The influence of citizenship education on students' political efficacy

Obstacles, possibilities, and promising practices

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Forord

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English summary

This dissertation explores connections between citizenship education and the development of students' political efficacy. Building on research showing that political efficacy influences political participation, and based on the premise that political participation is an important feature of a persistent democratic system, I first investigate this matter by considering the literature on education and political efficacy based on the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). Thereafter, I explore qualitatively a student group's perspective on how the subject of social studies influences political efficacy, and on how cooperative learning used in social studies teaching affects students' political efficacy. Taken together, these aspects considered in the three articles comprising this thesis aim to answer the overarching research question: *How does citizenship education influence students' political efficacy?* The purpose of this dissertation is to broaden the current knowledge on this matter, which offers a contribution to the research field of citizenship education. Moreover, I hope to provide insights into the field of social studies didactics, creating new opportunities to expand practice for both teacher education and teachers. Finally, this thesis examines how different theoretical understandings of political efficacy will have consequences when it comes to understanding the concept, what advice is given for practice, and what form of democracy that is promoted through this practice. An important contribution that this thesis seeks to make is thus also to deepen the understanding of the implications of various understandings of political efficacy.

Article 1 contains a literature review written together with Tessa E. Grevle. It aims to develop and clarify findings concerning citizenship education and political efficacy in studies that have analyzed data from the ICCS of 2009 and 2016. The reviewed articles showed that political efficacy is clearly connected to political participation and, accordingly, a common recommendation was to focus on enabling students' political efficacy through schooling. Another central finding was that there is substantial variation in how the efficacy variables were operationalized, understood, and used in the research. Furthermore, the material building on ICCS data did only, to a small extent, attempt to understand political efficacy through the thorough use of theory or further qualitative explorations of quantitative findings. Consequently, we argue that there is a need for both qualitative studies using the ICCS data as a point of departure, and for the development of clear theoretical arguments to further develop knowledge about the interconnectedness between citizenship education and political efficacy.

Article 2 explores a group of lower secondary students' perceptions of how their experiences in the social studies classroom contribute to or limit their sense of political efficacy. Focus group interviews were conducted with 13-year-old Norwegian students, which were analyzed using the constant-comparative method. The students' responses indicate three obstacles to political efficacy in the social studies classroom: (1) the reactions of their peers in political discussions; (2) the perception that adolescents are not respected due to their young age; and (3) a view of opinions as fixed and, hence,

unchangeable. The possible solutions to these hindrances, as given by the students, were to work to enhance the level of respect and support in the classroom, to practice politics through carefully structured discussions, and to work in smaller groups to make them feel more secure and supported. The main implication is that the social studies teacher should aim for critical analysis and raising awareness of how to present and promote different perspectives instead of focusing solely on the students' personal opinions, and that the structure of the classroom has to be carefully considered in this work.

Article 3 discusses the results of a formative intervention in the tradition of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Methods from cooperative learning were tried out in the same social studies class as in Article 2, with the goal of exploring how the experiences of cooperative learning impacted the students' political efficacy. The data underlying the research were analyzed using the constant-comparative method and consisted of interviews with the now 14-year-old Norwegian students. The main implication of the study was that cooperative learning can enhance students' political efficacy, by providing students with opportunities to practice democratic skills, such as participating in discussions, cooperation, and constructive social interaction. However, the students' responses indicate that a contradiction arises when students become more concerned with individual achievements than with the collective learning process, which can lead to resistance to cooperative learning in the student group.

Taken together, the value of working to establish an open classroom climate through friendly peer relations, the influence of students' age on their political efficacy, and the challenges provided by an individualized classroom, are the main empirical contributions of this thesis. In the extended abstract that follows, these contributions are analyzed as part of a larger framework provided by the participatory democratic approach, and discussed in light of different theoretical understandings of political efficacy. Through this effort, I hope to make a contribution to the large and important persistent project to develop a sustainable democratic system through education, by providing theoretical insights and practical recommendations for educators, researchers, and policy makers interested in educating to sustain and develop adolescent political efficacy.

Norwegian summary

Denne avhandlingen utforsker sammenhenger mellom medborgerskapsutdanning og utvikling av elevers politiske mestringstro. Utgangspunktet for arbeidet er forskning som viser at politisk mestringstro kan føre til økt grad av politisk deltakelse. Gitt premisset om at politisk deltakelse er viktig i et bærekraftig demokratisk system, har jeg først skrevet en forskningsoversikt over litteratur basert på International Civic og Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) som behandler utdanning og politisk mestringstro. Videre har jeg gjort kvalitative intervjuer med elever i en samfunnsfagsklasse, for å utforske hva deres perspektiv er når det kommer til hvordan deres opplevelser i samfunnsfagundervisningen påvirker den politiske mestringstroen deres, og hvordan samarbeidslæring brukt i samfunnsfaget kan påvirke den samme mestringstroen. Avhandlingen tar sikte på å svare på det overordnede forskningsspørsmålet: *Hvordan påvirker medborgerskapsutdanning elevenes politiske mestringstro*?

Hensikten med dette arbeidet er å tilføre ny kunnskap om utviklingen av politisk mestringstro til forskningsfeltet medborgerskapsutdanning. Gjennomgående er det også et overordnet mål å gi ny samfunnsfagsdidaktisk innsikt, som et bidrag til å utvikle god praksis både i lærerutdanningen og for lærere som allerede arbeider i skolen. Til slutt tar avhandlingen for seg hvordan ulike teoretiske forståelser av politisk mestringstro vil gi føringer når det kommer til både forståelse av begrepet, hvilke råd som gis til de som driver undervisning i praksis, og hvilken form for demokrati som fremmes gjennom denne praksisen. Et viktig bidrag som denne avhandlingen søker å gi er dermed også å utdype hvilke implikasjoner ulike forståelsene av politisk mestringstro har.

Artikkel 1 inneholder en litteraturgjennomgang som er skrevet sammen med Tessa E. Grevle. Den tar for seg forskningslitteratur som har brukt data fra ICCS 2009 og 2016, og målet er å klargjøre hvilke funn som er gjort når det kommer til sammenhengene mellom medborgerskapsutdanning og politisk mestringstro. Artiklene i utvalget viste at politisk mestringstro tydelig er relatert til ungdoms politiske deltagelse. Videre er det en vanlig anbefaling i litteraturen at medborgerskapsutdanning bør fokusere på å støtte opp under ungdoms politiske mestringstro. Sentrale funn var videre at det er stor variasjon i hvordan variablene som måler mestringstro har blitt operasjonalisert, forstått og brukt i tidligere forskning, og at materialet fra ICCS i liten grad er forsøkt forstått gjennom grundig bruk av teori eller videre kvalitativ utforsking av funn. I artikkelen argumenterer vi dermed for at det er behov for kvalitative studier som bruker data fra ICCS som utgangspunkt. I tillegg synes det viktig å utvikle teoretisk godt funderte argumenter for å klarlegge og skaffe til veie ny kunnskap om sammenhengen mellom utdanning og politisk mestringstro.

Artikkel 2 utforsker ungdomsskoleelevers oppfatning av hvordan erfaringene deres i samfunnsfagsklasserommet kan bidra til eller begrense politiske mestringstro. Artikkelen bygger på data fra fokusgruppeintervjuer med 13 år gamle norske elever, som ble analysert med konstant-komparativ

metode. Elevene peker på at de i samfunnsfagsklasserommet opplever tre hindringer for politisk mestringstro: (1) reaksjoner fra medelever i politiske diskusjoner, (2) en oppfatning om at ungdom ikke blir respektert på grunn av deres alder og (3) en opplevelse av at meninger ikke kan påvirkes eller endres. Elevene peker også på mulige løsninger som kan bidra til å komme forbi disse hindringene. De mener det er viktig å få respekt og støtte i klasserommet, de kan øve på politisk deltagelse i godt strukturerte diskusjoner, og til sist kan det å arbeide i mindre grupper gjøre at elevene føler seg tryggere. Hovedimplikasjonen av studien er at samfunnsfagslærere bør prøve å få til kritisk analyse i klasserommet gjennom å jobbe for å få frem ulike perspektiver, heller enn å fokusere på elevenes personlige synspunkter. For å få til det, synes det viktig å jobbe med å strukturere klasserommet på en måte som legger til rette for en slik praksis.

Artikkel 3 diskuterer resultatene fra en formativ intervensjon, utført innenfor rammeverket fra kultur-historisk aktivitetsteori. Ulike samarbeidslæringsteknikker ble prøvd ut i samme samfunnsfagsklasse som i Artikkel 2, for å utforske hvordan dette ville påvirke elevenes politiske mestringstro. Datagrunnlaget i artikkelen består av intervjuer med elevene, og konstant-komparativ metode ble igjen brukt i analysen. Hovedfunnene i studien er at samarbeidslæring kan styrke elevenes politiske mestringstro, fordi elevene får mulighet til å øve på demokratiske ferdigheter som diskusjon, samarbeid og konstruktiv sosial samhandling. Samtidig tyder elevenes uttalelser på at det oppstår en motsetning når elevene blir mer opptatt av individuelle prestasjoner enn av den kollektive læringsprosessen, som kan føre til motstand mot samarbeidslæring i elevgruppa.

De viktigste empiriske bidragene fra denne avhandlingen, er først og fremst verdien av å jobbe for et åpent klasseromsklima gjennom å arbeide for gode relasjoner mellom elevene, hvordan elevenes alder og deres påfølgende oppfatning om sin egen (manglende) innflytelse påvirker mestringstroen deres, og hvordan et individualisert klasserom gir utfordringer både for samarbeid og videre for utvikling av politisk mestringstro. I kappeteksten som følger, blir disse punktene analysert fra et deltagerdemokratisk perspektiv, og diskutert i lys av ulike teoretiske forståelser av hva politisk mestringstro faktisk er. Forhåpentligvis kan dette bidra inn i det store prosjektet med å utvikle et bærekraftig demokratisk system gjennom utdanning. Jeg håper også å kunne gi både teoretisk innsikt og praktiske råd til lærere, forskere og politikere som er interessert i å jobbe med og for å opprettholde og fremme ungdoms politiske mestringstro.

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Article 2: Kosberg, E. Sources of internal political efficacy in the social studies classroom: A qualitative investigation of Norwegian lower secondary students' perceptions. (Manuscript accepted for publication and in review for minor revisions in the journal *Nordidactica*).

Article 3: Kosberg, E. The effect of cooperative learning on student political efficacy: Results from a formative intervention study in a Norwegian social studies classroom. (Manuscript in review in the journal *Educational Research).*

Preludium

Teaching is my job, my hobby, and my passion. All my job applications have started this way since I finished my master's degree in political science and started my teaching career back in 2008. At this point, I said no to an invitation to apply for a job as a research assistant, with good prospects for it leading to a PhD. I wanted to be in the circus. I wanted to be where it really mattered. And for me, that meant being in the classroom together with students.

In 2009, I got a new job at an upper secondary school. The school was progressive, and several of the teachers had held courses for the largest publishing companies in the country. I remember the first meetings with my colleagues as frightening. They were so capable, so knowledgeable, so forward-leaning. And I remember myself thinking that from here on, the only way was up. I wanted to be a teacher of the same caliber as the great teachers with whom I now worked. I wanted to learn.

During this first year at my new school, the entire staff group had training sessions in what I came to know as cooperative learning. I was introduced to a new world of methods that I passionately embraced. As a social studies teacher, I often found it difficult to make my students participate in class. I often found myself in a situation where the same students were always participating, and where other students seemed afraid to talk. It seemed as if they would never consider discussing the subject with their peers or with me, their teacher. And I was looking around for tools that could move the focus away from what I knew and wanted to explain to the students. Instead, I wanted to hear their voices and have them reflect and discuss together with me.

I think the search for participatory methods reflected my values as a teacher, as I remember at one point drawing how I visualized being a teacher (see Figure 1). On the left-hand side, you can see how I imagined the traditional teacher standing in front of the students transmitting his or her knowledge to them. On the right, you can see my view of teaching: I am the little blue dot; the students are green. I saw myself as a leader, but at the same time, as an equal to the students who got to participate in their learning. The little building symbolizes the school. As you can see, we are all outside of it, and the students are neither neatly lined up nor listening to me. Instead, we are moving out into the surroundings, exploring the world together.

Figure 1: My view of myself as a teacher (drawn November 2019)

However, that does not mean that I meant, or mean, that the teacher does not have an important role in the classroom. The teacher knows more than the students do. The teacher has an education that gives him or her important tools for helping the students see themselves and the limits and possibilities that the world brings about. But in the classroom, the teacher is the equal of the students because we are all human. We carry our histories with us. We are all products of our society. We all feel. And this feeling of the "us" of the classroom led to it being really important for me to find the right tools for the students to feel secure and to voice their opinions in my classroom.

With cooperative learning, I found answers. Simultaneously, I often found that the students had to "unlearn" their earlier behavior in the classroom. One example of this concerns a student whom I had in my sociology class in the first year at my new school back in 2009. Coming into the class, he had been doing vocational programs for two years, and he had been forced to take sociology because his schedule would not work without this subject. At the start of the school year, he told me that he had "no interests" and that his goal was to "get rich." Taking on the role of the classroom clown, he clearly did not want to be in the class. But throughout the year, he blossomed. Through practicing discussions and gaining perspectives on himself, his life, and society, he started to read newspapers and follow the news. At the end of the school year, he had an oral exam. On that day, he came to school, all dressed up in a suit. He had been to the hairdresser and smelled of perfume. He got an A on that exam. After the sensor had left, he told me that he would go on to study sociology at university. And he excused himself for the spelling errors in his PowerPoint presentation, as he did not know anyone who

could proof check his writing before the exam. No one in his family had a university degree. He thanked me for not letting him stay quiet.

Throughout the years, I have had many students like him. Students who came into my classroom withholding themselves, afraid of what I, and their peers, would think about them if they actually spoke about the topics in the class. Students who deemed politics too difficult. Students who saw politics as something that adults could do or get engaged in—but that would not affect or engage them. I made it my mission to make this change. To create a social studies classroom in which the students would experience a real participatory environment, where everyone contributed to everyone's learning, and where no one would want to stare out the window waiting for the next break.

The way into DEMOCIT

DEMOCIT is a research group consisting of researchers from Oslo Metropolitan University. The researchers are partly from the social science teaching department. The rest belong to NOVA, which is a research institute concentrating on studies in childhood, aging, social policy, and the welfare state. Together, the researchers in DEMOCIT combine social studies didactics research and youth research to develop social studies teacher education at OsloMet, hopefully in a direction where it can educate teachers who are better equipped to promote political efficacy and democracy through their work (OsloMet, 2023). As I saw the announcement for the recruitment of PhDs to this project, I got the feeling that this was my project. The goal of wanting to promote political participation and to explore how this can be developed through education seemed to coincide with what I had thought of as my goal throughout the whole of my teaching career. It was, though, not an easy decision to decide to apply. It felt as if I were moving away from what was important. Away from the lives of those who were the center of my attention, namely the students. But at the same time, I was at another place in my life than ten years ago when I had chosen teaching over an academic career. Moreover, I had a great wish to reach a larger audience. So, I applied and got the position. And so this PhD project began. Or maybe it was only that my life project had turned a page into a new chapter. As you will see, my teaching years provide an important context for this PhD project, which has to be seen as a continuation of the experiences and values that have been my foundation since back in 2008.

1. Introduction

Democracy presents great advantages to the societies in which it prevails (Gerring et al., 2022). It has inherent value because it is based on the equality of all humans, and instrumental value due to the possibilities that it brings, such as freedom and personal evolvement (Wikforss & Wikforss, 2021). Quantifiable measures show that democracy is often associated with positive outcomes, such as transparency, less corruption, better conditions for human health and development, and so on. Generally speaking, democracies seem to be better governed than their autocratic counterparts (Gerring et al., 2022) and have been proven to enhance economic growth and provide more rapid technological change (Knutsen, 2015). Democracy, in many ways, thus seems to legitimate modern political life (Held, 2006).

However, in 2024, as this thesis is coming to an end, there is an unpleasant feeling in the world that democracy is under threat. Many countries have seen a decline in both participation and trust in their political systems (Dalton, 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Putnam, 2000). Since the Brexit referendum of 2016, where the British voted to leave the European Union (EU), and the following infamous US election of 2016, where Donald Trump was voted president, there has also been a feeling of unrest in the political landscape of the West, perhaps stemming from the fact that many democratic countries are on a path toward being less democratic (V-Dem Institute, 2023). These examples illustrate that democracy does not arise or exist in a vacuum. Democratic development follows a historical path, and can, like other historical phenomena, decline (Wikforss & Wikforss, 2021). To ask how we can continue to develop democracy as a stable and flourishing political system thus seems a task of utmost importance.

At the core of the democratic way of life is the central role of citizens as partakers in the political process. Even though there can be substantially different ways of looking at who the citizens are and what and how much participation is necessary, needed, or even wanted, the legitimation that democracy provides to a political system lies in the role of its citizens (Held, 2006). The clear implication of this is that there is a need to support popular involvement in politics and, moreover, that education of the citizenry has a central role to play in democracies as a foundation that the democratic state is aiming for. Barber (1995, p. 5) explains this by pointing out that "the democratic faith is rooted in the belief that all humans […] have not just the right but the capacity to become citizens." This makes for a close link between education

and democracy, where there is a great responsibility on schools to "give every pupil the chance to become an autonomous, thinking person and a deliberative, self-governing citizen" (Barber, 1995, p. 12). In representing a participatory approach to democracy and democratic education, Barber underscores how the main task of education is to be an equalizer to ensure the participation of everyone in society. In this thesis, this is also a foregrounding premise on which my work is built.

Citizenship education goes back centuries and has continued until modern times. Heater (2002) shows how even early Greek and Roman states had different systems to train individuals to undertake the role of "citizen." However, this thesis focuses on the present and is placed within the Western sphere. This is due to the main data source, which has been gathered within the Norwegian school system and which led to the choice of this research being positioned within this particular setting. Democracy and education is a current issue in all European countries, and it has received increasing attention in recent decades due to several historical incidents (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018). The fall of the Berlin Wall led to the need to educate Eastern European states in democracy. And the transition of (many of the) European states into the EU in 1993 led to several new opportunities grounded in its foundational document: the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. The treaty gave EU citizens formal citizenship rights, with the resulting need to educate them about what these rights were. Moreover, the Maastricht Treaty contained an agreement on common pillars that were to be the foundation of over-national policies, of which education was one relevant area (Keating et al., 2009). This historical backdrop enhanced the focus on citizenship education in Europe. And, as we shall see, the historical and societal context is important in exploring the state of citizenship education that this thesis seeks to investigate.

1.1. The Norwegian context

This thesis is framed within the Norwegian context. Even though Norway is not part of the EU, the over-national engagement in citizenship education that has thrived in Europe in general has also made its mark in the Norwegian education system (Biseth et al., 2021). Even so, there is a long tradition of teaching citizenship in Norway. In 1920, the Norwegian Parliament had already made a commitment whereby Norwegian schools had to lay the foundation for political engagement and democratic participation (Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012). Today, the mandate for

the education system is described in the Education Act, which states that education (in all subjects) shall "promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). The core curriculum (also prescribed for all subjects) underscores the importance of democratic values and democracy as a form of government, stating that education:

> …should give students an understanding of the rules of democracy and the importance of upholding these. Participating in society means respecting and standing up for basic democratic values such as mutual respect, tolerance, the individual's freedom of belief and expression and free choice. Democratic values must be promoted through active participation throughout the training course.
>
> (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017)

Including aspects in other subjects or applying it as a cross-curricular theme is the most common way of setting up citizenship education (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018). However, Norway also has citizenship education applied via the subject of social studies (Löfström & Ouakrim-Soivio, 2022). The main responsibility for the content that covers the relationship between the individual, society, and the political system resides here, as is visibly expressed in the subject's curriculum, which states that "through sociological thinking and methods, students shall develop an active citizenship" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Within the Norwegian context, it thus seems natural to focus on this subject when exploring citizenship education.

Social studies has existed as a distinct subject separate from history and geography since 1964 (Ryen et al., 2021). It is a mandatory subject from the 1st to the 10th grade, which includes primary (1st–7th grade) and lower secondary (8th–10th grade) education. The subject comprises aspects from several content areas, such as sociology, political science, geography, history, law, and psychology. In addition, all students have an additional 11th year with a subject called social science, which is taught at the upper secondary stage (11th–13th grade). At the upper secondary level, social studies is divided into three separate subjects: social science, history, and geography. Social science follows up on topics from social studies and covers aspects of political science, sociology, economics, and social anthropology. The subjects of social studies and social science together provide students with a total of 718 hours of teaching during their time in the Norwegian education system (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In addition, several additional courses are taught at the upper secondary level, such as politics and human rights, and sociology and social anthropology.

However, these are not mandatory; therefore, I have not counted them as part of basic citizenship education. Further on in this work, I will use the terms "social studies" and "social science" when describing the concrete subjects taught in the Norwegian school system. When referring to the overarching teaching of democracy and citizenship, I will use the term "citizenship education," in line with the broad definition given by the European Commission. It uses this term to describe a thick, inclusive, and activist education for democracy, which aims at value-based participation for students in their education (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018).

Moving on, there is a need to investigate the content of social studies as well. One of the subject's core elements is to understand and participate in democracy, and the subject aims to help pupils develop the knowledge and skills for creating and participating in democratic processes (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). The curriculum is further specified at the level of competence goals, which provide the concrete content of the subject. Several of these competence goals direct the teaching toward training the students to reflect on, discuss, explore, or assess different aspects of society (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Nevertheless, the curriculum can be seen as very complex. To a large degree, it leaves it up to the teacher regarding *how* to resolve the expectations of teaching both large amounts of knowledge and, at the same time, transmitting democratic skills and values to the students (Hidle & Skarpenes, 2021). Furthermore, both Solhaug et al. (2020) and Børhaug et al. (2022) call for research on concrete didactical approaches to teach democracy. In line with these observations and proposals for further research, the focus of this thesis is to fill part of this gap by providing examples of concrete advice on *how* to teach for democracy.

1.2. Citizenship education and political efficacy as the focal point

To move closer to the concrete *how*, previous literature has guided me. The starting point that I have taken lies in former research showing that a stable influence on political participation can be found in political efficacy (Almond & Verba, 1963; Chryssochoou & Barrett, 2017; Dalton, 2020). This basic insight provides the main frame for my research, and hence made me explore political efficacy on an empirical, theoretical, and practical level. In defining political efficacy, I follow Sohl (2014), who argues that there are three central aspects that must be

included in the definition of political efficacy. First, political efficacy revolves around self-image in terms of one's capacity to do things. Second, it follows that the central point is about what actions a person regards him- or herself as capable of executing. And third, the actions must concern the political. Therefore, her definition is that political efficacy is "an individual's perception of her/his abilities to execute political actions aimed at producing political change in society" (Sohl, 2014, p. 42).

When reviewed, prior research on education and political efficacy has suggested that there is a clear possibility for schooling to promote political participation through enhancing students' political efficacy (Beaumont, 2011; Gan et al., 2023; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015; Torney-Purta, 2002). There are several suggestions as to how this could be carried out in the classroom. Among others, Beaumont (2011) identified socio-political learning mechanisms that can enhance political efficacy, namely, experiences in politically active communities, acquiring skills for political action, engaging in political discourse, and inclusion in collaborative pluralist contexts, while Sohl and Arensmeier (2015) concluded that the school as a teaching environment is important for students' political efficacy, underscoring the role of deliberative conversations and an engaged teacher. If taken together, it seems like active learning (Peterson et al., 2022) and student cooperation (Mitra & Serriere, 2012) are keys to enhancing students' political efficacy, together with real-life experiences of engaging in political matters (Blaskó et al., 2019; Maurissen, 2020). In addition, it is clear that an open classroom climate, meaning that students feel safe to voice views and discuss politics with their peers, is a factor that can promote political efficacy (Hess & McAvoy, 2014; McAvoy & Hess, 2013).

As referenced above, the Norwegian curriculum underscores that the student should be able to participate in the teaching during his or her education and be prepared for participation in wider society as such (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017, 2020). And, as in many other countries, there is data from Norway showing that political efficacy has a crucial effect on political participation (Ødegård & Svagård, 2018). Curiously, there is, at the same time, research showing that the level of political efficacy among Norwegian adolescents is low when compared to the average European score (Isac et al., 2014). It is thus important to establish examples of contextual conditions behind this connection, and to do so, a potent source to investigate is the thoughts of adolescents themselves.

The course that I follow to enable this quest begins with central observations of the state of the current research that I seek to encounter through my work. First of all, most research on citizenship education and political efficacy within the European frame is done with quantitative data from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). I have thus chosen to review this research to be able to place this doctoral thesis within its landscape. At the same time, the current quantitative focus in the field leaves a gap regarding concretizing how a classroom that promotes political efficacy can be established; thus, I have continued my research by aiming to provide qualitative data in a landscape that is commonly described in quantitative terms.

When turning to the sparse existing sources that use qualitative data to explore political efficacy, there are two trends in the material. First, most of the studies are done in an American context and are carried out within specific educational programs, meaning that the experience is limited to those students who have either enrolled in or have been selected for a specific course (Evans, 2015; Hoffman, 2015). In contrast, in the European context generally, and in Norway specifically, citizenship education is undertaken in a broad and mandatory way (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018; Löfström & Grammes, 2020), which makes it important to investigate citizenship education undertaken by a general group of students that has not self-selected or been selected for a certain course or program. To do so, I use interview data from students in a mandatory social studies class to take steps toward embodying a practical foundation for supporting students' political efficacy within such a context. Second, thematically, the former qualitative research on citizenship education and political efficacy often involves students working on real-life scenarios outside of the classroom, trying to solve some sort of societal problem (Barnett, 2018; Glover et al., 2021; Harrell-Levy, 2018; Iverson & James, 2013). These projects often require considerable time, energy, and money, which is perhaps too much to expect in many educational settings where all students are to be included. This consideration supported the concurrent choice to seek to provide knowledge about the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy that could be made relevant for a broad spectrum of classrooms.

The last consideration that should be mentioned before I go on to describe the aims and research questions of this thesis is the theoretical framework that is applied in this extended abstract. I have worked closely with both socio-cognitive learning theory and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), and there is a need to extract what role these theories have played

throughout my work, and in relation to the already mentioned wish to educate for a broad participatory approach to democracy (Barber, 1995; Pateman, 1970).

The main concept of the thesis, political efficacy, is most often tied to socio-cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1990, 1997). This is a finding both in my first article and in the review of former research undertaken for this extended abstract. The socio-cognitive understanding of political efficacy was also used in Article 2 of this thesis. While writing this second article, I was doing qualitative fieldwork, where tools from CHAT were used to understand and develop practice. During this process, the understanding of the context and historicity that CHAT provides made me raise questions regarding the limitations of the educational advice given based on the socio-cognitive understanding of political efficacy, as extracted in Article 3. Consequently, this extended abstract will contain a thorough discussion on different theoretical perspectives of political efficacy and the learning processes that eventually might lead to the development of political efficacy, and how my subsequent findings can be understood in relation to this matter.

1.3. Aims and research questions of the thesis

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to explore connections between citizenship education and political efficacy to enhance our understanding of how schooling can promote political participation among youth. The thesis is anchored in participatory democratic theory (Barber, 1995; Biesta, 2006; Pateman, 1970), and seeks to investigate citizenship education and political efficacy through reviewing prior research, interviewing students on their classroom experiences, and through a formative intervention (Engeström, 2015) where techniques from cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) were tried out as part of social studies. These three angles have been part of my attempt to answer the overarching research question: "How does citizenship education influence students' political efficacy?" In the subsequent articles, I study three interrelated aspects of the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy, which are expressed in the three sub-questions that are treated in the articles, as described in Figure 2.
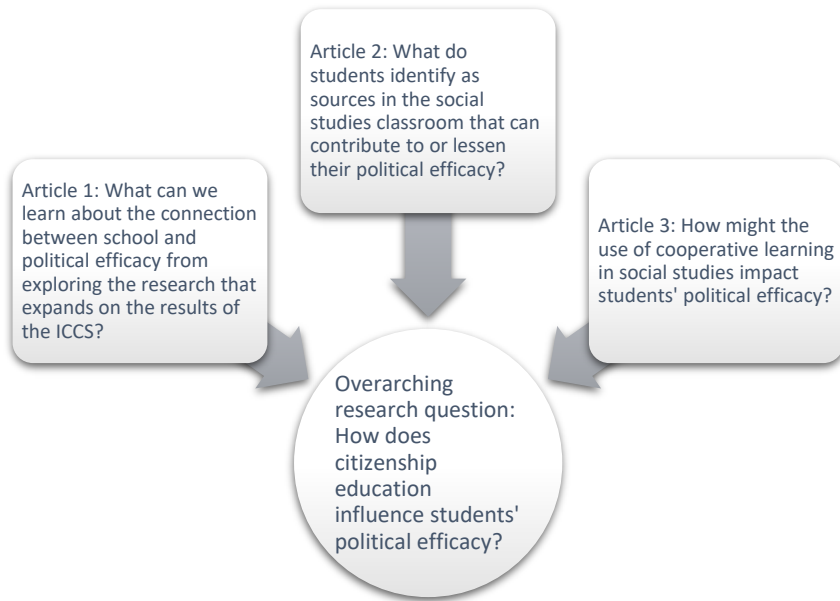
Figure 2: Research questions of the included articles and their connection to the overarching research question of the thesis

Moreover, the following extended abstract is centered on three research goals. As can be seen in Figure 3, all the research goals are part of my attempt to answer the overarching research question.
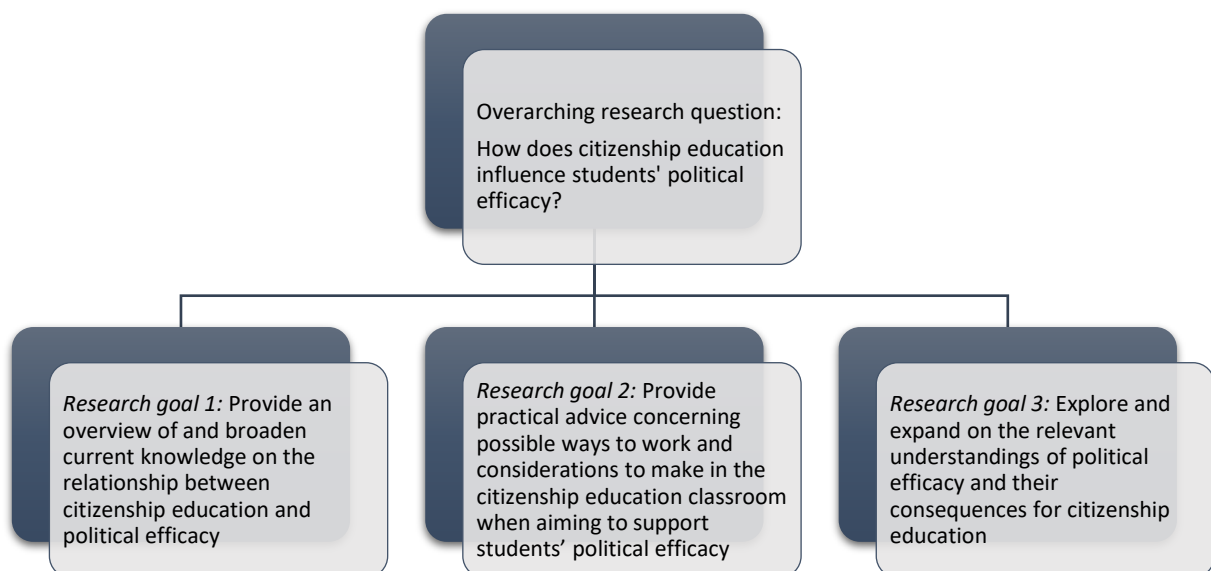
Figure 3: Research goals of the thesis

To meet the first goal, I draw on the prior literature and my own research, which includes a formative intervention (Engeström, 2015). My intention is first to review and thereby depict the current knowledge about the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy. Second, I intend to use qualitative methods to provide further examples of how students' experiences in a social studies classroom are related to their political efficacy. Hopefully, I will broaden the current knowledge on this matter, which could provide a contribution to the research field of citizenship education.

With the second goal, I aspire to provide some answers to the existing practical knowledge gap (Børhaug et al., 2022; Solhaug et al., 2020), which I hope will make an original contribution to the field of social studies didactics as well. To achieve this goal, I extract the results from the literature review in Article 1 and the broader review in the extended abstract, and from my conversations with the participating students on their experiences regarding the connections between social studies teaching in general, and later, on cooperative learning more specifically, and their sense of political efficacy. I aspire to contribute concrete advice that is useful to both teachers and teacher educators.

By following up on the first two goals, I finally hope to explore and expand on the concept of political efficacy by contributing to a deeper understanding of how political efficacy is and might be understood in current research and theory. Throughout my work, it has become very clear to me that opposing interpretations of the concept are rooted in different understandings of democracy and citizenship, and thus give way to different advice on how the connections between education and political efficacy might look. Thus, through my thesis, I also want to explore and expand upon the different uses of the concept of political efficacy. Hopefully, this can provide an additional layer of theoretical understanding of the concept by pointing to the important consequences of different theoretical approaches that are used in educational research concerning political efficacy.

1.4. Structure of the extended abstract

This PhD thesis consists of two main parts. The first part—the extended abstract—consists of seven chapters, including the introductory chapter. In this extended abstract, the three articles—the second part—are discussed in relation to each other and in regard to the overarching research question. Following this introduction, in *Chapter 2,* I review the prior literature deemed relevant to my work, which includes former knowledge on political participation patterns, education and political efficacy, and citizenship education in Norway. In *Chapter 3*, an outline of the theoretical perspectives that have guided and served as the framework for this PhD is given. *Chapter 4* covers the methodological and methodical choices that have been made throughout the research process, while *Chapter 5* deals with considerations regarding research quality and ethics. In *Chapter 6,* I summarize the main findings from the three articles that comprise this PhD thesis. In *Chapter 7,* the contributions of this PhD thesis are discussed. The chapter also contains important limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. Former research

2.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a broad examination of earlier research that is relevant for understanding and putting this PhD thesis into perspective. I start with a presentation of the research on what characterizes political participation in modern democratic societies. The participation patterns of modern democracies provide an important backdrop for my exploration of political efficacy, as my starting point has been how education can support political participation. As my research was conducted with Norwegian adolescents as participants, it is natural that the chapter continues by narrowing down political participation patterns within this particular group. Thereafter, the largest part of the chapter is used to explore the current literature on political efficacy and citizenship education, as this is the focus of my work. And in the last part of the chapter, I aim at giving an outline of the previous research on citizenship education in Norway and on the current research relating to its connections to political efficacy.

2.2.   Participation in modern democracy

Since the 1970s, there has been a profound shift in the culture of Western and post-industrial societies. Norris and Inglehart (2019) describe how the revolution of mass education and the emergence of gender equality, urbanization, and thereby ethnic diversity all contribute to a value change that concords with generational change. They explain that this development, which has provided high levels of external security, has resulted in the appearance of post-materialist values, such as freedom, autonomy, and individual choice. The long-term structural change has *ergo* led to a cultural change that is especially apparent among the younger generations (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

Norris and Inglehart (2019) continue by showing how the weight placed on autonomy and individual choice has led to an erosion of party loyalty and class identity. Instead, political engagement has turned out to be based on one's personal identity. Bauman (2012) explains how this phenomenon, where both the emphasis and responsibility are placed on the individual, has led to a situation where even if risks and contradictions are socially reproduced, the duty and necessity to cope with any situation has become individualized (Bauman, 2012). Furthermore, he states that this comes as a consequence of the widespread modern view that social institutions

or universalistic principles are not (or are no longer) carriers of human interest. Instead, there is an insistence on the individual as a cultural and psychological specificity (Bauman, 2012), which necessarily leads to the individual being the sole representative of him- or herself.

The cultural change that Norris and Inglehart (2019) reveal in their research comes to light through several aspects of political participation in current times. There has been a change in political participation, with a turn away from traditional partaking. Instead, engagement is based on cultural issues, such as environmental issues, immigration, and issues concerning equality among different societal groups (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Moreover, Dalton (2020) describes a broad trend where there is a drop in turnout rates for elections in democracies, and where many cast their votes due to civic duty and not because they feel that they can have a major impact on public policy. Concurrently, he underscores that changes in the *style* of political action do not necessarily mean that there is a drop in political *engagement* (Dalton, 2020). What is rather the case is that the engagement of the modern citizen often comes in other and more direct participation forms (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Direct contact with politicians has become more common, and the overall level of protesting has risen. The same can be said for online activism (Dalton, 2020).

Thus, it seems that the *nature* of participation today is more important than simply describing what actions are taken. The forms of participation that are trending tend to be individualistic and focused on single issues, which effectively means that cognitive mobilization is replacing collective decision-making (Dalton, 2020). Against this background, it seems natural for the citizen to choose participation forms that seem fitting for his or her own purposes based on a sort of political consumerism, where a distinct participation form is seen as a method to achieve a specific (and personal) goal, and not as part of a broader and collectivist movement to achieve societal change (Bauman, 2012). According to Norris and Inglehart (2019), it is natural that this trend will be stronger among younger generations, as their historical experiences, to a larger degree, will anchor those values that are based on cultural issues, which often leads to explicit participation patterns.

However, for the last decade, Norway, where this study is situated, contrary to the trend, has seen a rise in political participation among younger age groups (adults aged 18–30) concerning both voting and more activist forms of participation. Even though adolescents and young adults are slightly less interested in politics than older age groups, the trend is that there

is an increase in both interest and actual participation (Bergh et al., 2021). The same tendencies are visible in research on 14-year-olds, where a comparison of results from the ICCS from 2009 and 2016 revealed an increase in both political engagement and actual participation (Hegna, 2018).

The ICCS data also uncover further interesting aspects concerning the participation patterns of Norwegian youth. When compared to adolescents in other regions, Nordic youth have high levels of knowledge of and engagement in democracy, yet their level of actual participation is relatively low. Lieberkind and Bruun (2021) term this distinct combination "the reserved citizen" and explain how it expresses an active–passive disposition: Nordic youth are not passive, but reserved, and are thereby engaged in an indirect and perhaps more composed manner. This can be uncovered in concrete numbers for Norway, where 70 percent of Norwegian adolescents have participated in some form of organization or group linked to politics. A higher share has participated in activities that require less commitment and time, such as in an organization that collects money for a charitable cause, than in more time-consuming and demanding activities, such as being in a political youth organization or in a human rights organization (Huang et al., 2018). The Norwegian score is the highest among Nordic countries, yet it is below the average international score (Huang et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the ICCS measures adolescents' intentions to participate in politics as adults. Again, the results show that Norwegian adolescents, to a large degree (55.4 percent of girls and 53.4 percent of boys, respectively), report that they expect to participate in political elections in the future. Compared to the international average, this is a high score. However, the results were lower (48.8 percent for girls and 48.3 percent for boys) when considering more binding activities, such as joining a union or a political party. This result is below the average international score (Huang et al., 2018). In regard to different types of participation, Norwegian adolescents are thus more prone to what can be called "conventional citizenship" than to "social-movement citizenship" (Lieberkind & Bruun, 2021).

Another aspect of political participation among adolescents relates to what issues engage them. Although not rejecting family background and tradition as reasons for party choice, a central factor that led to the actual choice of a party in an election among Norwegian student teachers was idealism and a political taste for certain viewpoints. One can thus speak of a self-reflexive individual who votes on the basis of personal preferences (Kristensen & Solhaug,

2017) and can be seen as an expression of what Norris and Inglehart (2019, p. 34) term "value-based engagement." It is perhaps then not surprising that the issues that engage the younger generation of voters in Norway conform with the same international trend: Research has shown that the age group between 18 and 30 is both more liberal concerning immigration and more concerned about climate change issues than the older generations are (Bergh et al., 2021).

2.3.   Educating for political efficacy

In this doctoral work, the interesting question is how these patterns of participation are tied to political efficacy, and how political efficacy can be supported through citizenship education. There is a broad range of literature concerning citizenship education and political efficacy, and in this part of the chapter, I intend to review the parts that are relevant to this dissertation. The first inclusion criterion considers the time span covered. In the following, the literature from 2010 until May 2023 is included. The reason for this starting point is that it matches the starting point of the first round of the ICCS, which is examined in Article 1. Second, I used a focal criterion. I included only sources that directly used the term "political efficacy." This means that I excluded articles that could shed light on the topics covered in this review, but that did not treat political efficacy explicitly. Furthermore, the included sources had to cover citizenship education in a formal manner in addition to thematizing political efficacy. To avoid any overlap, I removed articles that were covered as part of the material in Article 1. This means that articles based on the ICCSs from 2010 to 2020 were left out. Articles that have been published on this material since this point have been included so that this thesis covers all the literature on the subject in total.

The last aspect that I considered was the age of the students. I have included research on the elementary to university levels in my search. Even though my own research is executed at the lower secondary level with students who were 13–14 years of age, I also consider the findings from other school levels to be relevant, as political socialization happens at different stages of adolescence (Sohl, 2014). In addition, the inclusion of different school levels was seen as helpful in putting age into perspective by considering the differences in the findings for different age spans, and to be able to identify what signifies the research undertaken on the age group considered later in this thesis.

In the material, I identified several trends. First, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, a severe overweighting of studies concerning the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy is carried out within the American context. A large number of these studies concentrate on students developing political efficacy due to direct educational experiences at different levels (Kosberg, in press). For example, a large amount of research shows that when citizenship education includes participation in real-life politics or communities, it might enhance students' feelings of political efficacy. For example, efficacy was enhanced when youth served in one-year terms alongside county board supervisors as active members and cast advisory votes (Calvert et al., 2015) and when students were trained to be poll workers in an election, which included real practice in the application of democracy (Csajko & Lindaman, 2011). Furthermore, the literature on the positive effect on the political efficacy of programs in which students participate in so-called action projects is extensive. There are numerous programs that engage students in real-world issues, where the students are to take action, frequently in cooperation with local actors, to enact change, which has led to increased political efficacy (Barnett, 2018; Glover et al., 2021; Iverson & James, 2013; Levy, 2011). Often, these action-learning programs allow students to work on current topics, which will increase the connection between the teaching and the real world, which can enhance political efficacy further (Calvert et al., 2015; Maloyed, 2016).

These conclusions reveal that the development of political efficacy seems to happen when citizenship education concerns, includes, or questions the lived worlds of the students. Nevertheless, it is possible to question the relevance of large programs that are positive for the political efficacy of students who get to participate in them but that seldom include a broad range of students. Within the Norwegian context in which this study takes place, it seems more fitting to search for routes to political efficacy that can be enacted within a classroom setting, as well as when time and resources are scarce, and thus that can include more/all students. To meet this need, I wanted to look further into what kinds of characteristics were found in the prior literature that would be applicable within a regular teaching setting, such as in the mandatory Norwegian subject of social studies.

A great deal of previous research has shown that simulations can have a similar effect to direct experiences both when executed on political systems (Levy, 2018; Mariani & Glenn, 2014; M. Oberle & Leunig, 2016) or mechanisms (Chen & Stoddard, 2020; Schmitt & Bryant, 2019), and when simulating political situations, such as discussions (Hendrickson, 2021). The

positive effect of simulations highlights how citizenship education can constitute an arena for the rehearsal of relevant skills in the classroom, and such a process can help develop students' sense of political efficacy (Kosberg, in press). One such relevant skill might be to discuss, and a curriculum that was designed to rehearse discussion was shown to positively impact students' political efficacy (Stroup et al., 2013). A similar situation with another skill, namely informing and persuading peers, in which students in a political engagement project were to synthesize information about a relevant political issue with the goal of informing their peers about the topic and persuading them to act, was also positive. This rehearsal situation enhanced political efficacy among the students, and the authors elaborate on how this was due to the students having had training experience in critical thinking and communication skills before they were required to act (Woolard & Hunt, 2019).

However, what students learn depends on the structure of the simulation (Middaugh, 2016). When performing a simulation as a rehearsal situation, it is therefore important to consider what each particular student and student group draws from the situation (Chan & Hoyt, 2021; Mayes et al., 2016), and in every simulation, it is equally important to structure it in a way that is beneficial for the educational aims that are to be promoted (Lin et al., 2016). One suggestion as to how to structure the classroom to work on students' political efficacy, which is often discussed in the literature on citizenship education and political efficacy, is cooperation in groups. There are consistent signs that group work can be favorable for developing students' sense of political efficacy (Chen & Stoddard, 2020; Hendrickson, 2021; Morgan, 2016; Piñgul, 2015). However, the question remained as to *how* group cooperation directly stimulated political efficacy. Serriere (2014) describes how the diversity of a student group worked to put students in situations where they had to defend their perspectives and listen to others, take up leadership roles, and work together to form and reach a goal. This led to enhanced efficacy on both the individual and collective levels. Gan et al. (2023) also described improvements in both individual and collective efficacy as a consequence of an action project in which cooperative learning was used to structure student group work. Concurrently, Gan et al. (2023) showed that there were challenges with cooperative groups. Some students were concerned that the group slowed their own individual learning or that it would impact their academic achievement. Gan et al.'s (2023) findings point to important aspects of using groups as part of citizenship education with the goal of stimulating students' political efficacy regarding the relationship

between individual assessment and collective teaching, which have proven relevant to my findings.

No matter what efforts are made as part of citizenship education, students' reflexivity is essential for the development of students' political efficacy because it helps to develop a sense of what is possible within a given frame and context, and with particular knowledge, skills, and networks (Peterson et al., 2022). There is also research concluding that students who experienced structured reflection following civic engagement activities gained higher levels of efficacy than the control group that had the same experience but without the structured reflection session (Bird et al., 2019). As reflection can be part of constructing a civic identity, precisely because it allows students to put their and other people's experiences into perspective, it is an important part of building political efficacy (Iverson & James, 2013).

Up to this point, I have described in concrete terms the aspects that are shown to stimulate political efficacy in the previous literature, which I have estimated as both relevant and doable within the frames of regular teaching efforts in social studies classrooms. However, it seems that the *setting* in which these experiences take place is also crucial. First and foremost, in working for political efficacy in a formal educational setting, it seems that the environment of the classroom is central. It is a common conclusion that students who experience a contributing environment in school might experience enhanced political efficacy, as shown both in this thesis's Article 1, in the further ICCS material (Dahl, 2022), and in additional literature (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Matthews & Hullinger, 2019; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015). At the same time, the connection between an open classroom climate and students' sense of political efficacy is not always present. Data based on the Norwegian ICCS results show that there is no connection between these phenomena (Blaskó et al., 2019), and the same conclusion is drawn from longitudinal research with Belgian students (Dassonneville et al., 2012). The nature of the relationship between an open classroom climate and political efficacy thus seems to be in need of further investigation and is further explored in this thesis.

Moreover, the educational setting also concerns the age of the students. Outside of the ICCS fold, there is a severe overweight of research on adolescents older than 14, which is the average age of the ICCS respondents (Schulz et al., 2018). This is evident in the included literature for this review: Three of the included studies were done with former university students as participants (Bentahar & O'Brien, 2019; Harrell-Levy, 2018; Parrott, 2017), and 23 were

executed at college/university level (Stroup et al., 2013; Yanus et al., 2015). At the lower levels, there were 14 studies thematizing citizenship education and political efficacy at the upper secondary level (Oberle & Leunig, 2016; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015). Three articles studied the elementary level (Mayes et al., 2016; Serriere, 2014; Whitlock, 2019). The lower secondary level, which is the focus of this thesis, was only found to be covered in eight former studies.

A closer look at the studies concerning the lower secondary age level brings some common trends to light. A quantitative study conducted in Portugal showed that students aged 13–15 who were prompted to engage through citizenship education by being given the opportunity to be included in discussing and reflecting on challenging contexts acquired enhanced levels of political efficacy (Marques et al., 2020). However, in another quantitative study performed in Mexico, students aged 13.5 years old, on average, did not report higher levels of political efficacy after their teachers were trained in participatory pedagogy. This is suggested by the authors to be due to the fact that political efficacy was not targeted in the intervention (Reimers et al., 2014). Three studies were conducted in the United States, all of which were quantitative studies at the middle school level (ages 12–15). Enhanced political efficacy was found following an action project (Morgan, 2016) and after a cross-content literacy program to embed discussions on controversial issues (Lin et al., 2016). However, the third study did not find enhanced levels of political efficacy following a geo-inquiry process as part of citizenship education. Potential reasons for this were that project work and inquiry-based learning were new to the students, so, for example, working with sources was demanding. In addition, some of the students had a difficult exam in another subject at the same time, which attracted a lot of their attention (Oberle, 2020). The only qualitative piece on citizenship education and political efficacy, was a multiple case-study design based on interviews. The study was executed in Singapore, and concerned differences in political efficacy among 14- and 15-year-olds due to variations in the citizenship education given in the academic and vocational tracks (Ho et al., 2011).

The research conducted within the lower secondary age group aligns with the quantitative trend in the research field. Consequently, an important aspect to consider is that quantitative studies do not automatically uncover causal influence between citizenship education and political efficacy, but a relation between variables (Clark et al., 2021). Nevertheless, all the included articles regarding the chosen age span have taken measures to account for this limitation. Most publications included pre- and post-tests within the student groups before and

after a specific citizenship education experience (Marques et al., 2020; Morgan, 2016; Oberle, 2020; Reimers et al., 2014), which opens the possibility to see a development of political efficacy over time (Clark et al., 2021). In addition, some studies have been set up using control groups (Lin et al., 2016; Marques et al., 2020). This allows for a comparison between different student groups who have followed different teaching programs, and to trace what characterizes dissimilarities in their outcomes (Clark et al., 2021). Both the use of pre- and post-tests and the use of control groups strengthen the impression of the quality of the studies and of their ability to suggest a causal direction (Clark et al., 2021).

There is, however, some variation regarding whether the researched citizenship education situations at the lower secondary level have had a positive influence on student political efficacy—and more so than in the literature concerning older age groups. The suggestion made regarding a connection between what is targeted in a teaching situation and how the students receive the situation (Reimers et al., 2014) and how, when new ways of working are introduced, it takes time for the students to adjust (Oberle, 2020), seem important. As younger students will necessarily be engaged in newer situations, as they are not as far along in their education as older students, it seems natural that their need for teaching situations to be adapted to their context is greater than for older students. However, as the number of studies concerning this educational level is low, it is hard to give a complete explanation as to what characteristics are central to explaining when political efficacy is positively affected and when it is not, and further examples are needed to extend the knowledge on this matter.

The discrepancy in the amount of research and between the different age groups is also interesting when looking at European educational systems, where the age group that is enrolled at the lower secondary level is the age group that most commonly receives citizenship education through a direct effort in a specific subject (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018; Löfström & Grammes, 2020). After this stage, there is a clearer division between the academic and vocational tracks, which results in greater variation in how citizenship education is delivered (Hoskins et al., 2016; Savage et al., 2021). This is also the case in Norway, where this study is situated, where although the curriculum is the same in the subject of social science for all students at the upper secondary level, it is taught in different years in different tracks. Moreover, the Education Act (2020) states that the content of the different mandatory subjects of upper secondary schools, such as social science, should be adjusted in accordance with the vocational careers that the students have chosen, which allows

for more variation within the same subject than at the lower secondary level. This underscores the importance of studying at the lower secondary level, which is where most students receive their citizenship education in school. Later in this thesis, I will thus try to add fresh insights and provide useful examples of practice by extensively exploring a case at the lower secondary level.

In my further work, the previous literature provided important guidance. To sum up, it seems that drawing connections between the students' life worlds and what happens in the citizenship education classroom is essential. There are also clear signs that experiencing politics, either in real life, through simulations, or through practicing relevant skills in the classroom, might enhance students' sense of political efficacy. Moreover, group work using cooperative learning strategies might be favorable for political efficacy, as long as the structure is targeted, and the particular students and student groups present are taken into consideration in both the structuration and application of the teaching. And lastly, it is essential for the students to reflect on their experiences as part of their citizenship education. All of these aspects have been important in setting up my research, especially in the intervention described in Article 3.

2.4.   Citizenship education in Norway

It is now time to turn to the Norwegian context. Having synthesized the prior research on citizenship education and political efficacy, it seems fitting to provide an overview of the status of the empirical research on Norwegian citizenship education, to provide points to both compare and contrast my own research within the national context within which it is placed, and to be able to see this context in relation to the wider range of research that has now been presented. In this presentation of the research on citizenship education in Norway, I have again made choices regarding what sources to include. I have included both research based on ICCS data and empirical research on the subjects that are dedicated to citizenship education in Norway, namely, social studies, social science, and non-mandatory subjects at the upper secondary level, such as politics and human rights, and sociology and social anthropology. Anthologies and chapters focused on summarizing citizenship education in Norway more broadly have also been part of my reading. The time span that I have covered is limited to the literature concerning citizenship education since the Knowledge Promotion Reform—an educational reform

introduced in 2006 in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education. The content of this reform is still in use today, after having gone through a curriculum renewal in 2020 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020), and I thus find it plausible to aim for an overview of the literature that explores citizenship education within this timeframe.

I want to start this overview of the research on citizenship education by focusing on Norwegian teachers and on what aspects they considered most important as part of teaching in social studies. Data from ICCS 2016 show that 77.6 percent of social studies teachers view developing the students' ability around critical reasoning and independent thinking as important, and 43.3 percent see promoting knowledge on the rights and responsibilities of citizens as a significant goal of their social studies teaching (Huang et al., 2018). Interestingly, the teachers put much less weight on participation: Only 17.3 percent of teachers viewed encouraging student participation in the local community as an important goal, and as few as 6.8 percent highlighted preparing students for future political engagement as important (Huang et al., 2018). It thus seems like knowledge and critical thinking are prioritized, while present and future participation are not given the same amount of attention (Sætra & Heldal Stray, 2019).

Teachers prioritizing critical thinking and knowledge led Sætra and Heldal Stray (2019) to ask whether students were given opportunities to practice democracy in Norwegian schools, and they explained this by pointing to how teachers understand participation as something that is in the students' future, as opposed to something that they can do at the present time. It thus seems imperative to ask what is taught about democracy and democratic participation. Empirical research examining social studies education in Norway has shown that traditional forms of teaching with textbooks at the center are still prevalent (Børhaug et al., 2022). The results from ICCS 2016 can be seen to point in the same direction, where the students are still in traditional classrooms, with much of the knowledge transmittance going from the teacher or the textbook to the students (Huang et al., 2018). To add to the picture, there might be a strengthening tendency between the use of textbooks and traditional forms of teaching democracy as knowledge, as Norwegian textbooks for the lower secondary stage are found to primarily contribute knowledge about democracy and, to a far lesser degree, to open up critical thinking and democratic practice (Lorentzen & Røthing, 2017). However, this research was conducted before the curriculum reform of 2020, and most publishers have since printed new textbooks. And as Skjæveland (2020) suggests, the reform of the curriculum might lead to a

change in practice that is yet to be recognized in the research. As an example of newer research perhaps pointing in this direction, Aashamar et al. (2021) found that social studies teachers used a wide range of written sources, of which the textbook was only a small part.

Thus far, I have noted how Norwegian teachers say that they prioritize critical thinking and knowledge over preparing their students to participate politically or letting their students participate politically, and how the classroom practices seem to be fairly traditional and focused on transmitting knowledge. This begs the question of what knowledge is transmitted. There is evidence of Norwegian teachers communicating a narrow view of democracy as being about voters and the transmittance of the motivation for voting (Børhaug et al., 2022). An example of this can be found in Samuelsson's (2013) research. His main finding was that Norwegian social studies teachers emphasized majority rule and freedom of expression as the content of a democracy. And even when considering the voting system especially, there was evidence that a narrow view of electing officials was promoted. Moreover, Borge (2017) has shown that there are signs that political participation is conveyed as an individual project to promote one's own identity or interests. Interestingly, these findings are supported by Mathé (2016). She finds the same narrow view of voting and freedom of expression as the main functions of democracy in interviews with 16-year-old students, and thereupon argues that the students have a limited understanding of what democracy is.

I now move on to ask how students experience Norwegian citizenship education. Curiously, research carried out with upper secondary students of social science suggests that they see social science as a subject that does not require either a certain level of knowledge or steady participation in class (Børhaug & Borgund, 2018). Moreover, when there are discussions, these are experienced as based on personal opinions (Børhaug & Borgund, 2018). This aligns with Børhaug and Langø (2020), who find that discussions in the subject of sociology and social anthropology are subjective. Simultaneously, they find that student engagement in the subject comes from emotional connectedness. When seen in the light of Børhaug and Borgund's (2018) work, it seems plausible that this emotional connection would come from discussions that are experienced as subjective and felt to be of concern to the individual students.

To summarize, research on the students' experience of citizenship education in Norway indicates that individual emotional engagement is at the core of what motivates students. In this way, the students' view of social studies and other relevant subjects in Norway resembles the

broader individualistic societal trend (Bauman, 2012; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Concurrently, there are signs that in the Norwegian social studies classroom, traditional teaching forms still dominate, with the transmittance of knowledge from the teacher or from written teaching material to the students (Børhaug et al., 2022). At the same time, in a broad sense, participation is seemingly given priority, possibly resembling the goal of social inclusion, where everyone should speak, but not necessarily including the aspect of what is discussed or said (Samuelsson, 2013). This parallels a tendency in which freedom of expression, access to voting, and knowledge about governmental structures are considered enough, which is also paralleled in the teacher's and the students' views of democracy and in textbooks (Lorentzen & Røthing, 2017; Mathé, 2016). For my purpose, this backdrop will be important if these same traits are present in the example that I explore in the current case.

2.5.   Education and political efficacy in Norway

In the last part of this chapter on prior research, I will now describe the previous findings concerning citizenship education and political efficacy in Norway. As in the writings on other countries, it has been shown that political efficacy is a core component leading to political participation for Norwegian adolescents (Ødegård & Svagård, 2018). However, even though Norway is a country with long and strong democratic traditions, data from the ICCS show that the sense of political efficacy among Norwegian students is quite low (Blaskó et al., 2019; Bragdø & Mathé, 2021). Interestingly, the results from the study concurrently showed high levels of knowledge about democracy among Norwegian students, and also that Norwegian students considered their classroom climate to be open (Huang et al., 2018). As shown in the literature review in Article 1, adolescents' impressions of an open classroom climate and a higher sense of political efficacy are often connected (Isac et al., 2014).

In the literature, the perhaps surprising connection between a view of their classroom climate as open and, at the same time, low levels of political efficacy is explained in different ways. Lieberkind (2015) hypothesizes that Scandinavian students experience openness in the classroom, but that they do not really have a substantial impact. He continues by arguing that the humanized and democratized Scandinavia can be said to have been both fostered and forced by teachers, and that this trait is amplified by the idea of education as part of the market-based economy, with its focus on knowledge and skills in schools since the 1990s. Hoskins et al.

(2015) take a more positive view, and propose that the lower levels of political efficacy in Norway and other Nordic countries exist due to the fact that teachers in stable democracies tend to underscore the value of critique and autonomous students, leading to the students being more skeptical and less supportive of their political systems, which could be an explanation for their comparably lower levels of political efficacy.

Another explanation that is not explicitly formulated in earlier research is the question of whether the adolescents are simply content. Reichert et al. (2018) carried out a cluster analysis based on the ICCS data from Nordic countries on how different groups of students have different perceptions of their school context. The results showed that 41.6 percent of Norwegian students can be put in the *indifferent* group, with moderate perceptions of the school context as open, and with them scoring below average on most indicators of emergent participatory citizenship. In continuation of these findings, it could be theorized, in line with Lieberkind (2015), that the feeling of indifference comes from the teachers being in charge, or perhaps the adolescents simply do not see the relevance of school or political involvement. Concurrently, it is possible to ask whether adolescents are simply satisfied with their society and political system, and hence do not feel the need to participate, at least not in demanding ways.

The different attempts to theorize about why the level of political efficacy is comparably low among Norwegian students call for the need to investigate this connection on a deeper level, which can be done with qualitative methods. To the best of my knowledge, to date, the only contribution that has attempted to qualitatively explore political efficacy among Norwegian students has been written by Jøsok and Kjøstvedt (2023). In a newer article, they interviewed Norwegian teachers, and found that the teacher's openness and awareness toward working with controversial topics in social studies might be advantageous for students' political efficacy, and this can have an equalizing effect on the differences in political efficacy that exist due to background variables, such as gender, socio-economic status, and belonging to a minority group. However, Jøsok and Kjøstvedt (2023) do not address the above-mentioned contrast between students' experience of an open classroom climate and low levels of political efficacy among the students. They also do not explicitly touch upon the *how* that I am interested in, as their focus is on the teaching topics rather than on the methods that are used in treating these topics. The present research thus presents another angle for investigating the development of political efficacy among Norwegian students with my focus on the practical side of citizenship teaching.

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In summary, I have used this chapter to review the relevant literature concerning my interest in unraveling the potential impacts of citizenship education on students' political efficacy. I have examined the research on what characterizes political participation in this era, and what describes Norwegian youths' political participation especially. Thereafter, I have undertaken a thorough examination of the existing knowledge on the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy before ending the chapter with an overview of the prior research on citizenship education and political efficacy in Norway.

3. Theoretical frame

3.1.   Introduction

The next chapter is concerned with the central concept of this thesis, namely, political efficacy. I start with a short outline of different theories of democracy, and explain my choice of the participatory approach to democracy and thereby its understanding of political efficacy as the starting point of this thesis. The participatory perspective on democracy sees political efficacy as part of a democratic identity that develops as a result of broad citizen participation in different spheres of the democratic community (Pateman, 1970).

Participatory theory does not, however, contribute answers to *how* the development of political efficacy takes place or transpires, and as Held (2006) notes, a central question to ask of participatory democratic theory is how to accomplish the participatory society that it promotes. To investigate how such a learning process occurs, there is thus a need to look further into theories of learning, their stances on political socialization, and how they relate to the participatory understanding of political efficacy. The next section thus examines the learning theory that dominates the current understanding of political efficacy, namely, socio-cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1990, 1997). After giving an overview of the theory, I argue that the socio-cognitive understanding of political efficacy and its focus on the individual is not sufficient if subjectification is to be achieved, which is one of the three goals for good education, as noted by Biesta (2009). Thereafter, I suggest that another learning theory presents perhaps more sufficient answers as to how to understand the development of political efficacy within a historical-contextual frame, namely, CHAT (Engeström, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, I demonstrate that through the metaphor of expansive learning, CHAT opens up the possibility of learning what is not yet there (Sannino et al. 2016), which I find to be a better fit with the participatory approach if adolescents are to be supported as autonomous selves (Biesta, 2009).

3.2.   Educating the democratic citizen

Most would agree that democracy means a form of government in which the people rule, and that it entails a political community in which there is some form of political equality among the people. However, there is great variation in the views on what the term "democracy" does and should contain, for example, who the people (or citizens) are and what kind of participation

is envisaged for them, in addition to what conditions are assumed to be conducive to participation (Held, 2006). One's understanding of democracy and participation inherently leads to a certain view of what a citizen should be when it comes to both rights and responsibilities, and it is in the extension of this view of the citizen that citizenship education comes into play. If the premise is followed that a society's view of the citizen expresses what kind of person a society desires (Keating et al., 2009; Veugelers, 2021), the task of the educational system thus becomes to produce, promote, or support the desired traits in its inhabitants.

To illustrate how citizenship education is both normative and inevitably closely tied to the context in which it takes place (Veugelers, 2021; Wiksten, 2022), it is useful to look at how history has seen different schools of democracy and democratic education develop. In the early days of citizenship education in Europe after the Second World War, the most important aim was to reproduce and uphold existing democratic systems (Veugelers, 2021). Consequently, the education systems were actively used to ensure that citizens supported nation-building projects by promoting national loyalty (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018, p. 22; Green, 1997). In many ways, this resembles what can be termed a representative view of democracy, where democratic life should consist mainly of elites competing for the mandate to rule (Børhaug, 2022). Within this view, the role of citizens is to vote, and as follows, their right is to replace one government with another (Held, 2006). Accordingly, the importance of a fair voting process and the legitimacy of political institutions have become important. The educational implications are that the focus is placed on understanding the political system, its institutions, and organizations (Børhaug, 2022).

The representative view of democracy was challenged by critical pedagogy, in which the transformation and dynamics of the developing society were underscored (Veugelers, 2021). Within this school of thought, the focus on global injustice and inequality was heightened (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2018). It is within this historical wave that the roots of a participatory democratic approach can be found (Børhaug, 2022). Even though participatory theorists vary greatly in how their view of democracy is framed, the common theme is the "democracy of everyone" (Barber, 1995). Democracy thus becomes not only about voting, but also about a way of living that covers all aspects of a citizen's life (Pateman, 1970). In the educational setting, this leads to an approach

that is often centered on actions and broad participation for the students, which can also happen outside of formal educational institutions (Sant, 2019).

Surrounding issues at stake and historical developmental trends thus have an important influence on what is treated as part of citizenship education. This leads to the question regarding what developmental trends affect citizenship education today. In an attempt to bridge the gap between competing elites of representative democracy and mass-based participatory democracy, the deliberative view of democracy places weight on rationality and face-to-face decision-making. According to this view, private preferences can be transformed through a deliberative process, where it becomes possible to reach a rational coordination of actions to find common ground (Held, 2006). Therefore, deliberate educators aim for both a deliberative decision-making process in school, and to practice deliberation, cooperation, and problem-solving in class (Sant, 2019). In the Norwegian school system, this view has been dominant in the didactics of democratic education (Borgebund & Børhaug, 2023).

However, if we presume that Norris and Inglehart (2019) are right in their description of the widespread cultural change in the Western sphere described in the previous chapter, it should come as no surprise that this phenomenon will also shape the educational sphere. Veugelers (2021) describes how, since the 1990s, the individual's cognitive and affective processes as the foundation of their political participation have been at the core of research on citizenship education. Furthermore, both he and others have described how the enhanced influence of trans-governmental organizations on national educational policy has led to the aim of effectiveness, which also applies in the Nordic countries (Ball, 1998; Liljestrand, 2014; Telhaug et al., 2006; Veugelers, 2021). Within the field of democratic theory, this tendency can be recognized in the neoliberal strand, where the dynamics of the market economy are transferred into an understanding of democracy that promotes the efficiency of the system for the citizens, who are seen as consumers (Børhaug, 2022). An ideal of freedom for each individual leads to an educational starting point where individual choice is imperative. Measurement and assessment also become important, as such measures will make schools both more efficient and accountable to the individual (Sant, 2019). This aim of effectiveness can help explain how, in the same period, there has been growth in the educational use of large-scale surveys, of which the ICCS is an example within citizenship education (Keating et al., 2009). Consequently, the focus is also largely placed on the individual in education, as it is in

wider society, and the weight placed on the individual's cognitive and affective processes in the educational sphere can therefore be read within a larger societal scope.

The different ways of viewing democracy are all present in the Norwegian educational system, and can be experienced through work in a social studies classroom (Borgebund & Børhaug, 2023; Heldal & Sætra, 2022). However, I have chosen to take the participatory approach as a starting point for my work based on Westheimer and Kahne (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; 2000, 2004). Writing from a current perspective, they provide a starting point for understanding citizenship education within this modern landscape. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) analyze different citizenship learning programs and ask what kind of citizen will be supported through the different programs. Based on their analysis, they make a division between the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen. *The personally responsible citizen* acts responsibly in her community and is trained to do so through educational programs that place weight on personal responsibility, individual self-discipline, and hard work. *The participatory citizen* actively participates in civic and social affairs at different levels and is trained to do so in teaching efforts that emphasize how government and organizations work and what skills and knowledge are needed to plan and manage such institutions through a collective and organized effort. *The justice-oriented citizen* focuses on systemic change and how it can be executed by social movements, focusing on the roots of problems. The educational structures that promote this citizen type typically teach to engage students in analysis and critical discussion, and want students to consider collective strategies for change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

An important argument that Westheimer and Kahne (2000, 2004) draw from their research concerns the limitations of personally responsible citizens. While recognizing the importance of following rules, working hard, and being committed in a democracy, they claim that this is not enough if democracy is to be promoted, because these personality traits would also be cherished in non-democratic states (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Consequently, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) move on to argue that it is the participatory- and justice-oriented citizens who should be pursued through education to promote democracy. Simultaneously, they show that while the participatory-oriented citizenship program teaches important strategies for political participation, it fails to address the deeper causes of societal problems. The program that aims at the justice-oriented citizen, on the other hand, clearly addresses these causes but fails at developing the student's knowledge of and efficacy toward the concrete challenges and

possibilities of political participation (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Their conclusion is that both these citizenship types should be promoted as part of supporting a democratic society.

Further in this work, I will follow Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) view of what kind of citizen should be promoted in citizenship education programs. However, as was shown in the literature review in Chapter 2, the emphasis in Norwegian schools seems to be leaning more toward promoting critical thinking, which can be seen as a trait of the justice-oriented citizen, and less toward teaching participation, which can be seen as a large part of the participatory citizen (Sætra & Heldal Stray, 2019). Consequently, I argue that it is important to balance this tendency, and on this basis, I will focus on the second aspect of democratic practice, which parallels Westheimer and Kahne's participatory citizen. Moreover, I have chosen the participatory approach to democracy as my theoretical starting point because of its similar focus on broad participation in different societal spheres, including schools.

3.3.   Political efficacy in the participatory democratic approach

With the participatory view in the background, this thesis now turns to its central concept, political efficacy. This concept came into political science as part of early attempts to understand voter behavior. In an early definition, Campbell et al. (1954, p. 187) stated that political efficacy is:

> *The feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change.*

A closer look at the definition reveals that the focus is on the political system and on the individual's belief in the system's changeability. The last part of the definition says that the individual citizen *can* play a part: To answer "yes" to this question, it would seem enough to believe that *some* individual citizens would be able to influence the political system, not necessarily pointing to oneself. Balch (1974) points out how this leads to a view of political efficacy as mainly concerning the political system and whether citizens believe in its democratic functions. Therefore, in this view, a sense of political efficacy can be seen as a norm to support

a democratic political regime (Balch, 1974). In Almond and Verba's (1963) famous work, a corresponding view can be found where political efficacy is pointed out as key to establishing a democratic system. "The self-confident citizen appears to be the democratic citizen" (Almond & Verba, 1963, p. 257) they write, and point out how one who has such an attitude will be more prone toward having trust in the democratic system and to be both more satisfied and loyal (Balch, 1974).

This norm of the loyal citizen resembles the representative democratic approach and the early efforts and needs of the democratic system to sustain its own existence (Børhaug, 2022; Veugelers, 2021). As mentioned earlier, the participatory approach to democracy represents a critique of this view, as it promotes broad participation in a wide spectrum of societal spheres for the citizenry. Participatory democratic theory holds that to have continuously politically active citizens is what a democratic system *is*, which means that democracy is seen not only as a process through which to build laws or make political decisions (as within the representative approach to democracy) or as a product (that serves the citizens well, as in the neoliberal approach), but as a continuous movement on behalf of the inhabitants that creates the social and political attitudes of the individual (Pateman, 1970).

Interestingly, Pateman (1970), as an early representative of the participatory approach, leans her argument on political efficacy on the definitions provided by Campbell et al. (1954) and Almond and Verba (1963) (and hence does not state her own definition) and, as such, takes up the tradition of the early political science approach. At first glance, the citizen in the participatory approach thus bears similarities to the voter described by Almond and Verba, who is politically active, supportive, informed, interested, loyal, and satisfied (Balch, 1974). But at the same time, Pateman (1970) refers to how political efficacy is about one's feeling of control over the surrounding environment. The combination of these two perspectives leads her to a broader understanding of political efficacy, where the participation of all citizens in, for example, family life, workplaces, and schools, is seen to forego political efficacy, and where political efficacy is thereafter seen as part of the democratic character of the individual. The temporal order is thus seen as different from the preceding approach, where it is assumed that political efficacy foregoes political participation. In the participatory democratic view, participation precedes political efficacy, as "the experience of participation in some way leaves the individual better psychologically equipped to undertake further participation in the future" (Pateman, 1970, p. 45).

Underlying this view of political efficacy are two important postulates. First, there is a profound epistemological belief that knowledge comes from experience through action (Sant, 2019). A participatory process is thus assumed to have an educative impact that makes the democratic system self-sustaining. Participation on the local level or outside of the formal political system thus provides training in democracy, which strengthens the citizen's ability to participate on a higher level. As expressed by Pateman, "The participatory theory […] argues that the experience of participation itself will develop and foster the 'democratic' personality, i.e. qualities needed for the successful operation of the democratic system" (1970, p. 64). Second, an important ontological postulate is that people can modify the world through their actions (Sant, 2019). This belief is not only a potential; it is also the substantial content of what democracy is. If democracy is viewed as being made up of the collective set of actions that the citizens undertake, the democratic system will consequently be the sum of the citizens' acts.

So, what does this mean for citizenship educational purposes? A newer representative of the participatory democratic view is Gert Biesta. Biesta (2009) suggests that good education consists of three dimensions: socialization, qualification, and subjectification. Socialization concerns how students are taught to be part of the existing society through learning central norms and rules that maintain the status quo. Qualification relates to what needs the society has in terms of professions and which skills are needed to fill these gaps. Education is thus a tool that can qualify students to fill the societal roles that are needed. Both of these goals can be said to resemble a view of learning as acquisition (Sfard, 1998), and furthermore, teaching becomes a tool for the students to adapt to an existing or desired frame (Löfström & Grammes, 2020).

However, the last purpose of good education that Biesta (2009) describes— subjectification—does not fit into these categories. To be a subject means to be an active and autonomous individual capable of asking critical and political questions, and going one's own way, even if this way is not part of the society's established tradition. This parallels teaching as critical inquiry (Löfström & Grammes, 2020), and Biesta (2021) describes how this is a necessary risk of education: The task is not only to uphold the existing status quo, but to give the upcoming generations the tools with which to redefine and reinvent their future. It follows that democratic education does not mean preparing students (only) for a democratic life that is yet to come. Instead, the educational sphere can be one of many arenas where students can experience democracy in the here-and-now, as "the best way to prepare for democracy is through participation in democratic life itself" (Biesta, 2006, p. 125).

The participatory approach to democracy provides a thorough description of what a democracy for everyone looks like. But it is not a learning theory. The question still remains as to what the learning processes that happen as participation occurs are that are necessary preconditions for political efficacy. Consequently, I have looked into the field of learning theories to find perspectives on how to understand the development of political efficacy and whether such perspectives conform to the three goals of education that Biesta (2009) lays out.

3.4. Political efficacy within socio-cognitive theory

In an educational context, the concept of political efficacy is most often understood as part of socio-cognitive learning theory. This theory, which is placed within a psychological tradition, is often tied to Albert Bandura (1989, 1990, 1997, 2006b). He did extensive work on how the individual learns, and, as shown in Article 1, is very often quoted in the educational literature on political efficacy. Understanding the mechanisms described in Bandura's work is therefore also a way to understand the underlying implications of the suggestions and recommendations that are given building on this theory.

Bandura's starting point in his approach to efficacy is what he calls the psychology of human agency. To be an agent is described as follows: to "influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (Bandura, 2006b, p. 164). The concept of agency thus presupposes actions that are done on purpose to have a specific effect (Bandura, 1989). Personal agency is effective through cognitive processes that regulate action (Bandura, 1990), and the most influential of these cognitive processes is, according to this theory, perceived efficacy— that is, "the person's belief in their own ability to act in a certain way" (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). One's sense of efficacy affects both what goals a person sets out to accomplish and whether he or she expects to achieve these goals. As Bandura writes, "The self-efficacy mechanism plays a central role in the exercise of personal agency" (1990, p. 421). Furthermore, Bandura describes four learning mechanisms that might cause a person's feeling of efficacy to grow: enactive mastery experiences and vicarious mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, and a physiological and/or affective state (Bandura, 1997). As these are thoroughly described in all three articles, I chose not to elaborate further on their content. However, the central point for this thesis is that they can be applied to understand how the concept of efficacy and its development can be understood within the political sphere.

The definition of *political* efficacy given by Bandura is as follows: "Political efficacy involves people's beliefs that they can influence the political system" (Bandura, 1997, p. 483). He explains how there are two aspects of political efficacy that operate in interplay: (1) an individual's level of personal efficacy, which refers to one's power to produce results by one's own effort and the proficient use of capabilities, and (2) opportunity structures provided by the social system. In these two aspects, we can recognize the division between the internal and external aspects of political efficacy that is often applied in newer research (Craig, 1979; Craig & Maggiotto, 1982; Sohl, 2014). Even though Bandura adds that opportunity structures are important, he underscores that an efficacious individual would act regardless of having few opportunities, and vice versa (Bandura, 1997). According to this view, an individual's efficacy is thus seen as more important than the view of a potential systemic response, even though these are seen as interdependent.

Moreover, Bandura (1997) explains how political efficacy can be strengthened by collective efforts through an individual's belief in collective capability. But even though this shows that there is an understanding within socio-cognitive learning theory that collective efficacy exists, this phenomenon still resides in the individual's estimation of his or her own ability to perform in the group or in the group's capability of working as a whole (Bandura, 2000). When making collective efforts within the political domain, the individual will also base his or her participation on individual self-interest, be it possibly material benefits, a gain in self-respect due to personal standards, or a community and relationship with other participants in the activity (Bandura, 1997). Although the theory includes social aspects in its focus on collective efficacy and the social world's impact on the individual (Bandura, 2006b), the focus on the individual is thus eminent also in this aspect.

The socio-cognitive framework largely rests on statistical measures within different specific domains. Bandura (2006a) explains that the scales that are to be used to measure efficacy should be connected to factors that impact a specific domain of functioning, and thus, they have to be goal-specific. At the same time, it is underscored that in studies on political efficacy, different types of political participation should be included. He explains that if political efficacy is seen to include only conventional forms of participation, it is reduced to finding the "politically efficacious, trustful citizenry" (Bandura, 1997, p. 490), which excludes individuals who believe in social change but who have more efficacy in political activism than in conventional participation. Efficacy is thus not about "specific behaviors in specific situations" (Bandura,

1997, p. 49), as domain particularity is not the same as behavioral particularity. In using the socio-cognitive understanding of political efficacy, it is thus assumed that what the individual should or could try to control must be known, and this behavior can be predicted by people's belief in their capability to do whatever is needed to succeed within the given domain (Bandura, 1997, 2006a).

In summary, socio-cognitive theory defines political efficacy as "people's beliefs that they can influence the political system" (Bandura, 1997, p. 483). The individual's perception of his or her own ability to act is at the center, and even though these beliefs are seen as interdependent with a system's opportunity structures, the individual's individual efficacy is ultimately seen as decisive when it comes to whether the individual chooses to act or not. The same is the case regarding the collective aspects of political engagement, where both the motivation and the final decision to engage in collective action reside in the individual (Bandura, 1997). This theoretical starting point and its view of political efficacy can thus seemingly be tied to the educational focus on the cognitive aspects of the individual, where cognitive and affective processes have become the center of attention (Veugelers, 2021). Moreover, the domain-specificity that the measurement of political efficacy within socio-cognitive theory requires necessarily leads in the direction toward known goals, which hinders possibilities to support progression into the unknown or new, which is an important requisite of education according to the participatory democratic view (Biesta, 2021). Based on these limitations regarding the implications of using the understanding of political efficacy contained in socio-cognitive theory, I claim that there is a need to investigate other understandings of learning to move beyond the focus on the cognitive aspects of the individual and to explore how to turn away from reproducing toward known goals. To do so, I will now introduce another theory of learning that has its base in the socio-cultural tradition (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).

3.5.   A theoretical starting point for learning and change

In the last part of this chapter, I want to introduce a framework that provides an alternative to the socio-cognitive learning scheme while maintaining the participatory view of democracy and political efficacy as a consequence of a common process. This section is therefore dedicated to clarifying how CHAT provides such a frame. On a mission to understand not only learning and understanding, but also how a developmental process works, in 1987, Yrjö Engeström

published the book *Learning by Expanding*. The book was a way to show how CHAT could be a framework for development and change and, at the same time, a way to move away from the tendency at the time t studies of education and cognition were mostly observational and analytical (Engeström, 2015). In the furthering of this thesis, I rely heavily on Engeström and colleagues' work, and thus I will now direct attention to the theory that he and they advocate.

3.5.1. The theoretical foundations of cultural-historical activity theory

CHAT is often described as having been developed within three generations. Starting with Russian psychologist Leo S. Vygotsky, CHAT stands within the tradition of socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky argued that the use of tools is deeply intertwined with the organization of a child's activity, and hence that children's developmental process is not a result of an automatic process of stimuli and response. This led Vygotsky (1978) to argue that the object of any study should be to try to understand how an exact state has come to be what it is by revealing the underlying causal or dynamic relations underlying outer actions. Only by understanding the historical context that surrounded a child would it be possible to understand why that child would act in a certain way. Vygotsky's argument rests on a profound insight: "I do [as human] not simply see the world in colour and shape but also as a world with sense and meaning" (1978, p. 33). The word "meaning" points to how the world cannot only be described by portraying its objects, but must include the *meaning* that people give to these objects, and this meaning was seen to be shaped by historical and contemporary factors impacting the individual.

Nevertheless, Vygotsky concentrated on individual learning. In the research following Vygotsky, there was a shift in attention to how the activities of individuals create collective systems of activity. Aleksei N. Leontev represents the second generation within CHAT, and just as Vygotsky did, he believed that the individual's consciousness was developed in the social world and, at the same time, that the individual shaped the social world. But to understand this process, Leontev (1974) introduced the concept of *activity*. An activity is "the nonadditive, molar unit of life" and consists of "a system with its own structures, its own internal transformations and its own development" (Leontev, 1974, p. 46). Leontev (1974) continued to claim that all human actions and, henceforth, human understanding are in some way part of an activity. Thus, the focus shifted—as opposed to Vygotsky (1978), who concentrated on the individual, Leontev (1978) aimed attention at collective activity.

Leontev (1974) went on to argue that every activity is always directed toward something—an object. This object is the driver and the motive of the activity, and accordingly leads to the isolation and formation of the goals that are set for the actions in the activity (Leontev, 1974). In this research project, it is possible to apply these terms to the classroom. If "learning" is the motive of an activity, several goals can be imagined, as herein with examples from Article 3: The teacher might have as her goal to try out a new cooperative method in class, and consequently chooses as her action to explain how to carry out the method to the students. The students might have as their goal to take individual responsibility for getting good grades, and henceforth, the subsequent action is to resist cooperation. Alone, these goals and their succumbed actions only bring intermediate or partial results. But the sum of their aggregated actions is internally connected, and thus leads to a total product that is a result of a social and collective labor process. It follows that the participants in an activity system share a division of labor, as the isolation of goals and the consequential actions toward them carry in them a division of functions (Leontev, 1974).

3.5.2. The system of activity

From Leontev (1974), we thus learn that every action is part of an activity, and it is in this activity that the individual gives meaning to life (Engeström & Sannino, 2020). Later research in the tradition of CHAT added the word "system" to activity, and Engeström provided a visualization of activity through his model of the activity system (Engeström, 2015). As shown in Figure 4, the activity system consists of six nodes that stand in mutual relation to each other. The subject node represents the individual or group whose point of view is taken, while the instrument node represents the tools that the subject makes use of in the movement toward the object. In this research project, the subject is generally considered to be the student group, while the object is considered to be learning. The tool or instrument that is introduced is cooperative learning. The bottom three nodes are the rules, community, and division of labor. While rules refer to the formal and informal norms and regulations that function as guidelines for behavior in the activity, the community node represents other participants in the activity system; in this case, the teacher and me as a researcher. Lastly, the division of labor deals with the internal divisions of power in the activity system, both the horizontal and hierarchical (and often formal) divide, such as between the teacher and the students, but also the vertical divisions of power

between partakers in the activity who are formally at the same level, such as between the students in a class (Engeström & Sannino, 2010).
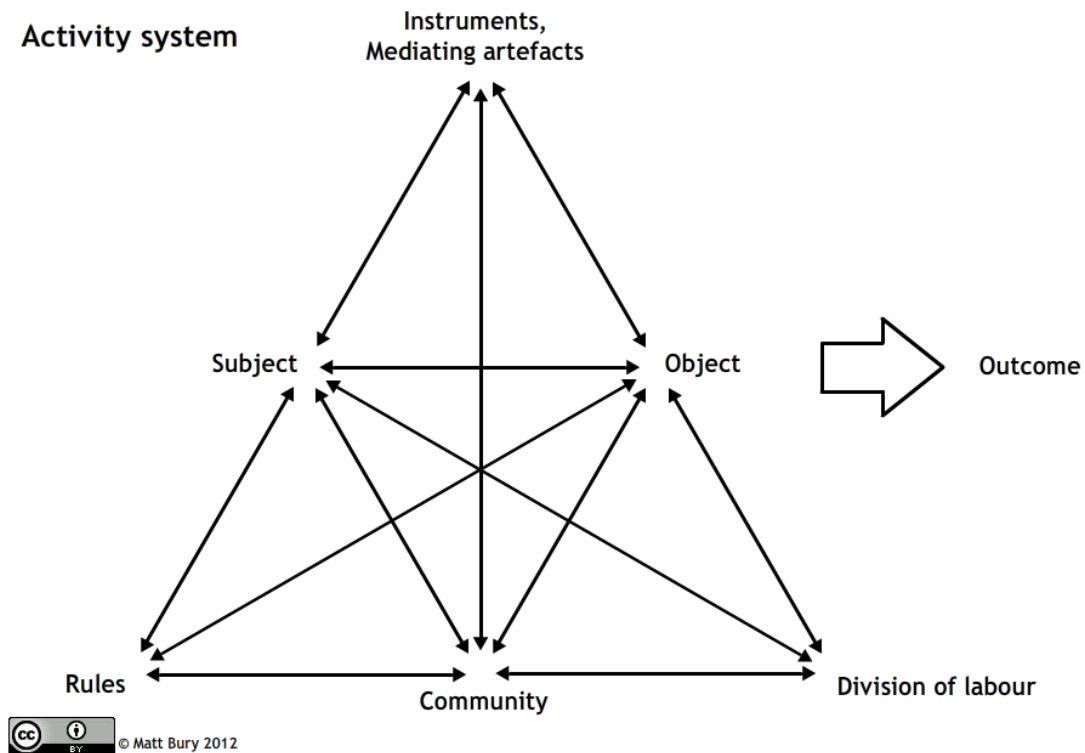
Figure 4: The activity system, by Engeström, 2015, by Matbury.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Activity_system.png).

Engeström (2015) describes how what defines the difference between animal and human activity is that humans use tools systematically and as part of a social setting. This use of tools leads to production, which again will lead to a surplus that must be divided between the members in the system. The distribution of this surplus creates tensions between the members of the activity system as a consequence of the overarching and enduring clash between the general activity system and the individual actions in the same system (Engeström, 2015). In every capitalist society, this manifests in the form of commodities, as objects are given exchange value in addition to use value. As the use and exchange values are simultaneously mutually exclusive and dependent on each other, there will be contradictions within every activity (Engeström, 2015).

Altogether, there are four levels of contradiction. Primary contradictions remain within a node in the activity system, while secondary contradictions appear between the corners. Tertiary contradictions appear when culturally more advanced forms of an activity are introduced into an existing activity system, and quaternary contradictions can emerge in the interaction between the central activity of a system and neighboring activities (Engeström, 2015). The contradictions of the activity system are manifestations of what it is to be human and are a natural consequence of the productional aspect of human activity, which leads to problems but also gives way to development and change (Engeström, 2015). This leads to the argument that to understand a developmental process, there is a need to explore the roots of a conflict, which can be found at the level of contradictions in the activity system (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). The energy contained in the contradictions can spark a change process when and if the participant's agency is kept at the center and often with help from an interventionist (Sannino, 2020, p. 4).

3.5.3. Double stimulation and expansive learning

The interventionist researcher thus has a role as a facilitator who can introduce stimuli as part of a process of double stimulation, and who can serve as a catalysator for a participatory analysis and a developmental process within an activity system. Double stimulation is thus the description of a particular method of investigation, where "two sets of stimuli are presented to the subject, one set as objects of his activity, the other as signs which can serve to organize that activity" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 56). In CHAT's application, this is carried out through two steps, where the first (stimulus) is an initial problematic situation and the second (stimulus) is a tool that in some way lets the subject connect his inner psychological functioning to the outside world (Sannino, 2015). Through the mediating second stimulus, an activity can be transformed by practitioners—but not in a linear direction, as is often presumed in educational research (Engeström, 2011). Instead, the subject can be guided toward the construction of a new solution to the initial contradiction in a process of expansive learning.

Engeström and Sannino (2010, p. 2) have formulated that "in expansive learning, learners learn something that is not yet there. In other words, the learners construct a new object and concept for their collective activity, and implement this new object and concept in practice." Expansive learning is therefore something different from an individual taking in someone else's

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understanding or adopting someone else's knowledge: Terms such as "transformation," "creation," and "movement" imply development, without specifying a target point for this development. Instead, it represents a way to build on a participant's agency in a developmental process by building on the meaning that the participant gives to certain situations or objects.

It follows that through a participant's agency directed at transforming an activity, it becomes possible for the participant in an activity to change its outcome. Engeström (2011) does, in this context, describe how several levels of causality exist in human action. Human beings do not only act according to certain logics as a consequence of their understanding of a law or rule and in what can be termed the interpretive layer of causality. Due to the contradictions in any activity, human behavior becomes both unpredictable and unstable, and this complexity is captured in the contradictory layer. But, through the process of double stimulation, it is possible for a subject to gain agency to redefine a situation, which can be understood as an agentic layer (Engeström, 2011). On this, Engeström et al. (2020, p. 4) note, with an explicit reference to Bandura (2001), that "agency is not a capacity in the individual that people sense that they have, but something people do, in a process." As explained by Jensen (2021), participants can use artifacts to intentionally transform an action and its direction in a causal process of development.

In my work, I find this to be an important theoretical insight. As described, the participatory democratic framework suggests that good education contains subjectification, which presupposes that good education does not have all the answers and solutions to how adolescents, or students, should proceed as citizens (Biesta, 2009). The opportunities provided by CHAT for expansive learning (Sannino et al. 2016) seems to provide alternative solutions as to how citizenship education can support students in both adapting to society's existing norms and to challenge and change those norms if and when needed. Hence, I have followed CHAT's explanation of causality as present in the process of double stimulation (Engeström, 2011).

In addition, the framework contains important insights for understanding how the historicity and collectivity of the activity system both shape and contain opportunities for the individual to partake in reshaping its object (Engeström, 2015). If we remember that the participatory democratic approach proclaims that participation foregoes political efficacy (Pateman, 1970), CHAT seems a promising source for exploring how a certain classroom's history and current practice might contribute to or barricade the students' political efficacy. In the continuation of

my work, I have thus used tools developed within CHAT to both understand and analyze the current case and to structure the formative intervention that has been part of this doctoral work (Sannino et al. 2016). This process will be described in Chapter 4, where this thesis now turns to Methodology and methods.

4. Methodology and methods

4.1.   Introduction

In this chapter, the aim is to outline the choices regarding the methodology and methods that were made during this PhD project. My aim is also to describe the research design of the fieldwork and the formative intervention that I have executed as part of this doctoral work in a more comprehensive manner than is found in the subsequent articles. In the first section, I describe and reflect upon the process of the literature review contained in Article 1, and elaborate upon how the conclusions from this review chapter provide a starting point for the following formative intervention. Thereafter, I describe the research design and the research phases of the formative intervention in an overview, and detail the different phases by considering both their connections to the prior literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and to the theoretical frame given in Chapter **Feil! Fant ikke referansekilden.**. The remaining part of the chapter is concerned with the data analysis, and depicts the undertaking of the transcription, coding, and categorizing in Articles 2 and 3.

4.2.   Doing a literature review

The first step that was conducted as part of this doctoral thesis was the literature review undertaken in Article 1, together with co-author Tessa Eriksen Grevle. The review can be considered a systematic review that seeks to "draw together all known knowledge on a topic area" (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 102). With the goal of synthesizing the research evidence, a systematic review is typically narrative and brings about an analysis focusing on what is known about a topic, providing advice for practice and recommendations for future research (Grant & Booth, 2009). Thus, the systematic review had several benefits for this thesis. First, it would enable an outline of the existing research to be developed, which provided me with both an overview of this broad field and theoretical knowledge that I could pursue. Second, by identifying the gaps in the existing literature, the review provided a way to both legitimize and adjust the intervention process that was to follow (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Silverman, 2002).

4.2.1. Methods and analysis

The work started with a literature search. The search phrase "ICCS 2009" OR "ICCS2016" OR "International Civic and Citizenship Education Study" was applied in the databases Web of Science, ERIC, Idunn, NORART, the Danish National Research Database, BASE, and Scielo, where 193 articles were covered by the search phrases, and that covered the Nordic languages, English, German, and Spanish. These were the languages that were accessible to the authors, and hence met the first criterion of what articles to include in the review. Following Grant and Booth (2009), the second inclusion criterion was to include only articles from peer-reviewed journals, which was considered evidence of quality. Both criteria were applied in the first stage of the review process.

During the second stage of the review process, a focus criterion was applied. The abstracts of the 193 articles were reviewed, and articles that did not cover political efficacy (in this case, meaning that they in some way handled one of the two variables "political efficacy" and "citizenship self-efficacy," as described in Article 1) were excluded from the material. This stage left 58 articles. Thereafter, we used another focus criterion regarding which articles to include, namely, which of the 58 remaining articles connected the topic of political efficacy to schooling. This led us to include 27 articles as our primary sources.

Continuously, the second stage led to the recognition of what factors we needed to map to get a well-structured overview of the content of the 27 articles that we were to read thoroughly in the third stage. These factors were year, author, title, cycle of ICCS data (2009, 2016, or both), countries covered, variable used (political efficacy or citizenship self-efficacy or both), how the variable was used, what the outcome variable was, method (cluster or not), research question, main point of the argument (summarized as one or two sentences), school factors covered, information about socio-economic status, and connections to political efficacy and education. Additionally, we operated with an "other" column in which we wrote down additional information that seemed important, such as suggestions on how to use the article in the forthcoming argument and questions that we could discuss in the article. We read half of the articles each, but at the same time, we marked the articles in green that seemed more important in order to suggest that we should both read them. The stages of this process are displayed in Figure 5 below.

First stage:
Sources covered by the search phrases: 193

Second stage:
Articles covering political efficacy: 58

Third stage:
Articles considering both political efficacy and education: 27

- Sources screened on the basis of the abstracts
- Full-text articles assesed by one author
- Full-text articles read thouroghly by both authors
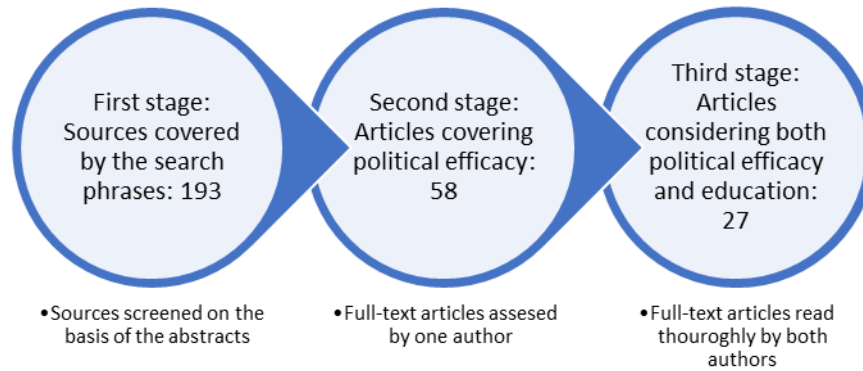
Figure 5: The stages of the review process in Article 1

After the articles were sorted, Grevle and I conducted an open coding process in which the goal was to obtain an overview of the material (Postholm, 2019). Thereafter, we worked on summing up the connections and causalities in the content that we had been working with to determine how to present the—at that time—diversified thematic categories in a continuous argument (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process led to the argument that provided the overarching structure of the first article.

4.2.2. Considerations of the review process

The focus criteria that are used as part of a literature review will necessarily impact the conclusions that are drawn (Snyder, 2019). To ensure the transparency of the review process, I now want to point out some aspects that could have been done differently.

Snyder (2019) states that the systematic review approach requires a narrow research question, and that it might not be feasible or even suitable for all types of projects, as the limited view might cause the researcher to lose sight of other relevant variables. The selection criteria, where we decided on articles that contained one of the variables on political efficacy and school variables in some form, might have caused a limited view, as out-of-school factors clearly impact school experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). During the process of developing the selection criteria, Grevle and I explicitly discussed how we should understand the concept, and consequently, if we should adopt it according to Bandura (1997), or if we should understand political efficacy more broadly, which could have led us to include articles that considered aspects of an adolescent's life other than education. As the Bandura approach to understanding political efficacy is the most common in the ICCS literature, we ended up using this approach. But, as shown in Chapter 3, Bandura's understanding of political efficacy is not the only one, and if we had chosen another theoretical starting point for our selection process, it is clear that it might have caused both the process and the results to look different.

Furthermore, I want to discuss the consequences of two researchers working with the same analytical process. Snyder (2019) explains that it is essential to ensure the same understanding of each focus criterion when several researchers are included in an analytical process. With our article, this seemed to be most important at the stage where we were to choose which articles to read thoroughly. To ensure a common understanding, we used the Rayyan tool, which is an AI-assisted tool used to organize and manage collaborative systematic literature reviews (Rayyan, n.d.). After applying the first criterion, all 193 articles considering ICCS were loaded into Rayyan. The program offers the possibility of blind reviews, as authors can sort articles according to the selected criteria without seeing their co-authors' sorting results.

Figure 6 is a screenshot taken from Rayyan, showing how the results appear with the blind review in off-mode. The articles were then marked red for "exclude" and green for "include," which made it easy to see which articles we disagreed on, and we could focus on discussing the cases where our understandings differed. In addition, we had several categories that we used in

addition to the inclusion/exclusion criteria. The blue box in the upper line says "bør leses," which means "should read." This tag was used to identify articles that were not included according to the criteria but that seemed relevant to read in order to understand, for example, the context of, theoretical approaches to, or critique of the ICCS. Other tags that we used were "spanish" (which made it available only for Grevle to read), "must find" (if the text was not available in our search systems), "report" (meaning that it would not meet the peer-reviewed criterion but was still important for understanding the ICCS), and "definition" (which meant that the text was in some sense important for expanding our understanding of the term or theoretical background of the term "political efficacy"). The tag "it's a yes" that is shown on the second line in the picture was our finalizing tag, and it meant that we had discussed and agreed to place the article in the included category.

| 2017-01-01 | | Tessa Eva Bør leses | The IEA International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) 2016: an analysis on Italian students' attitudes Damiani, V. |
| 2018-01-01 | | Tessa Eva Its a yes | Investigating expected civic engagement of immigrant and non-immigrant young adolescents in Europe... Damiani, V.; Caponera, E. |
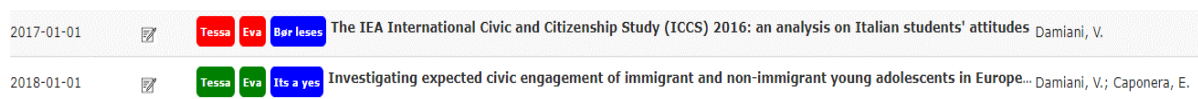
Figure 6: Screenshot from Rayyan

4.2.3. The literature review and the following qualitative study

The first choice made after choosing the focus of Article 1 was to study articles that drew on data material from the ICCS. This raises a question regarding whether the choice to study articles based on the ICCS leaves out other material that focuses on adolescents' sense of political efficacy. As shown in Chapter 2, there is a wide range of research that considers citizenship education and efficacy. Thus, there is a need to showcase what considerations were made in making this selection and what consequences this had for the outcome of the article, specifically, and for the thesis in general.

The choice to investigate research based on ICCS data was first made due to its relevance to the larger research project DEMOCIT. Some of DEMOCIT's research aims and questions were based on earlier ICCS findings, especially in Ødegård and Svagård's (2018) article on the Norwegian ICCS results from 2016, in which they investigated what factors would lead Norwegian adolescents toward participating politically, with political efficacy being the most important factor. A selection criterion for the schools that contributed to parts of DEMOCIT's main project was also based on ICCS data and the levels of political efficacy reported by the students in the different schools.

However, participation in or results from the ICCS was not a criterion that I used in selecting the class that I followed in my subproject, which is further described in section 4.3.3.1 on sampling. Therefore, it would be possible to argue that it would have been more relevant to write a broader review that considered a wider range of literature. Still, the centrality of the ICCS was considered critical. The ICCS is the largest international and only dedicated study of civic and citizenship education (Schulz et al., 2018), and the first search for the literature review that led to all the articles produced with ICCS data from the 2009 and 2016 cycles showed that 193 articles were written from 2010 to December 2020. This is a substantial number, which can be an argument in itself for investigating research based on the ICCS as a single source. At the same time, this number manifests significant growth in research on civic education, and is a template for how the ICCS both leads and guides the fields of policy making and educational research (Isac, 2021), also in Norway, where this study is situated (Biseth et al., 2021). Consequently, the choice was made to review research based on the ICCS concerning citizenship education and political efficacy.

Even though the literature researched in Article 1 extends the historical context of the concrete classroom that the post-ceding study focuses on, it was related to and directed the later research in this project in several ways. As shown in Article 1, a common recommendation in the ICCS-based literature is to work toward supporting political efficacy in schools (Blaskó et al., 2019; Isac et al., 2014; Maurissen, 2020). Simultaneously, the nature of the ICCS as a survey study is necessarily such that it brings knowledge on an overarching level, and its deductive approach will leave out people's interpretations and reflections on what is measured (Clark et al., 2021). This also resonates in Article 1, where one of the suggestions for further research was a call for qualitative studies to shed light on the relationship between schooling and political efficacy by going beyond the constructs of the ICCS.

Moreover, the recommendation to do qualitative research is made even more relevant considering that the ICCS, as discussed concerning the prior quantitative literature on political efficacy in section 2.3., cannot establish a causal link between its items. The data from each school is collected simultaneously, in Norway between February and April 2016 in the second cycle (Svagård & Huang, 2017). As described in section 3.5, the use of qualitative methods and the CHAT framework can reveal lines of causality when it is traced how individuals use artifacts to take control over their circumstances (Engeström, 2011). Doing qualitative studies in continuation of the ICCS thus can contribute to both a legitimation and a concretization of the

advice given based on quantitative data. Consequently, I sought to use a qualitative approach. I hoped to increase the relevance of the ICCS-based recommendation to support student political efficacy, which seemed important, but was far from being translated into examples of concrete classroom practices when phrased in the language of variables and statistics (Clark et al., 2021).

Moreover, the review raised the question as to what view of political efficacy is contained in the ICCS. As formerly mentioned, at the point of writing the review, Grevle and I, as authors, worked with the socio-cognitive understanding of the concept (Bandura, 1997). However, a central finding from Article 1 was a narrow or lack of use of theory on the concept of political efficacy in the ICCS-based literature, with just a few articles referencing Bandura's (1997) work. As depicted in Chapter 3, the implications of Bandura's work are an individualistic view and an understanding of political efficacy as directed toward a specific and known goal.

However, the ICCS does not provide a theoretical framework for its use of different terms, variables, and phrases, and has been met with criticism for lacking an education-theoretical foundation (Zurstrassen, 2011). In consonance with this critique, the review in Article 1 also revealed critical voices. Joris and Agirdag (2019, p. 287) stated that "[the] ICCS misses an important potential to […] promote pupils becoming autonomous and critical democratic citizens" due to its dominant focus on the socialization and qualification aspects of citizenship education (Biesta, 2009). In a similar vein, Liljestrand (2012) argued that students, when seen through the ICCS lens, were seen as citizens to-be who needed to be trained to move toward certain given attitudes and actions, while issues the students considered important were not opened up within the ICCS frame. Liljestrand (2012) went on to argue that this is also the case when considering the understanding that the ICCS transmits of political efficacy, and explains that the variable of citizenship self-efficacy conveys a predefined view of what activities and actions are seen as rightfully democratic, and furthermore suggests that the phrasing of the question that asks the students to rank how *well* they will master activities leads to students ranking themselves on an already given scale, indirectly signaling that these are activities that the students should (work to) accomplish.

These readings were important as a starting point for asking what theoretical implications were present in the literature that simply adopted the ICCS framework for political efficacy. Even though the ICCS does not provide a theoretical foundation, it is possible to obtain a view

of how political efficacy is understood by looking at the categorizing and phrasing of the included variables that measure political efficacy. As explained in Article 1, the 2009 cycle of the ICCS contained two variables termed "internal political efficacy" and "citizenship self-efficacy," which are both explained as measuring aspects of political efficacy (Schulz et al., 2011). In the 2016 cycle, only the variable of citizenship self-efficacy was kept (Schulz et al., 2018). The remaining citizenship self-efficacy variable names specified activities that the students are to consider, which is in line with Bandura's claim that efficacy is directed toward something specific and, accordingly, that measures of political efficacy should be particularized (Bandura, 2006a). Moreover, the students are asked to state, as described by Liljestrand (2012), how well they think they would perform activities, such as to "discuss a newspaper article about a conflict between countries" (Schulz et al., 2011, p. 179). The activities specified in the citizenship self-efficacy variable are tied to situations that are part of students' everyday lives, where two of the measures are directly tied to school settings ("stand as a candidate in a school election" and "organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school"). The remaining four items also consist of activities that could at least be performed in an educational setting (e.g., "argue your point of view about a controversial political or social issue").

Furthermore, the citizenship self-efficacy variable could be said to focus on the competence of the students due to the statements starting with active verbs, such as discuss, organize, argue, and write, which indicate specific competencies. This is not in agreement with socio-cognitive theory, as Bandura explicitly states, and as shown in Chapter 3, that political efficacy is not about specific behavior, and that a broad range of activities should be included in measurements of political efficacy, including actions that would fall outside of the established expectations of political engagement (Bandura, 1997). Interestingly, the internal political efficacy variable, which was only used in 2009, was phrased with modal verbs ("I *have* political opinions worth listening to" and "I *am* able to understand most political issues easily"). Such verbs are often used to express whether a person believes that something is certain, possible, or impossible. The political efficacy measure from 2009 thus seems to come closer to measuring the respondents' beliefs about their capabilities, and can be considered more open regarding their outcomes, as "I *have* political opinions worth listening to" does not specify how a person should make these opinions heard, and "I *am* able to understand most political issues easily" does not specify how a person would act on the understanding that he or she has. The only item specifying being politically active in the internal political efficacy variable from 2009 is, "as an

adult, I will be able to *take part in politics,*" but note how this partaking is to happen is not defined.

The reduction from 2009 to 2016 thus turns the inherent content of political efficacy in the ICCS, understood through the citizenship self-efficacy variable, in a direction where the focus is on measuring specific predefined competencies and political actions that are concretely placed within students' everyday lives. The turn toward measuring competencies is in accordance with the international trend that is described as part of a neoliberal turn in education in Chapter 3, wherein the efficiency of education systems in general, and in this case, of their citizenship education systems, is at the center (Veugelers, 2021). Interestingly, political efficacy is also sorted as a potential learning outcome in both of the cycles (Schulz et al., 2011; Schulz et al., 2018), showcasing the presuppositions that (1) political efficacy can be supported by civic education and (2) it is an *outcome* that is sought through such education. The underlying premise is that active citizens are a benefit to democracy, and that education has a role to play in enhancing specific activities that can be done in specific ways that are seen as advantageous dispositions in the democratic citizen.

The content of the variables measuring political efficacy in the ICCS is thus directed toward maintaining and supporting the existing system, and even more so with the removal of the variable of "political efficacy" in 2016. Even though, as shown in Article 1, it is common in the ICCS literature to reference Bandura (1997) as the theoretical source on political efficacy, the understanding of political efficacy in the ICCS framework can thus be seen to lie closer to a combination of the view of the early political scientists, where democratic citizens are supportive, loyal, and participating, and they endorse and uphold the current democratic system (Almond & Verba, 1963), and that of the neoliberal strand (Held, 2006). As both of these understandings are limited in meeting the educational goal of subjectification that is found within the participatory approach to democracy (Biesta, 2009, 2021), the critique of the ICCS provided the leeway for this thesis to become both more theoretically focused and for the subsequent intervention to aim toward what the critical voices said that the ICCS would not promote, namely, autonomous democratic citizens. In shaping my overarching frame for the following project, wherein the participatory democratic approach became important, the recommendation found in Article 1 to develop clear theoretical arguments was also therefore a guideline in my further work, both in making the different understandings of political efficacy

that are used in this thesis explicit, and in my own discussion of the implications of these different understandings.

However, the qualitative study that followed would necessarily have to be placed within a certain context, as the execution and quality of such work depends on the researcher being present with the participants in the research over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The platform brought forward in Article 1 on this matter had revealed that Nordic countries shared a characteristic where the impression students had of having an open classroom climate was not connected to high levels of political efficacy (Hoskins et al., 2015; Lieberkind, 2015). This particularity would direct my later theoretical searches and provide me with questions that would stimulate my own gathering of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and hence was the starting point for the formative intervention that was to follow (Sannino et al., 2016). This work is described in the next section.

4.3. Research design and research phases of the formative intervention

The overarching design in my following qualitative research project was developed within the framework given by CHAT. As shown in Chapter 3, this framework is aimed at supporting change (Engeström, 2015). Concurrently, different options were possible, as interventions in schools can be carried out within different frameworks. One alternative was to use design-based research (DBR). In this approach, the goal is both to improve practice and to make models of innovation that can contribute to learning (Borko et al., 2007), which seemed to fit well with my project. Nevertheless, Engeström (2011) points out that the intervention process within DBR is of a linear character, where the researcher(s) come(s) up with a model that can be implemented by teachers to make the students learn better. The implicit critique is that the complexity of the perspectives of the different actors in a research project is lost, which can lead to a situation in which the agency of participants, such as students and teachers, is not captured or taken into account.

The second alternative that I considered to be an overarching framework was a traditional action research design. Within this tradition, there are several schools, and I do not intend to go into all of these. But as a common denominator, action research has researchers collaborating

with practitioners to develop or transform their practice (Kemmis, 2009). This differs from CHAT, as within this framework, the theoretical backdrop of activity theory had both shaped the methods and tools developed by Engeström and others (Engeström, 2015; Engeström & Sannino, 2020), and the focus on the historicity of a case could be said to give a better understanding of the complexity of a situation than that which is contained within the action research approach (Aas, 2014). In this project, where I was to explore the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy, I found this part important, particularly as I was to work with one group of students. As I was going to use a qualitative approach, it was important to give thick descriptions of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). CHAT's concentration on the historical and empirical context of the activity system thus seemed to give me better tools with which to possibly provide such descriptions (Engeström, 2015). With this as my background, I found the methodological tools and models of CHAT to be the most suitable for exploring my research question.

4.3.1. The formative intervention

The concrete research design thus ended up being based on CHAT and, more specifically, within the Finnish tradition. Within this school, a formative intervention is understood as an intervention that has as its aim to create new content in some or all parts of an activity system. To do so, tools stemming from CHAT are used in the developmental process, which brings attention to historically formed contradictions (Engeström, 2011; Sannino et al. 2016). Since 1994, the Center for Research on Activity, Development and Learning (CRADLE) has had its seat in Helsinki, and has played a role in several developmental projects from which I have drawn much inspiration. Working on different areas, such as with change efforts in a university library (Sannino, Engeström, & Lahikainen, 2016), enhancing collaboration and efficiency at a service company (Haapasaari et al., 2016), and meeting changing needs in a hospital surgery unit (Engeström, 2001, 2011), the framework has proven to be both flexible and adaptable to different contexts.

Within this school of intervention research, the methodology of the Change Laboratory (CL) has been prominent. It holds 6–12 weekly sessions, with participants and researcher-interventionists jointly analyzing contradictions in an activity, and then it uses them as a starting point to find new solutions (Sannino et al. 2016). On several occasions, the CL has been used in educational research, such as in a middle school where the object of the teacher's work

activity was transformed (Sannino et al. 2016), and to enhance teacher's professional development regarding assessment and management in the classroom (Sannino, 2010). However, this research project has not applied the CL methodology. But the developmental process shares its emphasis on spending time with the practitioner participants to develop a common goal and the use of tools from CHAT to stimulate a process of double stimulation as part of the intervention process, to evolve toward a new, collective practice (Postholm & Smith, 2017).

When it comes to the concrete methodological choices that have been made throughout the project, the writings of Postholm (2008, 2015, 2019) have been important. Their concrete nature and focus on school-based development made them relevant and well-suited as a guide derived from the larger developmental projects referenced above and how a smaller scale project such as this PhD project could be executed, for example, by choosing to do a case study (Postholm, 2015), by determining what needed to be considered during the start-up phase of my research project (Postholm, 2008), and by reflecting on both my own role during the research (Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013) and, together with the teacher, reflecting on the progress of the project (Postholm, 2018). However, Postholm has mainly focused on school leadership and the teacher's perspective. In my work, cooperation with the teacher has been central, but it is the student's perspective that has mainly been considered, which has made adaptations necessary in regard to working with adolescents who were in a student role. These considerations are thoroughly discussed in section 5.4.

4.3.2. The expansive learning cycle

To execute a formative intervention, CHAT provides the expansive learning cycle as a model for developmental work (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). In the expansive learning cycle, the stages of a developmental process based on the contradictions in the activity system are visualized (Engeström, 2015). The historicity and context of a case, and thereby the perspectives and agency of the participants in a project, are thus explicitly included in the developmental process.
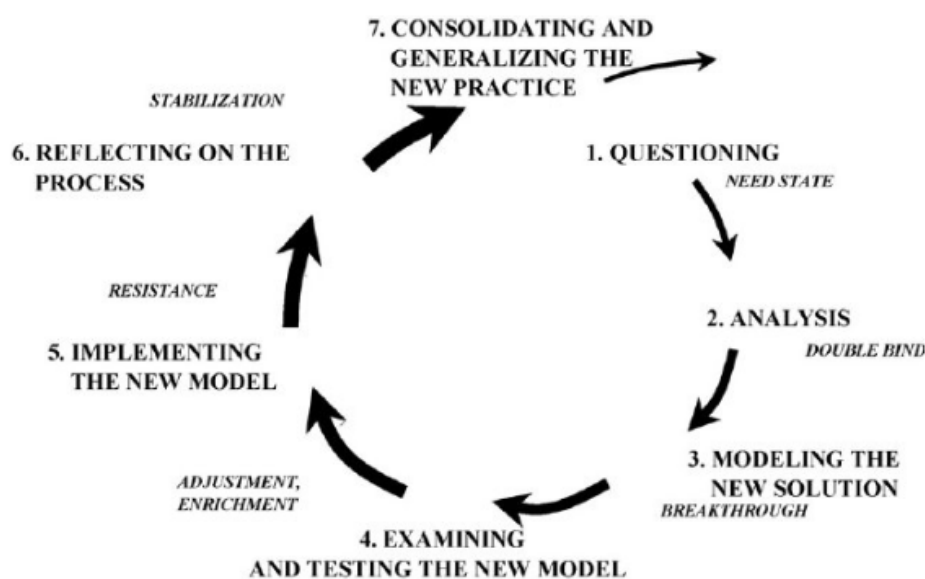
Figure 7: The expansive learning cycle, Engeström and Sannino, 2009, p. 8. (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248571723_Studies_of_expansive_learning_Foundations_findings_and_future_challenges/figures?lo=1).

Table 1 below shows the research phases of the formative intervention contained in this PhD project in the column to the left. The numbers that were added match the numbers of the phases in the expansive learning cycle displayed in Figure 7 above to make explicit that this model has been followed throughout the work. The second column gives an overview of the methods that were applied in the different phases, and the third column displays the data collected. The different types of data had different functions: Observations were the driving force for the developmental process and for reflections, both with the teacher and the students. Concurrently, the primary source of data for both Articles 2 and 3 was interviews. In addition, an anonymous questionnaire was important in Article 3 to validate the information from the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Secondary data, such as audio files from the group work

and pictures of the products that the students made during the lessons in the intervention, were not systematically analyzed, but were used both to guide the evolution of the intervention and to strengthen the key interpretations of the findings. In the last column, the timeline of the project is given.

Research phase	Method	Data sources	Timeline
1 Questioning 2 Analysis	Introductory meetings	Logbook	December 2020–January 2021
2 Analysis	Observation	Field notes Logbook	February 2021–April 2021
2 Analysis	Interviews round 1	Sound files	May 2021
3 Modeling the new solution	Meetings between researcher and teacher	Logbook	May 2021–August 2021
4 & 5 Examining and testing the new model/implementing the new model	Observation	Field notes Sound files from group work Student evaluation forms Logbook	August 2021–October 2021
6 Reflecting on the process	Interviews round 2	Sound files	October 2021–December 2021

Table 1: The research phases, methods, data sources, and timeline of the intervention

I will now go on to describe the different phases of the intervention. Within each phase, I aim to connect the methodological choices to the overarching research question, as well as to describe and reflect on the methods that were used.

4.3.3. Phase 1: Asking questions

The first stage of the expansive learning cycle is termed "asking questions." In this stage, the central point is to determine which contradictions or tensions are present in an activity system (Sannino et al. 2016). For a researcher, the intention in such a start-up phase is also to create a common understanding of the present situation, which can be understood as a common construction of the object of the research process (Postholm, 2015). Concurrently, there is a need to build trust and intersubjectivity between the researcher and the participants to reach the twofold goal of the process: to "understand and help" practitioners develop their practice (Postholm, 2008, p. 577).

4.3.3.1. Sampling and context of the selected case

At this stage, I started with the aim of exploring the connections between social studies education and political efficacy. I wanted to explore this connection qualitatively by following

a class over time, and was focused largely on classroom practices that could be beneficial for political efficacy, and on the connections between political efficacy and an open classroom climate. I therefore went into a sampling phase to find a class to follow. Sampling often involves asking what is promising or useful when it comes to exploring the research questions at hand (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and choosing a case is therefore about the intention of the study and is also termed "purposive sampling" (Silverman, 2002). In this research project, purposeful had a practical meaning and can also be described as a convenience sample (Creswell & Poth, 2018), as I needed to focus on only one group of students to be able to follow up on the project in relation to the teacher and the students and to follow lessons throughout the fieldwork. I also needed to find a school that was at a reasonable distance from my home, as I planned to spend a lot of time there. Outside of these practical starting points, there were no selection criteria for the case except for the students' age, which I wanted to be at a lower secondary level, which is accounted for in section 2.3. Within the lower secondary level, I specifically looked for a class within the 8th grade. Within the lower secondary stage of education in Norway, I found that this choice of grade was most appropriate, as the alternative would have been to follow the students from the 9th and into the 10th grade. In the 10th grade, Norwegian students have exams and receive a finalizing diploma that is decisive for their route into upper secondary school. The choice to want to follow the students from the middle of the 8th grade into the first part of the 9th grade was therefore considered less of an issue for the students than the second alternative. All other factors, such as the placement of the school in a certain area, students' socio-economic background, school results, or ethnic diversity, were not taken into consideration in the selection of the case.

Finding a class to follow did, however, prove to be a bit of a challenge. As this project started during the Covid-19 pandemic, the schools in the surrounding area had experienced several months of homeschooling just as I went into the recruitment phase. This led to many schools, understandably, wanting to stay focused on their core task of teaching. However, my network of school-interested people would put me in contact with teachers whom they thought would be interested in working with me on this project, which is an example of snowball sampling (Clark et al., 2021). This process led to me following a class in an urban area, and their teacher, who from now on will be referred to under the pseudonym of Catherine. She was an experienced teacher in a class of 8th-graders who taught the subjects of Norwegian, English, and social studies. To meet the goal of getting to know each other and to establish a common

understanding of the context, the teacher and I had our first digital meeting in December 2020. Thereafter, we met at the school in January of the following year to discuss the upcoming project. For both of these meetings, I went in with an open mind, trying to be an active listener and to find out what the context really looked like (Postholm, 2008).

At this point, the students had been in the same class for five months. They had attended several different schools in the surrounding area at the elementary level, meaning that some of them had known each other for a long time and had a history together, but most were still quite new to each other, and the dynamics of the class seemed to be still in the making. Furthermore, the teacher noted that there was sometimes a harsh tone between some of the students, especially when controversial issues were discussed in social studies class. She expanded upon how topics such as racism or feminism could trigger long discussions in the classroom, as some students had backgrounds that made these topics sensitive to them. However, the student group was diverse, so the experiences and backgrounds of the project participants would be dissimilar. This is an example of how the teacher, the practitioner, transmitted her knowledge to me so that we could have a common understanding of the situation at hand (Postholm, 2008). As a consequence, my focus changed slightly: Where my own teaching background had made me predisposed to thinking that the challenge at hand would be how to make silent students start participating in the social studies lessons, the common object of the developmental project instead became explaining and perhaps changing what happened in the classroom when the students communicated with each other in different learning situations (Sannino et al. 2016).

After Catherine and I had discussed the project and agreed on a progress plan, the students obtained information about the project and consent schemes. Catherine's guess was that most of the students would choose to participate. As it turned out, this was not the case, as 10 out of 26 students did not consent. As there were no distinct patterns regarding background and sex, interest, participation, or former results in the subject of social studies as to which students consented and who would abstain, the teacher's guess at a probable reason for the number of non-consenting students was their present experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. At this point, Norwegian schools had seen several lockdowns and other corona measures for almost a year. A probable reason for the students (or their parents) not wanting to participate was, thus, that they had experienced a period with a lot of disturbance and changes, both in their school and in their private spheres, which could lead to skepticism toward adding another new factor to an already complex situation.

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After discussions with the teacher and my supervisors, I chose to proceed with the project, with some adjustments that were applied from the beginning. The adjustments that I had to make were mostly practical to respect the privacy of the students who did not want to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I would only be able to observe the students who had consented, which meant that when they were working in groups or pairs with non-consenting students, I would have to leave them out of my observations. I also had to leave out potential classroom conversations where the non-consenting students took part. Consequently, I also put aside my plan to make video recordings in the classroom. I instead chose sound recordings, and when they were made, the recorder would be placed on a group table with only consenting students present. The interviews described below were also, of course, undertaken only with the consenting students. Note, however, that all the students in the class experienced the changes in the teaching that were made in the later stage of the project. This was considered legitimate, as the lessons were still following the curriculum for social studies (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Moreover, Catherine would make the necessary adjustments to the lesson plans, considering the different students' needs throughout the project.

4.3.4. Phase 2: Historical and empirical analysis

When the teacher and I had made a project plan and the students had been informed about the project, the work moved into its second phase. The goal of the second phase of the expansive learning cycle is to map the contingent historical and empirical conditions that shape an activity system (Sannino et al. 2016). This led me to search for a methodology that could meet the need to undertake such a process. Postholm (2015) describes how case studies might be used to describe steps in the expansive learning cycle to contribute knowledge about the state in one stage of the cycle. A case study is an approach where the researcher "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) [...] through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96) and can be favorable when the goal of the research is to explore a research question qualitatively to provide an in-depth understanding of a specific issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The choice to study the social studies class as a case was thus a choice with the goal of doing an empirical analysis of the students' experiences in a social studies classroom that would later function as a tool in the developmental process (Engeström, 2015).

I will now continue to expand upon the data sources that were used in this phase, namely, observations and interviews. They contained a mapping of both historical and empirical aspects, as I was trying to trace the sources of the levels of political efficacy that the students sensed they had. In the following section, I will expand upon how these two components were executed and how they are connected to the overarching theoretical perspectives and the expansive learning cycle.

4.3.4.1. Observations, round 1

While interviews provide the opportunity to move the conversation back and forth in time, observations provide insight into the participant's present experience and are an opportunity to capture the particular context on its own terms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In resonance with this view, Sannino et al. (2016) explain that the underlying motives of individuals can only be revealed through actions. These actions can be speaking actions, such as statements in the later interviews. But through observations of the students, one can also get a picture of their classroom actions—their spoken words, but also their body language, placement, tone, and other expressions (Engeström, 2011).

The original plan was that I would enter the school for initial meetings and observations beginning in January 2021. As January came, however, the school was in a lockdown due to Covid-19. As my primary goal was to get to know the students and the teaching, and for them to get to know me, I did not want to start the observations when the teaching was being conducted digitally. Many students would abstain from turning on their camera during the digital teaching period (Fosdahl, 2021). In addition, research showed that digital home schooling in Norway to a large degree consisted of individual tasks for the students with little support from their teacher (Blikstad-Balas et al., 2022). Therefore, we decided to delay the project until the restrictions had been lifted. On March 1, I belatedly entered the classroom. At this time, the schools in Norway had a color scheme that described what rules were to be followed to limit the spread of the virus. Red meant that the students were to receive homeschooling. As I went into the field, the level was yellow, meaning that the students were at school, but with restrictions. They had to sit in the same places in the classroom and were not allowed to move around or be too close to other students.

At the beginning of the third week of observation, the school yet again went back to the red level, and the students were to receive digital schooling. At this point, I felt that I had seen the

students for a long enough time to continue the observations on the digital platform, Microsoft Teams. I was also a bit worried about the progress of the project. Although I did not want the practical frames to govern my choices, I was delayed by two months in terms of following the scheduled time plan, and I was worried that if I were to delay the rest of the observation period, the class would go into a phase with midterm tests in May, and thereafter the summer holidays, and then there was a real possibility that the whole project would be delayed for half a year. Against this background, I decided to continue to observe the students digitally for the rest of the five-week observation period.

I observed the students in the three subjects that Catherine taught (social studies, Norwegian, and English). Even though my interest was in researching social studies, my experience as a teacher led me to think that the students would behave quite similarly in the three subjects that Catherine taught, and I figured that my presence in the classroom would both allow me to get to know the context that I was working with and in, and for the students to get comfortable in my presence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I took several steps to ensure this at this early stage. First of all, I chose an observant role that I hoped would not feel intrusive to the students: observer-as-participant (Postholm, 2019). I did not interact with the students or the teacher in the classroom, except for a few smiles and sometimes questions, for example, if I wanted to place myself at a more visible point in the classroom to be able to hear specific students working together or if I wanted to follow a specific group that was working in another room.

Observations can be done with both strict observation manuals and very openly (Klette & Blikstad-Balas, 2018). I chose to focus on two aspects: (1) how the students were working together when they were put in groups or pairs, and (2) how the class would react to and discuss politics. This focus was consistent with my overarching research question. Apart from this, I did not specify beforehand what I was looking for. I wanted to foster discovery and let the classroom unfold in front of me (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Such an open beginning would lay the foundation for me to see situations through the students' eyes, which was important, as my research project at this point was precisely aimed at mapping students' experiences of a phenomenon, namely, being in the social studies classroom (Bryman, 2008).

During the observations, I made field notes in two columns, writing down (1) what was happening, and (2) preliminary questions, comments, and interpretations of what I was seeing

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, I ended every day of the observation first by writing down my own impressions and thoughts. These could also be of a private nature—I would write down if I considered myself to have had a bad day or a lack of concentration due to other reasons to be able to possibly identify if this might impede my observations and interpretations. After this self-reflective exercise, I would go back to my computer and put my observations into a digital notebook that I used as an observational protocol to develop a searchable and more manageable system than I had in my handwritten notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.3.4.1.1. Outcome of the observations

The physical outcome of the observations in this phase consisted of 38 pages of field notes. The knowledge I obtained was used both with the students and with the teacher. With the students, an important outcome was that the observations gave me knowledge about the students that could be used as mirror data (Cole & Engeström, 2007). Mirror data means that the researcher takes some piece of data—it might be a summary of an incident or a quote from the classroom—and reflects it back to the participants—in this case, the students. An example is given in the following excerpt from the interview with group 4 (Oslo, May 2020):

16: […] there is some discussion in the classroom. There are maybe, four or five students who talk a lot, and the others sit and listen

13: Someone did something and the others heard that and discussed back, and then there is a whole discussion

16: And often, it turns into…

13: It takes about half an hour to clear it up

Researcher: So it's a bit tense?

16: yes between…

14: The different persons

Researcher: This is very interesting. When I have sat in the back of the classroom, I have been thinking the same as what you are saying—that someone is talking and someone is listening, and then the discussion becomes heated. How do you experience this? Or, how is it to be in the classroom at that time?

The last response shows how I used my observations from the classroom to confirm the students' descriptions of their classroom. Moreover, I built on our common understanding of the classroom by asking about the students' experiences after they had first described the classroom. This shows how mirror data allows for establishing a connection between the observations and the content of the interviews (Cole & Engeström, 2007). It can also make it

easier for the interviewees to talk in an interview when the conversation is tied to a specific time and place (Riessmann, 2008).

The observations were also an important asset in the conversations between the teacher and me, where they functioned as stimuli in the early stages of the developmental process (Postholm, 2008). As previously described, I made field notes. When given the opportunity, I discussed these with the teacher to get answers to practical questions, such as, "Is this a normal situation with this group of students?" or "How will you precede in the next lesson?" Furthermore, I used the conversations with her to air more substantial matters about my impression and interpretations of the situations in the classroom, such as, "Why do you think this happened?" This could be described as a sort of member checking, whereby I would let her judge the accuracy of my observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The observations thus made for a shared understanding of the classroom with the teacher, which would later constitute a common developmental zone (Vygotsky, 1978).

Additionally, I used my observations and the following questions as a starting point to decide where I needed to go to enlighten myself theoretically. Corbin and Strauss (2015) write that in undertaking observations, the researcher should be watchful for incidents that seem particularly interesting or important and follow up on these incidents by enlightening him- or herself about them. The existing literature can be used in several ways, for example, to enhance the researcher's sensitivity about a particular context or to supply questions for initial observations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The following excerpt from May 21, 2021 shows how, in my research journal, I compared my observations to several existing concepts. I wrote down several familiar texts that I wanted to go back and read to compare my findings to what I remembered as relevant.

Look back to the references on role play—[to] actually experience what others experience. Is this about that experience is what makes the students participate? Democracy as a practice of activity? This could be analyzed with the different types of citizenship, what type of citizenship is it that the students express. And Koritzinsky—closeness does not have to be physical, but emotional closeness is what is to be discussed. Ødegård—the students need to have the feeling that something should change to want to change something.

(Logbook, May 21, 2021)

The paragraph contains several references. At this point, I had just read Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1938), which triggered the first lines in which I write about experience. The types of citizenship that I consider are the categories developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), which were later included in this thesis's theory chapter. In addition, I connect my

observations to Koritzinsky's distinction between physical and emotional closeness (Koritzinsky, 2020) and to a presentation that I had heard from Guro Ødegård on adolescent culture in 2021, which I later connected to her work in the book *Ungdommen* [Adolescents] (Bergh et al., 2021), which is referenced in the chapter on former research. This provides an example of how the observations made me go back to the literature and search for points of comparison to deepen my understanding of the topics that I was working with. Concurrently, it was also an early attempt to analyze and understand my observations (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

4.3.4.2. Interviews, round 1

While the observations were important to get to know the class, as mirror data, and to stimulate the developmental process that was to come, interviews with the students were the primary data source in the first stage of the fieldwork. Interviews provide information about the meaning that the interviewees give to a theme or concept, and the method is uniquely sensitive in terms of capturing a person's lived world (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). As part of mapping the empirical state of the context that this particular social studies classroom provided (Sannino et al., 2016), I thus found it appropriate to undertake interviews with the students. It was also in line with the current situation, where most research on education and political efficacy is done using quantitative methods.

Interviews come in several different forms. An important distinction in this work is that between the one-on-one interview and the focus-group interview, where the use of focus-group interviews in academia has increased after first having been introduced in market research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). There are many reasons why a researcher can choose to undertake focus-group interviews. The practical side is obvious: They provide the opportunity to obtain a range of opinions within a limited amount of time (Chrzanowska, 2002). However, this argument of efficiency needs to be followed up with considerations connected to the research question at hand, the theoretical backdrop of the thesis, and the students as participants.

The basic epistemology that this thesis builds on is the social-constructivist insight that knowledge is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Within this view, the interview can be seen as a specific interaction constructed by the participants and the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). However, this is the case in both one-on-one interviews and focus-group interviews. For this thesis, the question that led to the focus group as the interview format

was, thereafter, how knowledge is created through action and interaction. In section 3.5, the understanding from CHAT that individual actions take place within the social context that an activity system provides (Engeström, 2015) is explained. But in individual interviews, interviewees are separated from their social context (Postholm, 2019). Additionally, more participants might bring forward more views due to the stimulus of the other participants, in contrast to the possible opportunities given in a one-to-one interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). In line with this argumentation, which can be summed up in the belief that knowledge is accumulated by the collective (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), I made the choice to use focus groups.

However, placing students from the same class in focus groups would, at the same time, pose challenges. Chrzanowska (2002) points out that the researcher should be considerate about trying to find methods to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and able to speak in focus-group interviews. Going into the first interview round, my observations had shown me how much the students participated in class varied greatly. I had also watched several situations where discussions had grown quite intense. Concerns regarding how to ensure the students' safety and how to lay the groundwork for their participation in the conversation that was to be had (Chrzanowska, 2002) thus seemed of utmost importance, and I put substantial effort into composing the groups, which were to consist of four students. I started by considering which students were quiet in class and which other students could help them to feel safe and able to speak in a small group. I thereafter considered which students were active in class, and how to construct the groups in such a way that they would still be able to voice their opinions without this quieting by other members of the group to avoid differences in participation due to the students not feeling safe in the group (Chrzanowska, 2002).

The next aspect that I wanted to address about how the interviews were to be set up was to allow the students to think and talk without me impacting them too much. In accordance with the overarching theoretical starting point of participatory democratic theory (Pateman, 1970), I wanted to use an approach that opened the floor up to the students and allowed them to take charge of the interview. This pointed toward an open interview format, as it brings power to the interviewees if one avoids a fixed interview format (Riessmann, 2008). The open interview format is largely unstructured, and the interviewer uses no or only a few prompts to guide the interview sequence (Clark et al., 2021). Originally, I had nevertheless planned to conduct focus-group interviews in quite a standardized way with prepared themes and questions that I had

prepared prior to the observations having been started. As the interviews approached, I discarded my whole plan and started over by developing a new interview plan. However, the format that I ended up with was not fully open but can be categorized as semi-structured, as some topics were chosen before the interviews were carried out (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). But, I did not have ready-made questions, except for the warm-up phase of the interview, where the intention was for the participants to get to talk about familiar topics to get comfortable in the new situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After this introductory stage, I chose to structure the interview by creating tasks that were inspired by cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Kagan et al., 2018). For the interview tasks that the students were to work on, they were given specific roles in the group. Together, they were to expand on a themed question, using the task as a mediating tool that I hoped would expand their thinking (Vygotsky, 1978). In this manner, the method of double stimulation and the insights that it brings on mediation through tools (Sannino, 2015) was an inspiration for developing tasks for the interviews instead of just asking questions. Simultaneously, I hoped that the students would focus on the task and not so much on me as an adult researcher, and that this would allow them to speak more freely (Chrzanowska, 2002).

The tasks from interview 1 can be seen in the appendix of Article 2.

4.3.4.2.1. Outcome of the interviews

The first round of interviews resulted in four audio files from the participating groups, ranging from 57–73 minutes. The content of the interviews was used to shape Article 2, which contains a mapping of the cultural context of the social studies class and its connections to the students' political efficacy. In the article, I reference how the students described three aspects that they saw as obstacles to their political efficacy in the social studies classroom: (1) the reactions of their peers in political discussions; (2) the perception that adolescents were not respected due to their young age; and (3) a view of opinions as fixed and hence unchangeable, which resonated greatly with the descriptions of the class that the teacher had given, and my observations beforehand. The possible solutions to these obstacles that the students discussed as positive were to work to enhance the level of respect and support that they experienced in the classroom, to practice politics through carefully structured discussions, and to work in smaller groups.

As part of the description of stage 2 of the expansive learning cycle, this supplied important information that was essential for developing the content in the upcoming intervention. The students' descriptions of their experiences in the social studies classroom provided a way to turn from the past (represented in the hindrances) to the future (represented in the ideas about what could possibly change the current situation) (Cole & Engeström, 2007), which was actively used in modeling the new solution, which is described below.

4.3.5. Phase 3: Modeling the new solution

The third phase of the expansive learning cycle involves modeling a new solution. The previous research had led to several important parts that made the pieces that were to be sewn together. Figure 8 depicts how the previous literature (marked in blue), represented in the literature review (Article 1) but also in my readings during this phase, was fundamental for the understanding that laid the groundwork for the formative intervention. Moreover, agency—and, thereby, ownership of the process by the participants—is central to a formative intervention (Sannino et al. 2016). The students' experiences and views are represented at the mid-level (marked in green) through observations and interviews. In the upper square (marked in yellow), the reflections between teacher and researcher are represented as the last factor shaping the intervention. The subsequent squares containing the theory and students' views can be said to have contributed to these reflections, which led to the concrete content and shape of the intervention.
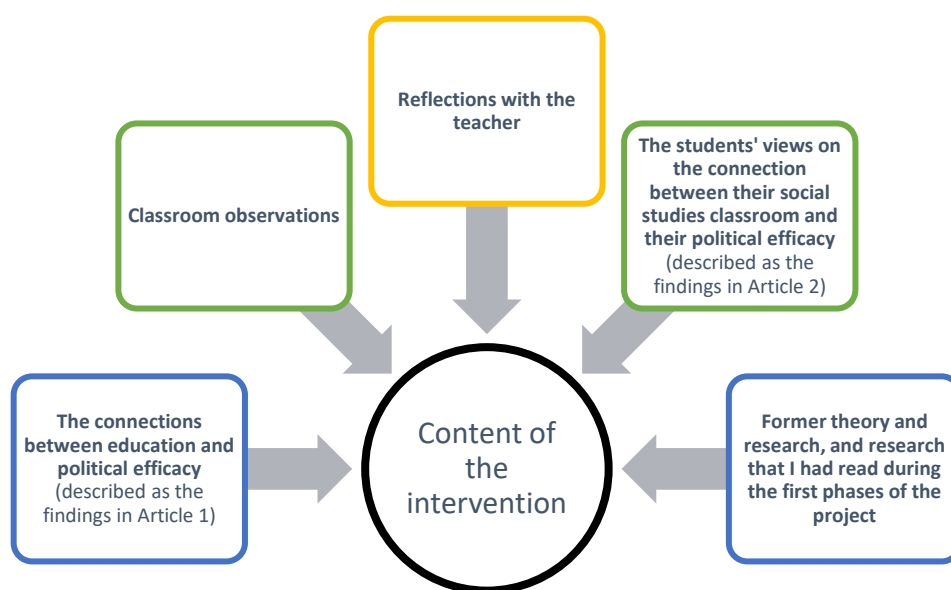
Figure 8: The foundational factors for the formative intervention

Furthermore, Sannino et al. (2016) describe how, in the phase where a new solution is to be modeled, it is time for the researcher to start using tools. The tools can be reading the relevant literature or, in other ways, giving the participants ways to open up for new ways of thinking, and represent the second stimuli in the double stimulation process. Furthermore, the tools are used with the analysis of the present context, which represents the first stimuli, as a backdrop

(Sannino, 2015). With this in mind, after having discussed the results from the interviews, I introduced the teacher to the book by Kagan et al., *Cooperative Learning: Teaching with Cooperative Structures* (2018). It contains a long list of concrete cooperative learning structures, in addition to describing, in an accessible way, the theoretical groundwork of cooperative learning and how to construct cooperative learning groups.

Engeström et al. (2014) describe how it is common for participants in a formative intervention to take over the developmental process, and more specifically, this typically happens as the second tool is used by participants to take control over a specific situation (Sannino, 2015; Sannino et al. 2016). Furthermore, Postholm (2008) notes that when the participants in a developmental process feel that the project is rooted in their intentions and feels useful to them, the initiative and drive for the project can reach a turning point where the participants take the lead. After the summer break, and as we were about to set up the formative intervention, in line with the literature, Catherine seemed to take over ownership of the project. She had read the whole book *Cooperative Learning: Teaching with Cooperative Structures* (Kagan et al., 2018) and seemed enthusiastic about where we were heading. Moreover, she asked me to participate in a parent meeting to inform them about the project process and to have an introductory session with the students in the same week to inform them about where we were in the project as well. Instead of *me* asking her questions about the class and her teaching, it was now turned around, so that *she* would ask me for input and feedback on her ideas regarding how to undertake and continue to shape the intervention. This coincided with the project moving into the next phase of testing and examining the new modes of teaching.

4.3.5. Phases 4 & 5: Examining and testing/implementing the new model

The fourth and fifth phases of the expansive learning cycle involve trying out the new solutions and applying them (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). In this project, these phases were blended together. Burner (2016) precisely describes how the nature of education is fluid, and that perceptions and practices have to be adjusted and questioned continuously. In his version of the expansive learning cycle, which is adjusted to an educational context, he underscores how, after trying out and adjusting new tools, it is time to reflect on the whole process again

(Burner, 2016). The following phase thus contains a description of the solutions that were tried out and the following reflections.

4.3.5.1. The researcher's role during the intervention

The researcher's role during a formative intervention is to support and provoke a transformation led by practitioners (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). Concurrently, different projects and stages of a project require different practices from the researcher. Postholm (2019) describes how the role that a researcher takes on should depend on the aim of the research. She continues to show the difference between the researcher on the sidelines and the interacting researcher (Postholm, 2019). The researcher on the sidelines can examine ongoing activities without intervening in them, and this role is thus well-suited in research that is not aimed at supporting developmental processes. In the previous stages of this research project, my role would best be described in this manner.

The interacting researcher, on the other hand, partakes in cooperation with other participants in the project. This role is a good fit in cases where he or she is to support a developmental process (Postholm, 2019). As this was what I was going to do in this part of the PhD project, I aligned with this role. The interacting researcher can gain authority, trust, and influence through his or her competence, hence by being useful for the participant's development (Postholm, 2019). My contribution in this phase would thus be to contribute both theoretical insights and practical suggestions for the teaching. The teacher would pick out the content of the lessons and keep on track with the lesson plan, other teachers, and the curriculum. I would help by suggesting cooperative structures that would fit with her goals—often offering several suggestions from which she would pick. I would also help out in the lessons, both with practical matters, and in having small discussions with Catherine about how to proceed or tackle concrete events in the classroom.

The above-mentioned descriptions show my contribution to the practical side of the developmental work. At the same time, the researcher and practitioners need to reflect on the processes that take place (Postholm, 2019). This was followed up on by regular meetings during the period to plan the lessons, some of them in person at the school and some of them digitally using Teams. In addition, many e-mails would be sent back and forth with thoughts, plans, evaluations, and questions.

4.3.5.2. Observations, round 2

In the intervention phase of the project, I continued to observe the teaching throughout all the social studies lessons (two sessions a week that gave a total of 135 minutes) from the beginning of the school year in week 35 until the end of the period in week 43. In comparison to the first observation phase, I went from following the class in several subjects to being only in the social studies lessons. Again, the choice of what observations to undertake depended on the goal of this research phase (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). While some of the goals in the first phase of observation were to become familiar with the context and for the students to become comfortable in my presence, my goal in this second phase of observation was connected to the ongoing intervention and to giving me opportunities to support and reflect on the developmental process at hand (Postholm, 2008). As this change happened primarily in the social studies lessons, this was where I needed to focus. Additionally, I knew that due to my observations in the first phase of the project, the students behaved quite similarly in the different lessons, and hence, I considered it sufficient to only follow the social studies lessons, as it would not bring any new information forward if I were to spend more time in the classroom (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Creswell and Poth (2018) depict how the observational role can change over the course of a research project as the possibilities and necessities of the project evolve. As the teacher and I worked together on the changes that were made in the classroom, together with me presenting the project and leading the reflection parts of the period, this led to a role that was considerably closer to the students, who also started talking to me. They would ask me practical questions, but they also asked about my work and about being a researcher. Therefore, I ended up being somewhere in between an observer and a full participant in a role that can best be described as participant-as-observer (Postholm, 2019), as I clearly did not teach. But at the same time, I was far from the passive observer that I had been in the earlier phase of the project.

The outcome of the observations came in different forms. First, it produced 35 pages of field notes in this second stage. Second, it provided important insights that were used in conversations with the teacher about how to continue our work. Third, I used my observations as a tool with the students as part of opening up for them to validate or question my views (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the middle of the period, the teacher and I arranged for a lesson in

which the students could both (1) comment on our impression of the period so far, and (2) report on their own experience. In a presentation with the students, I summed up my observations from the previous weeks into four bullet points:

1. *There is an increase in the number of students who participate regularly when social studies topics are discussed in the classroom.*

2. *There is more physical movement in the classroom.*

3. *When there is a change in activity, the level of activity is high. After some time, the level of activity drops a little.*

4. *The roles [in the cooperative learning structures] seem to work well, but sometimes some of them seem to be a little difficult to perform (some students fade out and do other things, some students stay quiet).*

(Logbook, September 2021).

There were not a lot of comments from the students at this point. However, the students were also given the opportunity to give feedback anonymously, which could shed light on my observations. This feedback was given in the form of an anonymous questionnaire.

4.3.5.3. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was built up using the characteristics of cooperative learning groups as categories to identify whether and eventually which parts of the group work were working well and where there might be room for improvement (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The questionnaire also contained several open-ended questions to ensure that the students would be able to share their views (Bryman, 2008). The students responded to the questionnaire on the learning platform "It's learning," which was put up by their teacher. She would export their answers into an Excel sheet and send it to me. Thereafter, I removed the information about the students who were not part of the project before saving the sheet according to the appliable procedures for data safety (Norwegian Center for Research Data, 2022).

The questionnaire was used as a guide to our further work in planning the lessons in the classroom to ensure that the students' perspectives and agency were respected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I sorted the answers, looked for themes in the questionnaire, and found three common trends. First, as the students were placed in groups, some of them would be seated with their backs against the board. The teacher and I adjusted for this in the following lessons by simply moving some chairs and tables. Second, some of the students reported that it was unclear to them or other students what their tasks or roles were in the groups. This point was in

accordance with my observations. The teacher and I sought to meet the problem by (1) giving clearer instructions and ensuring that they were written down on the board, and (2) the teacher focusing on moving around in the classroom and checking in with all the groups after giving the common instructions to ensure that everyone knew what to do. Third, some of the students pointed to a problem in which other students did not participate (enough) in the group work. This point was also in accordance with my observations, especially when there had been some time since the last change in activity. The teacher and I aimed to meet the problem by giving clearer instructions and by giving more thought to adjusting the tasks to the individual students. Our thought was that if this problem was connected to the students being given tasks that were out of their reach, they would fade out; hence, they needed to be given tasks that were challenging but still within their range of ability (Vygotsky, 1978).

4.3.5.4. Lesson design

As described previously, the lessons in the intervention were planned in close cooperation between the teacher and the researcher. The students were placed in formal cooperative learning groups, which meant that they were to sit in the same groups throughout the entire period. In addition, informal cooperative learning groups were used in some of the lessons due to techniques involving the movement of students between the formal groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

When it came to the concrete content of the lessons, we took several aspects into consideration. First, as depicted previously in Figure 8, the prior literature and theory guided the setup, together with the first round of observations and the student interviews that were reported in Article 2 and described in this extended abstract's chapter titled "Outcome of the interviews." Second, due to the upcoming national election in September 2021, the curriculum was treated that covered democracy and potential threats to democracy, and the political system and the political parties in Norway (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), as shown in Article 3. This is also in accordance with previous research stating that connecting citizenship education to the students' lived worlds might enhance their political efficacy (Maloyed, 2016; Peterson et al., 2022).

Regarding the cooperative learning techniques that were applied, most of them were adjusted versions of schemes provided by Kagan et al. (2018). In addition, some exercises

concerning learning social science concepts were inspired by Mathé (2021). It should also be added that during the period, two of the students in the class went to visit the Island of Utøya, which, in 2011, was the site of the Utøya massacre. Today, students and teachers can visit Utøya to get knowledge about and training in democratic skills. The students learned several exercises during this visit that they implemented with their own peers when they returned to school. The topical content and the cooperative learning structures of the lessons of the period are described in Table 2.

Date	Topical content	Structure and cooperative learning techniques
September 1	The political parties in Norway	One stay–three stay Group roles
September 3	The political parties in Norway	Carousel feedback Group roles
September 8	22 July (terrorism in Norway)	Substitute teacher—no cooperative learning structures used
September 10	22 July (terrorism in Norway)	Teacher-led session Think-pair-share
September 15	The Norwegian election	Teacher-led session Think-pair-share Group roles One stay–three stay Communication wheel
September 17	The political parties & the election (repetition)	Quizlet (Internet quiz program) Rotating tables Think-pair-share
September 24	Democracy & tolerance	Student-led session—with exercises from Utøya
September 29	Meta-reflection on the period Summary of the period up until this point Information-seeking and in-depth reading	Researcher-led session Evaluation form Think-pair-share Group roles
October 1	Continuation of session from September 29	Flashcards Group roles
October 13	Preparation for assessment conversation (Picking of topic for conversation + creating mind maps (overview))	Group roles
October 19	Preparation for assessment conversation (Making a plan for the conversation)	Group roles Jigsaw expert groups
October 20	Preparation for assessment conversation (Rehearsing)	Group roles Jigsaw
October 27	Assessment conversation	

Table 2: Content and design of the lessons in the formative intervention period

Additionally, Catherine used several of the techniques in her other lessons in Norwegian and English. The students, for example, decided on their own group names and group rules in the second week of the period. The students thus received even more training in cooperative learning than the lessons in social studies would allow for.

4.3.6. Phase 6: Reflecting on the process

The sixth stage of the expansive learning cycle involves reflecting on the developmental process that the project has brought to the fore (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). These reflections are partly reflected upon in Article 3, in which the students' views are reported. In addition, the teacher and I had concluding meetings in which we deliberated upon how the period had worked out and what she would bring with her when the official part of the project came to an end. In this section, I will elaborate on the reflection process, both with the students and with the teacher.

4.3.6.1. Interviews, round 2

The second round of interviews provided an important opportunity to reflect on the previous period with the students. I chose to use the same technique as in the first interview round, with the students having a task to solve instead of asking them pre-prepared questions. The task was based on the technique of split value lines (Kagan et al., 2018), which can be found in the appendix of Article 3. This time, however, the task contained more direct themes that I wanted the students to expand upon. While the first round of interviews was categorized as semi-structured, the second round of interviews was therefore in the category of structured interviews, which are characterized by the use of an interview guide and where every interview contains the same set of questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The reason for this was that I wanted the students to evaluate the use of cooperative learning specifically, as opposed to in the first round of interviews, where the goal was to explore the students' worlds and opinions within the frame of the political efficacy concept.

The students were interviewed in the same groups of four that they had been working in in the class in the previous period. Again, the reason for this was that the participants were similar and had experienced the same context, namely, working in the same group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In hindsight, this reason seemed to be in conflict with the concern that participants must feel safe in a focus group (Chrzanowska, 2002), and as such, the setup of the interviews clearly influenced the students' experience.

In this second interview round, there were five focus groups. Out of these five, the two groups that had a friendly and constructive cooperative tone during the lessons made the same impression in the interviews. However, in the third group that had experienced problems

cooperating in the social studies lessons, the students would have had problems speaking to each other at all in the interview. Consequently, I had to lead them through the different themes by asking a lot of direct questions. In the fourth group, we ended up somewhere in between these two poles, with me asking a few questions, but with the students also discussing and leading the conversation themselves. Interestingly, the last interview that was conducted had to be done a few weeks after the others due to personal reasons among the students. In this last interview group, there were students from different learning groups, which made the dynamic quite different from what I had seen in the classroom. In this last group, the students were able to discuss and compare their different experiences with cooperative learning. This made me reflect on the choice of how I had set up the groups. In the groups that had also worked together throughout the period, the students tended to use phrases such as "this worked well in our group, but in other groups…," "someone should have…," or "I am not talking about you now, but I have seen…." The students seemed wary about talking to each other about their own group process. This is in convergence with the content of the findings reported in Article 3 that show the students also explicitly stating that it was difficult to give feedback in the groups during the period. Clearly, the same phenomenon occurred in the interviews. In hindsight, I therefore think that it could have been a better idea to compose the groups so that the students who had been working together were not interviewed in the same group.

Directly after the interviews, the students were asked to anonymously answer the same questionnaire that they had answered at an earlier stage (see section 4.3.5) to evaluate the project at the end of the period. In addition to the questions regarding cooperative learning, I now added a second part that was developed to elaborate on the connections between the students' work in cooperative learning groups and political efficacy. I used Levy's (2018) framework for understanding political efficacy in youth, and created statements in the two categories of political knowledge and political skills. The students' efficacy concerning *political knowledge* consists of their belief in their own ability to understand and to feel confident when talking about political issues. *Political skills* are about one's beliefs in one's own ability to perform political actions, such as motivating others, constructing arguments, and expressing one's own view when someone disagrees.

Even though there were some issues related to the composition of the interview groups, the use of the questionnaire confirmed that the students had gotten to express their views. At this point, the answers were not systematically analyzed, but were checked for correspondence

against the categories in the coding of the interview material. As it seemed to correspond, I deemed it sufficient to analyze the interviews. This is in line with Corbin and Strauss (2015), who deem that the point of saturation is reached when more data does not bring new information or variation to the categories that are developed.

The outcome of the second round of interviews was five audio files ranging from 39–59 minutes. From these, the findings reported in Article 3 were extracted. In this article, I start by outlining how, if the development of political efficacy is understood through the lens of socio-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), the students' answers definitely point to ways in which cooperative learning has the possibility to enhance student political efficacy, mainly through providing students with opportunities to practice democratic skills, such as discussion, cooperation, and constructive social interaction, in addition to making peers accessible to each other as role models and support.

However, when the interviews are analyzed in terms of looking for contradictions, in accordance with CHAT's understanding of the always underlying tensions between nodes in an activity system (Engeström, 2015), further information was revealed. The students' responses point toward tensions within the student group, where a minority of the students expressed that they felt less able to make themselves heard when the cooperative learning groups were heard, while other students felt that they were actively shut down by the first group of students when they were in a regular classroom setting without the cooperative structures being applied. There was also a tension between the classroom as a unit of learning that could open up for cooperation, and the expectations of the classroom as a unit of evaluation where the students saw themselves as individually responsible for their results. The contradictions identified with help from the insights brought by CHAT thus add information that is not contained in the analysis based on socio-cognitive theory as to how the students would experience the cooperative learning classroom and how it would relate to their political efficacy. These interesting results are synthesized in the synopsis of Article 3 in section 6.4, and are further discussed in Chapter 7.

4.3.6.2. Reflections with the teacher

As part of the last phase of the formative intervention cycle, it was also central to reflect on the process together with the teacher, as the researcher's role in formative interventions is about

participating in reflexive conversations before, during, and after the intervention (Postholm & Smith, 2017). As Burner (2016) shows, in education, the developmental process is seldom finished, as it keeps on moving toward new starting points for exploration and development. The last project meetings in this project are a good example of this, as they ended up being a new stage of looking back at the intervention, which was now a representation of the past, and reflecting on new tools that could be used in the future (Cole & Engeström, 2007).

The starting point of our conversations at this point was that the students had expressed in both the concluding interviews and to Catherine that they had found it too tiring when there was too much cooperative learning. At the same time, the students still asked for cooperative structures to be used, and the teacher still found it useful to apply them in her teaching. In conclusion, the solution that she had chosen was to reduce the use of cooperative learning structures to a smaller degree. The students had also wanted to go back to a traditional seating format, and the teacher had met this by seating them in rows. The students were therefore no longer seated in groups, but in comparison to before the intervention, they were seated in a way that made it easier for them to turn around and form groups, and the placement of the students was done consciously to facilitate a good environment in the groups. This shows how the intervention had led to solutions other than what I, as the theory-driven researcher, would have suggested. As is typical in an intervention, the result or solution that the participants elaborated on from the intervention deviated from the starting point that I, as a researcher, brought into the project (Engeström et al., 2013). Concurrently, the agency of the participants seemed to be the decisive factor in how further development was to proceed, which was in consonance with the overarching goal of using the expansive learning cycle as a starting point for the developmental process in the first place (Sannino et al., 2016).

The other topic that the teacher and I discussed at the end of the project was that the students had been stressed by the assessment conversation. This was a finding in Article 3, and the students expressed the same view to Catherine after I had stopped observing the class. We thus reflected on how such a situation could have been shaped differently. Based on the finding that the students had found it difficult to give feedback to each other, we worked on measures to take smaller steps to let the students practice using conversation starters to practice constructive talk. As I no longer observed the class at this point, I am in no position to evaluate or report on how this process went in the classroom. However, the teacher's initiatives to use and further develop what she and we had learned in the intervention process can be seen as another

expression of an ongoing movement that would continue after I had withdrawn my presence from the field.

4.4. Data analysis

Moving on from the description of the phases of the expansive learning cycle, I now turn to how the data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Postholm, 2019). This method was applied in both Articles 2 and 3. What characterizes the constant-comparative method of analysis is that the researcher moves back and forth between gathering and analyzing the data in addition to reading theory (Postholm, 2019). During this process, the different pieces of data are constantly compared to each other. In addition, existing theory is drawn into the comparisons to "stimulate thinking about properties and dimensions of categories" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 85).

How one analyses should depend on the purpose of the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The analytical process was thus different for each article according to the differences in the underlying research process and the resulting diversity in the data material. The purpose of Article 2 was to explore the student's understanding of connections between social studies and political efficacy. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), I used the constant-comparative method to possibly develop new categories or to give new meaning to or understanding of a concept (political efficacy). Meanwhile, the purpose of Article 3 was to explore the student's experience of changes with cooperative learning. In this work, I started with predetermined categories. However, the constant-comparative method can also be used to study how a given theory can be applied in a new situation (Postholm, 2019). In the work involved with Article 3, I had a new combination of categories (cooperative learning/political efficacy) and intended to explore what happened when they were combined. Even though the method of analysis was the same in the two articles, it was thus applied in a different manner due to the different nature of the two stages of the developmental process on which the articles were built.

4.4.1. Transcription and analysis

In both Articles 2 and 3, I chose to transcribe the interviews myself, as I knew that the transcription of one's own interviews is in itself an initial analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

The coding process started as soon as I transcribed the interviews, as I wrote down what seemed to be important themes in the interviews. Even though the process of transcription seemed both time-consuming and at times not very rewarding, in hindsight, it is very clear to me that this procedure was essential for the analytical part of the project. This led to me being acquainted with the data material, which is a prerequisite for the construction of categories and concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The process of transcription differed slightly between the two rounds of interviews that I conducted. In the first round, I undertook the interviews with some time between them so that I had time to transcribe each interview before I moved onto the next one. This made the process quite streamlined, as shown in Figure 9 below:

Figure 9: Transcription process, Article 2

In contrast, in the second round of interviews, I undertook all the interviews in a few days, without the time to transcribe them in between. This made for quite a different process, as revealed in Figure 10:

Figure 10: Transcription process, Article 3

Although the stages of the process were slightly different, the techniques that I used in the process of transcribing were similar. I wrote memos, which are written records of analysis

(Corbin & Strauss, 2015), from the beginning. The excerpt below shows how I worked with a fragment from an interview that had caught my attention, in this case, using the strategy of looking at language (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) in a memo. As student 4 used the words "nothing" and "always," I reflected on what these words meant and how they expressed a view of the world as static. Thereafter, I moved on to asking questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), again focusing on the words that student 4 was using when she spoke about "we," and I wondered who "the others" were, as "we" implicated that there were also others who were defined as outside of the "we" that interviewee 1 saw herself as part of.

> *Excerpt from interview, student 4: I feel that it doesn't help, or, it may well be that it helps, with the government, but I feel, for example, with Palestine, Erna [Solberg, the current Norwegian prime minister] does nothing, those days, she hasn't said anything about it, and I don't know how to explain it ... The rest of us have to, in a way, stand together more and try to get a change, even if there will always be someone there who is against it, there will always be someone who sort of disagrees with you, but you have to sort of stand together then.*

> *My reflection: Here comes the feeling of a lack of power again. Erna does NOTHING. But at the same time, at the end of the paragraph, there is a "we must stand together." Here, there is thus a different category than getting help from adults; it is "standing together" that is the category. At the same time, there is ALWAYS someone who will be against, ALWAYS someone who disagrees with you. Where does this come from? Why do students feel that there is ALWAYS someone who disagrees with them? And note "the rest of us"—this points toward characterizing people in groups, "we" are someone other than "them"; who are these others?*

 Below, another example of my use of memos is shown, where I again start with an excerpt from an interview. At that time, I had started thinking about an early outline of the categories that I saw as occurring in the material. During the transcription phase, I would make several such lists, constantly comparing the categories that I found, and trying out different combinations to try to find out what the core category was, meaning the central theme of the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

> *Excerpt from interview, student 1: I feel that if a student tries to say something or have an opinion, he doesn't reach out to very many. But if a person of a higher status, a celebrity, for example, or another person who is kind of an idol to many, has a strong opinion or says or does something about the topic, then many will engage and get into it. It might be that those who want to do something can even, for example, study democracy to get more knowledge on how to find solutions and how to change [things].*

> *My reflection: What gives power: Higher status, to be a role model (can be connected to Greta Thunberg and why she gets power?). Also, they often mention attention; this goes for all the interviews, so at this point I have the following categories for what they think will lead to a possible change in society:*

> *Help from adults OR someone with a higher status (celebrity), stand together (be numerous), create attention, knowledge*

4.4.2. Coding and categorizing

The constant-comparative method of analysis is concerned with the reduction of data material to structure it and to see patterns. This is primarily done via the process of coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As shown in the previous sections, preliminary suggestions for important themes, and hence for categories that could be used in the coding process, were already being made during the transcription process as a preparatory stage for the development of the coding categories.

In grounded theory, there are three stages of coding: open, axial, and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first stage of open coding is done to find the main categories of information in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In both cases (articles), I used the themes from the interviews as labels in the open coding and sorted the material according to the structure of the interviews. Thereafter, I went into a process called axial coding. Here, I searched for the causal conditions that were linked to different levels of political efficacy in the classroom and strategies that are used to deal with this phenomenon—intervening conditions—that are situational factors that influence the strategies and, lastly, consequences, which are outcomes from the strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The axial coding stage again looked slightly different in the two articles. In Article 2, I spent a lot of time using the different concepts (phenomena, intervening conditions, etc.) as thinking tools to figure out how I could understand the material. I tried placing the preliminary labels that I had made at different levels of analysis, making comparisons to see what made better sense at explaining what the students had been saying in the interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Figure 11 and Figure 12 show how I went from having lists of potential thematical labels (Figure 11) to sorting these labels into different levels Figure 12Figure 12). In this last figure, the numbered points describe different types of political participation. The lettered points are labels describing what the students said could lead them to participate politically. In between these stages, I read a lot of theory both about political efficacy and education, and about political participation from the field of political science (see e.g., Bergh et al., 2020; Dalton, 2020), which I found extremely helpful for understanding the material that I was working with.

At the same time, I continued to ask questions about my own process. The upper sentence in Figure 12 says "Do I have to code this as two [different] parts?", showing how I was still considering how to move on with the axial coding. Every day, when I started work, I would

look back at the questions that I had raised the day before so that I could hopefully answer them in my later work or find out how they could lead to new questions that would need answering.

Figure 11: List of labels (early stage of axial coding, Article 2)
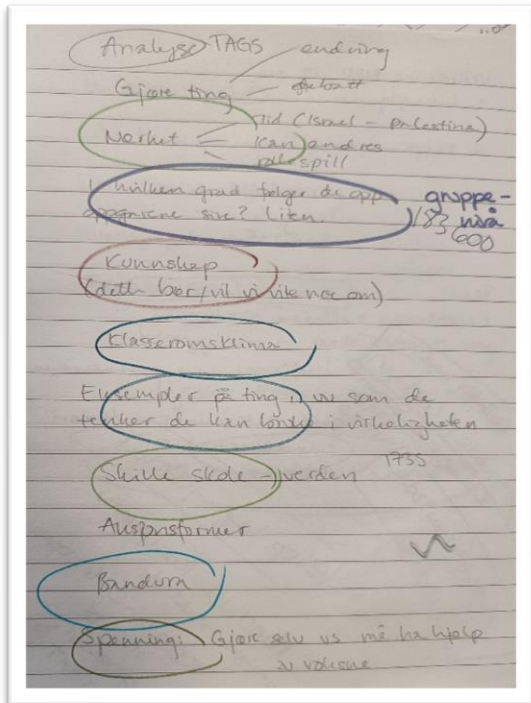
Figure 12: List of labels divided into causal conditions (late stage of axial coding, Article 2)
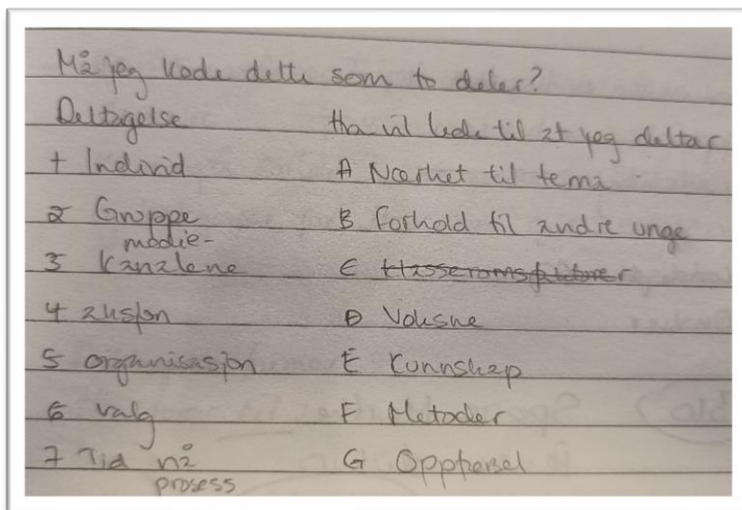
In Article 3, the axial coding stage looked very different. Having spent several months in the classroom beforehand, I found it much easier to structure the material. Correspondingly, I had spent so much time reading both the theoretical and methodological literature in the process

with Article 2 that I did not need all the steps to get to the point where I was able to grasp the essence of the material. I also had the advantage of having the student questionnaire in addition to the student interviews, so I would have the opportunity to access the students' opinions both as expressed in the groups and as expressed individually and anonymously. As these were consistent, I felt quite assured that the students had been able to evaluate the project in an honest and adequate manner.

The last stage of coding is called selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), in which the researcher takes the categories from the axial stage and forms propositions as to how these are related (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In my research, this process often overlapped with the axial coding stage, as I worked with labels and levels of labels at the same time. The results of the analysis are thoroughly reported in Articles 2 and 3, and discussed both there and in the discussion in Chapter 7. An overview of the findings (and thereby of the results of the analysis) is given in Table 3.

5. Research quality and ethical considerations

5.1.   Introduction

Having described the choices regarding the methodology and methods in the last chapter, it is now time to turn to how these stand in relation to research quality and ethics. Any research project should consider its own quality and make ethical considerations regarding the project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, in qualitative research, it is difficult to describe how we can evaluate the quality of the research. Tellingly, Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 341) write: "Quality in qualitative research is something that we recognize when we see it; however, explaining how to achieve it is much more difficult," and point to how even though everyone agrees that an evaluation of quality and ethics is necessary, there is no consensus on how this should be done and exactly what it should contain.

Lincoln (1995) argues that the answer to the diversity that exists within qualitative research is to choose the criteria by which the research should be evaluated based on what the research questions are. This aligns with Angen (2000), who argues that pragmatic and moral concerns are more important than having specific criteria for evaluating science. This led to my decision to choose the criteria that were seen as most important in evaluating my qualitative study in terms of what the study aimed to do. Consequently, I followed the well-established criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who demonstrate how quality in a qualitative project can be established through trustworthiness.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state four means that might be used to establish trustworthiness, which will be examined throughout this chapter. The first is credibility, which is about the researcher representing multiple perspectives and interpretations. The second is transferability, which, in qualitative research, is about providing thick descriptions to enable a naturalistic generalization, which means that the project is made relevant to others in a similar context due to thorough descriptions of what has happened in the project (Stake & Trumbull, 1982). It should be noted that the thorough descriptions of the research process provided in Chapter 4 are part of enabling the desired transferability of the project. This point also applies to the third means, which is dependability, which implies taking factors of instability and of phenomenal or design matters into account that might have impeded the project. Lastly, the fourth means is confirmability, which involves ensuring that the characteristics of the data can be confirmed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The task of this chapter is thus to reflect on these criteria in relation to my research. The chapter has four parts, whereof the first considers the difference between generalization and generativity, and discusses how the knowledge outcome of this project can be used further. In the second part, I reflect on my personal starting point and how this might have affected my theoretical, methodological, and cultural preferences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thereafter, the third part ponders my relationship with and concerns regarding the other participants in the project. And in the last part of the chapter, I review the role of external audits in my work.

5.2.   From generalization to generativity

The outcome of research is often judged using the terms "validity" and "reliability." It is a common understanding that validity means that the research describes what it is supposed to describe, meaning that there is some truth out there that is portrayed in an exact and objective way. Reliability, on the other hand, is a measure that is often used to describe whether the results of a study are reliable, meaning that they could be reproduced in a similar setting and that one would get the same results. In relation to reliability, the term "generalization" is often used, which expresses that the results are directly transferable to another setting (Bryman, 2008; Silverman, 2002).

Nevertheless, the above-standing explanations of the terms "validity" and "reliability" are expressed as they are often used in quantitative research. In qualitative research, generalization cannot be obtained, as the quantifiable amounts of data that such a measure requires are seldom accessible or useful to address the research questions that the qualitative researcher seeks to answer. Furthermore, the notion of generalization rests on objectivity, which presupposes a certain distance between the researcher and the object(s) of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, such a distance is hard to obtain, and is also in many cases not desirable, as it would hinder the understanding that a closeness between the researcher and a certain phenomenon brings.

This brings about a need to address the question of generalization and the analytical implications of the results from the project, as far as what types of knowledge this project does project. The findings based on the student interviews that have been the main source of data for the articles of this thesis need to be evaluated based on another set of criteria, as I have not

objectively tested the connection between general citizenship education and political efficacy or, more specifically, the effects of cooperative learning on student political efficacy. To measure such connections, my methods needed to have been different, perhaps with a pre-test and post-test of the students' political efficacy, preferably with the same questions and categories for answers in both of these tests to aim at the possibility of making the results generalizable (Bryman, 2008).

Within CHAT, however, the outcome of a developmental process is judged by its practical outcomes and not in terms of traditional cognitive variables (Cole & Engeström, 2007). The weight is thus placed on a potential change in the project participants' ability to challenge existing conditions (Cole & Engeström, 2007) and on understanding how participants react to a new stimulus (tool) (Vygotsky, 1978). The underlying prerequisite is the human potential for agency, which is comprised in the agentive layer of causality: Through using tools, it is possible for humans to control the outside world (Engeström, 2011). Concurrently, this premise makes generalizable or standardized solutions ill-suited as bases for actual development, as such solutions would not be able to include the historicity and thereby the agency of the participants in an intervention.

Instead, a successful intervention can point to limitations and possibilities within an activity system and to conditions in the surrounding society that influence the system (Cole & Engeström, 2007). The reported findings of this thesis must thus be understood in this light, not as a measurement of a cognitive end point, but as a possible starting point for further development. Such development can occur on different levels. Sannino et al. (2016) critique interventions that attempt to generalize and find standardized solutions that are one-size-fits-all models. Instead, they promote looking for generative solutions that can be constructive both in the local community, in interventions in similar domains, in this case in educational settings, and in the further development of the analytical perspectives or tools that have been used in succeeding formative interventions.

As for this research project, the formative intervention had lasting consequences in the shape of the teaching in the class that I followed, as shown in section 4.3.6. In addition, I held a workshop with the entire staff from the school present after the fieldwork was finished, where the local teachers got to discuss the results from the project and try out some of the practical methods that had been used in the intervention period. I have also been asked by seven different

schools in the same or similar area to execute the same workshop, and as such, the results from the project have also been used as a starting point for developmental work in other educational settings. In a similar vein, the results from the project have been used to develop course material for teachers visiting the Island of Utøya, where both students and teachers from the whole of Norway can go to experience and learn about democracy and citizenship education. In addition to the practical advice extracted from this thesis, these sessions and the teaching material contained advice on how to perform teacher observations, and perspectives on how to analyze information about and observations of student groups, to allow for adjustments, alterations, and developing alternatives that would better meet the conditions present in other student groups than the one explored in my work.

Interestingly, the project will also generate further research far away from its offspring, as the methodological tools provided by CHAT in this PhD project have awoken interest in Colombian researchers, who want to instigate a research project on democratic education in their country. As their context is very different from the Norwegian context, although working within education, their main interest is in the use of the interventional tools applied in this project (Engeström, 2015). The project has thus generated offspring on disparate levels.

5.3. Considering my own starting point

Moving on from the question of generativity, I want to use the next section to reflect on my own role and biases that might have inflicted my research. In qualitative research, the researcher is the most significant research instrument. This leads to the assertion that in writing qualitative research, one should provide the same amount of information on the researcher as on the other instruments used, such as interview guides or questionnaires (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As my research is an extension of the career choices, values, and actions that I have lived through, I have no way of enlightening the reader about every way in which I have influenced the project. What I can do is point out some of the more obvious aspects. Thus, I have reflected upon my biases relating to my background as a political scientist and as a teacher, which are factors to consider in the evaluation of the dependability of this research project. I also find my own entrance important to ensure the credibility of the project, as to make sure that different perspectives are represented, it has to be made clear what perspectives I myself had moving into and during the project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For the most part, these reflections are based on a journal that I kept throughout the whole of the project. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a reflexive journal is an important tool that can help structure a researcher's work, keep track of the researcher's biases, and thereby promote both credibility and transferability. Furthermore, they show how such a journal could serve several purposes: keeping track of the daily schedules and tasks, writing down methodological decisions and their foundation, and as a personal diary with reflections and thoughts on the research process. Following this advice, I kept a research journal throughout the entire PhD period. During the project, I ended every workday by writing down my thoughts on the day and the tasks and starting points for the next day. This was an important way to ensure structure, but also to ensure the quality of my work by keeping a track record of how I proceeded.

5.3.1. Political scientist

Even though this thesis began by underlining my career as a teacher, I want to start by reflecting on my training as a political scientist. Throughout my studies, I have consistently chosen courses focusing on political theory, and both my bachelor's and my master's theses focused on the understanding of concepts within political science using the framework of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001). Even though the concepts that I explored at that time were from the field of international political theory, and have had less relevance as such, I still found it of great advantage to have had experience in exploring different understandings of a concept when working with political efficacy throughout this doctoral work.

My experience in reading complex theoretical works and in recognizing and understanding central structures and concepts present in different theories has been of great help in my thesis, as when diving into the complexity of the CHAT framework. Concurrently, it is natural that it is easier for a researcher to see and understand what he or she is familiar with (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For my part, this visibly made it a preference to work with theory and structures. For example, this can suggest that I had a preference for choosing theories for my own work that included structure as part of their explanation for human action, such as the CHAT framework. And my experience, especially in the early phases of the fieldwork, was that I really dove into the unknown—even though the site of the school was familiar to me. As a consequence, I have tried to accentuate the fieldwork procedures that were new to me and therefore involved both

learning and resistance, which made me consider it important to provide thick descriptions of these procedures to ensure the transferability of the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I have also aimed to reflect on and make transparent the reasons for and consequences of using the specific theories that I have applied, again to provide thick descriptions of my work.

Concurrently, political science is a field that often aims attention at structures and power, a focus that lacks closeness to the lived life that a qualitative study presumes. At the beginning of the PhD period, I thus often found myself asking if what I did was really science, as it did not resemble the large statistical studies that are so common in political science (see e.g., Gerring et al., 2022). The quantitative understanding of reliability and validity was thus infused into my understanding of what knowledge was (Bryman, 2008). Learning about such criteria for research as usefulness (Levin, 2017) and relevance (Postholm & Smith, 2017) was thus an experience that filled a large gap in my knowledge field during the initial work on this PhD thesis.

5.3.2. Teacher

While I had to struggle to find my way into "what research is" due to my background in political science, when I found CHAT, it proved to be a link that seemed to fit not only my purposes but also my values. My background as a teacher made it especially important to me to do research that could matter, understood as something that the social studies teacher could use when stepping into the classroom that would benefit the students. In having this as my goal, several epistemological and ontological presuppositions are present (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, this whole research project rests on the ontological assumption that change is possible and desirable. This has obviously guided me in choosing a methodological framework that sees change as a natural way of evolving life (Engeström, 2015). At the same time, an underlying epistemological assumption that is inherent in the choice both of the social-constructivist framework (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018) and of cooperative learning as a teaching tool (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) is the belief that learning happens as a consequence of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

On a more practical level, my teaching background has impacted this project in several ways. My former job as a teacher gave me access to the field through my connections. It may have been easier for Catherine to say yes, knowing that I had had teaching experience. And it

definitely made it easier for me to understand what challenges the teachers and students were facing. I had a lot of knowledge about how to approach the students and build trust and talk to them. And as a lot of the structures and content of the classroom were familiar to me, I could more easily sort out what was special or characteristic for this exact group of students while not having to expend energy to understand the very well-known expressions of everyday school life (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, my former experience as a teacher would cause me to reflect on myself running the risk of possibly "going native." Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe how this can happen if the researcher starts to understand himself or herself as part of the group that he or she is studying. The danger of this phenomenon might also increase as a result of prolonged engagement in the field, as was the case for my project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My sympathies toward the teacher and eventually toward the students could have affected my observations, my understanding of the classroom, and the interview process. In many ways, I *was* already a native before I stepped into the field.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that awareness of a potential issue is the first step toward avoiding going native. Moreover, they suggest looking toward what seems atypical and which is often written off as uninteresting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An example of this from my work is given in this excerpt from my logbook. The post was written after the first meeting that the teacher and I had about the assessment conversation that the students were to have. I was quite demotivated about working on the assessment tasks because I felt that it was a detour from working on the cooperative learning strategies that I wanted to focus on.

> *Now I'm going to work on the assessment task, and I'm not very motivated about it. It feels like it's a side track […], and it's tiring to sit with. It's not what I want to do right now.*
>
> *(Logbook, September 15, 2021)*

As time went on, the students' reactions to the assessment task and the resulting tension between the cooperative structures that were implemented in the classroom and the individualistic view that the students had, which increased in the face of the assessment, came to be a main finding in Article 3. In my logbook, I commented on this after the second interview.

> *The role of assessment, which they discuss in the beginning [of the interview] ... There is a tension there between the students' focus on grades and assessment, and their ability to think as a team. The assessment becomes a kind of obstacle because it leads to a certain [individual] focus on the part of the students.*
>
> *(Logbook, November 2, 2021)*

What I, in the beginning, felt was a deviation and distraction from what I saw as important thus turned out to be a main theme further on in the research process.

5.4. The researcher's relationship with the other participants in the project

I am now going to move on to reflect on my relationship with the other participants in the project, namely, the teacher and the students. The relationship between the researcher and other participants in a project is pivotal for its quality, as a central point of its credibility is that multiple perspectives should be represented, and the criteria of confirmability requires that the characteristics of the data can be confirmed by the participants in a qualitative project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Furthermore, a central point in a project's quality is to make decisions that ethically consider its participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that ethical issues typically relate to three principles that the researcher should respect: respect for persons (e.g., through taking privacy and the consent to participate into account), concerns for participants' and other people's welfare (through minimizing harm and aiming for reciprocity between the researcher and participants in a project), and justice (for instance, by treating people fairly and equitably). To ensure that these principles are followed, Corbin and Strauss (2015) plead that qualitative researchers need to take strategic action *during* projects to ensure their quality.

In the following, I describe and reflect upon the different measures that were taken concerning both the students and their teacher in regard to the project's quality and ethics.

5.4.1. Students

The first means concerning ethics in this project was naturally to respect the privacy and consent of the students (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) explain how research participants should be informed about the purpose, main features, and risks and benefits of taking part in a project. The Norwegian Guidelines for Social Science Research also state that when participants are below the age of 15, both the adolescents' and their parents' consent to participate and to store data from the project is needed (National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, 2021). In line with this, the students received an individual letter about the project that was written in suitable language. In addition, an adjusted letter was sent to the students' parents with information about the project. In the

first part of the fieldwork, 16 out of 26 students participated in the project and were interviewed for Article 2. In the second part, 19 out of 27 students participated and were interviewed for Article 3. The letters of consent can be found in the appendices of this thesis. Moreover, I received research permission to conduct the study from the Norwegian Center for Research Data, stating that the collection of data for the research project and the storage of data followed the requirements for gathering and storing personal research data (Norwegian Center for Research Data, 2022). This ensured the students' anonymity, which was also ensured by using pseudonyms in the articles.

As the fieldwork started, I considered prolonged engagement as the first strategy for ensuring that the participants' perspectives would be taken into account throughout the project (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I spent as much time in the classroom with the students and in the school with the teacher as possible, and throughout the project, I actively considered how I would present myself to the students as an accessible and responsive person. Lincoln and Guba (1985) write that building trust with the participants is a developmental process that has to be continued throughout a research project. By steadily pursuing the aim of showing the students that they were in control of their participation, I hoped to take steps toward fulfilling the criteria of both ethics toward the students and quality in the results of my work as a consequence of their trust in me and hence their ability to speak their minds in my presence. An example of how this was done in practice comes from the intervention phase. I recorded several of the groups in each lesson, and taught the groups to press pause and play while recording so that they had the opportunity to take a break from being recorded during the lesson. I would also specifically ask them in each lesson if they wanted to be recorded. Some of the groups would always say yes, and some of them would also occasionally say no. I considered this a good sign of them feeling secure in my presence.

Moreover, I used member checking, which involves taking data, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Due to the age of the students, it was not possible for them to read the articles. But what was possible was to present the content to them and ask them about their opinions regarding my conclusions. The first round of interviews can be seen as using such a mechanism, as the content of the interviews was used to shape the following intervention. And before we started the intervention, the students were shown the main categories from the coding process and my conclusions as to what we were to include in the following formative intervention. Throughout the fall, the students were also able

to give feedback on the concrete lessons using the questionnaire referenced in Chapter 4, and in smaller feedback tasks that Catherine would give them at the end of the lessons. This provided the students with the ability to direct the work and critique where needed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the second round of interviews, as I was going to evaluate the project, it was especially important that the students could feel safe when discussing their views without fearing my reaction. I took it as a positive sign when students in several of the interviewed groups explicitly said, addressing me, that they were sorry for critiquing the project but would do it anyway. I took this as an expression of them feeling that there was room for critique, and in addition, that we had established a relationship where they felt they were participants and owners of their own context, which they were also active in evaluating.

5.4.2. Teacher

The second and third articles produced as part of this thesis build on data gathered from students. Even so, this project would not have been possible without the participation of their teacher. Practical matters, such as gaining the students' and their parents' permission to participate, would not have been achievable without her support, notwithstanding that the execution of the whole study rested on her letting me into her classroom and allowing for changes in her own practice. The relationship between me as a researcher and her as an active participant was thus of utmost importance throughout the year that I spent at the school. I therefore want to examine the personal responses and interpersonal dynamics between the teacher and myself as a researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Turning now to consider aspects of ethics and quality in relation to the teacher, I would like to begin with a passage from my logbook, which was written after my first meeting in person with Catherine at the school.

> *I notice that this will be a balancing act for me. I feel like teaching myself, and it will be difficult to hold back. At the same time, it will also be a challenge not to bombard the teacher (and perhaps also the students) with what I know. I am well aware that I am used to being in a lecturing role, and I easily go into explaining how things can be understood according to this or that [theory]. I have to be careful not to close the door to their experience. It is more important than mine.*

> *(Logbook, February 19, 2020)*

As reflected upon in the section on my potential biases as a former teacher, I would go into the field already as a native, which made the scene familiar, but at the same time, I had to consider my role as a researcher at all times to ensure that I did not try to *be* the teacher by

asking her to copy what I would have done in the classroom (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My guide on this matter was the theoretical framework of CHAT, where Sannino et al. (2016) explain that the researcher's role is not to implement a solution but to facilitate change. Concurrently, not trying to be the teacher would also be part of an ethical consideration of mine, because I wanted to respect Catherine's practice and knowledge as a teacher, and that she had allowed me to come into her classroom both to observe her students and to work with her on making changes in her teaching.

At the same time, I still worried about being too much in charge of the project, especially during the intervention phase. In the excerpt below, I considered my own concerns about getting enough time with Catherine to plan the content of the lessons and whether my experience would result in her asking me to plan all the content of the lessons during this time we spent together. Instead, none of these aspects seemed to have importance from the point where she overtook the initiative, because then these parts would simply fall into place. As the excerpt shows, it was made rather clear to me that the participants' ownership of the project was what I should be striving toward.

> *Her ownership and the students' ownership [over the project] appears to be absolutely essential. This was also what I was concerned about: Would it be me who was to make the decisions? But the key to development does not seem to lie in how I will gain access to her and the students, but in them owning the development themselves.*

> *(Logbook, September 9, 2021)*

Another important ethical consideration on my part was that I knew how full a teacher's schedule is, and I wanted to be sensitive toward her capacity (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). When possible, I wanted to add support and possibilities not only to her, but also to the school, which had let me do research during a stressful time. As the project moved into the intervention phase, the division of labor between Catherine and me made me feel that I could contribute to her work to make up for the extra time that she had spent working on the project. This was made possible because my role changed from observer-as-participant to participant-as-observer in a project (Postholm, 2008), as described in the previous chapter on the methodology and methods.

As a final aspect ensuring the quality of the research, I would use member checking throughout the different phases of cooperation between the teacher and me (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This would contribute both to the credibility of the project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as well as to respecting and opening up for the participants' views as part of the ethical concerns of the project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the early stages, this took the form of me taking my

thoughts and interpretations back to Catherine to seek her feedback. This was important to ensure quality, because her knowledge of the class and the students was an important corrective to me as an outsider. Simultaneously, it was also a way to build trust and a good relationship with her (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As with the students, it was important for me to be available and interested in her work to build trust and a constructive relationship between us (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As for the textual products, they were made available to the teacher in different ways. The results from the first interview round were thoroughly discussed, as they were used to shape the content of the subsequent period. However, I did not ask her to read the second article, as this text examined the students' thoughts, and not her perspective. The results from the second interview round were also discussed orally, especially the parts examining the assessment and its impact on the preceding period. The teacher was also given the opportunity to read the upcoming manuscript for the third article and the relevant parts of this extended abstract. As both the article and the extended abstract covered descriptions of our cooperation process and the decisions concerning the content and shape of the teaching, I found it important to allow for this to ensure referential adequacy, and thus to ensure the credibility of my work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was also important regarding ethics to ensure that her perspective could be represented, which was essential in terms of respecting both her welfare and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, at the time when this PhD thesis was printed, the teacher had not chosen to read the written parts of this work.

5.5. External readers' contributions to research quality

Up until this point, this chapter has considered ethical and quality issues regarding the participants in the research project: me, the students, and the teacher. Furthermore, the use of external audits is an important measure to ensure research quality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). External audits have had several functions in this project, such as through peer debriefing, which might contribute to a project's credibility, and by examining both the process and the products of the project, which is important for its dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The most important external readers were my supervisors. As one of my supervisors had no experience with classroom interventions but was familiar with social studies didactics, while

the other had a lot of experience using CHAT as a framework and had a background in pedagogy, they were able to give me a lot of advice and ask constructive questions, approaching my project from different angles. Next, my research group DEMOCIT contributed greatly to both Articles 1 and 2. In the first article, Grevle and I had two senior readers from DEMOCIT support and advise us throughout the process, who also thoroughly read the early versions of the review chapter that we wrote. In the second article, DEMOCIT's international advisory board provided me with the opportunity to have several qualified readers comment on Article 2 before it was sent in for the peer-review process, which was also a way to ensure that my work met the highest standards both methodologically and theoretically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The same can be said about the comments and critiques that I received at conferences. I presented all three articles at thematically appropriate international conferences. And lastly, both the mid-stage reading and the last reading before the thesis was submitted were undertaken by experts in my field who were extremely helpful in moving my work forward.

6. Synopsis of the articles

6.1. Introduction

The contributions of this thesis are gathered from research building on the ICCS data from the 2009 and 2016 cycles, and from students' impressions of their social studies classroom. In this chapter, the findings from the articles are presented as summaries. And in continuation of these summaries, an overview of the articles is given in TTable 3.

6.2. Article 1: Review of international civic and citizenship survey data analyses of student political efficacy

In the first article, the starting point is that sustainable democratic systems presuppose the participation of their citizens (Held, 2006). This is why it is seen as important to develop knowledge about how we can support and promote democratic action through education (Solhaug, 2006). Political efficacy, meaning people's belief in their own political competence (Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015), is one central factor in supporting democratic participation (Dalton, 2020), and in the ICCS, political efficacy is measured among 14-year-old adolescents in numerous countries (Schulz, Ainley, et al., 2018). In the article, Tessa E. Grevle and I present results from a literature review in which studies that analyzed data from the ICCS 2009 and 2016 cycles are examined in order to develop and clarify findings concerning the connection between education and political efficacy.

The twenty-seven reviewed articles showed that political efficacy has a clear influence on political participation (Blaskó et al., 2019; Isac et al., 2014; Ødegård & Svagård, 2018). As a consequence, several of the articles recommend that schools should focus on enabling student political efficacy (Claes et al., 2017; Maurissen, 2020). Yet, most of the articles that explored political participation did not treat efficacy as their primary focus; instead, they concentrated on an open classroom climate. Students' perceptions of an open classroom climate and their level of political efficacy are often connected (Isac et al., 2014), but interestingly, in Scandinavia, there is a negative trend, meaning that an open classroom climate is associated with low political efficacy (Lieberkind, 2015). It might be that one explanation for this is that the contextual culture of the different educational systems impacts students' levels of political efficacy. The review also points to how the cultural context of the classroom might lead to

preferences for different forms of political participation, which in turn might again influence students' political efficacy (Hoskins et al., 2015; Kuang et al., 2018).

A final aspect that is discussed is the influence of the student's socio-economic background on their political efficacy. An important finding is that when students with weak socio-economic status are given access to civic learning, it enhances their efficacy more than it does for their peers from more privileged backgrounds (Hoskins et al., 2021). The school's potential role as an emancipator is thus of critical importance when considering the democratic goal of civic participation.

Studies such as the ICCS are important, as we obtain generalizable knowledge that makes it possible to make comparisons between different countries (Schulz & Fraillon, 2011). Accordingly, it is important to explore how we can further develop or critically examine the data it produces. Even though the articles base their research on the same dataset, the interpretation and operationalization of what political efficacy is and entails differs in the articles. Furthermore, only two of the included articles used ICCS data as a starting point for qualitative research (Liljestrand, 2012; McCafferty-Wright & Knowles, 2016). In the review, we discuss whether the ICCS, which by design distinguishes between factors at the individual and school levels, removes the potential interplay between the school and students' political efficacy, which is often identified as a student-level factor, from the analysis in the included articles. To develop further knowledge about this interconnectedness and, thus, a deeper understanding of how schools can enhance political efficacy, we suggest that further research should be clear on and develop clear theoretical arguments in relation to political efficacy. Furthermore, we argue that qualitative studies on the connections between schooling and political efficacy are necessary to come closer to understanding how these are related.

6.3. Article 2: Sources of political efficacy in the social studies classroom: A qualitative investigation of Norwegian lower secondary students' perceptions

In the second article included in this thesis, the starting point is still that there is comprehensive research showing that political efficacy is a core factor that might lead to political participation (Dalton, 2020) and that schools can play an important role in enhancing students' political efficacy (Kosberg & Grevle, 2022; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015; Torney-Purta,

2002). Nevertheless, as shown in the first article, there are exceptions concerning the connection between citizenship education and political efficacy. Studies based on data from the ICCS 2016 show that there is little or no connection between an open classroom climate and political efficacy in Norway (Blaskó et al., 2019; Lieberkind, 2015). The article proclaims that there is still uncertainty about how this phenomenon could be explained, partly because the present research on citizenship education and political efficacy in Norway solely consisted of quantitative studies. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to start filling this gap by qualitatively examining a group of social studies students' views on the connection between their experiences in the social studies classroom and their sense of political efficacy. The research question was: *What do adolescents identify as sources in the social studies classroom that can contribute to or limit their sense of political efficacy?*

The study was conducted via group interviews with a group of 13-year-old students in May 2021, in a school in a Norwegian urban area. The interviews were structured using a very loose interview guide (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018) and the students were given tasks to work on during the interviews to expand their thinking (Sannino, 2015). The students were asked to illuminate the ways in which they might influence a political decision concerning a topic they had covered in class. Thereafter, I asked the students to discuss what experiences in social studies they thought influenced their experienced ability to perform the political actions that they themselves had mentioned. The data were analyzed in NVivo using the constant-comparative method (Postholm, 2019).

The findings uncovered three obstacles to political efficacy found in the social studies classroom. The first was that the students felt that they could lose both face and their friends when participating in classroom discussions. The second obstacle was that the students thought that adolescents were not respected due to their young age, which meant that they felt that they needed adults to execute their wishes. The third obstacle that came to light was that opinions were seen as fixed, and it thus felt meaningless to try to make changes because one's own and other's views were seen as unchangeable due to them being part of a person's identity.

Subsequently, the students discussed what could help them overcome the obstacles and increase their political efficacy. The students underscored the importance of respect and emotional support from their peers and teacher. Furthermore, they suggested carefully structured discussions as a method for practicing discussing politics in the classroom, which could enable the students to familiarize with different perspectives and solutions regarding the

topic at hand. Lastly, cooperating with others in groups was said to make the students feel safe throughout such experiences, and might also lead to enhanced motivation and excitement. The main implication is that the social studies teacher should aim for critical analysis and raising awareness of how to present and promote different perspectives instead of focusing solely on the students' personal opinions, and that the structure of the classroom must be carefully considered.

6.4. Article 3: The effect of cooperative learning on student political efficacy: Results from a formative intervention study in a Norwegian social studies classroom

In the third and last article of this thesis, I explore how the use of cooperative learning in social studies might impact students' politic al efficacy. Previous research suggests that cooperative learning teaches students important democratic skills, such as getting along with fellow students with different opinions and from different backgrounds (Gan et al., 2023; Mitra & Serriere, 2012). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that cooperative learning experiences have led to the development of positive relationships between students with and without disabilities and between students from different ethnic backgrounds (Davis, 2007; Grenier et al., 2005; Moore et al., 2019). Cooperative learning can also contribute to students' political skills through training in argumentation (Gillies & Khan, 2009; Guérin, 2017) and critical thinking skills (Hamann et al., 2012). It thus seems promising to investigate cooperative learning as a potential source of students' political efficacy. Through this exploration, I hoped to contribute to the educational field of research on political efficacy and to be able to give practical advice to teachers looking for methods to use in their social studies classrooms with the goal of enhancing their students' ableness as democratic citizens. The research question of the article was: *How might the use of cooperative learning in social studies impact students' political efficacy?*

Against this background, the article depicts a formative intervention study (Engeström, 2015) that was performed in the same social studies class as in the second article, with the students now being aged 14. After five weeks of observations and thereafter conducting student interviews on the students' views on the potential impact of the social studies classroom on their political efficacy, the students' views were used as a starting point for changing the

teaching in close cooperation with the teacher of the class. Techniques from cooperative learning were implemented over a period of 2.5 months. The data underlying the third article consist of interviews with the students that were conducted after the intervention period, which were conducted using a structured interview guide. The interview data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method of analysis (Postholm, 2019).

The findings reveal that when analyzed using the socio-cognitive theory on political efficacy (Bandura, 1997), cooperative learning can enhance students' political efficacy, mainly through providing them with opportunities to practice democratic skills, such as discussions, cooperation, and constructive social interaction. Concurrently, further analysis with the theoretical starting point of CHAT (Engeström & Sannino, 2010), shows that the students' goals in the social studies classrooms sometimes came into conflict with the new tool that was tried out. Three student goals were identified: to take individual responsibility, to keep their friends, and to be seen and voice one's views. At times, these goals visibly created tensions both within the student group and between the classroom as a unit of learning and the expectations of the classroom as a unit of evaluation. A recommendation for both teachers and researchers is thus to explore how a focus on individuality characterizes and impacts students and their experiences in citizenship education classrooms. Furthermore, an interesting path to explore further would be how individual learning and assessment can be carried out without getting in the way of other important goals, such as students' ability to cooperate, develop skills, or participate in activities that are not (as) easily connected to the exchange-value aspects of assessment (Engeström, 2015).

6.5. Overview of the articles

Title of article/chapter	Research question	Data	Findings
Review of International Civic and Citizenship Survey Data Analyses of Student Political Efficacy.	What can we learn about the connection between school and political efficacy from exploring the research that expands on the results of the ICCS?	27 articles based on ICCS data	It is a common recommendation that schools should focus on enabling students' political efficacy. However, the focus of the research is more often placed on an open classroom climate than directly on student political efficacy. Student political efficacy and an open classroom climate are connected in most countries. Civic learning can enhance political efficacy for students with low socio-economic status. Cultural factors in different countries might impact students' political efficacy differently. There is substantial variation in how the efficacy variables are operationalized, understood, and used in the research.
Sources of Political Efficacy in the Social Studies Classroom: A Qualitative Investigation of Norwegian Lower Secondary Students' Perceptions.	What do students themselves identify as sources in the social studies classroom that can contribute to or lessen their political efficacy?	Interviews	Three obstacles are reported as obstacles to political efficacy in the social studies classroom: (1) the reactions of their peers in political discussions, (2) the perception that adolescents are not respected due to their young age, and (3) a view of opinions as fixed and hence unchangeable. Associated classroom solutions: (1) to experience respect and support from peers, (2) to practice discussing politics through carefully structured discussions, and (3) to work in groups to make students feel more secure and supported.
The Effect of Cooperative Learning on Student Political Efficacy: A Report from a Formative Intervention Study in a Norwegian Social Studies Classroom.	How might the use of cooperative learning in social studies impact the students' political efficacy?	Interviews Student questionnaire	Cooperative learning can enhance students' political efficacy through providing opportunities to practice democratic skills such as discussion, cooperation, and constructive social interaction. Concurrently, students' goals in the social studies classrooms sometimes came into conflict with the method that was tried out, which made the students resist the cooperative learning groups. The main goals of the students in the social studies classroom were extracted to be as follows: (I) To take individual responsibility, (II) to keep their friends and (III) to be seen and voice their views.

Table 3: List of articles, with title, research question, data, and findings

7. Discussion

7.1. Introduction

The overarching aim of this dissertation has been to explore connections between citizenship education and political efficacy to enhance our understanding of how schooling can promote political participation among youth. I have explored this matter in several respects through the three research goals stated in the introductory chapter.

1. Provide an overview of and broaden current knowledge on the relationship between citizenship education and political efficacy.
2. Provide practical advice concerning possible ways to work and considerations to make in the citizenship education classroom when aiming to support students' political efficacy.
3. Explore and expand on the relevant understandings of political efficacy and their consequences for citizenship education.

In this chapter, the findings from the articles will be discussed in relation to the overarching research question: *How does citizenship education influence students' political efficacy?* Hopefully, it will bring to the fore a more consistent view of the thesis's contributions. The discussion also includes recommendations for future research that are raised as a consequence of the limitations of this doctoral thesis.

In the following, I will discuss the answers to the three research goals in three sections. In section 7.2, I deliberate on the results from the three articles, and try to relate the categories that are developed in the articles to each other, to prior research, and to theory. In section 7.3, I move on to discuss the compiled findings in light of different theoretical perspectives on political efficacy. My aim in this section is to expand upon how different theoretical perspectives on political efficacy are needed to reach the goals of a participatory democratic approach. In the third part of this discussion, in section 7.4, I move on to synthesize practical advice that is devised from the preceding findings and discussion. My aspiration in this part is to provide functional guidance for teachers and teacher educators, as use value has been an important aspect of this thesis from the beginning. And finally, in section 0, concluding remarks are added.

7.2. Citizenship education and students' political efficacy

To start off broadly, the common ground throughout this project is that both the literature review and the example provided in my fieldwork support how political efficacy *can* be supported through citizenship education, which is consistent with much of the prior literature

(Beaumont, 2011; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015; Torney-Purta, 2002). My first contribution pointing in this direction is the overview of the ICCS-based literature, which gives a clear recommendation on this matter (Blaskó et al., 2019; Isac et al., 2014; Maurissen, 2020). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that such a broad review of the literature on the connection between citizenship education and political efficacy has been done. As part of this thesis, this contribution thus provides a new and broad overview of the current state of the present research on citizenship education and political efficacy.

One of the main findings from the reviewed literature based on the ICCS is the importance of an open classroom climate for political efficacy. Moreover, research using other sources of data is in line with this view (Dassonneville et al., 2012; Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017). However, there is scant research exploring these connections within a qualitative frame, and, as such, the analysis undertaken in this thesis lays the groundwork for understanding this connection further and from a student perspective. In accordance with former quantitative research (Isac et al., 2014; Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015), the interviewed students in this work connect an open classroom climate to their political efficacy. Their fear of their peers' reactions might be viewed as being in opposition to such an open classroom climate, and this effectively hinders students from using the classroom as a space to rehearse participation, which is deemed central to the development of political efficacy in the prior literature (Calvert et al., 2015; Serriere, 2014). Moreover, the finding from Article 3 that an important goal for the students was to keep their friends can be read as corresponding to this view.

In this manner, the already-present relationships between the students seemed to spill over into student participation in the social studies lessons, which further impacted their political efficacy. This supports the view that if schools' citizenship education is to positively impact political efficacy, it is critical to work on student relations and the classroom climate as part of this effort. According to the principles of generativity (Engeström, 2011), this is also a relevant finding for similar educational settings when peer relations are not optimal. In addition, the overarching question can be relevant to ask for any teacher: How does the concrete classroom climate possibly influence *my* students' political efficacy, what kind of speech culture does it promote, and what norms regulate students' understanding of the object and the following goals and actions that they rely on?

Prior literature has also pointed to the potential advantages of group work for political efficacy (Fry & Bentahar, 2013; Serriere, 2014). There seem to be two main arguments for this. In groups, it can become easier to develop a friendly environment that can spill over into the

whole class, which might indirectly affect political efficacy (Ryter, 2012). Moreover, groups can contribute as an important rehearsal space for political efficacy, which might have a more direct effect (McGowan-Kirsch, 2021). Both of these aspects are present in my research; however, my thesis adds nuances to this picture. Even though earlier research has suggested that former relationships between students might impact their ability to work together, I have gained the opportunity to ask *why* by using qualitative methods. The weight that the current students put on their individual responsibility and the societal trends of individualization and identity-based argumentation (Bauman, 2012; Norris & Inglehart, 2019) that this phenomenon resembles appear to impact the connections between the possibilities given in the social studies classroom to perform citizenship education through group work and the students' political efficacy in a substantial way. This expands the insights provided by Gan (2023), who in a similar manner, points to the challenges that occur in the crossover between cooperative learning and students' individual focus on their academic achievement. The layer that is added to the present research is the increased understanding of how this phenomenon can be part of larger societal trends (Bauman, 2012; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), an understanding that is made possible by applying an analysis based on CHAT (Engeström, 2015). Nevertheless, further work is needed on the effects of individual assessment on the connection between citizenship education and political efficacy and, more generally, on how to assess learning in citizenship education. Furthermore, as the sample considered in this present research is also limited, a natural progression would be to research whether the same tendency of individualization does occur in other educational settings and in relation to political efficacy for other students.

Another aspect that seems important to consider when discussing the possibilities for citizenship education to impact political efficacy is students' ages. The former literature has hypothesized that, in cases when citizenship education has not had a positive effect on students' political efficacy, it might be due to particular teaching methods being new to the students (Oberle, 2020). The introduction of cooperative learning techniques in this project was, in a similar way, new, as the students were introduced to ways of working that they were not used to. Even though my project does not contain a quantitative measure of the correlation between the cooperative learning period and political efficacy, the data from the student interviews can broaden our understanding of what happens when a new method is introduced. A developmental process takes time, and it is normal for new projects to be met with resistance in the early stages (Haapasaari et al., 2016). However, it is possible to move from opposition to self-initiative and constructiveness if the motives of the included actors are included in a process of double

stimulation (Sannino, 2010). The question, however, is whether this PhD project allowed for such a process to happen. In Reimers et al.'s (2014) work, the question is raised as to whether an executed intervention and its lack of impact on the concerned students' political efficacy was caused by the lack of an appropriate structure. Although the intervention depicted in Reimer et al.'s (2014) research was not carried out within the CHAT tradition (Engeström, 2015), it sheds valuable light on this current project, considering how long, yet comparatively little, time was spent on the project. Even though a year is a long time to spend at a research site, it is not a long time if viewed as part of a possibly lasting learning process. However, the PhD project did not allow for further time spent with the class to make further adjustments and work with the students; hence, the current intervention became more and more targeted, but was perhaps not allowed to last long enough for it to be targeted *enough*. Even though observations suggest that the teacher worked to engage and include the students in discussions and other citizenship education activities, the students had only been part of this concrete context for half a year when this project started, and the prior context of their citizenship education is thus unknown. However, assuming that at least some of these students had been part of a relatively widespread traditional Norwegian social studies classroom (Børhaug, 2022; Skjæveland, 2020), then the type of methodology represented by cooperative learning would require a kind of unlearning (of old rules) of behavior in the social studies classroom. This could be particularly difficult at this age level, where it is so important what your fellow students think of you, and when the cost of being the one who steps out of the established lines of behavior was considered grave, as shown in Article 2.

The age of the students is also important when considering, as referenced in Article 2, that they see it as a hindrance to their political efficacy, as their experience is that adolescents are not really listened to. If this is a result of the students experiencing citizenship as an achievement that they will possibly realize with age, and not as something that they can practice at their age and in their educational setting (Lawy & Biesta, 2006), it can be seen as an example that is supportive of Lieberkind's (2015) understanding of the Nordic classroom as a unit in which the students do not really experience having an impact, which he uses to explain how Norwegian students might experience an open classroom climate yet have low levels of political efficacy (Blaskó et al., 2019; Bragdø & Mathé, 2021). As for the other explanations relating to the lack of a connection between an open classroom climate and political efficacy in Norway, there are no signs in my qualitative data that the students lean toward critical inquiry, as suggested by Hoskins et al. (2015) to be the Nordic teachers' focus, and as referenced by Sætra and Heldal

Stray (2019) as one of the prioritized goals of Norwegian social studies teachers. Moreover, the findings do not seem to support the outlook of students who are indifferent to politics (Reichert et al., 2018).

On the contrary, the students were very engaged. However, their engagement was connected to what engaged them individually or to what they experienced as involving themselves. Interestingly, this can be connected to the autonomy part of Hoskins et al.'s (2015) argument, where the students' focus on their individuality, and consequently on their personal responsibility, is recognizable. This fits well with Bauman's (2012) description of the individual who feels (and perhaps is) solely responsible for his or her own well-being and who seeks to promote his or her interests by voicing dissatisfaction with the current state. Interestingly, these findings also seem to coincide with earlier research on social studies education in Norway. As shown in the literature reviewed in section 2.4, there are several studies that point toward students in different citizenship education subjects viewing them as subjects in which their engagement depends on how the different topics that are treated concern them as individuals and on the students' feelings of personal engagement (Børhaug & Borgund, 2018; Børhaug & Langø, 2020). Participation thus seems to become an individual project to promote one's own interests (Børhaug, 2017). And it is tempting to connect this finding to the neoliberal citizen who engages selectively in matters regarded as relevant to him- or herself (Sant, 2019).

This intriguing connection between students' individual focus and their level of political efficacy adds a new layer to the existing knowledge about the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy, and is a central contribution of this doctoral work. Taken together, it seems plausible that an individualistic understanding might affect students' political efficacy. And, it seems possible that the students' emphasis on their own feelings and views is something that can be further escalated in the social studies classroom. If what students are asked to do in the classroom is to state their own opinions, as is common in Norwegian classrooms (Samuelsson, 2013), this creates a sense of efficacy toward these particular types of actions, and hence a preference for them (Bandura, 1989). Yet, having others hear one's opinion does not necessarily bring about change. It is thus tempting to posit that students' emphasis on stating their personal opinions may partly explain their potential lack of political efficacy. Bauman (2012) explains how a part of the individualization process in modern society leads to a pattern where risks are to be fought alone, whereas an understanding of public issues that can only be solved through common effort is lost. The students' preferences might thus make their opinions heard. However, as they are not formalized parts of the political system, leaning on

individual expressions effectively leaves adolescents standing outside the power structures of the established political system.

Taken together, the value of working to establish an open classroom climate through friendly peer relations, the effect of students' age, and the challenges provided by an individualized classroom are the main empirical contributions of this thesis. I have already pointed to the need to investigate the assessment of citizenship education and how student age is connected to citizenship education's effect on political efficacy. Moreover, I would suggest that further studies should concentrate on finding tools to understand the interaction and perhaps spillover effects between the classroom and the surrounding society, and to analyze how this impacts the goals and possibilities of citizenship education. The present doctoral work leaves abundant room for further progress in understanding how the political efficacy of students focused on their individuality is shaped, and what consequences there are for political participation and, henceforth, for democracy.

7.3. The consequences of different theoretical understandings of political efficacy for citizenship education

As shown in Chapter 3, political efficacy can be understood in different ways, and in my thesis, several of these are included in the subsequent articles through the different theoretical starting points that I have used. What I now want to do is look for the possibilities and limitations that the different answers to the question "What *is* political efficacy?" provide while at the same time considering the current findings. Then, I argue that there is a need for clarity in the current research on the theoretical implications for specific uses of political efficacy. Furthermore, I advocate that great value can be added to the understanding of how citizenship education might impact political efficacy if different theoretical lenses are applied. In all of this, I maintain the participatory approach to democracy, and explore how the different understandings of political efficacy might lead to socialization, qualification, and subjectification (Biesta, 2009, 2021).

The articles in this thesis must be read with caution regarding what understanding of political efficacy their findings are based on. Interestingly, the investigation of the ICCS literature in Article 1 brought to the fore a lack of clear theoretical perspectives in the investigations of political efficacy. But, as shown in section 4.2, Article 1, which is based on the ICCS's understanding of political efficacy (Schulz et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2011), is,

however, necessarily characterized by the implicit view of the loyal citizen and, especially with the change to using only one variable in 2016, moves toward a measurement of specific competencies that the students are to consider, which resembles a neoliberal view (Veugelers, 2021). This means that, for example, the correlation between political efficacy and political participation, which is a common finding in the ICCS-based research, must be read with the knowledge that the measure of political efficacy already contains a certain preference for given activities. As for the Norwegian results, with Norway's lack of a connection between political efficacy and an open classroom climate (Blaskó et al., 2019; Liljestrand, 2012), this must also be understood by keeping in mind that political efficacy presupposes a given understanding of what participation is. This insight makes it relevant to ask the following question: If the measure of political efficacy did not presuppose certain actions, what would this connection look like? What if the adolescents preferred other ways of influencing others and their answers about their own (lack of) feelings of capability mirrored how the preferences of the students were not included in the phrasing of the variable? These are, of course, hypothetical questions that the ICCS is incapable of answering. The use of the ICCS's understanding of political efficacy thus contains limitations, also as far as the introductory premise of this discussion goes: If the common recommendation to work on students' political efficacy through education means educating young citizens in a given set of activities, it certainly constrains opening up for a participatory society where adolescents are both included in reflecting on the old—the known—and in themselves shaping the new—the unknown (Biesta, 2006).

Article 2, on the other hand, is based on the socio-cognitive understanding of the phrase political efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The interviews that the article is based on, as shown in section 4.3.4.2, were built up in a way that let the students define their preferred ways of taking political action, before discussing the connections between the social studies classroom and their political efficacy. As such, my findings do not contain the same implicit given ways of political engagement that the ICCS uses. However, the analysis of the findings in Article 2 also contains traces of the socio-cognitive theory that was used as a theoretical starting point. To begin to clarify this, the "known" of the students must be identified, because when using Bandura's (1997) understanding of political efficacy, it is assumed that what the individual should or could try to control must be known. In Article 2, I map the current state of the empirical context of the students' classroom on the basis of their descriptions of their political efficacy and how it relates to their social studies experiences. The students' answers fall into three categories: fear of their peers' reactions due to quite a harsh classroom climate, that their

experience is that adolescents are not listened to, and that both their own and others' opinions are viewed as fixed. All three categories can be viewed as parts of the "known" of the students, as they resemble the at-the-time current state in their classroom and thereby the known factors on which the students' choices of actions were built. In Article 3, the "known" of the students surfaces in a more indirect manner in their goals: Individual responsibility is important, be it for learning, getting good grades, or for voicing one's own views.

In contradiction, the "unknown" is represented in the students' suggestions as to how to support their political efficacy in Article 2, namely, through respect and support from peers, structured discussions to promote perspective-taking, and group work. Even though the students' suggestions are concrete, they represent something new, as they contain future possibilities for changes (where the content is not known), and how the students will experience and respond to these changes is also yet to be uncovered. In Article 3, several of these "news" or "unknowns" are introduced in practice through the use of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), which represents a direct confrontation between the known and the unknown for the students. The difference between the perspectives that Article 2 and Article 3 bring forward on this matter is that, in Article 2, the understanding of the known stops at identifying the students' experiences in their social studies classroom. This means that even though the theory provides knowledge about how the students' experiences within social studies relate to their political efficacy, it is only when using the activity system as a frame of understanding for analysis that the contradictions within the classroom can be revealed (Engeström, 2015).

One of these contradictions was a tension between the goal of making it possible for all the students to participate in discussions and group work versus a minority of the students feeling that this goal was in direct opposition to their chances of voicing their views in class with a full audience. The term "minority" reflects two layers in this regard: First, these views were expressed only by three students, who voiced that they identified as part of a minority group. Second, these few students expressed how they felt that the rights of, and therefore the voices and views of, what they saw as suppressed groups, such as ethnic minorities, women, or people with low socio-economic status, should be allowed to dominate in classroom discussions. However, the cooperative learning groups were set up to allow for broad participation, and this was also welcomed as such by the majority. But those few students felt that they were now given less of a voice, and thereby that a multiplicity of perspectives was allowed in the classroom, which they found to be negative.

Thus, there is a difference here in how different students experienced the use of the new tool of cooperative learning in the classroom. This is in line with former research, in the sense that it is underscored how different student groups might experience education differently (Chan & Hoyt, 2021; Mayes et al., 2016), and hence, that the relationship between citizenship teaching and political efficacy is not a static one. The knowledge that is added by using CHAT is that not only are differences identified between or, as in this case, within a student group when it comes to how students experience citizenship education, but through the student's own explanations, knowledge is provided about their understanding of *why* these differences occur. This is an advantage of using a framework that is aimed at supporting a developmental process to understand the state of and development of political efficacy, because it helps identify tensions, and it is in these contradictions that the energy can be found that can lead to expansive learning and encountering the new (Engeström, 2015). The use of the CHAT framework thus goes beyond the potential that is found in the socio-cognitive understanding (Bandura, 1990, 1997), as the whole point of a developmental process done within the CHAT framework is to go into the unknown (Sannino et al., 2016).

Moving into a phase of expansive learning presupposes that the participants in a project, in this case the students, experience agency in the sense that they are capable of taking intentional transformative actions (Engeström, 2011). The students partaking in but also critiquing the project and the subsequent changes in the classroom that were made after I had withdrawn from the field points toward such a living process. The use of the expansive learning cycle as a framework for understanding the possible development of students' political efficacy is therefore an important methodological innovation, as it provides an opportunity to further understand the structural influences on individual students' political efficacy. Moreover, it expands the current research regarding what advice is useful for citizenship education to enhance political efficacy moving forward. The complexity of any teaching situation can make any ready-made solution fail if the context of the concrete classroom is not taken into account. As such, this PhD project provides an example of the insights that can be provided by using the analytical tools from CHAT in an educational setting. Hopefully, this example can generate ideas and advice that can be used in other settings to move beyond the individual and analyze the historicity of other contexts.

Moving on, I also want to connect the findings to explore the issue of individualization and how this relates to different uses of political efficacy. The statements of some of the students that some views should be allowed to dominate because of their roots in minority status groups

can be recognized as identity-based arguments (who *am* I and how do I *feel* in this situation) (Bauman, 2012). Furthermore, individualization comes to the surface in the findings of Article 2 when the students view opinions as static. Again, this way of viewing opinions as part of one's self can be tied to individualization, where one's identity becomes the carrier of one's interest. As described in the theory chapter, identity-based argumentation then becomes connected to a view of individual responsibility instead of resorting to a community-based strategy to promote change (Bauman, 2012). And, it is part of a societal trend that is often connected to the neoliberal strain of democracy (Held, 2006).

However, these are not the only signs of individualization that occur in my work. In Article 2, where my main theoretical frame is socio-cognitive theory, the classroom solutions suggested by the students to enhance their political efficacy were (1) respect and support from peers, (2) structured classroom discussions, and (3) working together in groups. Looking more closely at these results, they are all methods for enhancing individual participation in class. In line with Bandura's (1997) argument, political efficacy is thereby connected to an individual's feeling of exerting power over his or her environment, which leads to a possible change in his or her cognitive understanding of his or her capabilities. A critique of this understanding and thus also of the advice given as an extension of socio-cognitive theory may be that it presupposes an individual angle. It might then be that by using this understanding of the concept of efficacy, the advice that is received will reinforce the individualistic trend that is pointed to in the preceding section (Bauman, 2012).

It thus appears that to move beyond the limits that individualizing structures impose on both citizenship education and the students, there is a need to explore students' political efficacy from another angle than that presented in the view of political efficacy found in socio-cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1997). Interestingly, the CHAT framework, which places the focus on the cultural-historical context and thus on the structure in which the students partake and derive their goals (Engeström, 2015), seems to present a broader view of the possible connections between citizenship education and political efficacy. CHAT also ends up pointing in the direction of individualization, but then at individualization as a sort of collective, or perhaps better, at a widespread phenomenon that directs the collective understanding of the activity system in this particular classroom (Engeström, 2000). What is thereby provided by analyzing political efficacy through the lens of CHAT is an understanding of how the structures inside and outside the activity system surrounding the students are a substantial part of shaping

both their belief in their own capacity and their preferences for certain actions (Engeström, 2015).

Still, the understanding of political efficacy found in socio-cognitive theory is not unimportant. What can be argued, however, is that by using different theories' understandings of political efficacy, weaknesses in each theory can be countered. Socio-cognitive learning theory gives significant practical advice that is easy to translate into practical classroom operations, as is also the case with the solutions put forward in Article 2. It is also the case that parts of society need to be reproduced and transferred (Sfard, 1998). The socialization and qualification goals of education that can be said to support the status quo are thus also important parts of maintaining a democratic society (Biesta, 2009). If read through this lens, the advice derived from the students in Article 2 still constitutes valuable knowledge in terms of answering how citizenship education might impact political efficacy. Furthermore, the understanding of the individual's cognitive sense of political efficacy found in socio-cognitive theory can be said to meet an important limitation of CHAT, which must also be mentioned. A common critique of CHAT has been that it might be seen as difficult to understand human subjectivity within such a collectivist framework, and that the understandings of the subjective cognitive choices of an individual are not as thoroughly explained as one might have wished for (Stetsenko, 2013). In Article 3, the goals of the students are understood as collective, which removes the focus on the individual and possibly the unique intentions and operations of each student. This implies the continued importance of Bandura's framework.

In many ways, the same argument regarding the importance of maintaining a democracy's norms and established structures can be used to defend the ICCS framework's construct of political efficacy (Schulz et al., 2018). Yet, there is still a need to go back to the argument made by Westheimer and Kahne (2000, 2004) concerning the limitations of the personally responsible citizen. They maintain that following rules and being committed to a democracy is not enough. A *democratic* state requires citizens who are committed to both social justice and addressing the structural root problems of a society, and to active participation in civic affairs, which includes taking action on the foregoing injustices (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). From the viewpoint of participatory democratic theory, this combination will be able to grow and maintain a flourishing democracy (Barber, 1995). Considering the content of the ICCS's measurement, it seems insufficient as a foundation for reaching this goal, and as such, a broader understanding of political efficacy seems to be needed to allow for citizenship education that supports students in developing as autonomous beings (Lawy & Biesta, 2006).

To summarize, the understanding of how citizenship education impacts political efficacy and the reading of the findings in this doctoral work will vary due to the different theoretical starting points that have been applied. This supports the argument that researchers exploring connections between citizenship education and political efficacy need to clarify the theoretical implications of their specific understanding of political efficacy in order to be transparent regarding what presuppositions their theoretical lens(es) bring(s) into their research. As I uphold the value of using different theoretical perspectives, it is important to remember that the value of each theory depends on what one wants to achieve (Sfard, 1998). As shown in my discussion, it seems that to fulfill the goal of both maintaining *and renewing* a democratic society through democratic participation, there is a need for different views on political efficacy and, furthermore, on how citizenship education supporting political efficacy should be undertaken.

It is thus clear that it is time to challenge the central position of both the ICCS's (Schulz et al., 2018) and socio-cognitive theory's understanding of the connections between citizenship education and political efficacy (Bandura, 1997) by bringing other theoretical perspectives into play, while at the same time acknowledging their value: The ICCS provides us with a unique possibility to contrast and compare different countries' citizenship education efforts. However, this thesis makes a clear suggestion to further clarify the theoretical background of the measurement of political efficacy and its implications for the research and recommendations made on the basis of the ICCS data. And while socio-cognitive theory is useful in explaining the individual's cognitive understanding of his or her political abilities, the theory's individualistic overtone must be kept in mind when it is applied. Lastly, this thesis has explored political efficacy and citizenship education using CHAT (Engeström, 2015), which provides a new perspective due to its understanding of expansive learning, and that seems to bring opportunities for students as subjects in a way that is called for by the participatory perspective (Biesta, 2021). However, its newness as a methodology in the research field of citizenship education calls for further explorations as to both this thesis's conclusions regarding the structural influences on individual students and on the use of methodological tools, such as the model of the activity system and the expansive learning cycle as part of developmental work within classrooms.

7.4. Practical advice concerning possible ways to work in the classroom to enhance political efficacy

The final research goal of this doctoral work was to generate practical advice concerning possible ways to work and considerations to make in the citizenship education classroom when aiming to support students' political efficacy. My intention has been to fill in parts of the practical knowledge gap that exists within social studies didactics generally, and to explore how to teach to enhance political efficacy specifically, in turn, to promote the student's ability to participate in politics. As I now turn to this practical advice, the insight that several theoretical perspectives should contribute to understanding students' political efficacy is important. As it turns out, what advice to give clearly depends on one's understanding of political efficacy, and there are no fast tracks or magic solutions, as is most often the case in educational research. By reviewing the existing research and taking an exhaustive dive into the case from this thesis's fieldwork, I hope to be able to deduce practical guidance that can be useful for the teacher who is planning her next social studies lesson. In this section, I have thus drawn together the advice based on the findings and the different theoretical perspectives that were employed in this thesis.

7.4.1. Work on peer relations

The findings of this doctoral work clearly point to the importance of peer relations for political efficacy. Fear of peer reactions can hinder student participation and thus exclude students from important spheres of practice. Establishing a safe and open space in which the students can partake thus seems foundational for healthy development, both for the individual students and for the class as a collective. Even though prior research has found a lack of connection between students' views of an open classroom climate and political efficacy in Norway (Blaskó et al., 2019), this thesis makes it possible to argue that this does not make working on establishing such classrooms unimportant, as the previous findings carry with them the implications of the ICCS framework (Schulz et al., 2018). As the example brought forward in this thesis shows, there is undoubtedly a connection between the students' view of the atmosphere in their social studies classroom and the possible state and development of their political efficacy—while the atmosphere is influenced both by the tensions within the student group and by the individualistic trend that suffices in the students' worldview. This underscores how the connection between an open classroom climate and students' political efficacy is

affected by the traits of the current classroom. Consequently, the recommendation to work on peer relations has to be based on the specific student group at hand and on insights into the specific historicity of that student group.

7.4.2. Aim for discussions in the classroom, but structure the discussions carefully

The next suggestion is to practice discussions in the citizen education classroom. As shown in the literature review in section 2.3, allowing students to experience situations in which they can practice democratic skills is beneficial for their political efficacy (Serriere, 2014; Stroup et al., 2013). However, as shown in Article 2, the students are clear that it is important to consider what *type* of discussion is practiced. Even if they experience their classroom climate as harsh, the answer is not claimed to be to shut down discussions or avoid controversial issues. Instead, discussions should be structured to avoid the arguments from getting personal and to allow the students to take in and get to know different perspectives. Interestingly, this advice seems to meet the specific needs of the student group in relation to its focus on students' individuality and identity.

As shown in Article 2, this research contributes concrete suggestions regarding how such a discussion might be set up, which generates advice for other educational settings where such a trait is surfacing. Students can be given the opportunity to choose which topics to discuss to ensure their participation in lesson planning and to make sure that the discussion feels relevant. However, by placing the students in roles—that is, not letting them start off by discussing their own feelings or initial opinions as their starting point—it becomes easier to open the floor up to different perspectives without the discussion turning into a competition based on students' personal vendettas. Such a discussion takes planning on the teacher's behalf—it might be advantageous to start the preparation for the discussion itself several weeks in advance. However, through such measures, it can become possible to arrange for a setup that allows the students to get to know different perspectives, without them arguing on a subjective matter, while keeping their engagement intact.

7.4.3. Try cooperative learning

In Article 2, the students propose using small groups as practice spaces that can allow more students to participate in class. Looking at the first two pieces of advice given, cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999) leaves room for methods that can both enhance peer relations and provide guidance on how to structure classroom discussions, which can support political efficacy among the students. As shown in Article 3, cooperative learning might be a way to allow students to practice democratic skills, such as cooperation, giving feedback, having political discussions, and rehearsing stating and arguing for one's opinion or a given perspective. When seen in the light of the second recommendation to use structured discussions in the classroom, it is also fruitful to combine these two aspects: It can get easier for students to partake in discussions if they are held in smaller groups, as the threshold feels lower without a large audience, as in whole-class conversations. And by practicing in a smaller scenario, it might also get easier over time to participate in a larger arena.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that cooperative learning is not a mechanism that automatically leads to a democratic classroom; instead, it is *one* possible way of framing the classroom so that it *can* contain favorable structures for political efficacy. The findings in Article 3 exemplify how tensions in the classroom can make students resist cooperative structures. This might point to a possible weakness of cooperative learning: Even though there is consistent research showing that cooperative learning brings about positive peer relations (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), one might ask whether the techniques do not presuppose a certain amount of goodwill to begin with. A possible answer to this issue could be to start with small steps and easy structures to make the students feel safe moving beyond their usual behavioral patterns. Concurrently, the first piece of advice regarding the peer relations of a specific student group must be taken into consideration both when setting up student groups and when deciding which and how cooperative structures should be used as part of citizenship education classrooms.

7.4.4. Be aware of the consequences of individualization

As the last practical piece of advice, it can be deduced from Article 3 and the discussion in this extended abstract that the consequences of individualization can be severe. All of the above-mentioned advice is affected by this phenomenon. As an example, the initial cooperation in the intervention stopped as the students—and maybe also the teacher and I—started to focus

on the assessment part of the teaching. However, individualization also put a brake on the will to cooperate and to listen to peers during the earlier stages of the project.

However, it is questionable whether a teacher in a social studies classroom can manifest a solution to counter this trend on his or her own. Individualization is part of societal development that is present in many spheres of the students' lives (Bauman, 2012). This made the starting point of the students in this project one of singularity, which had to be accounted for in the classroom because it would interfere with the students' responses to classroom activities. In choosing how to structure a lesson or a period, it thus seems decisive for the teacher to be aware of the possibility of the students having such a starting point and the consequences that it might possibly bring to light. Concurrently, the responsibility to adjust and possibly counterbalance the trend cannot be placed on the teacher(s) alone—such an expectation would be yet another expression of trying to solve a structural phenomenon that requires structural change to be modified and of placing the burden on an individual's shoulders (Bauman, 2011, 2012). Substantial advice to be drawn from this PhD thesis is thus directed at policy makers and other actors who are in power to make adjustments on a broader level to support efforts and at further research regarding what measures could be taken to compensate for the effects of the individualization that is seen in citizenship education.

7.5. Limitations and concluding remarks

This PhD study set out to explore the relationship between citizenship education and students' political efficacy. The project contributes new knowledge to this field by providing insights through reviewing former research and conducting a formative intervention in a social studies class. I have also aimed at providing practical advice on how teachers can work to enhance students' political efficacy, and what considerations and adjustments must be considered in such a practice.

Moreover, my work has been based on participatory democratic theory (Barber, 1995; Biesta, 2006; Pateman, 1970), and I have discussed how socio-cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1997) and the ICCS both contain distinct understandings of political efficacy and thereby of democracy, which I argue is not sufficient if the aim of supporting a participatory democracy is to be met. Although valuable advice can be drawn from an analysis of teaching practice using socio-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), there is a need for a broader analytical approach to the citizenship education classroom. Through the formative intervention and the

analytical tools provided by CHAT (Engeström & Sannino, 2010), a new methodology and, at the same time, a new theoretical understanding of how an individual and the surrounding collective structure of activity systems is intertwined is applied to further understand citizenship education and political efficacy. What has been brought to the fore is a focus on the underlying contradictions of the current classroom and how they can impact students' experience of and actions in the classroom, and consequently also students' political efficacy. It thus seems important to be aware that advice and research on citizenship education and political efficacy will be part of distinct theoretical traditions that will undoubtedly influence how political efficacy is understood and, furthermore, what view is transmitted on how political efficacy may be enhanced. Throughout my work, I have therefore striven to be clear about how this concept has been understood and used by both myself and others. Hopefully, this can be both a contribution to the theoretical understanding of the concept of political efficacy and an appeal to future researchers to be clear about what theoretical underpinnings their adopted concepts are built upon.

The empirical findings of my PhD were the result of my fieldwork with an engaging group of adolescents. I have previously stated that the sampling method can be described as one of convenience (Bryman, 2008). A limitation that follows from this is that I did not use any specific criteria regarding the students, except that they were to be available due to their teacher's interest in the project, and that they were to be at the upper secondary level. Moreover, I did not gather data from the students that would have made it possible for me to break down their answers based on social background. There is research showing that there are differences in both political efficacy and in the effect of social studies education on students' political efficacy, depending on their social background (Hoskins et al., 2021). And the second round of interviews, in which some of the students expressed how the views of suppressed groups should be allowed to overshadow other views due to their status as minority perspectives, points in a direction where the students' backgrounds might play into their experience of citizenship education, which can further affect political efficacy. This is, of course, also valid for the rest of the student group, the difference being that their history and former experiences would allow for a different reaction to the cooperative learning techniques. However, in my work, I have not been able to take a systematic approach to this matter, and further research could usefully be undertaken to expand on this issue. The same could be done regarding possible differences due to student gender, which I obviously had access to but did not explore further.

The conversations with the students pointed to several factors that might impact political efficacy. The importance of peer relations cannot be overestimated. However, peer relations do seem to be important *as a surrounding context* in which it is possible to build a practice ground where the students might rehearse and practice politics. Focusing solely on peer relations without opening up for discussions and the political thus seems to be an unwanted solution. Finding a balance between working on student relations (and thereby working toward harmony) and opening up the floor for disagreement (which potentially might lead to friction and disharmony, at least temporarily) is thus advised, even though it will be demanding on the part of both the teacher and the students. This project has provided some advice on how this can be done, for example, through carefully structured discussions and cooperative learning structures, which I hope can contribute to the everyday practice of social studies teachers.

What has fascinated me along the way is how the phenomenon of individualization has kept coming back as an intrusive aspect that has run throughout the project. As I have come to learn, this developmental trait of modern society impacts most facets of present-day life (Bauman, 2012). The impact of individualization on how citizenship education is both undertaken and received is thus an aspect that presumably impinges on the effects that it has on students' political efficacy. This underscores the importance of seeing education as part of a larger societal context, which might potentially lead to a deeper understanding of how political efficacy is developed. Thus, there is an invitation for future researchers to look further into how such a deep and widespread trend impacts citizenship education and its relationship to political efficacy.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Research permission from the Norwegian Center for Research Data

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger: 04.02.2021

Referansenummer: 140073

Vurderingstype: Standard

Dato: 04.02.2021

Prosjekttittel: Samarbeidslæring i samfunnsfag - En vei til økt politisk mestringstro for elevene?

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet / Fakultet for lærerutdanning og internasjonale studier / Institutt for grunnskole- og faglærerutdanning

Prosjektansvarlig

Eva Kosberg

Prosjektperiode

01.09.2020 - 30.08.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 30.08.2023.

Kommentar

NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 04.02.2021. Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 04.02.2021. Behandlingen kan fortsette. NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til videre med prosjektet! Kontaktperson hos NSD: Marita Ådnanes Helleland Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Appendix 2: Information letter to parents

Vil du la ditt barn bli intervjuet i et forskningsprosjekt om demokrati i skolen?

Ditt barns klasse ved XX skole deltar i et doktorgradssprosjekt om hvordan undervisningen i samfunnsfag kan bidra til å styrke elevenes tro på at de er i stand til å delta i et demokratisk samfunn. Dette er en forespørsel til deg om å gi tillatelse til at ditt barn observeres og intervjues som en del av forskningsprosjektet, og i dette skrivet vil du få informasjon om hva det innebærer for ditt barn å delta, og hvilke rettigheter du har som foresatt.

Formål

Norske skoleelever kan mye om demokrati, og de er også positive til demokratiet som styringsform. Samtidig sier mange at de selv ikke planlegger å delta, fordi de mener at de ikke kan nok om politikk, eller fordi de føler at de ikke er kompetente nok. Formålet med forskningsprosjektet på deres skole, er å undersøke hvordan vi kan styrke elevens tro på sin egen evne til å delta i demokratiet, gjennom bruk av metoder i undervisningen som kan fremme samarbeid mellom elevene. Målet er at elevene skal oppleve mestring i møte med politiske temaer, som koronasituasjonen, klimakrisen, 22. juli eller valget i USA.

En forsker vil i perioder følge klassen i andre halvdel av 8. klasse (vår2021) og i første halvdel av 9. klasse (høst2021). Anonymiserte resultater fra prosjektet skal brukes til å utvikle samfunnsfaglærerutdanningen ved OsloMet - storbyuniversitetet, og vil inngå i planarbeid og undervisning der. Det vil også bli utgitt rapporter og forskningsartikler hvor anonymiserte forskningsresultater fra prosjektet brukes som data. Disse rapportene og artiklene kan leses og brukes av alle.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Institutt for lærerutdanning og internasjonalisering (LUI) ved OsloMet er ansvarlig institusjon for doktorgradsarbeidet. Avhandlingen er knyttet til prosjektet DEMOCIT (NSD-meldingsnummer 771476), som er et samarbeid mellom LUI og Velferdsforskningsinstituttet NOVA, begge ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet. DEMOCIT er finansiert av Norges forskningsråd, og kombinerer forskning om ungdoms demokratiforståelse, demokratiske holdninger og samfunnsdeltakelse med ny kunnskap om undervisning og læreres bruk av lærestoff og metode. Formålet med prosjektet er å utvikle lærerutdanningen slik at alle elever, uavhengig av ulikheter i bakgrunn, kan få styrket evne og vilje til demokratisk deltakelse og tro på at slik deltakelse nytter. Du kan lese mer om bakgrunn, formål og forskningsspørsmålene i DEMOCIT på https://www.oslomet.no/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/demokrati-lering-mobilisering-unge-medborgere

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Ditt barns lærer i samfunnsfag, NAVN, har sagt ja til å delta i studien og alle elevene i klasse TALL ved NAVN skole vil dermed bli spurt om delta. Deltagelse for lærer og elever ved skolen er også godkjent av rektor ved skolen, NAVN, NUMMER.

Hva innebærer det for ditt barn å delta?

I løpet av studien skal det samles inn data i to former: Observasjon, og intervjuer.

Observasjon vil foregå ved at forskeren er til stede i perioder av undervisningen i samfunnsfag og norsk. Under observasjonen vil det bli tatt notater. Det vil også være aktuelt å gjøre lydopptak av elevene når de jobber i grupper. Det blir ikke registrert noen persondata om elevene.

Intervjuene vil skje i gruppeform sammen med andre elever fra klassen. Intervjuene vil foregå i en skoletime innenfor vanlig skoletid, etter avtale med elevenes lærer. Forsker vil gjøre lydopptak, filme og ta notater fra intervjuene. Elevintervjuene kommer til å handle om elevenes opplevelser med å jobbe i grupper og samarbeide i undervisningen. Forsker ønsker også å spørre elevene om deres erfaringer med å arbeide med politiske temaer, og om de opplever å ha god forståelse og selvtillit i dette arbeidet. Her vil elevene få bruke konkrete eksempler fra egen undervisning. Forsker ønsker også å snakke med elevene om hvordan de tenker at undervisningen kunne formes for at de skal oppleve forståelse og selvtillit i møte med politiske temaer, og hvorfor de tenker det de gjør.

Foresatte vil naturligvis få se intervjuguide på forhånd ved å ta kontakt med ansvarlig forsker.

Innsamling av særlige kategorier av personopplysninger

Studien handler om ungdoms egen forståelse av sin evne til å delta i et demokratisk samfunn, og om hvordan man i samfunnsfag kan bruke bestemte metoder for å styrke disse evnene. Innsamlingen av data kan derfor gi forskeren innsyn i elevers holdninger til politiske, filosofiske eller religiøse spørsmål som tas opp på skolen. Hvis slike opplysninger kommer frem i intervjuet, ønsker jeg å ta med dette i min datainnsamling.

Det   er   frivillig   å   delta
Det er frivillig for barna å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å gi ditt barn tillatelse til å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle personopplysninger som gjelder ditt barn, vil da bli slettet fra prosjektet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg eller ditt barn hvis du ikke vil la ditt barn delta eller senere velger å trekke ditt barn fra forskningsprosjektet, og det vil ikke påvirke ditt eller ditt barns forhold til læreren eller til skolen.

Ditt barns personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker data

Opplysningene om barnet ditt vil bare kunne bli brukt til formålene omtalt i dette skrivet. Opplysningene behandles konfidensielt og i samsvar med norsk personvernregelverk.

Behandlingsansvaret for dataene vil ligge hos stipendiat Eva Kosberg. I databehandlingen vil ditt barns personopplysninger (navn, skole) bli erstattet med en kode som oppbevares adskilt fra øvrige data. Lyd-, bildefiler og notater vil bli lagret i Tjeneste for sensitive data (TSD) https://www.uio.no/tjenester/it/forskning/sensitiv/mer-om/ som brukes til all lagring av data fra DEMOCIT. TSD krever totrinnsautorisering for tilgang.

Det er også Eva Kosberg som vil arbeide med dataene fra intervjuene. I tillegg vil hennes veiledere kunne få innsyn i dataene. Dette er Anders G. Kjøstvedt (LUI, OsloMet, mobil: 67 23 76 25, e-post: Anders.Kjostvedt@oslomet.no) og May Britt Postholm (Institutt for lærerutdanning, NTNU, mobil: 73598192, e-post: may.britt.postholm@ntnu.no).

I publikasjoner fra prosjektet vil verken skole eller enkeltpersoner kunne gjenkjennes.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når doktoravhandlingen er godkjent, noe som etter planen er august 2023. Da vil observasjonsjonsnotater, utskrifter fra intervjuer, og anonymiserte lydfiler fra undervisning og intervjuer arkiveres hos Norsk senter for forskningsdata, (NSD). Ved å lagre anonymiserte data etter prosjektslutt ønsker vi å gjøre datamaterialet i DEMOCIT tilgjengelig for fremtidig forskning. Slik bruk av materialet vil imidlertid kreve søknad om tilgang, slik at materialet ikke vil ligge åpent i NSDs arkiver. Materialet vil bli lagret i fem år etter prosjektslutt. Videodata vil bli slettet ved prosjektets slutt.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge ditt barn kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om ditt barn, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om ditt barn,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om ditt barn, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av ditt barns personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om ditt barn?

Opplysninger om ditt barn behandles basert på ditt skriftlige samtykke. NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS har vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter til innsyn eller sletting av data, ta kontakt med:

Ansvarlig for studien: Eva Kosberg, e-post evako@oslomet.no, tlf. 95 88 63 06.

Personvernombud ved OsloMet: Ingrid Jacobsen, e-post ingrid.jacobsen@oslomet.no, tlf. 67 23 55 34/993 02 316

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD-vurderingen av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Eva Kosberg, Stipendiat, Institutt for grunnskole- og faglærerutdanning, OsloMet

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Samtykkeerklæring

Følgende erklæring signeres av foresatt og elev. Den kan leveres på følgende måter:

a) fotograferes med mobilkamera og sendes som MMS eller på e-post til forsker og ansvarlig for datainnsamlingen Eva Kosberg (mob. 95 88 63 06, e-post evako@oslomet.no)

b) leveres av eleven til lærer (navn på lærer) på skolen

Samtykke må leveres med en av disse fremgangsmåtene innen (dato).

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om forskningsprosjektet, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker med dette til mitt barns deltagelse, som innebærer:

Mitt barn kan bli intervjuet på tidspunkt som avtales med lærer. I intervjuet kan elevers holdning til politiske, filosofiske eller religiøse spørsmål komme frem, slik dette aktualiseres av undervisningen i samfunnsfag.

Mitt barn kan observeres som del av undervisningen i samfunnsfag og norsk.

Opplysninger om mitt barn kan behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

Opplysninger om mitt barn kan lagres i anonymisert form i en periode på fem år etter prosjektets slutt.

Sett tydelig kryss:

 Ja

 Nei

Sted, dato

Elev

Foresatt

Appendix 3: Information letter to students

Vil du delta i et forskningsprosjekt om demokrati?

Koronasituasjonen. Klimakrisen. 22. juli. Valget i USA. Alt dette er eksempler på politiske temaer som du både lærer om på skolen, og som på ulike måter kan påvirke ditt liv. I et demokrati er det viktig at alle innbyggerne kan delta i diskusjonen om disse temaene, og at vi kan engasjere oss for å påvirke, hvis vi ønsker det.

I de neste månedene vil jeg som forsker være sammen med dere i klasse XX ved XX skole. Det jeg sammen med dere ønsker å utforske, er hvordan dere opplever å arbeide med politiske temaer når dere jobber i grupper, og om dere tenker at det blir lettere å diskutere politiske temaer gjennom at måten dere arbeider på, endres noe. Jeg vil utforske dette både gjennom å være til stede i klasserommet, og gjennom intervjuer. Disse intervjuene skal gjøres i små grupper, og vi vil snakke om hva dere tenker om undervisningen, både når det kommer til hvordan dere synes det er å jobbe med politiske temaer, og hvordan det er å jobbe med slike temaer i mindre grupper i klassen. Intervjuene vil foregå i skoletiden, i grupper som læreren din har satt opp.

Din lærer i samfunnsfag og norsk, NAVN, har sagt ja til å delta, og dermed får alle elevene i klassen spørsmål om dere vil bli med. Jeg håper at akkurat du sier ja! Videre i dette brevet kan du lese mer om prosjektet og hva det innebærer for deg å være med.

Foreldrene dine har også fått et brev med informasjon om prosjektet. I foreldrebrevet ligger det et eget skjema, hvor både du og foreldrene dine må signere om du skal delta i forskningsprosjektet.

Om forskningsprosjektet

Det er Institutt for lærerutdanning og internasjonalisering (LUI) ved OsloMet som har ansvar for prosjektet. LUI og Velferdsforskningsinstituttet NOVA samarbeider om et stort forskningsprosjekt, som har fått navnet DEMOCIT. I DEMOCIT jobber det flere forskere, som på ulike måter arbeider med å finne ut hvordan alle elever kan bli like gode i tema som gjelder demokrati, slik at alle har lik mulighet til å være med og bestemme i samfunnet. Alt dette skal brukes til å gjøre lærerutdanningen på OsloMet bedre enn den er i dag. Hvis du deltar i forskningsprosjektet, hjelper du altså til med å gjøre undervisningen i skolen bedre. DEMOCIT har egne nettsider, og du kan lese mer om det her: https://www.oslomet.no/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/demokrati-lering-mobilisering-unge-medborgere. Det er Norges Forskningsråd som betaler for at prosjektet kan gjennomføres.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du sier ja til å bli intervjuet, vil du bli intervjuet i en gruppe sammen med andre elever fra klassen din i løpet av en vanlig skoletime. Intervjuet skjer i et eget rom, for eksempel et grupperom eller et ledig klasserom på skolen. Forskeren avtaler med læreren din når intervjuet skal skje, og du vil få beskjed fra læreren din på forhånd. I selve intervjuet stiller forskeren spørsmål som dere kan snakke om. Flere elever kan gjerne svare på det samme spørsmålet, og det gjør ingenting hvis dere har forskjellige meninger og vil diskutere. Forskeren vil gjøre video- og lydopptak og ta notater fra intervjuene.

I tillegg til å gjøre intervjuer, vil forskeren gjerne observere klassen når dere har undervisning i samfunnsfag og norsk. Da vil hun ta notater underveis. I tillegg vil hun gjøre lydopptak av noen enkelttimer hvor dere arbeider i grupper.

Det er frivillig å delta
Du velger selv om du vil si ja til å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst ombestemme deg uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alt forskeren vet om deg i prosjektet, vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg eller for læreren din hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg fra prosjektet. Deltagelse i forskningsprosjektet vil heller ikke ha noen innvirkning på din lærers vurdering av deg i noen fag.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Forskeren vil bare bruke det hun får vite om deg og det du forteller i intervjuet på de måtene som hun har fortalt om i dette brevet. All informasjon om deg blir behandlet uten at noen andre får vite noe om deg, slik det norske personvernregelverket har bestemt at det skal gjøres. Når forskeren siden skal skrive forskningsrapporter og artikler fra dette prosjektet, vil ingen kunne kjenne igjen deg, læreren din eller skolen din i det hun skriver.

Forskeren som er på skolen din og som kommer til å arbeide med intervjuene etterpå, er Eva Kosberg som arbeider på OsloMet. Du kan ringe eller skrive e-post til henne hvis du har spørsmål om prosjektet, eller du kan snakke med henne før intervjuene. Du finner kontaktopplysningene mine til slutt i dette brevet.

I tillegg vil veilederne hennes kunne få innsyn i dataene. Dette er Anders G. Kjøstvedt (som jobber ved lærerutdanningen på OsloMet, mobil: 67 23 76 25, e-post: Anders.Kjostvedt@oslomet.no) og May Britt Postholm (som jobber ved lærerutdanningen på NTNU i Trondheim, mobil: 73598192, e-post: may.britt.postholm@ntnu.no).

Hva skjer med dataene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Alt forskeren vet om deg anonymiseres når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes i 2023. Det betyr at alle opplysninger som gjør at du kan gjenkjennes fjernes, både fra utskrifter og notater fra intervjuer og observasjon. Lydfilene vil også bli anonymisert, slik at det ikke går an å gjenkjenne hvem det er som snakker.

De anonymiserte utskriftene, notatene og lydfilene vil bli arkivert hos Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD). Slik kan andre forskere få forske videre på datamaterialet etter at vårt prosjekt er slutt, men de vil ikke få vite hvem du er. Videodata blir slettet når prosjektet avsluttes.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge det er mulig å kjenne deg igjen i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,

- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata har sagt at måten jeg behandler data på i dette prosjektet, er riktig og i tråd med det norske personvernregelverket.

Hvis du vil spørre om noe eller du først har sagt ja til å være med og deretter ombestemmer deg, ta kontakt med meg på e-post evako@oslomet.no, eller mobil 95 88 63 06. Du kan også kontakte OsloMet sitt personvernombud Ingrid Jacobsen på e-post ingrid.jacobsen@oslomet.no, eller telefon 67 23 55 34/993 02 316.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Eva Kosberg

Stipendiat, institutt for faglærer- og grunnskoleutdanning, OsloMet

Appendix 4: Information letter to teacher

Vil du delta i et forskningsprosjekt om demokrati i skolen?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å utvikle kunnskap om hvordan vi i skolen kan arbeide med å fremme elevenes politiske mestringstro. I dette skrivet får du informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Norske skoleelever kan mye om demokrati, og de er også positive til demokratiet som styringsform. Samtidig sier mange at de selv ikke planlegger å delta, fordi de mener at de ikke kan nok om politikk, eller fordi de føler at de ikke er kompetente nok. Studien du inviteres inn i, er et doktorgradsprosjekt som skal undersøke hvordan vi kan styrke elevers tro på sin egen evne til å delta i demokratiet, gjennom bruk av metoder i undervisningen som kan fremme samarbeid mellom elevene. Målet er at elevene skal oppleve mestring i møte med politiske temaer, som koronasituasjonen, klimakrisen, 22. juli eller valget i USA.

En forsker vil i perioder følge klassen i andre halvdel av 8. klasse (vår2021) og i første halvdel av 9. klasse (høst2021). Anonymiserte resultater fra prosjektet skal brukes til å utvikle samfunnsfaglærerutdanningen ved OsloMet - storbyuniversitetet, og vil inngå i planarbeid og undervisning der. Det vil også bli utgitt rapporter og forskningsartikler hvor anonymiserte forskningsresultater fra prosjektet brukes som data. Disse rapportene og artiklene kan leses og brukes av alle.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Institutt for lærerutdanning og internasjonalisering (LUI) ved OsloMet er ansvarlig institusjon for doktorgradsarbeidet. Avhandlingen er knyttet til prosjektet DEMOCIT (NSD-meldingsnummer 771476), som er et samarbeid mellom LUI og Velferdsforskningsinstituttet NOVA, begge ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet.

Studien er en del av forskningsprosjektet DEMOCIT. Her kombineres utforskning av ungdoms demokratiforståelse, demokratiske holdninger og samfunnsdeltakelse med forskning om didaktikk og læreres praksis. Formålet er å utvikle lærerutdanningen slik at alle elever, uavhengig av ulikheter i bakgrunn, kan utvikle evne og vilje til demokratisk deltakelse og tro på at slik deltakelse nytter. DEMOCIT vil dermed styrke det tverrfaglige temaet *demokrati og medborgerskap* i lærerutdanningen ved å finne ut hvordan ungdoms egne livs- og hverdagserfaringer kan gjøres mer relevante i undervisningen. Forskningsprosjektet DEMOCIT har egne nettsider, hvor du kan lese mer om bakgrunn, formål og forskningsspørsmålene i prosjektet   https://www.oslomet.no/forskning/forskningsprosjekter/demokrati-lering-mobilisering-unge-medborgere

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du blir invitert til å delta i studien fordi rektor ved din skole har anbefalt ansvarlig forsker å ta kontakt med deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Forskningsprosjektet innbefatter innføring av en undervisningsmetode kjent som samarbeidslæring. Dette innebærer at gruppearbeid rundt politiske temaer som skal arbeides med i klassen, struktureres slik at elevene er gjensidig avhengige av hverandre. I tillegg forutsetter metoden en refleksjonsprosess for elevene mtp. deres rolle og potensial i arbeidet. Det finnes mange ulike teknikker som kan brukes. Jeg som forsker, vil bidra med innsikt i disse og teoretisk bakgrunn for metoden. Men, det er du som lærer som kjenner dine elever best, både som individer og som gruppe, og det er også du som best kjenner fagene du underviser i. Det er dermed opp til deg hvordan dette best kan brukes inn i de konkrete øktene. Jeg vil også gjerne få observere deg og elevene dine i klasserommet både før, underveis og etter at samarbeidslæringen er tatt i bruk, og jeg ønsker å intervjue elevene ang. deres opplevelse av den prosessen som forskningsprosjektet innebærer. Elevene og foreldrene deres får et eget informasjonsskriv om dette.

Det   er   frivillig   å   delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg eller for skolen hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med norsk personvernregelverk.

Behandlingsansvaret for dataene vil ligge hos stipendiat Eva Kosberg. I databehandlingen vil opplysninger om deg (navn, skole) bli erstattet med en kode som oppbevares adskilt fra øvrige data. Lyd-, bildefiler og notater vil bli lagret i Tjeneste for sensitive data (TSD) https://www.uio.no/tjenester/it/forskning/sensitiv/mer-om/ som brukes til all lagring av data fra DEMOCIT. TSD krever totrinnsautorisering for tilgang.

Det er også Eva Kosberg som vil arbeide med dataene fra intervjuene. I tillegg vil hennes veiledere kunne få innsyn i dataene. Dette er Anders G. Kjøstvedt (LUI, OsloMet, mobil: 67 23 76 25, e-post: Anders.Kjostvedt@oslomet.no) og May Britt Postholm (Institutt for lærerutdanning, NTNU, mobil: 73598192, e-post: may.britt.postholm@ntnu.no).

I publikasjoner fra prosjektet vil verken skole eller enkeltpersoner kunne gjenkjennes.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når doktoravhandlingen er godkjent, noe som etter planen er august 2023. Da vil observasjonsjonsnotater, utskrifter fra intervjuer, og anonymiserte lydfiler fra undervisning og intervjuer arkiveres hos Norsk senter for forskningsdata, (NSD). Ved å lagre anonymiserte data etter prosjektslutt ønsker vi å gjøre datamaterialet i DEMOCIT tilgjengelig for fremtidig forskning. Slik bruk av materialet vil imidlertid kreve søknad om tilgang, slik at materialet ikke vil ligge åpent i NSDs arkiver. Materialet vil bli lagret i fem år etter prosjektslutt. Videodata vil bli slettet ved prosjektets slutt.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss lov til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Jeg behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke. NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter til innsyn eller sletting av data, ta kontakt med:

Prosjektansvarlig, stipendiat Eva Kosberg, e-post evako@oslomet.no, tlf. 95 88 63 06.

OsloMets personvernombud: Ingrid Jacobsen, e-post ingrid.jacobsen@oslomet.no, tlf. +47 67 23 55 34/+47 993 02 316

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD-vurderingen av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Eva Kosberg,

Stipendiat

Institutt for grunnskole- og faglærerutdanning, Oslomet

Samtykkeerklæring

Følgende erklæring signeres, fotograferes med mobilkamera og sendes som MMS eller på e-post til forsker og ansvarlig for datainnsamlingen Eva Kosberg (mob. 95 88 63 06, e-post evako@oslomet.no)

Samtykke må leveres med en av disse fremgangsmåtene innen (dato).

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om forskningsprosjektet, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Mitt samtykke innebærer:

- Å delta i forskningsprosjektets utviklingsdel sammen med forsker
- Å la forsker observere undervisningen i min klasse TALL for periode som avtales mellom meg og forsker
- At opplysninger om meg kan behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet
- At opplysninger om meg kan lagres i anonymisert form i en periode på fem år etter prosjektets slutt

Sett tydelig kryss:

JA

NEI

Sted/dato/prosjektdeltaker

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Article 1

Kosberg, E., & Grevle, T. E. (2022). Review of international civic and citizenship survey data analyses of student political efficacy. In S. Wiksten & R. Desjardins (Eds.), *Handbook on civic engagement and education* (pp. 234–246).

17. Review of International Civic and Citizenship Study data analyses of student political efficacy[1]

Eva Kosberg and Tessa Eriksen Grevle

The issue of democratic participation has received increased attention in light of the recent decline in voter turnout (Blais and Rubenson, 2012; Gray and Caul, 2020; Solijonov, 2016). Similarly, Putnam (2000) describes a more general disengagement from political involvement, including attendance at public meetings, service on committees, and membership of political parties (Biezen, Mair, and Poguntke, 2012). At the same time, Europe has seen the rise of authoritarian right-wing populist parties in countries including France, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Sweden (Norris and Ingleheart, 2019). Other countries are run by authoritarian leaders who threaten pre-existing democratic structures by not accepting the opposition (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018), and the citizens of a number of countries, such as Poland, Turkey, and Venezuela, have experienced the removal of some of their individual rights (Neuman, 2020).

As a consequence, it is crucial to study how participatory democracy works and can be supported in practice, to counteract authoritarian political tendencies. This is especially true for adolescents, as their participation will shape the future of democracy. A number of factors help to explain what supports young people's decisions to participate in politics, such as socio-economic background, motivation, and political efficacy (Sohl and Arensmeier, 2015). This chapter aims to advance the understanding of political efficacy as one of these factors, by drawing attention to the relationship between adolescents' sense of political efficacy and the potential impact education can make.

In this literature review, we examine 193 articles that analyze the data from either or both cycles of the International Civic and Citizenship Study of 2009 and 2016 in order to develop and clarify findings concerning both education and political efficacy. How schools should focus on and work to support democratic participation remains only vaguely articulated. Our aim is to help fill this gap, firstly, by summarizing the trends that emerged from our comparison of research articles that explore both adolescents' reported levels of political efficacy and connections to school, and then, by describing how efficacy variables are interpreted and treated in the reviewed research articles.

A key finding is that the reviewed articles express a clear consensus throughout. Articles that both expanded on the ICCS and explored efficacy underscored the importance of schools focusing on increasing adolescents' sense of political efficacy, owing to its positive correlation with the enablement of their future engagement. Ironically, we found little research that considers the level of political efficacy a key point or that seeks to expand on ICCS efficacy variables as a starting point for qualitative research. Consequently, we conclude that there is a need for more research to further explore the results of the ICCS, through in-depth qualitative research and/or by treating efficacy as the primary research focus.

RESEARCH FRAME

Educating for Political Efficacy

In political science, there has been a longstanding focus on exploring political efficacy's role in explaining political participation. The research of Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) on mechanisms behind voting behavior, provides an early definition of political efficacy.

> The feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one's civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change. (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187)

Since Balch (1974), there has been a tendency to distinguish between the two aspects of internal and external political efficacy. While internal political efficacy is about one's own belief in one's ability to master participation in political life, external efficacy is about the degree to which one feels that the political system can be influenced (Balch, 1974; Vecchione et al., 2014). There has been debate about whether this distinction is reasonable, as these measures are often correlated (Craig, 1979). Notwithstanding, more recent research suggests that treating the two dimensions of political efficacy separately provides a better way of elucidating the concepts, which is why the term political efficacy should focus on the internal aspects of efficacy (Beaumont, 2011; Sohl and Arensmeier, 2015). Accordingly, our interpretation of political efficacy refers to internal aspects only.

Previous research has shown that political efficacy contributes to various forms of expected political participation, in addition to mediating the effect of knowledge on actual political participation (Eckstein, Noack, and Gniewosz, 2013; Reichert, 2016; Vecchione et al., 2014). It is thus no wonder that numerous factors that can influence individual political efficacy have been identified, such as political participation itself, the occurrence of preferred outcomes, participation in small-scale democratic decision-making, identification with a group, and finally, experiences in school (Levy, 2011). To understand the mechanisms of *how* this happens, we will turn our attention to psychologists' use of the term "efficacy".

Albert Bandura has conducted extensive work on the concept of efficacy as a central part of human psychology, and his social cognitive theory has strong potential to explain what the school's civic education role could entail (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitive theory describes how people's beliefs about their capabilities are a central and pervasive determinant of human motivation, affect, and action. Similarly, the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) understands perceived behavioral control as part of predicting and explaining human behavior. For our purpose, the important aspect is to what extent the belief in one's ability to master a specific task affects one's level of engagement, and participation in particular. This aspect is also applicable when considering the relationship between expected and actual participation, as research shows that young people who expect to participate as adults are more likely to actually do so (Eckstein et al., 2013).

Insights from psychological definitions of efficacy highlight how efficacy can be influenced, for example, through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, or physiological or affective states (Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, the learning context is shown to positively influence the students' sense of internal political efficacy (Beaumont, 2011), notably through learning experiences that contribute to increasing their political skills (Beaumont,

2011). Research shows (Pasek, Feldman, Romer, and Jamieson, 2008) that political discussion in the classroom and at work, related to solving problems in the local community, increases students' political efficacy. Likewise, social learning experiences, such as political role play, lead to students experiencing increased efficacy (Levy, 2018). In addition, political efficacy can serve as a mediator, strengthening the effect of factors such as knowledge or media use on democratic participation (Jung, Kim, and de Zúñiga, 2011; Pasek et al., 2008; Reichert, 2016).

THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP STUDY

The ICCS is a large-scale international survey that maps the level of civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic engagement of 14-year-old adolescents. Building on similar studies, such as the Civic Education Study (CIVED) in 1999, the design and the assessment framework have been progressively developed into a comprehensive quantitative study with a complex methodological design. ICCS data allow for comparisons within and between countries. The study has been carried out twice, in 2009 and in 2016, and a third cycle is planned for 2022 (Schulz, Ainley et al., 2018).

In 2009, adolescents' sense of political efficacy was measured using the two constructs "internal political efficacy" (INPOLEF) and "citizenship self-efficacy" (CITEFF). The first considers general capacity for political participation through questions regarding global statements, in line with the traditional manner of measuring internal political efficacy (Craig, 1979; Craig and Maggiotto, 1982; Niemi, Craig, and Mattei, 1991; Vecchione et al., 2014). Citizenship self-efficacy, on the other hand, is a more recently developed construct and measures perceived self-confidence regarding specific tasks related to civic participation (Schulz et al., 2016). Both variables were mapped as part of the ICCS student questionnaire, *students' civic related self-beliefs*, together with a third variable, namely *students' interest in political and social issues*. The six questions that mapped internal political efficacy asked students to rate their sense of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

1. I know more about politics than most people my age.
2. When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say.
3. I am able to understand most political issues easily.
4. I have political opinions worth listening to.
5. As an adult, I will be able to take part in politics.
6. I have a good understanding of the political issues facing this country. (Schulz, Ainley, and Fraillon, 2011, pp. 177–179)

The construct mapping citizenship self-efficacy, on the other hand, asked students to rate how well they would perform activities by choosing between four evaluation categories, and asked them to assess how well they would perform the following actions:

1. Discuss a newspaper article about a conflict between countries.
2. Argue your point of view about a controversial political or social issue.
3. Stand as a candidate in a school election.
4. Organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school.
5. Follow a television debate about a controversial issue.
6. Write a letter to a newspaper giving your view on a current issue. (Schulz et al., 2011, pp. 177–179)

In 2016, citizenship self-efficacy was the only construct that mapped efficacy, as the internal political efficacy variable was removed from the questionnaire. Citizenship self-efficacy was now categorized within *students' dispositions toward civic engagement* together with the construct *willingness to participate in school activities* (Schulz, Carstens, Losito, and Fraillon, 2018). This indicates that efficacy was understood slightly differently in 2016, as a disposition. In comparison, in 2009, it was categorized as a self-belief. Even so, the citizenship self-efficacy construct was measured in the same way in 2016 as in 2009, only the phrase *and email* was added to question 6, and a new action was added, namely, *(7) speak in front of your class about a social or political issue*.

We have chosen to consistently refer to the names of the ICCS variables discussed in the various articles, irrespective of which concept the authors have used to describe the variables included in their text. This is done in order to make it easier to communicate a comparative analysis of the content in our selected material. We use the broader term *political efficacy* as an overarching term when it is not appropriate or useful to link content specifically to just one of the ICCS efficacy constructs.

METHOD

Although this is a narrative literature review, the method of identifying the relevant articles has been systematic (Bryman, 2008). We developed the search phrase "ICCS 2009" OR "ICCS 2016" OR "International Citizenship and Civic Education Study" and applied this, both in English and in Spanish, using the databases Web of Science, ERIC, Idunn, NORART, the Danish National Research Database, BASE, and Scielo. The search concluded in January 2021. We found 193 articles and sorted their abstracts according to the inclusion criteria of whether one or both of the measures of efficacy were examined in relation to education. We read 58 of them thoroughly to ensure that we were able to identify all the relevant articles. Both the abstracts and the articles were read and sorted separately, using a categorization scheme to single out the factors included in the texts. After this step, we discussed the texts we had sorted differently until we reached consensus on which articles to include.

This process led to the final selection of 27 articles. At this point, a second reading was required to identify the categories by which efficacy was understood, used, and analyzed, as our first categorization had focused on identifying the use of efficacy as part of the texts, not delving into the details of how this was done. Hence the last step was to develop new categories and reread the full version of the 27 relevant articles in order to fill in a new schema that could help to pinpoint the emerging trends in the material. The interpretation and framing of efficacy varied, which meant we needed to map both how the efficacy variables were used, categorized, and analyzed, and to what extent this was theoretically explained.

POLITICAL EFFICACY IN ARTICLES ANALYZING ICCS DATA

In this section, we describe the trends identified concerning education and efficacy. Out of the 27 selected articles, 17 articles dealt with the results from the first cycle of the ICCS in 2009, four considered the cycle in 2016, and only one compared the results from both cycles. All but one understood efficacy in line with the framework and results of the ICCS, in terms

of the questions used to measure the variables of internal political efficacy and citizenship self-efficacy.

The reviewed articles showed that political efficacy has a clear influence on political participation. For example, research on Irish students (Gilleece and Cosgrove, 2012) shows that adolescents with higher levels of internal political efficacy also have higher levels of civic participation at school. García-Cabrero, Pérez-Martínez, Sandoval-Hernández, Caso-Niebla, and Díaz (2016) found that, for adolescents in Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, citizenship self-efficacy is one of the most influential predictors of expected participation in legal protests, while internal political efficacy was among the most important predictors of expected electoral participation (García-Cabrero et al., 2016). Similar correlations, in which the level of efficacy is highlighted as key to explaining expected political participation, are also found in Norway (Ødegård and Svagård, 2018), Italy (Manganelli, Alivernini, Lucidi, and Di Leo, 2012; Manganelli, Lucidi, and Alivernini, 2014), Chile (Martínez, Cumsille, Loyola, and Castillo, 2020) and in several Asian societies (Kuang and Kennedy, 2018). Blaskó, da Costa, and Vera-Toscano (2019) studied the results of the 2016 cycle of the ICCS for 13 European countries. They show that citizenship self-efficacy is a predictor of traditional forms of political engagement, such as electoral participation. Research on the school's role in influencing expected political participation in 31 countries found that adolescents' attitudes and expected participation depend on citizenship self-efficacy (Isac, Maslowski, Creemers, and van der Werf, 2014).

Given the clear connection between efficacy and expected participation, it is not surprising that several of the articles recommend that schools should focus on enabling students' sense of efficacy (Blaskó et al., 2019; Claes, Maurissen, and Havermans, 2017; Gilleece and Cosgrove, 2012; Ødegård and Svagård, 2018; Martínez et al., 2020; Knowles and McCafferty-Wright, 2015). Isac et al. (2014) investigate whether different national curriculum systems and the quality of the education the students received were related to the adolescents' civic learning. The authors found that schools have little influence on civic attitudes and intended civic behavior, while out-of-school activities and the students' individual characteristics were highly influential explanatory factors. They argue that the main emphasis of civic education in schools is on civic knowledge, while less attention is paid to aspects such as attitudes. Isac et al. (2014) observe that while civic knowledge is positively related to variables such as gender, ambition, immigrant and socio-economic status, attitudes and expected behavior are mainly explained by students' sense of citizenship self-efficacy and interest in political and social issues. Consequently, if the ambition of schools is to educate adolescents to be engaged citizens, the research evidence appears to indicate that they should generally shift their focus to increasing adolescents' interest and efficacy.

Moreover, the analysis by Blaskó et al. (2019), on how education can lead to different types of political participation in 13 European countries, concludes that civic learning, school democracy, and active community involvement can all promote different types of political participation. Blaskó et al. (2019) observe that there is a possibility that citizenship self-efficacy enables student participation at school, which may enable more positive attitudes towards democracy (Blaskó et al., 2019).

This is substantiated by the findings of Maurissen (2020), who shows how three different teaching methods – classroom discussions, student participation, and civic learning – are clearly related to expected political participation. Hoskins, Saisana, and Villalba (2021) also observe a direct and significant connection between an open classroom climate and in-school

civic participation on, among other aspects, citizenship self-efficacy. They also find that peers' positive experience of a participatory school community positively affects the individual student's sense of citizenship self-efficacy. Meanwhile, Maurissen (2020) shows that both political interest and citizenship self-efficacy have a mediating effect on the relationship between citizenship education and future political participation. Maurissen (2020) and Knowles and McCafferty-Wright (2015) are, as far as we can see, the only articles that explore the role of political efficacy as a mediator between education and political participation, and which thus clearly demonstrate how schools' work on enabling efficacy can influence the students' expected political participation.

Notwithstanding, the majority of the articles on the role of schools in enabling adolescents' political participation did not focus on efficacy, but on an open classroom climate. There is a clear connection between perceptions of the classroom climate and expected political participation, which shows that students' individual perceptions of the classroom climate are positively related to their intentions to be political participants as adults (Blaskó et al., 2019).

However, a study based on ICCS data from five Asian societies shows that there is a general positive association between student perceptions of an open classroom climate and their political efficacy (Kuang, Kennedy, and Mok, 2018). Correspondingly, two articles based on data from several European countries also find a positive association between an open classroom climate and political efficacy, and these similar findings indicate a trend that underscores the importance of studying these two constructs in combination (Claes et al., 2017; Knowles and McCafferty, 2015). Correspondingly, students in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) who report that they perceive their classroom climate as open, on average, have greater civic knowledge, more positive attitudes towards democracy, and the highest levels of political efficacy (Reichert, Chen, and Torney-Purta, 2018). McCafferty-Wright and Knowles (2016), who also demonstrate the connection between an open classroom climate and political efficacy in their research, use this finding as the starting point for creating a checklist for teachers wishing to examine their own classroom environment, and a sample lesson plan illustrating how elements of an open classroom climate can be employed in the classroom.

At the same time, it has been shown that Scandinavian students, who often perceive their classroom climate as open, also report low internal political efficacy (Lieberkind, 2015). A possible explanation for this is that, as a consequence of a long-term, stable democracy, students in Scandinavia do not experience the need to participate as being as urgent as students from countries such as Italy and Greece, which have more recently transitioned to democracy. Teachers in Scandinavia might also prioritize critical thinking and students developing their sense of autonomy, making them capable of, and possibly more prone to, criticizing the existing political system (Hoskins et al., 2015). This is interesting seen in light of Toots and Idnurm's results (2016), which demonstrate that in countries with a comparatively high proportion of underperforming students, such as Bulgaria and Cyprus, the low achievers participate in a more scattered way compared with countries with a lower level of underperforming students such as Finland and Denmark, where more of the underperforming students choose not to participate at all.

Kuang and Kennedy (2018) also discuss how culture can influence young people's political participation by showing how students' citizenship self-efficacy and internal political efficacy are positively related to various forms of political participation. In their study on Asian students, they show that more radical forms of participation are perceived as too extreme. Kuang

and Kennedy (2018) discuss whether this can, in part, be explained in the Asian context by a common cultural trait emphasizing social harmony (see also Kennedy and Li, 2016; Kuang and Kennedy, 2020). The school's location in a given cultural framework, and how this affects students' understanding of democracy and their civic role and associated democratic self-esteem, is thus an important field for further exploration (Kuang et al., 2018).

A final aspect that should be discussed when it comes to school and youth efficacy is how students' socio-economic backgrounds are often related to expected political participation. It is a common finding that weak socio-economic status is associated with a lower likelihood of democratic participation (Gilleece and Cosgrove, 2012; Hoskins et al., 2015; Isac et al., 2014; Manganelli et al., 2014; Knowles and McCafferty-Wright, 2015), in addition to it also being associated with a perception of the classroom climate as less open (Claes et al., 2017). Hoskins, Huang, and Arensmeier (2021) demonstrate that there are differences between student groups with different socio-economic status in their access to civic learning. However, when students are given access to civic learning, it enhances civic competence, of which citizenship self-efficacy is a central element. Interestingly, students with low socio-economic status learn more in school about aspects such as the importance of voting than their peers from a more privileged background (Hoskins et al., 2021). If there was any doubt about whether studying the school's role in enhancing adolescents' efficacy is worthwhile, this should hopefully dispel these doubts, as working to reduce the participation gap between different social groups and recognizing the possibility for all groups to participate are vital aspects of democracy (Knowles and McCafferty-Wright, 2015).

Although the majority of the reviewed articles understood efficacy as an aspect to be taken into consideration when discussing civic education and political participation among adolescents, we observed substantial variation in how the efficacy variables are operationalized, understood, and used in the research. Moreover, the articles that deal with efficacy rarely contextualize their analysis in such a way that the content expands on the other articles. In the following section, we describe various operationalizations of efficacy to illustrate that while plurality is positive, meaning that the understanding of efficacy rests on a richly diverse ground, it also makes it challenging to interpret the various studies within the context of a common framework and hence to identify common trends.

While Toots and Idnurm (2016) understand internal political efficacy as part of behavioral intentions, Kennedy and Li (2016) treat both internal political efficacy and citizenship self-efficacy as part of their categories of individual student values and dispositions. Blaskò et al. (2019) analyze citizenship self-efficacy as one aspect of civic assets, the other being civic knowledge. Last but not least, Hoskins et al. (2021) also use both variables and follow Hoskins et al. (2015) in reading efficacy as part of what is framed as participatory attitudes, which contribute to the larger measure of civic competence. In addition, numerous articles treat either internal political efficacy or citizenship self-efficacy, or both, as separate independent variables in their research. An example of this is Manganelli, Lucidi, and Alivernini (2015), who include both internal political efficacy and citizenship self-efficacy as separate independent variables in exploring how efficacy can promote participation in civic activities.

Moreover, political efficacy is counted as an ability of the individual, like gender or socio-economic status (Isac et al., 2014; Quintelier and Hooghe, 2013), or as part of the adolescent's cognitive apparatus in terms of attitudes or beliefs (Hoskins et al., 2015, p. 435, 2021; Kuang and Kennedy, 2020). Claes et al. (2017) measure efficacy both at the individual level and at the school level as a collective phenomenon, while Maurissen, Claes, and Barber

(2018) include neither internal political efficacy nor citizenship self-efficacy in their research on what they term collective efficacy.

Interesting exceptions to the articles treating efficacy as a variable in a quantitative framework are provided by Liljestrand (2012) and Joris and Agirdag (2019), who offer a broader critique of the ICCS. Joris and Agirdag (2019) analyze the ICCS from a normative perspective and find that internal political efficacy is one of few measures in the ICCS that may be associated with how civic education creates individualism and autonomy, referring to Biesta's concept of subjectification (Biesta, 2009). Subsequently, they argue, this shows that even though the development of independent and critical thinkers is regarded as one of the most important goals of civic and citizenship education, this is not sufficiently documented in ICCS questions (Joris and Agirdag, 2019). Liljestrand's (2012) analysis of ICCS data focuses on dialogue in the classroom and calls for centering adolescents' voices to understand both democracy and participation. Liljestrand (2012) uses the understanding of political efficacy in the ICCS as an example of how it employs a predefined understanding of what it means to act politically. Both of these articles demonstrate that vital aspects in the development of adolescents' political efficacy may not be sufficiently documented through the framework of the ICCS.

None of the reviewed articles mention the alteration in which efficacy was reduced from two variables in 2009 to only one variable in the 2016 cycle of the ICCS. In part, this is due to the fact that the majority of articles reviewed examined the results of the 2009 cycle. Nonetheless, this alteration is interesting, as the change in the ICCS framework demonstrates that citizenship self-efficacy continues to be validated while internal political efficacy is removed. This is further illustrated by looking at the CIVED study, in which three constructs were used to measure efficacy (Schulz, 2005). We found it interesting that none of the articles we reviewed mentioned that the citizenship efficacy variable is categorized differently in the first and the second cycle of the ICCS, as this entails an altered contextualization and understanding of efficacy in the technical framework of the ICCS.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of ICCS data provides a unique means of acquiring consistent knowledge of general trends when it comes to the political efficacy of students. This data surpasses country-specific knowledge and research focusing on educational programs designed to teach politics. A large-scale survey such as the ICCS provides an opportunity to test hypotheses on the basis of extensive data material, making it possible to generate general knowledge and to make comparisons between different countries and country groups using a standardized measurement tool (Schulz and Fraillon, 2011). This increases the value of findings that support the link between education and political efficacy, and between political efficacy and expected political participation.

Such knowledge is important, but also insufficient, in explaining all of the connections between education and political efficacy. One example of a limitation in large quantitative studies such as the ICCS is that the nature of the research design creates artificial boundaries between variables. Moreover, the framework of the ICCS and consequently the analysis of the selected articles builds on a separation of factors at the individual and school level. This approach is necessary in order to isolate efficacy at one of those levels but removes the

potential interplay between the school and students' political efficacy, often identified as a student-level factor, from the analysis. Correspondingly, when vital correlations are identified in quantitative studies such as the ICCS, it is likely that clearer insights regarding the direction and nature of the causal relationship can be further developed through qualitative studies. Analyses will also benefit from being clearly connected to a theory, or theories.

A range of different theories were used to frame the research in the reviewed articles. A few articles explained and defended their theoretical interpretation of the concept of efficacy explicitly – the majority, however, did not (for example, see Isac et al., 2014; Kennedy and Li, 2016; Lieberkind, 2015; Reichert et al., 2018). Notable exceptions that articulate political efficacy in a theoretical framework throughout their analysis include Garcia-Cabrero et al. (2016), who understand both variables as part of informed social engagement theory. Another example is provided by Kuang and Kennedy (2018), who treat both variables as part of a *sense of self* in personal investment theory. A handful of the articles use Bandura's social cognitive theory explicitly in their analysis (for examples, see Gilleece and Cosgrove, 2012; Manganelli et al., 2014; Knowles and McCafferty-Wright, 2015). At the same time, many of the articles make brief mention of Bandura (see Hoskins et al., 2021; Toots and Idnurm, 2016), without considering the mechanisms for how political efficacy is shaped, for example, by discussing how the experience of discussing politics in an open classroom climate can help change a student's cognitive understanding of his or her own potential to master political participation. The lack of a common framework in the articles leads us to assume that the development of clear theoretical arguments is one approach that would make it easier to identify the threads in research on political efficacy and the school – and hence enable the development of new knowledge.

Given the potential in the ICCS for further research insights, it is surprising that very few of the articles in our material have used the data as a point of departure for further exploring how efficacy can be influenced by experiences that the school can facilitate. Liljestrand (2012) provides the only example of this, taking a critical approach to the criteria of the efficacy variable in the ICCS, stating that it is a social construct created in a social setting. Accordingly, the nature of a study such as the ICCS requires a static understanding of political participation, omitting the answers and questions that the adolescents themselves would have considered important, as they cannot be found among the predefined answer alternatives provided in the framework of the ICCS.

This critique is relevant to several of the reviewed articles where phrases such as "preparing students to be active citizens" (Kuang and Kennedy, 2018) were used. Another example is the identification of adolescents who intend to participate as "good citizens" (Toots and Idnurm, 2016). These examples imply that students are not (good) citizens until they achieve what has been defined in the school curriculum. In contrast, Mathé (2019), who advocates that educators should build on students' particular interests to support their engagement, provides an example of how qualitative research on student perceptions of democracy brings valuable insight to students' understanding of democracy and its consequences for civic education. Both Mathé (2016, 2019) and Liljestrand (2012) illustrate how qualitative research can be used to examine political efficacy in the future, as they look beyond the constructs of the ICCS in order to map how schools can work purposefully to enhance students' sense of political efficacy and mitigate differences created by socio-economic status.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have reviewed analyses of the findings from ICCS 2009 and 2016 to form a deeper understanding of the connection between education and political efficacy. As a result of our overview and analytical summary, we see a need for further research to consider specific methods of enhancing students' political efficacy, and we recommend further analyses of ICCS data with political efficacy as the dependent variable. Since our findings concur with previous research, according to which political efficacy affects participation in many different fields, it seems appropriate to continue exploring how schools can help to support adolescents' political efficacy, which mitigates differences in participation owing to socio-economic status and adolescents growing up in different cultural contexts. This leads us to recommend that political efficacy should be treated as a main topic in future research, supporting further efforts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the role of schools in supporting civic engagement.

We also recommend further research to explore ICCS data as a starting point for – or together with – qualitative studies. This would support further discourse on, and interpretation of, outcomes from the ICCS survey, and might in practice encourage actions that could be useful for both politicians and others interested in increasing youth political participation. Concretely, this could help to inform everyday practices in schools, and thereby also support teachers and school leaders, as McCafferty-Wright and Knowles (2016) exemplified by exploring how teachers can facilitate an open classroom climate.

It is remarkable that despite the potential impact of efficacy on political participation, it is rarely a focus in research that draws on ICCS study findings. Only a few articles focused on political efficacy as a mediating factor between school and political participation (Maurissen, 2020; Knowles and McCafferty-Wright, 2015), while a few others focused on efficacy as their main research topic.

We also found that student political efficacy was explored in very different ways in terms of how (1) efficacy is understood, (2) which variables efficacy is measured by, and (3) which links are highlighted in research – including efficacy as an aspect affecting political participation. This is positive as it highlights various aspects of efficacy. Results from studies using a variety of methods to analyze the quantitative material from ICCS support the view that political efficacy is important for civic participation. However, the complexity of how political efficacy as a factor has been treated can make it difficult to form a comprehensive and coherent understanding of what efficacy is, and what the role of schools may be in developing political efficacy among students. The summary that we provide in this chapter of how research based on ICCS data uses and understands the concept of political efficacy is thus central, because it opens the door to developing a deeper understanding of the role of civic education in a democratic society.

NOTE

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Article 2

Kosberg, E. Sources of internal political efficacy in the social studies classroom: A qualitative investigation of Norwegian lower secondary students' perceptions. (Manuscript accepted and in review in the journal *Nordidactica*).

Sources of Internal Political Efficacy in the Social Studies Classroom

A Qualitative Investigation of Norwegian Lower Secondary Students' Perceptions

Abstract: This article explores lower secondary students' perceptions of how their experiences in the social studies classroom might affect their sense of internal political efficacy (IPE). The qualitative data underlying the research are group interviews with 13- and 14-year-old Norwegian students, which were analyzed using a constant-comparative method. The students' responses indicate that there are three obstacles to IPE facing the students in the social studies classroom: (1) the reactions of their peers in political discussions, (2) the perception that adolescents are not respected due to their young age, and (3) a view of opinions as fixed and hence unchangeable. The possible solutions given by the students are to work to enhance the level of respect and support that they experience in the classroom, to practice politics through carefully structured discussions, and to work in smaller groups. In analyzing the findings, Albert Bandura's theory of how efficacy develops as a consequence of experiences in a person's environment has been useful. The article also draws on Gert Biesta's framework, describing how one central aim of education is to enable students to function as subjects in a world that brings both possibilities and limitations to their preferred actions. The main implication is that the social studies teacher should aim for critical analysis and raising awareness of different perspectives instead of focusing solely on the student's personal opinions.

Keywords: Internal political efficacy, education for democracy, social studies, political participation

Introduction

Norway has a long history of civic education dating back to the establishment of Nordic social democratic welfare states after the Second World War (Telhaug et al., 2006). The Norwegian Education Act clearly states that one educational objective is to promote democracy (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020), and this trend has intensified with the introduction of *democracy and citizenship* as a cross-curricular theme taught in all subjects in Norwegian schools since 2020 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). This implies great opportunities and responsibilities for educators, who play a central role in providing adolescents with the best possible foundation for taking care of and developing their own democratic society (Held, 2006).

This answers the question of what the schools should do (teach for democracy) but still leaves the question of *how;* how can teachers work in practice to enable young citizens? Comprehensive research shows that internal political efficacy (IPE) is a key factor that can lead to participation in the political sphere (Beaumont, 2011; Reichert, 2016; Torney-Purta, 2002). Correspondingly, this is also true in Norway, where this study is situated (Ødegård & Svagård, 2018; Solhaug, 2006). In addition, there is solid evidence that educational factors, such as active students and an open classroom climate, support student IPE (Isac et al., 2014; Sohl & Arensmeier, 2015).

Nevertheless, exceptions do exist concerning the connection between education and IPE. Several studies based on data from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016 show that there is little or no connection between school factors, such as an open classroom climate, and IPE in Norway (Blaskó et al., 2019; Lieberkind, 2015). There is still uncertainty about how this phenomenon can be explained, partly because previous explorations of IPE in Norway are all quantitative studies (Bragdø & Mathé, 2021; Ødegård & Svagård, 2018; Solhaug, 2006). Although they provide valuable insights into the apparent connections between the variables in their data material, they are insufficient for explaining the results. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to fill this gap by qualitatively examining social studies students' views on the connection between their experiences in the social studies classroom and their sense of political efficacy. In the Norwegian education system, social studies combines topics from geography, history, sociology, and political science. The subject is compulsory for all students throughout the 11 years of their schooling, and has a special responsibility for civic education (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

The research question in this study was: *What do adolescents identify as sources in the social studies classroom that can contribute to or limit their sense of internal political efficacy?* The data underlying the study consisted of group interviews with 13-year-old Norwegian students that were analyzed using the constant-comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The article begins with a presentation of a broad theoretical framework that draws on Biesta's notion of the subjectification function of education (Biesta, 2021). Thereafter, I present the IPE concept as one possible route to support the subjectification process through social studies education, and describe how Bandura (1997) has explained the different educational experiences that might help students develop student efficacy. Next, I examine former scholarship on social studies education and IPE to compare and contrast my findings with existing knowledge on important aspects of an educational context that might affect student IPE. The findings section presents three obstacles to IPE facing students in the social studies classroom: the reactions of their peers during political discussions, the feeling that adolescents are not respected due to their young age, and a view of opinions as unchangeable. The possible solutions proposed by the students to enhance their IPE included structured discussions, working together, and receiving respect and recognition from their peers. These are discussed in relation to the theoretical outline of the article and previous research.

Theoretical Framework

To perceive oneself as capable of influencing society, one must feel enabled to challenge the existing order and function as an autonomous individual. Biesta (2009a) refers to this as the *subjectification* function of education. Being a subject is not the same as having an identity. While identity is about *who* a person is, being a subject concerns *how* a person exists in the world, which entails having both the capacity and competence to act and the inabilities and incompetence that the person posits (Biesta, 2021, p. 52). Being a subject thus permits adolescents not only to achieve a predefined version of what citizenship should be (Biesta, 2009b), but also to take ownership of their citizenship and develop as active and responsive citizens (Lawy & Biesta, 2006).

Thus, an important premise is to know what leads to a feeling of human agency. Bandura (1997, p. 437, 2006b, p. 170) describes how a person's self consists of a personal identity and agentic capabilities. While identity refers to self-characterizations of what one is, agentic capabilities are, for example, intentionality and self-reflection, involving cognitive activity that leads to purposeful acts to acquire or avoid a specific outcome. The most important foundation of the latter aspect of human agency is efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2006b).

There are strong indications that the connection between agency and efficacy is also present within the political sphere because a key indicator of political participation across different types of civic action has proven to be political efficacy (Dalton, 2020; Vecchione et al., 2014). The internal aspect of political efficacy has been found to be a critical factor in predicting both social movement citizenship, which emphasizes forms of participation oriented toward political and civic life (Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015), and more traditional forms of participation, such as voting in an election or membership of a political party or organization (Ødegård & Svagård, 2018). These IPE studies focus on the feeling of an individual's *political competenc*e. Concurrently, political efficacy also contains an external aspect—a belief in system *responsiveness* (Craig, 1979, p. 226). Bandura (1997, p. 483) explains how IPE and external political efficacy (EPE) are not independent from each other; people's beliefs about the responsiveness of a given system might affect their IPE and thus their efforts to try to impact the given system over time. Likewise, people who have a weak sense of IPE might effect little change even in a system that provides many opportunities to do so.

Thus, the two aspects of political efficacy are intertwined and often correlated (Craig, 1979). However, Sohl and Arensmeier (2015, p. 135) argue that, due to a lack of conceptual clarification, there is a need to treat the concepts separately. In line with this assertion, this article focuses on the internal aspects of political efficacy. In cases where EPE is considered, this is explicitly formulated, and the aspects that are considered are when EPE seems to influence student IPE. I use the term "political efficacy" in instances where both aspects are included.

The next question to be asked is how IPE can be supported in schools. Albert Bandura (1997) identifies four factors that can enhance one's sense of self-efficacy on a general level, which can also be applied to IPE specifically. The first factor is mastery experiences, which, in an educational context, means that the student experiences authentic evidence of her capability to succeed. The second factor is vicarious experiences, which posits that self-efficacy can be developed through social modeling. Observations of others display both the behavior of the other and the outcome of such behavior. Such observations can both inspire and enable students to act in a particular way. The third factor leading to self-efficacy is verbal persuasion, which happens when significant others express faith in one's capabilities to perform. In a school setting, this function might be filled by the teacher or by other students giving constructive feedback. The fourth factor, physiological or affective activation, can affect efficacy when read as signs of an ability or inability to perform. For our purpose, this means that students who

experience a bad mood or physiological pain might misread these feelings as signs of dysfunction or vulnerability and hence allow them to affect their judgement of efficacy.

All of these factors apply to the individual form of efficacy. In addition, Bandura explains how efficacy can develop as a consequence of being part of a collective due to people's "shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results" (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). When part of a group, the coordinative and interactive group dynamics might influence the individual's efficacy by virtue of both affecting the individual's ability to perform in the group and the individual's evaluation of his or her group's capability to operate as a whole (Bandura, 2000, p. 76).

Literature Review: The Connections Between Internal Political Efficacy and Civic Education

Turning now to the existing literature, I will outline the central educational settings that seem to be advantageous for student IPE.

An open classroom climate has repeatedly been found to be beneficial for student IPE (Claes et al., 2017; Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015; Maurissen et al., 2018). Such a climate is characterized by students being encouraged to voice different opinions, which are respected and tolerated by fellow students and teachers (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). Within this atmosphere, it is possible to aid students in practicing argumentation, encountering different perspectives, and considering the difference between evidence and opinion (Hess & McAvoy, 2014, p. 78). Such deliberative practices might mitigate the influence of one's social background (Beaumont, 2011; Hoskins et al., 2021) by providing all students with an opportunity to practice central political skills, such as reasoning and discussing (Levy, 2013).

Often, the threshold for participating in a full-class discussion can be experienced as high. Working in smaller groups might then be a way to provide students with opportunities to work together and practice communication (Chen & Stoddard, 2020; Schmidt, 2021). These practices might enable further participation in other and more extensive arenas in the long term. The teacher's organization of the classroom and of discussions can thus be an influential base for student IPE.

Nevertheless, in Norway, some findings show no connection between an open classroom climate and IPE (Blaskó et al., 2019; Bragdø & Mathé, 2021). Lieberkind (2015) argues that a possible reason for such a (dis)connection is that teachers orchestrate and control

openness in the classroom, leaving little room for student influence. Concurrently, several studies have indicated positive connections between the teacher and IPE. Formal classroom instruction (Dassonneville et al., 2012) and teacher-led reflection in groups after civic engagement activities (Bird et al., 2019) are both reported to enhance IPE. Moreover, Sohl and Arensmeier (2015, pp. 146, 137) explain the teacher's role in possibly affecting student IPE positively through pointing to engaged teaching, and how this might spark student attention and interest.

The teacher might also arrange the classroom to provide students with possibilities to be active, which could lead to mastery experiences and beneficial observations. Participating in classroom projects that are student-centered and action-oriented (Ballard et al., 2016), and in school-based civic learning experiences, such as political role play, heightens IPE (Levy, 2018). The same is observed for students involved in school democracy (Maurissen, 2020). Enabling students to be active participants in their education has thus proven to be a crucial remedy and can be effective when practiced in different arenas, such as in their classrooms and schools, and in their own communities. This underscores how the role of the teacher could make a significant difference in both promoting and reducing student IPE.

Method

Data Collection

The primary data underlying this research consisted of interviews with 16 students from the same class, aged 13 and 14. I also observed the class for several weeks. The observation data were not systematically analyzed, but served as a contextual guideline to set up and conduct the interviews. I will now outline the methodological choices.

The age group of the student participants in this project was the same as that of the ICCS, in which student political efficacy was a topic (Schulz et al., 2018). To expand on and explore the Norwegian ICCS findings (Huang et al., 2018), it seemed natural to have student participants of the same age. Concerning the choice to follow one group of students, I used purposeful sampling (Bryman, 2008, p. 458). To answer the research question, I wanted to explore a student group in depth. This was also due to the larger research frame of which this article is a part, as I was going to follow up on the data collection with further work together with the teacher. Having further classes to follow would therefore not have been possible within the given resource frame.

I ended up following a group of students with different backgrounds and different levels of both competence and participation in the social studies classroom. The school was situated in an urban inner-city area in Norway. Regarding the choice of this particular student group, I used snowball sampling to contact teachers who might be interested in the project (Bryman, 2008, p. 184). As the sampling was done during the coronavirus pandemic, few schools were available as research sites. The sampling method can thus also be described as one of convenience (Bryman, 2008, p. 183).

Interviews

I interviewed the students in focus groups of four at their school in May 2021. Leaning on theoretical findings concerning the connections between political participation, civic education, and political efficacy, these three concepts provided the foundation for the three subsequent parts of the interview. Apart from identifying the concepts, framing them in introductory questions and explanations, and preparing tasks for the students to work on in the interview, my main focus was on making sure that all the students understood the tasks and on supporting their work and asking follow-up questions when needed to encourage them to work further on the task (Halkier, 2010).

The interviews were performed in four groups, with four students in each group. After describing the form and content of a social studies lesson, the students picked a topic they had been working on in class. This topic provided a starting point for exploring political participation and IPE. The first task explored the following question: *What types of political participation would you use to influence politics concerning the given topic?* I assigned the students different roles (writer, group leader, etc.). They were asked to suggest ways in which they might influence a political decision and to write down their suggestions on Post-it notes and hang them on the wall. During this task, the students were introduced to different arenas, such as their classroom, their school, and life outside school, to spark their thinking about how they could participate.

In the second task, the students explored what experiences in the social studies classroom they thought influenced their ability to perform the political actions they had posted on the wall, working on the overarching question: *How do experiences in the social studies classroom influence your political efficacy?* I made the students consider whether they could "jump one meter" to familiarize them with the IPE concept, which, for simplicity, I termed "political efficacy" in the interviews. After using this concrete example, I used the students' answers from the previous task to conceptualize political participation and asked them to

discuss what in-school experiences they considered to have influenced their ability to perform the political actions that they had come up with. The students were again assigned different roles in the conversation while they worked on finding keywords to write down on a large piece of paper. The four categories the students discussed as potentially influential classroom factors were their teacher, their peers, didactic methods, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Focus group interviews might be beneficial when research participants are similar, cooperative, and from the same context (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). In this study, all the participants were situated in the same class, had experienced the same teaching, and were of the same age. I therefore found it fitting to use this method to enable the students to probe each other's reasons and modify answers after listening to each other (Bryman, 2008, p. 475; Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 5, chap. 5). This could institute a deeper elucidation than in a more traditional sequence of conversation between interviewer and interviewee.

Furthermore, focus group interviews can be seen as beneficial when individual interviews may be difficult because the interviewee is hesitant about providing information (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 164). As focus group interviews leave less control for the interviewer and more room for the interviewees (Bryman, 2008, p. 475), I was hoping to avoid the potential consequences of the hierarchical relationship between me, as an adult interviewer, and the interviewees, as students (Halkier, 2010), and to allow the students to talk more freely by enabling them to talk to peers and not only to me. To ensure that the students felt comfortable in the interview situation, I used knowledge from prior observations to construct groups that would allow everyone to participate. The roles that the students were given in the work on the tasks were also a way to ensure that everyone could feel that their participation in the group was essential for the group solving the task, and hence that their contribution was valuable to the research. At the same time, I was hoping that the interview situation would feel both more entertaining and relaxed to allow the students to feel comfortable in what was an unusual situation (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 9, chap. 2).

Moreover, a way to overcome the participant's feeling of a lack of control or power in an interview situation is to use stimuli—providing participants with material that they are in charge of (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 5, chap. 6). At the same time, I did not want my predefined impressions to influence the students' answers, so the use of stimuli tasks was also a way to allow the students to work on the interview topics without me steering them in a specific direction in terms of content. Using the tasks as tools, the students were given the opportunity to move beyond the categories given in the task (Sannino, 2015). Given that the tasks consisted

only of concepts to be explored and of practical instructions, the students were free to interpret the concepts and suggest their own solutions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Another type of stimulus that I actively used during the interviews was mirror data, where my observations were used to reflect back to the students how specific classroom situations had played out (Cole & Engeström, 2007). Thus, as the interviews progressed, I could use my knowledge to expand their thinking. When needed, I would follow up on the students' descriptions and explanations with questions or comments that would expand on their depiction while also adding components from my observations. In this way, I could use my background knowledge to make my participation in their conversation both relevant and pointed (Chrzanowska, 2002).

Nevertheless, the potential disadvantages of using focus groups must be addressed. The dangers are, for example, groupthink, where conclusions are reached that individual participants think are wrong, thus making them feel uncomfortable, and the conformity effect, where participants answer in line with others to avoid potential social consequences (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 10, chap. 4). Chrzanowska (2002, p. 9, chap. 5) suggests that a way to moderate focus group interviews to avoid participants getting stuck in socio-emotional roles or plays for status is to manage the group carefully by impartial moderation and validation of individual views (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 9, chap. 5), for example, by encouraging the silent and stopping the dominant. An example of this can be seen in the excerpt on p. XX, where Nate, who had been silent for some time, was encouraged to share his views.

Finally, I was careful to signal the transitions in the interview and explain the concepts and tasks to try to remove any potential anxiety or insecurities on the student's behalf (Chrzanowska, 2002, p. 7, chap. 7). I leaned on theoretical insights regarding how to execute these explanations. As for the term "efficacy" (Norwegian: *mestringstro*), I assumed that it would be an unfamiliar concept to the students. As efficacy beliefs partly stem from persons visualizing themselves executing activities skillfully (Bandura, 1997), I started by letting the students consider what they thought of as political activities to enable them to operationalize the concept of IPE in the next part of the interview. As the term itself was introduced, I used a concrete example and phrased the question using the word *can* to underscore that efficacy is about one's perceived capabilities, and to distinguish self-efficacy from phenomena such as self-esteem or expectations of potential outcomes for a particular action (Bandura, 2006a). As for the tasks, I explained them, and afterwards, I checked with each student individually to see if they understood their part of the group work. During the work, I was careful to look for signs

of insecurity (e.g., students looking down or not participating) to help them both perform their assigned task and contribute content to the group.

Data Analysis

As I wanted to explore the students' understanding of the connections between social studies teaching and IPE, the constant-comparative method seemed a natural choice, since it can be used to correct, redefine, and modify already existing concepts and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The audio files from the interviews were analyzed using this method, in which the making of constant comparisons is the main tool, while moving back and forth between data collection, analysis of the data material, and consulting already existing theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

After the first interview, I transcribed it and wrote memos before I returned to do the second interview. The students' names were not used; instead, I used numbers in the transcriptions, and they were subsequently given pseudonyms. I repeated this routine of interviewing, transcribing, and writing memos four times, moving back and forth between data collection, initial analysis, and reading existing research. Between interviews, I used the asking questions technique to gain new insights and find new angles to look for in the next interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

After I finished the interviews, I coded and analyzed the transcripts using NVivo. The first round of coding was open and systematized the data according to the structure of the interviews. I used the following labels: *description of social studies lesson*, *experience of social studies lesson, political participation channel, agency,* and *lack of agency*. Concurrently, I actively used memos in which I wrote down keywords, thoughts, and questions. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), I looked for *causal conditions*, which were factors that the students considered hindered or supported IPE. During this step, I used my knowledge from the observation period to contextualize and understand the students' descriptions and explanations. The causal conditions identified were *emotional closeness, relationship with peers, relationship with adults, teaching methods,* and *behavior*. The material was then coded a second time using this second set of categories as labels.

After the second coding, I developed propositions regarding how the categories were connected to each other (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). When combining and exploring the factors identified in the second round of coding, I was able to single out a three-headed model for IPE obstacles: *the classroom climate*, *the students' age*, and *the view of opinions as static*. These

were connected to certain solutions: *respect and support*, *structured discussions*, and *working together*. I then read the data material a third time, ensuring that it was coded correctly, and sorted the prior categories into larger folders that represented the final layer of categories I had identified. The categories from the third and final round of coding were used to structure the findings section and guide the discussion presented below.

Findings

To present my findings, I begin by describing the educational factors that the students described as hindrances to their IPE. The second part of this section describes what the students saw as classroom solutions that could enhance IPE.

Three Obstacles to Internal Political Efficacy

The Social Consequences of Participating in Discussions in the Social Studies Classroom

The students described social studies as a subject they both liked and found interesting. Sometimes the subject was thought to be challenging due to a harsh debating climate. Group 4 described occurrences of discussions as "fun," "interesting," and "something that I can learn from." Concurrently, they described the discussions as shown in the example below:

> *Dan: [...] There is often a bit of discussion in the classroom. There are maybe four or five students who talk a lot, while the others sit and listen.*
>
> *Emma: Someone did something, and then others heard it and answered back, and then it turns into a discussion.*
>
> *Dan: And then it will probably be a bit more…*
>
> *Emma: Yes, it takes about half an hour to sort it out.*
>
> *Dan: There will be a bit of bad blood between…*
>
> *Lily: …the different persons.*
>
> (Group 4, May 2021, Oslo)

Group 4's description of the classroom discussions resonated with all the interview groups. Following up on the student's description of the classroom, the next excerpt displays Student Group 4's response to the researcher asking about the students' experience of being in the classroom during such a discussion.

> *Lily: It's ok, really, if they discuss something important. It is good that they dare to say something about it and manage to have a discussion about it.*
>
> *Dan: At the beginning of the year, I participated a lot in those discussions. But recently, it has not been as much. I mostly have something to say, but I don't partake as much as before, because I know...*

Lily: ...it turns into a big thing.

Dan: Yes, it turned into a big thing. I said what I thought. And after that, there was a lot of talk about me [...] because I had another opinion.

Researcher: That does not seem like a good situation to be in.

Dan: No.

Researcher: How about you, Nate. How is it for you to be in the classroom?

Nate: [...] Sometimes these persons talk a lot, and then it gets really boring to sit and listen to them.

(Group 4, May 2021, Oslo)

The starting point given by Lily in this citation is that the discussions were, *per se,* a good thing. The problem would seem to be the *form* of the discussions, which led to different types of reactions. Nate found the discussions boring and did not participate. Dan, on the other hand, was an example of a student who used to actively participate. Due to the hostile classroom climate, he limited his participation to avoid potential social consequences. This same resistance toward participating due to the classroom environment was also mentioned by the last girl in Group 4, Emma. She was an example of a student who had rarely participated in classroom discussions or group work at all, because she was afraid that some of her peers would be irritated if she said something in class that they saw as wrong.

> *Sometimes, when there are discussions, there has been a bit of a mess, so if I don't know very much about that topic, then I don't want to say anything, because if I say something wrong, then I feel that someone in the class will get pretty annoyed about it.*

(Emma, May 2021, Oslo)

The classroom discussions thus seemed a hindrance to IPE from the perspective of the students, as they described them using words such as "teams," "winning," and "losing." One person's gain in a discussion was equated with someone else's loss, turning the discussions into a hostile zero-sum game. Nonetheless, it is important to underscore that the students still saw it as *possible* to participate. It was not that they were unable or not allowed to voice their opinions, but rather that they risked losing face or friends by doing so.

Adolescents Are Not Listened To

The second level of IPE obstacles was related to what the students described as a lack of respect for adolescents, which they saw as leading to a lack of access to political influence. Lily stated that children are looked down on, and a consequence was that the path to having an impact was a lot longer than for adults:

Because it's hard when it's children to get what you want, because you're a child and they sort of ... you can be looked down on because you're just a child, so you [...] need to have a larger group, get many more engaged, you need to make a big deal out of it.

(Lily, May 2021, Oslo)

Accordingly, this view was expressed in the ways in which the students talked about themselves as less worthy and of their opinions as stupid or maybe not worth listening to, such as when Sofia started one of her replies with "What I was going to say is just very stupid" (Sofia, May 2021, Oslo). This feeling of not being in a position where influencing their own society was possible was explained as leading to a low IPE level. This is in line with Bandura's explanation of how a perception of a lack of system responsiveness might impact IPE negatively (1997, p. 483).

The student's IPE was instead seen as dependent on adults or celebrities. Teachers, politicians, influencers, parents, or journalists were seen as gatekeepers to influence, on whom the youth are dependent for being heard, which can be seen as resonating in Sarah's statement below: It is when someone important fronts a topic that the students are interested in that students could have an impact in this matter.

I feel that if a student [...] tries to say something or has an opinion, then he or she does not reach out to very many. But if a person with a higher status, for example, has a strong opinion ... A celebrity or another important person who is in a way a role model for many says something and does something about that topic, then quite a few will get involved and become interested in it.

(Sarah, May 2021, Oslo)

Views Are Unchangeable

While the first obstacle to IPE arose due to possible sanctions the youth would meet for participating in the social studies discussions, and the second referred to the lack of access to influence, the third obstacle was more substantial in nature. Dominic argued that he did not participate in student strikes as part of the so-called Fridays for Future movement because of who he *was*: "I really am, I know it's very important, but [...] I'm not a person who goes out and wants to strike. I'm kind of only staying inside" (Dominic, May 2021, Oslo). Dominic did not stay at home because the cause was not important or because it was not a good thing to strike instead of going to school. In contrast, his argument for his lack of action was that it was part of what defined him as a person.

Another illustration is given by Tina, who gave her view on the possibility of abolishing racism through political participation. Tina argued that "of course, racism will never go away to any degree, because everyone has different opinions" (Tina, May 2021, Oslo). Tina's statement, containing the phrases "of course," "never," and "everyone" when talking about changing opinions, seemed to characterize a person's point of view as something static and immovable. Words and phrases such as "never," "not possible," "there will always be," and "not at all" were consistently used throughout the interviews when considering opinions and the possibility of making such opinions change, be it the student's own or others'.

Whereas trying to change something in the preceding sections was seen either as hard or as something that had to be done by others, the expressed connection between viewpoints and a person's identity seemed to lead to a view of change as close to impossible, because student opinions or behavioral patterns were seen as fixed. Moreover, this linkage was explained as leading to low levels of IPE. People's beliefs about the influenceability of what they try to impact might influence their IPE, as IPE specifically presupposes a view that what one is trying to do is actually doable (Bandura, 1997). The above examples illustrate how, for many of the students, it was their own and others' viewpoints that were considered unchangeable as a consequence of them being tied to their personal identity, which was seen as fixed. Therefore, the conception of opinions as static is the last aspect highlighted as an obstacle to student IPE.

The Students' Suggested Classroom Solutions

After considering the obstacles to IPE, the students discussed how these obstacles could be overcome. This section will elucidate three suggestions that emerged from this part of the interview.

Respect and Support from Peers and Teachers

Throughout the interviews, the students frequently mentioned that respect and support from their peers and the teacher were critical to gaining IPE. This was underscored as crucial not only in the classroom discussions, but also during pair or group work or, when it came to the teacher, on a regular basis during the lessons.

To start with the classroom discussions, Jane (May 2021, Oslo) explained that while one did not have to agree, one had to respect how others might have different opinions. The important thing was to feel safe and validated as a person, not that everyone had to agree on a

particular topic. Thus, there seems to be a difference between respect and agreement, where the respect part was the eminent part that was seen to possibly affect IPE positively.

As an extension of the desire for respect from fellow classmates in classroom discussions, emotional support from peers and teachers was underscored as important also on a more general basis. An example of this was given by Anna when describing how she felt when she was encouraged by other students in a smaller group setting: "Because it's like, it helps me, because … or it helps me because I think I can do it" (Anna, May 2021, Oslo). Based on the students' statements, their IPE thus seems to be influenced by their relations to their peers in different classroom settings, and this could go both ways: Supportive peers might influence IPE positively, while negative comments or a negative atmosphere might affect it negatively, as demonstrated when discussing the social consequences of participating in class.

The teacher might also take on a supportive role, as illustrated by Group 1. In this example, the students discussed how the teacher could possibly affect their IPE positively during her day-to-day work in the classroom.

> *Jenny: I think it is important for the teacher to show that everyone has a voice that they can use and reach out with. For example, by letting everyone sit down and write a letter to Erna [the then-present Prime Minister of Norway]. That is possible, but it depends if it reaches her. So I think that it is important for the teacher; she can show that it is possible … I don't know how to put this into words.*
>
> *Vanessa: …show that it is actually possible to have an impact, show that writing a letter has results?*
>
> *Lu: Maybe engagement? Yes. Engagement too, the teacher must somehow try to engage the students, speak positively […]. Not just like: "No, you will not be able to do this" […]. But [she] must try to encourage and show different examples of what we're supposed to do or let us know about it then, if you understand.*
>
> (Group 1, May 2021, Oslo)

The passage points to different aspects of how the teacher might play a central role in student IPE. As illuminated by both Jenny and Lu, the teacher might give examples of how the students can potentially impact the political system to enhance student IPE. Lu underscored that engagement is important, using the words "positively" and "encourage." Furthermore, she stated that being negative on the student's behalf could possibly influence the student's IPE negatively. Thus, the teacher might play a central role in enhancing the student's sense of political efficacy by being emotionally supportive and by providing students with genuine chances of experiencing politics. At the same time, it could influence the student's IPE negatively if the teacher is negative about the student's possibilities.

Structured Classroom Discussions

All the interview groups mentioned one classroom experience as an example of what they thought would enhance IPE: a clearly structured classroom discussion. In the example below, Jessica started by stating that the solution to the heated classroom discussions was not to silence them. Contrarily, the discussions should be allowed to happen, but within a frame that was controlled by the teacher. Building on Jessica, Ivy remembered an example of such a discussion:

> *Jessica: Maybe have discussions where the teacher has a bit more control. [Sometimes] the teacher has stopped the discussion and left it hanging. And you can't just turn it off.*
>
> *Ivy: I came up with something! Organized debates. We had that once, and it worked a lot better than regular discussions.*
>
> (Group 3, May 2021, Oslo)

In the lesson that all the groups described as favorable, the students were to discuss three topics of their choice in class. Having the students choose the discussion topics made the content engaging and the students part-owners of their own learning experience. This might be one way to overcome the adolescents' feeling of not being listened to—a starting point for enhancing IPE could be the students having an actual impact in educational settings.

In preparing for the discussions, the students did not know which standpoint they were to argue for or against. This meant that they had to engage with both sides of the argument. At the same time, the students were removed from the position where they were responsible for their own views, because they did not have to agree with the position they were assigned by the teacher. However, they were expected to argue for the perspective to which they were assigned, meaning that all the students had to participate to make all the different viewpoints heard. The structure of the discussion and the focus on the possible arguments instead of the personal opinions of the students made the discussions less daunting to participate in than the whole-class discussions mentioned above. The students hereby again underscored means that could lessen the potential negative social consequences of participating in class, which could consequently reduce the negative impact of participating on their IPE. Discussing was also stated as a way of practicing politics, which could positively affect their IPE.

Working Together

The carefully structured discussion has parallels to working in groups, which was the third and final solution the students put forward. As with the discussions, they emphasized that the work had to be clearly organized to avoid blind passengers. But when a group worked well,

Dominic (May 2021, Oslo) illustrated how diverse points of view were a strength: "Well, in a group you have different opinions, and it's not like one person, it's not like one brain. It's like in that saying about two heads being better than one." This answer points to the possibility of heightening IPE through a form of collective exercise in which their competencies are pooled together, which, again, might lead to a feeling of increased ability for the individual student.

Furthermore, Lu elucidated how working in a group made her feel:

I kind of get more self-confidence when I work with someone, because then I think it's not just my [product]. If you have to give a presentation in front of the class and such, I feel that if I'm with someone, I'm not nervous, [...] so if we're writing a letter [to a politician] or something, or a letter to the editor, I feel better if I'm with someone else.

(Lu, May 2021, Oslo)

A closer look at Lu's comment shows how she feels more confident about her actions when she is part of a pair or a smaller group. She explains that this is due to her not being responsible by herself—and that this makes her less nervous. Lu also explicitly points to the link between the feeling that she has in the classroom when she is to present in front of the class and how this feeling can be transmitted to political actions, such as writing a letter to a politician. Working together in smaller units thus seems to be favorable for student IPE, as it might provide them with a sort of practicing ground with a smaller audience, which might provide mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, working with someone might provide a feeling of security due to the students not being singularly responsible for what Lu terms "products." When seen in connection with the obstacles to efficacy, this part might provide a starting point for working around the students being afraid of participating in classroom discussions due to peer reactions.

Discussion

The initial aim of this study was to identify factors in the social studies classroom that might affect student IPE. Based on the present findings, I will now deliberate on how IPE may be connected to students' classroom experiences.

Throughout the interviews, the students regularly commented on how respect from their peers was crucial to gaining political efficacy. The importance of relations with peers corroborates the view that an open classroom climate is key to enhancing student IPE (Claes et al., 2017). When the students listen to each other, and when a hostile critique is replaced with constructive argumentation, it might contribute to a safe zone where they may express views without social risk. This might lead to positive mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). On

the contrary, if the classroom environment is felt to be hostile, it can hinder efficacy, because people will avoid potentially threatening situations if they feel unable to cope with situations they see as risky (Bandura, 1990). This is clearly in accordance with the presented findings, where the risk of participating in class is explained as being directly connected to a lack of IPE.

Moreover, the students' age is important when considering their understanding of their lack of ability to act without the help of adults. Such a view is consistent with what Lawy and Biesta (2006) describe as an understanding of citizenship as a possible achievement that students have yet to obtain. If such an impression is present in the classroom, it might suggest that the students have not experienced a sufficient level of teaching in which they have practiced, experienced, or watched others experience actual impacting situations (Bandura, 1997). This proposition is supported by results from ICCS 2016, which show that traditional teaching forms, such as textbook work and teacher lectures in which students take notes, still prevail in social studies education in Norway. Notwithstanding, discussions are common (Huang et al., 2018).

The question, however, is whether classroom discussions have the ability to promote an open classroom climate. Lieberkind (2015) describes how Scandinavian countries might have open, but at the same time neatly managed, classrooms where students do not experience any real impact. Such a state would naturally not lead to situations in which students might feel enabled to master politics, as they are not in a context in which they are really autonomous (Biesta, 2021). The present study could be seen to support Lieberkind's argument insofar as the students underscored the importance of having an open classroom climate, but at the same time saw themselves as unable to have an impact due to their age.

Concurrently, all of the interview groups used a discussion that was carefully structured by the teacher as an example of a situation in which they felt comfortable practicing discussions, which was seen to also practice politics. The discussion in this context meant taking an active part and engaging in a classroom activity, and thus being an active subject in their own learning. This corroborates Bandura's theory, which demonstrates that a person's efficacy is partly the result of experiences in his or her own environment (Bandura, 1997). However, a closer look at the discussion shows that an important part was that the students did not argue for their personal views. Instead, the discussion became a way of enlightening different perspectives that were not connected to the individual students. The situation then resembles a political role play, which former research has shown to provide both mastery experiences and beneficial observations, leading to enhanced IPE for students (Levy, 2018). At the same time, the focus is

relocated, moving from personal opinions that are seen as statically a part of the student to *how it is possible* to think, interpret, and act on a given matter. It might then be that the student's IPE is strengthened due to being in a context where different opinions are present, without feeling these to be a threat to the individual student. Again leaning on Bandura (1997), an important entry point to feeling efficacious is being able to visualize oneself executing an act skillfully. If a discussion thus consists of students who are solely asked to state their opinions, this is also where they have their mastery experiences and where they can observe others mastering or receiving positive feedback. This creates a sense of efficacy toward this particular type of action, and hence a preference for it (Bandura, 1989). Being a subject is thereby reduced to stating one's opinion, which can hardly be seen as consistent with Biesta's call for autonomous individuals who are able to enact change (2009a).

Educational Implications, Recommendations for Further Research, and Limitations of This Study

Moving back to the classroom, the question remains as to what the educational implications would be if the premise were that students should be able to think of themselves as subjects in Biesta's broader view. The methods the students considered favorable for practicing politics—primarily discussions and group work—might at first seem unexpected due to the current negative experiences the students reported. However, as McAvoy and Hess point out, there is a distinction between discussing and deliberating in the classroom, the latter meaning that students will "practice reason giving, listening, perspective taking, evaluation of views and treating each other as political equals" (2013, p. 19). It is hence the latter form of conversation that is to be encouraged and aided in the social studies classroom, and it is also the latter form of discussion that was called for by the students. Interestingly, working in smaller groups might provide the students with an important practicing arena, which might contribute a sort of collective efficacy that may impact the student's feeling of ability through providing emotional support and positive feedback (Bandura, 2000).

Practicing their own ability to meet, respect, and negotiate between different perspectives might provide students with valuable feedback and mastery experiences that could enhance their efficacy in political situations (Bandura, 1997). Seeing and understanding their own societal position and that of others is essential for being an able subject in a democratic society (Biesta, 2021). The role of the teacher as an institutor of an advantageous classroom climate with rich possibilities for the students to be active, but at the same time without leaning

solely on the personal opinions of the students, thus seems to be an important thread to follow up on both for educators and in future research. Another suggestion could be targeted classroom interventions to test teaching methods that specifically follow students' recommendations to determine whether they have any pronounced effect on students' IPE. Researchers could also explore the role of the school in promoting IPE further by using a larger sample, other age groups, or viewing it in relation to other arenas in adolescents' lives, such as their out-of-school milieus.

However, the generalizability of the results is subject to limitations due to the small number of participants. Even though a thorough description may lead to a naturalistic generalization of knowledge that can be useful to practitioners working in a relatable context (Postholm & Smith, 2017), further research is clearly needed to explore how an open classroom climate might be established and, concretely, how the teacher impacts student IPE through her operation of the classroom. It should also be mentioned that a lack of information on students' socioeconomic status (SES) could have affected the findings. SES has proven to be an indicator of both low levels of IPE and political participation (Isac et al., 2014). However, research suggests that civic education might have a compensating effect by beneficiating students with low SES (Hoskins et al., 2021). To establish a greater degree of accuracy, a natural progression could be to study the role of SES in the connections between the social studies classroom and IPE development.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to investigate adolescents' views of IPE and what sources in the social studies classroom they saw as contributors to or obstacles to IPE when thinking about performing political actions. Three obstacles to IPE were revealed: possible social consequences of participating, lack of access to participation due to adolescents' young age, and a feeling that opinions are fixed, which would make participating meaningless. The identification of these obstacles is important, because through pinpointing where the problems lie, it might be possible to find ways to overcome them and to promote IPE in the social studies classroom.

The investigation thus has implications for practice. An open classroom climate is confirmed as a significant foundation for promoting respect and support among students. However, even if an open classroom climate is established, it might not be sufficient to enhance students' IPE. If the student still sees the possibilities for real impacts as scarce, being in a

respectful and constructive environment might not in itself be enough. It is therefore very important that the students get to experience real impacts and, at the same time, practice situations that might make them feel enabled to perform similar actions outside of the educational context. Moreover, the importance of the teacher was confirmed. She can play a constitutive role in the educational work on promoting IPE by organizing her teaching in a way that promotes active student participation in an open classroom environment.

The empirical findings of this study show that future research on civic education and IPE needs to take students' self-perceptions into account and how different teaching methods may promote divergent views on their ability to change their own minds and those of others. A clear course of action would be to shift the focus from the student to the world, and from opinions to perspectives (Biesta, 2021). If we can manage to do this, we might also enable students to become real subjects of their own lives and societies through the work done in the social studies classroom.

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Appendix 1: Interview manual

For the reader:

- The text in italics shows the information/questions directed by the researcher to the students.
- The text not in italics elucidates the researcher's interview plan, the tasks given to the students, and other factors that were to be considered during the interview.

Introduction

1. *Presentation (me + research project)*
2. *Information about consent + anonymity*
3. *Recording starts*

1 The social studies classroom

Describe a social studies class (content – form)

4. *What do you work on in social studies classes? (Before/now, interesting/not interesting, likes/dislikes)*
5. *Are there topics you would like to work on in social studies classes? What, and why?*
6. *How do you work / what do you do in class / what forms of work do you use? (What makes you like/dislike the subject?)*
7. *What do you think about the subject, and why do you think so?*

2 Ways of participating

The students choose a topic that they have worked on in class (see questions 1 and 2).

8. *If you were to influence this issue or make your opinion heard, how can young people proceed / what can young people do?*

Task 1: The students are assigned four roles and work on the basis of question 5 above
A. Writer (has pen and writes on the Post-it notes)
B. Chair (makes sure that everyone in the group gets to participate, asks for input from others)
C. Post-it person (hangs the notes on the wall)
D. Arena manager (introduces new arenas when the previous theme is emptied)
- Arena 1: In your class
- Arena 2: At your school
- Arena 3: In your local environment
- Arena 4: In the whole of Norway, or outside Norway

3 Political efficacy

Introduction based on the participation methods that the students themselves have come up with (question 5)

9. *How do you think that what you experience in the classroom can affect your belief in whether you can do these things?*

Task 2: The students write down four categories on a large sheet of paper (four fields on the sheet). The students are assigned different roles and work on question 6 above.

A. Writer (has pen and writes on the large sheet)
B. Chair (makes sure that everyone gets to participate, asks for input from others)
C. Guard (makes sure that everyone does their part of the work on the task)
D. Theme manager (introduces new themes when the previous theme is emptied)
- The teacher
- Fellow students
- Teaching methods
- Covid-19

End session

1. *Thank you for participating*
2. *Repeat consent information*
3. *Contact information*

Appendix 2: Example of student group response to task 1 concerning political participation methods
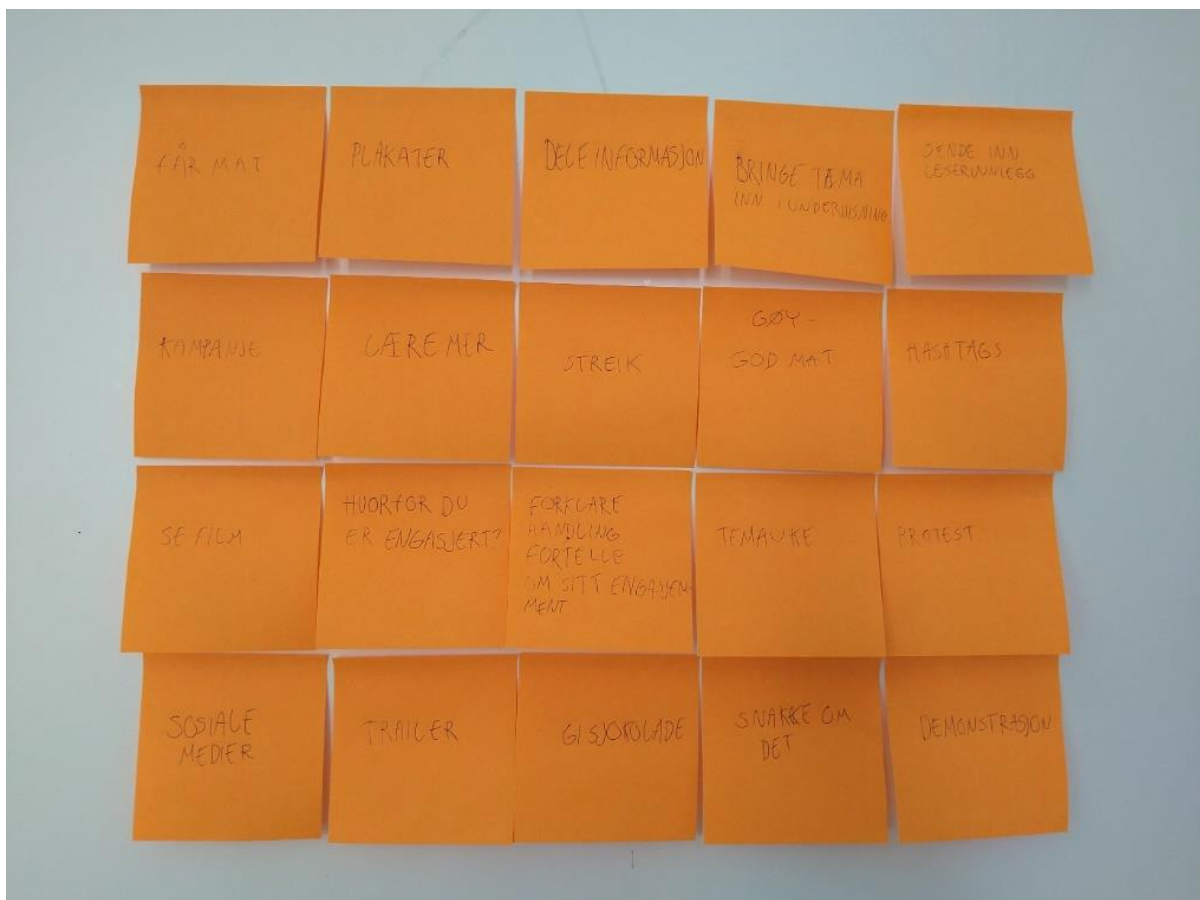
Appendix 3: Example of student group response to task 2 concerning classroom factor's potential impact on political efficacy
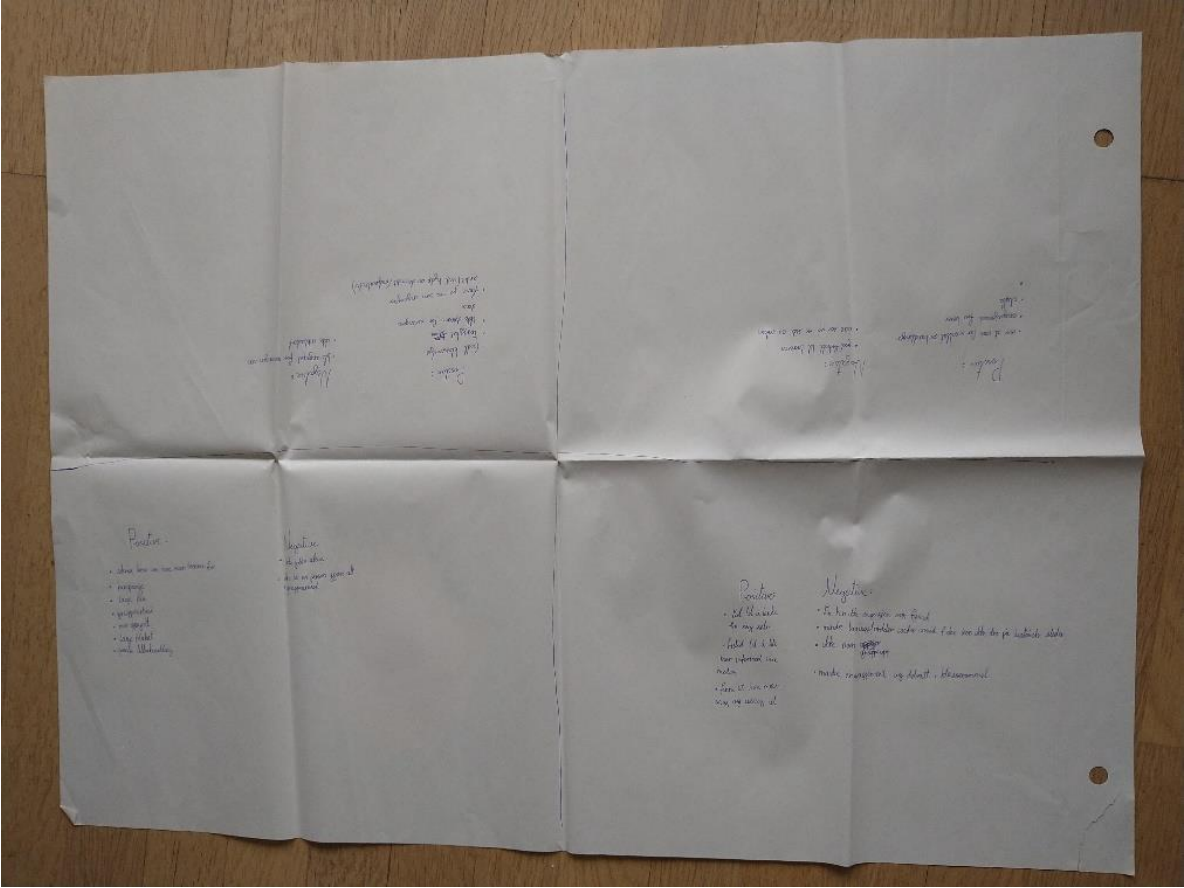
Article 3

Kosberg, E. The effect of cooperative learning on student political efficacy: Results from a formative intervention study in a Norwegian social studies classroom. (Manuscript submitted to the journal *Educational research).*

The influence of cooperative learning on student political efficacy

Results from a formative intervention study in a Norwegian social studies classroom

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The influence of cooperative learning on student political efficacy

Results from a formative intervention study in a Norwegian social studies classroom

Abstract: This article reports from an intervention research project in the tradition of cultural-historical activity theory. Methods from cooperative learning were implemented in a social studies class to find out how the experiences of cooperative learning would impact the students' political efficacy. The data underlying the research have been analyzed using the constant-comparative method of analysis and consist of interviews with 14-year-old Norwegian students. The main implication of the study is that cooperative learning has the possibility to enhance student political efficacy, mainly through providing students with opportunities to practice democratic skills such as discussion, cooperation and constructive social interaction. However, the students' responses point towards tensions within the student group, and between the classroom as a unit of learning and the expectations of the classroom as a unit of evaluation, as key contradictions that may hinder the realization of a cooperative learning classroom.

1. Introduction

In a landscape where democracy seems to be under threat due to internal factors such as sinking levels of political trust (Norris & Inglehart, 2019) and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000) and to external factors such as terrorism (Mani, 2021) or aggressive acts by authoritarian states (Semenenko & Ivashenko, 2022), researching how democratic societies can sustain and develop seems to be of utmost importance. The core element of democracy is the participation of its citizens (Held, 2006). Civic education provides a possibility to achieve such engagement, since extensive research shows that schooling may lead to civic participation (Blaskó et al., 2019; Torney-Purta, 2002).

Political efficacy has proven to be one important influence on expected democratic participation of adolescents (Hoskins et al., 2015; Ødegård & Svagård, 2018). Consequently, supporting political efficacy in schools may lead to enhanced societal participation for the students (Isac et al., 2014; Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015), and understanding the link between education and political efficacy thus seems important. So far, however, there remains a paucity of studies that explore explicitly and qualitatively different teaching methods and their connection to political efficacy. Since most research on political efficacy and education is done using large-scale surveys, it can remain vague what the teacher should actually do stepping into the classroom.

Based on his own research on the effect of practicing politics on political efficacy through political role play, Levy (2018) suggests further research on the connection between social learning experiences and the development of political efficacy. XX's qualitative interview study with students suggests the same focus on social learning experiences such as group work while experiencing politics as a method to promote political efficacy (source anonymized – will be added after peer review). This research project takes these suggestions as its starting point and investigates how political efficacy can be supported in schools by exploring the connection between the use of cooperative learning techniques in social studies and students' political efficacy. Cooperative learning (CL) provides a framework in which interdependence among group members is promoted, and which has proven to lead both to heightened levels of trust between group members and to higher levels of knowledge and skills such as active reasoning and critical thinking (Gillies & Khan, 2009; Mahari et al., 2019). It thus seems a promising source to explore in connection with political efficacy.

In the following I describe a formative intervention study, in the tradition of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström & Sannino, 2010), that was aimed at contributing knowledge about how civic education might contribute to the development of political efficacy. Additionally, I want to give practical advice to teachers looking for methods to use in their social studies classroom with the goal of enhancing their students' ableness as democratic citizens. The research question that has guided the work is: *How might the use of cooperative learning in social studies impact students' political efficacy?*

2. Political efficacy and cooperative learning: An overview

In this article, political efficacy is understood in line with Sohl (2014, p. 34), who state that political efficacy is "an individual's perception of her/his abilities to execute political actions aimed at producing political change in society". Such a perception has proven to be a strong indicator of political participation (Dalton, 2020), and there is considerable evidence indicating that political efficacy may be strengthened through civic education (Hoskins et al., 2021; Isac et al., 2014). Previous research has demonstrated that an important feature of classrooms that contribute to student political efficacy, is an open classroom climate (Claes et al., 2017), meaning that the students are encouraged to voice their own opinions, which are respected and tolerated by fellow students and teachers, and by teachers presenting different perspectives and encouraging discussion (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). Additionally, it seems important that students are given an active role in their own learning (Beaumont, 2011; Iverson & James, 2013). To understand why these classroom practices are relevant, it is helpful to use Bandura's description of how efficacy is developed through mastery- or vicarious experiences, and as a consequence of verbal feedback. Efficacy is also affected by physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). These mechanisms can be transferred to pathways to political efficacy that can be used in civic education, and include to involve students in skill-building mastery experiences, to possibly have students have role models of political efficacy and involvement, a potential for social encouragement and supporting relationships, and opportunities to guide students towards having empowering and resilient political outlooks (Beaumont, 2010; Sohl, 2014, p. 52).

In this study, cooperative learning techniques were tried out as a method to influence student political efficacy. Cooperative learning involves group work that has certain cooperative characteristics (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, 2009): CL groups have *positive interdependence* between the students, meaning that the individual's performance affects the group positively while at the same time every member is held accountable for their share of the work and for facilitating the work of the other group members. CL groups are also taught *appropriate use of social skills* such as *promotive interaction,* where the members encourage and promote each other's efforts to reach the group goals, and *group processing,* where group members reflect on their own impact on the collective work and make collective decisions on what actions to continue or change.

There is a paucity of research on cooperative learning and its effect on political efficacy, and even less on this connection in social studies specifically. The current explorations nevertheless seem to agree that group work can have positive impacts. Schmidt (2021) shows that students who worked in CL groups engaged in purposeful civic education experienced enhanced political efficacy. This aligns with Chen and Stoddard (2020), who found a significant gain in student political efficacy after a virtual CL project in which students learned to critique- and take action using political media. Furthermore, Hajisoteriou and Angelides (2016) show how group work also led to enhanced efficacy due to the students' need to discuss and negotiate to meet the common group goal. Mitra and Serriere (2012) came

to the same conclusion, reporting on a project where a student group chose to work to change the menu in the school cafeteria. The work brought the students closer to their peers as they learned about how to merge opinions into one project. Together, this suggests that CL teaches students important democratic skills such as getting along with fellow students with different opinions and from different backgrounds. CL can also contribute to students' political skills through training in argumentation (Gillies & Khan, 2009; Guérin, 2017) and critical thinking skills (Hamann et al., 2012).

3. Theoretical frame: Cultural-historical activity theory

In the previous section, using cooperative learning was introduced as a potential source to enhancing student political efficacy. To be able to research this connection, there was a need for a framework that could facilitate and understand a change process, as I wanted to introduce cooperative learning techniques in a social studies class. This led to the choice to explore the social studies classroom as a system of activity, using concepts from cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). In understanding the classroom as an activity system, I see it as containing different goal-directed actions (Leontev, 1974). It is the common understanding of the whole teaching situation and of the connection between the actions that give them meaning as part of an activity which a collective understands in the same way (Engeström, 2000; Leontev, 1974).
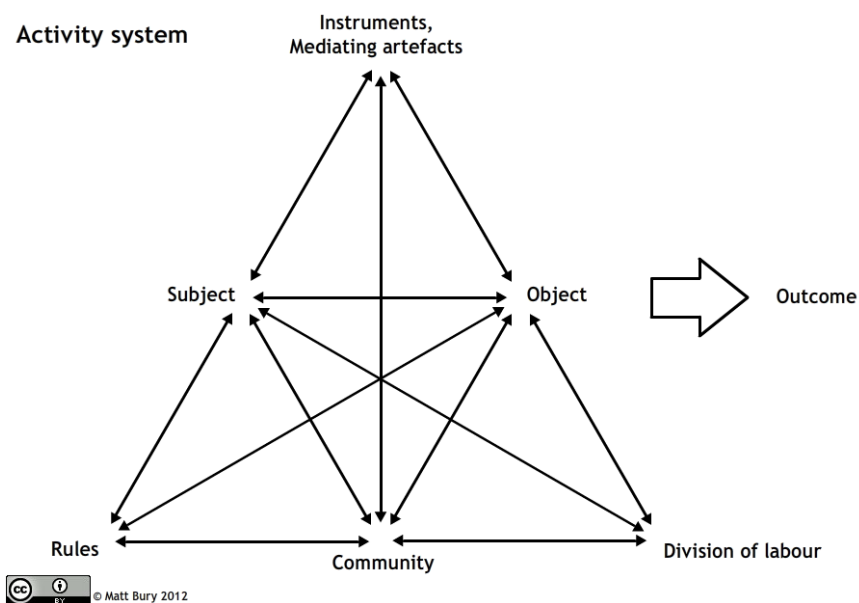
Figure 1: The activity system, by Engeström, 2015, by Matbury.
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Activity_system.png). CC BY-SA 3.0.

A system of activity is depicted in the general model of the activity system shown above. An activity system consists of several nodes: the *subject* refers to the individual or group whose point of view is used in the analysis (Engeström & Sannino, 2010), and which in the present study primarily refers to the students. The node on the right-hand side of the activity system is the *object*, which is something

toward which an activity is directed in order to accomplish, pursue or transform. The object emerges at two levels: first, it shapes the subject's activity, and second, it is a product of the subject's actions toward it (Leontev, 1974). The object is not in itself visible but must be identified through studying what the subject is trying to pursue through its actions. In the context of understanding the classroom as an activity system, the considered object in this study is learning. Moreover, the uppermost node of the activity system, the mediating artifact, describes the instruments that are used by the subjects to take control of their own activity (Engeström, 2011). With the help of instruments, which can be both signs and other tools, the object is turned into outcomes (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). In this study, cooperative learning can be seen as a new tool that is introduced into the classroom as an activity system.

The activity system also contains the node's rules, community and division of labor. The rules of an activity system consist of the implicit and explicit norms and regulations that regulate actions in the system. Community refers to the individuals and subgroups who share the same general object, which in this study comprises the students, the teacher and myself as researcher. Division of labor refers to the horizontal distribution of tasks between the individuals and the vertical distribution of power and status among those same individuals (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). In the present study, there is both formal division of power between the students and the teacher and informal division of power between the students.

The activity system contains historically developed contradictions, both within and between the nodes. This is due to the inherent contradictions between use and exchange values of commodities that are present in every capitalist society (Engeström, 2011, 2015). Use value refers to a tradeable object that can satisfy a human need or requirement. Exchange value expresses what one can get for the same object in an exchange situation (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). There are four different layers of contradictions: primary contradictions are found internally within a node. Secondary contradictions arise between nodes when an activity system adopts a new element, which may collide with some element(s) in the existing system of activity. Tertiary contradictions arise when more culturally advanced forms of activity are introduced, while quaternary contradictions come into play when neighboring activities affect the activity system of interest (Engeström, 2015).

The theoretical starting point given by CHAT, contributes to this article by providing a framework for understanding change processes. Engeström (2011, p. 609) writes: "New qualitative stages and forms of activity emerge as solutions to the contradictions of the proceeding stage or form." The historically developed contradictions are hence seen as the starting point of any real development, because as new contradictions are revealed, new questions and solutions arise. In this study, where I aim to discuss how cooperative learning might impact students' political efficacy, CHAT thus provides a promising framework for both developmental work and for understanding resistance and contradictions within this work.

4. Methods

This study is part of a research project in which I followed a class of eighth graders aged 13 and 14 and their teacher, at a Norwegian lower secondary school in an urban inner-city area. The article focuses on the evaluation of the intervention phase of the project, where I wanted to explore in-depth the connection between the use of cooperative learning and political efficacy in a social studies class.

The formative intervention consisted of a change in the teaching approach in the social studies lessons, by implementing different cooperative learning techniques throughout a period of three months (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Kagan et al., 2018). The topics for the period were democracy and Norwegian politics, based on competence aims from the curriculum for social studies stated by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020). The period was executed in close cooperation between the teacher and the researcher: The teacher provided overviews of the curriculum in social studies and of her students' social background and academic progress, in addition to being responsible for the teaching. I helped plan concrete parts of the lessons using CL techniques and participated in all the social studies lessons throughout this period (3 x 45 minutes a week), observing the students and assisting with practical tasks in the classroom. Moreover, the students on several occasions evaluated concrete lessons through written feedback. This facilitated adjustments to meet the students' wishes and needs throughout the project.

At the end of the period, I conducted focus group interviews with the students (Clark et al., 2021), as I wanted the students to be able to build on each other's answers and to reflect together on their common experience, which is allowed for in a focus group setting (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). In the interviews, the students were asked to discuss different statements about their experience of working in CL groups and its potential effect on their political efficacy. The students also evaluated the period using a questionnaire, to provide them with an opportunity to report on the project anonymously. Both the statements in the interviews and the questionnaire concerning CL, were based on Johnson & Johnson's (2009) criteria for well-functioning cooperative learning groups. The statements concerning political efficacy were based on Levy (2013, 2018), who has developed categories to measure efficacy beliefs concerning both political knowledge and political skills. The interview tasks and the questionnaire can be found in the appendices of the article.

4.1. Data analysis

After conducting the interviews, I analyzed the data material using NVivo 12. I used the constant-comparative method of analysis, which advises the researcher to go back and forth between data analyses, data collection and reading theory (Postholm, 2019, p. 88). At the first stage, I sorted the students' responses according to the structure of the interviews. In addition, I coded four overarching themes that had emerged throughout the interviews: *skepticism towards other students*, *discussions in class*, *assessment,* and *views of politics*.

After the first round of coding, I removed myself from the data material and used a drawing exercise to visualize the emerging main categories. I used a large piece of paper with the activity system as a thinking tool (Engeström & Sannino, 2010) to do this stage of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I had the object as my focal point and developed categories, first on the subject side of the activity system, considering what actions the students were pursuing in the classroom, and then on the object side of the activity system, writing down what goals toward which the actions seemed to be aiming. Based on the students' statements, I ended up with four main categories:

Goal	Actions (based on the statements in the interviews)
Take individual responsibility	Expressions related to students' expectations of themselves and of their peers to take individual responsibility for their work and learning in the classroom
Keep friends	Expressions concerning fear of standing out or being rejected by peers
Be seen and voice their views	Expressions of dissatisfaction with having less speaking time in class and with others having more speaking time
Have fun	Expressions suggesting disinterest in the project or more interest in other things (gaming, talking to friends)

Table 1: Students' goals and actions

After sorting the students' goals, I went back to the data material for a second round of coding. I now looked for subcategories within the main category *take individual responsibility*. This was done to further structure the material in this category and to identify causal conditions in a process of axial coding, which would include factors which the students considered hindered or supported their goals (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This led to more specific labels such as *gaining knowledge* and *feeling secure* (supportive factors) and *free riders* and *don't want to be responsible for other students* (hindering factors). At this point, my main goals were to ensure that my view of the tendencies in the material concerning the students' goals were correct and that I did not leave out any details. The second layer of labels largely confirmed the categories I had developed at the end of round 1. The only change I made was to remove the *have fun* category, since I could find no statements in the interviews that were connected to this goal. I then kept the three other categories that were both based on my observations and confirmed by the students' statements in the interviews.

After the second round of coding, I again went back to the theory. I used Engeström's (2015) description of different levels of contradictions as a starting point to identify how the complexity of the object led to contradictions in the activity system. I connected the students' goals to different nodes in the activity system, for example by understanding the focus on assessment as part of the node "rules" and the internal differences among the students as "subject" as a consequence of hierarchical structures in the node "division of labor". This led to the identification of underlying contractions:

(1) Primary contradiction: Object (use vs. exchange value of learning) and subject (students have different worldviews).

(2) Secondary contradiction: New tool (cooperative learning) vs. old rules (individually responsible student + individual grades).

After this sequence, I again went back to the data. Now I read the interview transcripts from each student chronologically, again wanting to make sure I had caught all the details in the material. I then used the categories describing the students' goals to shape the findings section of this article, and the discussion section will deliberate in detail the contradictions in the classroom.

5. Findings

5.1. To take individual responsibility

Turning now to the findings, the first category of actions was directed toward the goal of taking individual responsibility, due to the students' understanding of themselves as being individually responsible for their own learning and thus for their own grades. This was linked to the students' positive and negative evaluations of the CL period, since the students seemed to evaluate the outcomes of the project depending on their own individual gains.

The students emphasized that discussing with peers who have different views could make them more confident. Student 4 put it as follows: "It's easier to talk to people after that [working in groups]. I feel that then I've also heard the others' opinions, so you can kind of understand their way of thinking. And then you kind of understand more. About their views and your own." Student 16 explained that practicing discussions in a group might make her feel better able to discuss in a larger group or talk in front of more people: "I think it might be easier to first discuss in the group, because then you can get input […]. And then if it went very well […] then maybe you dare to say it out loud, as you said earlier, you get to practice […]." Interestingly, student 16 went on to express how experiences in the group may affect her political efficacy both positively and negatively, depending on how the group responded to her views: "But then if it doesn't go well, like, oops now I said something stupid ... then maybe the arguments weren't that good anyway. Then you might not say them out loud, at least"

During the period, some of the students got involved in party politics and joined different youth political parties. These students became role models for their peers. Student 16, who was not one of the politically engaged students, described the engaged students as follows: "When they […] state their opinions out loud, then you get […] a bit more engaged, and you start to read up on it and then you begin to think this is how it is and works […]." The politically engaged students showed student 16 that political engagement was a real possibility, and as student 16 indicated, this would lead her to feel more engaged herself as she became more interested and started to understand more.

Interestingly, the students who considered themselves more capable than their peers expressed more negativity toward the project. One example regarding the lessons was given by student 6: "But when you already know a lot about politics and then you have someone who doesn't know much about politics, then you just have to explain – you don't learn anything new or understand politics better." Student 10 expressed the same viewpoint regarding the assessment conversation of his group, because he did not want the others to affect his grades: "I like to be unaffected, […] that it's kind of in my hands. I don't think it should kind of be up to others whether or not you get a good assessment." Both of these statements suggest how students are keen not to be affected by their peers; both student 2 and student 10 saw themselves as individually responsible for their own learning and grades, and cooperating with others was seen as a hindrance to their own performance.

Moreover, free riders were the most frequently commented negative issue in the interviews. Student 11 put it as follows: "Almost every time we work in groups, there's at least one person who doesn't do what he or she is supposed to." Again, the students who felt they were more competent described their experience as negative, emphasizing how it felt up to them to "carry the group" and how everyone should have individual responsibility. Furthermore, they felt that if someone did not do their share of the work, the teacher should help these students individually rather than focus on the group or class as a whole.

The view of learning as an individual responsibility was also substantiated by some of the students explicitly formulating how the fact that someone did not participate would depend on them *not wanting* to do their part (and hence was not about students struggling or *not being able* to do their part). Student 10 stated: "We often try to explain to them but they still don't want to [work]." The key word in this sentence is "want". Student 10 believes that participating or working in class is about the students' will to do so, and hence it is no wonder that he sees it as an individual responsibility to "just" change one's own behavior.

5.2. *To keep friends*

The next category of findings dealt with how the students felt uncomfortable acting in ways that might draw criticism or create tensions between them and their peers. Consequently, the goal of their actions seemed to be to keep friends. This first surfaced in the parts of the interviews regarding feedback in the groups. All of the groups discussed how the feedback process in the groups had felt forced and thereby superficial, as illustrated by student 10: "It's not really heartfelt when we're asked to give each other compliments. Everyone sits there and like, uhm, you're good at … finding information." "Finding information" is in this example a broad task given by the teacher to some of the students, and student 10's response implies that the feedback did not assert anything specific and was not directed at the contributions to the group work. None of the groups mentioned that anyone had given feedback on the social or group part of the process, such as drawing attention to other students not participating.

Student 5 suggested that the feedback part of the project did not work as intended because the students did not trust each other and therefore did not want to mention negative points: "I feel that people, they don't really want to talk about what others do that works badly." This point could be substantiated by this quote by student 7, who also raised the issue of trust in the groups: "I know others who weren't very satisfied with it and don't feel comfortable […] talking. [But if] you have someone you know well then it's easier to talk."

Moreover, the students' experience of the assessment conversation mirrored the same tendency of lack of trust. The excerpt below shows three students discussing their assessment conversation.

Student 9: Yes, it was also fun when we had that learning conversation and had to talk about politics and stuff.

Student 10: Ugh, no!

Student 9: I know!

Student 10: Because it didn't go as well as it could have. For me, I think. I like to be unaffected, […], that it's kind of in my hands. I don't think that it should kind of be up to others whether you get a good evaluation.

Student 11: That conversation. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't good either. Like, ok.

Student 10: It wasn't terrible, but it wasn't …

Student 11: It was ok.

In this specific part of the conversation, student 9 started off being positive to the assessment situation. When student 10 commented "Ugh, no!", student 9 visibly pulled back and withdrew his view and responded with "I know" to express agreement with student 10's negative comment. As student 10 continued to express his view on the situation, student 9 chose to keep quiet. Student 11, who had remained neutral throughout the interview up to that point, also ended up expressing agreement with student 10. The form of the discussion thus underscored the same point that some of the students had been communicating explicitly, namely that they would prioritize keeping social harmony over voicing views that might draw negative reactions from their peers.

5.3. *To be seen and voice their views*

The account given so far of the students' feedback on the intervention period has largely concerned their experiences of cooperative learning as a tool for teaching and learning. Interestingly, not all the students agreed with this forelaying premise. For a subgroup of students, the goal of their actions appeared to be to be seen and to voice their views. These students saw cooperative learning as a tool used by the teacher to suppress their chances of being heard. This view of CL as an unfair method stemmed from an impression of being inherently suppressed on entering the classroom. This was attributed not only to skin color, but also to gender or socio-economic status:

Student 6: It's very difficult to have a conversation with someone who thinks you should not be there or who thinks you should be beneath them. It's very difficult for people – both women and foreigners and people of color – and I think the school has been a bit ignorant or arrogant about it.

The problem expressed by this student group was the sense that their chance of being heard had weakened as a result of the changes in the teaching method. An example of this was given by student 5:

> Before [this period], we talked as individuals [...]. When you go into the classroom you hear that there's a discussion going on. And it's as an individual that you can participate. But now we're in groups, so then you kind of ... I feel that you don't get to voice your opinion.

Ironically, the difference in worldviews that becomes apparent in the interviews also shows signs of the same individualization as seen above. Student 5 also sees herself as individually responsible for making herself heard, and thereby for resolving or overcoming the underlying structures that she believes to exist in the classroom. This makes her see the groups as a threat to her usual way of responding to her feelings, which is to voice her views herself and, preferably, quieting the other students.

6. Discussion

In this study, I set out to research how the use of cooperative learning in social studies classes might impact students' political efficacy. Bandura (1997) stated that the main routes to efficacy are mastery experiences and vicarious mastery experiences. The students confirm that working in groups can provide them with mastery experiences when they try discussing politics or solving problems on a smaller scale and with vicarious mastery experiences when they observe students who they see as more capable than themselves. This corresponds with previous research on cooperative learning as a practice field for discussion and cooperation (Gillies & Khan, 2009; Guérin, 2017; Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016) which may strengthen political efficacy (Schmidt, 2021).

However, it seems that the contradictions in the activity system might present obstacles for the development of student political efficacy (Engeström, 2015). Starting with the object, the tension between the use and exchange value of learning can be seen as an overarching contradiction that ran through this project. The majority of students accepted "take individual responsibility" as their prime goal. To take individual responsibility was often connected to getting good grades, which is an expression of commodities manufactured to differentiate between students and to make it possible to assess them in a market economy. Furthermore, this high regard for the exchange value aspects of the object by the majority of the students created a tension within the subject node, between the majority, and the minority of the students who saw their prime goal as "be seen and voice their views" which at a deeper level is about the students' value as individuals or humans and is hence about use value. The weight the students' attached to individual responsibility also created tensions between the students who saw themselves as more capable and the students who were deemed less capable. Primary contradictions could thus be found in both the object and the subject nodes.

The tensions within the student group subject node underscore the importance of an open classroom climate for political efficacy (Claes et al., 2017). In an open classroom climate, students are encouraged

by peers to speak their mind and to contribute in classroom discussions (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). The contradictions in this classroom though led to a classroom climate where many students did not dare contribute and hence in which enhancement of political efficacy could not be expected, as the classroom did not provide neither opportunities as a political practicing ground nor favorable support systems (Bandura, 1997; Beaumont, 2010). The lack of an open classroom climate might also help explain the students' reactions to the feedback process, which is a central part of the composition of CL groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, 2009). In contrast to previous research showing that constructive feedback between peers may be central for evolving political efficacy (Bandura, 1997), the students reported that the feedback process in the groups was not helpful. However, this does not imply that cooperative learning cannot be supportive of the students' political efficacy in this respect. On the contrary, it might be seen to expand on Bandura's theory that general feedback that is not connected to the actual students' actions or to the actual progress of the group work will not be helpful to the students' sense of political efficacy (Bandura, 1997), suggesting the importance of rehearsing a constructive type of feedback with students.

The findings concerning contradictions within the student group node could be said to contradict previous research that underlines how CL can create a better environment between students with different backgrounds (Mitra & Serriere, 2012; Moore et al., 2019). However, the tensions must be understood to be already present as part of the historically developed contradictions in the classroom activity system (Engeström, 2015). The question then is how the students understand their experience with CL considering this background. The new tool, cooperative learning, was premised on the students being mutually dependent on each other (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Cooperative learning thus stands in direct opposition to the strong individual trend that was built into the activity system and thereby creates a secondary contradiction between the rule and the tool node (Engeström, 2015). Moreover, it seems that the individualistic starting point of the students could be considered an obstacle to the development of their political efficacy through cooperative learning methods, as it effectively made several of the students resist working in groups and thereby the promising results of a successful cooperation process.

Furthermore, considering the apparent likelihood that CL was evaluated on the basis of the students' individual gains, it would come as no surprise that the stronger students were more negative than the others. If significance or success was evaluated through asking "Did I personally gain more knowledge or help than before?", it seems natural that students who did not feel the same individual gain would not see the point of – or could even be negative toward – contributing to the others' gains. Changes seen in the classroom as an assessment task was introduced seem to substantiate how, when the formal part of the rules of the activity system were brought into play, the focus on the individual and the opposition to cooperation were both heightened, especially by students who saw cooperation as a threat to their own accomplishments. Additionally, the power structure created by the division of labor within the student

group created another tension that strengthened the pressure to follow the rules, since the students who deemed themselves more capable supported the existing rules.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the connection between cooperative learning and students' sense of political efficacy through implementing a formative intervention in which cooperative learning was introduced as a new tool in the teaching of social studies (Engeström, 2015). The experiment confirms previous research suggesting that cooperative learning can enhance important skills that underlie political efficacy, such as students getting to know different perspectives on politics (Chen & Stoddard, 2020; Mahari et al., 2019). Working in a group can provide students with an important practice arena in which they can rehearse arguing and finding common ground and in which other students can serve as role models (Mitra & Serriere, 2012). All of these findings corroborate the theoretical concepts provided by Bandura (1997) and substantiate that using cooperative learning in the social studies classroom might be a way to enhance student political efficacy.

Simultaneously, it seems clear that there is more to the case then what can be explained by Bandura's concepts (1997). While they explain thoroughly how certain aspects lead to political efficacy, this paper has underscored how the complexity of the object in the classroom leads to actions which at first may seem contradictory, but which when analyzed are rooted in the goals of the students. Eminently, the trend of individualization runs through all the different parts of the project, as shown both when the students give positive feedback on the project and when they give critique.

As previous research has suggested, it is important that the students have the chance to be active in their own learning for their political efficacy to evolve (Ballard et al., 2016; Beaumont, 2011). Consequently, there is need to break down what it actually means to be active. What does it mean to discuss in an appropriate way or to cooperate in a constructive manner? How does one give feedback? To take a step back and rehearse such skills on a smaller scale thus seems important advice. We cannot assume that cooperation generally and a constructive feedback process specifically occur automatically. Accordingly, based on my study, I suggest that exercising such practices in the classroom could be an important starting point for a good cooperation process, which in turn may be seen as favorable to the students' political efficacy.

At the same time, this research points to several important systemic contradictions. A recommendation for both teachers and researchers is to explore how assessments can be carried out without getting in the way of other important goals, such as students' ability to cooperate, develop skills or participate in activities that are not (as) easily connected to the exchange value aspects of learning. As teachers, it might be hard to see how such a development can be supported through everyday work in the classroom. But leaning on this research, I follow Biesta (2021) in recommending that the students be trained in positions and practices which they do not themselves immediately see as necessary or

desirable. The students who do not want to write or to talk in class, or who do not want to cooperate, do not necessarily see the long-term consequences of their actions. It must therefore be the teacher's job to give the students what they do not ask for in the moment, as part of their work in supporting their students' future capabilities and engagement.

Political efficacy is developed over time (Bandura, 1989), and the students' feelings may well have changed if the project had continued. This raises an important practical problem with conducting educational research and a limitation of the present study: while trying out methods in the classroom is time- and energy-consuming, a research project is usually developed (and funded) for a certain period, after which the researcher is expected to withdraw from the field to write and publish the results. Another recommendation is therefore to create research projects that take into consideration the longitudinal nature of education while at the same time recognizing the importance of being in the classroom and talking to students about their experiences. It is only through aiming to grasp the complexity of the classroom that we may be able to develop real answers to how teachers should work to support student political efficacy.

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Appendices

Interview task

The students had a board on the table displaying three fields: *agree, unsure* and *disagree*. They took turns in placing the statements shown below in the field they found appropriate and explaining why. Thereafter, they discussed the statement to try to find common ground before moving on to the next statement (Kagan et al., 2018). All the statements startet with "when we work in groups…".

1. It is easy to understand what to do.

2. Everyone contributes their share of the work.

3. All the students help each other so that everyone knows what to do.

4. We often give each other feedback on what we do that is good and what we can do better.

5. It is easier to understand politics.

6. It becomes more likely that we will discuss politics with someone who disagrees.

7. Leads to a greater chance of getting involved politically, for example by participating in a demonstration or writing a letter to a politician.

Questionnaire used for period evaluation

Unless stated otherwise, the alternatives given in the questionnaire were: *agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree* and *disagree*.

1. It is easy to understand what my job in the group is.

2. I contribute to the work.

3. I work… (alternatives: *all the time, almost all the time, some of the time, never*)

4. What can be done to ensure that everyone participates as much as possible? You can think about what you can do yourself, and what your classmates and the teacher can do. (open)

5. I get support from the others in the group on how to carry out my part of the work.

6. I support the others in the group so that they can perform their part.

7. I can ask the other students in the group for help in understanding what I should do in the group.

8. I can ask the other students in the group for help with academic questions.

9. What can you contribute to group work in class? (open)

10. I give feedback to the others in the group.

11. I get feedback from the other students.

12. the other students tell me how I can work to make the group work as well as possible.

13. I tell the other students what they can do to get their assignments done in the best possible way.

14. I can trust that the other students in the group want the best for me.

15. What do you think are the benefits of working with cooperative learning? (open)

16. What do you think are the disadvantages of working with cooperative learning? (open)

17. Do you have any other comments? (open)