



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

MAINTAINING TEACHING

Exploring te(a)ch-abilities with actor-network theory

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i stora Jadwiga, Högskolan i Gävle, fredagen den 14 juni, kl. 13:00.

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Maintaining Teaching – exploring te(a)ch-abilities with actor-network theory.

Abstract

The thesis investigates everyday teaching with digital technology during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The pandemic was one of the world's largest disruptions to everyday education with both health and education at stake. With the pandemic control measures affecting upper secondary education in Sweden, gathering in the classroom cannot be taken for granted and digital technologies accelerated and intensified everyday practices. The aim is to explore the relation of teaching and digital technology. How can we understand the ways in which digital technology and teaching become jointly experimented with to cope with pandemic uncertainty?

With an Actor-Network theory (ANT) approach, the thesis puts emphasis on how everyday teaching holds together at the pandemic intersection of routine and breakdown. The everyday teaching practices during the pandemic is an empirical focal point for inquiry into how they become enacted and, secondly, what the implications are for knowledge production when examining this novel educational practice with ANT's relational materialism. To answer these questions, ethnographic methods are used with an upper secondary school in Sweden from May 2020 to June 2021. The fieldwork consists of empirical engagements in school visits, interviews, and online observations. In line with recent ANT scholarship, the methodological approach is articulated as a care-ful methodology. It implies tracing vulnerable and stable relations that enact sociomaterial practice and acknowledging cuts and becoming.

The results show how a manifold of more-than-digital practices enact everyday teaching. The included studies in the thesis examine attendability and mundane rituals, lesson enactments of scheduling practices, and digital platforms that co-produce specific practices while obscuring others. Teaching in the pandemic challenges taken-for-granted notions of a rapid transition to distance and online teaching. By surfacing neglected aspects of everyday teaching with digital technology the thesis discusses how 'digitalisation of teaching' erases the local work of everyday teaching as an equipped practice. In conclusion, the proposal is made that maintaining teaching takes into account the materiality, abilities, care, and vulnerabilities that enact everyday teaching.

Keywords

teaching, Covid-19, digital technology, ethnography, digital platforms, upper secondary education, attendance, maintenance, actor-network theory, care, science and technology studies,

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