Editorial 1/2017

Reading Research and Criticism Responsibly

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Phrases like «the revolution of teaching» have been in use ever since the publication of John Hattie’s book *Visible Learning* in 2009. Whether one is for or against Hattie, his research enables a very important debate on issues of education, research, theory, methodology and more. We are therefore pleased that *Nordic Studies in Education* can make a contribution to the debate about Hattie’s extensive research on visible learning. However, many questions do arise. Have the followers and the critics really read Hattie? How well have they read him? How does one choose to read Hattie? Which reading perspective should be used, either black or white?

In this issue, two Danish articles take a critical perspective on Hattie and his research. In «The Blind Spots of Visible Learning. Critical comments to the ‘Hattie revolution’», Klaus Nielsen and Jacob Klitmøller examine the methods of Hattie, and argue that Hattie mixes rhetorical and narrative concepts into his research. With this, Nielsen and Klitmøller address important questions about educational research. For example, should not research have a free space, that is, a space where research can be research, exempt from rhetoric, politics and the like? In the article «A Critique of Visible Learning», Thomas Aastrup Rømer criticizes Hattie for liquidating the independence and essence of the discipline of «pedagogikk». Among other things, this happens, according to Rømer, through
Hattie’s views on the concept of assessment and through a constructivist perspective of learning.

This issue also consists of two other articles which both focus on aspects related to research: Catharina Tjernberg’s and Eve Heimdahl Mattson’s «From methods and concepts to triple learning processes in school, teacher education and research» and Rie Thomsen’s, Rita Buhls’s and Randi Boelskifte Skovhus’s «Research Circle Management in Practice». Like Hattie, these researchers enable important questions related to practical pedagogy. For example, does practical pedagogy relate too heavily on subjective assessments from the teacher, and/or can practical pedagogy relate too much to research, with the result that teachers’ subjective judgments are being neglected?

When it comes to research, one might say that research is not worth anything in itself. The reason being that research is dependent on being accepted among other researchers. In a way, this is now the case regarding Hattie’s research, but have we got two camps, some of whom are for Hattie and some against? How fruitful is that? We wish to emphasize that the debate about Hattie and his theory of visible learning is very demanding, as Hattie’s extensive research requires expertise in many fields. Not only should we read Hattie and go deeply into his theoretical and research-based universe, but we should also do the same for the criticism, and let nuances emerge, without the excessive interference of emotion, political ideologies and the like. Let us hope that this issue of Nordic Studies in Education will make possible a fruitful debate, not only about the research of Hattie but of educational research in general.

Finally, it should be noted, that during 23–25 March 2017, Copenhagen welcomes all researchers engaged in educational research, for them to present and discuss the various important theoretical and research based pedagogical issues in the 45th Congress of the Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA). The theme of the congress is «Learning and education – material conditions and consequences». We are looking forward to meeting you at NERA 2017!