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Maria Fernandes-Jesus
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Book Review

Skolen i demokratiet - demokratiet i skolen [The school in democracy - democracy in school]

Trond Solhaug (Ed.). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2021. 250 pp. 978-82-15-04742-3.

Nora Elise Hesby Mathé

Department of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Skolen i demokratiet - demokratiet i skolen is a book written in Norwegian and the second edition was published in 2021. The book was edited by Professor Trond Solhaug at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and includes a preface and 13 chapters by four authors: Trond Solhaug, Kjetil Børhaug, Knut Vesterdal and Trond Risto Nilssen. In its own words, this anthology aims to provide teachers, student teachers and others who are interested a background for understanding, assessing and participating in democratic systems and teach topics related to democracy and citizenship in school.

The title of the book indicates a focus on the relationship between the school system as a part of a democracy, but also on the role and potential of democracy in schools. The book is written in and for the Norwegian context, emphasizing concepts such as democracy, politics, citizenship, student participation, diversity and human rights – which are arguably important also outside the Norwegian educational context.

Due to the scope of this review, I will not go into detailed descriptions of each chapter. After presenting the content of the book, I will rather highlight a few overarching aspects of the book relevant for the readers of the JSSE and give examples from selected chapters.



The book includes the following chapters (my translations):

1. Introduction and the democratic mandate
2. The concept of democracy in school
3. Citizenship
4. About politics
5. Political participation and Norwegian politics
6. Motivation for political participation as a challenge in teaching
7. Political knowledge and literacy
8. Student diversity and inclusive citizenship
9. Students' participation in student body councils and municipal youth councils
10. Education for democracy in a globalized world
11. Human rights education as citizenship in school
12. Sami citizenship in society and school
13. Democracy, citizenship and didactics

As this overview illustrates, *Skolen i demokratiet - demokratiet i skolen* covers a range of topics that are relevant to social science education. It is not, however, specifically about social science education. Rather, the book thematises school as a whole, but with several links to and examples from and for the social science subjects in the Norwegian education system. As a whole, the book moves between a societal perspective and an educational perspective and between school in general or across subjects and social science subjects specifically. In line with the book's blurb, the chapters emphasise contributing to the reader's knowledge about each central concept or phenomenon to provide a foundation for didactic choices. For some chapters, this means that the author gives an introduction using democratic, political or other social scientific theory and research before focusing on the educational context later in the chapter. For example, chapter 2 (written by Trond Solhaug) contains an introduction to different perspectives on democracy, from liberal to agonistic ideas. The different perspectives are later related briefly to various alternatives teachers can choose in terms of what to emphasise in their teaching about democracy. This overview is useful and offers a good starting point for reflection and discussion of didactical choices. It does not, however, include the most recent research on connections between democratic theory and educational practice. Chapter 3 (written by Trond Solhaug) reviews the double meaning of citizenship, which in Norwegian is conceptualised as *statsborgerskap* (legal status) and *medborgerskap* (cultural, social and political aspects, sometimes translated into co-citizenship) (Stokke, 2017), as well as different notions of citizenship. Other chapters focus more exclusively on the educational context, as indicated by the chapter titles above.

The chapters vary concerning to which extent and how they discuss didactic issues (understood here as teaching and learning in school subjects), such as how teachers can

approach a topic in the classroom. Some chapters take a more general educational perspective, such as chapter 12 (written by Trond Risto Nilssen), focusing on the history and fight for rights of the Sami people, how this has been taught in schools in Norway and the role of the Sami in curricula. Other chapters, such as chapter 11 about human rights education (written by Knut Vesterdal), are more explicitly contributing with concepts and potential strategies of specific value for teaching in social science education and other school subjects.

In different ways, the chapters of the anthology bring a critical perspective on the role and potential of democracy in school. This is done for example by discussing aspects of the Norwegian curriculum (several chapters) and whether student body councils can provide students with democratic experiences in line with democratic principles (chapter 9 written by Kjetil Børhaug). Chapter 9 provides both an analysis of the student body council and discusses how such formally organised aspects of democracy in schools can be developed further. This is valuable for educational practitioners as well as researchers interested in citizenship education and democratic education.

To conclude, *Skolen i demokratiet - demokratiet i skolen* offers insight into education for democracy and citizenship education in the Norwegian context and serves as an introduction to important concepts for this field, for those who read Norwegian. The anthology seems to be written primarily for student teachers and teachers. While the book's main themes are all relevant for social science education in school and teacher education, it varies between chapters how explicit and in-depth the links to social science didactics are. *Skolen i demokratiet - demokratiet i skolen* is a valuable contribution to the Norwegian literature on education for democracy and citizenship education, and should be of interest for student teachers, teacher educators, researchers and others interested in democracy in schools.

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Corresponding author of this book review:

Nora Elise Hesby Mathé, Moltke Moes veg 35, 0317 Oslo, Norway. E-Mail: n.e.h.mathe@ils.uio.no

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