Article

Political education of young children: teacher descriptions of social studies teaching for children in 1st–4th grade in Norwegian primary school

Stine Johansen Utler

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

– Teachers emphasise political aspects of the initial social studies education despite not being asked about them directly.

– Teachers seems to focus on building a foundation for thinking and acting politically

Purpose: This study investigated the political aspects of 1st- to 4th-grade social studies education in Norwegian primary schools through qualitative interviews with 30 social studies teachers. The research examined how and to what extent politics is in focus in initial social studies education using the pre-political perspective as a theoretical starting point.

Findings: The political sphere is, to a large extent, focused on initial social studies education, in the form of either political actions or preparation – e.g. building a foundation on which pupils can think and act politically. Despite the fact that not all aspects of the political are equally emphasised in initial social studies education and often seem to tend towards harmony and common agreement, pupils have the potential to be politically orientated or socialised in initial social studies education.

Corresponding author:
Stine Johansen Utler, Institute for Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, E.C. Dahls gate 10, 7491 Trondheim, Norway. E-mail: stine.j.utler@ntnu.no

1   INTRODUCTION

Political understanding begins in early childhood, with the first years of schooling establishing an important context for political learning (Abendschön, 2017; Greenstein, 1965). The education that children receive during these years is potentially crucial for their subsequent political orientation and knowledge. Despite this, the political education of young children is neglected in the Norwegian research context (Børhaug, 2017).

This study investigated the political aspects of 1st- to 4th-grade social studies education in Norwegian primary schools. Through semi-structured qualitative interviews, 30 1st- to 4th-grade social studies teachers were asked about their perceptions of initial social studies education and their teaching. The research question posed in the study was as follows: *From a pre-political perspective, how and to what extent is politics in focus during initial social studies education in Norwegian primary schools from first to fourth grades?*

The study analytically employed a pre-political perspective as a theoretical framework to assess how children develop a political mindset through school. Empirical data were generated on initial social studies education in Norwegian primary schools, emphasising its political aspects. Political aspects are here broadly understood as including learning about both citizenship – civic – and democratic principles.

Studying children`s first introduction to formal education in politics is important for several reasons. Despite an emphasis on political education from an early age, there are no empirical studies on the political education of the youngest children in Norwegian schools. Internationally, there are a few such studies (e.g. Abendschön, 2017; Berti, 2001). However, as political systems vary from country to country, the findings of these studies are less transferable to the Norwegian context. In addition, there are no clear guidelines for teachers about how to educate their pupils about politics, nor are there any requirements for teachers in Norwegian primary schools to have a formal education in social science or politics.[1] Moreover, teachers have substantial autonomy in terms of how they organise their teaching. Hence, we can expect wide variation in the political education that the youngest pupils receive. Simultaneously, in autumn 2020, the new national curriculum – *Kunnskapsløftet 2020* (SAF01-04) – was implemented, introducing democracy and citizenship as interdisciplinary themes and highlighting the importance of instructing the youngest pupils in political topics.

In Norway, social studies combines several social scientific disciplines (political science, sociology, anthropology and social psychology) with history and geography. Until the implementation of the new curriculum in 2020, social studies was structured into four main areas, each associated with different competence goals: civic life, history, geography and *utforskeren* ('the researcher'), which was added to the primary and lower secondary school curriculum in 2013.[2] In the new curriculum, social studies is categorised into interdisciplinary themes and core elements. The purpose of primary social studies is, for instance, to support and contribute to the understanding of basic human rights, democratic values and equality, as well as to give children experience with active citizenship and democracy (SAF1-03).[3] The curriculum only provides teachers with

learning objectives that should be achieved upon completion of a specific grade level (fourth, seventh and tenth grades), with the only regulation being the number of teaching hours (385) allocated to social studies from the fourth to seventh grades. No regulations exist regarding the specific stages at which these teaching hours should be completed – only that they need to be incorporated into the overall seven-year period.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Most democratic countries have developed measures and institutions to promote the political integration of their citizens (Børhaug, 2008). Schools are vital in this regard. Both the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization have issued recommendations on how democratic citizenship can be strengthened through the education system. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many national leaders called for their education systems to teach the process of democratisation (Torney-Purta & Richardson, 2004). This led to the emergence of citizenship education, i.e. political education with a special emphasis on civic competence, which is now a high priority in most Western democracies (Berti, 2001). Today, the term 'civic' is often used either instead of or as a supplement to the term 'political' (Flanagan & Fasion, 2001; Youniss et al., 2002).

To date, few extant studies have investigated the political education of young children. Internationally, several studies have examined the effects of political education on, for instance, adolescent's tendencies, skills and knowledge concerning citizenship (Amadeo et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) or the effects of young people's political knowledge, ideology and candidate selection on voting (Achen, 2002; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Schools, particularly those prioritising political education, have been shown to have a positive impact on the acquisition of political knowledge, political interest and political orientation by young adults (Campbell, 2008; Gainous & Martens, 2012; García-Albacete, 2013; Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2011; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Quintelier, 2013; Whiteley, 2012).

However, the influence of political education on young children's political understanding and knowledge has been less examined. Yet, in recent years, there has been increased research interest in the political perceptions and understandings of young children (Abendschön, 2017; Dias & Menezes, 2014; Haug, 2017; van Deth et al., 2011). Young children are aware of and, to some extent, knowledgeable about politics (Götzmann, 2015), and it is shown that primary school children can understand and learn political concepts if they receive adequate political education (Berti, 2011).

In the Norwegian context, only a few empirical investigations of political education exist, and these are limited to secondary or upper-secondary education. During the 1970s and 1980s, several textbook and curriculum studies were conducted (Eikeland, 1989; Haavelsrud, 1979; Koritzinsky, 1972). More recently, broader empirical studies of democracy and training have been conducted (e.g. Børhaug, 2005, 2007, 2008; Heldal Stray, 2010; Samuelsson, 2013; Solhaug, 2003; Ødagarard Borge, 2015) as have more limited

content analyses of policy documents and curricula (e.g. Briseid, 2012; Heldal-Stray, 2010; Stray & Sætra, 2015). None of these studies, however, focused on primary education.

In response, the present study sought to address this deficiency in the extant research on the political education of young children. The pre-political perspective and empirical data presented here provide valuable insights into initial political education in Norwegian schools – particularly the ways in which teachers orient their pupils to experience being a part of a greater (political) society or how they can act 'politically' by emphasising different political aspects.

3 THEORY

3.1 Approaching pre-politics

The analysis of the empirical material in this study was based on the 'pre-political perspective', which, I propose, can be theoretically deployed to assess how children develop a political mindset. Before outlining this perspective, I first address politics, followed by a definition of pre-political.

I interpret politics broadly, as it allows for the fact that political practices occur in lower primary school grades. One of the broadest ways to define politics is to perceive it as a 'social activity' – i.e. an activity in which we engage together with others or one through which we engage others. Politics, in this sense, is 'always a dialogue, never a monologue' (Heywood, 2002, p. 3). Accordingly, fundamental school activities, such as classroom dialogue and discussion, are inherently political. In its essential form, politics is a claims-making activity (Frödin, 2011). Political claims are made with reference to someone else. Claims imply counterclaims or contestations because, otherwise, there would be no basis for making them (Sheehan, 2006). Thus, politics can be defined as an activity through which 'individuals and groups articulate, negotiate, implement, and enforce competing claims' to affect social change or maintain the status quo (Sheehan, 2006, p. 3). If we assume that politics is about promoting claims, then classroom dialogue and discussion can also be considered political. I argue that by partaking in social activities, such as classroom dialogue and discussion, that involve the exchange of opinions or insights into the perspectives of others, children develop political thinking.

Similar interpretations of politics were made by Arendt (2005), who argued that politics is not restricted to certain places, times or actors but is instead intrinsically connected to how individuals – through interaction – see themselves and their actions as part of a collective and how collective interests and arguments are formed. Politics, according to Arendt, is the world that emerges between us – the world that manifests through our interactions with one another or through the ways in which our individual actions and perspectives are aggregated into collectivities (Arendt, 2005). Here, both power relations and a general understanding of and respect for the opinions and views of others are the underlying premises; in other words, democratic meaning formation. This interpretation

of politics substantiates the assertion that social activities in the classroom, such as dialogue and discussion, can be political, thereby introducing young pupils to political thinking and action and laying the foundation for the development of a political mindset. It is from this nascent development that the pre-political perspective presented here is derived. In this work, "pre-political" denotes a state in which we find ourselves while on the path to becoming politically thinking and acting individuals. More specifically, here, pre-political means the preparation for political thought and awareness (i.e. political mindset) – an initial phase, a beginning[4]. In this phase, different events, experiences and social interactions each contribute to the development of one's awareness, which, in turn, cultivates political thinking as well.

To support my assertion that children develop a pre-political perspective through school, I again turn to Arendt and her *Theory of Judgement.*[5] I also build on two of her essays, 'The Crisis in Culture' (1961) and 'Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy' (1970), as well as other works by Arendt and others.

3.2   Aspects of the pre-political

To illustrate how I envision the emergence of a political mindset, I break down politics into different actions, abilities and realisations in children. These I call pre-political assets.

3.2.1 Seeing from another perspective and recognising oneself as a part of a larger whole

Judgement, understood as a fundamental political ability, is a good starting point for imagining how children develop a political mindset. We often regard judgement as the ability to distinguish right from wrong. However, as a political ability, judgement refers to 'the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view, but from the perspective of all those who happen to be present' (Arendt, 1961, p. 221). Therefore, judgement is what enables us to orient in the public realm, in the common world. This way of interpreting judgement – as the ability to see from the perspective of others – is here considered the first step towards thinking politically. By seeing from another perspective, children also begin to recognise themselves as being a part of a larger whole. Both capacities are fundamental for shaping collective interests and arguments, which are here treated as the very essence of politics. Seeing from another perspective and seeing oneself as part of a larger whole are thus regarded in this study as two essential pre-political assets, both of which build the foundation for political thinking.

3.2.2 Imagining oneself in the place of others

The capacity to consider the perspectives of others and to recognise oneself as part of a whole requires the capability to imagine oneself in the place of others. Hence, imagination is central for developing judgement. The use of imagination can contribute to children's ability to see from the perspectives of others and can allow them to position themselves in the place of others. Imagination is what prepares us for the operation of reflection and is the faculty that permits representation and comparison (Arendt, 1982). When we seek to see something from another person's point of view using our imagination, we are making a visit. This implies a form of decentred thinking – a thinking process in which one is out of one's centre (Biesta, 2014, p. 142) or thinking in the place of everybody else (Arendt, 1977, p. 220).[6] Thinking in the place of others is essential not only for the formation of democratic meaning but also for the development of the ability to promote one's own claims, which is in turn crucial to the development of a political mindset. Based on the assumption that politics is about creating collective interests and arguments, I argue that children's ability to imagine represents a productive basis on which thinking and acting politically can emerge.

3.2.3 Expanding one's own opinions by incorporating those of others (in the direction of representative thinking)

Critical thinking helps to develop judgement and is important for learning to navigate in a political world. Our ability to think critically is cultivated through public discussions and debates, in which personal opinions can be expanded and tested – i.e. rejected or supported – through interactions with others' opinions. Debates and discussions, as well as the capacity to enlarge one's perspective, are thus crucial for the formation of opinions that can claim objective validity (Arendt, 1990). Political thinking and action require not only the ability to promote one's own arguments and to position oneself in the place of others but also, and perhaps more importantly, the capacity to expand one's own opinions by incorporating those of others – e.g. representative meaning formation. I argue that such expansion of opinions, in addition to the formulation of representative opinions, are pre-political assets. But to acquire these assets, one must be capable of recognising the needs of the majority rather than only one's own individual needs. Simultaneously, representative thinking can be seen as the very essence of political processes and might require a high level of abstraction. Therefore, children's ability to think in the direction of representativeness is perhaps just as important as their ability to do so at this stage.

3.2.4 Publicly promoting opinions and recognising the idea of universal interdependence

Judgement, albeit a mental activity, concerns actions performed in a common world. Opinions are never self-evident – meaning that, even though we form opinions on our

own, we are inexorably interdependent (Arendt, 1961, p. 242). We create meaning in the plural, as our perspectives are broken, illuminated and discussed via public conversation (Benhabib, 1996). As such, for children to develop their political thinking, public discussion is vital. More specifically, public discussion is a prerequisite for the formation of one's own opinions and, more importantly, for realising common interests. Moreover, the formation of 'valid' opinions – i.e. objective views – requires a space in which individuals (e.g. children) can test and refine their views. I thus argue that the public promotion of opinions is a central pre-political asset insofar as it lays the foundation for the other pre-political assets mentioned above. Furthermore, I contend that recognising the reality of universal interdependence is another pre-political asset, one which can also be developed through public discussion.

Conflict and disagreement are important aspects of politics. Consequently, conflict is also inherent to the pre-political perspective. Arendt's notes on *Judgement* do not mention conflict explicitly, but it is well described in her other works. Therefore, I borrow from these works as I turn to the conflictual aspect of the pre-political perspective.

3.2.5 Accepting conflict and practising forgiveness

Conflict is often portrayed as the driving force in politics, whereas the political exists in pluralistic negotiations between action and speech (Arendt, 1998). Thus, experiencing conflict or exposure to conflicting views is important for the development of a political mindset. First, it reinforces understanding of the fact that not everyone always agrees and that consensus is neither always possible nor desired. Second, conflict can render the opinions of others more explicit than can deliberation without conflict. Third, and perhaps most importantly, without conflict there is no progress. This view of conflict can be identified as an agonistic approach to democratic education, implying a view of politics that accepts the pervasiveness of political conflict and seeks to channel such conflict positively, which contrasts with the deliberative ideals of seeing the common humanity in others (Lo, 2017). I argue that conflicts can provide great learning opportunities if one can recognise and respect the views of others.

This does not mean that the goal should be unity – on the contrary, it should be to highlight diversity. If reengagement after a conflict is possible, then new solutions can be found. Political processes are characterised by negotiation and renegotiation. Inherent here is forgiveness, which allows us to continue and progress (Arendt, 1998, p. 237). In this context, forgiveness does not necessarily mean agreement or mutual understanding but is instead an opportunity to reengage. The final two assets of the pre-political perspective are, consequently, accepting conflict and practising forgiveness. Forgiveness demands respect for and recognition of others and, perhaps more importantly, permits new beginnings, enabling children to exercise political agency and develop their judgement.

4   THE STUDY

4.1   Method and selection

The study was initiated to gain insights into social studies as a whole. In order to explore what teachers emphasised without influencing their responses, teachers were asked about initial social studies education in general, not political education in particular. For instance, teachers were asked what they thought should constitute initial social studies education and what they considered to be the most important topics pupils should learn during the first years of education.[7] Despite not being asked about it directly, the political content of teaching was highlighted by a majority of the teachers, and several of the questions provided insights into the political aspects of the subject, especially the two mentioned above.[8]

The study was conducted from autumn 2017 to spring 2018. Thirty social studies teachers from 20 different schools located in the middle of Norway were interviewed using the semi-structured interview format. Aiming for a diverse and competent teacher population, school mentors for pre-service teachers at the Department of Teacher Education at NTNU were asked to participate, with 26 teachers ultimately signing up. To secure some balance between experienced and less-experienced teachers, a request to participate was also sent to newly qualified teachers, four of whom agreed. In total, 24 women and six men participated in the study (19 of whom had formal education in social studies, 11 of whom did not). The participants represented schools of different sizes (ranging from 70 pupils to over 500 pupils), different pupil populations (eight of the represented schools had a large proportion of pupils with a minority background). Nine teachers represented district schools, while the rest represented city schools. All participating teachers were anonymised and given fictitious names.

4.2   Analysis and procedures

I used a stepwise deductive-induction (SDI) approach to analyse the data. The approach bases on an inductive principle – beginning with raw data and moving towards concepts or theories through incremental deductive feedback loops. This differs from many other qualitative approaches in that it uses only one level of codes, sticking to a pure inductive strategy (Tjora, 2017, p. 197). In the initial rounds of data processing, I transcribed all data manually myself. In the next step of the process, I started over with the first interview transcription to develop codes. Codes within the SDI approach are referred to within grounded theory as 'open coding' or 'eclectic coding' (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Saldañas, 2013, p. 188). In the first step of coding, I worked to find codes that explained in detail what actually emerged in the interviews by using concepts already existing in the data, thereby building on the participants' own statements and words. These are referred to as 'native concepts' in what is called 'in vivo' coding (Saldañas, 2013, p. 7). After coding the first

interview transcript, I had four codes. I continued to work my way through the transcripts and, as insights and new concepts emerged, I added codes to the list. The final code list (shown below) comprised 11 codes, all based on informants' own words. For an SDI approach, this number of codes is relatively small, which is partly attributable to my decision to make each code quite broad. At the same time, this also conveys that the informants' responses largely referred to many of the same concepts and topics.

- To understand oneself as a part of a whole: how to function as a human being in society

- Learning rules of conduct: to be together, paying attention to each other, reflecting and seeing more than oneself, respect, equality, justice, norms and rules

- Democratic processes and principles, majority decides

- Classroom talk: to participate, reflect, discuss and promote one's own opinions

- Daily routines: source and garbage sorting, traffic rules and reflex use

- International relations: The United Nations, things that happen abroad

- That which is close to the pupil: family, relatives, school, our village, nature

- Myself and my body: girls and boys, similarities and differences

- Natural science/geography: days, dates, seasons, the earth, the sun, the moon and the continents

- History: from the Stone Age moving to the present time

- No clear reflection on initial social studies education

The coding revealed that a majority of the teachers emphasised content related to the first six categories (codes that relate to the political field of the subject). This is clear, for instance, concerning the question of what constitutes initial social studies education. Here, 15 of the 30 teachers emphasised aspects related to the political field, eight referred to aspects related to 'natural science/ geography', and seven did not seem to have reflected much on what constitutes initial social studies education, adhering to the last category in the coding list. After coding all of the transcripts, my impression was that much of what the teachers spoke about could be related to the political field and the political science part of the subject. This realisation can also be referred to as an empirical-analytical reference point (EAR), i.e. a form of analytical fixing that arises in the coding, where elements in the empirical data triggers analytical ideas (Tjora, 2017).

From here, I decided to focus on the political aspects of initial social studies education. I went through the data again, this time distinguishing between 'political content' and 'non-political content'. Building on Arendt`s (2005) interpretation of politics (as outlined previously), many statements were easy to distinguish from the political, such as excerpts conveying 'natural science/geography' (e.g. focusing on learning about different types of trees, insects and animals, or days, dates and continents). Other excerpts related to 'that

which is close to the pupil' were more challenging to place. I decided to draw a line for the political at the private.[9] Teacher statements expressing learning about 'your body', 'family', or that which is 'closest to the child' were therefore interpreted as sociology or social psychology themes, not politics. The statements placed within the 'non-political' category differed from those placed within the 'political' category by focusing on the very close communities, e.g. placing more emphasis on the individual (micro-level) rather than on situating the children in a larger (social) community (meso-/macro-level[10]) as such. Themes that recurred in the answers placed in this category were 'sexuality', 'different family forms' and 'health' (in the sense of how to take care of your body or live a healthy life).

After this categorisation, I could set aside the material regarded as 'non-political' and delve deeper into the material considered political. This constituted the second SDI step – to collect all data of relevance to the research question in groups (Tjora, 2010). In this process, I started to obtain a clearer picture of initial political education in social studies education. My impression was that much of what the teachers spoke about could be understood as different approaches or attempts to orient their pupils in terms of what it is like to be a part of a greater (political) society or how to act 'politically' to be a citizen. This realisation also marked the beginning of the last SDI step – developing concepts.

In search of theoretical contributions or more general labels on what I observed, I found that Hannah Arendt's *Theory of Judgement* had some transferable value to the observed phenomenon. That said, this theory is incomplete and was not designed to comment on the development of a political mindset in children. Consequently, I chose to borrow some aspects from Arendt and others in order to construct my own theoretical framework for analytical purposes. This can be regarded as concept development, which requires moving from preconceived notions to new 'narratives' about what we seek to understand. Abduction occurs when we discover conditions (in the form of code groups or main themes) that do not fit with existing theory and speculate on how we in a more theoretical sense should understand our observations (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014, p. 5). The development of the pre-political perspective was thus a way for me to theorise what I observed.[11] After developing the pre-political perspective, I conducted additional coding rounds using NVivo transcription and categorised the data based on the different aspects of the pre-political perspective.

4.3 Validity, reliability and ethics

All teachers voluntarily participated in this study and informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time. As only a limited number of teachers participated in the study, the results do not allow for statistical generalisation; nevertheless, the findings are still suitable for analytical generalisations (Martinussen, 1984). I sought to make my data selection, collection and analysis procedures clear, and I further attempted to secure the validity of the study by specifying how I arrived at my understanding of the study results

(Thagaard, 2013). Such transparency and specificity in terms of procedures and interpretations also contributes to generalisation by enabling the transfer of knowledge from one situation to another (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The pre-political perspective was built from my reading of the interviews; therefore, my theorisation is explicitly rooted in the data, which clearly affected my interpretation of the teacher statements.

5   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following analysis shows *what characterises the political part of initial social studies education.* By categorising teacher responses in terms of pre-political assets, I outline what aspect(s) of the political were most prominent in their statements.

5.1   Seeing from another perspective and recognising oneself as a part of a larger whole

Developing pupils' ability to see from the perspective of others and to recognise themselves as part of a larger whole was referred to by the teachers in different ways as a goal of the initial training.

> I would have started with the pupils and how we want the class to function as a group (Ina, 37).

> I think it is to understand how to relate to others and to understand Norwegian rules in a way (Julie, 28).

> It is about placing yourself in the world in a way, into this class or into this group, who they are and how they should be in this miniature society, and being able to function inside this small community inside the class or within the whole grade (Ella, 47).

> That they should experience a little themselves, beginning to relate to those around. Being with fellow pupils, establishing a class community. In first grade, we use a lot of time on building a class community. We use time on playing, learning the rules of the game, learning to be together, paying attention to each other, reflecting and 'waking up' a little. Being able to see more than just oneself (Sara, 34).

> Seeing oneself as a part of the society at school, I think that is the most important thing in social studies. To learn that you are a part of a society. In the beginning they are very occupied with themselves, they don't see how what they do can affect not only one, but also a whole group. That what they do affects others' actions and that it affects many others (Hanna, 30).

Ina seemed to link it to what is closest to the pupils, and how the pupils want 'the class to function as a group'. This implies that the pupils have to see themselves as individuals with individual rights, but also as part of a concrete community, which also requires

respecting others and their rights. Julie presented a somewhat larger perspective: 'relate to others' can mean classmates, but it can also be more general. Her further reference to 'understanding Norwegian rules' indicates that she is seeking to create a slightly larger, overall understanding among the pupil of their place in the Norwegian society. Hanna, Sara and Ella in many ways elevated the discussion by referring to 'class community', 'miniature society', 'being able to function' and 'learning the rules of the game'. Their excerpts demonstrate the capacity to be part of a greater society. 'Learning the rules of the games' or helping pupils to see their own actions as affecting others implies being able to see from another perspective, creating an understanding of a greater community, or learning how to behave within the community. This can be seen in connection to Arendt's interpretation of politics as 'the world that emerges between us—the world that emerges through our interactions with one another or through the ways in which our individual actions and perspectives are aggregated into collectivities' (Arendt, 2005). Implicit here is also a general understanding of, and respect for, the opinions and needs of others and of power-relations, e.g. democratic meaning formation, and hence politics.

Aspects concerning seeing other perspectives or recognising oneself as part of a larger whole are further often associated with *rules, routines and norms of behaviour*. Nine teachers made direct references to rules on the question of what is the most important thing to learn.

> The most important thing is to learn about rules, routines, how to cooperate with others, democracy, and different cultures (Selvy, 39).

> Social relations, how to function as a human being, how to achieve the best possible community. It includes norms and rules, both inside and outside the school. Building relationships with each other, building a social network, learning and repeating how to function socially (Kari, 38).

> Awareness of what social studies is perhaps? Who are we, and who are the others? We`re part of a society. The society is also the school. Working with making rules and so on. The school is a miniature society, we have rules and regulations, and there are consequences if the rules are broken (Sara, 34).

These statements reflect an orientation of the individual in a larger whole, or as Kari states, 'community', through a focus on rules and routines, i.e. a kind of orientation towards what is expected behaviour from the individual or how to work together to 'achieve the best possible community', This requires that the pupils express their opinions, reflect and discuss them inside the class community, and both agree and disagree with their classmates. The focus on rules, routines, i.e. expectations of the individual from the collective, is further exemplified by Sara, who stated, 'there are consequences if the rules are broken'. This implies an orientation in how others see/expect from you, which requires taking the perspective of others. On the question of what is the most important thing to learn, eight of 15 teachers highlighted *democracy and co-determination*; for instance, by letting pupils make rules and standards for behaviour or through voting.

Then I think of the pupils themselves in relation to how we want it at school, with rules and democracy, things like that, that`s where we always start (Kathrine, 39).

To understand your rights. How the community works and co-determination, but I would have started with the pupils and how we want the class to work, as a group (Eva, 35).

We begin talking about democracy early, making class rules. Co-determination and deciding together how we want it in class (Lars, 42).

Both Eva and Lars referred to 'democracy' and 'co-determination' in relation to 'how we want it at school'. In this sense, a focus on rules/making rules or talking about desired behaviour is used as a means to see both the opinions of others and the whole and to facilitate an understanding of how to develop opinions and decisions together. Kathrine was not as precise in her statement as were Eva and Lars, but here, too, 'rules', 'democracy' and 'how we want it at school' were related. Simultaneously, teachers emphasised the development of more basic individual skills and understanding necessary for political engagement. This was reflected in, for instance, the teachers' emphasis on promoting an *understanding of diversity* – that people have different opinions and perceptions, and that it is not necessary for something to be right or wrong. Six teachers pointed to this as an important thing to learn.

Why we should listen to others, to know that justice and expectations can be perceived differently from person to person. That we should be inclusive but independent human beings. That it is essential in order to respect those around (Ella, 47).

The pupils should learn that both expectations and perceptions can differ, that's important. They should learn to be reflective about justice and equality (Ane, 26).

These excerpts illustrate the teachers' intention to raise awareness of others and to enable the recognition of oneself as a part of a larger whole. By listening to others, respecting others and recognising that people have different opinions and interpretations, the ability to assume other perspectives can also be stimulated. Ella and Ane both referred to 'justice' and 'expectations' as something that can differ, which can be interpreted as their effort to foster awareness in the pupils that they are not universal and are also dependent on the individual and on the context. Ane stated that the pupils should be 'reflective about justice and equality' – this also implies an awareness of others' views on these issues, to see them as topics that are not established. Ella also saw this in relation to the development of individuality, to teach the pupils to be 'inclusive but independent human beings'. This in turn involves an assessment of oneself, of one's own attitudes and opinions in light of the greater whole, as well as an assessment of individual vs. collective preferences and perceptions. Justice/injustice and equality/inequality are of concern to most children. Several teachers in this study noted this. Politics also concerns such notions.

Political negotiations are characterised by either a desire for equality or a struggle for the distribution of goods and burdens, both of which inherently involve justice and equality.

5.2   Imagining oneself in the place of others

The possibility for pupils to imagine was also evident in the teachers' statements. On the question of what constitutes initial social studies education, three answers were related to imagination.

> There is a lot that has to be placed the first year, starting to reflect is very important, beginning the reflection process. It is a lot that happens outside of them, which they because of age cannot be conscious about, we use a lot of time on reflection and conversations, and that it is okay to have different opinions (Eva, 35).

> We talk a lot; the children reflect, wonder and ask questions (Live, 37).

> It is to participate, to reflect over things, discuss things and to promote own opinions. To participate is observing and reflecting over it (Morten, 28).

None of these excerpts included the term 'imagination'; yet, it can be argued that pupils` potential to imagine themselves in the place of others was present. The teachers here pointed to 'conversation', 'reflection', and 'asking questions'. Conversations allow pupils to articulate their thoughts and feelings, partake in classroom discussions, and have the opportunity to understand others. Reflection further implies investigating or thinking through different sides of one's own or others' actions, attitudes and ideas, also implying making 'a visit' (Biesta, 2014). Discussing involves expressing and sharing opinions in order to influence each other. Based on the teacher descriptions, it cannot be stated that the pupils actually used their imagination; however, the potential did exist for the pupils to imagine themselves in the place of others. On the question of how teachers perceive their pupils' interest and motivation for social studies issues, two other examples of the potential to use imagination were elicited.

> They were very engaged during the work for the United Nations Day and UNICEF`s fundraising campaign. They asked many good and reflective questions. I think this engaged them more because it deals with children their own age and this made them feel the difference between Norway and other countries more easily (Laila, 40).

> What gave me the most from the pupils was this fall when we worked on the Syrian war. The pupils were very upset because it is about kids, and they were like 'Hey?' Kids their age should not have it that way. While they have a SmartBoard, the Syrian children have bomb holes in their blackboard (Kathrine, 39).

Laila and Kathrine both referred to situations in which pupils' potential to use their imagination was present. Laila used words such as 'engaged' and expressions such as pupils 'feel the difference more easily'. Neither Laila nor I can confidently say what the pupils actually felt here, but as Laila stressed, the pupils asked 'reflective questions'. As reflection involves a level of comparison, the pupils likely at least tried to imagine the lives of the other children. Kathrine explained how the pupils were 'very upset' because of the plight of the children in the Syrian war. This shows that the pupils were emotionally moved – in order to be so, it is reasonable to think that they at least tried to understand how these children lived/felt. The excerpts demonstrate that the pupils, to some extent, compared the other children with themselves, and consequently had compassion for the other children. Again, this could imply the use of imagination; nevertheless, whether they actually did so cannot be asserted with confidence.

5.3   Expanding one's own opinions by incorporating those of others (in the direction of representative thinking)

Developing their pupils' ability to argue for and promote their own opinions was emphasised by all of the teachers, as reflected in their answers to what working methods/approaches they use.

> I work to develop their oral skills, which is about being able to contribute, reflect on things, discuss, to promote your opinions. Participating, observing and reflecting. I always turn to this, the pupils can contribute a lot here (Kathrine, 39).

> The pupils are good at participating in conversations, they have developed their abilities to substantiate and explain assertions and opinions (Laila, 40).

If we assume that politics is a claims-making activity, then – according to these statements – children must rehearse or be exposed to such activity during initial social studies education. To 'justify', 'promote', 'reflect' or 'explain' one's own 'opinions' and 'assertions' requires insight into or understanding of others' arguments, as claims imply counterclaims or contestations, which show the potential for pupils to expand their own opinions. The teachers' reference to 'reflection', once again, requires pupils to use critical thinking. In order for pupils to 'justify own claims' or 'reflect on social themes', assessing opposing views and explanations is necessary. Political thinking and action require not only the ability to promote one's own arguments and to position oneself in the place of others but also the capacity to expand one's own opinions by incorporating those of others – e.g. representative meaning formation. While the teachers emphasised the importance of developing the pupils' ability to see their own and others' views and to argue their own opinions, a few of them strongly focused on developing a representative mindset in the children. However, the teacher statements revealed that the children become familiar with the idea of representativeness in initial social studies education. Ten teachers mentioned regularly working with democratic meaning formation, and that their pupils

understood this conception. Conversely, three teachers did not think their pupils understood the concept of democracy. Two teachers were unsure whether their pupils understood the concept of democracy.

> I think they have to be older in order to understand what democracy really means, but we do tell them that it is about co-determination (Selvy, 39).

> We have talked about democracy, but if they understand what it means, I am not sure (Ina, 29).

> We discuss their perception of concepts. Letting them try to explain from their point of view. We often do this in plenary so we get a lot of explanations and then we try to agree on one common explanation that we use in class (Lise, 57).

> In fact, the understanding of democracy comes early. Taking part in deciding is something they are occupied with. They use the words 'just' and 'unfair' but, if you use their words and put them into context, they understand. For example, by voting on which movie to watch while eating, they understand that if there are ten who want to see one, while only three want to see the other, it is actually the proposal with the most votes that wins. This is despite the fact that those three have a huge desire to see the other, and then it is not unfair since the other movie got the most votes (Morten, 28).

Selvy and Ina found the concept of democracy too difficult to teach, as they considered it to be too abstract for their pupils to understand. The excerpts from Lise and Morten illustrate a different perception. Lise`s response provides an example of the stimulation of a representative mindset. She spoke about synthesising opinions or instructing the pupils to make/develop new opinions together, e.g. 'explain from their point of view' and 'try to agree on one common agreement'. Morten's response regarding pupils' understanding of social studies concepts further demonstrates that pupils are faced with questions related to majority vs. minority opinions and needs. Morten described how he used polls in the classroom so his pupils would experience co-determination. Likewise, seven other teachers referred to the use of polls as a way to stimulate thoughts about democracy and representativeness. However, as described by Morten, employing polls seems to be somewhat random and not a part of planned democracy education. Hence, it can be stated that pupils have experience with majority vs. minority questions, but that this experience randomly occurs, perhaps in connection with other subjects or situations during the school day. Nevertheless, the teacher descriptions revealed that they *do* touch upon the idea of representative thinking but that, in many ways, the ability to express and justify one's own opinions is a more prominent goal.

5.4 Publicly promoting opinions and recognising the idea of universal interdependence

The public sharing of perspectives and arguments was emphasised by the social studies teachers.

> Well, in initial education it is a lot of dialogue, especially in the listening corner. Where the children can put words on events or things that affect their daily lives. It is important to try to ask open questions and, when doing so, you get a lot of answers, and then you have to build on what they say, and then try to reinforce it to show them that they are making the point (Sara, 34).

> During a school day, there are situations where we discuss social studies themes, or what we should do to have the best possible class community (Morten, 28).

> The initial social studies education is primarily in the listening corner with a lot of conversation and discussion (Lise, 57).

Publicly sharing opinions, as well as forming and testing individual opinions, appeared to be dominant activities throughout the school day, extending beyond social studies education, as noted by Morten. The listening corner (*lyttekrok* in Norwegian) practice was mentioned by four of the teachers as a place in which much of the initial social studies teaching takes place – intentionally or not. Sara's and Lise's responses regarding working methods and approaches used in initial education illustrate this. Sara also clearly emphasised her pupils' opportunity to speak their mind, 'it is important to ask open questions'. This implies giving the pupils the chance to reason freely without having the expectation of a predefined answer to a particular question. Sara, Morten and Lise all further indicated the exchange of opinions, using words such as 'discussion' and 'conversation'. Although the public promotion of opinions is certainly practised during initial social studies education, it is difficult to say whether this encourages the children to recognise the idea of universal interdependence. None of the teachers explicitly stated that universal interdependence was emphasised in initial training. However, some traces of this notion were detectable in their descriptions. Iver's description of the most important thing to learn touches upon the idea of universal interdependence in several ways:

> Well, I've only been teaching social studies this year, for about four months, so I haven't thought much about what is most important to learn, but it is something about creating social understanding of how the world is connected. This is related to both environmental issues and garbage. And we have talked about emergency services and also the world map, and I've tried to create a bigger picture for them, so they understand that they're a part of a whole (Iver, 26).

Iver first mentioned the idea of 'how the world is connected'. This can be related to different aspects of universal interdependence – distance between countries,

communication, trade, etc. – but it may also be associated with politics, e.g. understanding how decisions are made. The second, and perhaps clearest, example of universal interdependence here is Iver's emphasis on environmental issues and garbage. Regardless of how the topics of environment and garbage were approached, an emphasis on joint work was involved, which in turn implies notions of common interest, not individual needs. Iver's description of their work with emergency services could also be inferred to encompass notions of universal interdependence – however, how this topic was actually communicated in the classroom is difficult to identify based on the excerpt. Another excerpt in which universal interdependence with respect to environmental issues was elicited was made by Lars concerning on what themes he focused in the initial training.

> Well, for instance, now we learn about the letter M, and then it is natural that the word 'miljø' (Norwegian word for environment) comes up. Learning about the environment then becomes a part of learning the letter M. Then I might show the pupils a picture of a boat leaking oil, asking them how this influences the environment, and perhaps there is a bird there, which is not doing well, and I ask the pupils what thoughts they have on this, and what we should do in order to save the environment (Lars, 42).

Lars` description above illustrates how human action has consequences for the surrounding environment. Whether universal interdependence has a place in this context and whether pupils' thinking in relation to universal interdependence is stimulated through initial social studies education, however, cannot be determined from these data. That said, it is clear from the data that the opportunity for introducing the concept of universal interdependence was at least present.

5.5   Accepting conflict and practising forgiveness

Upon first glance, the conflictual aspect seems to be excluded from initial social studies teaching. However, indications of both conflict and forgiveness are implicit in the teachers' descriptions. The excerpts below appear to recognise the conflictual aspect.

> That it is okay to discuss. We focus a lot on the fact that, when we discuss, it isn't one thing that is right. We have different meanings and different interpretations and that is allowed (Per, 35).

> We`ve talked about deciding, how we can decide, and whether it means getting what you want all the time, or if it means bringing proposals to the table, and the process of agreeing on a proposal, here we have talked about the municipal level (Morten, 28).

Per clarified the importance of being allowed to debate, disagree and have different opinions. To 'have different meanings and different interpretations' could mean that the children are informed that consensus is neither always possible nor desired. In a way, this also supports the idea that children obtain experience with forgiveness, in the sense of

'agreeing to disagree' or the acknowledgement of and respect for others. Per`s description of discussions in the classroom clearly demonstrate the potential to reinforce children's understanding that not everyone always agrees or that consensus is not always possible. Yet, Per did not refer explicitly to conflict – in this sense, in his descriptions, deliberation seemed to be more prominent than agonism. Conflict was not directly mentioned by any of the other teachers in this study either, and no statements were made from which the importance of conflict could be determined, other than that 'it is okay to disagree'. However, the excerpt from Morten somewhat differed in this regard. Morten problematised whether deciding actually means 'getting what you want all the time, or if it means bringing proposals to the table'. This may show that he provided room for conflict in the process of making political decisions. Simultaneously, 'agreeing on a proposal' could here also indicate that he stressed deliberation. 'Common agreement' was emphasised by all of the teachers.

> To understand that you're a part of a whole and of democratic processes. This we do a lot in the first grade, in initial training. To learn to wait for your turn, that the voice of everyone should be heard and, if we disagree, that we can vote on it. It is about democracy and that the majority decides (Eva, 35).

> To wait for your turn and that the voice of everyone should be heard, and if you don`t agree, you can vote over it. It is about democracy and majority decides (Ane, 26).

Both Eva and Ane seemed focused on reaching agreement through discussions and conversations and, if this was not possible, voting to reach a consensus. These references, as well as that to the 'majority decides', further reveal an emphasis on consolidation, not conflict. The focus on discussions and polls to reach a common agreement also demonstrate an emphasis on deliberative and direct models of democracy in teaching.

6   CONCLUSION

From a pre-political perspective, how and to what extent is politics in focus during initial social studies education in Norwegian primary schools from first to fourth grades?

The term 'pre-political' was introduced here as indicative of a state in which we find ourselves while on the path to becoming a political thinker and actor. In this respect, the pre-political perspective represented an analytical starting point to investigate teacher statements about initial social studies education.

The analysis showed that the teachers worked to develop a pre-political perspective in their pupils; in other words, they built a foundation from which their pupils could learn to think and act politically. This was achieved through the collective orientation of the pupils. The teachers described working to develop their pupils` perspective of the world and to instil in them a sense of community as well as an understanding of responsibility for others and of cooperation. This can be described as a process of political socialisation, of becoming a member of a political community, and of developing a political identity in

the context of discussing different societal issues. However, other aspects of the political were less emphasised by the teachers or could have been worked with differently or in more nuanced ways in the classrooms. In the following, I highlight these potential variations and discuss their implications for initial political education.

If we begin with assets as defined in the pre-political perspective, two assets, or areas, received little direct attention from the teachers in the initial social studies education: 'imagine oneself in the place of others' and 'recognising the idea of universal interdependence'. Although it cannot be stated that the pupils do not develop perspectives on these areas in initial education, the analysis did not identify teacher statements that directly mentioned working on developing these areas among the pupils. That said, several statements could be taken to indicate that the pupils potentially have the opportunity to develop thoughts about these areas in their initial training. Regardless, there is definitely great potential to work with and explore these aspects in initial education. To imagine oneself in the place of others is transferable to many social studies topics, not just political topics. Cultivating pupils' ability to imagine themselves in the place of others can therefore be expedient for many areas of the subject (e.g. history and sociology). The stimulation of imagination could be carried out more systematically by, for instance, using role-play, stories or comparisons in the teaching. Although the use of such approaches does not guarantee that pupils will actually imagine themselves in the place of others, it could at least foster their ability to do so. With regard to recognising the idea of universal interdependence, more systematic and thoughtful work could also stimulate proficiency in this area. Universal interdependence is in many ways a core component of society, as well as politics. There are many topics that can stimulate thoughts about this concept that are also suitable for young children. In the analysis, reference was made to the environment; climate might be another example, but also working with political decision-making processes or citizens' initiatives could also be fruitful here. With adaptations, and through preparations, even young children can 'do' politics (Serriere et al., 2010). As for aspects that were emphasised by the teachers but which could perhaps benefit from being worked with differently and in more nuanced ways, two aspects in particular stand out.

Democracy and co-determination were emphasised by the teachers. These aspects were described as means used to develop the pupils' understanding of themselves as part of a greater 'political' community. In other words, democracy and co-determination were used so that the children could identify their own individual preferences in relation to those of others and with respect to the greater whole. Some of the teachers also noted that they used co-determination as a means for developing their pupils' understanding of democracy. The teacher descriptions demonstrated that initial social studies education seems to primarily be education through democracy (Koritzinsky, 2014; Stray, 2011) – e.g. giving pupils the experience of how democratic processes work by partaking in democratic activities. Simultaneously, whether the situations the teachers described are actual democratic situations, or simulations of them, could be discussed. For instance,

several of the teachers described situations in which they gave their pupils the choice between two different tasks, questions or benefits (e.g. what book to read during lunch) and stated that doing so was about learning democracy. The teachers further referred to co-determination as democracy, with an emphasis on reaching a common agreement – and if this was not possible, voting on the issue to reach a consensus of the majority. Thus, the teachers seemed to emphasise deliberative and direct models of democracy in their teaching, with the majority principle providing democratic legitimacy.

This focus is certainly beneficial in developing pupils' understanding of themselves as part of a larger whole and for acknowledging the opinions of others, both of which are stressed as important assets in the pre-political perspective. Simultaneously, whether the focus on deliberation and agreement overshadowed important aspects of being part of a larger political society could be debated. 'Real-life' politics is diverse and extensive; it is a battle of interests, negotiations and priorities. It is winners and losers. One could therefore question whether the focus on deliberation and common agreement creates a glorified understanding of being part of a greater (political) community. At the same time, and as argued for in the pre-political perspective, an incipient political mindset is the foundation for thinking and acting politically, and community thinking and forming collective interests and arguments is without doubt important components here. Nevertheless, it is still important to reflect upon whether an initial political education should also include more 'brutal' realties from real-life politics. This also relates to the second aspect of the political, which was little emphasised by the teachers in this study: disagreement and conflict.

The analysis showed that the teachers worked to develop their pupils' understanding of the fact that not everyone always agrees, and that their pupils should learn that it is important to have different opinions. Simultaneously, their focus on the importance of disagreement and different opinions appeared to be more about the fact that it is important that their pupils learn to express their own individual opinions, and that the 'goal' of sharing opinions is to find common agreement. The teachers' reference to 'agreeing on a common proposal' or 'common agreement' exemplifies the teachers` focus on consolidation over conflict. In this regard, deliberation (again) was more prominent than agonism in their descriptions. What this means for the development of a political mindset is difficult to answer. At the same time, we know that, in general, disputable classroom environments have a positive effect on pupils towards politics and enable them to express themselves and participate in discussion (Baysal, 2009; Campbell, 2008; Hahn, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Moreover, partaking in intraclass discussions reflects a higher consciousness of political efficiency (Almond & Verba, 1963). The analysis of this study showed that class discussions and conversations/reflections on questions and issues that concern the pupils were strongly emphasised by the teachers. In this way, the pupils` political efficiency may also be developed. However, there is probably room for more disagreement and conflict without reaching a common agreement, even already in initial education.

Despite the fact that not all aspects of the political are equally emphasised in initial social studies education and often seem to tend towards harmony and common agreement, I still argue that the pupils have the potential to be politically orientated or socialised in initial social studies education. This is in terms of developing a pre-political perspective – e.g. a foundation for thinking and acting politically. Simultaneously, it is worth questioning whether more systematic and holistic thinking about initial political education could perhaps serve to lay the foundation for pupils to think and act politically in stronger and more diverse ways.

6.1 Implications for initial political education

Based on this study, a reflection on the following points is proposed for teachers or others engaged in initial political education of children or teacher education:

- Do more actual democracy, do not simulate it. Do politics!

Encourage pupils to partake in (political) decisions, citizen projects, etc. Facilitate opportunities for pupils to investigate, discuss and find solutions together (on a problem in everyday school life, in the local community, or even a societal problem). This will give them experience in being part of, but also deciding and working within, a greater whole, as well as becoming familiar with how actual political decisions are made, how negotiations occur, and how solutions to common problems are identified.

- Do more discussion and debate, encourage disagreement and conflict.

Use discussion, disagreement and conflict as teaching methods. This will provide opportunities for developing both the competencies and knowledge necessary for political engagement (see, for instance, Giesecke, 1997 or Reinhardt, 2015). By planning for what questions or topics to address in class, societal issues can also be introduced into initial education. Several approaches are applicable here. Sometimes, it is enough to ask a question that will definitively engage the pupils. Other times, it may be appropriate to assign the pupils a view for which they should argue. This might also require them to imagine themselves in the place of others. Dilemmas can also be appropriate here, in which pupils must decide between two equal benefits or burdens, implying that they have to explore different alternatives (see Reinhardt, 2015).

- Provide teachers with knowledge and support in order to teach politics from an early age.

If not done so already, consider making it a formal requirement for primary school teachers to have politics or social science as a part of their educational background in order to benefit their teaching. The political education that in-service teachers receive should also include more knowledge on how to teach children about politics and becoming a part of a political society. This also requires more research-based knowledge on the field.

6.2 Further research

The pre-political perspective provides us with a framework to better understand the work of teachers in relation to a political perspective. However, in order to confirm whether my thoughts regarding the pre-political perspective are rooted in reality, an investigation of children is necessary. Further research should investigate children and the development of their political thinking as well as classroom practices and initial education in politics more closely.

REFERENCES

Abendschön, S. (2017). Children`s political learning in primary school- evidence from Germany. *Eduation,* pp. 450-461. doi:10.1080/03004279.2015.1115115

Amadeo, J. T.-P. (2002). *Civic kowledge and engagement: An IEA study of upper secondary students in sixteen countries.* Amsterdam: Association for the Evalutation of Educational Achievement.

Archen, C. H. (2002). Parental socialization and rational party identification. *Political Behavior,* pp. 151-170. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1021278208671

Arendt, H. (1961). *Between Past and Future.* New York: Viking Press.

Arendt, H. (1977). *The crisis in Culture, in Between Past and Future.* New York: Penguin Books.

Arendt, H. (1982). *Lectures on Kant`s Political Philosophy.* (R. Beiner, Ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, H. (1988). *The human condition* (1st ed. ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, H. (1990). Philosophy and Politics. *Social Research.*

Arendt, H. (2005). *The Promise of Politics.* New York : Schocken Books .

Bartninkas, V. (2014). The pre-political and the political in Aristotele`s politics. *Problemos,* pp. 18-29. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/6391386/The_Pre_Political_and_the_Political_in_Aristotles_Politics_In_Problemos_2014_85_18_29?auto=download

Benhabib, S. (1996). *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Berti, A. E. (2001, November). Third Graders` Understanding of Core Political Concepts (Law, Nation-State, Government) Before and After Teaching. *Genetic, social and general psychology monographs,* pp. 346-377.

Biesta, G. (2014). *Utdanningens vidunderlige risiko [The beautiful risk of education].* Fagbokforlaget.

Briseid, L. G. (2012). Demokratiforståelse og intensjoner i demokratioppdragelsen. Norske læreplaner mellom 1974 og 2010 [Democracy understanding and intentions in democratic education. Norwegian curricula between 1974 and 2010]. *Nordic Studies in Education,* pp. 50-66. Retrieved from https://uia.brage.unit.no/uia-xmlui/handle/11250/139209

Børhaug, K. (2005). Hvorfor samfunnskunnskap? [Why social science?]. In K. F. Børhaug, & L. Aase (Ed.), *Fagenes begrunnelser: Skolens fag og arbeidsmåter i et danningsperspektiv* (pp. 171-183). Fagbokforlaget.

Børhaug, K. (2007). *Oppseding til demokrati. Ein studie av politisk oppseding i norsk skule [Education for democracy. A study of political education in the Norwegian School].* Avhandling for graden doctor philosophiae (dr.philos.) Universitetet i Bergen. Retrieved from http://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/2601

Børhaug, K. (2008). Politisk oppseding i norsk skule [Political education in the Norwegian School]. *Norsk Pedagogisk Tidsskrift*, pp. 262-274. Retrieved Febuary 12, 2020, from https://www.idunn.no/npt/2008/04/politisk_oppseding_i_norsk_skule

Campbell, D. E. (2008). Voice in the Classroom: How an Open Classrom Climate Fosters Political Engagement among Adolescents. *Political Behavior*, pp. 437-454.

Cook, T. &. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis issues for field settings.* Houghton Mifflin Co.

Cresswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Sage.

d` Entreves, M. (2019). *The Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from Hannah Arendt: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/#toc

Delli Caprini, M., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters.* Yale University Press.

Dias, T. &. (2014). Children and adolescents as political actors: Collective visions of politics and citizenship. *Journal of Moral Education*, pp. 250-268. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2014.918875

Eikeland, H. (1989). *Fortid, nåtid og framtid. En fagdidaktisk innføring om undervisning i o-fag og samfunnsfag [Past, present and future. A subject didactic introduction on teaching in social science].* TANO.

Ekman, J. &. (2009). Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology. *Human Affairs.* doi:https://doi.org/10.2478/s13374-012-0024-1

Flanagan, C., & Fasion, N. (2001). Youth civic development: Implications of research for social policy and programs. *Civic Engagement*, pp. 1-17. Retrieved February 17, 2020, from https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=slceciviceng

Frödin, O. (2011). The Art of the Possible - The Bullet or the Ballot Box: Defining Politics in the Emerging Global Order. *Theoria: Journal of Social and Poltical Theory*, pp. 1-20. Retrieved March 15, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/41802508

Gainous, J. &. (2012). The Effectiveness of Civic Education: Are "Good" Teachers Actually Good for "All" Students? *American Politics Research*, pp. 232-266. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X11419492

Garcís-Albacete, G. (2013). Promoting Political Interst in Schools: The Role of Civic Education. In S. Abenchön, *Growing into Politics: Contexts and Timing of Political Socialization* (pp. 91-114). Colchester: ECPR Press.

Glaser, B. &. (1976). The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research. AdlineTransaction. Retrieved from http://www.sxf.uevora.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Glaser_1967.pdf

Greenstein, F. (1965, 69 (4)). The Benevolent Leader Revisited: Children`s Images of Political Leaders in Three Democracies. *The American Political Science Review*, pp. 1371-1398.

Greenstein, F. (1975). The Benevolent Leader Revisited: Children`s Images of Political Leaders in Three Democracies. *The American Political Science Review*, pp. 1371-1398.

Haavelsrud, M. (1979). Indoctrination or Politization through Text Book Content. *International Journal of Political Education*, pp. 67-84.

Haug, L. (2017). "Without Politics It Would Be Like a Robbery Without Police" 1: Children`s Interest in Politics. *American Behavioral Scientist*, pp. 254-272.

Heldal Stray, J. &. (2016). Hvordan kan evne til refleksjon og dømmekraft utvikles gjenom dialogisk undervisning? [How can the ability to reflection and judgement develop through dialogical teaching?]. *Utbilding og Demokrati*, pp. 7-24. Retrieved March 11, 2020, from https://www.oru.se/globalassets/oru-sv/forskning/forskningsmiljoer/hs/humus/utbildning-och-demokrati/2016/nr-2/heldal-stray--satra---hvordan-kan-evne-til-refleksjon-og-dommekraft-utvikles-gjennom-dialogisk-undervisning.pdf

Heldal Stray, J. (2010). *Demokratisk medborgerskap i norsk skole?: en kritisk analyse. Avhandling for ph.d.-graden [Democratic citizenship in the Norwegian School?: a critical analysis. Dissertation for the PhD degree].* Pedagogisk forskningsinstitutt, Utdanningsvitenskapelig fakultet Universitetet i Oslo. Retrieved from https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/30460

Heywood, A. (2013). *Politics* (4th ed ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hooghe, M. &. (2011). The Effects of Civic Education on Political Knowledge. A Two Year Panel survey among Belgian Adolescents. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, pp. 321-339.

Koritzinsky, T. (1972). *Samfunnsfag og påvirkning [Social science and impact].* Universitetsforlaget.

Koritzinsky, T. (2014). *Samfunnskunnskap. Fagdidaktisk innføring [Social science. A subject didactical introduction]* (4th ed.). Universitetsforlaget.

Lindseth, A. &. (2004). A phenomenological hermenutical method for researching lived experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Science* , pp. 145-153.

Lo, J. (2017). Empowering Young People thorugh Conflict and Conciliation: Attending to the Political and Agonism in Democratic Education. *Democracy and Education*. Retrieved from https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol25/iss1/2

Martinussen, W. (1984). *Sosiologisk analyse: en innføring [Sociological analysis: an introduction].* Universitetsforlaget.

McCowan, T. (2006). Approaching the political in citizenship education: the perspectives of Paulo Freire and Bernard Crick. *Educate*, pp. 57-70.

Niemi, R. &. (1998). *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn.* Yale University Press.

Quintelier, E. (2013). The Effect of Political Socialsation Agents on Political Participation between Ages Sixteen and Twenty-One. In S. Abenschön, *Growing into Politics. Context and Timing of Political Socialization* (pp. 139-160). Colchester : ECPR Press.

Samuelsson, M. (2013). Deliberativt demokrati i den norska skolan. Ger Lärare uttryck för deliberative uppfattinger när det kommer til demokrati och demokratiutbilding? [Deliberative democracy in the Norwegian School. Does teachers promote deliberative democracy conceptions?]. *Utbilding och demokrati*, pp. 47-63. Retrieved June 14, 2020, from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/27257655.pdf

Sheehan, J. (2006). The Problem of Sovereignty in European History. *American Historical Review*, pp. 1-18.

Smith, S. (2001). Education for judgement: An Areditan oxymoron? In G. Mordechai, *Hannah Arendt and education. Renewing Our Common World* (pp. 67-92). Colorado: Westview Press.

Solhaug, T. (2003). *Utdanning til demokratisk medborgerskap. Avhandling for graden dr.polit. Institutt for lærerutdanning og skoleutvikling [Education for democratic citizenship. Dissertation for the degree doctor philosophiae].* Universitetet i Oslo. Retrieved from https://www.uv.uio.no/ils/forskning/publikasjoner/rapporter-og avhandlingen/trond_solhaug_120.dpi%5B1%5D.pdf

Stray, J. (2011). *Demokrati på timeplanen [Democracy on the timetable]* (1st ed.). Fagbokforlaget.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2013). Retrieved January 09, 2020, from Læreplan i samfunnsfag (SAF1-03) [Social science curricula]: https://www.udir.no/kl06/SAF1-03

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2020). Retrieved May 22, 2020, from Læreplan i samfunnsfag (SAF1-04): https://www.udir.no/lk20/saf01-04

Tjora, A. (2010). *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis [Qualitative research methods in pracics]* (1st ed.). Gyldendal forlag.

Torney-Purta, J. &. (2004). Anticipated political engagement among adolescents in Australia, England, Norway and the United States. In J. Demaine, *Citizenship and political education today* (pp. 41-58). Palgrave/ Macmillan.

Torney-Purta, J. L. (2001). *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries: Civic knowledge and engagement at age foruteen.* Amsterdam : International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

van Deth, J. A. (2011). Children and politics: An empirical reassessment of early political socialization. *Political Psychology*, pp. 143-173.

Westheimer, J. &. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, pp. 237-269.

Whiteley, P. (2012). Does Citizenship Education Work? Evidence from a Decade of Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools in England. *Parliamentary Affairs*, pp. 513-535.

Youniss, J. B.-B. (2002). Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Research on Adolescense*, pp. 121-148. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/1532-7795.00027

Ødegaard Borge, J. (2015). *Creating Democratic Citizens? An analysis of Mock Electios ar Political Education in School. Dissertation for the degree of philosophiae doctor (PhD).* University of Bergen. Retrieved from http://bora.uib.no/bitstream/handle/1956/13138/dr-thesis-2016-Julie-Ane-Ødegaard-Borge.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

ENDNOTES

[1] The Norwegian Education Act: https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2006-06-23-724/KAPITTEL_17#KAPITTEL_17

[2] The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2013). *Social studies subject curriculum* (SAF1-03). Retrieved from https://www.udir.no/kl06/SAF1-03/Hele/Kompetansemaal/competence-aims-after-year-level-4?lplang=eng. 'The researcher' (*utforskeren*) intervened into the other main areas of the subject regarding how social science knowledge can be built through curiosity, creativity and critical thinking.

[3] A new national curriculum was implemented autumn 2020 (https://www.udir.no/lk20/saf01-04). The learning outcome formulations are somewhat changed here. When this study was conducted, the previous curriculum (https://www.udir.no/kl06/SAF1-03) was applicable.

[4] In classical political theory, the term 'pre-political' refers to the state of nature that arises before any form of political authority (Bartninkas, 2014). Ekman and Amnå (2009) has applied the term pre-political to describe young people's 'latent' political interest.

[5] Arendt never developed a systematic theory of judgement because of her sudden death in 1975. Her views on judgement, however, are presented in two primary sources: her essays 'The Crisis in Culture' (1961) and the 'Lectures on Kant`s Political Philosophy' (1970).

[6] Sociologists would perhaps interpret this as 'symbolic interactionism' (e.g. see George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer in Franzese, A., & Seigler, C. (2020). Symbolic interactionism. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_2125)

[7] In retrospect, it would have been appropriate to ask the teachers follow-up questions on this.

[8] This might be a sign that political education is an essential part of initial education and something that the teachers themselves think is important. Nevertheless, in order to confirm this, teachers would have had to be asked about it directly.

[9] This does not mean that 'the private' can never be political (e.g. Second Wave feminism), but at some point I had to set the boundaries for what is here considered political, otherwise, everything could be interpreted as political, I therefore chose to set a limit by the private.

[10] See for instance Schiefloe, P.M. (2011*). Mennesker og samfunn. Innføring i sosiologisk forståelse* [Humans and society. Introduction to sociological understanding, 2.ed.] ,2.utg. Fagbokforlaget.

[11] The pre-political perspective cannot be considered a theory; nevertheless, the development of the perspective here serves to facilitate the dissemination of the research findings.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Stine Johansen Utler, is PhD. Candidate in social studies didactics at the Department of Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her research interests centres on young children, their interest and perception/knowledge of politics, political education and democracy- and citizenship education.