken, 2011; Balarin & Benavides, 2010). Transnational curriculum convergence on the formal and intended curriculum raises questions of curriculum coherence more substantially than when considering the national and locally enacted curriculum by school leaders and teachers in schools and classrooms.

What Is Curriculum Coherence?

It is hard to argue against the self-evident fact that educational policies need to be aligned. If a new education policy (e.g. new prescribed performance

standards) contradicts another newly introduced policy or an existing policy, then the implementation of the new policy will encounter serious setbacks. Moreover, if new policy programmes lack internal coherence, their implementation and enactment will most surely produce divergent outcomes. Therefore, the alignment of new policies with existing policies, as well as with internal elements, needs to be carefully examined, and possible conflicts and contradictions should be addressed. Additionally, in providing sufficient resources for reform implementation, curriculum reforms, beyond punctual and isolated interventions, need to have the necessary conditions (e.g. learning materials, teacher preparation, monitoring and supervision) and the enabling environments guaranteed by the state and made available for teachers and schools. This is general common sense in terms of curriculum policy alignment and the sought-after coherence in the intended and enacted curriculum.

Usually, curriculum coherence refers to the alignment of knowledge or learning standards from transnational and national expectations to local and classroom arenas in terms of the goals, content and assessment of learning practices. Most definitions concern the internal alignment between what the intended academic expectations are and what is actually taught, learned and assessed in teaching practices. However, it also includes the many elements that are present in education and teaching, such as assessment, standardised tests, textbooks, assignments, lesson plans, instructional methods and teachers' in-service programmes (Biggs, 1999). It has generally been assumed that strong curriculum coherence indicates a high pedagogical quality, where different parts of the activities (such as governance, management, organisation, competence development, systematic quality work and assessment) are linked to the curriculum and its standards.

However, there are several aspects to consider in exploring the concept of curriculum coherence, as research has shown. Previous research on the topic ranges from examining coherence at the local and district levels (Cohen, 1987) and at the institutional (Cowan et al., 2004), programme (Newmann et al., 2001) and national policy levels (Spillane & Jennings, 1997). Furthermore, Anderson (2002) describes curriculum alignment as having a strong link between objectives and assessments, between objectives and instructional activities and materials, and between assessments and instructional activities and materials. In other words, content validity, content coverage, and the opportunity to learn are all included within the more general concept of 'curriculum alignment.'

Generally, previous research on curriculum coherence has been based on a definition that views coherence as an achievable, objective outcome – that is, the internal alignment of standards, curricula and assessment (see, for example, Biggs, 1999). This dominating perspective, what is here referred to as a coordinative approach, tends to foster the assumption that the more coordination, the better, and this calls for a strong top-down mandate. However, this framing does not cover the vertical dimension of policy intentions and enactment. Despite a range of levels and topics, the enacted curriculum

addressing the so-called policy–practice gap or the ‘implementation gap’ is less researched. Some researchers have suggested that the lack of a central theory about the nature of learning and knowing in a given domain of knowledge and expertise makes it difficult to coordinate the curriculum, instruction and assessment (Pellegrino, 2006). As will be shown in this chapter, this has led to some crucial aspects of the enacted curriculum being neglected in different educational settings, including its institutional context.

Often, the attention and energy of policy-makers focus on the ‘what’ of a desired change, and they tend to neglect the ‘how’ (Rogan, 2007). Indeed, misjudging the ease of implementation is one of the most frequent mistakes in educational policy-making (Rogan, 2007). When the implementation stage has not been well planned and structured, it may result in unexpected outcomes and strong resistance to policies (Dyer, 1999). The coordinative and system-related approach to implementing curriculum reforms focuses on clear and efficient communication with the actors involved in the implementation at the regional and local levels to avoid insecurities, confusion and irregularities among local implementation actors. This can be simply called the policy–practice gap, which is based on a quite technical definition of curriculum coherence. However, if epistemic and content-related dimensions are taken into consideration, the espoused theory of alignment needs to be related to the theory in use that refers to the world view and values reflected in the behaviours that actually drive the dynamic process of the enactment and translation of curriculum frameworks into practice. An *integrative approach* to curriculum coherence, as explored in this chapter, raises other types of questions for the local enactment of the curriculum that involve epistemic dimensions and institutionalised background assumptions among the actors set to implement curriculum standards at various levels.

Critical Aspects of Curriculum Coherence

There is considerable research evidence which demonstrates that pedagogical practices are resilient to change, partly because pedagogy is complex and multidimensional (Buchmann & Floden, 1992; Nordin & Sundberg, 2021; Spillane, 1999). Various studies have also pointed to a range of issues that make the implementation of achievement standards highly difficult and challenging in diverse contexts. These issues include a range of complex cultural and systemic factors, including mismatches with lived local realities (such as understandings, teacher and learner backgrounds, identities and motivations), a lack of policy alignment between various curricular aspects, inadequate teacher preparation and supervision, backwash effects of high-stakes examinations leading to ‘teaching to test,’ and unfavourable material conditions in schools (Schweisfurth, 2013). Furthermore, curriculum standards seem to be inaccessible to ordinary teachers and lack operational clarity; hence, they are subject to a variety of interpretations. The effectiveness of such programmes with children from disadvantaged socioeconomic

backgrounds, as well as their appropriateness for teaching lower-order cognitive skills (especially basic literacy and numeracy skills), has been particularly questioned (Schweisfurth, 2013). The policy response to these obstacles has, to a large extent, been one of a coordinative approach to strengthen the alignment of the elements of the curriculum programme.

However, there are obvious lessons from previous research that suggest that the epistemic and normative dimensions need to be considered. Teachers' resistance to reforms and their principled resistance when they express negative feelings and reluctance to act in line with a reform are based on either a personal or a professional principle – that is, a genuine commitment to a particular normative idea and/or epistemic assumptions. This personal or professional principle may be informed by a variety of aspects, such as organisational, social-professional or cultural-ideological interests, as well as self-understanding or pedagogical knowledge. The suggestion is that reforms force teachers to rethink their professional self-understanding. This may negatively affect their task perception and job motivation. In a more positive sense, it may make them reflect on the possibility of providing good teaching. The implementation of reforms is, therefore, suggested to strongly depend on the congruency of the normative ideas in the teacher's personal interpretative framework, on the one hand, and those in the rationale underpinning the reform, on the other. This concerns curriculum coherence in an epistemic and content-related manner.

This research suggests that, often, reform failures are not due to technicalities, limited funding or implementation problems. Rather, such failures reflect the fundamental enactment contradictions that arise when (policy) solutions are borrowed from educational systems where the problem contexts are entirely different (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). When the context is not adequately considered in education policy transfer, coordination and alignment may be accomplished at a superficial policy level, yet at the epistemic and cultural levels, contradictions prevail. Indeed, policies prescribed by the same paradigm might produce different practices when applied in different contexts. Sometimes, such differences might be so large that it would be difficult to imagine they were the result of the same global policy. Ignoring such contextual capacities might lead to unintended and unexpected consequences, and reforms aimed at improving educational quality might unintentionally undermine that quality or intensify socioeconomic inequalities (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002).

My argument is, therefore, that adequate attention being paid to the context and the recontextualisation of transnational curriculum standards beyond coordinative and system dimensions is crucial. To strengthen curriculum coherence in a more integrative and substantial respect, during curriculum development and implementation, the involvement of teachers and their specific school contexts is crucial. Teachers and other local actors need to be involved in the entire policy process – from formulation to evaluation, not only via formal participation but also as curriculum actors and mediators. Although teachers are widely recognised as the real driving force

behind educational reforms, change agencies, be it ministry departments or development organisations, hardly act accordingly. In many cases, teachers are not or are only vaguely involved in the initiation. However, participation may not be enough since it only concerns the coordinative dimension. It is essential to acknowledge the epistemic dimension in the preparation, design, development and recontextualisation of any new curriculum proposal (Spillane, 1999; Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018).

Curriculum Coherence in the Enacted Curriculum: Two Empirical Examples

Although global policy trends have informed reform processes in many countries, including Sweden, research on policy implementation in diverse contexts reveals that divergence at the country level persists (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018). The Swedish standards-based curriculum reform of 2011 was based on a strong assumption of curriculum alignment and coherence (i.e. its internal programme features). Previous research, however, has shown that the reform has been recontextualised and adapted to local contexts as different versions of the intended curriculum (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021). Moreover, the curriculum reform, introducing specified and prescribed knowledge requirements and performance standards, has gone through a metamorphosis as a result of different understandings, interpretations and practices of the actors involved at the implementation phase, such as teachers and students. Such recontextualisation and deviations from national intentions and expectations most likely vary between schools in different achievement and socioeconomic settings. Classroom studies in Swedish schools indicate that the enacted curriculum displays different patterns in high- and low-performing classroom contexts, which makes it possible to discuss *knowledge segregation* between schools in terms of what knowledge is offered. The following examples were chosen from individual interviews with principals and teachers and group interviews with students over a school year in order to capture a longer series of lessons.¹ The main unit of analysis consisted of various themes (cf. ‘curriculum tasks’), which represent a longer sequence of lessons combined with the same content theme (e.g. sustainable development). Two schools were selected to provide contrasting examples of how curriculum coherence played out in different settings, in high- and low-performing contexts. The two examples represent different socioeconomic settings, as well as different internal pedagogical profiles, in the Swedish education system.

Pine Tree School

Pine Tree School is a lower secondary school. The school’s results were within the 75th percentile, which is considered the average merit value over five years. The school is a public school with an outspoken progressive pedagogy and an aesthetic profile and is located in the centre of a medium-sized

city. The school has about 240 students ranging from 6–16 years old (years 0–9). The school has a common pedagogical platform that they describe as enhancing aesthetic learning processes that include the intellectual, as well as emotional, aspects of learning – that is, the theory and practice of student-oriented learning. The platform emphasises that aesthetic learning processes mean that man himself creates his knowledge in social and cultural contexts. The local curriculum emphasises common thematic tasks that are cross-disciplinary and involve most subjects, covers longer periods of time and is anchored in the local community. The schoolwork is goal-oriented and not teaching-material-driven; therefore, the students have no homework.

The natural sciences teacher, Anna, interpreted state standards and benchmarks to include different objectives to be learned, which included different forms of knowledge as facts, widened understandings, ethical considerations and emotions that relate to climate change over a series of lessons, topics, tests and examinations. The theme of climate change was part of a horizontal collaboration not only between the subject teacher group but also across the social and natural sciences, as well as the practical/aesthetical subjects. The planning of the theme included the selection of different textbooks and learning materials (films, websites, documentaries, etc.) and a variety of assessment forms based on the goals, core content and relevant knowledge requirements.

The local enactment of the national knowledge standards was aligned in tests, materials, and instructional activities and assessment forms not only in a coordinative way but also in epistemic and pedagogical respects. Even in Pine Tree School, with its explicit and high-profile pedagogical platform, such active curriculum work was underway to implement the curriculum intentions based on different local conditions and where the management emphasised the importance of the curriculum also becoming part of the management and teachers' basic pedagogical view. Here, however, control was not as prominent. At Pine Tree School, it was more about achieving a kind of substantial curriculum coherence by weighing up different views on the curriculum, knowledge, teaching and learning and gradually developing a consensus so that they were interconnected:

The abilities and the central content are not a problem, but the knowledge requirements are completely catastrophic ... In language, certain things are impossible to assess.... There are a lot of conflicts in the curriculum that we must find a way to handle simply.

(Cecilia, Swedish language teacher, Pine Tree School)

This work was given priority by both the principal and the school management, according to Cecilia. Many school conferences were devoted to the school's special profile and its curriculum interpretations so that teachers interpreted the requirements in a similar way. The corresponding curriculum patterns were not found in the other case study schools, where the management of curriculum work was much more sporadic between the principal

and the school. The curriculum patterns that can be identified at Pine Tree School also include horizontal curriculum coherence involving connections and relationships between and across subject boundaries that are perceived in different ways and linked to a common curriculum assignment at the school. The different subject traditions were thus not seen as completely separate but were linked to the school's curriculum system, as formulated by the principal in the following way:

It clashes with the timetable if you are to work in an interdisciplinary manner ... you have to make a fake schedule to show that they have received their subject hours, but our actual schedule is subject-integrated.... it is a system that clashes.

(Principal, Pine Tree School)

Anna also gave examples of how the school had created a subject, Life Studies (Swedish: *Livskunskap*), to work with curriculum goals that cut across several different subjects – for example, around the theme of sex and relations, which was coplanned by different subject teachers:

No, we also have life skills here at school, so it comes up in many different subjects ... all the time.

(Anna, science teacher, Pine Tree School)

Pine Tree School represents an example of the enacted curriculum as a goal- and process-driven curriculum – which was coordinated with national knowledge requirements or even integrated, as has been discussed, and enacted in the local pedagogical approach, as well as in teaching practices. The epistemic assumptions and dimensions in the intended curriculum were also explicated and accounted for among the professionals in local deliberations in order to develop an integrative and substantial approach to curriculum coherence.

Birch Tree School

The school's results were within the 25th percentile of the average merit value (198/340) for five years, based on the grades in year 9. The class had 25 students, most of whom had Swedish as their mother tongue. The school is located in a sparsely populated area with farmlands and small- and medium-sized industries, as well as a large utility industry. Historically, it was a central school, and for a long time, it was the only high school in the municipality. The school has no special pedagogical profile according to themselves and is a typical traditional organisation with separate subjects and subject-based teacher teams. Less than half of the students had a foreign background (SIRIS, the national database for grades, the 2018/2019 school year). Just over two out of five students had parents with a postsecondary education (SIRIS, the 2018/2019 school year). The proportion of students

who had achieved all the knowledge requirements for year 9 was below the national average. The principal explained that external factors, to a large degree, dictated the teaching conditions at the school:

I: Does the curriculum affect which areas you, as the principal, attach importance to in your governance of the school?

- Study days and things like that. So you get those pieces in place. National tests control, actually control, the year, and involve a lot of planning. How can we create the time for a certain part to be able to perform well in the national tests?

(Principal, Birch Tree School)

The principal, in the quote just cited, believed that external imperatives (such as national tests), rather than the internal curriculum work, govern teachers' teaching. This indicates that performance management, more than goal management, was at play. For example, in aligning with tests, the school developed some 'control stations' to screen which students/student groups needed special support outside the classroom. A two-teacher system with semi-groups was established at Birch Tree School, and the principle of physical inclusion in the same class was established. The teaching observations show that the large variety of prior knowledge among the students led to a lot of self-work, with individual help from teachers regarding relatively isolated skill training (Swedish). Sarah, the science teacher at the school, declared that the national tests involved strong control in terms of content taught in the classroom:

I try to mix things up a little. I get some inspiration from the National Agency for Education's material sometimes, from the National Agency for Education's national test, since much of that is in the call with formative assessment.

(Sarah, science teacher, Birch Tree School)

The framing of the taught curriculum was also linked to the pace of teaching – governed by keeping up with as much of the central content as possible to reach the knowledge requirements, Sarah explained. The performative pressures to meet the knowledge requirements for as many pupils as possible contributed to narrowing the curriculum content and separating the content into units that could be assessed according to the available assessment devices, most notably national tests and pretests. Cross-disciplinary thematic curriculum tasks as sustainable development goals tend to, Sarah explains, be downplayed, as they are formulated as general objectives and because there is only one knowledge requirement in physics that explicitly relates to this teaching content.

In conclusion, the local enactment of the curriculum was, to a large degree, characterised by an assessment and activity-driven curriculum, rather than the

goal- and process-driven version at Pine Tree School. The example of Birch Tree School highlights a different curriculum pattern that is loosely coordinative rather than integrative or substantial in terms of how the national curriculum standards were adopted and translated into classroom instruction. This is an example of how curriculum coherence played out differently due to external conditions, such as socioeconomic and cultural factors of the school, and internal factors – such as the local curriculum-making in enacting and translating curriculum policy and standards into, for example, teachers' curriculum deliberations and common curriculum tasks, as well as teaching activities and assessment procedures in the classrooms.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to show that curriculum coherence in the implemented and taught curriculum can be an important aspect to study in order to understand differences in goal attainment in schools and achievements between schools and classes (Newmann et al., 2001; Oates, 2011; Sullanmaa et al., 2019). However, I have also identified critical aspects of current dominant framings, understandings and definitions of curriculum coherence. For curriculum alignment to be substantial and not merely technical and coordinative, the conditions for an integrative approach need to be considered. The two contrasting empirical examples from two very different schools – Pine Tree School and Birch Tree School – highlight how the conditions for achieving curriculum coherence for teaching and learning in schools are highly diverse. Local enactment by teachers and students is structured by not only internal working conditions and organisational concerns but also external pressures and expectations on improved performances.

The analyses indicate that three different analytical levels appear to be central in exploring integrative curriculum coherence to be more than a superficial top-down mandate for compliance. *First-order curriculum coherence* is about teaching in the classroom. It means that the teaching connects classroom activities to the students' lives, that teaching and evaluation correspond to the goals in an understandable way for teachers and students, and that there is a real connection between the intended curriculum, overall goals, content, and assessment and the teaching that students encounter. The example of Pine Tree School shows that first-order curriculum coherence requires that core assumptions and understandings of knowledge, teaching and learning need to be addressed. It also requires involving teachers as active curriculum makers in enacting standards and translating them into meaningful teaching practices.

Second-order curriculum coherence concerns the consistency between the local school's goals and pedagogy and what happens in the classroom. Research has demonstrated the importance of local enactment and understanding among professionals in translating intended curricula into practical pedagogy and teaching practices (Tikkanen et al., 2019). Curriculum coherence here means that the school's pedagogical ideas (local curriculum)

and classroom activities are connected in a deliberate way – that is, not only coordinated but also interpreted, discussed and implemented collectively and collegially. This implies that the school should be able to identify and trace the central ideas in various lesson plans, course plans, themes, tests and examinations, and so forth so that the school's collective work with the curriculum has a real impact on teachers and their teaching.

Finally, *third-order curriculum coherence* means that there is coherence in the intended, communicated and enacted curriculum, from the practical teaching classroom context to the school and principal levels, as well as to the district and national levels. If this alignment is to be more than superficial and technical, the local enactment of the curriculum that involves epistemic dimensions and institutionalised background assumptions, knowledge views and pedagogical philosophies among the actors set to implement curriculum standards at various levels needs to be addressed. This challenges common ideas about the implementation of curriculum standards.

In conclusion, the results of this analysis suggest that there needs to be a redefinition of curriculum coherence that takes recontextualisation and local enactment in all its complexity into account. To meet the challenges of the elusive teaching gap and the increasing knowledge segregation in policy-making and teaching practices, this chapter suggests that this is still a major task ahead.

Note

- 1 The selection of schools was based on variation in terms of high- and low-performing schools (five-year criteria based on the average of the merit values applied). The selection of case schools also included some variation regarding urban and rural areas, with differences in socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds in the student composition (Wahlström, 2019).

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