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Democratic Schools – Analytical Perspectives

Keywords

Democracy, participation, knowledge, democratic values, institutions, citizenship

1 Democratic schools

In this introduction democratic schools means schools which are run according to democratic principles and values.

Why publish a special issue on democratic schools? First, from an educational perspective, schools are the most important public institution for citizen's qualification and socialization in life. While most students qualify for further studies or work, they experience schools very differently, and a large minority drop out before graduating. It is important to research how schools support all students and qualify them for later studies in life. Second, democracies are struggling to provide work and welfare for many citizens, and these democratic failures often lead to declining political trust. Democratic schools are often associated with preparing students for active citizenship where the idea is that student participation in democratic schools may promote students' inclination to participate in civic activities after leaving school (Biesta, 2011). This way, schools are to some extent seen as a solution to the political challenges in democracies. In this introduction to a special issue on democratic schools, I elaborate theoretically on what we should mean and how we should analyse schools as more or less democratic schools?

I argue that to really analyse how *democratic* the schools are, one must consider several aspects of their legal framework as well as their guiding norms and practices. This implies taking a holistic view of school based on democratic and educational theories and analysing several factors: participation, school as an institution, teaching styles, values, virtues, and above all, inclusion in school. A citizenship perspective is used to focus on the relationship between students, parents, and school leadership and related governing bodies, municipalities, and the state. Such a perspective clarifies that students at any level in school have rights and duties and should be treated as citizens. This perspective contrasts the view often held in schools that students are only citizens 'in the making'. Such a perspective tends to ignore that children are legal entities with extensive rights in society and framed by the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). It is argued that a citizenship perspective is a fruitful guiding principle for teacher practices to sufficiently cover important democratic aspects of schooling. The outline of the introduction is as follows. The main body is the theoretical

framework of schools, followed by a presentation of the research contributions in this special issue. Finally, I offer some research samples and suggestions for further reading.

2 Conceptual clarification and legal framework

Carl Cohen defines democracy as, "that system of community government in which, by and large, the members of a community participate, directly or indirectly, in the making of decisions which affect them all" (Cohen, 1971, 7). While Cohen had governing bodies of states in mind, the 'system of community government' might also work for the governing structures of schools and their body of decisions. Schools are usually regulated by law, and using Norway as an example, the law on education specifies the rights and duties of students and parents. Also, different governing bodies such as counties and municipalities have freedom and responsibilities in governing schools (Opplæringslova, 1998). Since students' (and their parents') life in school is regulated by legal frameworks we may speak of a 'school citizenship'. Isin og Nyers defines citizenship as "...an *institution' mediating rights (and duties – author comment) between the subjects of politics and the polity of which these subjects belong*" (Isin & Nyers, 2014, p. 1). Using this definition, we may speak of students and parents in schools as political subjects in a single school which is included in local governmental bodies or schools in the state as levels of government and their accompanying polities. School citizenship might be defined as follows; *school is an 'institution' mediating rights and duties concerning schooling between students and their parents and the levels of school government of which these students and parents belong*. What states might have in common, with some variation, is schools as qualifying and socializing institutions with accompanying rights and duties of students and their parents (i.e. school citizenship). What might be more variable is the local autonomy of schools and local school government. While the Scandinavian countries have a somewhat centralized system of national curricula, the US and Germany offer considerably more local autonomy to states and Länder. The legal framework of schools might be subject to various democratic influences such as media, political debates, and elections in a large society.

2.1 A democratic tension

At the heart of the Norwegian law on education is the duty of every student to attend primary education in specified subjects (Opplæringslova, 1998); it is a law and duty which makes schools the most important institutionalized body of qualification and socialization, as

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well as ensures continuity in complex societies. In any country, there is a body of governing educational structures, usually with a cabinet ministry providing all their administrative support and a county or municipality level of school government, or both. Although there are democratic processes through elections and hearings on educational policies, it is beyond doubt that these governing bodies are there to implement educational policies and exercise supervision and control of schools. These governing systems might function differently across countries, but their task is to promote the continuation and development of societies in a relatively top down system. When there are tensions between the political state's interest and the interests of various groups (e.g., what subjects to teach and what knowledge to learn), the government certainly has the power to limit the influence on school outcomes from non-state actors. Actually, most schooling is decided upon by the state, and its interest is in the continuation and development of societies (Apple, 1995, 2004). In sum, schools are fundamental to societies, and many aspects of schools are not subject to democratic influence. This fact and the tensions between groups' and states' interests in schooling need to be considered when researching topics related to democratic schools. This tension might particularly affect the range of criticality related to what knowledge to teach and the political education in schools.

3 Democratic schools – analytical perspectives

In the following paragraphs, I will focus on the individual school as a relatively democratic unit, and I will only touch upon theoretical aspects of democratic schools, including how schools are perceived as relatively democratic. Within an individual school, governmental legal frameworks regulate the school's citizenship, and only school and classroom rules may be subject to influence, which limits the 'range' of school democracy (Cohen, 1970). With a focus on participation in decisions as the key aspect of democracy, I continue to apply Carl Cohen's democratic theory outlining three analytical dimensions of democracy, applied to individual schools in this case. First, Cohen speaks of 'democratic breath' which is a quantitative aspect of the share of participants actively involved in decision-making. As the share of participation increases, the school becomes more democratic. Second, he speaks of the depth of democracy, which is a qualitative matter. Central to decision-making is how well issues at stake are enlightened and argued for in a public debate. Many democratic theorists have pointed out the importance of public debates for a democracy (Barber, 1984; Cohen, 1971; Dahl, 1998; Diamond & Morlino, 2005; Habermas, 1995). Such participation might be regulated in laws or rules, which is the case in Norway (Opplæringslova, 1998). In practice, schools constantly have debates, particularly at the classroom level, but also at the school level on matters of importance. The procedures of democracy and the quality of the debate's content is of course vital for decision-making (Dahl, 1979), and schools and classrooms are

suitable arenas for 'public' debate. The third aspect in Cohen's analytical theory is 'democratic range' (Cohen, 1971). This concept is related to the substance of democracy or what sort of issues are subject to democratic decision-making processes in both the legal framework and school practice. Cohen continues by dividing the range into a sovereign and an effective range; the sovereign range includes all possible issues for democratic involvement, and effective issues are those reflected in decision-making practices. Hence, as both sovereign and effective ranges broaden, a school becomes more democratic because all those affected by the decisions will have a say in matters of importance to them. Issues like teaching, assessment, homework, and learning procedures are all very important to all groups in schools, but most importantly, 'knowledge and qualification' is at the heart of the matter for students, teachers, and society at large. Consequently, democratic involvement in matters of importance to students' school experience such as knowledge, its content, and ways of learning characterize democratic schools, while limited involvement in issues less important to students characterizes less democratic schools (Solhaug, 2003).

3.1 Knowledge and teaching

The question of knowledge, as the content and heart of the matter in schooling, is a very complex issue in schools; the main stakeholders are primarily the state and its national interests, the politicians preoccupied with the school subjects, teachers, and finally, students who are learning the topics. Many scholars have politicized how knowledge is presented in school and argued for a more democratic approach to knowledge construction (Apple, 1990; Apple, 2000a, 2000b; Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1998; Kincheloe, 2001). One of the themes is therefore the epistemological question and the role of students in actively constructing their own knowledge. The theme of this debate may be phrased by the question, 'whose knowledge is to be taught in school'? In his writings, John Dewey devoted much of his effort to criticising schooling for its authoritarian tradition and particularly teacher-centred education (Dewey, 1938). Central to Dewey's thinking about schooling is his concept of experience: "*When we experience something we act upon it and we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. To experience is to do something to a thing and observe what it does to us in return*" (Dewey, 1916/1968). Therefore to experience something, in Dewey's terms, the learner needs to actively engage and be able to observe the outcome of his or her efforts. Consequently, learners need to be active and develop their own knowledge. Dewey considered being able to 'experience' a fundamental aspect of schooling. According to Dewey, teaching and learning where it's possible to experience is central to democratic schools, which implies setting the premises for what knowledge to learn (Dewey, 1938). Democratic education is, therefore, a way of teaching and learning which supports students' active process of knowledge construction. The whole process of qualification is



democratized in the sense that students make choices of which path to follow, what to focus on, and what to explore with support from their teachers. Furthermore, Dewey acknowledged the need for a democratic government, but he was primarily preoccupied with the public (i.e. the citizens) and social life, which he saw as a precondition for democracy. He emphasised that citizens are all bound together (i.e. interdependent) in a *'joint living experience'*. For Dewey, education is also inherently social and nourished by communicative experiences (Dewey, 2000). It may be argued that Dewey's approach to teaching and learning in school leads to much more student, or democratic, influence on the development of knowledge. His emphasis on social learning and interdependence also supports social awareness and students' sense of responsibility for each other, which may be considered democratic. Dewey's perspective on teaching and learning influenced later educationalists, particularly when discussing what types of knowledge to focus on and how they are taught in school (Freire, 1993). A recent frequently-debated issue is the diversification of classrooms and the challenges in teaching, learning, and knowledge development accompanying these processes. Following Dewey, Cherry A. McGee Banks and James Banks (1995) argue that diverse learners have diverse life experiences which are often not present in schools. Their view is that in teaching- and learning-processes the school should try to connect the knowledge to the learners' diverse background and life experiences. By connecting knowledge to learner's experiences, students' learning processes may be facilitated, equalized, and democratised despite the differences (James A. Banks, 2009; Banks et al., 2004). McGee Banks and Banks overall educational point may be fruitfully elaborated on by using Bourdieu's concept of habitus. According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is closely linked to an individual's objective position in the social space, as it is formed by the opportunities and constraints that this position reveals. Habitus therefore designates an acquired disposition and can be described as follows. *"Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them"* (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu's overall point is that all socialization works as an embodiment of social structures, which the individual carries around, and educators need to connect to these embodied structures to provide equal opportunities for a diverse student body; see discussion of equality and democracy below. Furthermore, Bourdieu also provided concepts of economic, social, and cultural capital that have contributed to tools for analysing educational differences (Bourdieu, 1986). Using the concept of 'taste', he provides a ground-breaking sociological understanding of how 'taste' classifies social groups, and how it classifies the classifier (Bourdieu, 1995). Bourdieu's ideas offer concepts and analytical approaches to differences and inequality in education as well as

inequality in society at large, which may only be mentioned here. Below, I will elaborate on the question of equality and democracy but will make a summary of this brief sketch of knowledge and democratic schools.

Knowledge is about understanding the world, premises for action, and the basis for qualifications in a student's future professional life. Student involvement and participation in knowledge development may be considered as learning to take charge and develop self-consciousness and self-interest in their future professional life. The *raison d'être* of participation in this perspective is therefore more than the prospects of future voting and political protest. Participation in school may be regarded as learning options for the many aspects of a citizen's life, self-determination, and social and political involvement. Schools may therefore be compared to the extent they take a citizenship perspective and involve students in teaching and all aspects of knowledge learning.

3.2 School as a democratic institution

I continue elaborating on the democratic aspects of schools by taking an institutional perspective. An institutional perspective allows for a more comprehensive analytical approach to democracy in schools. Schools as institutions involve almost all citizens for many years of their life; in Norway, it is at least 13 years. Institutions always have, as noted above, a legal framework or legal regulatory level (Scott, 2001). Rules regulate teachers', students', and parents' rights, responsibilities, and behaviour. This regulatory framework makes it meaningful to speak of school citizenship because the framework may facilitate and support democratic involvement as well as limit the options for democratic processes. Life in most institutions is also characterized by norms, which can be formal but are most often informal. In both cases, they regulate school leaders', teachers', students', and parent's behaviour either formally or informally in their practice of school citizenship. Some norms may support students' involvement in democratic processes and some may not. Norms are typically situated between the legal regulatory level and the informal level of practice or culture. Analytically, one may identify norms which are supportive of as well as counterproductive to democratic practices and a democratic culture (see below). At the third and very informal level, institutions have culture and practices which may support participation and involvement in decisions, or there may be a totally different authoritarian culture and less democratic in practice, which is also a type of practice and school citizenship. Such school cultures may support student practice or impose restrictions on student involvement. Based upon research, schools may display internal coherence and/or contradictions between the different levels of analysis (i.e. rules, norms, and practice). In addition to tension between levels of analysis, there might be tension or consistency between different rules, norms, and practices within a school. A typical example is that student participation in school varies according to teacher attitudes to students, and this sometimes-great



variety of practices often prevents schools from being effective arenas for learning citizenship and of being truly democratic. For a school to be effective in its democratic practices, there should be a perceived substantial consistency between the levels' rules, norms, and practices. In a citizenship perspective, participation in institutions is to regard schools as arenas for the many aspects of citizenship practice and learning. For a more detailed elaboration of the analytical framework of institutions, see (Scott, 2001).

3.3 Student council

The most prominent example of institutionalised school democracy and practice of 'political citizenship' is the student councils which exist in many countries, especially countries which have adopted the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, as they have a responsibility to create structures for student participation and influence (UN, 1989). In Norway, concepts of student councils date back to the 1840s (Hareide, 1972), and they were formalized by 1964 in upper secondary schools and later in lower secondary and primary schools. School councils in Norway are also interconnected through student unions. The student council is usually a representative system of students from all classes in schools and has some rights and responsibilities. The aim of student councils in Norway is, according to *Opplæringslova* §11-2 and §11-6 (Law on Education), "to promote the common interest of students in school, to contribute to a favourable learning and school climate for all students". The councils have a say on school climate issues in primary schools and contribute to the learning environment, working conditions, and student-welfare interests. Applying Cohen's democratic criteria to the student council framework, for example, the democratic range does not involve teaching and learning, or much of the classroom practice, and seem to be excluded from the council's issues, which severely limit their democratic range (Børhaug, 2008). Student councils are certainly important to democracy in schools because they are a formal option for election procedures in schools, formal representation, and a voice for students and their involvement in decision-making. As such, it is an example of students' political school citizenship. However, in practice, student councils vary greatly in their effectiveness in democratic processes, in the number of participants involved, and how deep the democratic processes are in schools. They may also vary greatly regarding issues they can discuss and influence on behalf of students in the school (Lindholm & Arensmeier, 2017; Michelsen, 2006). In short, democratic schools certainly need to have student councils as a formal option for influence, but I believe schools vary greatly according to how effective and democratic these councils are, particularly according to the issues in which student councils may get involved. Effective student councils involve most students in a school in matters of importance related to their knowledge and life development.

3.4 Democratic values and virtues

Values and virtues often underpin certain regulations, norms, cultural aspects, and behaviours and are certainly important to the democratic practice of school citizenship in a formal setting or in school life and classes. Values can be characterized as general standards in judgement and behaviour which are preferred by an individual (Rokeach, 1973). Virtues reflect values and express preferred behaviour. Particularly relevant and interesting to an analytical framework of democratic schools are civic virtues and democratic values. Virtues may be participation and critical reflections, as well as citizens obeying the law and having social and political trust in school and political institutions. Democratic values include among others, freedom, equality, tolerance, and solidarity (Thomassen, 2008). While rules and norms are important guidelines for behaviour, most teachers, students, parents, and researchers are focused on the classroom and what takes place during lessons. I will elaborate on these core values and their relationship to democracy and democratic practices in society in general and schools in particular. The French revolution provided us with the terms *liberté* (freedom), *égalité* (equality), and *fraternité* (solidarity). I see these and other values as guiding principles for democratic citizenship practices in school.

3.4.1 Freedom

Democracies and democratic institutions are characterized by freedom of participation and involvement. However, some value freedom as an option for participation (e.g., republicans), while others (e.g., liberals) view freedom as most important to individual choices. Empirically, freedom seems to be the most important value documented in the World Value Survey (Thomassen, 2008). In Norway, students enjoy legal participation rights, which are also regulated in the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and official laws related to education (*Opplæringslova* 1998). However, classroom participation practices vary considerably both in frequency and content. While student participation is often viewed as a normative positive practice and an inherent quality of democracy (Diamond & Morlino, 2005), we must acknowledge that there is an ideological/political tension between liberals and republicans on the question of participation (Dagger, 2002; Schuck, 2002). Having said this, I emphasize the overwhelming democratic theory, which expresses that democracy in any unit, state, organization, and in this case, schools, is strengthened by citizens' or members' active participation. Consequently, I argue that as students and parents enjoy more freedom and engage in opportunities to participate, schools become more democratic.

3.4.2 Equality

Equality as a value in democratic theory is above all reflected in equal rights and responsibilities, including the right to vote and the equal worth of all human beings regardless of differences - the principle of universality of difference (Lister, 2008; Thomassen, 2008). Applying



the value of equality to schools is more complex. School has the role of qualifying citizens for economic, social, and professional self-determination. This implies that students should initially learn the same and later learn quite different professional topics. Coleman also complicates matters further by identifying three different approaches to equality in schooling (Coleman, 1968). First, equality in schooling means that students should have equal access. This implies that all children have a right to schooling, but this approach ignores what happens in school. Second, equality might imply that educational resources, usually teachers' time, should be distributed equally among students during their time in school. The consequence of this understanding is that a variety of students get the same support. Third, equality may also be understood as equal outcomes for all students. This third understanding of equality acknowledges that students are different, which usually implies a redistribution of educational resources. Coleman's three approaches to equality in education is analytically valuable but assumes that students are all going to learn essentially the same knowledge. Such an approach is relevant in most cases, but only relevant for a variety of groups in the upper classes of schooling when students specialize. I therefore turn to the concept of 'equity' in schooling. Banks and Banks (1995) understand 'equity' in school "... as teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (McGee, Banks & Banks, 1995,152). By using the concept of equity, it is acknowledged that students are all different with a variety of goals and interests, but they all use schooling as the basis for later qualifications in life. In this perspective, 'equity' understood as 'equal opportunity' is a concept which acknowledges students' diversity and focuses on their rights to qualify and make individual professional choices. The aspect of equality built into these concepts are very complex to judge. In Norway, students have rights to schooling and teaching that are adapted to their special needs (Opplæringslova, 1998). However, the effectiveness of these rights in teaching and learning vary considerably, and consequently, the outcome of schooling also varies for most students. A special case is the challenge of preventing school drop outs, and leaving school prematurely which is also an international challenge (Rumberger, 2011). In Norway, up to 30% of students do not complete upper secondary school after five years (3 years are required) (Lødding, 2009). School drop outs is therefore a significant challenge to democratic schools because schools fail to qualify a substantial percentage of students for their professional life.

This discussion of equality and education is by no means exhausting, and judging equality or equity in education is very complex. Still, I argue that, at the theoretical level, schools which practice their teaching and learning process in accordance with equity principles will be more democratic. Also, schools which have a low

dropout rate and thereby manage to qualify most of their students are more democratic.

As previously noted, there might be tension between liberty and equality. The tension is most obvious in liberals' and republicans' views of participation; liberals view responsibilities as restrictions of freedom but republicans view participation as options (Dagger, 2002; Habermas, 1995; Schuck, 2002). Additionally, unrestricted liberty will lead to inequality of conditions which may not be acceptable to the citizens (Thomassen 2008). These values underpin norms in a democracy, and the dilemmas of unrestricted freedom versus market intervention and redistribution of values are closely related to perceptions of justice and fairness and are very common in both school and society at large. Their link to justice tends to engage students and makes dilemmas of freedom and equality potential learning options for political citizenship. However, the controversies over freedom and participation makes it difficult to judge which school may be characterized as being more democratic.

3.4.3 Tolerance and intolerance

I continue by elaborating on political tolerance; political tolerance and intolerance reflects the individual's ability and willingness to put up with ideas they dislike (Gibson, 2008). The question of tolerance versus intolerance is important because diverse people have diverse habits, viewpoints, and attitudes which should be expressed in public. Building on Gibson, "a democracy requires that all political ideas (and groups holding them) get the same access to the marketplace of ideas as the access legally extended to the ideas dominating the system" (Gibson, 2008:325). It goes without saying that the political marketplace will constantly display views and behaviours that are sometimes provocative to some members of the public. The ability to show respect for any relevant difference is therefore a necessary condition for the practice of human citizenship within democracies. Of particular interest to schools is the school- and classroom-climate for behaviour and public debate. Schools and classrooms are potentially very important arenas for public debate, which certainly requires that those involved endure disagreement and tolerate or have respect for differences. Much research is devoted to the implications of the classroom climate for participation and public debate (Knowles & Di Stefano, 2015). This research has led to a growing literature on what contributes to the classroom climate; see Xiaoxue Kuang, Kerry John Kennedy, Magdalena Mo Ching Mok (2018) in this issue. Among factors contributing to the perceived classroom climate are quality of the relations to teachers and friends. Having said this, I argue that a school's level of democracy is influenced by how politically tolerant students and teachers are and particularly how views may be presented in class without the fear of hostile reactions. Furthermore, I argue that any public debate in school which exposes different views, particularly controversies, are options for learning and living with diverse citizens in practice.



3.4.4 Solidarity

Solidarity is defined as, “a feeling of unity between people who have the same interests or goals” (Merriam-Webster 2017). The extent of solidarity is contested in several ways but above all between liberals and republicans in their view of civic responsibilities. Republicans and some social-liberals (i.e. pluralists) emphasize citizens’ responsibilities for other fellow citizens and society at large, while ultra-liberals consider these duties as limitations to their individual freedom (Roche, 2002; Schuck, 2002). Still, solidarity is emphasized in considerations of what defines a ‘good citizen’ (Van Deth, 2008). I acknowledge that there are controversies regarding this value which, in the Van Deth’ language, is considered as a norm of citizenship and practice. There also seems to be strong empirical support for solidarity as a basic civic virtue (Van Deth, 2008). Based on these premises, I consider schools where teachers and students practice acts of solidarity as important for the feeling of inclusion and empower students’ abilities. Such an empowering school climate supports students’ efforts and equity in the outcome of their schooling. Based on the above reasoning, schools characterized by the practice of citizenship as solidarity among students and teachers support equal opportunity and equity among students and will be more democratic.

3.4.5 Protection

Rights detailed in the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) are legally binding in all states which have ratified it, and this convention contains quite a few articles which are relevant to democratic schools. I would like to point out two of them: Article 12 concerns the rights to have a say (i.e. participation), and is already included in this introduction to democratic schools, and Article 19 requires that children are protected from any violation of interest and mental or physical abuse in school. The protective rights are very important because many children are subject to various forms of suppression during their time in school. Such negative experiences may have serious consequences for the outcome of their schooling and often have lifelong negative implications. Schools’ failure to provide protection may limit students’ participation, and schooling in general and may deprive them of many options in life. Consequently, a democratic school provides effective protection for its students during their schooling.

3.4.6 Inclusiveness in schools

In response to what has previously been said about dropouts in schools and its potential consequences, I would like to draw attention to an analytical framework for inclusive citizenship developed by Neila Kabeer, Ruth Lister, and Nancy Fazer (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Kabeer, 2005; Lister, 2008). This framework may be adjusted to most relevant units; there are six important points, and some have been touched upon already.

The first is about justice in school, understood as the question which asks, when is it fair to treat people equally and when is it fair to treat students differently?

This criterion acknowledges that we are all different and sometimes deserve to be treated differently as we are to fulfil our goals in life. This understanding of justice is a precondition for equity in schooling. Following this first criterion, a second criterion of inclusiveness is the recognition of equal worth regardless of differences. The third criterion is self-determination, understood as people’s ability to exercise some control over their own lives. Usually, self-determination is related to work and subsistence, where school, as pointed out earlier, has a key qualifying role. Particularly, the challenges caused by dropping out of school and lacking basic qualifications for academic studies and/or work places a burden of responsibility on students who drop out. The fourth criterion, solidarity, can be seen both as a societal goal and as especially important in education. The feeling of support from one’s environment is vital to social life. Linking the four aspects, Lister writes of “*the capacity to identity with others and to act in unity with them in making claims*”, “*participatory parity*”, or the ability of members in society to interact with one another as peers (Lister, 2008, pp. 49-50). Finally, Lister emphasises the “*ethos of pluralization*”; to avoid an exclusive identity and politics, one must recognize the right to be different and promote reflective solidarity as the “*universalism of difference*”(Lister, 2008, p. 50).

To really practice inclusiveness in schools is a very complex matter, but there should be no doubt that schools capable of practicing inclusiveness among their diverse students are more democratic than the schools which struggle in such practices. Below is a table which summarizes theoretical analytical aspects of a democratic school. The introduction continues by introducing the contributions in this special issue.

4 A summary of analytical approaches

This introductory article covers key theoretical perspectives related to democratic schools. It is argued that these theoretical perspectives are an important framework for analysing democratic schools but also offer a variety of approaches to citizenship learning and practice in school. While much of the literature on democratic schools is preoccupied with participation and the possibility that schools may contribute to democratic participation in real life, a citizenship learning perspective offers a more comprehensive view of democratic schools and democratic learning which may guide holistic practice in citizenship education and contribute to the democratizing of schools.



Table 1: Analytical approaches to democratic schools

Short name	Elaborations
Democratic participation	Democratic participation in schools may vary according to its breadth (the number and relevant participants, its depth (the qualities of participation) and its range (the subject matters which is to be decided on).
Schools as institutions	Institutions have their formal regulation, the norms governing practice, and culture which reflect a degree of democratic practice. Democratic schools have a supportive regulatory legal framework, norms which support school democracy, and a culture which support an inclusive democratic practice.
Knowledge	Democratic schools provide teaching and learning processes which support students' knowledge construction, social learning, and citizenship practices. Democratic schools acknowledge that a diversity of students have diverse life experiences which need to be present in the process of learning.
Student council	Democratic schools have effective student councils, which provide opportunities for student participation and being critical of issues of importance to their schooling
Democratic values and virtues-Freedom	It is being argued that the more freedom students are given participate in school, the more democratic the school is.
Equity	Building on the concept of equity, I argue that the more students experience equity in their schooling, the more democratic the school is.
Tolerance	It is argued that political tolerance is a necessity for democratic practice, and consequently, schools where students and teachers show great tolerance for diverse views and behaviour are more democratic than schools which have less tolerant students and teachers.
Solidarity	Schools with teachers and students who practice a culture of solidarity will experience more support for their school work and will be more democratic than schools with a less solidarity.
Protection	Schools, which provide effective protection of its students, are more democratic than schools, which provide less effective protection.
Inclusiveness	Schools, which have a practice of inclusiveness in schooling along with the criteria for inclusiveness mentioned above, will be more democratic than schools which are less inclusive.

5 The special issue on democratic schools

This special issue addresses democratic topics of school- and classroom-climate, sexual diversity and its acceptance in school, the role of criticality in citizenship, and human rights education, and finally, a paper on the role of emotions.

The first article is titled "Can schools engage students? Multiple perspectives, multidimensional school climate research in England and Ireland" and was written by *Dorien Sampermans, Maria Magdalena Isaac, and Ellen Claes*. Building on the previously-described analytical framework, this article contributes to the literature on schools as institutions by focusing on school climate, which is often associated with school culture. Three aspects of school climate are included: school order, interpersonal relations, and student-teacher relations. The study elaborates on how a general school climate along with control variables are associated with future electoral participation in an IEA ICCS 2009 sample from England and Ireland (IEA, see: www.iea.nl, ICCS,

International Civic and Citizenship Education study). Although knowledge, as expected, has the strongest association with future electoral participation, aspects of school climate also contribute. It is recommended that more attention be paid to overall school culture in political socialization.

The second article is titled "Creating Democratic Class Rooms in Asian Contexts: The Influences of Individual and School Level Factors on Open Classroom Climate" and was written by *Xiaoxue Kuang, Kerry John Kennedy, Magdalena Mo Ching Mok*. Many studies using data from international surveys like the CIVIC education study and the current ICCS study conducted by the IEA have explored the associations between an open classroom climate and various civic virtues. What often motivates these studies, as noted in the literature reviews in the article, is to explore how participation in classroom discussion in school may contribute to future democratic participation or other civic virtues. In the current study, which uses ICCS 2009 data from Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand, open classroom climate (OCC) is a dependent variable. The study acknowledge that OCC might be an important asset to schools, but the classroom climate might be perceived differently by students, and it is important to explore how schools may contribute to the classroom climate in these Asian societies. Using a multilevel analysis, both individual variables and school contextual variables are included. Such studies are rare in this region, and they revealed interesting findings on regional differences and possible local influences. The study adds to the literature on classroom climate, particularly because of its regional focus.

The third article is titled "Youth political engagement and communities of practice" and was written by *Gary Homana*. Data from the IEA Civic Education Study 2000 is analysed to investigate research questions on the association between participation in two civic communities of practice, including a student council and volunteer organizations, and two types of expected adult political participation as well as trust in political institutions in Australia and the United States. The study takes an important theoretical perspective when using the term 'communities of practice' in the analysis of how such practices may be associated with civic engagement. Findings were that in both countries, participation in the two civic communities of practice was associated with higher levels of trust in political institutions and greater expectations to become an informed voter and an active citizen.

The fourth article is titled "Discourses of young people from Portuguese secondary schools about sexual diversity: Unveiling an incomplete school democracy?" and was written by *Hugo Santos, Sofia Marques da Silva, and Isabel Menezes*. This article addresses the question of inclusion, exclusion, and protection for sexual minorities in school, and the study is contextualized theoretically in democratic schools. The study has a very important focus which is highly debated as much as these studies are rare. It adds significantly to the literature on



democratic schools and the field of protection (see above) for diverse students. The study builds on a large sample of student interviews (332) in Portuguese schools. A discourse analysis is applied which reveals findings of support, tolerance, and hostility towards sexual minorities. Particularly, the hostility is of course challenging to the school environment in general and to the students in question in particular.

The fifth article is titled "Leyla and Mahmood – Emotions in Social Science Education" and was written by *Katarina Blennow*. This study focuses on the role of emotions related to two cases, Leyla and Mohammed. Emotions are always important but rarely focused on in social science writings. Emotions in the current contribution are related to the two individual cases, Leyla and Mahmood, as refugees and at the same time subject to the teaching of subjects related to their destiny as refugees. Experiences with students' reactions to controversial utterances about terrorism is discussed. The article opens up a field in social science teaching and learning which is rarely touched upon. Few writers engage with this difficult topic; one of them is Jon Elster, who discuss what emotions are and the role in regulating behavior (Elster, 1999, 2007).

Finally, *Isabella Schild* and *Judith Breitfuss* contribute to this special issue on 'democratic schools' with a report which discusses an interrupted school lecture in Austria. The report is titled, 'Civic Education under Pressure? A Case Study from an Austrian School'. The case is about a representative from the Green party who was invited to lecture on political extremism in school, but a student and his influential father from a right wing party in Austria interrupted the discussion. The interruption and limiting of the expressions and the following debates are most interesting as such actions deal with the presence of politicians in school, their freedom of political expression, and the limits of controversy in civic education. Such debates are also at the heart of the matter for democratic schools and their framing of civic education. With reference to the German 'Beutelsbach Consensus' on controversies in civic education the authors do take a stand in favour of political expressions in school, but I recommend the audience to engage with this Austrian case also.

6 Samples of resent research on democratic schools

In the following, I provide some samples of further reading and research.

6.1 On democratic schools

The first topic to be reviewed here are alternative approaches to research on school democracy. One recent contribution is by Feu, Serra, Canimas, Lázaro, & Simó-Gil, (2017). They list four dimensions to be discussed. The first is governance, or a body of structures, and the accompanying possibility to participate and influence decisions in school. The second dimension is inhabitancy, which is about having basic, material, and health conditions and these qualities of life are pre-conditions for democratic involvement. Sen also laun-

ches the capability approach to human rights. People must have capabilities to convert their rights into action (Sen, 1999/2009). In school, inhabitancy is about well-being and every student's feeling of support and general ability to do his or her best. Also, the diversity of individuals should be recognized. The third approach in their analytic framework is 'democracy as otherness', or the recognition of difference between groups. Otherness refers to the recognition of the otherness of groups, which in schools may mean to avoid hegemony and dominance, to include, and positively assess the other. The fourth analytical approach concerns the virtues and values of a culture in schools. These virtues should support student's capabilities in classrooms.

A second study is Turkish and builds on the Delphi technique which involves a group of 22 experts from nine countries responding to the importance of a number of criteria for democratic schools (Korkmaz & Erden, 2014). The Delphi technique is a procedure based on anonymity and consensus over survey-items. There were two rounds of analysis of a very comprehensive material starting with more than 800 items in the first round and dropping to 339 in the second round (Korkmaz & Erden, 2014). The outcome of the analysis ten main categories: 1) school funding process, 2) decision-making model, 3) school policy forming, 4) curriculums, 5) learners, 6) teaching staff, 7) nonteaching staff, 8) internal and external relations, 9) physical properties, and 10) Financial resources. All these have subcategories.

6.2 On classroom practice

Not surprisingly, classroom practice is covered extensively. This is partly because the IEA CIVIC and ICCS studies have provided available data. There is an overview of the IEA related research in: Knowles & Di Stefano, (2015). Although these data are valid and comparable both longitudinally and cross sectionally (Country), a limited number of items was used which limits the survey outcome. My suggestion for future research is to use some of the available scales and add other scales which are theoretically founded and elaborate on important aspects which are not covered by these studies.

Important qualitative studies of classroom dialogue and discussion is Ljunggren and Øst, (2010) a study of Swedish teachers handling of controversies in classrooms; see also Hess, (2009). Samuelsson has developed an inter-esting typology of classroom discussions (Samuelsson, 2016). A variety of factors of importance to the class-room discussions are elaborated on by Claes, Maurissen and Havermans, (2017); see also Carole Hahn's overview (Hahn, 2010).

6.3 Diversity

In this field of research, there is a large body of literature on specific aspects related to diversity, and the prestigious volumes by Banks and Banks needs to be mentioned (Banks, 2004; James A. Banks, 2009). Meshulam discusses counterhegemonic strategies in the context of Palestinian/Israeli schools (Meshulam, 2015). Important

discussions are related to the demographic composition of classes and the outcome of schooling or well-being of students in Davis, (2004) and Jacobsen, Frankenberg and Lenhoff (2012).

6.4 Values

School effectiveness research has been preoccupied with the concept of equity; see Mortimore, Field, & Pont, (2004). There are many approaches to research on equity which has created an enormous body of literature which encompass integration and segregation of schooling; recent contributions are Frankenberg, Frankenberg, Garces and Hopkins, (2016), Jefferson, (2015), Gregory and Fergus, (2017), while Kugelmass's contribution is a bit older (Kugelmass, 2004). Important insights in equity pedagogy is delivered by McGee Banks and Banks (1995).

Paul Vogt wrote an important book on tolerance and learning in education (Vogt, 1997). A much-tested hypothesis is the contact hypothesis where intergroup contact is assumed to have a positive effect on tolerance (Frølund Thomsen, 2012). Laura Lundy (2017) specifies important contact premises for the development of tolerance in education; see also Pettigrew (1998). A recent and perhaps controversial contribution is by van Waarden (2016).

A remarkable finding by Torbjörnsson and Molin revealed that their students were not acquainted with solidarity as a concept. In cases where solidarity was mentioned at all in class, the students primarily contemplated it in a historical context (Torbjörnsson & Molin, 2015). In a framework for inclusive citizenship, solidarity is emphasized by Kabeer (2005) and Lister (2008). Research on inclusiveness in education covers large fields of special needs education, diversity, and education. A handbook in the field is, Puri, Puri and Abraham, (2004).

In citizenship education, Arthur & Cremin, (2012) write about citizenship debates. A relatively recent handbook in the field is, Arthur, Davis and Hahn, (2008), and there are other important contributions related to citizenship and education in Haste (2010), Lister (2009), Lister (2009), Osler (2012a) and Osler (2012b). The most recent handbook is the *Palgrave International Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Social Justice* (Peterson, 2016).

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