Application for grant for project “Bringing QoG research to the classroom”

Background, purpose and goal of the project: The Quality of Government (QoG) Institute was founded in 2004 by Professor Bo Rothstein and Professor Sören Holmberg. It is an independent research institute within the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg consisting of about 25 researchers who conduct and promote research on the causes, consequences and nature of Good Governance and the Quality of Government (QoG) - that is, trustworthy, reliable, impartial, uncorrupted and competent government institutions, in particular the civil service.

The main objective of our research is to address the theoretical and empirical problem of how political institutions of high quality can be created and maintained. A second objective is to study the effects of Quality of Government on various aspects of human well-being, such as health, the environment, social policy, climate change, reduction of poverty and gender equality. The rationale for this approach is that measures of QoG for countries all over the world (and also for sub-national regions in EU member states) show substantial positive correlations with almost all standard measures of human well-being as well as for measures of political legitimacy, citizens’ subjective well-being and the likelihood to live under peace. If improvement in human well-being is the goal, increasing QoG turns out to be of the outmost importance and, as the most recent empirical research show, more important than democratization.

A central aim of the QoG Institute has been to create state-of-the-art country based databanks that contains all relevant data that measures variation in QoG as well as data that measures varies aspects of human well-being (such as measures of population health, the situation for children, access to safe water, education and health care as well as citizens’ subjective life satisfaction). The databanks we have created are now among the largest in the world. Since we have made the databanks freely available, they are now used frequently by researchers all over the world with about 15,000 unique page views per year. In 2009, the QoG databanks received the prestigious “Lijphart, Przeworski, Verba Award for Best Dataset” by the Comparative Politics Section of the American Political Science Association.

In order to make the data available also to the general public, media and practioners, we have recently launched a special easy to use data visualization tool on the QoG website (www.qog.pol.gu.se). This data visualization tool gives every person that can handle a personal computer an opportunity to use large parts of our data. For example, with just a few “clicks” it allows user to visualize the relation between variables on maps, diagrams or other graphics in motion and then to use these for their own presentations. For example, it is very easy to produce diagrams or maps for countries’ level of corruption vs. their infant mortality. Or, to take another example, GDP/capita vs. the degree of QoG. Or the relation between measures of gender equality, citizens’ life satisfaction and the likelihood the children will live to see their fifth birthday. Given the large number of variables (about 800) and countries (from 40 to 194), the possibilities are almost endless.

We believe that the opportunity to use our large databanks in a very user-friendly way would be a great asset for teachers in civics and history. Students would get a grasp over what the access to “big data” means and how it can generate new ideas about the relation between political institutions and human well-being. They would also be informed about how high quality research in the social
sciences works and what this can imply for improving human conditions on a global scale. Students would learn how theory, methods and data can work together to create new and exciting ways to think about social, political and economic issues. These are all important aspects for students in elementary and upper secondary schools. However, in order to achieve this, we actively need to address schools and teachers and we need to create information materials and tutorials. Put simply, we need to create a platform for communication.

The QoG Institute is one of the most successful research initiatives that has been launched at University of Gothenburg during the last decade. This can be seen not only from the large number of publications in prestigious international scientific journals but also from the large research grants that has been awarded to the QoG Institute. Among those are the so called Wallenberg Scholar Grant in 2009 and the European Research Council’s Advanced Research Grant in 2013. This “research-to-teaching” project will thus create a direct link between a world leading social science research program that focus on how to improve central aspects of human well-being on a global scale and students and teachers in Swedish class-rooms.

**Organization:** The project will be lead by three persons. Professor Bo Rothstein is the Head of the QoG Institute and will have the main responsibility for the project. He has extended experience from leading large research projects and also from research information. Dr. Maria Jarl, lecturer at the Faculty of Education at University of Gothenburg and Dr. Stefan Dahlberg at the QoG Institute will also serve in the steering group. Dr. Jarl serves as chair of the Board of Teacher Education at University of Gothenburg and has thereby an extensive network in the Teacher Education community in Sweden. Dr. Dahlberg is the data set Manager at the QoG Institute and has been responsible for creating the above mentioned data visualization tool. The project will be located at the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg.

**Budget and plan for implementation:** The project will last for two years. The main cost for the project is for one full-time research information officer who will be responsible for creating the information material to teachers and schools and for presenting this to schools of education, and various school conferences and to individual school districts and schools. Our primary focus will be teachers and students in the Swedish Gymnasium but we will also try to extend this to the younger students. The project will also involve contact with the professional teachers’ organizations which we believe are an important venue for this type of research-to-teaching information. We will also plan to organize four one-day information conferences for social science teachers (in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Umeå and Malmö). Outmost care will be taken for getting the right person for this job for which qualifications from teaching social science, basic research and research information will be essential. The QoG Institute has in a previous two year general research information project gained valuable experience for doing this. In addition, costs for travelling, for producing the information material specially designed for teachers. Including overhead, our calculations show that this will cost 2.6 mil. SEK for two years which is the sum we hereby apply for.

Gothenburg, Sept 10, 2013

Bo Rothstein

Professor and Head of the Quality of Government Institute