Disagreement in the Classroom – Citizenship in Practice?

A Case Study Exploration of Student-led Discussions of Controversial Issues

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Abstract

This study explores students' experiences with, and views on, controversial issues discussions in two lower secondary schools in one of the biggest cities in Norway. The study additionally explores whether differing socio-economic contextual factors and individual factors influence students' experiences in their own accounts of engagement in the issues concerned. The overarching methodological approach is qualitative. A case study design with a set of deductively based theoretical assumptions have helped guide the research process and analysis. Semi-structured interviews with individual students function as the primary data source.

The findings show that many participants highly valued their discussion experiences. The content was generally perceived to be relevant and authentic, and the pedagogy was found to stimulate active participation by students of diverse opinions. However, while the most controversial issues stimulated highly valued discussion experiences among most students, the discussions were also experienced as less appreciated or resented by some. The schools differ in terms of students' perceptions of how supportive the classroom climate was experienced as a site for such discussions. These findings indicate that some features concerning 'climate' may have encouraged some students to participate, and hindered others. It is also suggested that informal socialization is influential for the development of individual students' political and civic engagement. The use of controversial issues discussions as a means of citizenship education may therefore be highly valuable for certain participants, under certain conditions. However, the presence of some less appreciated elements of students' experiences, should not be ignored in an overall assessment of such discussions.

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1   Introduction

Educators, researchers, politicians, and other stakeholders involved in international and national education discourse, have in recent decades argued for the revitalization of democratic citizenship education as a tool for strengthening democratic societies (Kerr, 2012, p. 19). Education systems are increasingly seen as efficient fields for governmental action addressing great societal challenges of our time, such as securing democratic participation, building peaceful societies and social cohesion, protecting against the rise of xenophobia and racism, and preventing extremism and radicalization processes among youth (Ghosh et al., 2016, p. 5). In line with the dominant international picture, citizenship education is recently addressed as a concept of importance in Norwegian education policy through the renewal of the National Curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016). Implied is a theoretical line of thought that aims at teaching *about* democracy and *for* democratic participation, *through* active participation (Stray & Sætra, 2015, p. 462). It is however worth questioning if such goals are realistic within formal educational frames; can we *learn* to live together in increasingly diverse democratic societies?

The scientific discourse is dominated by studies that argue for the introduction of controversial issues discussions in open, democratic, and participatory classrooms. Such studies emphasize different aspects of importance and are equally met with relevant criticism. Firstly, there is a growing body of research that claims to show causal predicaments of an open classroom climate and favorable citizenship outcomes such as knowledge, values, and engagement, based on large-scale comparative data sets offered by The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IAE) in the 1999 Civic Educational Study (CIVED) and 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) (Campbell, 2008; (Hess & Avery, 2008; Knowles & Mc Cafferty-Wright, 2015; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Secondly, a number of small-scale classroom studies have shown positive student experiences with controversial issues discussions, based on the presence of accessible and authentic topics, strong and diverse views of participants, and active participation by different groups of students (Avery, Simmons, & Levy, 2011; Eränpalo, 2014; Hand & Levinson, 2012; Hess, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Critical voices question to what extent such favorable outcomes result from educational efforts, or whether factors outside the classroom are equally important in fostering konwledgable and engaged youth (Biesta, Lawy, & Kelly, 2009; Lauglo, 2016; Ljunggren & Öst, 2010;

Mikkelsen, Fjeldstad, & Lauglo, 2011). Additionally, there are researchers who address certain problematic aspects of controversial issues discussions, such as students' experienced sensitivity towards how they are percieved by others, and potential polarization in class (Hess, 2009; Hess & Posselt, 2002).

Norwegian data from the 2009 ICCS study suggest a range of civic characteristics of Norwegian adolescence. A summary of citizenship competencies shows how they score above ICCS average on civic knowledge, but below average on most engagement measures (Mikkelsen et al. 2011, p. 157). Findings also imply that controversial issues practices are *present* in classrooms (Mikkelsen et al, 2011, p. 181). However, in-depth studies of controversy in Norwegian practice are mainly restricted to teacher perspectives; specifically addressing the 22nd of July 2011 terrorist attacks in education, and generally exploring teacher experiences with democratic citizenship as a legislative education mandate (Anker & Von Der Lippe, 2015; Gulestøl & Farstad, 2015; Knapstad, 2012; Stray & Sætra; 2016; Stray & Sætra, 2015; Åsenden, 2016). Furthermore, research on the citizenship concept have helped identify its specific historical and contemporary position in curriculum and education policy, both nationally and comparatively (Biseth, 2009; Osler & Lybaek, 2014; Stray, 2009; Larsen, 2015). Consequentially, many argue for the introduction of controversy in Norwegian education practice. Solhaug (2013, p. 194) for instance: "recommends that school focuses on the political, and possibly the controversial, aspects of democracy and citizenship in its approach to citizenship education". Such an introduction should not only be based on international insight, or research on teacher practice, but also on critical scrutiny of student perspectives. Moreover, few Norwegian studies have focused specifically on pedagogical practices and outcomes of controversial issues discussions, or specifically on student experiences.

In keeping with the existing literature, this study thus aims at exploring the subjective perspectives of students participating in controversial issues discussions. Contrasting approaches between those who argue for the potential citizenship education has in developing active democratic citizens, and the critics who emphasize informal socialization, and a strong socio-economic influence on individuals, opens for certain questions of theoretical importance: How are such discussions valued, by whom, and under what conditions? A democratic citizenship seminar organized at the Utøya island, one of the sites of the 22nd of July terrorist attack, and subsequently held student-led discussion sessions in two selected schools, serve as a backdrop for this inquiry. Two discussion events were chosen for

qualitative exploration as they were easily distinguished from students general citizenship education by temporally, spatially, and contextually bound characteristics. Additionally, the two groups were exposed to approximately similar aspects of content and pedagogy. By comparing two schools in different socio-economic areas in of the biggest cities in Norway, this study also aims to provide an understanding of whether student experiences are contextually bound. The purpose of this study is therefore primarily to explore student experiences of the inner classroom context in discussions of controversial content, and secondly to explore whether broader contextual factors influence individual students experiences differently in their own accounts of engagement in the issues concerned. Three research questions were used to guide the empirical inquiry:

- What elements of experience are emphasized in student accounts of the controversial issues discussions, and how are they valued?
- Following from the general picture of student experiences with the discussions, to a more specific hypothesis of the relationship between experience and controversy: Did higher degrees of controversy lead to higher valued experiences?
- Furthermore, by taking the different contexts into account: Are contextual factors found to influence students with high valued discussion experiences differently in the two schools?

The thesis consists of six chapters, including the introduction to the study. Review of literature, theoretical approaches, and the analytical framework is presented in chapter two. Chapter three consists of an introduction to the contextual background, and chapter four addresses the methodological choices made before, during and after the fieldwork. Findings are presented in chapter five, and chapter six is devoted to summary, discussion and final conclusions.

2   Review of Literature and Theoretical Approaches

Several researchers support the use of *discussions of controversial issues* as both a form, tool, and goal of democratic citizenship education. It involves the practice of discussing authentic societal issues with a group of people who has different opinions than yourself, and a number of studies point out positive effects, not merely related to democratic discussion skills themselves, but also on civic outcomes such as values, knowledge and engagement (Hess & Avery, 2008, p. 507). Moreover, beneficial outcomes of such educational practices are often understood in the context of what has been known as *an open classroom climate*, put forward as a strong explanatory variable related to citizenship outcomes in a range of empirical studies (Campbell, 2008; Hess & Avery, 2008; Knowles & Mc Cafferty-Wright, 2015; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013; Schulz et al., 2010). In contrast to the growing contribution of research on learning as social and participatory practice, previous research on the issue focused more specifically on cognitive development and learning strategies as the most important outcomes of citizenship education (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013, p. 5). Contemporary contributions that question the causal predicaments of classroom climate and learning outcomes, especially in the Scandinavian context, draw the attention to factors *outside* the school to explain the development of favorable citizenship outcomes among adolescence (Lauglo, 2016; Ljunggren & Öst, 2010; Mikkelsen et al., 2011). A similar criticism of contemporary citizenship education discourse is proposed by Biesta et al. (2009) where potential political and civic socialization among youth is understood in a *broader* context than merely outcomes limited to individualized curriculum measures, and the result of school activities (in the context of an open classroom climate).

The emerging divide in the literature touches upon some fundamental educational questions: Is the main educational purpose a matter of egalitarian, economic, civic, or humanitarian concerns? (Kubow & Fossum, 2007, p. 3) Seeing the expansion of learning objectives of contemporary education, beyond the traditional development of knowledge and cognitive skills, towards a focus on softs skills, values and attitudes of the learner, what are the actual possibilities and limits of formal education? (UNESCO, 2014, p. 5) Moreover, is it possible to *learn* citizenship, and can classroom practices influence students *independently* of the family, community or broader societal structures? (Kymlicka, 2008, p. 128) A review of the most important literature within the framework of citizenship education, and more specifically on the research related to discussion of controversial issues and the importance of classroom climate, should take account of relevant theory. The following review will

therefore move from global and international trends, discourse, and underlying theoretical approaches, towards more specific empirical research from the Scandinavian and Norwegian context.

2.1 The Revitalization of Citizenship Education

One can trace the rationales behind citizenship education back to early thinkers and philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, and their ideas concerning the favorable virtues and behavior of an ideal citizen (Arthur et al., 2008, p. 4). The concept was however actualized and institutionalized in state formation processes of the 18th and 19th century, and revitalized in the reform processes of nation states in the age of globalization characterizing the 20th century (Arthur et al., ibid.). UNESCO has been one of the actors putting citizenship education on the international educational agenda over the last decades, as well as shifting the perspective from national to global importance (UNESCO, 2014, p. 11). The Delors Report (UNESCO, 1996) represents one of the early signs of emphasizing soft skills in the educational discourse, where *learning to live together* was given equal importance to learning to *know*, *do*, and *be*. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is moreover specifically emphasized in Target 4.7 in *Education 2030 Agendas and Frameworks for Action* as mutually reinforcing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), in the continued educational development focus sparked by the six Education for All (EFA) goals, and the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 48). A number of countries around the world have moreover developed citizenship education programs, in Europe mostly informed by education frameworks and recommendations from the EU and the European Commission (Solhaug 2013, p.198).

The renewed interest in the concept from governements and international bodies and agencies, have also led to growing academic and educational efforts in addressing the issue, and Solhaug (2012) point out four main approaches structuring the international research field of citizenship education over the last couple of decades. First, that democracy and citizenship are *challenged* concepts in many contemporary societies, and secondly that *schools* are put forward as primary arenas for citizenship education. Thirdly, there is a tendency for favorizing the development of a *civic republican* citizenship concept within this context, a role that is characterized by active and participatory elements. Finally, a majority of researchers propose a pedagogy that is *constructivist* at its core, as the preferred mode of teaching and learning in the development of active republican citizens (Solhaug, 2012, p.

200). Not only are the four approaches relevant to citizenship education research in isolation, but also as theory guiding national educational policies and practice. Their content and role in thought and practice will therefore be given attention in the following chapters, as well as some of the critisism put forward to challenge their dominance.

2.1.1 Challenged Democracies and Citizenship Education as Remedy

The growing international focus on citizenship education as a remedy for challenged democracies, must be understood within a context of changing global realities created by globalization processes of contemporary societies, affecting economic, political, cultural and social structures (Lauder et al., 2006, p. 1). Other factors of importance are the forces of conflict and global inequality leading to migration and new national constelations, putting traditional national citizenship concepts under preassure (Solhaug, 2013, p. 181). Citizenship education in a traditional sense can be connected to the growth of nation states, nation building processes, and the expansion and institutionalizion of education systems, where national identity was seen as an entity possible to build, also within the schools, and where citizenship was understood as a contract between the individual and the state (Arthur et al. 2008, p. 4). Different forms of state (re)formation and democratic development could be seen in various parts of the world throughout the 18th and 19th century, from decolonized, and newly independent states in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, to former dictator states in South America, post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe, as well as more traditionally democratic states such as Australia, the UK, and USA (Arthur et al., 2008, p. 4-5). The traditional citizenship concept in these contexts moreover relied on national frames of understanding, whereas increasingly globalized and multicultural states are experiencing challenges related to social cohesion, low election turnouts among the young, and increasingly religious and political extremism (Arthur et al., 2008; Osler & Lybaek, 2014; Solhaug, 2013).

The response to the challenges of contemporary societies that citizenship education represents, thus aims at "developing young peoples' capacities to be active, informed and critical citizens in their varied locations, communities and contexts" (Tudball, 2015, p. 151). These characterizations of an active citizen of the 21st century clearly resemble the picture drawn by UNESCO of a global citizen who not only has the appropriate *knowledge* of a range of civic issues on a local, national and global level, but also the *attitudes*, *values* and *behavior* appropriate for change- with certain key learning attributes: "informed and critically literate; socially connected and respectful of diversity; ethically responsible and engaged" (UNESCO,

2015, p. 24). With strong democratic traditions, education for democratic citizenship also play an important role in the Scandinavian countries, but as analysis of educational legislation in the three countries show, the democratic *national* ideal is still emphasized (Biseth, 2009, p. 251). There are however signs of a more global turn in Scandinavian education policy in line with the developments introduced in this chapter. Returning to the Norwegian context, one can find support for the presence of recommendations and influence of global actors through so called *soft power* and *best practice* in the educational discourse (Waldow, 2012, p. 415), for instance with reference to Report No. 28: "Subjects – Specialization – Understanding" where *democracy and citizenship* are explicitly stated as one of three overarching topics of growing importance facing societal challenges (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 38). Sieckelinck et al. (2015, p. 331) moreover point to a complex picture of national security, intelligence, integration, national identity, and the role of education when describing the new European reality, and govermental efforts at creating societal stability by expanding the purposes of education. Also Scandinavian countries have over the last years published Action Plans for the prevention of radicalization and extremism, where both formal and informal education play an important role (Government of Denmark 2009; Government Offices of Sweden 2011; Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2014).

The international discourse on the importance of a revitalizing the role of citizenship in the global reality, leaves us with an impression of a strong belief in citizenship education as a transformative tool for future generations facing the great challenges of our time. Citizenship education discourse on a global level deals with recommendation, policy, and the development of teaching programs. It is however informed by empirical research, and the last decades have given rise to publications ranging from small national studies of civics and citizenship education, small scale qualitative research, as well as larger international and comparative studies focusing on large quantitative data sets (Tudball, 2015, p. 151). The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievment (IAE) represents a coordinating organization delivering large-scale comparative data on a range of different subjects, already from the 1960's, and more specifically in the Civic Education Study (CivEd) in 1999, and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) in 2009 as a response to a growing awareness of countries' interests in developing national civic educational programs, and is one of the largest international cross-country studies on the citizenship today (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Schulz et al., 2010). Specific insights drawn from

the ICCS studies, secondary analyses, and other relevant studies on discussion of controversial issues as part of citizenship education will be discussed in more detail under.

2.1.1.1   Critical Voices

Criticism of the positive emphasis citizenship education is given in the interenational discourse is however clearly present at different levels. Criticism directed to the world view of the UN (and other economically oriented international agencies such as OECD, World Bank, and IMF) is primarily questioning their underlying ecoomic, neo-liberal globalized agenda and its effect on national education policy development across the world (Jones & Coleman, 2005, p. 38). UNESCO stands out as the UN agency that is most ambivalent to the importance of economic and neo-liberal globalization; its policy recommendations are based on humanistic core values (Jones & Coleman, 2005, p. 40). What is present is moreover an underlying tension between a top-down and a bottom up perspective; does societal problems and the growth of citizenship education indirectly place the responsibility of change (and blame) solely on the individual, rather than on societal structures and processes?

This question relates to the line of thought found in Biesta et al. (2009, p. 6), where three problems are raised concerning the tendency of democracies in crisis to adress the problem by (re)educating their young to become active, responsible, participatory democratic citizens of the future. First, an individualization of the problem aligns with a conservative and neo-liberal world view with economic competition at its core, where individuals themselves are 'blamed' for malfunction and failure, and also given the responsibility of working out a solution (Biesta et al. 2009, p. 6). Such a view is moreover based on a consensus perspective of *meritocracy*, where individual achievement triumphs structural and systematic explanations of social mobility blockages, with the formula of Young (1961) as its core assumption: intelligence + effort = achievement (Lauder et al., 2006, p. 9). Biesta et al., (2009, p. 7) furthermore argue that such an individualized concept of citizenship also implies certain theoretical causal relations; democracy will come as a *result* of the education of active citizens, and more importantly, democratic citizens do not exist *prior* to formal teaching of citizenship. A too strong focus on formal education alone, therefore runs the risk of ruling out the importance of informal sites of citizenship learning. The third problem of this conceptualization thus deals with the educational part itself: how do you know that what is taught equals what is learned? The development of citizenship curricula does moreover not automatically lead to the production of active citizens, and is especially interesting when you

consider citizenship competence as a field of knowledge where informal sites of learning such as the family, community, church, and other organizations form important supplements to formal education in developing civic identities (Biesta et al., 2009; Kymlicka 2008).

A related question deals with debates concerning assessment and measurement of citizenship outcomes such as knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviour, not only on a global level in comparative citizenship studies such as the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), but also on the local level in classrooms. Moreover, how do you measure the effects of in-school and out-of-school factors and their impact on competences within the citizenship framework (Kerr, 2012, p. 26)? Comparative and interenational contributions to research on citizenship education have traditionally been greater in western countries, but there have been signs of growing research communities also in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East over the last couple of decades. The critisism of a western bias in the international citizenship discourse, collection and interpretation of citizenship data, and development of citizenship programs and policies is therefore highly relevant, and should be a question of concern in discussions of best practice and educational borrowing across global societies (Kerr, 2012, p. 27).

Whether citizenship is understood as a legal status, national, global or local identity, this discussion suggests that citizenship education must be understood in relation to society, the contexts in which the education takes place, and individual identity construction within these contexts (Banks, 2004; Biesta, et al. 2009; Kymlicka, 2008). For a better understanding of citizenship and its interconnected relations, we now turn to the different meanings given to the concept itself.

2.1.2 The Citizenship Concept

Researchers and policy makers alike, either directly or indirectly refer to certain implied features of an ideal citizen in their work, and the citizenship concept therefore calls for a further discussion. Solhaug (2012, p. 200) moreover argues that the participatory and active features of a *civic republican* citizenship concept seem to dominate the international landscape. In the following chapter the civic republican stance will be introduced together with the liberal, communitarian, and deliberative citizenship concept, as well as national and global perpsectives. Relevant research on the field will also be visited. When introducing citizenship as a concept, one must however acknowledge that the content itself is debated, as well as its relation to other concepts and contexts of importance. More importantly, the

existence of contrasting views of democracy and citizenship in society clearly have implications for the development of citizenship education acknowledged by the majority (Christensen 2015, p. 66).

2.1.2.1   Citizenship as Status and Role

Citizenship have traditionally been given a geographical and situated importance, where citizens are seen as the members of a community or nation state, with corresponding rights and duties, and therefore with a legal or political status (Arthur et al., 2008, p.3). One can moreover make a distincion between *citizenship-as-a-legal-status*, seen as political or juridical membership, and *citizenship-as-desirable-activity*, as the participatory role the citizen have as members of a society or community (Kymlicka & Norman, 1995, p. 353). Citizenship education thus deals with the participatory perspective, but the two should be handled together in a historical context for a better understanding of how the concept is used today. Two fundamental philosophical perpsectives will give more insight, namely the liberal and the civic republican (Davies, 2012, p.32). The liberal perspective focuses on individual's rights, without much interference from, and obligations imposed by the government, whereas the civic republican perspective also focuses on citizen duties towards the community (Davies, ibid.). Theoretical perspectives on the development of citizenship go back to the French and American Revolution, where citizen rights were constitutionalized for the first time. Marshall [1965] connects the historical development of the democratic citizenship concept to a liberal line of thought, and points out three main stages of the expansion of citizen rights; from juridical, political, to social rights (in Kymlicka & Norman, 1995, p. 354). The members of a liberal democracy today thus enjoys individual freedoms of speech, property, religion (juridical), the right to vote, political formation, and political participation (political), as well as the right to education and other social services (social) (Kymlicka & Norman, 1995, p. 354). What divides the liberal and the civic republican concepts is moreover their relation to individual freedom and public duties. It is however too simplistic to give these perspectives political labels of *right* and *left* (Davies, 2012, p.32), as we will experience when looking at the communitarian and deliberative perspctives, as well as putting them in an educational context.

The classical liberal perspective emphasizes individual freedom and a minimal state, and citizenship education within this framework will thus teach students about their rights and possibilities of participation, without imposing any ideal of public responsibility (Christensen,

2015, p. 68). A communitarian perspective on the other hand, focuses strongly on the community as a site for personal development and duty, and communitarian education will therefore emphasize the development of shared values among its citizens, across the communities they belong to (Stray, 2009, p. 70), a perspective that resonates with traditional European national identity building (Arthur et al. 2008, p. 4). The civic republican stance can be understood in a middle position, where the community remains important in a political and social sense, but not necessarily morally (Christensen, 2015, p. 69). Active public participation is thus seen as a virtue in a civic republican perspective, which contrasts with both the individualized liberal view where voting is the most essential democratic virtue, and a communitarian view, where political participation only can take place within a space of culturally shared values and moral (Solhaug, 2013, p.184). Civic republican citizenship education will therefore focus on democratic values, not moral ones, and the development of active citizenship (Christensen, 2015, p. 70). The civic role of deliberation has been emphasized in the work of Habermas (1998, p. 246) where deliberation is proposed as an alternative to the liberal and republican democratic concepts, and where public political debate is seen a core value. Citizenship education within this view will aim at developing socially informed students that practice public debate in class and who reach for political solutions, and even consensus, to the problems at hand (Christensen, 2015, p. 71).

2.1.2.2   Citizenship as Role: Minimal or Maximal?

Alexander (2015) uses the arguments of McLaughlin (2008, p. 122) to show how different citizenship concepts have a direct influence on how the citizenship role is understood within citizenship education. He moreover draws a continuum from a minimal to maximal conceptualization of citizenship to explain the practical outcomes. The minimal side offers a civic identity that is merely formal and juridical, whereas the maximum side of the continuum points out a civic identity based on membership of a community, not only related to individual rights, but also to obligations and responsibilities (Alexander 2015, p.231). Liberal citizenship is traditionally referred to as minimal or thin, whereas maximal, or thick concepts refer to the more active forms of citizenship, such as the civic republican or deliberative traditions (Stray, 2009, p. 73). The distinction is actualized by some researchers with reference to the changing contexts of modern societies, especially when looking at how different people can continue living together in increasingly diverse democracies: "The more a program in citizenship education leans towards the maximal end of the continuum, then, the

greater its emphasis on negotiating shared values dedicated to coexistence across deep difference" (Alexander, 2015, p. 232). Ljunggren (2014) argues in a similar way when posing the possibility of a citizenship education that looks beyond traditional national, as well as multicultural identity concepts in contemporary Sweden:

> It is to give the meaning of and the search for national identity a political role, rather than politicising a specific national identity. And it is to understand the nation as a space (of action) rather than a place (in terms of state-nation) (Ljunggren, 2014, p. 39-40).

This view serves as an example of the assumptions made by Solhaug (2012) that civic republicanism seems to be the preferred citizenship concept among many contemporary citizenship researchers. Citizenship education in Ljunggrens (2014, p. 40) case is thus directed to develop citizens who shares political or democratic values, but not necessarily national, cultural or religious ones, and might be considered deliberative at its core. The transformative and critical research project The Global Doing Democracy Research Project (GDDRP), deals with thick and thin conceptions of democracy, and thus indirectly with concepts of citizenship. GDDRP was conducted in over 70 countries with the participation of about 20 researchers, with a critical pedagogical framework that draws a continuum from thick to thin understandings of democracy and its relation to education (Carr, 2010, in Zyngier & Carr, 2012, p. 8-9). The concepts of thin and thick democracies share characteristics with concepts of representative vs. participatory democracy, as well as thin vs. thick citizenship; the former focuses on formal knowledge and electoral processes of democracy, whereas the latter emphasizes engagement, participation and social justice. The difference is even clearer in an educational context where thin practice would focus on teaching *about* democracy, whereas a thick also would teach *for* active democratic participation (Zyngier, 2012, p. 4). Results of research undertaken within the thin/thick democracy framework in the US and Canada, as well as Australia show that educators for the most part teach citizenship within a thin democratic perspective, of which the author remain strongly critical:

> Instead of education reproducing the current thin democracy that leads to disengaged citizens, examples of excellent teacher practice would enable the development of an educational framework of teaching for thick democracy in leading to a more participatory, empowered and engaged citizenry and a more inclusive participation in, and therefore safeguarding of, democratic society (Zyngier, 2012, p. 18).

2.1.2.3　Citizenship as Role: National or Global?

The liberal, republican, communitarian, and deliberative citizenship concepts all have roots in traditional (western) nation state contexts, but as earlier shown, several researchers aim for more complex content, if they are to fit a global and pluralistic frameworks of contemporary societies. Explicit arguments for the development of concepts such as global or cosmopolitan citizenship can be found in a range of works internationally (Banks, 2004; Kymlicka, 2008; Osler & Lybaek, 2014; UNESCO, 2015b among others). Banks (2004, p. 299) for instance, states: "Literate citizens in a diverse democratic society should be reflective, moral, and active citizens in an interconnected global world. They should have the knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to change the world to make it more just and democratic." Osler & Lybaek (2014, p. 559) moreover refers to the common human traits of solidarity towards others as a reason for stressing cosmopolitan citizenship in contemporary discourse, a view that is commonly found also in the UNESCO (2014, p. 14) approach:

> (...) global citizenship does not imply a legal status. It refers more to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity, promoting a 'global gaze' that links the local to the global and the national to the international. It is also a way of understanding, acting and relating oneself to others and the environment in space and in time, based on universal values, through respect for diversity and pluralism.

Whether the citizenship role is understood as minimal or maxiamal, national or global context, what is evident so far is the strong relationship between citizenship and society. It is inherently linked to legal and participatory roles of the citizen in its changing and diverse contexts, and it is in a western line of though mutually dependent on the concept of democracy. The study of citizenship thus implies the study of society.

2.1.2.4　The Citizenship Concept in Research

How democratic societies deal with the relationship between democracy, citizenship and education affect the development of political and civil communites over time (Stray 2009, p. 67). Every society moreover deals with underlying (normative) characterizations of an ideal citizen, which leaves educational documents in a historical context an interesting field of inquiry. The study undertaken by Marshall represents an early effort of categorizing the development of the citizenship rights, primarily in the history of Western thought (Kymlicka & Norman, 1995, p. 354). A similar documentation of the development of the democracy concept was done in Britain in 1998 by the Crick Committee Education for the Report on

Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (QCA 1998), where four broad stages of democracy was proposed by Bernard Crick (McCulloch, 2012, p. 6). The first was found to be the ancient Greek democracy, exemplified through the work of philosopher Plato, the second associated with the 17th century Republics such as the Roman, English, Dutch and American, the third to the French Revolution and Rousseau, and finally the American Constitution (McCulloch, 2012, p. 6). With the greater picture of democracy and citizenship development as a backdrop, local studies on the citizenship concept in curriculum, formal legislation, educational policy, and classrooms have been published in all Scandinavian countries, with analysis of both independent data, as well as comparative units (Biseth, 2009; Christensen, 2015; Löden, 2014; Stray, 2009).

Löden (2014, p. 124) is clear in his descriptions of the Swedish contemporary conditions for citizenship education: "... at the level of national curriculum values relevant for developing knowledge, attitudes and skills required to function in the nation-state and global society are clearly represented. Still, the national curriculum can be different things as compared to what teachers actually do in their classrooms." He moreover refers to various, and in his view, limited, sets of qualitative and quantitative research from classrooms, where he nonetheless makes the conclusion that knowledge, attitudes, and skills *are* being taught as intertwined elements in classrooms, and that the primary expressed goal from teachers is to develop active and autonomous citizens (Löden 2014, p. 125). What is also present is a recognition of the complexity of democratic socialization, the difficulty of measuring effects and causalities, and that parental background have a striking effect on individuals and their class, when looking at civic competencies (Löden, 2014, p. 127-128). Where Löden is slightly positive to both curriculum and the potential that classroom practice has in developing national and global citizens, Biseth (2009, p. 246) is more critical in her comparative analysis of official legal texts; the Education Act(s) and their belonging legislative regulations in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. She notes the presence of a strong democratic, and human rights based ideal in all three cases, but with limited reference to diversity of language and culture as incorporated values, or to practice that broadens the perspectives of students with different background (Biseth, 2009, p. 251). Stray (2009) analyzes the role of citizenship education in the Norwegian National Curriculum based on the educational reform known as *The Knowledge Promotion* (2006), by comparing it to the general international citizenship discourse at the time, and concludes that a *limited* democratic citizenship mandate is given in the curriculum, which has a strong focus on equipping students with competences and skills

preparing them for work in the globalized knowledge economy, within a framework of individualization, assessment, and human capital (Stray, 2009, p. 11).

Christensen (2015, p. 65) analyzes and compares the stated aims of the *social science* curriculum in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway by looking at similarities and differences concerning the underlying citizenship concept. He concludes that the Norwegian concept is mainly communitarian with elements of civic republicanism, while the Swedish aligns with a civic republican concept with deliberative elements, and finally that the republican concept with certain deliberative elements is the most prominent in the Danish context (Christensen, 2015, p. 88). These are interesting results in three countries that are often perceived as having similar democratic traditions, and it shows the importance of understanding citizenship within certain historical, institutional and political contexts. One can find theoretical arguments for the development of a deliberative practice in the Scandinavian context also outside curriculum studies (Englund, 2006; Ljunggren, 2014). Ljunggren (2014) investigates the potential of *teaching ambivalence* as a didactical approach overcoming the challenges of contemporary national identity, democratic citizenship and the role of education in increasingly multicultural Sweden: "It is legitimated by the political tradition of deliberation and commitment that derives from an open, agnostic process where the public defines itself, and where teachers encourage dissidents to discuss and debate (Ljunggren 2014, p. 43)." Englund (2006, p. 510) similarily gives a thorough introduction to deliberative communication in a tradition based on the work of Dewey, Mead and Habermas, as well as insights to what it means in practice, and thus argues for giving the didactics of deliberation growing importance in national education policies, as part of general long-term strengthening of democracy.

2.1.2.5 Critical Voices

A relevant critique of a *too* strong civic republican and deliberative approach in classroom practice, is the need to recognize the tension between social and a politicied citizenship education: "teaching and learning may be explicitly social and cultural or aimed at some form of political participation, be it voting, voicing opinions in some forum, or the intent to exert political influence (Solhaug, 2013, p. 191)." An interesting dilemma for the education sector is whether one should focus on harmony and the reduction of conflict in addressing issues in politics and societal matters, or if one should focus on critical scrutiny and debate (Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012, p. 43). This is relevant not only to curriculum development, but also to teacher reflections and perceived preparedness for teaching citizenship. The question of

causality also remains important, does a more politicized classroom automatically build more engaged youth?

What becomes evident is the fact that teaching about the formal sides of citizenship and democracy seems easier for teachers than preparing for dialogue and discussion, especially when the discussions involve controversial issues (Stray & Sætra 2016, p. 280). Both English and Dutch qualitative studies shows how teachers feel unprepared and unequipped in leading discussions of controvercial issues in their classrooms (Radstake and Leeman, 2010; Oulton et al., 2004). The quantitative analysis of the normative sides of citizenship education goals in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Finland based on the 2008 European Value Survey, moreover found a stronger preference for consensus based citizenship outcomes, rather than contested ones (Eidhof et al., 2016, p. 114). If one aims at introducing a more deliberative approach in citizenship education, one must also acknowledge teacher challenges and dilemmas concerning the expression of their own political and moral views in class. Ljunggren & Öst (2010, p. 35) propose four different communication strategies teachers use if an issue of controversy comes up in class. While the *debate leader* opens up for discussion and different perspectives and tries to stay objective, the *normative* teacher clearly adresses what is seen as morally right or wrong in the discussion. The other two strategies moreover aims at closing down the discussion by either *rejecting* student attempts to discuss an issue, or *isolating* the student who brings up a potentially controversial issue, to avoid class discussion (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010, p. 35). They moreover regard issues of potential controversy as a resource for a more relevant and authentic citizenship eduaction, and thus argue for active teacher roles. An early advocate for teacher neutrality in discussion was Lawrence Stenhouse, who with the Humanities Curriculum Project in the UK, argued for informed controversial issues discussions based on evidence, with teachers as *neutral* facilitators (Stenhouse 1971, p. 157-160).

Stray & Sætra (2016, p. 293) similarly discusses the different teacher roles in controversial issues discussion and deliberation in classroom practice based on seven teacher interviews in Norwegian high schools. They advocate that giving teachers the pedagogical freedom of professional choice is preferable rather than neutrality being the most efficient stance. In other words, the teacher has a professional responsibility to choose the appropriate role as facilitator, moderator, motivator or devils advocate. Other empirical studies on citizenship education and teachers in the Norwegian context moreover refer to *experiences*, such as teachers and school principal's perceptions of what promotes and hinders democratic

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participation, and to teacher's experiences with the democratic mandate given in recent curriculum reforms (Gulestøl & Farstad 2015; Larsen 2015; Stray & Sætra 2015). Stray & Sætra (2015, p. 461) argue that the concept of democracy as it is found in the social science curriculum is too wide. They note that teachers often choose to focus on teaching *about* the political principles of democracy, rather than *doing* democracy in class.

What seems important to note at this stage, is that the way citizenship is understood and framed in national educational policy, not only is important in itself, but also affects teacher practice and student experiences. The tension between types of citizenship education that aims at transformation or those aiming at status quo maintenance, therefore exists on all organizational levels. When Solhaug (2012, p. 200) puts forward a tendency for favorizing the development of a *civic republican* citizenship concept in international citizenship research, he implies a citizenship role that is active and participatory at its core, found towards the maximum end of the conceptualized continuum. The question of whether classrooms can become too political is however important to address. The discussion of the different concept understandings of citizenship as a role, such as civic republican, communitarian, deliberative, global and national ones, moreover lies at the heart of any attempt of studying citizenship education in practice.

2.1.3 Knowledge as Construction

The last theoretical approach which Solhaug (2012, p. 200) puts forward as dominating the international research field of citizenship education, addresses the question of citizenship pedagogy: How do students best *learn* the content knowledge, attitudes, values and skills associated with citizenship? Citizenship education that focuses too much on the formal aspects such as factual information, is often highly criticized in the literature for several reasons: "Students often find some of this education to be irrelevant, and it has a rather uncertain effect on students' civic engagement" (Solhaug 2013, p. 193). This line of thought clearly fits the minimal approaches of democracy and citizenship presented above, and many thus argue for a thicker concept of citizenship education. Evans (2008, p. 525) points out that international and national studies devoted specifically to citizenship pedagogy are scarce, which makes it difficult to compare practices, understand the theory-practice gap, and assess effects on a larger scale. For a better understanding of how different curriculum traditions relates to pedagogical choices in citizenship education, three curriculum orientations will be

presented, based on a framework developed by Miller [1988]: transmission, transaction, and transformation (Miller, 2007, p. 10-12),

The *transmission* orientation is a contents driven curriculum perspective associated with a functionalist framework with the purpose of status quo maintenance (Evans, 2008, p. 523). Knowledge is seen as a fixed entity possible to pass on from teacher to student, from one generation to the next, and the curriculum thus contains separate academic subjects where knowledge is an authoritative entity to which students must strive to gain access to (Miller, 2007, p. 10). Teaching activities are built around transmission of knowledge and skills, and is typically top-down (Evans, 2008, p. 523). The *transactional* orientation is instrumental by emphasizing skills and competence development of individuals in the context of economic competitiveness characterizing contemporary globalized societies (Evans, 2008, p. 523). Knowledge within this view is not fixed, but something that can be changed, particularly though problem solving activities, interaction, and critical inquiry, and the teaching activities are therefore organized around group work and individual scrutiny (Miller, 2007, p. 11). The *transformative* orientation aligns with change and liberation, and focus on holistic education of the individual as part of a social space, where students are made aware of historical, political and social contexts (Evans, 2008, p. 524). Active participation in learning activities and discussions, characterizes the pedagogy where knowledge is seen as a flexible entity constructed in social interactions with others, and engagement transcends the traditional classroom context.

Two fundamentally different learning theories with great influence in western educational work can however be seen underlying the curriculum orientations, namely the behaviorist and the constructivist. The behaviorist approach developed in America in the early 1900's with psychologist such as Thorndike, Watson, and Skinner through experiments of stimuli and response (Imsen 2012, p. 179-183). Implications from the experiments formed theories of learning where individuals potentially could learn everything from behavior to language concepts, by being exposed to stimuli and positive responses. Knowledge learning was therefore viewed as objective, transmittable, successive and followed a machine-like logic (Imsen 2012, p. 30). Traditions based on constructivist assumptions on the other hand, see knowledge as dynamic and subjective, and the learning processes of knowledge either takes the form of cognitive development of individual mental schemes (Piaget, 1973), or socially dependent internal development:

> We propose that an essential feature of leaning is that it creates the zone of proximal
> development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes

that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent development achievement (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90).

One cannot present theories of social learning without mentioning Dewey, although his focus was directed towards social interaction and inquiry of "real civic problems and issues" in classroom practice (Evans, 2012, p. 521). He believed that development of democratic knowledge, attitudes and skills among future citizens results from participation in realistic democratic processes in their schools (Hahn, 2012, p. 48). Englund (2006, p. 512) makes a clear reference to a socio-cultural learning perspective with knowledge construction and interaction at its core, when he proposes deliberative communication the main constituent in preparation for deliberative citizenry. He sees such an approach as in keeping with such classic socio-constructivist Russian theorists as Vygotsky and Bakhtin (p. 512). This may also apply to others who propose a thick participatory democratic pedagogy characterized by teaching *about* democracy, *for* democratic participation *through* participation in international, as well as national settings (Stray & Sætra, 2016, p. 462).

The pedagogical theories of constructivism and social learning had much influence on educational work internationally, as well as nationally. The pedagogical participatory traditions gained terrain in the Norwegian educational discourse and curriculum traditions in the 70's, and you can still find reference to these perspectives today. It moreover fitted the social democratic political context where equal integration of all students was seen as a core educational value (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, p. 13). The focus was anti-authoritarian, with an emphasis on teaching and learning within a 'participatory democracy' framework, where knowledge was negotiated and constructed through dialogue (Lauglo, 1995, p. 290). Critics of the participatory pedagogy in Norway, argue that pedagogic practice became too child-centered, and that freedom and interaction was emphasized over knowledge and learning (Bergersen 2006; Skarpenes 2005). The efficiency based pedagogy of the 80's and 90's with the introduction of "management by objectives", may therefore be seen as a reaction to such perceived excesses (Lauglo, 1995, 305). Although the Knowledge Promotion in 2006 introduced competence goals, and individual assessment as core features, the curriculum furthermore carries elements of the participatory ideals of the past. See for instance how knowledge is framed as social construction in the Core Curriculum:

> Pupils build up their knowledge, generate their skills and evolve their attitudes largely by themselves. This process can be stimulated and spurred or curbed and blocked, by

others. Successful learning demands twosided motivation: on the part of the pupil and on the part of the teacher ... (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1994, p.18)

It is important to note that pure examples of the curriculum orientations of transmission, transaction, and transformation and related pedagogies are hard to find, but the perspectives remain useful when looking at influential citizenship trends and actual curriculum. The transformative curriculum orientation however resonates with the work of those who argue for the active, participatory, thick democratic citizenship education discussed in earlier chapters. Some of the perspectives of a transformation orientation are also present in the Norwegian context. The use of discussion as a pedagogical tool and a way of doing democracy is moreover emphasized in specific competence goals across subjects in the Norwegian curriculum, which will be handled in more detail in the chapter concerning context. Can research however tell us anything about the presence and effects of such practice?

2.2 Controversial Issues Discussion in Citizenship Education

As the first part of this chapter on influential theoretical approaches in citizenship education focused on the bigger picture, the attention will now shift to specific empirical studies on controversial issues discussion, as it represents one line of practice within the field that some would even place at "... the heart of education for citizenship in a democracy" (Hahn, 2012, p. 48). If one acknowledges that some school subjects (mainly those included in the humanities) contain value questions that divide groups in societies, arguments in the lines of Stenhouse [1978] stress the importance of discussing multiple perspectives on controversies in classroom practice (Elliott, 2012, p. 88). Such arguments are unsurprisingly associated with the 'thick' end of the above noted concept of democracy and citizenship education continuum, since it involves the participatory act of *doing* democracy by practicing disagreement with people with different opinions from yourself (Hess & Avery, 2008, p. 507). Hess (2009, p. 28-30) summarizes three main arguments in favor of discussing controversial issues. First, discussion is a key aspect of democratic education since itself is a skill required for participating democratically. Secondly, engaging with controversial issues inside the classroom, is a way of bringing the outside world into school, and thus prepares students for authentic democratic life. Thirdly, discussion enhances other desirable outcomes such as knowledge, values, and interest in political life that matter for democratic citizenship.

2.2.1 The Importance of an Open Classroom Climate

Hahn (2012, p. 51) argues that three overlapping features should be given attention in practice and research on controversial issues discussion; content, pedagogy and climate. Controversial issues content is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for discussion in class, conflictual pedagogy, where teachers open up for the exploration of different perspectives, and an open classroom climate where students feel comfortable disagreeing in discussions, are just as important. The IEA/ICCS (Schultz et al., 2010, p. 171-174) handle similar features under the heading of Classroom Climate; the presence of political and societal content in discussions, teachers encouraging students to discuss freely and facilitating such discussions in class, as well as student overall experience with the classroom as a place to safely express their opinions. The 1971 IEA Civic Education Study was the first large study to reveal that:

> students' belief that they were encouraged to speak openly in class was a powerful predictor of their knowledge of and support for democratic values, and their participation in political discussion inside and outside school. (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p. 137).

Similar findings were reported in both the 1999 and 2009 IEA/ICCS studies (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 171; Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p. 146), and several secondary studies have been carried out to identify the effects of an open classroom climate on a range of favorable civic outcomes.

Campbell (2008, p. 450) analyzed data from the 1999 CIVED study, and found that an open classroom climate correlated with student's civic knowledge and perception of political conflict, and even compensates disadvantaged youth of lower socioeconomic family status. Godfrey & Grayman (2014, p.1802) similarily used the 1999 CIVED data to investigate if an open classroom climate also correlated with the development of critical counciousness following the liberation and empowerment theories of Freire (1972), and found support for some of their hypothesises: "open classroom climate was positively related to socio-political efficacy in both the educational and political domains and to critical action in the community domain, but was not related to critical reflection" (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014, p.1801). Quintelier & Hooghe (2013, p. 20) moreover used 2009 IEA/ICCS data from 35 countries for secondary analysis, and found that student perceptions of a "participatory democratic climate" correlated with students' expected participation in political life. The secondary analysis by Knowles & McCafferty-Wright (2015, p. 265) used 2009 IEA/ICCS data from 14 countries, and they similarly argue for the importance of an open classroom climate, as they found

correlations with civic engagement in general and specifically in social movement engagement. A panel study conducted by Persson (2015, p. 589) aimed at strengthening the validity of the result by comparing them to the Swedish ICCS data, and analyzed 500 upper secondary student's knowledge development and variables of classroom climate over the course of one year. The similar results found across the two data sets, was used to argue the presence of causal explanations: "10% positive change in the *classroom-level* measure results in about 5.5 percentage points higher *civic knowledge* (Persson, 2015, p. 594)."

Lauglo (2016, p. 430) however, points out that the introduction of 'class average' in addition to 'individual scores' as predictors in two-level analyses of the 2009 IEA/ICCS data, shows results that conflict with those presented in studies above, in terms of correlations of an open classroom climate. This was evident also in the Norwegian data, where an open classroom climate on an *individual* level show a significant effect on variables such as civic knowledge and engagement, whereas this is not the case when climate was measured as a *class average* level (Mikkelsen et al., 2011, p. 230). Quintelier & Hooghe (2013, p. 22) similarly point out that stating a relationship between variables does not automatically allow for causal explanations, neither in the case of open classroom climate and civic knowledge and engagement. A possible explanation is that high performing and engaged students perceive the classroom climate as having a more 'open' characteristic than do their fellow classmates (Lauglo, 2016, p. 431). The criticism drawn from these insights thus questions the strong belief in the effects of the type of pedagogy associated with an open classroom climate.

There are also other limitations to studies that rely on large quantitative data cross-sectional data sets such as the IEA/ICCS. Hess (2009, p. 35) interestingly refers to research on controversial issues discussions where self-reports, often differs from observations of actual classroom discussion in practice. One reason for this is that students, and even teachers confuse general classroom talk with actual discussion. The difference between classrooms where discussion takes place, and classrooms that are perceived as open for students to express their general thoughts on a topic is thus not clear. Both classrooms might be labelled as having an 'open classroom climate' (Hess & Avery, 2008, p. 509). Another complication is the fact that students may report on an open classroom climate, without actually participating in discussions themselves (Hess & Ganzler, 2007). Results from the Norwegian 2009 ICCS data can serve as an interesting example. Norwegian 14 year olds generally perceive their classrooms as open: More than 80% of the students report on openness of expressing their opinions in class, even when their opinions differ from their teachers (Mikkelsen et al., 2011,

p. 99). 61% report that their teachers bring up political issues for discussion in class, and 55% experience that their teachers encourage discussion (Mikkelsen et al., 2011, p. 99). Furthermore, findings concerning teacher's own reporting of teaching methods in democratic education, show that as many as 98% *often* or *sometimes* use discussions of controversial issues in class (Mikkelsen et al., 2011, p. 181). Although students were not asked specifically to what extent controversial issues discussions are present in class, there is nonetheless a discrepancy between students' and teachers' reports on practices that clearly divide the opinions in class.

2.2.2 The Importance of Discussion Experiences

Shifting the perspective from the general classroom climate to the discussions themselves, also means a shift from the large-scale IEA studies of classroom climate, to a more diverse set of studies that include qualitative investigation. Certain conditions should be present if one is to achieve desired outcomes of controversial issues discussions according to Hand & Levinson (2010). They conducted a small-scale study in the UK in 2007 in a range of secondary schools, with focus on a course of history, philosophy and ethics of science, where discussion was as a core element. They used a mix methods design with questionnaires and interviews of students and teachers, and found four factors that tended to promote discussions: "effective preparation, accessible topics, strong and diverse views among discussants, and appropriate facilitation" (Hand & Levinson, 2010, p. 620). These factors resemble the three factors Hahn (2012, p. 51) emphasizes in best practice of controversial issues discussion: overlapping features of content, pedagogy and climate. Hand & Levinson (2010, p. 620) also found two types of student strategies that effectively shut down the discussions irrespectively of the presence of the other factors, which shows the complexity of facilitating fruitful discussions: *that's-just-what-I-believe* and *that's-what-my-religion-says*. Hess & Ganzler (2007*)* moreover show how classes where teachers encourage discussion of controversy and ideological difference, to some extent build tolerance of political conflict, as well as engagement among the students. Socio-cultural, ethnic and political diversity in the student group are moreover often put forward as a positive force in the controversial issues discussion literature, since it creates authentic difference of opinion. Hess (2009, p. 30) also refers to research where the authentic expression of conflicting opinions in class appeal to students. Campbell (2008, p. 451) analyzing ICCS data, support a compensation hypothesis when he shows how an open classroom climate is especially beneficial to student with lower socio-

economic family backgrounds, with regards to factors such as informed voting and appreciation of conflict, but not to civic knowledge achievement. Hess (2009, p. 33) however notes that while "diversity can be a deliberative strength, it can also re-inscribe social divisions if students feel they are being silenced, or simply do not want to voice opinions that differ from the majority." There is thus a danger of letting students that belong to majority groups in the class dominate the discussion, and Hess & McAvoy (2015, p. 8) emphasize that the teachers' responsibility is to critically evaluate "who is and is not represented within their classrooms". They also address growing political polarization as a challenge in contemporary political classrooms (Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 8). A third challenge relates to social positioning in classes with adolescence, a point addressed by Hess & Posselt (2002), who found that students who were sensitive to the way they were perceived by their classmates, especially by the more popular ones, experienced negative emotions such as anger and anxiety connected to controversial issues discussions.

Students do however themselves tend to report positive experiences of controversial issues discussion. A group participating in a focus group study after attending classes modelled after Structured Academic Controversy by Johnson & Johnson (1995), stated these three aspects as the most positive outcomes: to be able to express their opinions, listen to other perspectives, as well as dealing with authentic issues in discussion. The Fifth-Year report of The Deliberating in a Democracy project, looked at six sites in Eastern European countries (Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, and Serbia), and five in the US (Illinois, South Carolina, Colorado, Virginia and California), evaluating the effects and experiences of secondary teacher and students participating in a deliberation project in which students discuss current societal and political issues (Avery et al., 2011, p. 6). Self-report by almost 2000 student participants revealed findings suggesting high levels of student satisfaction with the program: "In Years 2-4, students reported that they learned a lot from (83-87%), and enjoyed the deliberations (83-89%), developed a better understanding of the issues (87-88%), and increased their abilities to state their opinions (79-81%)" (Avery et al. 2011, p. 59). Self-reports of this type might yield unreliable data, especially since the positive ratings were high, but they nonetheless gives a *general* picture of student satisfaction with a pedagogy that might not be the most commonly used in these countries and sites. Finnish researchers similarly conducted an exploratory qualitative case study of Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian adolescents playing a simulation game that stimulated debate over social issues (Eränpalo, 2014, p. 104). Contrary to findings that had indicated that 14 year olds from these

countries were less socially engaged than the ICCS average, this study shows how the young participants adopted a surprisingly active and critical role in the game and their deliberation. The researchers suggest that classroom discussions and dialogue has a potential to open for genuine and active student participation and engagement, in order to prevent the development of what they refer to as civic *bystanders* and *anarchists* (Eränpalo 2014, p. 116).

2.2.3 The Importance of Contextual Factors

Many of the secondary IEA/ICCS studies claim to address positive correlations between the pedagogical practices characterized by an 'open classroom climate' and favorable citizenship outcomes. Studies of student experiences with controversial issues discussions similarly assess learning effects of such classroom practices. This is not surprising as much educational research is done within a framework of applied science, and is often associated with educational policy development (Arnove, 2013, p. 6). A common finding in educational research is the correlation between learning outcomes and family background. Socio-economic background was also the factor most strongly associated with 'civic knowledge' in the 2009 ICCS results, although with varying strength across the participating countries (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 216). Studies on classroom climate and controversial issues discussions, could investigate whether specific pedagogical practices have the power to overrule or reduce this relationship. A secondary analysis of Swedish 2009 ICCS data aimed to reveal *why* student citizenship outcomes differed, by analyzing factors within, and outside the classroom (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010). They found that the clearest explanatory factors for both individual and class level outcomes were contextual, not classroom based. Parents' educational background moreover correlated with higher citizenship outcomes of *individuals*; and *classes* composed by more students with highly educated parents generally scored higher than other classes (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 97-99). They did not find support for the same results when assessing the effects of 'inner contextual factors', such as teacher communication strategies, and student participation. In terms of engagement outcomes specifically, they found that girls were more civically engaged than boys, and that high parental education background correlated with higher degrees of engagement. Furthermore, findings show that students with culturally diverse background have a stronger explicit belief in future political engagement than their fellow Swedish classmates (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 95).

Mikkelsen et al. (2011, p. 230) similarly show correlations between parental education level and student's civic knowledge and engagement in the Norwegian 2009 ICCS data. Lauglo (2016, p. 429) moreover refers to previous research that has shown how civic and political engagement in the family tend to reproduce over generations, and therefore argues for the importance of family influence on young persons' civic engagement. His analysis of 2009 ICCS data in 35 countries also shows evidence for other educational effects of political socialization in the family, such as expectation of higher education (Lauglo, 2016, p. 430). Biesta et al. (2009) also criticizes the strong belief in the classroom as the primary context for the development of citizenship outcomes such as civic knowledge and engagement, and argues that the family, community and other learning sites outside of school matter more for young people's civic development. Their qualitative case study conducted in the South West of England during 2003-2007, shows that the citizenship learning of young people is more than cognitive knowledge acquisition, but a process that is situated, relational and connected to their life-trajectories (Biesta et al., 2009, p. 9). They argue that the dominant citizenship concept in educational discourse is "exclusive rather than inclusive since it fails to recognize that young people always already participate in social life and that their lives are always already implicated in the wider social, economic, cultural and political order" (Biesta et al., 2009, p. 7). Young people must be acknowledged as political subjects and societal participants already when they enter the classroom.

2.3   Summary and Implications for the Study

The existing literature and related theoretical approaches presented in this section have positioned citizenship education in the international field of research, education policy and curriculum development over the last decades. The discourse is characterized by a growing tendency of seeing citizenship education as a remedy for challenged contemporary democratic societies, by favoring an active and participatory citizenship concept, such as the civic republican and deliberative approaches. A pedagogical approach based on constructivist principles has much professional support in formal citizenship education. Several researchers argue in favor of using of discussions of controversial issues within such a constructivist and participatory pedagogy, and see discussions in an open classroom climate as positively related to citizenship outcomes. A more contextually research-based argument is critical of this emphasis, especially when looking at results from classes as whole units, and rather emphasize the importance of family and arenas out of school as more influential to student's

citizenship outcomes, such as civic knowledge and social engagement. A third group of researchers look at student's own experiences with discussions, and argue that positive and negative sides of a constructivist and participatory pedagogy is not easily captured by questionnaires and surveys, but can nonetheless be experienced as meaningful for students.

Norwegian educational discourse and curriculum development can be positioned within the international framework, since it focuses on strengthening citizenship education for continued democratic stability. The democratic citizenship seminar at Utøya is similarly based on participatory, student-centered and constructivist principles. What remains interesting for this particular research is however whether student experiences with such education can be understood in lines with either of the different stances in the research literature. Moreover, can the strengthening of citizenship education with the sufficient conditions of content, pedagogy and climate of controversial issues discussions have a positive effect on student engagement in the classes? How influential are contextual socio-economic differences on individual learning outcomes?

2.4   Analytical Framework

Taking the theoretical and empirical approaches of this chapter into account, the present analysis will be based on a revised version of the analytical framework of Ekman & Zetterberg (2010, p. 89), see Figure 1. This framework is chosen as it acknowledges factors at the individual level, the broader context, *as well as* classroom practice, when assessing the influences upon citizenship outcomes of individuals. It thus addresses the purposes of this research: primarily to explore the experiences of two groups of students participating in controversial issues discussions, and secondly whether broader contextual factors or individual resources can be seen to influence the individuals differently in their own accounts of engagement. As the framework was originally developed for secondary analysis of Swedish data from the 2009 IEA/International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), the different elements of importance need clarification (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 80).

Figure 1. Analytical Framework (Reworked, Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 89)

	School Context		
Student's Individual Resources -Gender -Ethnicity -Parents educational background -Parents civic engagement -Individual engagement -Personality	**Broad Context** -National and local curriculum -Compositional factors (parents educational background in the class/school as a whole) -Local realities of potential controversy	**Inner Context** *Controversial Issues Discussions:* -Content -Pedagogy -Climate	**Citizenship Competence** -Engagement and participation

2.4.1 Student's Individual Resources

Stated educational aims commonly assert the ideal that there should be equality of opportunity across factors such as gender, ethnicity, geographic and socioeconomic background (Farrell, 2013, p. 154). Despite this ideal, much research internationally and nationally, including research on citizenship education, has shown that such factors nonetheless affect educational outcomes of individuals in different contexts (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 17). For the Swedish analysis, gender, ethnicity and parental education background were therefore chosen as the primary individual variables, since they were found most highly correlated with different citizenship outcomes across the student group (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 83). While acknowledging that such factors of the individual are useful as descriptive categories of differentiation, one cannot however presume that they automatically will be found equally meaningful by the students themselves. Moreover, an essentialist view of identity where these factors represent a stable unity of personality traits cannot be taken for granted (Farrell, 2013, p. 155). Other factors of student's individual resources might be found just as important on the influence of citizenship outcomes, such as political engagement in the family, individual engagement in organizations, or other forms of civic influence in community activities outside school (Biesta et al., 2009; Lauglo, 2016). Students'

participation in such class activities as controversial issues discussions need not only result from elements of the inner classroom context, but can also reflect individual characteristics such as personality, general confidence, and sensitivity towards how one is percieved by classmates (Hess & Posselt, 2002). Such individual factors can be explored in a qualitative exploration of how individuals experience citizenship education.

2.4.2 School Context

2.4.2.1   Broad Context

The broad school context frames local educational action. The overarching elements of the broader context are national educational documents such as acts and curriculum, which exemplify relatively stable influences in schools across a given country (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 84). Contexts that differ among schools are compositional and institutional factors. The institutional factor points to the difference between public and independent schools, but does not stand out as important for analysis in the Norwegian context since the great majority of schools are public (SSB, 2017). The compositional factor on the other hand, refers to socio-economic and socio-cultural factors characterizing the population served by the local school, and thus the student group itself. Such parental background as educational level will not only matter for individual student outcomes, but also because students who attend classes with a majority of highly educated parents, have been found to draw on a common *pool* of resources for school based learning (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 88). Additionally, the population composition of a certain community can also reflect potential social tension, by conditions such as unemployment, immigration and crime, which can have bearing of issues of potential controversy brought up for class discussion by teachers and students (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010, p. 22). Ljunggren & Öst (2010, p. 19) thus argue for addressing such factors as part of a relevant and authentic citizenship education. If students have experienced racism or discrimination related to elements of social tensions in their community, this should be addressed by the school.

2.4.2.2   Inner Context

The inner context of the framework refers to educational factors inside the classroom that can potentially influence citizenship outcomes. For the Swedish analysis, two elements were emphasized: the communication strategies used by the teachers in situations of potential

controversy, and students' participation in citizenship learning activities and content, since they reflect the extent to which the classroom can be described as collaborative and democratic (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 169). The factors will however be modified in this study, since its focus is on *student-led controversial issues discussions*, which contains certain specific elements for analysis. In keeping with rationales for controversial issues teaching, the three overlapping features of content, pedagogy and climate should be present to achieve good practice (Hahn, 2012, p. 51). Controversial issues discussion is here viewed as one way of practicing citizenship education, and the seminar and in-class sessions examined in this research are a form of citizenship education that crosses traditional subject boundaries (Davies, 2012, p. 36). Previous studies have usually not considered the possibility that students in the same class may perceive their classroom climate differently from each other, and from their teacher's perception (Hess & Avery, 2008; Lauglo, 2016). Also, it is interesting to look specifically at controversial issues discussion in a Norwegian context, since there is a discrepancy between how much teachers and students report on the presence of 'Open Classroom Discussions' content and pedagogy (Mikkelsen et al., 2011, p. 99/181). To explore student experiences of controversial issues discussions, there is a need to look at both content, pedagogy and climate. Figure 2 shows selected items presented to students and teachers for characterizing an 'Open Classroom Climate' in the ICCS study, since they exemplify elements of analytical value in the exploration of controversial issues discussions (Schultz et al, 2010, p. 171-174). The features however need further clarification.

The ICCS items do not refer to the *content* of the issues in question as explicitly controversial, but rather use the more neutral term "current political events" (Schulz et al, 2010, p. 174). In the revised framework for the current study, the political and societal issues however do represent a controversial content. A definition of such issues by Stradling (1985, p. 9, in Oulton et al., 2004, p. 490) is: "those issues on which our society is clearly divided and significant groups within society advocate conflicting explanations or solutions based on alternative values".

Figure 2. The Three Features of Controversial Issues Discussions, and Selected Items of an Open Classroom Climate (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 171-174)

Content	Pedagogy	Climate
-Propose topics/issues for classroom discussion; -Students bring up current political events for discussion in class; -Discuss the choice of teaching/learning materials	-Teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people who have different opinions; -Teachers encourage students to express their opinions; -Teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class.	-Feel comfortable during class discussion because they know their views will be respected; -Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds; -Freely express their opinion even if different from those of the majority; -Know how to listen to and respect opinions even if different from their own; -Students express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from those of most of the other students

This definition agrees with Stenhouse (1971, p. 154): "In short, a controversial issue is one which divides teachers, students and parents". When controversial issues are brought to the classroom, the perspective moreover is "to develop an understanding of human acts, of social situations and of the problems of value which arise from them" (Stenhouse, 1971, p. 155). What counts as an issue of controversy in society or the classroom is furthermore not isolated and stable, but develops in relation to the wider context (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010, p. 20). Hess (2009, p. 113) refers to a 'tipping' process from open to closed answers in order to describe how a question of controversy evolves towards closure. An example is the process that 'closed' the issue of women's suffrage (in most contexts). Whether an issue is taught and understood by teachers and students as open or closed, provides a clue to the nature, and degree of the controversy (Hess, 2009, p. 113). Moreover, not all issues seen as controversial in the public debate are automatically found controversial in the classroom, and vice versa. There might also be a discrepancy between what teachers and students find controversial.

Turning to the issue of *pedagogy*, it is presumed that discussion is the preferred mode of teaching controversial issues, not only because it opens for different perspectives, but also because controversial issues provide opportunities for engaging students in discussions (Hand & Levinson, 2012, p. 617). Also ICCS items refer to discussions as the most fitting pedagogic principle for the exploration of difference: "Teachers encourage students to discuss the issues

with people who have different opinions" (Schultz et al., 2010, p. 174). Stenhouse [1970] similarly place discussion over instruction as the mode of controversial issues teaching, and emphasizes teacher neutrality as a way of avoiding that some opinions receive more authority than others in the discussions (Elliot, 2012, p.88). The issue of authority is important in the current study, in addition to relevance and authenticity, as the discussion are *student led* for these very purposes (Hess, 2009, p. 28-30). Classroom talk can however not automatically be described as discussions, and Bridges (1979, in Hand & Levinson, 2012, p. 616) offers three 'necessary and sufficient conditions' for participant engagement in what he describes as a discussion:

    a. more than one point of view on the subject is put forward;
    b. participants are to some extent evaluating and responding to the different points of view;
    c. and use these processes to develop own knowledge or judgement on the matter.

A discussion is thus not merely the act of individuals expressing their own points of view, but also involves individual's ability to evaluate and respond to other's opinions; it is thus a highly cognitive activity (Hand & Levinson 2012, p. 616). The introduction of different citizenship concepts and their role in citizenship education earlier in this chapter, put forward democratic deliberation as the preferred way of practicing deliberative citizenship, and share many of the characterizations of discussions as introduced here: "Civic deliberation is the serious and thoughtful consideration of conflicting views on controversial public issues for the purpose of decision making" (Avery et al., 2013, p. 105). Both Englund (2006) and Ljunggren (2014) moreover argue for deliberative communication practices in Swedish democratic citizenship education. *Discussion* will nonetheless be used as the main concept in this study, since it is not associated with a specific citizenship concept, and also as it is the most commonly used concept in the dominant discourse. Deliberation often also imply the practice of public decision-making by debating multiple careful and balanced arguments and thus in finding a compromise between multiple actors (Englund, 2006, p. 506). The discussions in this study will not have the goal of reaching consensus, and thus fall short of such a characterization. Controversial issues discussions rather aim at practicing tolerance of difference, through disagreement (Hess, 2009, p. 16).

When turning to the specific factors of the *climate*, the focus will lie on the presence of some form of *social support* functioning as a base for the discussions (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 169). Students participating in controversial issues discussions should thus "feel

comfortable during class discussion because they know their views will be respected" (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 171). The presence of comfort is therefore related to how teachers support students when expressing their opinions, as well as how classmates respect and tolerate those who express opinions that differ from the majority. This is especially important if one choses to explicitly use the ideological differences that exists between students in a classroom, with the purpose of bringing out authentic diversity of opinion in the discussions (Hess, 2009, p. 32). It is not difficult to understand why many argue for strengthened teacher professionalism in handling controversy of different character in the classroom (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010; Oulton et al., 2004; Radstake & Leeman, 2010; Stray & Sætra, 2016). Students evaluation of how they are percieved by their classmates also stand out as an important factor in controversial issues discussions (Hess & Posselt, 2002).

2.4.3 Citizenship Outcomes

The choice of participation and engagement as the main *citizenship outcomes* in focus for study, relies on some important factors. The qualitative aspect of the study opens for exploring the meaning participant make of their experiences (Bryman, 2012, p. 399). It is moreover easier to make young people elaborate on their classroom experiences, than on the cognitive process of knowledge and value development in class activities. Student engagement in ICCS is defined as "the attitudes, behaviors, and behavioral intentions that relate to more general civic participation as well as manifest political participation (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 115)". Where large scale, or longitudinal educational studies have the potential of stating relationships between different educational efforts and their (long-term) effects (Arnove, 2013, p. 6), this study rather aims at exploring engagement and participation in the inner context. Engagement will therefore be understood as the sum of high valued elements of students' in-class discussion experiences, and explore whether experiences are contextually bound in terms of 'attitudes, behaviors, and behavioral intentions'.

3   Contextual Background

Before moving on to the methodological approaches guiding the research, there is a need to contextualize the research sites. What characterizes the development of the Norwegian education system and its current form, and what is the curriculum for democratic citizenship?

3.1   National Context: Demography, Economy and Education

With its population of approx. 5 million, Norway ranks above OECD average on a number of measures concerning economic and societal stability, such as life expectancy (80.1 years), GDP per capita (62 025 US$), unemployment rates (11.7%), and income equality between genders (OECD, 2017). The population is spread throughout the country, and with one of the lowest population densities in Europe, you find 33% of the total population living in one of the five largest cities: Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger/Sandnes, Trondheim and Drammen (SSB, 2016). The population has historically been described as relatively homogenous, with exceptions of the indigenous Sapmi minority (Solhaug, 2013, p. 181). Increased immigration over the last decades has led to growing multicultural and diverse communities, especially in the biggest cities. Immigrants account for 13.8 % of the total population, not including those referred to as *second generation immigrants* (SSB, 2017a). The immigrants have come from a varied set of countries and regions, and have migrated for diverse reasons. Most of them are members of a diaspora: a transnational migrant group upholding some form of relation to its home country, be it material or emotional, and adjust in different ways to the new country by facing specific constraints and opportunities (Esman, 2009, p. 14, in Godzimirski, 2011, p. 581). However, the diasporas differ. The polish diasporas, for instance, is highly economically based, whereas others, such as the Pakistani, Tsjetsjenian, Kurdish and Tamil diasporas, have a stronger political focus (Godzimirski, 2011, p. 596-600).

The impact of the financial crisis was not as severe in Norway as in most countries of comparison, and with the low unemployment rate and overall positive GDP growth over the last years, the economic situation can be described as relatively good (OECD, 2017). Like in other Nordic countries, the welfare system is comprehensive, seen for instance in the extensive free public education system with enrollment rates close to 100% in primary and lower secondary education, and 92.2% in upper secondary school, according to figures from 2015 (SSB, 2017b). The education level in society as a whole is generally high; and as much as 35.6% of women and 28.7% of men had completed higher education in 2015 (SSB,

2017b). Although there has been growth in private schools, not more than 5% of primary school students were enrolled in these in 2015 (SSB, 2017b). The public school is considerably decentralized, with some school autonomy. School ownership and related responsibilities are handled by the municipalities (428) for primary and lower secondary schools, and counties (19) for upper secondary schools (Nusche et al., 2011, p.15). The Parliament (Storting) and the government moreover lays down overall educational goals, legal frameworks and organization. The Ministry of Education develops educational policy such as acts, regulations, and curriculum (Nusche et al., ibid). The current Conservative Government was formed in 2013 (-2017), as a coalition of The Conservative Party and the Progress Party (Regjeringen, 2014). Shifting dominance in national level politics over the last decades are seen in different Labour and Conservative led governmental coalitions (Nusche et al., 2011, p.15).

The Scandinavian countries have long traditions of public mass schooling, and have systematically expanded their education systems in order to integrate children from all social strata (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, p. 14). This process can in the Norwegian context be seen in relation to the shifting focus of two distinct features of modern educational development, namely an instrumental and integrative perspective (Telhaug & Mediås, 2003, p. 13-14). Where the instrumental perspective addresses economic growth and nation building, the integrational perspective concerns culturally, socially and linguistic socialization of children with different backgrounds within the nation state, aimed at developing social cohesion and democratic support. The interrelated concepts of democracy, development and education has had much influence in this respect, especially after the Second World War (Liberkind 2015, p. 715). What is noteworthy in the Norwegian context is the strong comprehensive ideal of integration of children in formal education, as well as upholding the public school as the main educational provider, with strong support from all political parties. These are perspectives that have influenced the development of educational policy and curriculum already from the second part of the 19th century (Engelsen, 2003, p. 77). Norway has a comprehensive and relatively inclusive education system, by upholding the ideal of delivering free public education and ensuring equality of opportunity for children irrespectively of gender, ethnicity, geographical or socio-economic background (Nusche et al. 2011, p. 18). The content, pedagogies and purposes of the education giving such an opportunity have however changed over time.

3.2 Curriculum Context: Long Lines

Six major national curriculum reforms for primary and secondary education have been carried out only in the period after the Second World War (Engelsen, 2003, p. 42). While acknowledging that all curriculum implementations draw on values, content and traditions of the longer past, the focus will here nonetheless lie on *The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion* from 2006, as it represents the current framework for educational practice from primary to upper secondary education, and form the basis of national educational discourse.

The Knowledge Promotion refers to the legislative act, the Core Curriculum, Quality Framework, Subject Curricula, and the Framework for the distribution of teaching hours and subjects (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017a). It gives a holistic framework for primary (1st-7th grade), lower secondary (8th-10th grade) and higher secondary schools (3 years of general or vocational training). The implementation of the curriculum represented both a continuation of previous thought and practice, as well as certain breaks. Where earlier subject curricula can be described as content driven, the Knowledge Promotion represented a shift towards goals and outcomes as its main constituents (Olsen et al., 2013, p. 365). The content is structured within frameworks of basic competences such as reading, writing, oral skills, mathematic, and digital knowledge, with explicitly stated competence goals after specific school years, used for, among other things, assessment of learning outcomes (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017a). Pedagogical principles such as individual self-assessment, in addition to teacher evaluation and feedback were also introduced as important elements of the learning process. The rhetorics behind to the implementation of The Knowledge Promotion was thus shifting towards stronger individualization in education. Skarpenes (2005, p. 422) argue that educational practice based on the educational reforms of 1974, 1985, and 1994 developed within a framework of a specific pedagogy with roots back to the 1960's, with less focus on individual cognitive knowledge development, and a stronger focus on socialization of the student as a whole, in a participatory pedagogical climate. He notes a shift from a cognitive to a constructivist learning perspective, where the instrumental view of students as objects of learning, gives way to a world view where students are subjects of their own reality, and where the pedagogy aims at symmetrical relations, dialogue and collaboration as means of learning development (Skarpenes, 2005, p. 422-423). Traces of such principles were however not abandoned in the Knowledge Promotion, a point that somewhat limits a full individualization of the reform. Successful reform implementation always carries elements of

the past, and teacher's methods and learning views are never radically changed over-night (Olsen et al. 2013, p. 357).

The introduction of The Knowledge Promotion gave more responsibility to school owners and individual schools for the development of local competence goals and teaching methods within the National Curriculum framework (Telhaug, 2006, p. 68). Although the reform gave more freedom to schools and teachers in deciding on subject content for the purpose of reaching certain competence goals, some have also criticized the reform of restricting teacher practice by simultaneously increasing assessment of student competencies through national and international testing (Telhaug, 2006, p. 170). The first "PISA-shock" in 2001 must be seen in relation to these developments, which refers to the first time Norwegian teenagers participated in the mathematics, science and reading tests delivered by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), developed by the OECD. The shock represented a public response to the fact that Norwegian students performed at, and even below OECD-average, also compared to other Scandinavian countries (Sjøberg, 2014, p. 33). The Conservative Government with Minister of Education and Research Kristin Clemet in the frontline, explicitly referred to the PISA results, as well as recommendations from OECD and EU in Report No. 30 to the Storting "A Culture for Learning" (2003-2004) which formed the basis of the Knowledge Promotion, with support from the political opposition (Telhaug, 2006, p. 56).

The recent Report No. 28 to the Storting "Subjects – Specialization – Understanding: Renewal of the Knowledge Promotion" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016), suggests certain updates to fit contemporary challenges of national and global character, and the updated curricula implementation is planned for 2020. The Ministry more specifically aims at renewing, as well as building stronger cohesion between the educational legislative acts and the different key elements of the National Curriculum. Some issues are found to be of greater importance to fulfill the societal purposes of education, and should thus cut across traditional subject boundaries. One of these issues are *democracy and citizenship education*, which will be handled in more detail in the next chapter (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 7). The education reform initializing the Knowledge Promotion was primarily economically driven (Aasen et al., 2012, p. 41). The economic perspective is equally present in the renewal, here from the opening paragraph of the Report:

> The collective knowledge capital of a society is its most important resource. It is crucial for the workforce, and to handle the most severe challenges of societies, both in a short and longer perspective. The education system is the government's most

important instrument for the development of knowledge capital (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 5).

Many nations have traditionally emphasized the economic purposes of education, but Lauder et al. (2006, p. 3) suggest an even stronger contemporary focus on such instrumental factors, since globalization processes spark competitiveness not only within, but also across national boundaries. However, the Ministry highlights that contemporary Norwegian educational purposes are complex:

> [The children] shall participate in the social community the school represents, characterized by respect for the individual, equality between genders, freedom of speech, solidarity and tolerance. They shall receive knowledge about democracy, and practice in democratic processes (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 6).

These perspectives draw on the foundations of the Education Act and Core Curriculum, where education is understood within frames of Humanistic and Christian values, contextualized in the specific Norwegian historic, social, economic and democratic development. Education in a Norwegian context thus aims for a holistic education *ideal*: "In short, the aim of education is to expand the individual's capacity to perceive and to participate, to experience, to empathize and to excel" (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1994, p. 5).

3.3 Curriculum Context: Citizenship Education

Where democracy and related principles represent important factors underlying educational thought and practice, it is noteworthy that *democracy and citizenship* have been given explicit importance in recent education policy, such as the Report No. 28 "Subjects – Specialization – Understanding" (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 7). Three overarching topics are given extra attention as they are allready founded in the educational legislative acts and curriculum, and seen especially relevant for adressing important societal challenges over time. The topics are *public health and life management*, *democracy and citizenship*, and *sustainable development*. The topics are meant to be integrated into, and across specific subjects, and may form the basis of projects involving more than one subject. Democratic citizenship competences are thus viewed as important for educating the young to democratic participants in increasingly multicultural Norwegian communities, and the preferred pedagogy is understood within a participatory framework (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 38). Such a stance must be understood in the context of the constructivist curriculum traditions of the past, as well as the wide political support for the egalitarian social democratic principles

upon which the Norwegian education system is built (Lauglo, 1995, p. 305). Nor can it be understood without reference to the growing international discourse on citizenship education covered in chapter 2.

The underlying principles concerning democracy and societal participation is found in the legislative acts and the Core Curriculum, but for a better understanding of actual classroom practice, there is a need to look closer at the specific competence goals expressed in subject curricula. For the purpose of this research, which focus on lower secondary schools, the relevant competence goals are found after 10th grade completion. Three subjects are specifically interesting, namely 'Social Studies' (samfunnsfag), 'Norwegian' (norsk) and 'Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics' (KRLE), since they are compulsory subjects that address diverse democratic citizenship issues and related competences. Selected relevant competence goals in the subjects are presented in Figure 3, and they represent both perspectives of cognitive knowledge about democratic institutions (*give account for*, *give examples of*, *reflect upon*), and ways of practicing democratic principles (*discuss*, *participate*) on local, national and global levels (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Research, 2017c; 2017d; 2017e). What should also be noted is the introduction of a subject of choice in 2013 for lower secondary schools called 'Democracy in Practice' (demokrati i praksis), with competence goals presented within two main domains: *democracy* and *participation*. Schools can choose whether to offer this subject to students parallel to other voluntary subjects such as foreign languages (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017b). Current citizenship education in the Norwegian context cannot be categorized representing a single subject, but rather cross traditional subject boundaries and diverse curricula (Kennedy, 2008, p. 489).

Figure 3. Selected Competence Goals after 10th Grade in Subjects of Relevance (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Research, 2017c; 2017d; 2017e)

Norwegian	Social Studies	Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics
-participate in discussions with informed opinions and argumentation based on facts -discuss and elaborate on how language can have discriminatory and injurious effects	-reflect upon societal issues informed by digital and paper based sources, and discuss the purpose and relevance of these sources -discuss ideals concerning human value, discrimination, and the development of racism in historic and contemporary perspectives -give accounts of how different political parties stand for different values and interests, relate them to current societal issues, and argue for own views -give accounts of political institutions in Norway, their role, distribution, and compare them to institutions in other countries -give examples of what cooperation, participation and democracy means nationally, locally; in organizations and in school	-show the ability to participate in dialogue concerning religious and societal issues, and show respect for different religions and philosophies of life -discuss current issues concerning religion, culture and society -discuss choices of value and current issues in local and global societies; social and ecological responsibility; technological challenges; peace building and democracy

4   Methodology

The primary goal of conducting social scientific research is to identify, investigate, and seek to understand a specific social phenomenon within certain theoretical lenses (Walter, 2010, p. 4). There are however different ways of investigating the social world, and accounts of the methodology will give answers to the underlying worldview of a research project (Walter, 2010, p. 10). The traditional distinction between a qualitative and quantitative approach to scientific study reflects fundamentally different worldviews of ontological, epistemological, and methodological nature (Burrel & Morgan, 1992, p. 3). It implies two contrasting sets of assumptions of how the researcher is positioned in the social world of investigation. Firstly, it adresses whether the reality of inquiry is understood as externally observable, or internally and socially constructed by the participants (ontology), and thus how, and to what extent knowledge of the social reality can be obtained. An external reality can be studied objectively through measurement, whereas an internal reality is best studied subjectively through interaction (epistemology) (Burrell & Morgan, 1992, p. 1). Additionally, different assumptions affect the strategies chosen for the collection of data from participants (methodology) (Burrell & Morgan, 1992, p. 2).

The quantitative stance has traditionally been associated with natural sciences and a positivist approach, with objective measurements and collection of numerical data at its core, and where the testing of theory (deduction) is found to charecterize the scientific method (Bryman, 2012, p. 1670). The qualitative stance is similarly built on a set of distinct philosophical underpinnings, associated with a constructionist ontological foundation, which calls for subjective investigation and interpretation of data, where the generation of theory (induction) characterizes the method (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). These descriptions refer to theoretical underpinnings of two philosophically distinct research strategies, but one must acknowledge that the application of strategies is not always as contrasting in practice (Bryman, 2012, p. 36). This study is positioned within a qualitative research approach, since it aims at investigating student's subjective interpretations of their classroom realities. Certain elements of the research however differ from an idealized qualitative research strategy, and will be furter discussed in the section on research design. This chapter will adress the methodological choices made before, during and after data collection, and include descriptions of the design, site, sampling, methods, criteria for analysis, and limitations affecting the quality of the research.

4.1   Research Design

Where research strategies refer to a set of philosophical and methodological characterizations allowing for a qualitative or quantitative take on a specific research problem, the research design brings the broader classifications into practice. The research design moreover "provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2012, p. 46). This research is described within the frameworks of a case study design, since the aim of the study is to empirically explore a real-life phenomenon, highly dependent on the context where it appears, with the use of observation and in-depth interviews as data collection tools (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Important components of the case design are the presence of a set of research questions, some propositions or purpose guiding the questions towards specific units of analysis, and a set of techniques and criteria for linking the data to the initial questions and interpretation of the findings (Yin, 2009, p. 27).

The study consists of two cases defined as the controversial issues discussion *events* that took place in the two schools, since they are easily distinguished from other forms of general citizenship education that the students may have experienced in the past (Yin, 2009, p. 32). It is a two-case design, where the cases function as the main units of analysis, and address student experiences with the inner classroom context. It is however impossible to view the events independently of the students who participated in them, and the two groups of students represent the population from which the sample was chosen, and data collected from (Bryman, 2012, p. 68). The cases were *bound* within specific spatial, temporal and contextual frames: both events were organized by students who had received their training at Utøya in Norway, this training resulted in the use of a specific content and pedagogy, the sessions were held at two specific locations, and the sessions had a clear temporal time span (Yin, 2009, p. 32). The data was treated under one when analysis revealed common patterns, and as two distinct data sets when the patterns differed. The cases were therefore treated as the main units when analysis opens for implying comparative aspects of importance. The research findings and conclusions do not imply a complete comparative reading, but the comparative elements were nonetheless important in both the sampling and analysis processes. If one is to locate the comparative dimensions using the Bray and Thomas cube, this study is thus held at a micro level (school and classroom) comparison (1995, in Bray et al., 2007, p. 9)

A final remark on the choice of the case study as the overarching research design address its approaches to the role of theory and concepts. Yin (2003, p. 3) argues that taking a deductive approach to theory and concepts prior to the data collection process, not only helps

position the empirical study in the existing body of literature, but also directs the choice of appropriate units of analysis, the process of sampling participants, and guide the choice of data to gather in the field. This study aims at subjective exploration of student's social realities, and thus imply a philosophically qualitative approach. However, the study is also based on reviews of existing literature, and theoretical approaches. The use of a specific analytical framework and set of assumptions as a guide in the process, is associated with the deductive scientific method, which distinguishes it from a purely qualitative inductive strategy (Yin, 2009, p. 28).

4.2   Research Sites

From the introduction to qualitative research in general, and the case study design in particular, one can argue for the importance of context when investigating a social phenomenon. Researchers looking for meaning and patterns in social science research, must remember that participants make sense of the social world they find themselves part of (Walter, 2010, p. 8). The general introduction of Norwegian historic, economic, political and curriculum situation in chapter 3, functions as a national frame of experience for the participants. Three local sites are equally relevant for the sampling process of this research.

The first site is the Utøya island situated in Buskerud county, previously mostly known for hosting the annual Workers Youth League (AUF) summer camp. It is now most associated with the terrorist attack by Anders Behring Breivik on July 22. 2011, where 69 young people were murdered in cold blood, in addition to the bombing outside the governmental building in Oslo, claiming 8 victims (Osler & Lybaek, 2014, p. 544). The process of renovating and reframing the identity of the island after the attack has resulted in a continued practice of youth camps, a memorial monument, and a new learning center, the site of the citizenship seminar initializing this research (Utøya, 2017). The seminar was moreover organized by The European Wergeland Center and the Rafto foundation for Human Rights together with The 22. July Center and Utøya, with financial support from Fritt Ord and the Directorate for Education and Training (The European Wergeland Center, 2016a). Two to three students from schools around the country travelled with their teachers to participate in a three day long seminar in Utøya, bringing back their own teaching program for fellow classmates. Acknowledging the strong links Utøya have to the labor movement, the seminar aimed for an overarching focus on *democratic citizenship training*, rather than specific political teaching:

Utøya symbolizes how important it is to defend and shape democracy every day. This makes Utøya a special place for young people to reflect on what democracy means to them, what challenges our democracies face and how young people can promote democratic values and practices (The European Wergeland Center, 2016b).

Two seminars were held on Utøya during the fall of 2016, and a total of 15 student groups organized training for their fellow classmates, other classes, or even entire schools when they returned. The degree and amount of training depended on various factors such as teachers' and principals' willingness to set aside time and resources, its relevancy to the subject issues and curriculum goals at the time when they returned, and students drive to teach others. Two schools out of the fifteen were chosen for further inquiry, based on some theoretical assumptions. From the introduction of contexts, one can assume that the two schools share sufficient similar traits to make meaningful analysis of both similarties and difference in the data material (Manzon, 2007, p. 88). They are both situated in one of the largest cities in Norway, and like most lower secondary schools, they are public, medium to large sized, and attended by students of different backgrounds. In this study, they will be referred to by the invented names of Alby and Balnes Lower Secondary School. The National Curriculum frame educational practice in the schools, and both have chosen to teach 'democracy in practice' as subjects students can attend during 9th and 10th grade. The two student groups were moreover exposed to a session with a set of similarily based discussion issues of controversal content, led by the two students who received their training in the Utøya seminar.

The sessions consisted of an introduction, before moving on to practical activities, such as the controversial issues discussions. The students were asked to stand up from their desks, and position themselves on sites along an imagined line labelled *agree*, *disagree* or *uncertain*, representing their opinion to the different statements put forward. Students were asked to state their opinions for choosing the different positions. The statements used in the two schools are found in figure 4, and the content was assumed controversial since they handle basic human value questions that divide the opinion of not only the general public, but also teachers, students, and parents (Stenhouse, 1971, p. 154). The discussion statements differ slightly between the schools, based on evaluations made by the teachers and student facilitators of which issues were found most relevant within each group.

Figure 4. Statements for Discussion at Balnes and Alby School

Balnes School	Alby School
1. Summer is better than winter 2. Everyone has equal opportunities in Norway 3. Norway is a country of equality 4. You can say whatever you want to, as long as you are just joking around 5. Immigrants must adapt to Norwegian values and culture 6. We must tolerate more surveillance, and less privacy in order to prevent future terrorist attacks 7. Our culture is threatened by increased diversity 8. More surveillance equals less terrorism	1. Summer is better than winter 2. Everyone has equal opportunities in Norway 3. The use of niqab and burqa should be prohibited in Norway 4. We must tolerate more surveillance, and less privacy in order to prevent future terrorist attacks 5. Some people are worth more than others

With reference to the analytical framework presented in chapter 2.4, factors of the individual student resources, and the broad school context might give important input to the exploration of student experiences with the inner context, as well as the extent of participation and engagement. The choice of sample is therefore based on ceratain analytical and theoretical assumptions. The two schools interestingly differ in some respects. With the relative low number of private schools in the Norwegian context, the student population represents certain characterizations of their surrounding areas, primarily since the Education Act, § 8-1 upholds the principle of *the local school* as the main provider of primary education (Lovdata, 1999/2000, § 8-1). The significant difference between the schools is thereefore their geographic location in two different areas of the city, characterized by different socio-economic and cultural factors such as economy, educational backround and ethnic composition. Looking at the two areas as a whole, the students at Alby School thus have parents with diverse ethnic backgrounds, different educational levels and generally lower economic income than those living in the area of Balnes School. The students at Balnes are moreover less ethnically diverse, and the parents of a majority of the students tend to have a higher level of education and more income than those in Alby. With characterizations of the school population as a backdrop, the process of sampling individuals as participants will be visited next.

4.3   Sampling Processes

My role as a researcher in the Utøya seminar and school sessions can be described as a minimally participating observer, since observation of activities and interaction functioned primarily as a basis for getting familiar with students and teachers, accessing the field, and

preparing for in-depth interviews, which form the main sources of data in this research (Bryman, 2012, p. 443). The relations made at Utøya were crucial for gaining access to the student's home schools once they were ready to train their classmates. Moreover, they came to be key contacts throughout the field work process (Bryman, 2012, p 435). The initial plan was to sample participants at the Utøya seminar only, but assumptions concerning student's reasons for joining a voluntarily seminar on democratic citizenship, made me rethink this choice. It is not impossible to imagine that this group of students would provide experiences *only* from the standpoint of 'the engaged student', and thus little variation in the data. Sampling from the classmates who were exposed to the controversial issues discussions on the other hand, would allow for more individual variance related to the individual resources of Figure 1, chapter 2.4, such as gender, ethnicity, parental background and personal engagement. Moreover, following the logic of the case study design, the population from which the sample was to be chosen, was limited to the ones participating in the bound events that took place in the classroom sessions (Yin, 2009, p. 32).

Purposive sampling was thus conducted once present in the schools, with the goal of obtaining a wide range of participants (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). The students who led the sessions were the first to be included in the sample, since they could provide both an insider perspective of the class dynamics, as well as an external view based on their organizing role in the session. Their role as key contacts also allowed for access to their classmates, as they could help confirm the trustworthiness of the research project. The sampling process itself can be characterized as a combination of maximum variation sampling and snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012, p. 419). Maximum, since the goal was to obtain students with a varied set of backgrounds as possible; snowball, since students themselves helped guide me to others who were willing to participate.

The final sample consists of 13 students from Alby School (7 boys, 6 girls) and 12 students from Balnes (4 boys, 8 girls). Theoretical saturation primarily structured the sample size, since new participant were recruited parallel to the interview sessions, dependent on the data they provided (Bryman, 2012, p. 425). The data is however too limited to be described as fully saturated, especially since the two data sets also will be analyzed as comparative units. The sample size was also guided by practical factors such as time and resources, which certainly serve as a limitation. Although purposive sampling in qualitative research does not aim for generalizability across populations but rather to theory, the final sample also serve other limitations (Bryman, 2012, p. 406). First, recruiting a varied enough sample of

adolescence, including those of a more shy nature, and those who are not especially engaged in societal matters, was found problematic. Moreover, I had to spend much time in the field to obtain the status as someone the students could trust, and the relation to my key contacts was crucial in this process. An interesting dilemma in the field was to sample both those who enjoyed talking and would provide much data, and those who were not as comfortable talking, and neither discussing such matters with me in an interview setting. The 'quiet' and 'non-engaged' are present in the sample, but the majority of the participants in both groups can be characterized as the opposite. It is also interesting to note that the boys in Balnes were less willing to participate in the study than the boys in Alby, which explain the low number of boys in the sample from Balnes despite strong efforts in recruiting boys in the field. These differences will be returned to in the findings and discussion. Another limitation of a qualitative sample of this kind is the transferability of results across different contexts, and is a question of research quality (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). The two cases in this study are not only contextually bound by a number of factors, the specific contexts are also assumed to have an impact on the results. If the results are found too contextually dependent, then the study has little transferable value, even outside the two classes in question. Findings that point towards similarity across the two contexts on the other hand, might account for stronger degrees of transferability. These are also issues I will return to.

4.4 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

The qualitative research strategy and case study design introduced so far, function as the methodological frame for the practical choices made before and during field work, and ultimately the choice of methods or techniques used to gather and analyze the research data when returning from the field (Walter, 2010, p. 10). Two specific methods were chosen in this respect, namely observation and in-depth interviews. An overview of the mode and sequence of the data collection methods is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Data Collection Methods

OBSERVATION		INTERVIEWS
UTØYA Democratic Citizenship Seminar	**Alby School** Student-led session	**Alby School** 13, 7♂ 6 ♀
	Balnes School Student-led session	**Balnes School** 12, 4♂ 8♀
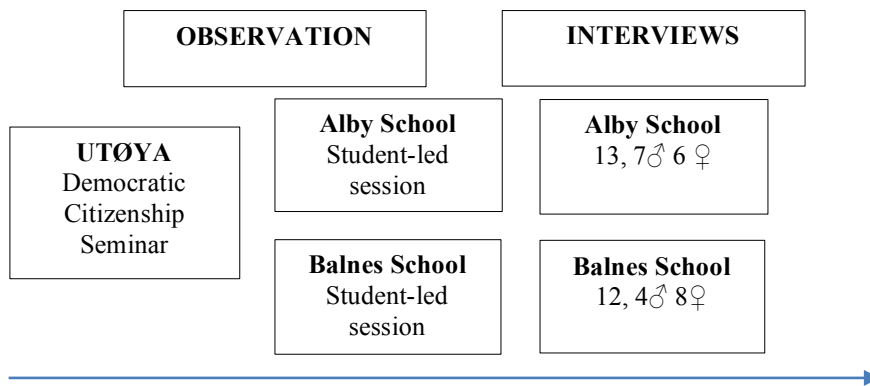
Observation in qualitative research is fundamentally different from a quantitative approach, since it is not aimed at observing and measuring an objective reality from a distance, but rather seen in relation to an ethnographical perspective where the participation of the researcher stands at the center of exploring the subjective social reality of participants (Bryman, 2012, p. 432). The study of a social phenomenon is however a complex process, and observation of behavior alone is not always assumed to give rich enough data. Observation thus function supplementary to the interviews conducted in this study. The participant observation conducted at Utøya and in the classrooms moreover gave important clues for understanding group behavior within the specific contexts, and thus to *what* could be meaningful to ask in the interviews, and *who* to choose for participation (Bryman, 2012, p. 432). The fact that I could refer back to episodes and statements made in the discussion sessions, as well as ask for clarifications and interpretations during interviews, also touches upon aspects of the internal validation of the study (Kleven, 2008, p. 222). Moreover, I had some control over evaluating the credibility of the claims that students made about the in-class sessions, and observation thus also functioned as quality measure.

Semi structured in-depth interviews were arranged and conducted after the sessions, with informed consent from both parents and students themselves as the participants were under the age of 18. Some practical elements of the field experiences are however important to address before moving on to the interview guide that structured the interviews. As the field work was done in my mother tongue, language and knowledge of the field did not cause any major problems (Bryman, 2012, p. 473). The participating observation also positively affected knowledge about the setting and access to participants. However, acknowledging that most

15-year olds value their free time resulted in some problems arranging interviews, but the majority of students showed great interest and trust in the setting once finding the right time and place. The schools also varied as to how much school time they would allow for interviews. More interviews were conducted during classes in Alby than Balnes, and the rest were conducted between classes in both schools. The fact that lunch breaks were used for interviews in some instances, might have affected both the length and content of the interviews, and can be seen as a limitation to the data. Most interviews were moreover conducted in a quiet, private setting with the use of an interview guide, audio recorder, and with the attempt of creating an informal atmosphere simulating a conversation rather than an interview (Bryman, 2012, p. 471).

An interview guide was used to structure the conversations, and developed with basis in the analytical framework. Questions were thus structured around three main elements: Individual resources/broad context, inner context and citizenship outcomes.

Figure 6. Constructing the Interview Guide

Individual resources/ Broad context	Ethnicity Parents Engagement	Are you engaged in any organizations or activities in your spare time? Do you ever discuss societal issues with your parents?
Inner context	Content Pedagogy Climate	Why do you think that this specific discussion issue created such high temperature in class? How did you experience to disagree with others in your class?
Citizenship outcomes	Participation Engagement	How did you participate in the discussions? Do you see yourself engaged in any activities one year from now?

Figure 6 illustrates the process of breaking down the analytical elements of importance to understandable questions structuring the conversations. See appendix 8.1 for the full interview guide (in Norwegian). The goal was to include a varied, but limited set of questions in the interview guide for the purpose of opening up the conversations and let the participants themselves provide rich answers (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). A first draft was piloted and revised before moving in to the field, as well as fitted in the field by conducting the first interviews with the students organizing the sessions. The interview guide was also revised throughout the interview process, and a limitation to the data is thus a wish for some of the early interviews

to be more relevant to the questions that was added later. In spite of the preparations, the age of the participants and the research setting might have affected the data collection to some extent. Some participants did not elaborate without probing questions, and sometimes I found the probes to be somewhat leading. The aim of creating a comforting interview setting also influenced my patience with silence, and sometimes new questions might have been introduced too fast (Bryman, 2012, p. 473). The interviews containing the most probes, are also the shortest, and the length of the 25 interviews conducted varies between 30 – 90 minutes. The most limited interviews thus fall short of the rich data that semi-structures interviews have the potential of providing. The data collection process is thus closely linked to the sampling process and the ideal of theoretical saturation, since short and limited interviews directed the search for more participants as a way of strengthening the data.

The analysis of data and interpretation of results represent the last element of the research process, and should follow logically from the previous stages of the study design. The deductive aspects of the case study allow for the use of theory throughout the research process, and thus contrasts from more inductively qualitative designs such as ethnography and grounded theory (Yin, 2009, p. 35). Theory and the use of a specific analytical framework helped structure the sampling procedures, the production of the interview guide, and ultimately the analysis and coding process. All the interviews were transcribed word by word after completion, and analyzed in line with the research questions and the analytical framework. The original transcripts were written in Norwegian, and translations to English were made only on the data that was found important for analysis. Although the translations are intended to mirror each other, one must acknowledge that translating data might serve as a limitation since there is a danger of losing the full original meaning in the process. My fluency in both languages however account for misinterpretations, and original transcripts are kept for the sake of research transparency.

Figure 7. The Coding Process: Items, Concepts, and Categories
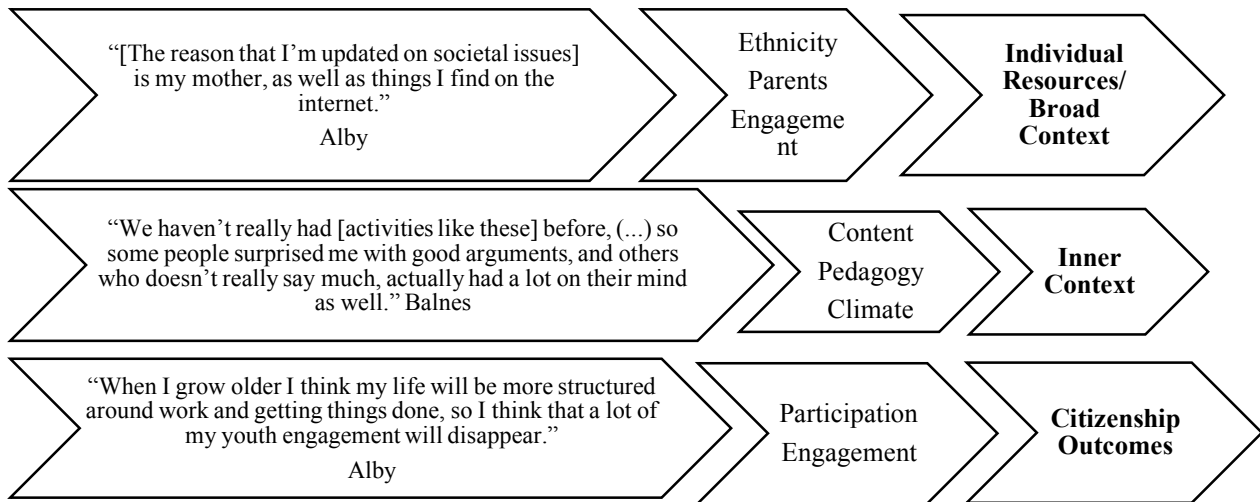
Figure 7 shows examples of how the broad coding process is similar to the creation of the interview guide, where collected data was conceptualized to higher levels of abstraction by linking quotes to theoretical concepts and categories of importance (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 66). While a case study like this relies more on theory than other qualitative designs, it does not automatically make the analysis process as straightforward as in quantitative research. The analysis process rather represented cyclical movements from data, through open coding of content of importance, back to data, and gradually towards a narrower coding of concepts and categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 160). The whole research process can moreover be characterized by being in a continuous state of review, although certain theoretical frames guided the overall structure (Bryman, 2012, p. 388).

4.5   Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

The quality of social science research has traditionally been evaluated with reference to the concepts of validity and reliability, but many qualitative researchers have gradually come to use alternative concepts to ensure research quality under the common heading of *trustworthiness* (Bryman, 2012, p. 390):

1. credibility, which parallels internal validity;
2. transferability, which parallels external validity;
3. dependability, which parallels reliability;
4. confirmability, which parallels objectivity.

Issues concerning the *credibility* of the study refer to what extent the researcher has understood the social world of inquiry, and thus the relationship between the theories and assumptions made, and the reality one seeks to explore (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). As already noted, the use of both observation and interviews as data collection methods accounts for some of the dangers of wrong-interpreting the reality of the participants, and represents an attempt of method *triangulation*. Interviews also allow for some degree of *respondent validation*, as one is in the position of asking questions to clarify, as well as to check interpretations continuously throughout the interview (Bryman, 2012, p. 391-392). A related limitation is the fact that participants know that they are being studied, which in this case might have influenced student answers towards what they thought was a certain preferred point of view (Walter, 2010, p. 6). Some students identified me as representing one of the organizations from the initial Utøya seminar, and might therefore have adjusted their answers accordingly. In such instances, it was found even more important to explicitly express my role as an autonomous researcher, as well as ensuring participant anonymity. A last remark on factors related to research credibility, or internal validity, is the question of causal interpretation between different elements in the data (Kleven, 2008, p. 223). Although this type of validity is more relevant to quantitative data analysis, some notes are however important to make for the purpose of this study, as one of its aims is exploring the modes of engagement influence of individuals. While acknowledging the limitations of generalizing about such inferences in the small data set presented here, the findings nonetheless point out tendencies that can be understood as contextually valid, since patterns are found both within and across the two cases.

A discussion of contextual validity is relevant also in relation to the next quality element of importance, which is *transferability* or external validity (Bryman, 2012, p. 391). The findings in this study are found to rely heavily on a number of specific contextual factors of the social settings, which makes the transfer of specific findings, and research replication almost impossible. However, attempts at giving detailed accounts of the theoretical and methodological choices, as well as contextually rich presentations of findings, might serve to strengthen the aspects related to transferability. The transparency of the research process is therefore also highly relevant to the quality concept of *dependability*, or reliability (Yin, 2009, p. 45). Interviews, early drafts of plans, research questions, interview guides and transcripts are therefore kept for others to critically revisit if needed. The comparative units of a two-case study also serve the argument of transferability, since two cases might help to test certain

theoretical assumptions better than one (Yin, 2009, p. 43). The question as to whether the findings of such controversial issues discussion would provide the same patterns in two contextually similar schools in a different Norwegian city, is however difficult to predict on such a limited data set. The more important element of qualitative transferability is rather if the results can be generalized to theory (Yin, 2009, p. 43).

The last quality measure of qualitative importance is confirmability, which parallels objectivity in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). Following the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, an interpretive approach to the social reality will never be purely objective (Burrel & Morgan, 1992, p. 3). What the researcher must aim for however, is not to expose own biases, feelings and expectations during the data collection process, in order to avoid collecting data that only suits one's own subjective assumptions (Bryman, 2012, p. 475). What cannot be ignored is the fact that the researcher's social position might influence participants nonetheless, and efforts were therefore made in the field towards creating a genuine open, non-authoriative, and non-judgemental relationship towards the young participants, and thus allowing for a range of different accounts of expereinces, even when the issues were found sensitive (Walter, 2010, p. 12). My position as a young woman might have influenced the recruitment of boys for the study, but little evidence indicate a gender difference as to how much the students would share of personal experiences in the actual interview setting.

For a researcher to succesfully collect data that serves the characterizations of trustworthy research project, certain ethical considerations must be made. Such considerations include whether the research in any way harms the participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, or if participants feel that their privacy is invaded (Bryman, 2012, p. 135). These issues are however not dedicated to the field experience alone, and a research proposal was applied and approved for by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) as part of the field work preparation. Since the participants of this study are under the age of 18, all potential participants were asked to take home written information about the study for their parents to read and approve, before conducting the interviews. The students themselves also gave informed consent on the basis of written and oral information about my role in the project, the study purpose and content, with specific emphasis on aspects such as confidentiality, voluntary participation and the right to withdrawl at any time in the process (Bryman, 2012, p. 140). See appendix 8.2 for further details on the consent forms. Research information was moreover distributed to the parents of the Utøya seminar students, but not to

the parents in the the two classes, since the observations only function as secondary data in the study, and will not be referred explicitly to in the findings. Teachers, and the students organizing the discussion sessions however, gave their consent to my presence.

Ethical considerations of importance during field work have been referred to in different parts in the current chapter, and primarily touches upon issues of potential harm or invasion of the privacy of the participants, and thus the role of the researcher in the field (Bryman, 2012, p. 135). Such issues include my ability to give an impression of trust and autonomy in the sampling process, and to provide gentle, but clear interview settings where participants felt free to elaborate on different issues, especially if they were sensitive. Since interviews were recorded, transcribed and kept for the sake of research transparancy, ethical issues also apply to data protection after leaving the field (Bryman, 2012, p. 137). This naturally also remains an aspect of the writing process and final research publication. To ensure confidentiality, interviews and transcrips are stored without reference to participants' real names, and information that can lead back to the participants is anonymized in the transcripts. Participants are given fictuous names in the presentations of findings, and the city and schools are neither referred to with their real names. Interview recordings will be deleted in time, according to principles given by NSD.

5 Findings

The research findings will be presented in this chapter. The findings follow from the theoretical, analytical, and methodological approaches guiding the purpose of this research, which was primarily to explore student experiences of the inner classroom context in discussions of controversial content, and secondly to explore whether broader contextual factors influenced individual students experiences differently in their own accounts of engagement in the issues concerned. Three research questions were used to guide the empirical inquiry, and will help structure the following chapter:

- What elements of experience were emphasized in student accounts of the controversial issues discussions, and how were they valued?
- Following from the general picture of student experiences with the discussions, to a more specific exploration of the issues of controversy: Did higher degrees of controversy lead to higher valued experiences?
- In students own accounts: Did contextual factors influence the students with high valued discussion experiences differently in the two schools?

Data from the two schools have been analyzed separately, but will be presented together in the first section, since the findings not only suggest differences, but also similarity between the schools. Findings concerning the second and third research question will be presented school-wise, since they address certain contextually bound characterizations. Findings from the three questions must however be understood as integrated parts of a greater picture, both within and across school contexts.

5.1 Elements of Value in the Inner Context

Findings that address the first research question point towards the elements that characterizes the inner classrooms contexts, and thus the features of content, pedagogy and climate of controversial issues discussions (Hahn, 2012, p. 51). What elements were given prominence in student accounts of their general discussion experiences, and how were they valued? The findings are presented in two sections which account for the elements that were highly, and less appreciated in student experiences. The elements are presented under one, as the findings revealed similar patterns across the sample. It is however important to note that such a

dichotomy does not automatically represent reality as such, and that the elements rather should be understood as part of a continuum.

5.1.1 Highly Valued Elements in Student Experiences

Highly valued elements expressed by students in accounts of their discussion experiences are categorized under the features of content, pedagogy and climate, as illustrated in Table 1. What stands out is the dominance of a number of *common* elements of experience (no background color), as opposed to the elements that were only found in Alby (light grey), and Balnes (dark grey). Elements that differed between the schools occurred in a minority of student accounts. Discussion experiences of high value will be presented below.

Table 1. Elements of High Value in Student Experiences

CONTENT	PEDAGOGY		CLIMATE	
	Cognitive	Practical	Classroom	School
Personal Relevance	Cognitive Challenge	Student-led	Diversity of Opinion	Tolerance of Opinion
Background Knowledge	Diversity of Opinion	Activity-based	Express Identity	
Diversity of Opinion	Change of Opinion		To have Fun	
	Critical Thinking			

5.1.1.1   Content

Elements of high value in student experiences of discussion content are *personal relevance*, *background knowledge*, and *diversity of opinion*. The element referred to by most participants across the schools is *personal relevance*, which shows how the majority of participants found the discussion issues relevant to their lives, either by interest or experience, as the statement by Alexander from Balnes School illustrates: "Normally we learn about things that are not very interesting to people, and people don't get engaged because it doesn't feel that relevant to our lives. ... But now the discussions were centered around issues that affect everyone, even our future." Eda from Alby School similarly stated: "All issues engaged me, ... because they are all relevant to my daily life and future." Some suggested that personal relevance was only applied to local domains of experience, while others contextualized their local realities within national, and even global perspectives, as illustrated by Maria from Balnes: "... it makes you

reflect upon societal issues, which I find to be important, ... since it [says something about] the society and the world we live in."

An element related to personal relevancy, is *background knowledge*. Having some form of background knowledge of the issues, stands out as an element of importance in both schools, although not as strongly as personal relevance. Participants often referred to domains outside the school when giving accounts of the knowledge acquired, here from Sabina in Alby: "It is an issue I'm interested in, and I've read a lot about it on the internet ...". Moreover, the fact that students expressed knowledge that is not primarily associated with the school context, is surprising for some, as illustrated by Eser, also from Alby: "Suddenly a lot of classmates who never do their homework knew a lot about the issues that we discussed, so actually I did change the way I look at some people."

Diversity of opinion is present across the features of content, pedagogy and climate, and represents a content element when participants suggest that highly valued discussion experiences were directly related to the quality of the issues. It is difficult to isolate this element from the other content elements, but it touches upon to what extent the content was experienced as controversial, which will be handled in more detail in chapter 5.2. Frida from Balnes School for instance, emphasized how the issues managed to create high levels of disagreement in class: "These issues engaged me the most ... because they are not settled yet, people have different opinions ... and that makes them interesting."

5.1.1.2   Pedagogy

Six highly valued elements are categorized under the feature of pedagogy, and refer to specific practical and cognitive elements of the discussions. They are labelled *cognitive challenge*, *diversity of opinion*, *change of opinion*, *critical thinking*, *student-led*, and *activity-based issues*. The practical elements refer to the fact that sessions were student-led, and that they involved activity, as students were asked to move around the classroom. The elements are highly appreciated in both schools, but with slightly different emphasis. High appreciation of the student-led facilitation of the discussions, was expressed by a majority of participants, since it allowed for the voice of different students to be heard, Sigurd from Balnes specified that: "... when students are in charge of the class, you can express things more freely." Especially the boys in Balnes emphasized the activity element of the sessions. Johan for instance, stated that: "It was fun, because it was different than normally. ... We didn't just sit

at our desks and learn stuff, but we actually got to do things ourselves, move around, and make active choices in [expressing] our opinions.”

There is however a tendency for more prominence given to the cognitive elements of the pedagogy at both schools. *Cognitive challenge* is an element many participants’ value. It refers to the act of expressing opinions, listen to, and answer others, and standing up for own views. Student appreciation of such challenges might relate to experiences of achievement. Markus in Alby said: “I enjoy having the opinion of the minority ... because you get more arguments directed at you, and then you get more engaged, [because] you have to take more responsibility, and think more.” Others appreciated that listening to others’ perspectives influenced not only their general experience of the discussion, but also their knowledge acquisition. Sigurd from Balnes commented: “I learned a lot about others’ opinions, and also that I [generally] learn more subject knowledge this way, ... because what the others say help you learn more.”

Other highly valued cognitive elements include *diversity of opinion*, to be able to *change others opinion*, to get one’s own *opinions changed,* and that discussions strengthened students’ *critical thinking*. To change others’ opinions, or experience that others’ change yours, involves an active cognitive process. Johan from Balnes stated: “At times you might change the first thing that popped into your head, when you get to talk to others about it.” Jenny from Alby even referred to the physical act in the classroom illustrating her change of opinion: “... at first I walked towards [the place for] ‘agree’, but then I changed my mind because someone put forward their opinion in such a good way.” *Diversity of opinion* here refers to the value given to discussion as a pedagogical tool that allows for disagreement among students. Alexander from Balnes expressed: “Normally in class, there’s always a right or wrong, and we are assessed according to it. But in discussions, nothing is right in that sense, everyone just state their opinions, and sometimes we don’t even agree in the end.”

5.1.1.3   Climate

Highly valued elements of the classroom climate are labelled *diversity of opinion*, *expression of identity*, and *to have fun*. *Diversity of opinion* refers to valuing disagreement given the climate in which it appears, and thus imply tolerance and social support. The student Even from Balnes suggested that: “If you already have friends in class, you cannot end the friendship just because you have conflicting opinions. ... We learn how to formulate and explore other’s opinions, and we get more used to others having different views.” The

findings show that *diversity of opinion* is highly valued in both schools, but also that climate elements generally are given more importance at Alby, since *to have fun,* and *tolerance of diversity* in the school climate, only appear in the data from Alby School, suggesting that Alby generally has a more supportive climate for such discussions. This statement from Mathias exemplifies how students appreciated the contributions made by others: "… if I had lost the debate, then it wouldn't have been as much fun. Everyone got to experience what it feels like to win or lose, and everyone got to state their opinions." *Tolerance of diversity* in the school climate refers to an element of high value only in Alby, although expressed only by some participants, here illustrated by Markus:

> "The whole school is special, one reason is the fact that we have a democracy subject where people discuss a lot, and many people also likes to state their opinions [out of class]. We all use our freedom of speech, so I wouldn't say that my group of friends are special, the whole school is."

Expression of identity is important in both schools. It shows how students position themselves as individuals who stand up for their opinions in the discussions, here illustrated by Johan from Balnes: "I think it's important to [stand up for your opinions], that you're not afraid, and that you can go your own way." Few participants referred to the classroom climate itself as particularly open for the expression of identity, but rather how it matters for freely speaking their mind *despite* what others might think of them. This quote from Adam in Alby shows how: "A good debate to me is one where no one tries to overrun others, make a fool of others, or make others feel stupid if they have a different opinion from your own. It should rather be 'I understand your stand, but I disagree' ... So generally I found this discussion to be pretty good."

5.1.2 Less Appreciated Elements in Student Experiences

Less appreciated elements of student experiences are presented in this chapter, categorized under the features of content, pedagogy, and climate, as illustrated in Table 2. Less valued elements were not as strongly present as the high valued in participants' experiences. Where common elements dominated students high valued experiences, the opposite is true for the less appreciated. Here, a minority of elements are found in both schools (no background color), as opposed to elements found only in Alby (light grey), and Balnes (dark grey) respectively. The findings indicate that the less appreciated elements of content and pedagogy was most prominent the Alby experience. In Balnes however, content and climate stand out.

Table 2. Less Valued Elements in Student Experiences

CONTENT		PEDAGOGY	CLIMATE	
Personal	**Practical**		**Classroom**	**School**
Personal Sensitivity	Consensus	Student-led	Fear of others' evaluation	Social Conflict
Polarization of Opinion	Lack of Knowledge	Lack of Discussion Quality	Criticism	
			Foolishness	
			Carelessness	

5.1.2.1   Content

Four less appreciated elements are given importance in the students' accounts: *personal sensitivity, polarization of opinion*, *agreement*, and *lack of knowledge*. *Consensus* and *lack of knowledge* represent practical elements that students value less since they show adverse effects on the general level of participation and engagement. Some issues were not much discussed. Adam from Alby stated: "This was the least discussed issue because everyone agreed, and even *I* had difficulties finding arguments." Lack of knowledge among students in both schools were especially present on one issue, which affected the discussion. Even in Balnes noted: "The issue of surveillance [by the police] was difficult for people to discuss, because it's a topic that you don't hear much about, ... so it depends on your own knowledge."

Two other important elements point to more individual personal experiences, namely *personal sensitivity* and *polarization of opinion*. Some students found the issues too personally relevant, as illustrated by Erdem in Alby: "This is something people see and feel every day ... we have a pretty high number of students from [the reception center for asylum seekers] at this school, who don't have the same rights as we do; and they experience it themselves." Others might experience the opinions as too diverse, and therefore as polarizing, as illustrated by Adam in Alby: "Questions concerning race, ethnicity, sexual orientation - things you cannot change - and equal rights, you *cannot* discuss [them], even though you disagree. It becomes more harassment than a discussion." Generally, less valued content aspects were given more emphasize in Alby than Balnes. Only the girls at Balnes refer to personal sensitivity, an issue to be addressed in more detail in chapter 5.2 on experiences of controversy.

5.1.2.2   Pedagogy and Climate

Less appreciated elements of pedagogy were mentioned by a minority, and only in Alby. Two elements were identified, that the *activities were student-led* and *quality of discussions*. Markus in Alby suggested that: "Some students might have taken a teacher more seriously." One of the participants referred to the discussions as 'opinion exchange' rather than a 'real discussion': "At first I said something, and them someone else said something that wasn't really related. When it develops into a discussion you sort of counter other's arguments."

Negative views of the climate represent more prominent tendencies. A majority of participants in both schools expressed concerns about the *fear of others' evaluation*, showing how most participants worry about the lack of social support in the climate of which the discussions took place. Some participants mentioned personal shyness as a factor affecting their experiences, but more importantly was the worry about how the others would react to their opinions. Sabina at Alby commented: "It's not a good feeling if people change the way they look at you because of your opinions." Maria from Balnes similarly said: "It can be uncomfortable to be the only one standing on one side. ... I don't think I would've dared to take such a stance." Vilde referred to group dynamics: "Some don't trust their group enough to express their opinions."

Other less appreciated elements of the climate are only found in the data from Balnes School. These elements include *criticism*, *foolishness*, *carelessness,* and *social conflict* in the general school climate. They are addressed by a few participants. *Criticism* refers to conflicting opinions being experienced as criticism, or even personal attacks, here illustrated by Sigurd: "[I think] some people are afraid to express their opinions, afraid of criticism, but I don' care." This element is closely related to the general school climate, as stated by Hedda: "I think it can be difficult at times [to stand up for your opinion at this school]. ... People our age often find *their* opinion more correct than others ... and they might have difficulties seeing others point of view." *Foolishness* and *carelessness* refer to the behavior of certain other students, but is characterized as elements of the climate since they are found to affect the discussion experiences of some participants, such as Eline: "We have some [in our class] who jokes around all the time, and it gets pretty irritating if you want to be serious yourself." Vilde referred to a similar experience: "There are some who doesn't care if the things they say are racist. ... They might say the most stupid things, ... and they know it hurts others, but they just don't care." Alby students seemed to find foolishness rare, surprisingly so to some, such as Sinem: "I found the discussions to be surprisingly good, people managed to formulate their

opinions well, and there was not much fooling around ... I was actually surprised by the opinions of some."

5.2 Views on Controversy

The in-class discussions focused on specific human and societal questions that have the potential of dividing opinion inside and outside the classroom (Stenhouse, 1968, p. 27). They were assumed to have a controversial content, and the findings presented in chapter 5.1 show tendencies that *confirm* the presence of some degree of controversy. *Diversity of opinion* is an element of importance in a majority of student experiences with the discussions, as a highly valued element across the features of content, pedagogy and climate. *Diversity of opinion* is also found as a minor tendency among the less valued or negative elements, especially if the opinions were perceived to be too diverse, and thus created polarization rather than discussion. A similar less valued element of the climate refers to disagreement experienced as personal criticism rather than discussion based on initially diverse views. This section will deal *specifically* with how students viewed the issues that created most discussion in class. The discussions evincing the greatest degree of diversity of opinion are therefore taken to be the most controversial, and experiences with these will be presented with the use of the conceptual framework presented in chapter 5.1. Moreover, did high degrees of controversy lead to the highest valued student experiences?

5.2.1 Alby School

The statements put forward to the students in Alby are found in Figure 8, and findings propose a tendency for statement number three and five to stand out as those who created the most disagreement in class. They address the use of niqab and burqa in Norway, and to what extent all humans are equally worth. Whether these discussions were the most highly valued in student experiences however, will be shown in the presented findings.

Figure 8. Statements for Discussion in Alby School

> **Alby School**
>
> 1. Summer is better than winter
> 2. Everyone has equal opportunities in Norway
> 3. The use of niqab and burqa should be prohibited in Norway
> 4. We must tolerate more surveillance, and less privacy in order to prevent future terrorist attacks
> 5. Some people are worth more than others

Highly valued student experiences with the discussions following from statement three and five were characterized by two elements: *personal relevance* and *diversity of opinion*. The element of relevance is labelled personal since most students conceptualized it this way, but some also included national and global perspectives. This is true also for statement number three and five. Eser said: "They are the most important [issues to discuss] in my opinion, because they reflect what's happening to people, not only in Norway but also around the world."

Personal relevance emerged as the most prominent highly valued element of experience with statement number three, especially since many of the students were Muslim themselves. Mathias explained: "Our school is pretty multicultural ... almost half our class is Muslim, [so the topic] had something to do with the class ... it has something to do with them." However, the discussion also divided the Muslim student group, which might account for the high value participants generally gave this element. Personal relevance did not automatically polarize the class, but sparked discussion with arguments on both sides, since many were familiar with the issue. Daniel for instance, stated: "Even Muslim students agreed that it should be prohibited ... and said that it is more about culture than religion ... and that was really informative and fun." Sabina on the other hand, suggested that personal factors influenced the participation of the Muslim students: "We have many Muslims in our class ... and many agree to the fact that girls should be allowed to wear niqab and burqa in Norway as well ... so they want to support their religion." Mia moreover emphasized: "One girl in my class wears a hijab, and she thinks that people should be able to wear whatever they want to ... [but it was not problematic for her because] she is active [in discussions]." *Diversity of opinion* was thus automatically related to personal relevance, but also given explicit value in itself. Mathias for instance, commented that: "... many joined the discussion ... and the more

people discussing, the more arguments, and the more fun it gets. You hear other's opinions as well."

Similar tendencies were found in the discussion on statement number five, on equal human worth. Filip contextualized its *relevance* to their lives: "It's an issue today; you hear about the celebrities and the amount of status they get in their lives, and then you might feel less worthy, even though everyone is worth the same." Some noticed the participation of those not normally active in class, as illustrated by Mathias: "… it seemed like the ones who were discussing the most, are those who are [normally] active, but also the ones who got *hit* by it, I think." The presence of *diversity of opinions* was equally highly valued. Eser found this issue to clearly divide the group:

> "Some people said that rich people are worth more than others because they have more money, ... others that the poor ones are worth less, because they might not have enough to get by in life, ... and others again said that Donald Trump is a bad person, and that he will become a bad president, but that he's still a person, he is worth the same as everyone else, even though he has a lot of money."

The diverse views sparked high temperature between the participants, as illustrated by Sinem: "There were many people who reacted with strong feelings when this issue was presented to us. ... One guy said that 'everyone should be treated equally, whether you are Christian, Muslim or Jew'. The ones who argued did it in a clear and informative way."

Personal sensitivity was the least appreciated element of experience with the discussion on the use of niqab and burqa, expressed by some participants. Although none gave personal accounts of sensitivity, they suggested that others might have had such an experience. Markus for instance, stated: "[This discussion] could be difficult for the Muslim students because it hits their religion. If you are *really* religious, it can hit you." Jenny similarly illustrated that: "Some people might feel more hit by it, if they have a culture where they feel that they *have* to wear a hijab." *Polarization of opinion* was not experienced by most participants, but was nonetheless a minor tendency. Erdem suggested that polarization could hold some students back: "Many people who argued *for* banning the use of niqab and burqa in Norway started their sentences with 'this is not racism, *but*....' because they do not want to be shot down because of their opinions." Sabina shared the same perspective: "Some people might be too scared to agree ... because they would get many arguments back at them, people might become angry ..., and say that their opinion was wrong, and stuff like that. ... They could get too much resistance."

Polarization of opinion did not appear as a finding specifically concerning the discussion on equal human worth. *Personal sensitivity* however, was present in the findings, expressed by a few of the participants. Mathias stated: "… it might affect someone, because as I said, someone actually feel less worthy than others, and then they might not want to say much about it … and they don't want others to know that this is how they feel." Adam added another perspective: "Not all people are worth the same in all cultures ... and we have people from different cultures here. We also have people who disagree to the fact that everyone should be treated equally, so it's easy to get angry. ... It creates a lot of debate"

Most of the Alby participants highly valued the issues that created the most discussion, since they were found personally relevant and therefore stimulated disagreement. The fact that some students who normally remain passive in classroom activities, joined the discussions, also suggest that these elements are important. Less appreciated experiences were not mentioned often by participants, but it is noteworthy that the most controversial issues generated both the most strongly *and* least appreciated experiences. Moreover, the risks of polarization of opinion, or offending students by discussing personal sensitive issues, should not be ignored in the larger picture of possible effects of controversial issues discussions.

5.2.2 Balnes School

The discussion statements at Balnes School resemble those at Alby, but they also include additional ones, as seen in Figure 9. Further details on the student-led sessions can be found in chapter 4.2 on methodology. Findings suggest a more equal distribution between discussions with high degrees of disagreement in Balnes. However, many participants proposed that there was much overlap in meaning between statements two and three, and between four and seven. By taking this approach, the issues concerning gender equality and immigration created the highest degrees of discussion. Specific data on student views on controversy was smaller in the Balnes material than in Alby, maybe since participation in the discussions generally was lower. Nonetheless, Sigurd from Balnes stated: "Almost [all issues] created discussion, ... because people have opinions, ... even though they don't always speak up." The findings share interesting similarities with Alby, as will be shown below.

Figure 9. Statements for Discussion in Balnes School

Balnes School

1. Summer is better than winter
2. Everyone has equal opportunities in Norway
3. Norway is a country of equality
4. You can say whatever you want to, as long as
   you are just joking around
5. Immigrants must adapt to Norwegian values and culture
6. We must tolerate more surveillance, and less privacy in
   order to prevent future terrorist attacks
7. Our culture is threatened by increased diversity
8. More surveillance equals less terrorism

Highly valued student experiences with the discussions following from statement two/three and five/seven were: *personal relevance*, *change of opinion*, and *diversity of opinion*. *Personal relevance* stands out as the most prominent element in the findings, and is experienced by many participants within a local, as well as national perspective, similarly to what was found in Alby. Celine for instance, stated: "I think that we should discuss things like this, because it reflects what's happening in our society right now, and everyone should know about it." Frida and Hedda elaborated. Frida: "Some things are easier to relate to." Hedda: "Those who have enough food, might have difficulties engaging in hunger [issues], whereas women might find it easier [than men] to engage in gender equality issues, and people with culturally diverse backgrounds can more easily engage in issues of discrimination and religion."

When asserting *personal relevance* to statement number two/three, most girls suggested that gender equality issues are highly relevant to their everyday life. Julia explained: "The boys say that there *is* gender equality, and the girls disagree, because the boys aren't really affected by it." Some girls continued the discussion with the boys after the session: "We talked a while with the boys after class, and we explained ourselves, ... and how girls are not prioritized as much as boys in sports, boys get better training hours for instance. They understood our point eventually." Other boys shared similar views, here exemplified by Alexander: "The boys might not put that much thought into the issue because it isn't that relevant to us, but it is for the girls, and they get frustrated." *Diversity of opinion* was valued highly in these discussions, since the issues were both personally relevant, and clearly divided the group. Eline thought that the issue had not been properly addressed earlier: "I don't think everyone knows what the situation is like, so maybe that is the reason why people had such

different opinions." The opinions generally showed a divide between the boys and girls, but the quote from Alexander suggest otherwise. *Change of opinion* was another appreciated element, since the boys' opinions may have altered. Alexander stated: "When the girls put forward their opinion, I think some of us learned a lot. We may even have changed our opinions." Hedda similarly thought: "There were many good arguments, most of them from the side arguing that girls are equally good as boys."

Findings concerning discussions on immigration by statement five/seven, were similar to those on gender equality, but less prominent. The discussions were not as divided between those who highly agreed and those who disagreed. *Diversity of opinion* was highly valued by many students in these discussions, and there were also examples of how disagreement did not always constitute two sharply conflicting sides, but rather a range of diverse opinions. Ada, stated: "I think that most people found the answer to be somewhere between *agree* and *disagree* ... it was difficult to give a clear answer." Frida also addressed the complexity of the issues: "These issues engaged me the most ... because they are not settled yet, people have different opinions." Johan perceived disagreement also in these discussions: "People were pretty divided on the issue on immigrants coming to Norway and adapting to the culture, ... I think it's because it's issue where people *do* think differently." *Relevance* stands out as the most highly valued element in the discussions sparked by statement five/seven, as exemplified by Alexander: "The issues related to immigration and threats to our culture were the most strongly discussed, ... and I believe it's because it's an issue generally [discussed] in Norway. ... People fear terrorist groups hiding behind the name of Islam, and they generalize." Vilde similarly stated: "[These are issues] you hear about in Norway, you hear about terrorism, immigration, ... and it concerns us and our opinions."

Also in Balnes, *personal sensitivity* stands out among the less appreciated aspects perceived by some of the participants in discussions on gender equality. Additionally, some students mentioned *fear of others' evaluation* as a negative element of the classroom climate. Frida suggested that gender equality "is a topic where it's easy for the boys to provoke the girls. ... It's a sensitive topic, and the girls get annoyed, while the boys, they think it's fun." Interviewer: "Almost like flirting?" Frida: "Yes." Hedda thought some girls might have been influenced by others evaluation: "They [the girls] might be scared by the thought of the boys making fun of them." Others expressed more serious concerns. Maria said: "Lately there have been incidents at school where girls have been called things that makes them feel less worthy."

Personal sensitivity was a less appreciated element expressed by a few also in the discussion on immigration. It was perceived to have affected students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Celine suggested that: "since we have immigrants in our class, I would say it's a bit strange to argue against them like*;* 'you need to adapt'! It's a bit *too* personal." Vilde however, stated that: "We do have students from different cultures in our class, so they *might* [have had a hard time], but ** for instance, says exactly what she means, and she knows how to put forward her opinions." Some suggested that social positioning and *carelessness* also were less appreciated elements of experience with discussions on immigration. Hedda commented: "They aren't really racist, but they [make jokes] to look cool. ... It is as if they don't care about other's feelings, like they don't think about it at all."

Like the Alby participants, most students in Balnes highly valued the discussions that created the most discussions, based on personal relevance and diversity of opinion. Some students in Balnes also emphasized change of opinion. A higher degree of participation of students who do not normally attend discussions, show support for such elements. Personal sensitivity and social positioning in the classroom climate were less appreciated elements mentioned by some participants. They are equally important tendencies to address, since they could have prevented the participation of some, and affected others emotionally.

5.3   Accounts of Individual Engagement

This chapter will address findings concerning contextual factors of perceived influence in individual student accounts of engagement in the issues concerned. Selected participants will be presented as they represent specific student *types* in the sample. All share a majority of highly valued elements of experience with the controversial issues discussions. Findings do not show evidence for any strong effects of compositional factors such as parents socio-economic and educational level on individuals (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 88). Elements in participants *own* accounts of engagement influence will therefore be emphasized, and show that the 'engaged students' across the sample share many characteristics; they discuss political and societal issues with friends and family, they are generally motivated for school, and often participate orally in class. However, Daniel at Alby, and Johan at Balnes differ from the typical 'engaged students', and are presented to show diversity in the student group.

5.3.1 Alby School

Individual characterizations of Sinem, Markus, and Daniel will be presented with the purpose of exploring individual engagement in Alby. Relevant characterizations of Sinem are found in Table 3, and she represents the typical 'engaged girl' in the Alby sample. She is Kurdish of background, and her parents engage in Kurdish politics. She recently joined them in a legal demonstration concerning Kurdish issues. Sinem stated that she is "not really that interested in societal issues.", but also commented that: "At home, I discuss everything; rules, our culture, religion. ... One example is the difference between boys and girls. ... We discuss these issues a lot, and I always ask: 'why is our culture so strange'?"

Table 3. Individual Characterization: Sinem

-			+		
Individual resources	**Broad context**	**Inner context**	**Individual resources**	**Broad context**	**Inner context**
-Does *not really* discuss societal issues with parents -Is *not really* into societal issues -Is *not* normally orally active in class	Compositional Factors: -Lower socio-economic area -Lower educational level	**PEDAGOGY** -Student-led **CLIMATE** -Fear of others' evaluation	-Parents: Kurdish -Parents: Engaged in Kurdish politics -Discusses *cultural issues* with parents *all the time* -Motivated in *some* subjects -Engaged in gender equality/cultural issues -Friends engage in the same issues -Engaged in sports -Student council representative -Stands up for her opinions		**CONTENT** -Personal relevance **PEDAGOGY** -Diversity of opinion -Cognitive challenge -Student-led -Activity-based **CLIMATE** -Diversity of opinion

Sinem and her friends are engaged in gender equality and cultural issues, and she wants to join a humanitarian organization in the future. She also stated that her friends discuss "all different kinds of stuff; from boys to football". In school, she is motivated in some subjects, but not among those orally most active in class. She was class representative in the student council last year. She found the controversial issues discussion to be "surprisingly good" as "it's important [to discuss these issues] because people have completely different opinions." She herself stated that she: "had many opinions, but ... was too scared to put [her] hand up. I was too embarrassed because the guy I have a crush on was present, ... and also because the group was too big." Other elements of experience were highly valued, especially since the

issues were personally relevant. She said: "I'm a Muslim myself, and so are many of the others that participated in this discussion ... I think it's an important issue." She also highly valued the expression of diverse opinions: "...you should express your opinion, get it out. If you hold it in, it might feel too crowded inside."

Relevant characterizations of Markus are found in Table 4, and he represents the typical 'engaged boy' in the Alby sample. His background is Norwegian, and he is more explicit in his accounts of own engagement: "Engagement is important to me, I like to get engaged, and I like to state my opinion."

Table 4. Individual Characterization: Markus

-			+		
Individual resources	Broad context	Inner context	Individual resources	Broad context	Inner context
	Compositional Factors: -Lower socio-economic area -Lower educational level		-Parents: Norwegian -Parents: One with HE -Discusses societal issues with parents *all the time* -Motivated for school -Discusses societal issues with friends *all the time* -Orally active in class -Role model -Stands up for his opinions -Student council representative (last year)	-Democracy in practice (last year)	**CONTENT** -Personal relevance **PEDAGOGY** -Cognitive challenge -Diversity of opinion -Change of opinion -Student-led **CLIMATE** -Diversity of opinion -Express identity -School: tolerance of diversity

Markus often discusses societal issues with friends and family. He commented: "My mom, dad, friends, we discuss all the time. This is who we are, we discuss everything. At home, the greatest issue now is immigration, the refugee crisis, and war." His parents are also interested in the formal sides of politics. He commented: "My parents think voting is very important." He is generally motivated for school, although he also spends some time "fooling around with my friends". Another aspect in his accounts of engagement influence referred to the subject 'democracy in practice' in the broad school context. He noted: "I don't think that [some of my friends] were equally engaged in politics before joining the democracy subject in school. ... But now I think they are pretty engaged in the world of politics." He is orally active in class, and represented his class in the student council last year. He commented: "I would say that I have an important role in my class, and I think a lot of people look up to me." His

discussion experiences were characterized by only highly valued elements, and he emphasized his position to inspire others:

> "No matter how good or bad you find your own arguments, I believe in expression, because it shows others that you're not afraid of making mistakes, and then you can inspire others to do the same. You should not be afraid of saying something stupid [in class]."

His high value of *tolerance of diversity* as a climate element was ascribed to the multicultural dynamics in the school. He suggested: "since [this school] is multicultural, you need to respect others".

Table 5. Individual Characterization: Daniel

-			+		
Individual resources	**Broad context**	**Inner context**	**Individual resources**	**Broad context**	**Inner context**
-Is *not* very motivated for school -Is *not* normally orally active in class	Compositional Factors: -Lower socio-economic area -Lower educational level	**CONTENT** -Agreement	-Parents: Norwegian -Discusses societal issues with parents *all the time* -His mother updates him on societal events -Enjoys social science subjects in school -Stands up for his opinions -Discusses societal issues with friends *all the time*		**CONTENT** -Personal relevance -Background knowledge **PEDAGOGY** -Cognitive challenge -Student-led **CLIMATE** -Diversity of opinion -Express identity -School Climate

Daniel represents a student type who differ from the typical characterizations of the 'engaged' students in Alby, as seen in Table 5. Lack of motivation for school, and absence of oral activity in normal classes differ Daniel from Markus and Sinem. Daniel rather suggested that he: "joins others if they start fooling around". Apart from school oriented performances, he is similarly engaged in discussions concerning societal issues with his parents and friends: "[I discuss] with my classmates, and especially the ones closest to me; we discuss during classes and between classes, because there is not that much to do here. Either you're on your phone, or you discuss (laughs)." In own accounts of engagement influence, he emphasized interactions with friends in online computer games and social media. His experiences with the controversial issues discussions were characterized by many highly valued elements. He stated: "I found [the discussions] exciting from start to end." *Background knowledge* stands

out as a positive element in his experience: "I usually don't put my hand up in class, but now I did because it was different, and that makes It more fun. ... I already knew something about the issues, I've been following it, and that makes it easier to express yourself." *Personal relevance* was similarly highly valued. He commented: "A lot of what was said was new to me, and [our class] is pretty interested in what's happening around the world, so it was a success in that sense; many learned a lot and was engaged."

5.3.2 Balnes School

Hedda, Julia, and Johan will be presented with the purpose of exploring individual engagement in Balnes. They represent student types of similar characterizations as those in Alby, but differs on others. As the recruitment of boys to the sample was difficult in Balnes, findings may account for a general tendency of more explicit engagement among the girls.

Table 6. Individual Characterization: Hedda

-			+		
Individual resources	**Broad context**	**Inner context**	**Individual resources**	**Broad context**	**Inner context**
		CONTENT -Polarization of opinion **CLIMATE** -Fear of what others think -School: criticism of opinion	-Parents: Norwegian -*Often* discusses societal issues with parents and siblings -Discusses societal issues with friends *sometimes* -Motivated for school -Orally active in class -Stands up for her opinions	Compositional factors: -Higher socio-economic area -Higher education level -Democracy in Practice	**CONTENT** -Personal relevance **PEDAGOGY** -Cognitive challenge -Diversity of opinion -Student-led **CLIMATE** -Diversity of opinion

Relevant factors characterizing Hedda are found in Table 6, and she represents one type of 'engaged girls' in Balnes. She has Norwegian background, is generally motivated for school, attends 'democracy in practice', and is orally active in most classes. She is highly interested in societal and political issues. She commented: "I believe in making the world a better place, and you cannot do that without engagement." She often discusses such issues with parents, siblings and friends, and she is positive to join a political party in the future. However, she suggested that: "I don't think my engagement comes from my parents ... because they have completely different opinions from myself." The discussion experience of

Hedda included elements of both high and less value. Examples of highly valued elements addressed aspects of the pedagogy, and she commented: "I think people actually got something out of what we were trying to do; learn how to argue for your view, ... and learn how to use democracy to get things done." She expressed surprise by others' participation: "I saw engagement in people I didn't expect." Less appreciated elements of the school climate were highlighted, and she found that *fear of others evaluation* could have affected some. She said: "I think [standing up for your opinions] can be pretty difficult sometimes, ... because you can get a lot of resistance on your view, ... so you're afraid to state them." However, she is positive to the potential discussions has in enhancing tolerance among the students. She commented: "... to get used to the fact that other people have different opinions from your own, and that they can be as good as yours, and as right as yours."

Hedda represents an engaged student type who expressed their opinions in the discussions. However, many of the girls in Balnes did not participate, such as Julia, who characterizes another type of student, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Individual Characterization: Julia

-			+		
Individual resources	**Broad context**	**Inner context**	**Individual resources**	**Broad context**	**Inner context**
-Is *not* normally orally active in class		**CLIMATE** -Fear of others' evaluation	-Parents: Norwegian -Medium motivation for school -Engaged in sports -Engaged in gender equality issues in sports -Discusses societal issues with parents and friends *sometimes* -Express her opinions in class *sometimes*	Compositional factors: -Higher socio-economic area -Higher education level -Democracy in Practice	**CONTENT** -Personal relevance -Background knowledge **PEDAGOGY** -Cognitive challenge -Diversity of opinion -Change of opinion -Student-led **CLIMATE** -Diversity of opinion

She has Norwegian background, is medium motivation for school, and does not normally participate orally in class. She discusses societal issues with friends and parents out of school, and attends the subject 'democracy in practice'. Julia expressed many high valued elements in her discussion experiences. She commented: "I actually put my hand up once, ... but I don't usually participate like that in school." Although *fear of others evaluation* was present in her accounts of personal experiences, she also referred to high valued elements of

the classroom climate. She said: "I talk a lot more in class now than I did before, since the group is smaller, and I feel safer around the others in my class." The most highly appreciated element of her experience addressed discussion as a tool opening for *diversity of opinions:* "It was easier [now] to come up with your own opinions, ... because usually in class there's always a right or wrong, and now there wasn't." She commented that normally if an answer is 'wrong': "people will pick on you for it."

While the engaged boys in Balnes share many characterizations with Hedda, Johan represents the boys who are *not* engaged in societal issues, but nonetheless expressed high valued elements of discussion experience. Relevant characterizations of Johan are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Individual Characterization: Johan

-			+		
Individual resources	**Broad context**	**Inner context**	**Individual resources**	**Broad context**	**Inner context**
-Is not interested in politics/societal issues -Does *not* discusses societal issues with parents or friends		**CONTENT** -Not engaging issues	-Parents: Norwegian -Motivated for school -Orally active in class -Stands up for his opinions -Engaged in sports	Compositional factors: -Higher socio-economic area -Higher education level	**CONTENT** -Diversity of opinion **PEDAGOGY** -Cognitive challenge -Diversity of opinion -Change of opinion -Student-led -Activity-based -Critical thinking **CLIMATE** -Diversity of opinion -Express identity

What differs Johan from other 'engaged students', is that he is not interested in politics, and never discusses societal issues with friends or family. He stated: "I don't really care about politics." His background is Norwegian, he is generally motivated for school, orally active in class, but spends all his spare time on sports. In his accounts of discussion experiences, he represents a minority of participant who said that *none* of the issues engaged him: "not to the degree of '*I'm gonna fight for this'.*" He rather appreciated the active elements concerning the pedagogy. He commented: "it was fun because it was different then normally. ... We didn't just sit on our desks and learn stuff." Other elements of high value

included *cognitive challenge* and *change of opinion*: "At times you might change the first thing that popped into your head, when you get to talk to others about it." Despite little interest in political and societal issues, he will probably vote at future formal elections: "[I think I'll vote at eighteen] if I learn more about it, and find someone that I want to vote for."

6   Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this research was primarily to explore the experiences of two groups of students who participated in controversial issues discussions. Their experiences with, and views on controversy have been categorized in terms of content, pedagogy, and classroom climate. The limited sample and time frame of the exploration of the student-led discussions, did not open for measuring any *effects*, or *outcomes*, but a closer look at the findings of student experiences will nonetheless shed light on how such an educational approach was *perceived* by the participants. Although findings suggest several highly valued elements of experience, there is a need to critically question to what extent findings concerning the less valued, or even resented elements in student experiences influence an assessment of the use of controversial issues discussions. A second purpose was to explore whether broader contextual factors could be seen to influence the individual students in terms of their own accounts of engagement in the issues concerned. A discussion of the findings should make it possible to address whether the in-class discussions influenced a range of different individuals, or if engagement in the discussions was mostly conditioned by factors outside the school as proposed by Biesta et al. (2009, p. 7). The diverse socio-economic characteristics of the schools was not found to affect students' engagement considerably, which may reflect the limited sample, rather than imply a general finding. Other contextual factors of perceived influence will therefore be given more emphasis in the discussion. This chapter will be devoted to examining the major findings from the inner context and its relationship to broader contextual factors in more detail, and thus to how discussions were experienced, by whom, and under what conditions. Firstly, the Utøya seminar and the following student-led controversial issues discussions will be positioned within the dominant international discourse of citizenship education.

Four main approaches characterize the international body of research over recent decades, with implications for policy and curriculum development globally (Solhaug, 2012, p. 200). First, a range of contemporary societies are perceived to experience *challenges* of democratic stability, and many respond by introducing formal *citizenship education* as the primary tool for strengthening national citizenship. There is also a tendency among some educationalists to favour the development of a *civic republican* citizenship concept, within a pedagogy based on *constructivist* principles. The renewed interest in citizenship education in Norwegian education policy, must be seen in light of the major international tendencies, as evinced in the recent Report No. 28 to the Storting, where democracy and citizenship are

given cross-curricular importance along with three other domains of importance, as part of the renewal of the National Curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016). It states that education for citizenship has the potential of strengthening the support for democratic principles, and help stimulate active democratic participation (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015-2016, p. 38). Norwegian education policy already builds on a strong democratic tradition, and accounts of the national citizenship concept as found in curriculum and formal legislation, have been the subject of inquiry in several recent studies (Biseth, 2009; Christensen, 2015; Stray, 2009). The current National Curriculum similarly guides the development of democratic citizenship competencies through explicitly stated competence goals in subjects such as Norwegian, social studies, and Christianity, religion, philosophies of life, and ethics (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Research 2017b; 2017c; 2017d).

Many researchers argue for a participatory democratic approach to citizenship education by means of discussion of controversial issues (Avery et al., 2011; Hahn, 2012; Hess & Avery, 2008; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Ljunggren & Öst, 2010; Stray & Sætra, 2016). The Utøya seminar and the controversial issues discussions exemplify a cross-curricular effort of applied citizenship education in the Norwegian context, within a theoretical line of thought that aims at teaching *about* democracy, and *for* democratic participation, *through* active participation (Stray & Sætra, 2015, p. 462). Although analysis of the underlying citizenship concept lies outside the primary purpose of this research, it is nonetheless interesting to note that such a view points towards the maximum, or 'thick' end of a continuum conceptualizing citizenship, where active and participatory elements of the citizen role are emphasized (Alexander, 2015, p. 231). The scope of citizenship education therefore aims for more than the mere transmission of formal knowledge on democratic structures, rights, and institutions, but increasingly the development of certain sets of skills, values, and behavior needed for democratic participation (Zyngier, 2012, p. 4). The citizenship concept understood within this context refers to *citizenship-as-a-desired-activity*, and therefore something that can be practiced and nurtured in different settings (Kymlicka & Norman, 1995, p. 353). A participatory, active, and transformation oriented citizen implies a conceptualization characterizing a civic republican or deliberative type, rather than a traditional liberal or communitarian one (Solhaug, 2013, p. 184). A final characterization of the Utøya seminar that positions it within the dominant international discourse, is the underlying constructivist pedagogical principles. By taking the transformative curriculum tradition of Miller (2007, p.

12) as a pedagogical point of reference, it emphasizes active participation by students in collaborative learning activities, since knowledge acquisition is understood as individual meaning construction in interactions with others. The transformative tradition furthermore emphasizes a holistic education, where historical, political and social contexts are used as references for individual exploration of issues (Evans, 2008, p. 524).

6.1 The Importance of Discussion Experiences

Table 9 summarizes the major tendencies in the findings following from the two research questions concerning the inner context. The table includes highly valued, and less appreciated elements of experience across the sample (light grey/no background color), as well as contextually divergent elements of experience (Alby: medium grey, Balnes: dark grey). The findings refer to students' *general* discussion experiences, and their *specific* views on controversy (light grey). The discussion will address the findings separately, since they leave contrasting implications for assessing controversial issues discussions as a means of citizenship education.

Table 9. Highly (top) and Less (bottom) Appreciated Elements of Experience

CONTENT	PEDAGOGY		CLIMATE	
	Cognitive	**Practical**	**Classroom**	**School**
Personal Relevance	Cognitive Challenge	Student-led	Diversity of Opinion	Tolerance of Opinion
Background Knowledge	Diversity of Opinion	Activity-based	Express Identity	
Diversity of Opinion	Change of Opinion		To have Fun	
	Critical Thinking			

CONTENT		PEDAGOGY	CLIMATE	
Personal	**Practical**		**Classroom**	**School**
Personal Sensitivity	Consensus	Student-led	Fear of others' evaluation	Conflict of Opinion
Polarization of Opinion	Lack of Knowledge	Lack of Quality	Criticism	
			Foolishness	
			Carelessness	

6.1.1 Implications of Students General Discussion Experiences

Findings suggest that highly valued elements of students' general discussion experiences were more prominent than the less valued or unappreciated aspects. Highly valued elements were dominated by common experiences in the schools, especially concerning the content and pedagogy (Table 9). 'Climate' elements reveal the highest divergence between the schools. Its implications will be discussed in more detail under views of controversy in chapter 6.1.2, and the importance contextual influence, in chapter 6.2. However, the argument that student's general highly valued experiences with the discussions align with the presence of the best-practice features of content, pedagogy and climate of controversial issues discussion, leaves some interesting implications (Hahn, 2012, p. 51). Taking account of the arguments by Hess (2009, p. 28-30) in favor of controversial issues discussions, the following section will look more closely at the relevance of discussion-based pedagogy and authenticity of content.

Discussion practice is not only seen as one of the most preferred pedagogical tools in citizenship education, it is also itself a desired outcome, since it *can* involve the practice of tolerance through disagreement, and thus prepare students for authentic democratic participation (Hess, 2009, p. 28). A complete isolation of discussion elements from those of content, and the extent of social support from the classroom climate is impossible, but it is nonetheless noteworthy that unappreciated pedagogical elements are rare in the data, only referred to by a few participants. Hand & Levinson (2012, p. 616) argue that active participation in discussions can be cognitively developmental, since it not only involves expressing one's own view but also evaluation of, and the ability to respond to others' opinions. This process can result in the development of new knowledge or judgement on an issue. Stenhouse (1970, p. 8, in Elliot, 2012, p. 88) similarly argued for the pedagogical aim of controversial issues teaching "as the development of an understanding of social situations, human acts, and the controversial issues they raise". Participants' highly valued pedagogical elements of experience address both diversity of opinion and cognitive development, and may support the presence of the 'necessary and sufficient conditions' of a genuine discussion as opposed to general classroom talk (Hand & Levinson, 2012, p. 616). However, a negative evaluation of one of the participants was that the discussions, from her point of view, were only 'opinion exchanges', since students were not addressing the arguments made by others. That deficiency could possibly undermine the pedagogical quality, but this was noted only by *one* participant. What should be emphasized is the importance of explicit focus on discussion

practices in the classroom, and thus the training of teachers with the skills and confidence to facilitate such practices (Radstake and Leeman, 2010; Oulton et al., 2004). Norwegian findings from the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), do reveal a discrepancy between teachers and students in how much they report on the presence of discussions of disagreement in the class, which might suggest that 'discussion' is confused with other forms of oral activity in class, or that teachers overrate the openness for discussion in their classrooms (Mikkelsen et al., 2011, p. 99/181).

Many participants highly valued the student-led pedagogical element of the discussions. It points towards some interesting implications related to the concepts of authority, and the degree of neutrality held by the discussion facilitators (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010; Stenhouse 1971; Stray & Sætra 2016). It should be noted that the student facilitators in Alby and Balnes most likely were highly regarded by their classmates as they were chosen to organize the sessions, but the facilitators were nonetheless students. Two main reasons for valuing the student-led element were emphasized, firstly that students could express their opinions freely because of equal relationship between facilitators and the other students, and secondly that discussions opened for multiple opinions. Such reasons support the argument of choosing appropriate communication strategies in controversial issues discussions, since a non-authoritative, and non-judgmental approach may help to open for a wider participation of students (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010, p. 35). A 'neutral teacher' can serve the same purpose as it involves a "commitment to protecting pupils' freedom to express and develop their own ideas through discussion" (Elliott, 2012, p. 90). However, according Stray & Sætra (2016, p. 281), facilitators should *not* ignore their responsibility to handle inappropriate statements made by students in order to prevent polarization or stereotypic categorizations in the discussions. Facilitators should be prepared for the possibility that controversial issues discussions can give rise to controversial views. The few participants who reported on *foolishness* from the student group, saw it as a result of the student-led aspect of the discussions, which strengthens the importance of responsible facilitator strategies.

Students attached the highest value of experiences to the discussion content (Table 9). *Personal relevance* and *background knowledge* were highly valued by most participants. However, many also expressed less appreciated content elements, which will be addressed in chapter 6.1.2. Hess (2009, p. 29) touches upon how authenticity of issues has the potential of linking the school to the world outside. Relevance in student accounts can be understood within frames of authentic experience, since issues resonated with student's personal interest

or experience, or enabled students to contextualize their local realities in national and even global perspectives (Banks, 2004, p. 299). Furthermore, the students referred to varied sources of knowledge on the issues, including the internet, discussions with parents, interactive conversations with friends on social media, and online computer games, in addition to social studies classes, and classes in 'democracy in practice'. These accounts support arguments emphasizing the importance of informal sites, interactions, and relationships in developing citizenship competences such as knowledge and engagement (Biesta et al., 2009; Kymlicka 2008). The participation of students such as Daniel (Table 5) supports this picture. Formal education should thus work to facilitate an inclusive citizenship discourse that recognizes, and explicitly draws on the resources that students bring to school (Biesta et al. 2009, p. 7). Ljunggren & Öst (2010, p. 19) similarly argue that citizenship education has a specific potential of bridging local and national societal issues of relevance and authenticity, to the classroom context. The fact that issues concerning Islam were found highly relevant in Alby, whereas gender equality issues were found similarly relevant in Balnes, exemplifies how student engagement in locally relevant issues has potential value in formal citizenship education. *Lack of knowledge*, and *consensus* in the discussions were less valued elements in student experiences, which support the importance of personally relevant and authentic discussion issues. Teachers should therefore prepare discussions carefully by considering which issues will be experienced as relevant to different students, and create authentic divisions of opinion in class, if controversial issues discussions are to be successfully introduced in practice (Hand & Levinson, 2012, p. 620).

By focusing explicitly on the elements of content and pedagogy that are highly valued in discussion experiences, one can find support for arguments favouring the potential which controversial issues discussions have in engaging diverse students, based on factors such as equality, relevancy and authenticity of discussion issues and relationships (Hess, 2009, p. 16). When turning to the specific experiences with controversy on the other hand, a more complex picture emerges.

6.1.2 Implications of Student Views on Controversy

Issues of controversy are characterized by similar elements of value in the two schools (Light grey, Table 9). The findings suggest that controversy not only generated the *highest* valued experiences, but also the *least* appreciated or even resented elements. More participants referred to the highly valued elements *personal relevance* and *diversity of opinion,* than to the

least appreciated *sensitivity of opinion*, *polarization*, and *fear of others evaluation*. They nonetheless refer to perceived risks of participation for some students.

While the issues concerning the use of Islamic veils, and equal human worth were found to spark the highest degrees of discussion, and thus the highest degree of controversy in Alby School, gender equality and immigration issues similarly were the most controversial ones in Balnes. The perceived experience of personal relevance and authenticity of discussion issues are implied to reflect students' local realities (Ljunggren & Öst, 2010, p. 19). In student accounts with these issues specifically, the highly valued element of *personal relevance* contrasted the least appreciated elements *personal sensitivity* and *polarization of opinion*. Although the issues created disagreement and engagement in the two groups, the findings also suggest that issues were perceived *too* personally relevant for some, and could not only be found to polarize the class, but also silence participants, or affect them emotionally. Controversial issues discussions can create authentic democratic spaces of deliberation, but can also open for potential polarization if social divisions are re-inscribed, or if students of a certain opinion feel silenced, or misinterpreted (Hess, 2009, p. 33). Certain participants' accounts may suggest such views. Students representing minority groups in the classroom need to have their voices heard, to prevent further polarization (Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 7). This applies both to heterogeneous, and more homogenous classrooms, as Alby and Balnes show. By introducing discussion issues of assumed relevance, there is therefore a need to clarify if, or to what extent social divisions in the class affect the discussion *climate* (Hess & McAvoy, 2015, p. 7). The use of controversial issues practices to normalize conflict and build tolerance, may have certain limitations (Campbell, 2008, p. 441). The findings are therefore best understood by looking at how students perceived the existing degree of social support in the classroom climate where the controversial issues discussions took place.

Fear of others evaluation is the least appreciated 'climate element' that was referred to by quite a few participants across the two schools. It contrasts the highly valued element of *diversity of opinion*. In other words, the degree of social support in the classroom climate affected to what extent students experience freedom of expressing different opinions, or feared the views of others to an extent that held them back. Most participants did not express their own *personal* negative experiences caused by issues of sensitivity or by an intolerant climate, but they rather expressed concerns for their classmates. It is difficult to assess whether this reflects the position a majority of the participants hold in their classes as engaged and socially confident students, or if they did not want to lose face in the interview setting.

The fear of others' negative evaluation find support in the findings from the qualitative study by Hess & Posselt (2002), which showed how a group of high school students were more sensitive to the way they were perceived by their classmates in controversial issues discussions, than to the effective facilitation strategies used by their teacher.

Several studies using data from the 2009 International Civics and Citizenship Study (ICCS), show that students' perceptions of 'openness' in the classroom climate are positively related to citizenship outcomes such as knowledge, engagement, and even appreciation of conflict (Campbell, 2008; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; McCafferty-Wright, 2015; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). However, by introducing 'class average' in addition to 'individual scores' as predictors in a secondary two-level analysis of ICCS data from 2009, Lauglo (2016, p. 430) shows that correlations of 'openness' and 'individual scores' contrast to 'openness' and the average perceptions by students in the same class. He therefore suggests that more engaged and knowledgeable students might generally find the classroom climate more supportive than their less-engaged classmates. The findings from this study might support such a stance, as the engaged students generally reported on *higher* valued experiences of discussing controversial issues than others in the same class. Additionally, the typical engaged student in my sample experiences the classroom climate as open for the expression of a diverse views, but *understands* that others might perceive it differently. This picture does however differ between the two schools, since the Alby students more often reported the most highly valued climate elements, and Balnes students reported unappreciated elements more often.

6.2   The Importance of Context and Climate

This section addresses implications of the individual and contextually bound characterizations of the students in my sample. Moreover, how can the exploration of individual student engagement shed light on their experiences with the controversial issues discussions in the inner context of their own school? The sampling process aimed at sampling two schools with contrasting socio-economic characteristics, as well as different types of students within each context. One reason for the choice of sample is the relatively strong correlation between student learning outcomes and parent's socio-economic and educational background found in many large scale educational studies, also in the field of citizenship education, as the findings from the 2009 IEA/ICCS study show (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010; Mikkelsen et al., 2011; Schulz et al., 2010). Although findings from a qualitative case study cannot produce results that are automatically comparable to tendencies found in large scale quantitative studies, the

findings concerning contextual and individual characterizations nonetheless provide some interesting implications of engagement influence. The final sample is characterized by a majority of what one could call (socio-politically) 'engaged students', and it is noteworthy that they share many characterizations, *despite* the differing constitutional socio-economic and educational factors characterizing their communities. Most of the participants said that they discuss societal and political issues regularly, both with parents and friends, and many even perceive standing up for their opinions as an identity marker. There was also high occurrence in students' accounts in which informal sites were mentioned as contexts of knowledge acquisition. This supports the argument that informal settings such as the family, and community are important arenas for civic and political socialization, as suggested by Biesta (2009), Kymlicka (2008) and Lauglo (2016). The participation of students who are not normally active in class activities, also suggest that externally acquired civic competences should be acknowledged in school-based formal citizenship education (Biesta, 2009, p. 7). Additionally, many of the participants were generally well motivated for school, attended the 'democracy in practice' class; and some stated that they often participate orally in class. It is therefore unsurprising that the already civically and politically engaged students also were found to highly value their experiences with, and participation in, the controversial issues discussions. Elements of contextual and individual *difference* however, matter more for understanding students' discussion experiences of the inner context.

The most striking difference between the two schools refers to elements of the classroom climate. This discrepancy is present across the findings, from general experiences with the discussions, specific experiences with controversy, and in individual accounts. Table 9 illustrates a clear tendency of mostly highly valued elements at Alby, and more lack of appreciation at Balnes. The school and classroom climate in Alby is more strongly characterized by tolerance for the diversity of opinion, expression of identity, and a site for fun. The school and classroom climate in Balnes, are contrastingly characterized by more social positioning, such as fear of others' evaluation, criticism, foolishness and carelessness. The fact that students across the sample nonetheless highly valued their experiences, suggests some interesting implications. Firstly, standing up for one's opinions might represent a higher social risk at Balnes than at Alby, since some students at Balnes seem to have engaged in the discussions *despite* worries about the less appreciated elements of the classroom climate, whereas students in Alby similarly seem to have engaged *because* of the highly valued elements. The fact that Hedda (Table 6) participated in the discussions, whereas students like

Julia (Table 7) kept silent at Balnes, may support this picture. This can indicate that school and classroom climate is more important for the participation of the 'less-engaged' or 'socially sensitive' students, than the typically engaged. Secondly, by taking a contextual approach to the relationship between individual student engagement and school climate, the findings suggest that although the typically engaged students in both schools share a number of individual and socially based engagement characteristics, Alby students might be more strongly involved in engagement *practice* than in Balnes.

Compositional factors of parents' socio-economic and educational level were assumed to represent the most influential contextual factors on individual engagement in this study, parallel to the Swedish findings (Ekman & Zetterberg, 2010, p. 89). However, the diverse socio-economic characteristics of the schools was not found to affect students' engagement considerably. One reason for this is the relatively small sample of the study, and the difficulties of assessing such influences based on interviews. Students' own accounts of influence upon their engagement, rather emphasize parents' political practices. In Alby, many parents of Kurdish background were strongly engaged in Kurdish politics, and several of these students referred to discussions with their parents. This is not surprising, as the Kurdish diaspora in Norway is strongly politicized (Godzimirski, 2011, p. 600). Studies have also shown how political socialization in the family generally represent a strong influence not only upon young people's civic engagement, but also on their expectation of higher education in Norway and other countries (Lauglo, 2016, p. 446). Whether political socialization is equally influential in families of diverse ethnic backgrounds is not known, but these findings could support such a view.

The Alby student's political, ethnic, religious, and ideological diversity, could have helped create a general climate of tolerance. Hand & Levinson (2010, p. 620) for instance, argue that authentic diversity of opinion can have a positive effect on such development. Ekman & Zetterberg (2010, p. 89) refer to the level of parental education and general socio-economic status in a community as a compositional factor that positively influences the inner context as a 'common pool of resources' that all students can draw on. The findings from Alby suggest that parents' political engagement level could have similar effects. Individual engagement in Alby is therefore not merely an attitude, but also help build a climate of tolerance and inspiration that students who are less engaged, not very motivated for school, and not socially confident can draw on. An 'engagement pool' of resources *is* also present in Balnes, but not to the extent that it is at Alby. One reason might be the unappreciated

elements of the classroom climate at Balnes, indicated by more social positioning, and less tolerance of diversity of opinion. Whether the controversial issues discussions merely served as sites of participation for the already engaged students, might therefore not the most fruitful perspective, but rather whether the *non-engaged* individuals experienced the classroom climate as open enough to draw on the engagement resources that different individuals bring to class. The sample is too small to suggest that this occurs, but findings support the importance of building an open and tolerant classroom climate for potential participation of diverse student types.

6.3 Conclusions

The findings provide some answers to the questions that initially sparked my interest in the Utøya seminar, and in the subsequent student led-discussions of controversial issues: How are such discussions valued, by whom, and under what conditions? In keeping with its primary purpose, the study has shown the presence of a number of highly valued elements in students' discussion experiences, and some less appreciated, or even resented elements. This applies both to students' general experience of these discussions, and to their views of controversy specifically. In terms of the study's comparative aspect, the findings do not indicate any clear differences concerning the experienced elements of content and pedagogy. Parents socio-economic and educational background is not found to exert much influence on the participants' views or engagement in the discussions.

However, the schools did differ in terms of students' perceptions of the classroom climate as a site to participate in such discussions. Many of the participants share certain characteristics, and many seem to be both 'engaged' and 'academically motivated'. Political socialization in informal sites such as the family, and in discussions with friends out of school, were also prominent in their individual accounts of influences upon civic and political engagement. However, most participants highly valued the discussions of controversial issues, *despite* the different perceptions characterizing the two classrooms in terms of climate. The findings therefore seem to support the view that classroom climate is more important for the participation of the 'less-engaged' or 'socially sensitive' students, than the typically strongly engaged students. Diverse types of students in the same class might also perceive their classroom climate differently, although the high number of 'engaged students' in my sample limits the empirical basis for such suggestions. Löden (2014, p. 126) summarizes his search for research that clearly documents positive citizenship outcomes by concluding that

democratic socialization is a complex process. The findings from this study alligns with a perspective where school-based formal education is seen as a specific democratic socialization agent, rather than a general one, that influences all students irrespectively of their diverse backgrunds (Löden, 2014, p. 126).

The highly valued elements of content and pedagogy in the students' experience of the controversial issues discussions provide support for the active, democratic, constructionist, and participatory citizenship pedagogy characterizing the Utøya seminar and the discussion sessions. In light of the relatively strong support for such a pedagogy in the reviewed professional literature, these findings did not generate any surprising answers. However, more noteworthy are the less appreciated elements in students' experience. Within a citizenship educational framework that aims at developing participatory citizens of a civic republican or deliberative nature, teachers and educationalists should reflect on whether one should teach citizenship by emphasizing harmony and the reduction of conflict, critical scrutiny and social transformation, or adopt a middle position (Solhaug & Børhaug, 2012, p. 43). Teachers' awareness of their roles as neutral, but responsible facilitators are important in this respect. If the purpose of citizenship education is to build social cohesion and tolerance of difference in diverse democratic societies, could it be that controversial issues discussions, depending on the topic, persons involved, and classroom climate, may represent a *too* strong civic republican or deliberative approach in classroom practice? Furthermore, could it be that such discussions polarize rather than build tolerance in certain classrooms? Findings from this study show that some participants' experienced *personal sensitivity, polarization of opinion*, and *fear of others' evaluation*. Whether the continued practice of controversial issues discussions in the two schools could have positively affected the development of a classroom climate of tolerance where conflict is appreciated, is difficult to assess. It is also difficult to state whether these findings apply to other classrooms of similar practices. The findings nonetheless adress the importance for teachers to critically evaluate the classroom climate, the discussion topics, and percieved goals of citizenship education before introducing controversial issues discussions in practice. While acknowledging the positive experiences expressed by many of the participants in this study, facilitators and teachers cannot ignore their responsibility of protecting students from negative experiences resulting from educational practices. The findings therefore suggest that using controversial issues discussions as a means of citizenship education is highly valuable for certain individuals, under certain conditions. However, the presence of less appreciated elements of students'

discussion experiences should not be ignored in an overall assessment of such practices.

In order to develop a more holistic understanding of the effects of controversial issues discussions in Norway, it would be interesting to explore larger samples of students who has participated in such practices. Furthermore, it is of interest to explore *which* students are positively or negatively influenced by the classroom climate in terms of citizenship outcomes. Another contribution of importance would be specific research on political socialization among students of different ethnic, cultural, and political background, and to what extent their contributions to the civic classroom can serve to strengthen the development of a diverse and authentic citizenship education. Civic and political engagement influence and practice in informal socialization sites on the internet is equally an interesting field in need of more research.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Interview Guide

Intervjuguide

1. Hvordan vil du beskrive deg selv som elev? Hvem er du?
   - Motivasjon for skolearbeid
   - Rolle i klassen
   - Hjem-skole → Foreldre (utdanning, etnisitet)
   -

2. Er du engasjert i noen form for organisasjon eller aktivitet på fritida?
   - Hva med dine søsken, foreldre, venner?
   - Hva gjør du der?

3. Hender det at du diskuterer samfunnsspørsmål med noen på fritida?
   - Foreldre/ søsken/ venner/ på nett
   - Hva?

4. Hva var målet/formålet/vitsen med opplegget dere hadde i dag tror du?
   - Hva synes du om det?
   - Synes du det lyktes/mislyktes?

5. Hvordan vil du beskrive diskusjonene dere hadde i klassen i dag?
   - Hvordan deltok du?
   - *Hvorfor* deltok/ikke du?
   - Hva med de andre i klassen?
   - Hvordan synes du diskusjonen ble ledet?
   - Oppmuntring til diskusjon?
   - Var denne diskusjonen annerledes enn vanligvis? Hvordan?

6. Hvordan føltes det å være uenig med andre?
   - Hvordan oppleves det å stå for sin egen mening her på skolen?

7. Lærte du noe nytt fra diskusjonene?

   - Forandret du syn på noe av det dere diskuterte?

   - Forandret du syn på noen av medelevene dine?

   - Hvordan avsluttet dere debatten i dag? (Enig-uenig, sagt-usagt)

8. Hvilke temaer synes du skapte mest debatt/uenighet? (Ha med liste med utsagn)

   - Hvorfor tror du disse temaene skapte mest debatt?

   - Hvilke temaer skapte minst debatt? Hvorfor?

9. Var det noen tema som var <u>vanskelige</u> eller sensitive å diskutere synes du?

   - Hvorfor? Hvis ja, burde man unngå det?

10. Hvilke av temaene <u>engasjerte</u> deg mest?

    - Hvorfor?

11. Hva betyr engasjement for deg?

    - Hva engasjerer deg?

    - Er det mulig å bli engasjert gjennom noe du gjør på skolen?

    - Kunne noen bli engasjert av opplegget dere hadde i dag?

12. Hvordan ser du for deg at du vil engasjere deg i framtida?

    - Organisasjon?

    - Valg?

    - Annet?

8.2 Informed Consent Form for Parents

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

Demokratiopplæring i praksis

Bakgrunn og formål

Formålet med denne studien er å undersøke hvordan ungdomsskoleelever opplever et opplegg som omhandler hendelsene 22.juli 2011, og diskusjon rundt demokratiske holdninger og verdier som del av demokratiopplæring. Studien blir gjort som utgangspunkt for et mastergradsprosjekt ved Universitetet i Oslo. For å kunne speile et mangfold av opplevelser er det ønskelig å nå et bredt utvalg av elever for deltakelse i prosjektet.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Alle elevene i klassen som deltok på det elevstyrte opplegget om demokratisk medborgerskap kan delta i studien, som består av individuelle intervjuer med prosjektleder i etterkant. Intervjuene vil kunne vare fra 30-60 minutter. Spørsmålene under intervjuet vil omhandle hvordan han/hun opplevde å lære om hendelsene den 22.juli 2011, om hvordan det oppleves å være uenig med klassekameratene sine, og hvordan han/hun vanligvis engasjerer seg på skolen og på fritida. Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp ved hjelp av lydopptaker. Foresatte som ønsker å se intervjuguiden på forhånd, bes ta kontakt med prosjektleder.

Hva skjer med informasjonen?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun prosjektleder selv, og veileder ved Universitetet i Oslo som vil ha tilgang til lydopptak og transkriberte intervjuer i ettertid. Deltakerne vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjonen, da både personopplysninger og skoletilhørighet vil bli anonymisert. Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes i løpet av juni 2017, og datamaterialet vil da bli slettet.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og eleven kan når som helst trekke sitt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom eleven trekker seg, vil alle opplysninger bli anonymisert. Hvis eleven opplever noen av spørsmålene i intervjuet støtende, kan han/hun velge å ikke svare.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

Dersom du har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Åshild Løkken Opsahl på ****/ ****@gmail.com (prosjektleder), eller Jon Lauglo på ****/****@iped.uio.no (veileder).

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien,
og gir som *foresatt* tillatelse til deltakelse for

_____

Elevens navn

_____

Signatur foresatt, dato