

Editorial Nordidactica 2023:4

Martin Ubani & Anuleena Kimanen



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We are delighted to present you the fourth issue of Nordidactica - Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education in 2023 (vol 13). It has again been a very good year for subject didactics and for Nordidactica. Nordidactica focuses on subject didactics in Social Science, Geography, History, Civics, Religion, and Political Science education. Throughout its existence the journal has brought together researchers with different disciplinary, methodological and contextual backgrounds – and continues to do so. This year started with a Jubilee issue of the journal (Nordidactica 1/13) and continued with a thematic issue *Kritisk tenkning i de nordiske samfunnsfagene* (Nordidactica 2/13). These have been followed by two issues covering a diverse range of topics (Nordidactica 3/13 and 4/13). Altogether four issues with 33 new contributions in 2023!

The current issue presents seven fresh studies on the didactics of social science subjects. As usual, the articles are diverse not only in their themes but also in their methods and contexts. The first three articles focus on different aspects of citizenship and democracy education. In his article *Chasing deliberation in the Social Science classroom - A study of deliberative quality in factual and controversial issues discussions* Jonas Henau Teglbjærg focuses on classroom discussions in Danish social science lessons. The study assesses the deliberative quality of classroom discussion in three contexts: a factual issue, a controversial issue, and a scaffolded controversial issue. The data were collected as video observations. In the article, Teglbjærg describes how, for example, the controversial issue context produced more argumentation, contestation and engagement compared to the factual issue context. Furthermore, the study describes how controversial issues seemed to elicit more debate related to aspects of inequality, exclusion and informal talk in classroom discussions. However, Teglbjærg concludes that further research is needed on the teacher's role, methods and practices when focusing instruction on controversial issues. The second article presents an examination of History education in Finland. The article *Ordinary Finns and Minority Folk: The Representation of Minorities and Colonialism in History Education in Finland* by Tanja Kohvakka focuses on the portrayed history of minorities in Finland and its colonial past. She analyses 18 history textbooks used in basic education in Finland using discourse analysis. According to Kohvakka's study, there are significant differences between textbooks written in Finnish and Swedish, for example. Kohvakka revealed that history textbooks in Swedish included more information and critical perspectives on minorities and colonialism than history textbooks in Finnish. Moreover, she found that many minority groups were neglected in all of the textbooks analysed. She concludes that history textbooks tend to associate colonialism with overseas activities without addressing the colonial history of Sápmi. The third article, *Konstruktiv religionskritikk og medborgerskap: Læreres beskrivelser og refleksjoner*, turns the focus to the themes of democracy and citizenship education. In the article, Sebastian Tjelle Jarmer uses

perspectives from democracy and citizenship research, sociology of religion, and the didactics of RE to discuss the critique of religion in Norwegian religious education. The article is empirical and based on 13 semi-structured interviews with teachers from various upper secondary schools in Norway. The study shows how metacognitive perspectives, power analyses, professional knowledge and practical experience are considered central elements in facilitating constructive criticism of religion in RE. Based on the teachers' descriptions, the article presents the case that teaching about the critique of religion can also be used for the purposes of democracy education.

Then the focus shifts to ethics education. Firstly, in the fourth article, *Å utvikle etisk kompetanse med 3H-modellen: En studie av etikkdidaktisk undervisningsdesign med VR*, Simon Simchai Hansen and Knut Aukland report a design-based intervention in moral education that aimed to enhance 11-13 year old Norwegian students' ethical competence. The study used virtual reality and a 360-degree video depicting bullying. Students were invited to take the position of both a witness and a victim of bullying. The researchers developed a model of ethical competence with three dimensions (cognitive, emotional, action) for the purposes of the instructional design. The model was also used in the analysis of the data of 30 student texts and three focus group interviews. The study describes the key inclinations in students' ethical reflections, such as students' tendency to emphasise the consequences for themselves, their ability to take the perspective of another, and whether they were able trust adult caretakers to address their problems with regard to bullying. The fifth article focuses on a similar theme, ethics, although with a completely different approach. In the article *Perspectives on Learning and their Implications for the Ethics Education Part of Religious Education* Jon Magne Vestøl reports a review study of articles from the Journal of Moral Education over the past decades. Moral and ethics education is one of the central topics and objectives in religious education, for example. Vestøl examines in the articles the relationship between ethics and three major learning theories, the behaviourist approach, the cognitive approach, and the sociocultural approach. The article shows that in the journal behaviourist perspectives have received little attention and have been criticized. On the other hand, cognitive approaches have been dominant, and sociocultural perspectives have been paid attention to some extent. However, Vestøl also discusses how perspectives from neurobiology have been introduced during the last two decades to address morality in ways that seem to favour an integration of aspects from the three previous approaches.

The next two articles are this years final contributions. The sixth article, *Geografi i studentexamen i Finland: Hur skolans kursutbud påverkar de studerandes val av krävande uppgifter i gymnasieskolans slutexamen*, offers insight on matriculation examinations in Finland in Geography. Christina Ruth and Tomas Hanell examined the quality of students' answers over ten-year span (2010-2020) and their relation to the courses they attended. In addition, whereas in 2010 a paper exam was conducted, in 2020 an e-exam was implemented in the matriculation examination. Through empirical analysis the researchers were able to confirm that the number of geography courses a school offers and the level of difficulty of the assignments that students chose were clearly correlated. Interestingly, this correlation existed in the e-exam in 2020, but not

in the paper exam from 2010. These results have broader relevance especially for the development of matriculation examinations in social science subjects. This article is followed by the seventh article written by Katarina Kärnebro, *Teaching RE – for what purpose? A discourse analysis of teachers’ talk about their teaching in relation to the children’s existential questions*, concludes the issue. She bases her work on the fundamental curricular changes in Swedish RE in the 1960s when existential questions were introduced as a theme of the Swedish subject of religious education. However, recent studies seem to indicate that teachers feel there is currently stronger emphasis on knowledge than existential issues. Her study is based on interviews of 11 upper primary school RE teachers. In her study, Kärnebro investigates what teachers take into account when they plan their teaching. The article describes the discourses that teachers construct, engage in or sustain when talking about their professional and pedagogical actions. The results showed that Teaching for the syllabus was a dominant discourse among teachers, whereas Teaching for understanding democratic values and Teaching for engagement discourses were less prevalent. It seems that the dominant discourse stems from perceived systemic constraints among teachers and how they view students as objects of teaching, leading to a tendency to overlook students’ own questions about the topics handled and about life. The article offers insight into the challenges historical curricular layers present when developing instruction that is also relevant beyond the subject of RE.

We would like to express our gratitude here especially to the authors and reviewers who have been key in keeping the journal alive, interesting and of excellent quality in 2023. We are humbled by the willingness, commitment and patience of both parties to refine the manuscripts to meet not only the standards of the journal, but also to realise the potential that the accepted manuscripts have shown in the first versions sent for review. This journal relies on the whole community. The contributions to subject didactics research this year have been outstanding in many ways – and we can already reveal that, also in terms of themes and content, next year, too, is looking very promising indeed!

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The Editors