



## Field studies in campus courses in The Primary Teacher Training Program at Uppsala University

### Context

Teacher training programs in Sweden is encouraged by the government to increase their cooperation with schools, primarily by focusing their Practicum courses placements to a smaller number of schools. In view of this, the teacher training program at Uppsala University also launched a number of partnerships with schools in the surrounding area with the aim of narrowing the gap between researchers and teacher educators at the university, and teachers in school. Due to these partnerships, student teachers have more opportunities to visit schools and classrooms.

The individual courses in the teacher training program at Uppsala University are in units of 7,5–15 credits without overlap in time. In addition to this, the Practicum courses are separated from the campus courses and there can be 1–1,5 years between different Practicum courses for individual students when they are not in the classrooms with students. In an effort of bringing teaching practices and theoretical reflection of teaching closer to each other, student teachers are conducting a mandatory small field studies within some of the campus courses.

### Implementation

#### *Organization*

Each partner school has a “contact teacher” whose task, among other things, it is to organize the visits of student teachers when they are conducting their small field study at the school. The main effort of this organization is to distribute students to individual classroom teachers at the school, and keep them informed of preparations and other things related to the students’ visit. The contact teacher should also organize a workshop in collaboration with a teacher in the campus course.

Due to the large number of students in each cohort at Uppsala University, each teacher at the local school receives 2–10 students, depending on the size of the school. The classroom teacher prepares for the students’ assignments. Although, the teacher has a set planning for lessons, the aim for the student visit is to allow the students to observe something which is simultaneously taught “theoretically” on campus.

#### *The assignment*

The small field study can vary depending on the theme of the campus course. For example, observations of teaching with a specific focus on the use of disciplinary vocabulary by teachers and students, observations of book talks, study the digital resources available, teacher and student interaction from a classroom management perspective, or meeting special educators and school psychologists are only some examples. The small field

studies do not have to be observations but a short observation task is easy to perform within the limited scope of the assignment.

The mandatory field study normally only takes 2–3 hours, but the students spend the whole day at the school. This allows teachers to arrange additional activities for the students. For example, one municipality has designed a series of workshops progressing through the students' years in training, dealing with topics and skills that the teachers themselves meant were lacking in the training, but necessary in their profession.

### **Benefits and challenges from a teacher educator's perspective**

The introduction of field studies in courses that were previously exclusively taught at campus has posed some practical difficulties, but the feedback from students and teachers is generally very positive. We have great hopes for this model of interweaving theory and practice. However, the courses in the teacher training program are not aligned with courses and teaching in the local schools which creates logistical challenges for the implementation of the field studies. Thus, it is important for the course leaders and responsible teachers to adapt to the current planning of the local school and be prepared to be flexible concerning the framing of the field study assignment. A smooth communication between the university and local schools, course leaders in the teacher training program and classroom teachers is essential in this kind of collaboration.

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