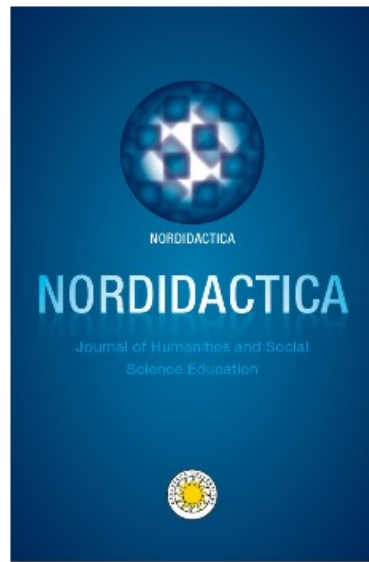


Watching, assessing, participating

Globalising political education in Norwegian upper secondary education

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Abstract: Transnational governance is expanding rapidly. From a political education perspective, an important question is to what extent and how this is included in the political universe that adolescents are being prepared for at school. Of particular interest is social science, which is part of social studies in primary and lower secondary school, before it develops into a variety of social science courses in upper secondary school. Including the transnational level in political education may mean critical thinking about current transnational issues as well as understanding how to participate politically with a transnational aim. Are these elements included in Norwegian political education in social science at school? And if so, is such participation related to notions of influence, power and conflicting interests? Or are notions of participation based on classical idealism? The research method is an analysis of selected social science textbooks in Norwegian upper secondary education. Textbooks are not assumed to determine teaching, but they are assumed to frame the field within which teachers develop their practice. The analysis shows that in the textbooks political education is expanded to a transnational level, where both political judgement of issues as well as participation are elaborated upon.

KEYWORDS: POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION, GLOBALIZATION, INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, SOCIAL SCIENCE, NORWAY

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Political education, being a main ambition for social studies in general, and social science teaching in particular¹ in most countries, has most often been understood and studied as a preparation to participation in the national political community (Børhaug, 2007; Eikeland, 1989; Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012). Political education refers to intentional educational efforts concerned with the relationship between citizens and political authorities directly or indirectly (Børhaug, 2007). Such political educational efforts tend to ignore that citizens may relate to political power at several levels. Local government and politics is an obvious example, Jøssang argues that the local level is generally ignored in the Norwegian social studies curriculum, including local politics (Jøssang, 2015).

On the other hand, political processes and governance are increasingly becoming transnational by means of organizations that act with an authority transferred to them from the states, by means of treaties and common rules (regimes) and by means of networks of experts, officials and elected politicians (Held & Mc Grew, 2003). Ordinary people may also engage in political processes at this level as citizens, but little is known about how political education includes this level of participation, even though there are some works on how the school in general encourages students to engage in development assistance and humanitarian aid (Bakken & Børhaug, 2009; Tvedt, 2003).² Børhaug and Christophersen find that Norwegian textbooks are very favourable to the United Nations (2012). But still, more needs to be done in order to understand to what extent and how Norwegian political education has developed a transnational dimension. Global issues in general have clearly been part of social studies for a long time in Norway, both in curricula and in textbooks (Hansejordet et al., 1994; Lorentzen, 2005). Whether this has taken form of political education, i.e. whether it focuses on critical thinking, taking a stand and encouraging political participation at this level is less clear.

Internationally, Evans et al. argue that international aid organizations promote global teaching of examining injustices in the world, and propose engagement in the aid organization as a way to act (Evans et al., 2009). Eis and Moulin-Doos (2017) examine curricular guidelines from EU, UNESCO and the Council of Europe. They find that notions of political participation with global reach in these documents avoid major problems of poverty, environmental degradation and war, and limits attention to the fact that individuals may have legal rights beyond the national state and individuals may voice their concerns on the internet or as consumers. Collective political action and movements with a reach beyond the nation states are ignored.

The research question for this article is therefore whether transnational issues are taught as political education in Norway. The article will first outline how transnational

¹ In this paper, social studies is used as an equivalent to the Norwegian *Samfunnsfag*, whereas social science subjects are used as equivalent to *Samfunnskunnskap*.

² There is more literature on how transnational issues ought be taught, not least from last time sustainable development was a main issue in Norwegian social studies, in the 1990s. But as this literature is not empirical to any large extent it will no be reviewed her, but see for instance (Hansejordet et al. 1994).

politics is framed in the national curriculum, arguing that it is there, but that it is unclear what it is meant to contain. Next, an analytical framework for the analysis will be presented making distinctions between knowing about and watching transnational governance, making judgements of core political issues at the transnational level and finally participating with a transnational aim. The method of research, i.e. textbook analysis of books in the final course in politics in upper secondary education, will be explained before moving on to present and discuss the results.

Transnational politics in the national curriculum

Norwegian schools are all obliged to adhere to the same national curriculum, the present one dates from 2006. It underwent a revision in 2013, which involved an attempt to strengthen political education. As the plan stands today, a striking observation is that transnational issues in general are not very prominent in social science in the compulsory courses in elementary school and lower secondary school.³ Out of 32 social science learning outcomes in social studies, very few concern transnational issues. In fifth to seventh grade, the first learning outcome of this type appears:⁴ “discuss the purpose of the UN and other international cooperation, including cooperation for indigenous people, and give examples of the role of Norway in this cooperation”.⁵ After grade 8-10, two more international objectives appear:

Present the main principles in the UN pact, UN declaration of human rights and key UN conventions, among others the ILO convention on the rights of indigenous people, show how these are visible in legislation and discuss the consequences of human rights violations.

Describe main aspects of the Norwegian economy and how it is linked to the global economy.

The remaining objectives focus on issues closer to home. In total, this compulsory curriculum does not have a very global and outreaching perspective as far as social science is concerned. In upper secondary education, however, things change. At this level there is a course in social science only which is mandatory for most study programs, and in this course international relations is one of five main themes, and this theme is defined in learning outcomes as follows:

Define the concept of power and exemplify how power is applied in the world community.

³ In primary and lower secondary education social science is integrated with history and geography in social studies.

⁴ The curriculum does not have learning objectives for each year but for every 3 years. Thus, the objectives are set for for instance 8-10 grade, or 5-7 grade.

⁵ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/SAF1-03/Kompetansemaal/?arst=372029323&kmsn=-632498266>.

Downloaded 1/3 2015.

Define the concept globalisation and assess various consequences of globalisation.

Present the goals and governing institutions of the European Union and discuss the Norwegian relation to the EU.

Find examples of different types of conflicts and human rights violations and discuss what the UN and other international actors can do.

Present different explanations why there are poor and rich countries and discuss measures to reduce global poverty.

Discuss characteristics and causes of terrorism.

As most young Norwegians attend also this course, what we have seen this far represents what is offered to the majority of young Norwegians. There is no explicit mention of the transnational level as an arena for participation, but the formulations are wide and hardly prohibit it either. These objectives are, however, quite explicit in that students should be invited to make political judgements about globalization, poverty, war and human right violations.

Finally, towards the end of upper secondary education there is the course Politics and Human Rights. This course has six components, two on political systems, two on human rights, and finally two on international politics. The learning outcomes for the two latter are as follows:

Present and compare political systems.

Present rules and agreements in international politics and their use.

Compare forms of power and use of power and assess the role of international actors in the world community.

Describe and analyse how political decisions are influenced by internationalization.

Discuss the role of mass media as international actor.

Describe the difference between state and nation and discuss problems related to multinational states and nations dwelling in several states.

Present regional and global forms of cooperation.

Discuss problems of peace and security, economy, environment, development and development assistance in relation to international cooperation.

Describe and assess international conflict and problem areas.

There is little explicit mention of transnational political participation here, but the big issues are on the agenda and could be extended to discussions of possible political activity at the transnational level. The curriculum being as open as this, there is scope for choice for teachers and textbook writers, and this article turns to the latter and asks

to what extent they have developed a concept of political engagement and participation at the transnational level, beyond learning about and watching global issues.⁶

Conceptions of transnational political participation

Political education in the framework of social science concerns citizen relations to political authority. Such education is a multifaceted phenomenon. Børhaug and Solhaug argue that at least four different aspects are involved (Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012). Development of solidarity in the political community creating trust that facilitates democracy, development of civilized co-existence among people with different opinions and values, educating young people to take a stand on key political issues based on a solid normative and empirical foundation and teaching how to participate in relation to political institutions. All these aspects may come into play when teaching transnational politics, but the two latter will be of most direct interest. How can they be included in political education aiming at transnational politics? Models of global education have expanded in recent years (Burnouf, 2004; Gardner, 2000; Hansejordet et al., 1994; Parker, 2011; Pashby, 2011), and offer some ideas of that are fruitful in this respect.

Parker gives an overview of main trends in global education.⁷ Some of them actually do not include political empowerment at all. For instance, the idea that in a global economy, competition is fierce and education must contribute either to the competitiveness of the national economy or prepare students to compete on a global labour market (Eis & Moulin-Doos, 2017; Parker, 2011; Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012). A more relevant idea from this literature is what Parker calls a global perspective, in which participation is partly included. There are two basic notions in this thinking. One is that the world is interconnected, and students must learn what these linkages and interdependencies are, that they and their lives are intertwined with the lives and problems of people far off (Burnouf, 2004). Next, students must develop an understanding and appreciation of multiple perspectives, concerning values, world views and ways of living (Gardner 2000). Related to this are values of tolerance and respect. The global perspective can be understood as an ambition of watching and understanding the globalized world and being able to interact in it. However, some contributions underline more strongly that students must also be encouraged to take a stand on global issues. They should be invited to make assessments of interconnected problems and solutions. An early proponent of this view is Carsten Schnack, who pointed out the major crises in the world as core curricular material: ecology, democracy, poverty, armament (Schnack, 1995). Environmental education, as it was developed in Norwegian social studies and teacher training in the 1990s also

⁶ In 2020 a new curriculum will be implemented. Preliminary drafts of the plan for social studies indicate that global issues will be part of it, but in general terms. See <https://hoering.udir.no/Hoering/v2/288>. 20.02.2019.

⁷ See also Evans et al. (2009) for a parallel review.

emphasized the need to examine global problems in a critical perspective (Farstad et al., 1993; Hansejordet et al., 1994).

Making political judgements and assessments can be seen as critical thinking. Critical thinking is twofold (Børhaug & Christophersen, 2012). It has an epistemological component of examining sources, data and other documentation. And it has a political component, where issues are evaluated based on interests, values and the common good. In order to encourage critical thinking to take a stand, social science must both invite to epistemological examinations, and invite to political judgements (Christensen, 2017). The latter must involve that social, political, economic and environmental issues are not taught as uncontroversial givens, but as objects for political choice. Where there are different perspectives and views, students must be told, so that they can position themselves, based on what they see as their interests and values. Where different solutions are tried in different places, students must learn that there are different solutions. Burnouf argues that global education has to stress issues as influenced by choice, reform, action and participating actors (Burnouf, 2004). Students must learn to examine issues in light of general normative standards such as democracy, human rights and justice as a basis for critical assessments.

However, transnational political education may also go beyond making critical political assessments in controversial issues. Several authors acknowledge that a global engagement has a political, participatory dimension (Huckle & Wals, 2015; Jickling & Wals, 2008; Burnouf, 2004). A common idea is that students must be encouraged to think critically about global issues, and next, to act locally. I.e. that individual citizens should learn to let the global context inform their own choices – not least as consumers (Pike & Selby, 1988; Eis & Moulin-Doos, 2017). It can be questioned whether this is participation aimed at political authorities at a transnational level. On the other hand, such action can be part of advocacy and wake up public opinion. Like boycott of South African products once was. But it can also be a quite personal, depoliticized action.

Parker identifies a cosmopolitan approach to education for a globalized world (2011), which underlines participation more strongly. This is also a mixed group of ideas (Linklater, 2002; Waldron, 2003). One variant is a moral conception of the world citizen, morally obliged to care for all fellow human beings. International solidarity, development assistance and aid can be justified this way. Young people can learn to participate in such charity and solidarity work. Another approach is legal, and argues that human rights extend to all human beings and thus we are all entitled to participate in world affairs. Teaching human rights is therefore of particular importance as an approach to international affairs (Osler & Kerry, 2002). The arenas where young people with a cosmopolitan outlook may participate are, however, often rather undefined. Non-Governmental Organizations, both idealistic and interest based, that operate in states and communities, are often integrated in transnational networks making them platforms for involvement in global problems (Evans et al., 2009). Digital resources also facilitate participation. World-wide public opinions develop online (Albrow & Glasius, 2008), global advocacy is the term Evans et al. apply (2009). The internet facilitates direct action on the ground or online.

In theories of international politics, there is a distinction between idealism and realism (Held & McGrew, 2003; Hovi & Malnes, 2011), and this implies quite different notions about what any given kind of participation is about. The idealist position stress that world politics ought to, and can be, regulated by peaceful cooperation and negotiation. Peaceful consensus building and conflict resolution is possible and/or must be promoted. This is what work in organizations, direct action, internet based advocacy or direct action is all about. Furthermore, participation in this perspective can also be to work to promote such peaceful cooperation in general. Thus, David Held has argued that in order for democracy to survive, it has to be reinvented at the transnational level (Held, 2003). And by that he means that powerful institutions, with supernational authority, has to be established, and they have to be held democratically accountable. The EU and the UN contains embryonic elements of such arrangements, but they must be developed. Translated to transnational political education, this implies that teaching based in an idealist position will argue for a new global institutionalized democratic order, for instance favouring the UN. At the EU level we see quite systematic attempts to develop a European approach to citizenship, in addition to the national one, supporting and promoting the construction of Europe (Ross, 2008).

In opposition to idealism, the realist position argues that states are self-centered, with conflicting interests in power and resources (Gilpin, 2003). The use of force and conflict is the normal state of affairs, and states as well as other actors, will either try to be strong enough to protect themselves, isolate themselves in order to stay out of trouble, or build alliances. Transnational participation will, in this perspective be understood as much more conflictual. Participation is to participate in such conflicts, or struggles.

Thus, political education with a transnational focus can promote watching and understanding, but also assessing and having opinions about the transnational level, and even on participating politically to influence. The overall research question is whether transnational issues are taught as political education in Norwegian upper secondary school. Based on the theoretical basis outlined above, this can be specified as follows:

- are transnational issues presented as objective and unchangeable facts or are students invited to make assessments and develop opinions about transnational issues?

- to what extent are students invited to become participants, and how? I.e. what is the role of social media, NGOs, consumer activism, transnational movements or personal lifestyle?

- is participation about entering a field of power and conflict, or is it to engage in consensus building and cooperation?

Methods of research

Textbooks are chosen as an empirical indicator for subject matter contents in social science subjects. This choice does not imply an assumption that textbooks determine teaching. Textbooks can be used by teachers as they see fit, and teachers may combine textbooks with other resources (Dale, 1993). However, due to work overload, reform

pressure, students with special needs and scarce subject matter knowledge, a teacher's capacity to make such judgements is limited, so consequently the textbook may well guide teaching contents and methods more than what the ideals of teacher professionalism suggest (Christophersen et al., 2003; Selander & Skjelbred, 2004; Skjelbred & Aamotsbakken, 2003). Regrettably as that may be, it offers methodological advantages since textbooks stand out as convenient indicators of main tendencies in school subjects.

As shown in the previous sections, transnational issues is a recurrent theme in the social science curriculum during the secondary school years in particular. The final treatment comes in the course "Politics and human rights", which is an optional course towards the end of upper secondary education. Only a minority of students follow this course, but I have chosen it as empirical source nevertheless, because notions of how and to what extent young people may participate at the international arena are expected to be most clearly pronounced at this level. There are two textbooks that are commonly in use for this course in Norway, and their treatment of international politics is the data material for this analysis.

The analysis starts with a brief overview of the books, and moves on to the question of whether transnational issues are presented as issues to have opinions and make judgements about. Next, are ordinary citizens portrayed as acting subjects in relation to international politics? What specific form of participation are presented, and are they related to conflictual or consensual notions of politics?

Analysis: watching, assessing and participating

The two books, from the publishing houses Aschehoug and Cappelen Damm, are both expensive books, with a lot of illustrations and high quality paper.⁸ An interesting detail is that both books have photos of young people in action in political protest on the front cover. Both books are well over 400 pages long. Transnational issues take 216 out of 406 pages in Aschehoug (Mellby & Kval, 2012) and 215 out of 445 in Cappelen Damm (Bergesen, Ryssevik & Føllesdal, 2006). Most of this is explanations and presentations of structures and processes at the transnational level, and the aim of this article is not to analyse this totality, only to examine whether political education is a part of this.

A challenge in textbook analysis is that quite often relevant points are mentioned very briefly, with a few sentences in a paragraph with another main focus. It is highly questionable whether such brief notes are noted at all by the students, unless the teacher makes a specific point out of such minor details because he/she thinks they are not details. Other relevant points are made the main issue in at least one paragraph or

⁸ Bergesen, Helge Ole, Jostein Ryssevik & Andreas Føllesdal (2006). *Politikk og menneskerettigheter*. Oslo: Aschehoug. Mellbye, Axel J. & Karl-Eirik Kval (2012). *Politikk og makt*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm.

section, and treated more in detail. This makes them more visible and likely to be noted by teacher and students. In the registration of textbook contents I have registered both types, but I have marked the difference in the summing up tables.

Concerning textbook invitations to critical thinking and taking a stand on global issues, the books sometimes present conflicts of a type that students can be expected to engage in. For instance, liberalization of world trade. This is interpreted as an invitation to critical thinking and to take a stand. In other cases, the books refer to conflicts which it is less obvious that young Norwegians should want to engage in, for instance the conflicting views on the status of the Falkland Islands. Conflicts of this latter kind are not registered as invitations to have an opinion. Only the former type is counted. Registrations from the Aschehoug book are marked with an “x”, and from the Cappelen Damm book with an “o” in summary tables.

A main finding is that the books both introduce a range of global issues in way that invites critical thinking, i.e. as object for political choice, marked by different perspectives or explicitly assessed by normative criteria. As table 1 shows, core global issues are introduced. This mainly takes the form of quite brief presentations of opposing points of view. For example, the Aschehoug book explains that

The NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 is a good example of a humanitarian intervention. In Kosovo military forces were used consciously to stop abuses of Kosovo Albanians from the Serbian military. This was done without UN mandate, because Russia, a close ally of Serbia, opposed it. Because of this, it can be argued, on one hand, that the NATO intervention was against international law and the UN pact because it was not approved by the Security Council. On the other hand, the intervention can be seen as a necessary humanitarian intervention to protect a vulnerable group of people, in correspondence with international law and human rights (Bergesen et al., 2013, p. 221).

There are similar discussions of opposing views on free trade, climate policies and development assistance. Most often the entries are about as thorough as in the example offered here. They are problematized in different ways, not only by showing that there are multiple views and perspectives. However, there are fewer introductions to normative evaluations leading to critical assessments of social and political issues. The most notable exception is that both books spend many pages on human rights as normative foundation and analyse to what extent human rights are respected. There is of course a normative aspect in discussions about free trade, climate change, poverty and development assistance. But the norms activated in those discussions are not clearly spelled out and the approach is more to present different points of view than to clarify opposing normative positions.

An interesting point is that it is so clearly established that the world order, both free trade, human rights and global and regional organisations are political constructs. For instance, the World Trade Organisation is described in such terms:

Throughout the post-war period, there has been international work to eliminate obstacles for trade among countries. First through GATT, later through WTO, which was established in 1995. The countries have reached agreements on international trade (...). In this way, the international

cooperation on trade has contributed to liberalizing world trade (Bergesen, Ryssevik & Føllesdal, 2006, p. 293-294).

This way, the global order stands out as man-made, not as inevitable evolution. This perspective is present in both books. Some issues are raised in both books, some only in one.

Table 1 gives an overview of all the issues that students are invited to have an opinion about in one or both books. As can be seen, they are many. They include security and military issues, international economic cooperation, climate and environmental issues, poverty and development and finally human rights.

TABLE I.

Issues to have an opinion about.

| |
|--|
| Guantanamo |
| The war in Iraq |
| The NATO intervention in Kosovo |
| EU (how integrated, how democratic) |
| Norway and the EU |
| Free trade |
| Development assistance |
| Global warming |
| Norwegian oil income investments |
| Are human rights universal? |
| Anti-terror legislation and democracy |
| War on terror |
| Norwegian foreign policy strategy |
| Minority rights |
| National sovereignty versus human rights |
| Who benefits from WTO? |
| Norway in US led operations abroad |
| How do we measure development? |
| Transnational regulation and environment |

A first partial conclusion, then, is that as the textbooks define the subject “Politics and human rights”, the international politics part raises a broad range of issues as controversial and open for assessments and opinions. Globalisation in general and transnational issues are not portrayed as given and beyond political choice and evaluation. Students are invited not only to watch, but also to be concerned about most of the global issues in a critical perspective. However, some of these introductions are brief.

Thus, students are challenged to engage in global issues. But are students also taught what they might do with their engagement? Or are they left to be engaged, but helpless spectators? To what extent do the textbooks outline a framework for active participation citizenship with a global view? First, both books point to Norwegian foreign policy, which is within reach for political participation within the national state framework. To engage in Norwegian politics and how Norway should engage herself transnationally is important. The Cappelen Damm book points out that “...many actors and circumstances

determine how the foreign policy should be defined and implemented. First and foremost, we must distinguish among external and internal factors”. The text points out four such factors: territory and population, economic factors, type of regime, and finally, national actors: “among others, the bureaucracy, internal pressure groups (popular movements and organisations), national media, enterprises, cultural and ethnic minorities” (Mellbye & Kval, 2012, p. 261). These points are explained, at least to some extent. The Cappelen-Damm book explains the possibilities to influence Norwegian foreign policy like this:

Many interest groups and interest organizations are engaged in foreign policy issues. The government often receives suggestions from idealistic organizations such as the Red Cross, Norwegian People’s Aid, the Norwegian Church Relief and Save the Children (Mellbye & Kval, 2012, p. 264).

Even if it can be argued that it is fairly obvious that also young people can join organisations like this, it is noteworthy that this is not explicitly spelled out.

As pointed out, young people can also be educated to act at the international arena, or towards this level somehow. Is this emphasized in the two books? As noted, the front page photo on both books illustrates such participation. Again, we should distinguish between brief mentions and systematic deliberations. The Aschehoug book for instance, explains over 4 pages how interest organisations that have been introduced in earlier chapters, are also involved in international networks with sister organisations in other countries (Bergesen et al., 2013, p. 222-225). Thus, joining such organisations at home also has the potential of expanding the engagement to an international level. However, it is not explicitly spelled out that young people may join and be active themselves, as the following quotation shows:

Trade unions were among the first NGOs (frivillige organisasjoner) who engaged themselves abroad. They needed the support from each other in conflicts with multinational corporations (.....). As the EU has expanded its authority, trade unions are organized at a European level to influence political decisions in the union. All major trade unions are represented with an office in Brussels (ibid. p. 224).

The social media are also presented as a participatory channel with transnational reach. The Cappelen-Damm book has an extensive explanation over 2 pages about “Social media – an important component in international politics?” (Mellbye & Kval, 2012, p. 275). In the concluding chapter, this book argues that

Human rights activists and groups show great courage when they are active in authoritarian states that suppress opposition and critique brutally. Therefore, they depend on support and attention from the outside world, which makes it more difficult for the government to punish activists with internment and imprisonment. Social media have made it easier for activists in one country to coordinate their work for human rights. It is also far easier to have contact with groups abroad. Thus, the activists become more visible, and the government will not be able to react against them without getting international reactions (Mellbye & Kval, 2012, p. 461).

Most explanations of how the students themselves may play a role at the international stage are at this low level of elaboration. However, in the Aschehoug book in particular, exercises at the end of the chapter are specifically concerned with how young people may relate transnational politics:

Find one of the Norwegian NGOs who is engaged in overseas development assistance (see norad.no for statistics on this). How does this organization relate to the problem of donor dependency? Send them an e-mail with questions about this based on the information you have found (Bergesen, Ryssevick & Føllesdal, 2006, p. 309).

In table 2 it can be seen that the total picture is one of pointing out a broad range of avenues to engagement beyond the Norwegian political arena. Findings from Cappelen Damm are marked “o”, from Aschehoug with “x”. Where there is a “+”, it means that the possibilities for adolescents – as opposed to citizens in general - are pointed out explicitly. Most often this is not the case, as illustrated in the quotations above.

TABLE 2

Participatory forms at the transnational level

| Participatory form | Brief mention – exercises | Elaborated explanation |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------|
| NGOs linked to international NGOS | O | X |
| Amnesty | X + | |
| Ethical consumer | X + | |
| Anti-globalization organisations | X | |
| Fair trade, boycotts | | X + |
| Carbon neutral lifestyle | | X + |
| List of things you can do for the climate as | | X + |
| Human rights groups and organisations | X + O | |
| Human Rights tribunal, Strassbourg | | X |
| International NGOs working with environmental issues | O | |
| Public opinion, awareness | O | |
| Humanitarian, aid organisations working in poor countries | O (repeatedly) | |
| Social media (examples from the Arab spring) | | O |
| Direct contact with states and corporations | X + | |

As the table also shows, this participation-action aspect is more clearly elaborated in one of the books. What gives a higher score in the Aschehoug book is partly that it has included, more than the other, personal lifestyle measures as participation of relevance. Besides, this book has a section in its exercises at the end of each chapter with the heading “Action”. They focus both on life style and consumption as well as on

organized participation (see above) or direct action by means of internet, as illustrated below.

Search the internet for information about a product that you know well from your daily life. What does the producer/company say about their emissions of CO₂? Do they take measures to reduce emissions? Are you content with what you have found out? If not, send an e-mail to the company to know more. Do you want to continue using this product after having received all information? (Bergesen, Ryssevik and Føllesdal 2006, p. 330).

Chose a country that has experienced riots during the Arab spring. How are human rights respected by the government in this country? Find the nearest embassy of this country and send them an e-mail with your points of view (Bergesen, Ryssevik and Føllesdal 2006, p. 387).

In these quotes young people are more directly challenged to activate themselves. Transnational political processes can be understood as cooperation or as struggles between actors with conflicting interests and values. The difference between the former (idealism) and the latter (realism), is even explained in the Cappelen book (Melby & Kval, 2012, p. 245). The general descriptions of transnational politics reflect both perspectives, even if the very strong emphasis on the importance of human rights in international affairs in both books should be seen in the context of a similar stress on human rights in social science also at lower levels (Børhaug & Christophersen, 2012). These explanations of the importance of human rights and how the UN and other organisations promote them give Norwegian teaching about international politics in this subject a general tendency towards the classical idealist position in theories of international politics. What is more important, however, is how citizen participation with a transnational aim is portrayed; as participation in a struggle or as joining transnational cooperation?

In particular the Aschehoug book articulates the participatory forms mentioned above in conflictual terms, for instance by pointing out that “globalization has at times met fierce resistance from trade unions, farmers’ unions and the environmental movement all over the world (Bergesen, Ryssevik & Føllesdal, 2006, p. 294). The “power position” of NGOs working for human rights and the environment is described like this:

Their power position is based in their ability to put states or corporations on display (sette i gapestokken) by revealing unacceptable practices. Therefore, they often go into conflicts with other actors. If they get media coverage, they can prevail in relation to powerful states and big multinational corporations (ibid. p. 233).

The Cappelen book is less explicit, and explains the role of the same NGOs for environment and human rights like this:

Many newer NGOs, among others Attac and Oxfam, address questions concerning globalization, trade and the situation of poor countries. This way, they place important social problems on the agenda in the media (Melby & Kval, 2012, p. 319).

The role of NGOs in determining national foreign policy is explained like this: “Many interest groups and interest organisations are engaged in foreign policy issues. Often the national government receives input (innspel) from NGOs” (ibid., p. 264). The Cappelen book also has mentions of participation as conflictual, but less so. However, the realist position is not only an assumption about conflict and power, it is also a notion of the primacy of national interests. Realism in this narrow sense, i.e. how to secure Norwegian national interests is less pronounced in both books. The conflictual political processes in question in the books are concerned with how to solve global issues, which brings them closer to the idealist position.

Closing discussion

The overall research question, whether transnational issues are taught as political education in Norwegian upper secondary school, has been examined via the following sub-questions:

-are transnational issues presented as objective and unchangeable facts or are students invited to have opinions about transnational issues?

-to what extent are students invited to become participants, and how? I.e. what is the role of internet based forms, NGOs, consumer activism, transnational movements or personal lifestyle?

- is participation about entering a field of power and conflict, or is it to engage in consensus building and cooperation?

As the analysis has shown, students are introduced to controversial issues at the transnational level where views differ quite systematically. Likewise, students are introduced to the fact that transnational institutions and developments can be shaped by political reform and agreement. Compared with an analysis made of the extent to which critical judgements are allowed and presented in textbooks in lower secondary school, the difference is marked (Børhaug & Christophersen, 2012). In this latter analysis it was found that critical approaches to the political and legal systems, and to the economic order, were quite rare, whereas there were selective critical points of marginal groups in Norwegian society (racists, non-voters). The range of critical entries is much larger in the present material.

Throughout both books, in one more than in the other, we also repeatedly find short introductions, sometimes very short, to various platforms for participation in social and political work with a transnational scope. The range of participatory forms is quite broad, and again contrasts with the fairly narrow voter election that seems to dominate political education in the compulsory courses in the Norwegian educational system (Børhaug, 2007). This difference is not dramatic, i.e. much of the material is made up of quite brief mentions. But in particular the Aschehoug book also has some broader discussions of participation. What dominates is internet based forms and NGOs. In one of the books, there is also suggestions about lifestyle measures – things to do in your daily life. There are brief indications of political participation as linked to movements, for instance to the labour movement (international trade unionism) or the environmental

movement as a transnational force, but these are rare. The books also point out that working to influence national foreign policy is a means to engage with transnational issues. The different approaches can be visualized in figure 1.

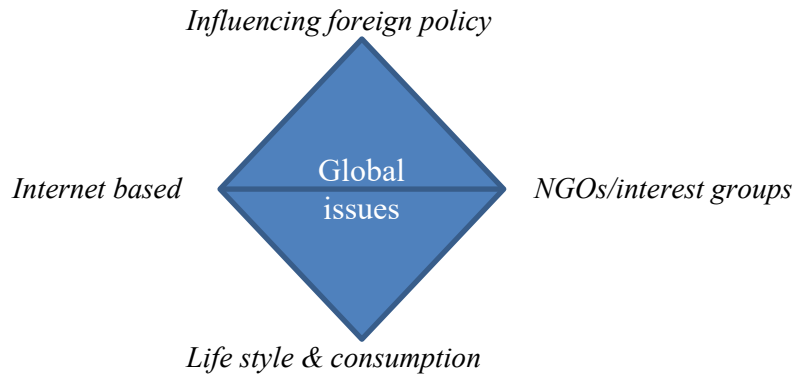


FIGURE 1.

Political participation with a transnational aim

Such participation is to quite some extent seen in a conflict perspective, i.e. of entering a field of conflicting values and interests. Which is a rather marked contrast with much of the literature on education for democracy at local and national scale, where deliberative and consensus oriented perspectives are the preferred ones (Børhaug, 2004; Borgebund, 2015).

In total, the textbook analysis suggests that political education with a transnational scope can be found in the optional Norwegian course “Politics and human rights”, at the end of upper secondary education. The conclusion is that Norwegian students attending this course are not limited to watching, they are also asked to assess and participate.

However, only a minority of students, many of them with special interest in social science and preparing to pursue the subject in higher education attend this course. The political education offered here seems different from what students are offered in the earlier compulsory courses. Even if it is difficult to compare with political education at lower levels as the studies from lower classes are not completely parallel, it is noteworthy that the critical approach is more articulated, the range of participatory options is wider, and realist ideas of participation are more easily pronounced in this final course. This difference can be interpreted in many ways. One is that this has to do with progression, students are capable of understanding such subject matter only at this level. However, there is a certain simplicity and naivety over the accounts of participation even here. This is in the final year before many of the students will start university and even though it is difficult to compare subjects, the level of complexity in other subjects at the same level is perhaps a bit higher? This is not really documented, it could be that the general weak development of didactical models defining progression in social science leads to a situation where progress is slow (Børhaug, 2015). But it

could also be that it is easier to emphasize critical assessment and political conflict when the issues at hand are outside Norway, far off. Critical thinking at this level does not disturb the task of legitimizing the Norwegian political order. Or, it could be that it is assumed that the students of this course are those who will study social science, in particular political science, and become bureaucrats and employees in the organizations working internationally from Norway.

It is not self-evident that political education ought to emphasise participation at the transnational level. As pointed out by for instance Burnouf (2004) and Eis & Moulin-Doos (2017), the difficult point is that it is very easy to exaggerate what such participation may achieve. Löden is one social science didactician who has warned against forgetting that the nation state is by far more important and within reach (Löden, 2002). However, growing recognition of the transnational interconnectedness of social and political processes could very well lead to the strengthening of transnational elements in political education, and the profile found here is one way of doing that.

Political education aims at encouraging participation. But knowledge about how to participate is not enough to make young people act, even if knowledge is positively correlated to participation (Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012). Motivation – i.e. what makes participation worthwhile – is therefore important, and probable more so when dealing with transnational processes which may leave feelings of helplessness. In the model of transnational political education outlined above, the issues themselves seem to play a key role as motivator. Issues are problematized and presented at length in the books, making the question of how to do something come quite naturally. In this respect, nationally oriented, mainstream political education could learn from the findings in this article.

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