

Transforming information to knowing: Studies of project work, 'real world issues' and the process of learning to reason in the digital age

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Project summary

The main focus of the project is to study how young people develop communicative and cognitive skills that enable them to express themselves and exert agency in a world characterized by information overflow and high expectations on individual literate competences. This issue will be studied in classroom settings when students engage in so-called project work. Such activities involve students engaging in information seeking using a wide range of resources including (but not exclusively) the Internet. In these projects students are expected to produce knowing that is relevant for an issue that is often complex. They are expected to search information, evaluate it and be able to formulate themselves in writing in a relevant genre. The problems addressed in project work are often multidisciplinary, and this implies that students are confronted with a very complex situation of deciding what is relevant and trustworthy information, and how this information can be converted into knowing that is relevant for their problem. Two types of project work are studied; those that concern socioscientific issues, and those that concern societal dilemmas. The empirical work involves following and analysing such projects in secondary school. A specific analytical interest is the nature of feedback students receive from fellow students and teachers when doing project work. Another central issue is to scrutinize to what extent students develop the necessary meta-communicative skills.