

**IEA Research for Education**

A Series of In-depth Analyses Based on Data of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)



Heidi Biseth  
Bryony Hoskins  
Lihong Huang *Editors*

# Northern Lights on Civic and Citizenship Education

A Cross-national Comparison  
of Nordic Data from ICCS



Nordic Council  
of Ministers



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of Educational Achievement (IEA)

## **Volume 11**

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Heidi Biseth · Bryony Hoskins · Lihong Huang  
Editors

# Northern Lights on Civic and Citizenship Education

A Cross-national Comparison of Nordic Data  
from ICCS



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# Foreword I

IEA's mission is to enhance knowledge about education systems worldwide and to provide high-quality data that will support education reform and lead to better teaching and learning in schools. In pursuit of this aim, it conducts, and reports on, major studies of student achievement in literacy, mathematics, science, citizenship, and digital literacy. These studies, most notably TIMSS, PIRLS, and ICCS, are well established and have set the benchmark for international comparative studies in education.

The studies have generated vast datasets encompassing student achievement, disaggregated in a variety of ways, along with a wealth of contextual information which contains considerable explanatory power. The numerous reports that have emerged from them are a valuable contribution to the corpus of educational research.

Valuable though these detailed reports are, IEA's goal of supporting education reform needs something more: deep understanding of education systems and the many factors that bear on student learning advances through in-depth analysis of the global datasets. IEA has long championed such analysis and facilitates scholars and policymakers in conducting secondary analysis of our datasets. So, we provide software such as the International Database Analyzer to encourage the analysis of our datasets, support numerous publications including a peer-reviewed journal—*Large-scale Assessments in Education*—dedicated to the science of large-scale assessment and publishing articles that draw on large-scale assessment databases. We also organize a biennial international research conference to nurture exchanges between researchers working with IEA data (<https://www.iea.nl/our-conference>).

The **IEA Research for Education** series represents a further effort by IEA to capitalize on our unique datasets, so as to provide powerful information for policymakers and researchers. Each report focuses on a specific topic and is produced by a dedicated team of leading scholars on the theme in question. Teams are selected on the basis of an open call for tenders; there are two such calls a year. Tenders are subject to a thorough review process, as are the reports produced. (Full details are available on the IEA website.)

A mark of civilized societies is the aspiration to have an informed, engaged citizenry. The path from infancy to mature citizenship and the role of formal schooling

in it are varied, however, and a good understanding of the factors at play is vital to our common future.

The Nordic region is a fruitful locus for exploring these factors. The Nordic countries with their extensive welfare systems and egalitarian ideology are a robust test bed for the evolution of democratic citizenship. Despite their many convergences, however, they exhibit differences in how practical citizenship plays out. We are delighted, therefore, to join with the Nordic Council of Ministers in publishing this comparative study of citizenship education in the Nordic countries, based on the copious data in our International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). It is being published both as part of our IEA Research for Education series and as a Northern Lights report under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic countries have a shared vision of a comprehensive school attended by all children and young people in a neighborhood, along with a commitment to equity in learning opportunities. Inevitably, challenges arise in practice and ICCS data display these clearly. Whether we look at civic knowledge—where Nordic students' scores are high by international standards—or civic engagement—where, by contrast, they are low—there are differences between and within the countries.

This book provides a welcome and illuminating scrutiny of these differences. Written by a team of experts drawn from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, plus one from the United Kingdom, it clarifies the factors associated with young people's civic knowledge and interest in societal issues, and how cross-country differences in citizenship relate to these factors. Successive chapters delve into schools' priorities for citizenship education in the different countries, young people's use of digital and social media, and issues relating to environmental citizenship. It provides too a timely focus on those young people with the least civic knowledge or engagement—a group that democratic societies ignore at their peril.

A forthcoming thematic report will provide a series of in-depth investigations into how concepts of “good citizenship” are shaped in different regions of the globe, using the rich comparative data from ICCS 2016 to build profiles of citizenship related to different school and social variables.

Seamus Hegarty  
Leslie Rutkowski  
*Series Editors*

## Foreword II

*The Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.* This is our Vision 2030 at the Nordic Council of Ministers, as agreed by the Nordic prime ministers. To achieve our vision, we are focusing on three strategic priorities: A green, competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic region.

In respect to a socially sustainable Nordic region, the goal is to promote an inclusive, equal, and interconnected region with shared values, strengthened cultural exchange, and welfare. One of the important and difficult tasks is to better understand how we can maintain social trust in the Nordic societies and strengthen shared values with a focus on democracy, culture, equality, inclusion, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression.

Against this background, the Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research decided that this year's Northern Lights report takes a closer look at the societal trends in the Nordic countries with significance for young people's democratic understanding, engagement, and active democratic citizenship.

In Nordic democracies, schools play an important socializing role in terms of developing democratic citizenship. By developing knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavior, schools have the responsibility to equip young people for a future as active citizens. However, there is a concern that schools are not sufficiently equipped in this respect, with the growth of various threats such as populism, racism, misinformation, and increasing inequalities. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the professionals who interact with young people on a regular basis, for example, in schools. The Nordic countries have a shared responsibility in ensuring that young people are offered the framework, competencies, and opportunities for democratic participation, and to promote sustainable development.

The Northern Lights reports are the result of Nordic cooperation within education, based on the Nordic countries' participation in international comparative studies of school performance. The purpose is to present policy-relevant analyses and make them accessible for policymakers on different levels, with the aim to contribute to insight, reflection, and further development within education.



We hope that this year's Northern Lights report will be of interest to policymakers in the Nordic countries and beyond!

Paula Lehtomäki  
General Secretary, Nordic Council of Ministers

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# Editors and Contributors

## About the Editors

**Professor Heidi Biseth** has long-standing research experience on democracy and citizenship education, multicultural education and professional development in teacher education and schools. She was a member of the National Advisory Group for the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016 in Norway. Biseth leads a research project on improving interdisciplinary work within teacher education and between teacher education and school (BRIDGES), a project funded by the Research Council of Norway.

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# Chapter 1

## Using IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) Data: Northern Lights on ICCS



Heidi Biseth, Bryony Hoskins, and Lihong Huang

**Abstract** This chapter introduces the Nordic context of civic and citizenship education in schools including reviews of previous results and research on IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). By discussing the issues relevant to democratic citizenship education that are of central significance in the four Nordic countries, this chapter argues for new cross-country comparative analyses of ICCS data based on themes typically engaging Nordic scholars, including students' understandings of citizenship, school principals' understandings of the priorities of citizenship education, digital citizenship education, environmental citizenship education, and inequalities and citizenship education. Furthermore, this chapter provides a layout of the volume through positioning the five analytical chapters across *contesting the understanding of civic engagement and democratic dispositions in Nordic democracies*.

**Keywords** Nordic context • Country specific findings of ICCS • Understanding of civic engagement • Democratic dispositions • Inequalities • International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

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## 1.1 Introduction

IEA's (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) is the only regular dedicated comparative international study of civic and citizenship education. In 2009 and 2016, national representative samples of grade 8 (grade 9 in Malta and Norway) students from educational systems across the world participated in the study, including four of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In addition to an international assessment and survey, regional modules have been administered in Europe and Latin America. The various reports from the ICCS study provide a detailed overview of the study's results (e.g., Losito et al. 2018; Schulz et al. 2018; Huang et al. 2017; Bruun et al. 2017, 2018; Skolverket 2017; Mehtäläinen et al. 2017; Finnish Institute of Education Research 2017). The ICCS 2016 and 2009 studies built on a history of IEA citizenship studies (the Civic Education Study [CIVED] 1999, and the Six Subject Survey conducted in 1971). Having had two cycles that used the same framework within ICCS has enabled researchers to monitor trends in civic knowledge and engagement over seven years for the countries that participated in both ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016.

The ICCS studies investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in a world where contexts of democracy and civic participation continue to change. It reports on students' knowledge and understanding of concepts and issues related to civics and citizenship, as well as their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours concerning this domain. The study collects a rich array of contextual data about the organization and content of civic and citizenship education in the curriculum, teacher qualifications and experiences, teaching practices, school environment and climate, and home and community support.

In this book, we present a Nordic comparative study on civic and citizenship education with a focus on the themes of: Nordic students' understandings of citizenship, Nordic principles' understandings of the priorities of citizenship education, digital citizenship education, environmental citizenship education, and inequalities in citizenship education. Nordic countries have a long history of democracy, equality, and human rights (see e.g., Ringen 2007, 2011; Economist Intelligence Unit [EIU] 2020), and this model is seen as providing an example, a "northern light," that many countries may be interested to learn from. There is considerable interest in the Nordic models of education and the young people's attitudes, values, civic knowledge, and skills that can be seen to be formed from these education experiences. This book will shed light on citizenship learning and identify the extent that there is a common Nordic model on civic education and young people's citizenship competences and how they are changing over recent years.

## 1.2 The Nordic Context

The benefit for comparative research is that Nordic countries are similar in many respects that make them apt for comparison. These countries combine relatively small populations, high Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, and long life expectancy (see Table 1.1). What is more, the histories of the countries are closely intertwined with close political collaboration across borders and all countries having been peaceful since the Second World War. We recognize that this is painting a picture with broad strokes, as differences do exist. For example, Finland’s proximity to Russia has had an impact on its policies after the Second World War which make it different from that of the other Nordic countries. While Denmark, Norway, and Sweden have languages mutually comprehensible, this is not the case for the Finnish language. Nevertheless, due to historical reasons, many Finns can speak Swedish and both languages are official languages in Finland (Hult and Pietikainen 2013). Finland, Norway, and Sweden also have a Sami indigenous population, speaking several Sami languages which are in the same language group as the Finnish language (see e.g., Lindgren et al. 2016). Moreover, despite all countries having relatively small populations, Sweden is about double the size of each of the other three countries. All the countries have a high GNI per capita, but Norway has a significantly higher GNI than the other three countries (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1** Selected demographics and economic characteristics of the Nordic countries participating in the ICCS 2009 and 2016 studies

	Population (in thousands)	Human Development Index					Democracy Index
		Value	Rank	Life expectancy	Mean years of schooling	Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in USD \$	
Denmark	5,797.45	0.930	11	80.8	12.6	48,836	9.22 (rank 7)
Finland	5,518.05	0.925	12	81.7	12.4	41,779	9.25 (rank 5)
Norway	5,314.34	0.954	1	82.3	12.6	68,059	9.87 (rank 1)
Sweden	10,183.17	0.937	8	82.7	12.4	47,955	9.39 (rank 3)

*Sources* Data on Human Development Index and GNI per capita obtained from the *UNDP Human Development Report 2019* (UNDP 2020). Data on population size sourced from *World Bank Open Data 2018* (World Bank 2019). Data on Democracy Index obtained from the *EIU Democracy Index 2019* (EIU 2020)

What is important and interesting for this book, is that Nordic countries have long-standing traditions as democracies, with social democratic models of society (see e.g., EIU 2020; Ringen 2007, 2011; Wiborg 2004). The four Nordic countries are ranked among the top 10 in the Democracy Index based on the five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture (EIU 2020, and see Table 1.1). Denmark and Norway are both in the top five of countries according to the level of satisfaction of their population with democracy in the world and Sweden and Finland are ranked in the top 10 (EIU 2020).

The four Nordic countries score among the top 12 out of 189 states ranked in the Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP 2020). This index measures (1) access to a decent standard of living through a country's GNI per capita, (2) access to knowledge through mean number of years of schooling and expected years of schooling, and (3) the potential for a long and healthy life through life expectancy at birth (UNDP 2020).

The education sector is the one institution in society with which the Nordic population is well acquainted since all spend a decade of their early lives in compulsory education, and have the choice to participate in higher and adult education as it is made readily available and free for all (UNESCO 2020, pp. 286–287, 296–297, 312). The four Nordic countries discussed here all have a high relative expenditure on education ranging from 7.2 to 8.5% of GNI (UNESCO 2020, p. 287, see also Schulz et al. 2018, pp. 46–47).

In Table 1.1 we present a selection of demographic and economic characteristics of the four Nordic countries participating in the ICCS 2009 and 2016 studies.

The fact that the countries are quite similar regarding many of these international standards/rankings provides a solid basis for comparison as significant differences on ICCS scores are more easily attributed to specific policy differences. In addition, general high levels of wealth and levels of education of parents, which are suggested by these country rankings, are argued to be the foundations for young people to have more cosmopolitan and social justice related attitudes and values (Inglehart 2007) so we could already expect results to be above the international mean for young Nordics on these scores.

### 1.3 Nordic Results in ICCS

IEA's ICCS measures three main components, namely (1) civic knowledge, (2) civic engagement, and (3) civic attitudes among 14-year-olds. The four Nordic countries score among the top five on civic knowledge (Schulz et al. 2018, p. 58). However, it is worth mentioning that civic knowledge varied more within than across countries (Schulz et al. 2018, p. xvii). In general, girls have higher civic knowledge scores than boys and this is the case for all Nordic countries. As shown in Table 1.2, the Danish boys outperform boys from all other countries in the study on civic knowledge in both ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 studies. However, Finnish girls outperform on civic



**Table 1.2** Civic knowledge achievement of boys and girls and changes between ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016

	Boys		Girls		Total average		Points change from 2009 to 2016	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	Boys	Girls
Denmark	573 (4.5)	575 (3.7)	581 (3.4)	597 (2.9)	576 (3.6)	586 (3.0)	2 (5.9)	16 (4.3)*
Finland	562 (3.5)	561 (3.4)	590 (2.9)	594 (2.3)	576 (2.4)	577 (2.3)	-1 (4.9)	4 (3.6)
Norway	527 (4.6)	547 (2.6)	552 (4.5)	581 (2.4)	538 (4.0)	564 (2.2)	20 (5.3)*	29 (5.6)*
Sweden	527 (4.2)	562 (3.9)	549 (3.4)	598 (3.1)	537 (3.1)	579 (2.8)	35 (5.4)*	49 (4.5)*
International average	489 (0.7)	505 (0.8)	511 (0.7)	530 (0.8)	500 (0.2)	517 (0.2)	16 (1.1)*	19 (1.1)*

*Notes* All calculations are performed using the IEA IDB (International Database) Analyzer applying student weight. Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors.

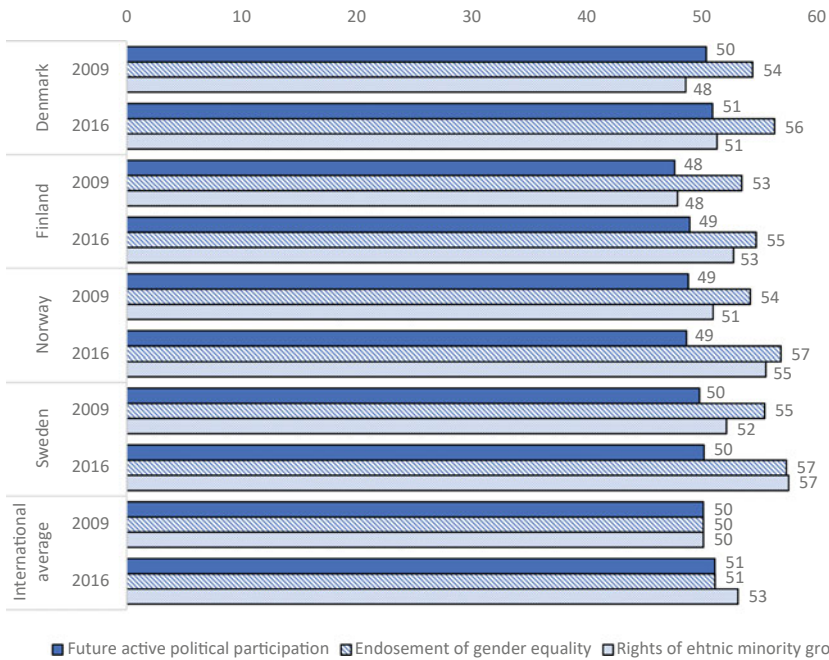
\*indicate a change is significant at 0.05 level.

knowledge achievement from all girls in ICCS 2009 while Swedish and Danish girls outperform from girls in Finland and Norway in ICCS 2016 (Bruun et al. 2017, 2018; Huang et al. 2017).

Although high civic knowledge is highly associated with self-reported future civic engagement in the ICCS studies, the young Nordic pupils score on or below the international average on the expected political participation scales in both ICCS studies (Schulz et al. 2018, p. 103). As visualized in Fig. 1.1, concerning civic attitudes, Nordic 14-year-olds endorse gender equality at significantly higher rates than the international average (Schulz et al. 2018, p. 126) and this is stable across the two time points. Endorsement of equal rights for all ethnic and racial groups are slightly lower than the international average in Denmark, on the international average in Finland, and slightly higher than the international average in Norway and Sweden (Schulz et al. 2018, p. 128).

### ***1.3.1 Social Background and Education Processes Associated with Strong Learning Outcomes***

There are two main processes in which civic competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions) are said to be learned: (1) through participation, and (2) through knowledge acquisition (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). The ICCS study focuses on measuring the participatory processes of learning and uses known measures of effective practice: open classroom climate and experiences of democracy



**Fig. 1.1** Nordic student civic attitudes and future political participation scales in comparison with international averages of ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 (*Notes* Numbers reproduced using IDB Analyzer applying student weight)

in schools such as debates organized at school, school councils, and general involvement in decision making about how the school is run. The results from ICCS 2009 show strong associations between these learning methods and students’ intended political engagement in the form of voting, legal protest, and formal political activities (join a political party, trade union, volunteer for a party, or stand as a candidate) in Sweden (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). Although the importance of an open classroom climate is documented, some of the classroom activities significantly increase the odds with which students achieve high civic knowledge more than others (Huang and Biseth 2016).

Socioeconomic status (SES) has frequently been associated with high levels of civic competence. In Sweden in 2009, participating in the above-mentioned learning activities was associated with socioeconomic background—the association was larger for countries like England and Ireland and smaller than Sweden for countries like Italy and Poland. The effect in Sweden, like England and Ireland, was at both the individual level and the school level. This means that the young people who go to schools with more disadvantaged young people in Sweden are reporting less open classroom climate experiences compared to schools with a higher level of advantaged student intake (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). On top of this, there is an individual effect, where more disadvantaged young people within a school are

reporting less of this experience compared to their more advantaged peers within the same school (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019).

In addition, undertaking education experiences can have different effects for different social groups and there is sometimes hope that an education experience can compensate for social disadvantage (Campbell 2008). From the participatory methods measured in the IEA citizenship datasets, none of these have been found so far to compensate for social disadvantage in Sweden, using the CIVED 1999 data (Persson 2015) or the ICCS 2009 data—although the subject citizenship education was found to be effective in compensating for disadvantage in England’s longitudinal data (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). Chapter 5 of this book will investigate the effects of social background and participatory learning methods on the learning of civic competence for all four Nordic countries in ICCS 2009 and 2016.

### ***1.3.2 Country Specific Findings from Previous Analyses***

Each of the four Nordic countries produced national reports that highlight specific findings from the ICCS 2016 data based on the countries’ particular interests, including trends when comparing with the ICCS 2009 data. The Danish national reports (Bruun et al. 2017, 2018) point out that the open classroom climate in Denmark is perceived by the pupils as very high but it has reduced since the ICCS 2009 study. Danish pupils additionally discuss political matters extensively at home. Danish students understand a good citizen as expected to obey the law, secure the family’s financial situation, and respect authorities. Interestingly, Danish young people do not consider engagement to protect human rights and the environment as important for adult citizens (Bruun et al. 2017, p. 3).

The Finnish national report shows that besides the general high scores in civic knowledge, students whose home language was the same as the ICCS test language had a higher score on civic knowledge compared to students with another home language. Additionally, the higher the SES, the higher the score on the knowledge component of the ICCS 2016 test (Mehtäläinen et al. 2017, p. 88). For the Finnish young people, traditional media such as newspapers are no longer the primary source of information, instead young people engage in discussions about political and social topics with both their parents and friends. Moreover, a sustainable environment seems to be one of the most engaging topics for students. Taken as a whole, there appears to be a slight increase from 2009 to 2016 in the level of participation and willingness to participate by Finnish youth, and the girls were slightly more active than the boys (Mehtäläinen et al. 2017, p. 89).

The Norwegian national reports show that compared to 2009, 14-year-olds in 2016 have higher civic knowledge achievement, higher institutional trust (Huang et al. 2017), more active civic engagement, increased positive attitudes toward the rights of ethnic minorities and immigrants (Hegna 2018a, b), higher intentions for electoral participation, and higher scores in considering a good citizen as one who obeys the law and respects authorities (Huang et al. 2017). There is a civic knowledge gap

between 14-year-olds depending on the socioeconomic background such as parents' educational attainment and native versus minority languages spoken at home, but the gap has been significantly reduced from ICCS 2009 to ICCS 2016 in Norway (Huang et al. 2017, pp. 54–72). Meanwhile, students with migrant background in Norway have become more active than the non-migrant students do in political and civic engagement in 2016 (Hegna 2018a). Further analyses of the Norwegian data show that students' civic knowledge achievement is significantly correlated with their achievement in mathematics and language literacy (Seland and Huang 2018); and that student citizenship efficacy and current civic engagement have stronger association with student future intended political participation than civic knowledge does (Ødegård and Svagård 2018). They also report on a conducive democratic school environment with an open classroom climate and participation in the election of school councils and/or representatives (Huang et al. 2017).

The Swedish national report identifies an increase among teenagers in discussing political issues with both their parents and peers (Skolverket 2017). They also consider the classroom climate in school to be open to discussions and debates. Surprisingly, compared to much of the evidence in the field (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Hoskins et al. 2011b), the report suggested the impact of democratic activities in school, such as the election of representatives for school councils, to be relatively low (Skolverket 2017).

## 1.4 Complacency in Wealthy and Established Democracies?

The most surprising and consistent pattern found in the Nordic countries is the high levels of civic knowledge scores coupled with low current and expected future civic engagement and participation in comparison to the international average in the ICCS study. This is particularly puzzling since Nordic countries have consistently held some of the highest levels of democratic participation of the adult population in Europe (Hoskins and Mascherini 2009), and indeed the world (EIU 2020).

It could be possible to think that high scores on knowledge would equally lead to a high level of engagement, or that knowledge would have an impact on civic attitudes. The national coordinator of the ICCS 2016 study in Finland claims:

Finnish teenagers, like their Nordic peers in general, have excellent cognitive and attitudinal basic competences for participation, but most of these teenagers lack the interest and need for more active participation. They are happy with living in a steady representative democracy with functional safety networks. (Finnish Institute for Education Research 2017)

These patterns are similar to those found in ICCS 2009 (Hoskins et al. 2015) and CIVED 1999 (Hoskins et al. 2011a): Longer and more stable democracies combined with economic prosperity and in countries where teachers tended to prioritize critical thinking within citizenship education were found to develop higher levels of civic knowledge and skills and positive attitudes towards gender equality (Hoskins et al.

2015). In contrast, poorer and less stable democracies, in particular those where the teachers prioritized rights and responsibilities, were found to motivate young people to wish to politically engage (Hoskins et al. 2011a, 2015).

Based on ICCS 2016 and previous citizenship studies, there is a certain level of complacency among 14-year-olds in Nordic countries who do not find engagement in society particularly important or necessary to protect or ensure a sustainable democracy. The country-level data questions if there is an association at the individual level between civic knowledge and civic engagement in the Nordic countries. These associations remain at the individual level as Amnå and Zetterberg (2010) suggest after comparing the same cohort from CIVED with the European Social Survey data, Nordic youth are much more realistic in terms of future participation levels and similar numbers go on to participate whilst in other regions the actual numbers of young people who participate drops significantly. Ødegård and Svagård (2018) conclude, based on data from ICCS 2016 in Norway, that students' level of democratic knowledge does not seem to influence their potential for future political engagement. Sætra and Stray (2019b), analyzing data from educators in ICCS 2016 in addition to 23 qualitative interviews conducted at the same time, question if students are provided with space in school to practice democratic engagement. They assert that teachers are more engaged in promoting independent and critical thinking than civic action and democratic engagement. Despite the opportunities available for students' democratic participation in school, educators seem to focus their education on the knowledge component, and not nurture the possibilities for civic engagement in school (Biseth 2011).

Using Swedish data, Amnå and Ekman (2013) challenge the alleged passivity of youth by investigating different understandings of what is judged to be a passive citizen. They claim that a group of youth who are non-active are yet alert or on standby, ready to become active whenever they realize they can make an impact. In other words, the active/passive dichotomy, as discussed by Amnå and Ekman (2013), defies some of the suppositions implicit in the ICCS study and, more importantly, in terms of the realities of young people. However, there are many opportunities in Nordic countries for young people to participate in both schools and civil society during their later teens, which may provide the more crucial learning of political engagement practices for democratic societies. These opportunities also move beyond traditional ways of understanding engagement and include, for example, the use of digital and social media (see e.g., Sevincer et al. 2018). This is not yet effectively reflected when determining civic engagement in ICCS 2016. Complacency when it comes to civic engagement may seem, to some extent, present in the Nordic countries, but a study measuring new and alternative ways of engaging in democracy among youth, and the role of education in it, is not yet developed.

## 1.5 The Positioning of This Book

Building on the context provided above, the following chapters explore essential themes about democracy, and civic and citizenship education in a particular Nordic context, being aware that the topics are by no means solely significant to a Nordic situation. Yet, a Nordic education model is claimed to exist with a free, comprehensive, and unified school system bringing together students from different socioeconomic strata with the aim of increased social mobility and democracy, and with a welfare state model at the centre (Imsen et al. 2017; Buchardt et al. 2013). The chapters of this book are based on themes typically engaging Nordic scholars or scholars engaging in studies of the Nordic countries with new analyses of the ICCS data. The main themes that the book addresses are: Nordic students' understandings of citizenship, Nordic principles understandings of the priorities of citizenship education, digital citizenship education, environmental citizenship education, and inequalities and citizenship education.

Table 1.3 presents the numbers of cases and distributions of background variables used in the analyses presented in this volume. All Nordic data from ICCS 2009 and 2016 are of good quality fulfilling the IEA required technical standards, while authors of each chapter clarify their own analytical strategies and choices based on the appropriateness of specific methods in answering the research questions identified.

In the following sections are brief introductions of the analytical chapters and their specific positions within both the meaningful structure of this volume and the ongoing academic discourse.

### 1.5.1 *Contesting the Understanding of Civic Engagement*

Bruun and Lieberkind, authors of the chapter *The Reserved Young Citizens of the Nordic Countries* (Chapter 2 in this volume), elaborate on the concept of “the standby citizen” by Amnå and Ekman (2013) when they develop the analytical category of “the reserved citizen.” They argue, based on data from ICCS 2009 and 2016 studies, that Nordic youth are not passive, but knowledgeable, have inclusive values, and are engaged in discussions with family and peers, yet they actively choose not to take part in more conventional political activities. In other words, Bruun and Lieberkind maintain that despite their reticence, the youth are pragmatic, reflective, critical thinkers who uphold democratic attitudes and values.

Seland, Huang, Arensmeier, Bruun, and Löffström, authors of the chapter *Aims of Citizenship Education Across Nordic Countries: Comparing School Principals' Priorities in Citizenship Education 2009–2016* (Chapter 3 in this volume), investigate how principals in the four Nordic countries prioritize civic and citizenship education, using ICCS 2009 and 2016 data in their analysis. They find a strong and common Nordic priority on critical and independent thinking as democratic virtues among educators. As critical thinking seems to intertwine with civic knowledge,

**Table 1.3** An overview of numbers of cases and distributions of background variables from four Nordic countries using ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 data

	Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden		Total	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009*	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
Number of schools	193	184	176	179	129	148	166	155	664	666
Number of school principal participants	171	181	174	174	118	142	155	141	609	630
Number of student participants	4408	6254	3307	3173	2926	6271	3464	3264	14105	18962
Average age of students	14.9	14.9	14.7	14.8	14.7	14.6	14.8	14.7	14.8	14.8
% of female students	52.6 (0.8)	51.3 (0.8)	51.1 (1.0)	47.4 (1.1)	50.0 (1.0)	49.5 (0.6)	50.1 (0.9)	49.3 (1.0)	51.0 (0.5)	49.4 (0.4)
% of students with migrant background (1st & 2nd generation) (standard error)	8.7 (0.8)	8.6 (0.8)	2.4 (0.5)	3.5 (0.5)	10.0 (1.0)	11.4 (1.1)	13.9 (1.2)	18.1 (1.6)	8.7 (0.5)	10.4 (0.5)
% of students having parents having a university degree (standard error)	22.6 (1.1)	24.8 (1.0)	32.6 (1.1)	41.8 (1.1)	50.2 (1.6)	59.6 (1.2)	52.0 (1.5)	58.9 (1.0)	39.3 (0.7)	46.3 (0.5)

*Notes:* Percentages and means are calculated using the IDB Analyzer applying total weight of students. \*Norway participated in ICCS 2009 with two student samples, i.e., grade 8 and grade 9, here we use the sample of grade 9 since Norway participated in ICCS 2016 with students of only grade 9

educators' encouragement in students' political engagement seems to be given less priority. This can be an essential matter in measuring youth's political engagement or prediction of their future engagement: to what extent is this kind of engagement stimulated in school. ICCS 2009 and 2016 do contain data on educators, but these data are only analyzed to a limited extent with students' results in the same study because the methodological design of the teacher survey only allows for analysis at school level. This chapter addresses this gap (Westheimer 2015; Sætra and Stray 2019b). One problem with the ICCS studies, at least in the Nordic countries, is the limited number of research reports from the dataset on educators' responses (Eriksen and Huang 2019; Hu and Huang 2019; Sætra and Stray 2019a, b). The students' results are expected to be, at least partially, an outcome of the schools' efforts. This chapter addresses the question, what kind of citizens do the educators want to promote and how do they do this? Understanding students' civic engagement is also about understanding teachers' civic engagement in addition to their understanding of democracy per se and their capability to translate this into their teaching and learning activities (Biseth and Lyden 2018).

An additional element complicating the understanding of civic engagement further is the ever-growing presence of social media, particularly for young people. Being digitally literate is considered important for a democratic citizen (see e.g., Fraillon et al. 2014; Frau-Meigs et al. 2017). Yet, the civic realities of today are not necessarily aligned with civic habits of the past (Papacharissi 2010). Traditional media such as newspaper and TV no longer have the same importance in young people's lives (Schulz et al. 2018). Young people keep informed through the internet and social media. Moreover, social media provides a low threshold for political participation and civic engagement. Young educators well versed in the use of social media, however, tend to struggle with using social media for civic and citizenship education purposes (Biseth et al. 2018; Gudmundsdottir and Hatlevik 2018).

In Chapter 4 in this volume, *Developing Digital Citizenship and Civic Engagement Through Social Media Use in Nordic Schools*, Christensen, Biseth, and Huang discuss results from ICCS 2016 compared with the four participating Nordic countries' core curricula. When data collection for the ICCS 2016 study took place, core curricula were in place promoting active digital citizenship. However, the curricula were not sophisticated in this regard.<sup>1</sup> The Nordic educators reported technically well-equipped schools and staff able to use digital tools, creating a potential for developing digital citizenship, yet teachers and students reported their rather limited use of social media for civic and political engagement both in and outside of school. Despite the youth using social media extensively for entertainment, it nevertheless appears less interesting to use social media in school as a place for civic engagement and democratic activities, making school detached from the world of the youth.

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<sup>1</sup>It must be noted that curricular changes have taken place in all countries after ICCS 2016, increasing the focus on ICT skills in general and in relation to a democratic citizen.



### 1.5.2 *Democratic Dispositions in Nordic Democracies*

As democracy is characterized by a set of values by which we organize our society, how such values manifest themselves in everyday praxis is of importance (White 1996). Biesta (2006) argues that students cannot become democratic if schools do not practice democratic ideals and that these ideals need to permeate all activities in school (Biesta 2006). The democratic dispositions present in staff and students in school may tell us about the democratic qualities of a school. As the school is educating future citizens, the presence or lack of democratic dispositions may provide indications of the future of the Nordic democracies or at least areas that need our attention. The chapters in this book make use of data from the ICCS studies in 2009 and 2016 to analyze and discuss different aspects important to Nordic countries—and beyond.

In Chapter 5 of this volume, *Socioeconomic Inequalities in Civic Learning in Nordic Schools: Identifying the Potential of In-school Civic Participation for Disadvantaged Students*, Hoskins, Huang, and Arensmeier raise what is to some extent an uncomfortable topic on what we believe to be our Nordic democratic dispositions. The authors investigate if there are social inequalities in the levels of skills needed to politically engage in Nordic countries and identifying the role of school in either reducing or increasing inequalities in civic competence. Socioeconomic inequalities are found, most visibly in Sweden, but significant in all Nordic countries, and stable across ICCS 2009 and 2016. Some learning experiences are not equally accessible to all socioeconomic groups in school, making the school a contributor in upholding socioeconomic inequalities. In other words, developing civic competences and educating citizens for a democratic society currently varies based on your socioeconomic background. Schools and educators need to ensure developing democratic dispositions and incarnate democratic values, also in a pluralistic society (White 1996; Biesta 2006).

Following a similar thread, Huang and Cheah present a picture of Nordic student environmental citizenship divided by SES and gender in Chapter 6, titled *The Young Environmental Citizens in Nordic Countries: Their Concerns, Values, Engagement, and Intended Future Actions*. The authors investigate if the Nordic “Greta Thunberg generation” of 14-year-olds in 2016 have similar or different concerns, values, engagement, and intended actions regarding environmental issues in comparison with their European and international peers and if there are socioeconomic inequalities of student environmental citizenship in the Nordic countries as well. Among the indicators of environmental citizenship from ICCS 2016 data, Nordic students stand out with their high concerns of pollution and climate change as the two biggest threats to the future of the world, in comparison with their European and international peers. While there are significant differences between countries, Nordic students as a whole are somehow lower in indicators of values, engagement, and intended actions of environmental citizenship, than the European and international averages. The analyses find that significant inequalities of student environmental citizenship exist between high and low SES and between boys and girls and there is a significant

interaction effect between socioeconomic background and gender in all Nordic countries. However, socioeconomic background and gender have much less effect among students with migrant background than among students without migrant background. Eventually, student environmental citizenship is socially divided by socioeconomic background and by gender.

## 1.6 Conclusion

The themes presented in this book are not exhaustive of the interest for civic and citizenship education in the Nordic countries. However, this current volume represents the first time ICCS data from the Nordic countries are analyzed and compared across themes and countries. Moreover, the chapters are proposed and authored by Nordic scholars, with a valued British colleague on the team. We hope this Nordic endeavor and lenses will supplement previous analyses that have focused mostly on individual national results of ICCS in this region. Today, only a limited number of academic works are published based on ICCS beyond the national reports, e.g., comparing national data of ICCS 2009 and 2016 (Hegna 2018a, b; Stray and Huang 2018) or comparing ICCS 2016 results across countries on student attitudes (Huang et al. 2018) and on school and teacher variables (Cheah and Huang 2019; Eriksen and Huang 2019; Hu and Huang 2019). The topics included in this book are relevant for policymakers, researchers, school principals, and teachers who are working and interested in the Nordic models of civic and citizenship education and democracy. These topics have become ever more important now when all countries in the globe are facing the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Worldometers 2020) which has its impact on almost every aspect of our society. Three topics presented in this book have been central in the Nordic educational systems, which we hope to provoke thinking of amongst the readers. First, although sustainable development has received a central position in the Nordic core curricula, the topic of youth political participation and civic engagement and how it can best be fostered and facilitated by our school education has been less so, yet it is essential for a functional democracy and a sustainable future. Second, although Nordic education systems are based on the principles of equality, there are persistent effects of social inequality on student educational achievement and how schools play a role in enhancing and mitigating this effect needs to continue to be on countries' policy agenda. Third, the Nordic reality is that our current school students are reserved, digital, and environmental citizens and the implications for this for the future of the Nordic democratic institutions is an ongoing question. This makes it ever more crucial to ensure educational systems that can cope, support, and develop all young Nordics to create a sustainable democratic world.

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# Chapter 2

## The Reserved Young Citizens of the Nordic Countries



Jonas Lieberkind and Jens Bruun

**Abstract** Both in citizenship education research and public debate, interest in understanding the role and significance of young people in the current state and future of democracy is ongoing. From one point of view, young people are seen as alienated and passive, thus raising concern. From another point of view, young people are seen as drivers for change, thus raising hope. This chapter intends to explore such contradicting roles of the young Nordic citizens. The basic questions are as follows: (1) What are the characteristics of the Nordic youth relative to the youth in other regions? (2) What are their main perceptions and attitudes towards the active and passive dimensions of citizenship? (3) Have these characteristics and perceptions changed over time? Empirically, the analyses and interpretations are based on IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 and ICCS 2016 data applied to demonstrate the regional trends, similarities, and differences among youth. In general, the Nordic youth are relatively passive with regard to political participation. At the same time, however, they are knowledgeable and democratically engaged. We propose a new analytical concept to understand this "double-sided" civic engagement of the Nordic youth as the *reserved* young Nordic citizens.

**Keywords** Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) · Civic education · Civic knowledge · Political attitudes · Citizen types · Political engagement · Monitorial citizen · Stand-by citizen · Reserved citizen · Bildung · Political formation · Nordic youth

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## 2.1 Introduction

We are currently witnessing young people around the world engaging in political issues and giving new life to contemporary political agendas. The Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and Fridays For Future are examples of the movements driven by young people's political engagement during the last decade. In particular, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has drawn considerable attention from young people towards climate change. Since August 2018, when 15-year-old Thunberg started the first school strike in protest against climate change in front of the Swedish parliament in Stockholm, her engagement has been a strong driver for young people's attitudes towards the climate change crisis. She has become a global icon of young people's political engagement. Millions of young people and school children from more than 200 countries have participated in thousands of Fridays For Future strikes. Thunberg is an example of how global and local engagement can become interrelated in reaction to a global issue that transcends national boundaries. On a global scale, Thunberg has at the same time triggered multiple discussions about how, why, and when the active political participation of people at her age is appropriate. In this chapter, we focus on her generation of the Nordic youth by investigating some fundamental questions about their political engagement in an international comparison. The basic intention is to investigate what is characteristic of this generation of young citizens of the Nordic countries, that is, those born in the early 2000s in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The empirical context for this investigation and discussion is IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) from 2009 and 2016. The young people that participated in ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 were all grade 8 (or equivalent) students; thus, most of ICCS 2016 participants were born around 2002 and were between 14 and 15 years of age at the time of the study. The study therefore provides a special opportunity to gain insights into this age group comprising young people nearing the end of compulsory schooling, albeit still on an ongoing educational journey. The following are some questions of interest: Is this generation of young people from the Nordic countries characterized by the same kind of active and global engagement as Greta Thunberg? Is the way they are engaged comparable to the political youth activism of the 1960s and 1970s? What can comparisons of the Nordic youth with young citizens from other regions tell us about the differences and similarities between them?

Based on a descriptive statistical analysis of ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 data, this chapter explores and discusses these questions with the aim of outlining the characteristics of this generation of young people as citizens. ICCS studies are designed to gain insights into many different aspects of the shaping, creation, and formation (becoming) of young citizens for future life in a modern democracy. ICCS covers a wide range of citizenship dimensions, such as civic knowledge, gender and ethnic equality, political efficacy, political discussion, electoral participation, conventional political attitudes, social-movement related activities, and personal responsibility. By combining the empirical findings for a range of such citizenship dimensions,



we capture and characterize the civic education<sup>1</sup> of young people (i.e., their *politische Bildung* or political education). We include the data from both ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 because this allows us to demonstrate how the perceptions of the Nordic youth have changed (or not changed) from one generation to the next, relative to each other and relative to the young people from other regions. The vast ICCS data may thus provide unique insights into the civic education of this “Greta-generation” of the Nordic youth. Every ICCS study cycle provides a snapshot of young people at a particular time and age. By gaining an insight into the civic education of this generation—that is, the generation investigated in ICCS 2016—we can view the components of this civic education as the foundation of how the young people of this generation will continue creating and shaping their identities as citizens.

The empirical inspiration and foundation for this chapter is inspired by previous insights from the international reports on ICCS 2009 and 2016 (Schulz et al. 2010, 2018a) and Nordic national reports (Bruun et al. 2018; Huang et al. 2017; Skolverket 2017; Mehtäläinen et al. 2017). In particular, ICCS 2016 results highlighted seemingly contradictory characteristics of Nordic students. On the one hand, the ICCS data demonstrated Nordic students as being highly engaged young citizens; on the other hand, the data showed them as having relatively low expectations with respect to active participation, for example, in protests and social-movement-related activities (Schulz et al. 2018a).

In research literature, *political engagement* is often used as an umbrella concept covering both the passive/indirect and active/direct aspects of citizens’ approaches to society—for example, attitudes, political interest, knowledge, political discussions, political self-efficacy, and political participation (Andersen and Hoff 2001). The *engagement* of young people in this chapter is considered in this broad sense. However, based on the empirical results of ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016, we want to make the analytical distinction and discussion of how to characterize young people’s political engagement more nuanced. We aim to show and discuss how a comprehensive interpretation of the Nordic youth as a certain kind of citizen is made possible by the introduction of a new analytical concept. The thesis of the chapter is that the civic engagement of the Nordic youth is comparable to neither the long-lasting political activism of the 1960s and 1970s nor a short-lived or passive attitude. On the contrary, we characterize the political engagement of the Nordic youth as existing outside of a simple active/passive dichotomy and instead being simultaneously active and passive. We have named these young Nordic citizens and their double-sided engagement as the *reserved citizen*.

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<sup>1</sup>When referring to “civic education” in this chapter, paying attention to the specific meaning of the concept is important. The Nordic languages distinguish between two different meanings and understandings of “education” and thus also of “civic education.” Using Danish as an example, the word “uddannelse” articulates “education” as the formal teaching and the academic learning outcome (“education” as a formal qualification). The word “dannelse,” however, articulates “education” as a lifelong process of personal and cultural cultivation (“education” as an informal experience). Often, “dannelse” is indirectly explained by a reference to the German concept of “Bildung” as used by Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767–1835). See also Lieberkind (2020).

## 2.2 New Theoretical Trends in the Perceptions of the Nordic Youth

Previous attempts in the research literature to characterize young citizens have revealed a widespread concern about their lack of desire to participate in society and democracy in general. One common point of departure is the claim that the young citizens of post-industrial societies are becoming particularly individualized—that is, detached from the values preserving culture and society (Dalton 1988; Lasch 1979; Norris 2002; Putnam 2001; Riis and Gundelach 1992; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999). In the Nordic context, a similar concern exists for the alleged lack of democratic and political engagement of young people (Amnå 2019; Riis and Gundelach 1992). In recent years, however, a new interest has developed among researchers in understanding the political profile of young citizens in new and more positive ways (Amnå and Ekman 2014; Amnå and Zetterberg 2010; Hegna 2018; Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007; Oser and Hooghe 2013). These researchers still share the widespread concern about the possible negative implications of an unengaged young generation for democracy, but they also tend to agree that previous research has used too narrow an understanding of the political engagement of young people and painted an unnecessarily bleak picture of this generation. In this chapter, we draw on the insights derived from some of these studies, especially those that focus on the political engagement of the Nordic youth. In doing so, we share the ambition of challenging the conventional and narrow understanding of the political commitment of these young people (Amnå and Zetterberg 2010; Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007; Oser and Hooghe 2013).

Previous research also argues that there is good reason to focus on the Nordic region as a group of countries with special democratic and political conditions. Amnå and Zetterberg (2010) refer to a “distinguished Nordic Civic Activism” (p. 44) characterized by cultural factors (tolerant, emancipative, and Protestant values), a relatively uncorrupted public sector, a high degree of social capital from membership of civic organisations, and strong socioeconomic development. Similarly, Oser and Hooghe (2013) find that:

...the Scandinavian countries always clearly outperform all other countries in the world with regard to the prevalence of ‘new’ democratic norms and citizenship concepts. In fact, we would expect that if a scavenger hunt for engaged citizens were conducted throughout the globe one would find that this norm is most prevalent in the Scandinavian countries. (p. 321)

Using a distinction from Dalton (2008), Oser and Hooghe (2013) term this new type of citizen as the *engaged citizen*, as opposed to the more conventional and so-called *duty-based citizen*. This new, engaged citizen constitutes a greater challenge to the political elite and is engaged in protests and issues such as human rights and the environment. As indicated above, they expect that, in particular, the Nordic youth will be the global forerunners of a more dedicated citizen type who is politically involved in democracy in a broad and critical manner. Therefore, they also assume that the Nordic youth are more engaged than young people elsewhere in the world and that the level of their engagement is increasing.

Oser and Hooghe (2013) use data from the IEA studies CIVED<sup>2</sup> 1999 and ICCS 2009 to test their assumptions. However, their analysis cannot confirm the hypothesis that this new and more engaged type of citizen has become increasingly important in the Nordic region from 1999 to 2009. They use 12 normative indicators which are, in fact, identical to 12 questionnaire items from CIVED 1999 and ICCS 2009. All items relate to the ways in which adult citizens could or should behave as citizens. In the ICCS 2009 study, some of these items are used as indicators for *conventional citizenship* and others for *social-movement-related citizenship* (detailed in the sections below). Oser and Hooghe (2013) link the concepts of duty-based and engaged to the same variables. Their trend analysis concludes that “All but two of the traditional normative indicators increased in importance over time ... Not a single element of committed citizenship increases between 1999 and 2009” (p. 328). In other words, they find that real development is the exact opposite of their expectation. They also state that this unexpected change—that is, the fact that the duty-based citizen is gaining support and the committed citizen is losing support—is unique only to the Nordic countries and is not a general trend in the countries participating in both surveys. Our analysis (see below), shows how the trends from 2009 to 2016 play out in this context.

Hooghe and Dejaeghere (2007) use Schudson’s concept of the *monitorial citizen* as the theoretical basis of their analysis. Schudson’s (2000) theory is that the generations of conventional citizens characterized by traditional and routine forms of participation are being replaced by new generations of more individualized young people for whom traditional loyalties and roles are becoming less important. However, he does not believe that this development is a problem for the relationship between citizens and their political system. This new monitorial citizen is not characterized by alienation or mistrust because, in Schudson’s (2000) view, the absence of traditional political activity is a rational choice. Hooghe and Dejaeghere (2007) explain that the monitorial citizen is a citizen who has “sufficient” political knowledge, “enough” political efficacy, and keeps the surveillance of the political system to a “minimum.” The monitorial citizen is passive but, to this limited degree, supervisory, reflective, and hesitant. The monitorial citizen is thus prepared to actively intervene if the need arises and possesses some level of political self-efficacy. By drawing on Schudson’s theoretical concept of the monitorial citizenship, Hooghe and Dejaeghere, to some extent, challenge the traditional expectation that a democratic citizen ought to be an active citizen. Nevertheless, the monitorial citizen is regarded as a good citizen because this citizen is *passively active*. Four aspects characterize the monitorial citizen: (1) political interest (i.e., monitoring political events), (2) internal and external political efficacy, (3) activity, but only if needed, and (4) absence of membership of a political party or other interest in organized long-term political participation. Hooghe and Dejaeghere (2007) examine the data from the European Social Survey to determine how widespread this type of citizen is among the adult citizens of the Nordic countries. They find that only 8.7% of Nordic adults

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<sup>2</sup>CIVED = IEA Civic Education Study. Phase 1 of the study was conducted in 1996–1997. Phase 2 data were collected in 1999 (standard population) and 2000 (optional population).

show all four aspects mentioned above. The group of monitorial citizens has the same average age as the other types of citizens. Therefore, there is no indication that this type of citizen is very important, either in general or among younger citizens. Almost 27% of participants of the sample in the survey combine political interest, self-confidence, and some occasional participation; but the vast majority of them are well-integrated into the conventional system, so the contrast between the monitorial citizen and the traditional citizen is by no means evident.

Amnå and Ekman are also inspired by Schudson's optimistic analysis of the relatively passive postmodern citizen, including Schudson's description of the monitorial citizen as passive but potentially active (Amnå and Ekman 2014; Ekman 2013). Based on a study of Swedish young people and young adults, they develop their theoretical concept: the *stand-by citizen*. Their ambition is to move "beyond the simplistic active/passive distinction" (Amnå and Ekman 2014, p. 261). At first sight, their basic idea resembles that of Schudson (2000): "Such 'stand-by citizens' are those who stay alert, keep themselves informed about politics by bringing up political issues in an everyday life context, and are willing and able to participate if needed" (Amnå and Ekman 2014, p. 262). However, their empirical operationalization is considerably less strict than that of Hooghe and Dejaeghere (2007) or Schudson (2000), because they reduce the four aspects of the monitorial citizen to two specific requirements for the stand-by citizen. Hence, they can claim that the stand-by citizen is much more widespread than the monitorial citizen. The main empirical criterion for the stand-by citizen is the combination of a relatively high level of political interest with an average level of occasional political participation when the results of this group are compared with the average results. Amnå and Ekman (2014) find that precisely this combination is a characteristic of the largest group of young adults in their sample and draw the conclusion that these young people, i.e., those highly interested but with an average level of activeness, are "prepared for action" (p. 262). Therefore, they also claim that this group of passive young people may be an asset, rather than a problem, to democracy (Amnå and Ekman 2014, p. 262).

Amnå and Ekman (2014) emphasize that political passivity is not a unidimensional phenomenon, as previous research has claimed. The study shows that in addition to the active citizen—that is, the citizen who is simultaneously interested and active, three different types of passive citizens exist: the unengaged citizen, the disillusioned citizen, and the stand-by citizen. Stand-by citizens are only passive relative to the citizens actively participating in political events. However, because they actively observe and monitor the society's state, they are prepared to become active. Hereby, Amnå and Ekman (2014) argue that describing this type of citizen as a special variation of the passive citizen type—that is, again, as a passive-active citizen—is analytically possible. In a previous article solely based on the theoretical discussions of the categories, they define these specific forms of passive activities as "latent political participation" (Ekman and Amnå 2012).

To be very clear, the civil actions we refer to are of course manifest (observable) behaviour as well, but "latent" in relation to specific *political* parliamentary and extra-parliamentary actions. Again, this reflects our wish to cover not only activities intended to influence actual political outcomes by targeting relevant political or

societal elites, but activities and forms of engagement that could very well be of great relevance for, e.g., future manifest political action, even if “pre-political” or “potentially political” rather than directly political as such (p. 292).

In this chapter, we pursue the main theoretical ambition of the previously mentioned authors to challenge the simple passive/active dichotomy. We also support the idea that the passive citizen is, in fact, an asset for democracy, even though our arguments differ from the ones mentioned above. Nevertheless, we want to hold on to the fact that both Oser and Hooghe (2013) and Amnå and Zetterberg (2010), on the basis of CIVED and ICCS data, show that the Nordic youth actually do have a relatively passive attitude. For example, Amnå and Zetterberg (2010) state: “The Nordic youth anticipated the least involvement in politics when becoming adults” (p. 59). Amnå and Ekman (2014) claim that this may change when young people grow older because the stand-by citizen will eventually become a good active citizen for some time. However, we are living in a time when political activities have led to both climate demonstrations and right-wing national activities or other radical movements. In other words, the different movements and political activism of our time appear to be phenomena that are unpredictable or, as Rancière (2013) says, uncontrollable. Regarding political activity as something good per se is therefore somewhat questionable. We will claim that this passivity is in fact a characteristic of the Nordic youth and that this passivity can be differently interpreted.

From our theoretical perspective, the most important problem with the monitorial and stand-by citizens is that in this way of thinking, the passive-active citizen is, as a rule and as a point of departure, a passive citizen. In other words, the young stand-by citizen is not included in democratic practice because it takes place at various levels of society. Staying alert and being prepared is thus an indication that the young stand-by citizen only occasionally participates in special events “when needed” but is not a part of democratic life in general. In other words, for the stand-by perspective, young people are only potentially political on an off/on or latent/manifest basis.

In this chapter, we argue in favour of an understanding of the Nordic youth as reserved citizens. This analytical category turns the stand-by citizens’ passive/active (i.e., off/on and latent/manifest) dichotomy upside down. Expressed in the passive-active vocabulary, the reserved citizen could be described as *active* as well as *passive* (active-passive). However, our theoretical ambition is to move beyond the passive/active dichotomy by introducing another perspective and vocabulary. The main point here is that the reserved citizen is simultaneously relatively *active* and relatively *passive*. The reserved citizen is always already engaged, i.e., not passive as a rule and not active only when and if needed. Later in this chapter, we present international comparisons, based on ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016, across a range of different civic dimensions of life as a young citizen. The ambition is to demonstrate and discuss this phenomenon, i.e., that a characteristic of the Nordic young people is that they understand and engage in society both passively and actively. This double-sided pattern of engagement is the empirical context for coining Nordic youth as reserved citizens.

## 2.3 Methods and Methodological Issues

This chapter primarily uses descriptive statistics based on ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 to characterize the Nordic youth as citizens. Hence, the analytical interest in the empirical data is primarily concerned with the generational characteristics. Because the focus is on young people's attitudes and perceptions in general within a shared imaginary political reality, the analysis will not include the specific life conditions of any individual young person or any sociological subgroups or subcultures.

The following sections are based on international comparisons of the youth of the four Nordic countries participating in the ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 studies. When tables and descriptions related to trends are presented, only the countries participating in both studies are included. In some cases, the Nordic region is compared with other regions, especially with the countries from the rest of Europe and Latin America that participated in the studies. These comparisons across regions are relevant because regional patterns and international trends are important for understanding the Nordic region in a broad international context. Countries in such regions usually display some common characteristics, especially relative to other regions.

Concerning the use of specific data from ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016, the descriptions mainly use the results from several scales examining important dimensions of young people's perceptions of citizenship, democracy, and politics. The scales measure these latent traits using multiple indicators. All scales were developed for ICCS 2009 and were used in an identical form in ICCS 2016. This enables us to document how the perceptions of the generations of young people change over time. These scales are advantageous for investigating and documenting the psychometric properties for each survey and all countries according to the well-established IEA technical standards (Köhler et al. 2018; Schulz et al. 2018a). The scales have proven to be suitable for trend analyses as they are relatively unaffected by random fluctuations over time. Note that previous research about the Nordic youth, as presented and discussed above, is often implicitly or explicitly based on results from some of the same scales. This chapter will use the analytical concept of the reserved citizen (active-passive citizen) as an interpretive key to identify Nordic young people's attitudes towards civic engagement. We place the results within an ongoing discussion about the theoretical concept that functions as the main interpretative grip.

## 2.4 International Trends from ICCS 2009 to ICCS 2016

### 2.4.1 *Increasing Civic Knowledge*

One of the recurring discussions about young people as democratic citizens is related to whether they have sufficient knowledge about, and understanding of, democracy to act in appropriate ways in society. These concerns are probably as old as the concept

of youth, and a difference in the civic knowledge of young people and older generations will always exist. All generations have and share historical experiences that differ from each other. From an inter-generational perspective, understanding that knowledge and concepts of democracy are interpreted in different ways in history and by different generations, which may generate some concern and incomprehension between generations, is important. The concern about young people's potential lack of knowledge rests on the traditional perception of democracy as founded on the rational arguments and well-considered engagement of knowledgeable citizens (Svensson 1979). In itself, this perception rests on the assumption that knowledge and commitment to society as a political community are positively correlated. An implicit or explicit assumption in the literature is that political knowledge and interest will lead to political participation.

In the ICCS studies, students' knowledge and skills are tested across a range of content sub-dimensions, including the functions of basic political institutions, the role of free media, electoral procedures, rights and duties of citizens, roles of international organizations, and a range of further topics covered by a total of 87 test items. The ICCS 2016 study shows that civic knowledge is related to various types of political participation in different ways, depending on the type of activity in question. In almost all countries, students' expected active political participation is negatively related to their civic knowledge, whereas their expected electoral participation is positively related to their civic knowledge (Schulz et al. 2018a, pp. 102, 104).<sup>3</sup>

One of the most interesting results of the ICCS 2016 study is that since 2009, the grade 8 students across countries and regions have gained more knowledge about social, political, and democratic topics and issues (see Table 2.1). The test results very clearly show that the average level of civic knowledge has increased across the eighteen countries that participated in both ICCS 2016 and ICCS 2009. This particularly applies to the Nordic countries. Some of the largest increases in the level of civic knowledge are measured in Sweden and Norway. Denmark and Finland show no increase; both countries have some of the highest average scores in the two ICCS studies. Any concern about the Nordic youth being ignorant about democracy and lacking the potential to function as enlightened citizens in the future is difficult to maintain in this comparative perspective. The Nordic youth are among the young people worldwide who are the most knowledgeable in this context, and thus have a unique point of departure for understanding and monitoring societal developments and forming their own opinions and perceptions.

### ***2.4.2 Increasing Political Engagement***

In this sub-section, we focus on nine scales from the ICCS study that are crucial for assessing students' political socialization and education. The first four scales

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<sup>3</sup>We understand that any relation or association between civic knowledge and types of participation is an interrelatedness, where any cause and effect most likely is a mutual causation.

**Table 2.1** Changes in the average civic knowledge between the results of ICCS 2016 and ICCS 2009 on the ICCS civic knowledge test

	Average scale score ICCS 2016		Average scale score ICCS 2009		Difference (absolute value)	
Sweden <sup>a</sup>	579	(2.8)	537	(3.1)	42	(5.2)
Russian Federation	545	(4.3)	506	(3.8)	38	(6.5)
Norway <sup>a, c</sup>	564	(2.2)	538	(4.0)	25	(5.5)
Belgium (Flemish)	537	(4.1)	514	(4.7)	23	(6.9)
Taiwan (Chinese Taipei)	581	(3.0)	559	(2.4)	22	(5.0)
Estonia <sup>a</sup>	546	(3.1)	525	(4.5)	21	(6.3)
Colombia	482	(3.4)	462	(2.9)	20	(5.5)
Bulgaria	485	(5.3)	466	(5.0)	19	(8.0)
Slovenia	532	(2.5)	516	(2.7)	16	(4.8)
Mexico	467	(2.5)	452	(2.8)	15	(4.9)
Lithuania	518	(3.0)	505	(2.8)	13	(5.2)
Latvia <sup>a</sup>	492	(3.1)	482	(4.0)	11	(5.9)
Denmark <sup>b</sup>	586	(3.0)	576	(3.6)	10	(5.6)
Malta	491	(2.7)	490	(4.5)	2	(6.1)
Dominican Republic	381	(3.0)	380	(2.4)	1	(5.0)
Finland	577	(2.3)	576	(2.4)	0	(4.5)
Chile	482	(3.1)	483	(3.5)	-1	(5.6)
Italy	524	(2.4)	531	(3.3)	-6	(5.1)

Source Table data adapted from Schulz et al. (2018a, p. 62). Notes The table is sorted in descending order by country difference between 2016 and 2009. Differences in bold are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Standard errors are placed in parentheses. <sup>a</sup>Covers 90–95% of the national target population. <sup>b</sup>Met sampling participation rate only after replacement schools were included. <sup>c</sup>Norway surveyed the adjacent upper grade where the average student age was equivalent to the other Nordic countries. In ICCS 2009, Norway surveyed both the target grade and adjacent upper grade. Both results shown here are for the adjacent grade (grade 9). The scale was established in ICCS 2009, with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100 for equally weighted national samples

are related to what we here label the *democratic culture*. Of these, the first two are about equality across different groups in society and the other two are about students' perceptions of themselves in political deliberation. The remaining five of the nine scales are related to what we here label the *political system*; of these, two scales are about the expectations of becoming politically active as an adult and three scales are about the endorsement of three different types of citizens. For each scale, we indicate the main content of the items used.

### I. *The democratic culture*

1. Gender equality (equality between women and men in politics, jobs, and life)
2. Equal rights of ethnic groups (equal educational, political, and cultural rights across all ethnic groups)



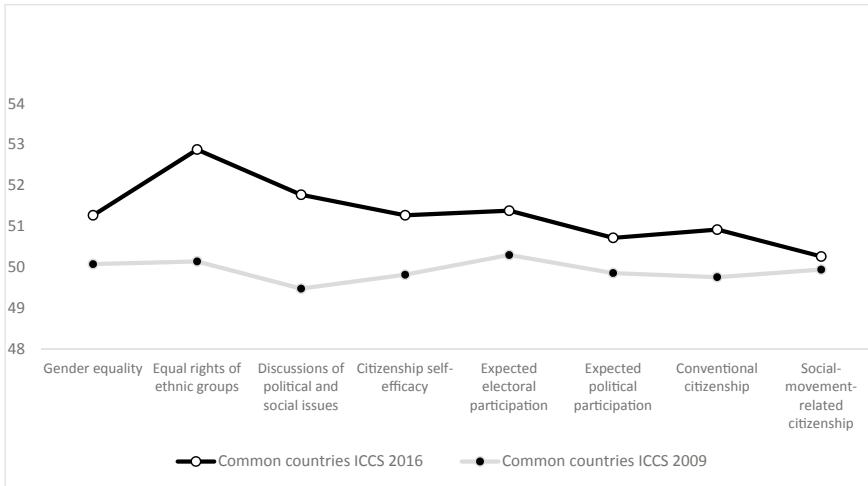
3. Political self-efficacy (self-confidence in being able to understand and contribute to political matters)
  4. Discussions about political and social issues (with friends and parents, about various issues)
- II. *The political system*
1. Expected electoral participation (voting in various types of elections as an adult)
  2. Expected political participation (supporting candidates and collecting money as an adult)
  3. Conventional citizenship (voting, following political news, interest in party politics; see more below)
  4. Social-movement-related citizenship (willingness to protest, support human rights; see more below)
  5. Personal responsibility citizenship (support one's family, work hard; see more below).

We investigated the differences in the scale scores between the ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 datasets for eight of these scales (personal responsibility citizenship was excluded because it was not measured in the ICCS 2009 study). A clear tendency is that the grade 8 students in 2016 have become more supportive of all these dimensions of political life than grade 8 students in 2009 (see Fig. 2.1). Across countries and regions, they show an increasing level of identification and interest in these social, political, and democratic norms and values.<sup>4</sup> The differences in all eight scales are statistically significant.

The endorsement of equal rights for different groups in society (here, the examples are gender and ethnic groups) has substantially increased. Compared with the students in 2009, the students in 2016 had a higher expected turnout and an increasing ambition to actively participate in the political system, for example, by joining a political party or political association or by supporting a politician or a party during an election campaign. The fact that the students across the participating countries have become more engaged is also indicated by their increased participation in conversations about social and political issues with parents and friends than the students in 2009. In addition, students have become more trusting in their abilities to understand political matters and to form and present their opinions. The trends (Fig. 2.1) indicate that the students have become more positive towards conventional citizenship—that is, the citizen type that supports the formal democratic system. The only almost unchanged result (the difference between the ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 results is only 0.32 scale points) is that of to the endorsement of social-movement-related citizenship: a type of citizen who is very active and, for example, protests outside the formal system.

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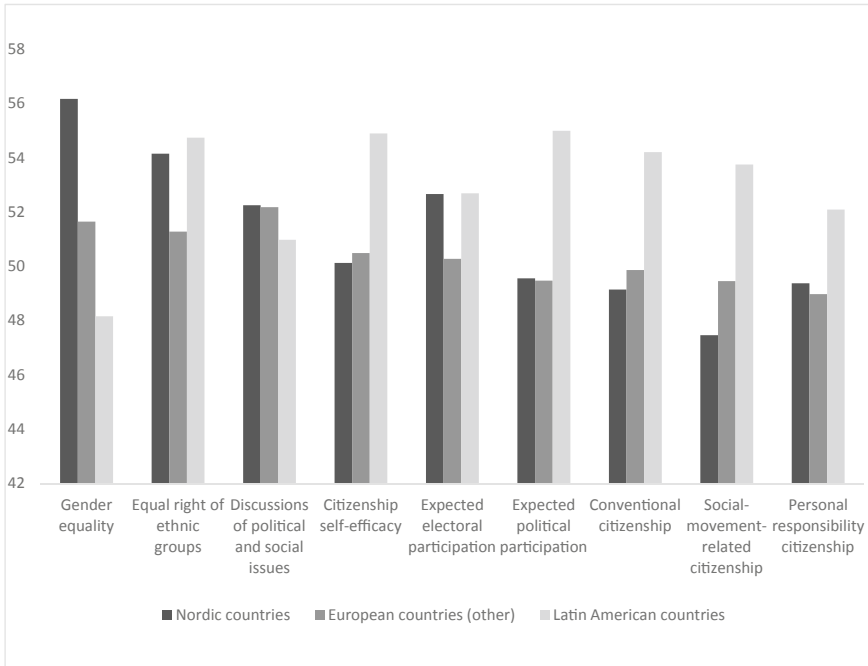
<sup>4</sup>To compare the international results over time, the results in Fig. 2.1 are shown as the total international average only for the countries participating in both ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016. The line in Fig. 2.1 is only intended to make the results clearly stand out as a pattern. As a rule, the international average for each scale was set at 50 and with a standard deviation of 10 in ICCS 2009. Therefore, note that the various scales are not directly comparable to each other.



**Fig. 2.1** Differences in the average scale scores from ICCS 2009 to ICCS 2016 for all countries participating in both studies (*Source* Data have been obtained from scale score tables provided by the IEA Data Processing Center in Hamburg for countries participating in ICCS 2016. For six of these scales, a table with rounded averages at country level can be found in Schulz et al. (2018b) on the following pages: Gender equality, p. 126; Equal rights of ethnic groups, p. 128; Expected electoral participation, p. 100; Expected political participation, p. 103; Conventional citizenship, p. 117; and Social-movement-related citizenship, p. 120. *Notes* The scales were constructed for ICCS 2009 with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for all countries participating in ICCS 2009. All the differences are statistically significant. For every average scale score shown here, the standard error is 0.1 or below. The symbols indicating the average scores are placed with a precision of one decimal)

Since 2009, young people across countries have become more knowledgeable about democratic societies and the world they live in and their general democratic education has also strengthened, at least in the sense that the endorsement of values and equal rights, the commitment to political participation, and the level of political self-confidence have all increased. In other words, their general democratic education appears to be supportive, and increasingly so, of democracy in all of these important dimensions. This development provides a relatively strong indication that young people have become more informed, democratic, and committed.

These results challenge the idea that young citizens only participate when there is a specific need, which is the behavioural pattern that characterizes the monitorial and stand-by citizens. In short, there are strong indications that the endorsement of democracy as both a political system and a democratic culture is currently growing stronger. However, the next section will show and discuss another side to the understanding of the Nordic youth relative to the youth in other regions.



**Fig. 2.2** ICCS 2016 scale averages for students’ perceptions of the nine citizenship dimensions in three regions (*Source* The regional averages have been obtained by recalculating the scale statistics originally provided by the IEA Data Processing Center in Hamburg for the participating countries in ICCS 2016. *Notes* The first eight scales from the left were constructed for ICCS 2009 with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for all ICCS 2009 countries. The last (ninth) scale was constructed with the same properties for all ICCS 2016 countries. The only benchmarking participant in ICCS 2016, North Rhine-Westphalia, is not included)

## 2.5 Regional Differences and Trends

### 2.5.1 Regional Differences

Another overall result from ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 is that how young people understand and form their political engagement and interests substantially differs between regions. The young people from the various geographical regions represented in the ICCS studies (mainly European, Asian,<sup>5</sup> and Latin American countries) have different views on the norms and values associated with being and becoming a political citizen (Fig. 2.2). The young people from the Latin American countries were

<sup>5</sup>The Asian countries are not included as a region due to the small number of Asian countries participating in both ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016. Neither is the Russian Federation included in any region nor as a region in itself.

often significantly more committed and involved in matters of political participation,<sup>6</sup> especially when compared with the young people from the European countries.

The young people from the Latin American and Asian countries show more positive perceptions regarding their expected participation in political activities, their political self-confidence, and different types of citizenship, compared to their European peers. However, exceptions are present, especially in the perception of gender equality and, to a lesser degree, in the engagement in discussions about political and social issues with friends and parents, where the perceptions of the Nordic students are more positive than those of the Latin American students.

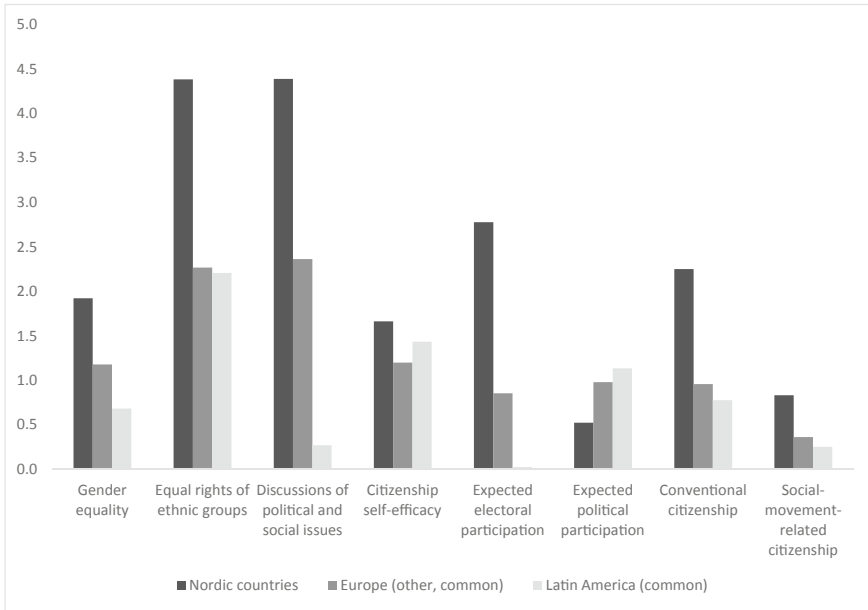
In general, the European students are less active, especially when compared with the Latin American students and in matters related to the political participation of citizens. However, when comparing the Nordic countries to other European countries, we still find that the Nordic youth are relatively active in some areas and relatively passive in others. In particular, they share a reluctant or passive attitude towards a more direct and active form of political participation. Most importantly, the scores of the Nordic youth are below the European average scores for social-movement-related citizenship, but their passive attitudes are also present in relation to conventional citizenship and their citizenship self-efficacy. As a contrast, we can point to the strong endorsement of gender equality and equality between ethnic groups (especially in Sweden and Norway). In addition, there is a high expectation among Nordic young people to vote in national elections and to some degree a widespread engagement in discussions with friends and family about political and social issues (particularly in Denmark). These forms of endorsements and engagements are extremely political but often more passive and indirect rather than direct and active. This indicates that the civic education of the Nordic youth (i.e., their *politische Bildung* or political formation) has some unique similarities.

### 2.5.2 Regional Trends

Compared with the students from countries in other regions (Fig. 2.3), the Nordic students represent the most positive trends from 2009 to 2016. The generation of Nordic youth born at the beginning of the twenty-first century seem to be more

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<sup>6</sup>The interpretations of such differences are sometimes problematized as expressions of *cultural bias*—that is, the judging of phenomena based on the norms in one's own culture. However, here we do not claim that high average scores in ICCS are better per se than low average scores. Another common discussion is to what degree students' self-reported attitudes are expressions of *social desirability*—that is, bias stemming from the tendency of respondents to give answers they expect to be acceptable to other people. Here, we view civic education (*politische Bildung*) as an analytical object that by definition differs in various educational, societal, cultural, economic, and political contexts. In other words, civic education is a matter wherein social desirability may be interpreted as an expression of students' understanding of cultural normativity. In any case, the analytical object is a social phenomenon. From this perspective, all students' answers are in fact true answers.



**Fig. 2.3** Differences in average ICCS scale scores for students’ perceptions of eight citizenship dimensions in three regions from ICCS 2009 to ICCS 2016 (*Source* The regional differences have been obtained by recalculating the scale statistics originally provided by the IEA Data Processing Center in Hamburg for the participating countries in ICCS 2016. *Notes* The eight scales were constructed for ICCS 2009 with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for all ICCS 2009 countries. For each of the four Nordic countries, almost all the increases are statistically significant differences. The only exceptions are found on the scale for expected political participation [significant increase was observed only for Finland] and the scale for social-movement-related citizenship [significant increase was observed only for Finland and Sweden])

engaged than their counterparts born at the end of the twentieth century. Interestingly, although this development is not only a Nordic phenomenon, the trends are particularly significant among the Nordic youth.

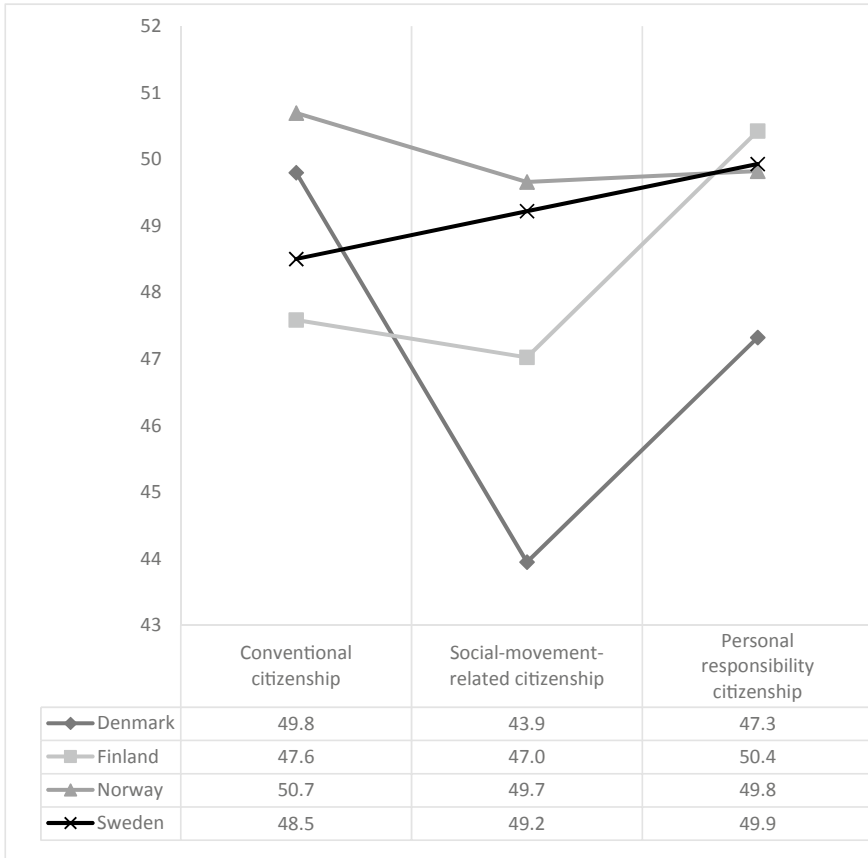
The most noteworthy Nordic developments are related to the issues from the scales labelled “democratic culture.” Nordic students especially have gained much more positive views regarding gender equality, equal rights for ethnic groups, and participation in discussions about social and political issues (Fig. 2.3). They are increasingly engaging in these dimensions of democratic culture and more so than the students in other regions. Nordic students are characterized by their immense concern about some of the democratic values that are crucial in everyday activities, jobs, and schools. This relation to everyday democratic life in civil society is also evident when looking at their increasing participation in political discussions with friends and family.

## 2.6 Nordic Differences and Similarities

So far, the analysis in this chapter has demonstrated how the Nordic youth born in the early 2000s is a generation of reserved citizens. Even though we label this generation of young Nordic people as reserved, these reserved citizens come in somewhat different forms and sizes in the Nordic countries. In Sweden, a significant increase is observed in several scale score averages from 2009 to 2016. This trend is unmatched in any other Nordic country. In the following sections, other Nordic differences will be analyzed based on three different scales (Fig. 2.4), measuring the endorsement of three different types of citizens: conventional, social-movement-related, and personal responsibility citizenship. These are the last three scales in the previous overview of scales; however, here we take a closer look at the scale constructs and the Nordic results across these dimensions.

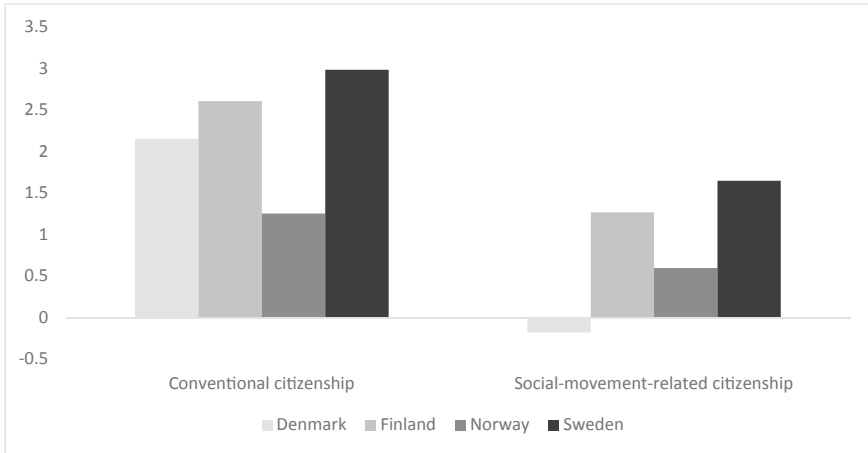
In the ICCS studies, students' endorsement of *conventional citizenship* is measured by the extent to which they agree that an adult citizen ought to be voting in every national election, joining a political party, learning about their country's history, showing respect for government representatives, engaging in political discussions, and following political issues in the newspaper or on the radio, television, or internet. In the broad comparison of all the participating countries participating in ICCS 2016 the average level of endorsement of conventional citizenship is relatively similar across the Nordic countries; all scores are below the total international average score. Nevertheless, there is some variation: Norway has the highest average score and Finland has the lowest (Fig. 2.4). The trends (Fig. 2.5) show that the endorsement has substantially increased in all four countries since 2009. In other words, young people across all the Nordic countries are increasingly becoming supportive of conventional citizenship behaviours.

The second type of citizenship is the so-called *social-movement-related citizenship* that is measured by the extent to which students endorse adult citizens who are participating in peaceful protests against laws believed to be unjust, in activities to benefit people in the local community, in activities to promote human rights, and in activities to protect the environment. The scores of all the Nordic countries are below the international average level of endorsement for social-movement-related citizenship. However, the level of endorsement is significantly higher in Norway and Sweden compared to Finland and Denmark (Fig. 2.4). The average scale score of Denmark is the lowest of all Nordic countries, and the average scale score of Finland the third lowest. Another issue is that the Nordic trends differ. The trends (Fig. 2.5) show a relatively significant increase in the endorsement of social-movement-related citizenship in Sweden and Finland. In Denmark, the ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 results are almost identical (with a lower average in ICCS 2016 but not statistically significant). Note that the level of endorsement in all Nordic countries is below that in many other countries. Therefore, these Nordic differences do not challenge the fact that the Nordic youth as a mutual trait are reserved. They do, however, indicate that the nature and degree of this reserve varies. This observation becomes even more evident when the third citizenship type is included in the comparison.



**Fig. 2.4** Nordic scale score averages for students’ perceptions of three types of citizenship in ICCS 2016 (Source The Nordic averages have been obtained from the scale statistics originally provided by the IEA Data Processing Center in Hamburg for the participating countries in ICCS 2016. Notes The scales for conventional citizenship and social-movement-related citizenship were constructed for ICCS 2009 with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for all ICCS 2009 countries. The scale for personal responsibility citizenship was constructed in the same way for ICCS 2016. All standard errors in Denmark, Finland, and Norway are 0.2 or below. All standard errors in Sweden are 0.3 or below)

The third type of citizenship measures students’ perceptions of the importance of *personal responsibility citizenship*. This type of citizenship is less associated with public life than the previous types. The personally responsible citizen is the one who as a person is situated in private life and sees society and the world from that private position. For this person, the most important dimensions of life as a citizen are individual responsibilities, personal efforts, and self-disciplinary attitudes; therefore, this type of citizen is of a more moral and dutiful nature than the previous ones. The personally responsible citizen is a private person, but their obligations and



**Fig. 2.5** Nordic differences in scale score points in ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 for students' perceptions of two types of citizenship (*Source* The Nordic differences have been obtained from the scale statistics originally provided by the IEA Data Processing Center in Hamburg for the participating countries in ICCS 2016. *Notes* These citizenship scales were constructed for ICCS 2009 with an international mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for all ICCS 2009 countries. For each of the four Nordic countries, the increases in the scale scores for conventional citizenship are statistically significant differences. On the scale for social-movement-related citizenship, the increases/decreases are statistically significant differences in Finland and Sweden)

attitudes may, to some degree, transcend the private family sphere and extend into the community. A similar type of citizen is defined in the writings of Westheimer (2015). Because this is a new scale constructed for ICCS 2016, we have no trends to discuss here. In ICCS 2016, this kind of citizenship is measured by the degree to which students endorse an adult citizen who is working hard, always obeying the law, ensuring the economic welfare of their family, making personal efforts to protect natural resources, respecting the rights of others to have their own opinions, supporting people who are worse off than them, and engaging in activities to help people in less developed countries. On this scale, students from Norway, Finland, and Sweden have an almost identical level of endorsement that is close to the international average. In statistical terms, only the average of Finland is significantly higher than the international average. Given the fact that the Finnish students show relatively low support for both the conventional and social-movement-related citizens, the level of endorsement of the personally responsible citizen in Finland is surprisingly high. The Danish students deviate from the Nordic average endorsement level with lower support for this type of citizen.

We find different patterns in the way the active-passive citizenship unfolds. In Norway, the average level of endorsement of all three types of citizenship is close to the average level of endorsement in Europe. The patterns differ the most in Denmark and Finland, where the reserved nature is most evident, albeit with one clear exception in each country. In Denmark, endorsement of conventional citizenship is surprisingly



high (relative to the low scores for the other scales), whereas in Finland, endorsement of the personally responsible citizen is surprisingly high (relative to the low scores for the other scales). In Sweden, the level of endorsement of the social-movement-related citizen and personally responsible citizen is close to the average level in Europe, whereas the support for conventional citizenship is relatively low. Thus, a special feature in Sweden is that social-movement-related citizenship is endorsed at a relatively higher rate than conventional citizenship. In general, the Norwegian and Swedish results are on the same level and seem to indicate that the main perceptions of citizenship in these two countries tend to include a broader range of citizenship dimensions than in Denmark and Finland.

Although some of these Nordic differences are quite substantial and could be worth exploring further, note that they all fall within a range that in the overall international and regional comparison still makes them relatively similar. In other words, we do not claim that all Nordic students or all Nordic countries share the same reserve, but relatively speaking, they do. Most of the Nordic trends in the comparison between ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 are remarkably similar, despite some exceptions. The comparisons and trends indicate that a characteristic of the young Nordic citizens is a special kind of active-passive citizen. As described in the previous sections, the Nordic youth are relatively active but, at the same time, they are also relatively passive. We call this citizen the reserved citizen.

## 2.7 Concluding Discussion

To sum up, the findings of ICCS clearly indicates that the Nordic youth are not left out of democracy in a stand-by position. Instead, they are increasingly engaged, albeit that their endorsement of the democratic culture in everyday life and political engagement generally is articulated in more passive and indirect forms. Most of the Nordic young people seem to be reluctant to participate actively and directly in public spheres. This line of reasoning corresponds to that of Hegna (2018), who differentiates between “engagement” (interest, taking part in discussions, and informal commitment) and “participation” (in organizations and formal democratic procedure). The work of Hegna is based on the observations of Norwegian ICCS results, where she finds that the students are engaged but not very participative. Based on similar observations across the Nordic countries, we characterize the young people of these countries as *reserved* (actively passive). The international comparison reveals that Nordic young people have some unique similarities regarding the way in which they understand themselves and engage as citizens.

From the comparative perspective, the Nordic results indicate that the young Nordic citizen is not easily defined by the categories from the simple active-passive dichotomy. In general, this complexity—that is, that the Nordic youth are neither simply active nor simply passive—has also been addressed by previous research (Amnå and Ekman 2014; Hooghe and Dejaeghere 2007; Oser and Hooghe 2013). Amnå and Ekman (2014, p. 270) make similar observations; however, within their

theoretical scope of the stand-by citizen, political engagement in everyday private life is a *preparation* for future public action. This implies that young people will stay alert and prepared for action if the need arises, or as Ekman and Amnå (2012) said in the quote above, that they are “pre-political” or “potentially political,” i.e., first passive and preparing and then active if necessary. We propose another interpretation suggesting that the Nordic youth are not on stand-by. The ICCS 2016 results and the trends since 2009 demonstrate that young people actually are engaged in democratic processes (knowledgeable on social, political, and democratic issues, expect to vote, deliberative, and with strong attitudes towards gender equality etc.). As such, gender equality is a good example of how the same political issue is, in fact, political in both indirect forms and private spheres and from time to time more directly and in public life. We suggest that the Nordic youth cannot be considered *passive-active*, as is the case in the stand-by position, where citizens have not yet made their decision to intervene (i.e., they are passive), but may change if necessary (i.e., become active).

The growing engagement of young people in a democratic society, as documented by the trends from ICCS 2009 to ICCS 2016 and the ICCS 2016 regional results, demonstrates that the Nordic youth continually are highly involved in everyday democratic life and that democracy is and is becoming still more important to them. The Nordic students possess the knowledge and skills that provide them with a strong foundation when forming their own opinions and independently contributing to the ongoing development of society. Every young generation may engage in society and democracy in new ways based on their experiences and interests in contemporary society; or they may follow the traditional ways of being a citizen in new contexts. The ICCS studies provide numerous findings that the Nordic youth prefer the non-partisan, indirect, and values-based forms of engagement (knowledge, discussion, and inclusive values). This combination of an engaged and non-partisan citizen is a characteristic of the reserved citizen. The civic education (i.e., the *politische Bildung* or political formation) of the Nordic youth is characterized by an active-passive disposition. They mainly engage in the political community through indirect participation. At first sight, this could be negatively perceived as a form of unengaged passivity or more positively as a temporary standby mode. However, based on our analysis of the Nordic youth civic engagement as double-sided (active as well as passive), we propose to describe the Nordic youth as continually engaged, but in a reserved way: the reserved citizen.

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# Chapter 3

## Aims of Citizenship Education Across Nordic Countries: Comparing School Principals' Priorities in Citizenship Education 2009–2016



**Idunn Seland, Lihong Huang, Cecilia Arensmeier, Jens Bruun, and Jan Löffström**

**Abstract** The Nordic welfare state has been associated with certain ideas of citizenship, the highlights of which are equal rights, social mobility, democracy, and participation. To better understand how these ideas are interpreted in the educational system, this chapter compares school principals' prioritization of the aims of civic and citizenship education in four Nordic countries as they are expressed in IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). We discuss our findings in relation to the Nordic model of education, meaning the governance of education epitomizing the Nordic welfare state. When comparing data from the survey of school principals in ICCS 2009 with ICCS 2016, we find a consistent prioritization of promoting students' critical thinking, while items concerning democratic participation are the lowest priority. While these results are similar to the international sample, the Nordic principals' support for promoting critical thinking is consistently stronger. In the Nordic welfare state, a shift toward neoliberal policies is seen as an adaption to economic challenges with an emphasis on development of human capital through knowledge, skills, and abilities. However, as critical thinking represents such abilities, this may also be seen as a prerequisite for social critique and political mobilization. We review these possibilities as representations of a break in or a

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continuation of the traditional ideas of citizenship associated with the Nordic welfare state. We conclude that, for Nordic principals, critical thinking may align with the recent international emphasis on competence while also relating to the concept of *Bildung*, an 18th-century emancipation ideal with deep roots in the Nordic model of education.

**Keywords** Civic and citizenship education · International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) · Nordic model · Welfare state · Critical thinking · Democratic participation

### 3.1 Introduction

A common point of reference for the Nordic countries after World War II has been the Nordic welfare state, also termed the social democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990). Embedded in the social democratic welfare regime is the Nordic model of education, which aims for increased social mobility strengthened by democratic participation and sense of citizenship (Imsen et al. 2017; Buchardt et al. 2013). Antikainen (2006, p. 230) views the Nordic model of education as a national system founded on specific local values, which are concretized in equity, participation, and the welfare state. In practice, the Nordic education model represents a comprehensive and unified school that brings together pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds (Imsen et al. 2017; Buchardt et al. 2013).

As one of the central means of maintaining societal cohesion in the Nordic welfare state, the Nordic education model both reflects certain ideas of citizenship and reinforces citizenship through educational institutions. How can these ideas of citizenship be identified and conceptualized? A starting point would be to look at the aims of civic and citizenship education (CCE) across the Nordic countries.

This chapter compares the aims of CCE in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden at two different levels: the national political level, represented by national school curricula, and the intersection between policy and pedagogy at the institutional level, represented by school principals' prioritization of CCE aims. IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), in which these four countries participated in both 2009 and 2016, provides the data for analytical comparison. Our objective is to study how similar or how diverse the aims for CCE may be among these countries and to discuss our main findings in relation to recent shifts in policy which concerns the Nordic model of education. The aim of this chapter is to discuss whether there has been a continuation or a break in the model's citizenship ideals.

## 3.2 The Nordic Model of Education and the Nordic Welfare State

As a political project, the Nordic education model became an integrated element of social democratic policy for societal modernization after 1945 (Wiborg 2013; Telhaug and Mediaas 2006). For the welfare states forming in the four Nordic countries between 1950 and 1970, the overall goals were citizens' equal rights and the state's responsibility for full employment of the national labour force and the narrowing of social differences; these goals rested on democracy, a sense of equality, and mutual trust (Brochmann and Hagelund 2010).

The concept of *Bildung* is embedded in the historical coordination of education in the Nordic countries, at both the institutional and political levels. Originating from Germany and bearing 18th-century cultural and philosophical connotations, *Bildung* is a democratizing, equalizing force enabling people to fulfil their aspirations in a free society and in pursuit of moral and intellectual growth (Ahonen and Rantala 2001). In its classic form, *Bildung* emphasized the individual's capacity for free and reasoned self-government, entailing a critique of the non-rational and pre-modern arguments legitimizing institutions like the church and the nobility (Ryen 2020). The concept's Nordic variations, spanning from *bildning* (Swedish) to *dannelse* (Danish and Norwegian) to *sivistys* (Finnish), combine the Enlightenment ideal of liberation with a romantic striving for personal refinement through the humanities (Högnäs 2001). *Bildung* is still relevant today as the overarching aim of schooling and of spiritual formation of the individual (Ryen 2020).

However, the last 30 years have brought changes to the Nordic welfare state and the Nordic education model. Efforts to increase welfare efficiency and quality through marketization, referred to as neoliberal strategies, are usually ascribed to shifts in government between parties from the political left to the right. Wiborg (2013), on the other hand, directs attention to the neoliberal shift that took place mainly within the Scandinavian social democratic parties, adapting to new economic realities and societal challenges following recessions and increasing globalization after 1980. She demonstrates how this shift may apply to all the Scandinavian countries with Sweden being the primary example.

The changing realities of the Nordic welfare states, and especially of their national education policies, were also influenced by international agencies, such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), gradually shifting from formerly prioritized national-cultural perspectives to global and human capital issues. These international changes have been described as resulting from increased attention to technical-economic or cognitive-instrumental rationality (Telhaug and Mediaas 2006; Imsen et al. 2017). In response, the Scandinavian states have developed their primary and secondary education sectors partly through decentralization as quasi-market systems, using voucher schemes, school choice, increased standardization, and testing (Wiborg 2013). The result is a universal education system with more or less distinct national variations created and strengthened by market-based initiatives and adaptations.



### 3.3 Citizenship and CCE

While “citizenship” denotes the relationship between the individual and the state and a sense of belonging to the state (Kivisto and Faist 2007), CCE is devoted to cultivating and maintaining the knowledge, attitude, and disposition associated with good citizenship (Isin and Turner 2007). As a theoretical concept, citizenship is a formal, objective dimension of law and justice expressed in the individual’s rights and duties, which are upheld by state institutions. A second, more subjective and informal dimension of citizenship emerges through a shared identity and loyalty to a collective entity, the state. The social and psychological aspects of citizenship are meant to strengthen cohesion among individuals in a political community, ideally forming trust and willingness to participate in political processes (Fleury 2006).

Arthur et al. (2008) suggest that CCE may be a means of stabilizing states based on perceptions of challenges facing the community. Academically, CCE hails from research on political socialization in the 1950s and 1960s, which identified mechanisms to integrate individuals into a political community by helping them to develop political identities (Solhaug 2013). CCE reinforces national ideologies and values through institutions of mass education, being a product of the historical establishment of nation states (Fraser 2008; Osler 2012). This is not a straightforward task, as Audigier (2000, p. 18) illustrates:

[CCE] concerns the individual and his relations with others, the construction of personal and collective identities, the conditions of living together. It thus has to deal with the individual and the social, the particular and the universal, the already there, insertion in a historical and cultural continuity, and the invention of the future ... the acceptance of a pre-existing reality and the development of a critical approach.

As stable democratic states require citizens who are both critical and loyal (Almond and Verba 1963), CCE faces the challenge of socializing citizens to a democratic regime while also promoting critical thinking to uphold democratic principles and values. This apparent dilemma touches upon major ideological debates on democracy and democratic values. Weinberg and Flinders (2018) describe how, at a macro political level in England, the left has advocated for CCE to promote interest for broader structural arguments and social critique, while the right emphasizes CCE to promote good character and personal responsibility. At the political centre, visions of strong democracy have emerged, trying to unite the two pillars of individual responsibility and collective participation.

According to Weinberg and Flinders (2018), it is against this backdrop that Westheimer (2015) (see also Westheimer and Kahne 2004) “three kinds of citizens” should be understood. This frequently referred to typology describes the intent of CCE programmes to support the development of either (1) the personally responsible citizen, (2) the participatory citizen, or (3) the social justice-oriented citizen.

By the personally responsible citizen Westheimer (2015) means character, or individual conduct guided by virtues, such as honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. CCE programs that aim to form personally responsible citizens tend to emphasize kindness, volunteerism, and the act of helping others. The participatory

citizen takes an active part in civic life and affairs. CCE programmes intended to promote participatory citizenship provide students with technical knowledge of how government and legislature function. However, technical knowledge about institutions and democratic procedures does not necessarily deepen the insight into societal problems, Westheimer argues. In his opinion, only CCE programs aimed at a critical assessment of the causes of such problems, involving considerations of fairness and equality of opportunity, can form social justice-oriented citizens truly engaged in democracy.

Another perspective is presented by Biesta (2009). Biesta engages in a macro-level discussion about the purpose of schooling, which criticises the emphasis on competition, testing and accountability found in neoliberal educational policy. According to Biesta, the first of education's three main functions is to qualify students, meaning to provide them with knowledge and skills so they can participate in work and social and civic life. The second function, socialization through education, is to help people become members of the social, cultural, and political order. Education's third function, subjectification, is described by Biesta as the opposite of socialization, as it is about creating independent individuals with their own opinions and agency in life and society.

Biesta (2009) regularly uses the three functions of education to discuss aspects of CCE and argues that a strong focus on qualification can be understood as a way to avoid discussions about explicit political socialization. On the other hand, Biesta observes, like Westheimer and Kahne (2004), that programs for CCE are often intended to socialize citizens to be obedient and well-behaved. Additionally, knowledge or qualification can, in Biesta's understanding, have the potential both to disrupt (subjectify) and to stabilize (socialize). This may depend both on how knowledge is taught and, especially, for what purpose, in a nation's educational system.

To add to other researchers' discussions, the objectives of citizens' engagement and participation can be framed by various intersections of the political and pedagogical aspects of CCE. For example, in some calls for school to engage young people in politics, especially voting, civic knowledge becomes nothing more than a means to achieve participation (e.g., Galson 2004). A somewhat different argument emphasizes that preparedness and ability are more important than participation and that a major role of the school is to enable "standby" citizenship by instilling political interest, knowledge, and skills (Ekman and Amnå 2012). Others are more sceptical of the celebration of political participation per se and advocate epistocracy, where only the competent, knowledgeable, and prudent citizens are trusted with full political rights and responsibilities (e.g., Brennan 2016). This position emphasizes education, though not in the form of universal participation.

Moreover, enabling student influence and participation within schools is vital to pragmatic and progressive educational ideals, both to improve learning and to democratize schools (e.g., Dewey 2007 [1916]). However, pleads for student participation in school can also be problematized for its strong focus on the present at the expense of the past and the future (Wedin 2018) and for its limited attention to inequality and power relations between students (Taylor and Robinson 2009). Education policies in

Nordic countries include all of these lines of argument, and it is therefore possible to find support for both extensive and more limited student influence and participation in school and society.

### **3.4 National Aims for CCE in Four Nordic Countries**

We now turn to educational curricula to see how aims for CCE are formulated at the national political level in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The following are descriptions of the curricula that were in use when school principals in these countries answered the ICCS 2016 survey.

#### **3.4.1 CCE in Denmark**

The preamble of the Danish Education Act states that the school “must prepare the pupils for participation, co-responsibility, rights, and duties in a society with freedom and rule by the people” (Undervisningsministeriet 2017). This kind of general democratic scope (i.e., a whole-school approach to CCE which is considered part of the school experience as a whole, as well as being more or less integrated into different subjects) has been central for primary and lower secondary education in the Danish Education Act since 1975, with some changes to the wording in 1993 and 2006. The Act does not detail how to implement this preparation for living in a democracy. For most subjects, the dimension of democracy and civic education are implicitly addressed in the ministerial guidelines.

In grades 8 and 9, the main subject for teaching CCE is social studies. The purpose of this subject is to provide students with knowledge and skills that enable them to take a considered approach to society and its development. Social studies consist of four competence areas: politics, economy, social and cultural issues, and methods (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet 2019). Within each competence area, students should develop the skills needed to take a reasoned position, take part in discussions, and decide how to act.

The official objectives and guidelines for social studies concern managing, searching for, and assessing information; project-oriented and problem-oriented teaching and learning; forming and expressing value-based standpoints; and criticizing sources and thinking critically, such as the ability to weigh arguments and understand a case from different positions. The main intention is to enhance students’ understanding of themselves as independent individuals and as members of the wider society and, at the same time, to help them view their future opportunities and choices in the society.

### 3.4.2 CCE in Finland

In Finland, the document that most directly guides basic education is the core curriculum for basic education, *Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (POPS). The core curriculum relevant to the analysis of the results of ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 is that of 2004 (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2004).

POPS 2004 has several educational aims related to CCE. Some of them are implied in the section of Underlying Values of Basic Education, where “human rights, equality, democracy, natural diversity, preservation of environmental viability and the endorsement of multiculturalism” are given as “underlying values of basic education.” Moreover, “responsibility, a sense of community and respect for the rights and freedoms of individuals” are mentioned as values that basic education should promote among pupils. The section Mission of Basic Education contains items related to pupils’ individual self-development but also to their ability to “develop a democratic society” as “involved citizens.”

The social studies section of POPS 2004 contains more focused goals related to civic competences. They include promoting knowledge related to societal topics and promoting the ability to acquire and use critical information related to society and to understand societal processes. Also among the learning objectives is promoting pupils’ disposition to be active agents in a democratic society and “take an interest in social participation and exerting an influence.” However, there are few explicit references to values.

POPS 2004 also contains seven cross-curricular themes that must be addressed in all subjects and school activities. Most of them relate to civic education, such as “participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship” or “responsibility for the environment and a sustainable future.” However, the themes were often not implemented because no teaching resources were allocated specifically to that purpose (Löfström et al. 2017, p. 78).

The Operational Culture section of POPS 2004 also states that pupils must have “opportunity to participate in the creation and development of the school’s operational culture.” The section does not make explicit reference to CCE, whereas the most recent Core Curriculum for Basic Education, POPS 2014, states clearly that schools’ operational culture must be democratic and support pupils’ growth into active citizens (Utbildningsstyrelsen 2014). This change may reflect the discussion of the Finnish results of ICCS 2009, of which it was noted that significant CCE takes place in everyday forms of school participation, where pupils can make their voice heard in decision-making processes (Löfström et al. 2017, pp. 77–81).

### 3.4.3 CCE in Norway

The Norwegian principals who answered the ICCS 2016 survey were subject to the Education Act, with its revised 2009 preamble and the 2006 national curriculum

entitled “Knowledge Promotion,” which contains the core curriculum instituted by a 1993 parliament resolution.

The preamble of the Norwegian Education Act (Kunnskapsdepartementet 1998) states that democracy and equality are among the aims of education, along with pupils’ right to codetermination and respect for the fellowship of humans, for cultural diversity, and for nature. Furthermore, pupils should learn to think critically and to act ethically and in accordance with environmental concerns.

The core curriculum (Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet 1997) in effect when the ICCS 2016 data were collected describes human beings through six so-called dimensions, examples being “moral outlook,” “cooperation,” and “ecological understanding.” The components of moral outlook are equality and tolerance of diversity and of diverging opinions within the framework of liberal democracy and the rule of law. Cooperation encompasses decision-making, organizing for the common good, and peaceful conflict resolution. Ecological understanding refers to sustainable global development and underlines the necessity of international effort. These dimensions of human activity and character are followed by 11 principles for education, bridging the preamble and the subjects of the national curriculum. Among these principles are pupils’ right to codetermination, their development of critical thinking, and a call to include the local community in schools’ activities.

The national syllabus for social studies (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2013) addresses most CCE issues in Norwegian primary and secondary education, although all subjects are intended to promote democracy and citizenship in accordance with the preamble of the Education Act (Biseth et al. 2021; Seland and Huang 2018). The national syllabus for social studies states that knowledge related to politics and society is necessary for active citizenship and democratic participation to take place. The competence aims for lower-secondary pupils thus include knowledge related to national and international political parties and institutions, principles and procedures of the legal system, and knowledge related to national and global economies.

### ***3.4.4 CCE in Sweden***

Sweden has an all-school approach to CCE, which means that all curricula from preschool to upper secondary school include an overall “democratic mission.” The curriculum for the 10 years<sup>1</sup> of compulsory school contains three types of civic tasks: the school must ensure that students leave school with certain value orientations, knowledge, and abilities (Arensmeier 2015).

Values, in particular, are mentioned in the introductory section of the curriculum, and the first sentence states that “the school system is based on democratic foundations.” A set of core values are then presented, a respect for human rights, fundamental democratic values, the intrinsic value of each person, and the environment. Further, a quite long list of different desirable values and attitudes come together in

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<sup>1</sup>The “preschool class,” preceding grade 1, is mandatory from autumn 2018.

the first chapter of the curriculum including a sense of justice, empathy, generosity, tolerance, and responsibility, the inviolability of human life, individual freedom, and integrity, the equal value of all people and equality between women and men, solidarity between people, understanding of other people, and an appreciation of values inherent in cultural diversity (Skolverket 2018).

Both the general curriculum and the syllabi for different subjects, particularly for social studies, contain knowledge and abilities relevant to civic education. Civics includes five content areas: individuals and communities, information and communication, rights and the judicial system, society's resources and their distribution, and decision-making and political ideas (Skolverket 2018). Abilities underlined throughout the curricula and syllabi concern critical thinking; forming, expressing, and assessing standpoints; managing, searching for, and assessing information; examining and analyzing social structures; capacity to use democratic methods, gradually exercise influence in school, and become involved and participate as active, responsible citizens (Skolverket 2018).

#### ***3.4.5 Summary: National Curricula for CCE in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden***

This short review of the national curricula of four Nordic countries illustrates the complexity of the CCE ideals described by Audigier (2000), especially in the multitude of values that are to be conveyed through education. The values included in the curricula may be viewed as templates for socialization through education (Biesta 2009). As for traces of macro-political debates on CCE (Weinberg and Flinders 2018; Westheimer 2015), we find a strong and consistent emphasis on knowledge and related abilities in all four states, spanning from traditional civics to how to use information from different sources. Knowledge and abilities are then coupled with democratic participation, but with no description of how this transformation from knowing to mobilization may take place. The curricula thus fulfil Biesta's (2009) assertion of qualification as one of the main functions of education and seems further directed at producing citizens that fall into Westheimer's (2015) participatory category.

### **3.5 Institutional Aims for CCE in Four Nordic Countries**

As head of pedagogical activities and of implementing national policies at their schools, principals' prioritization of CCE's aims links the national and the institutional level of this domain in the Nordic countries. The following analysis is based on Nordic school principals' responses to the ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 survey

question “What are the three most important aims for citizenship education at your school?” We conduct the analysis along the following comparative questions:

1. What are the aims of CCE across the Nordic countries, according to the understanding of lower secondary school principals?
2. How similar or different are the Nordic countries in this respect, and could the Nordic countries be described as a distinct group from a global perspective?
3. Have there been changes in school principals’ prioritization of CCE aims between 2009 and 2016?

### ***3.5.1 Data and Methods***

A two-step analysis was used to compare results from the principals’ ICCS surveys from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden ( $n = 618$  in ICCS 2009;  $n = 638$  in ICCS 2016). The focus was one question included in both study cycles, which asked the school principals to indicate the three most important aims for CCE at their schools from a list of 10 possibilities. To answer the first and second research questions, a descriptive analysis of the principals’ responses in 2009 and in 2016 was first conducted and compared with international averages, as presented in Table 3.1. In the second step of the analysis, changes in the response percentages of principals in 2016 compared to those in 2009 were examined, as presented in Table 3.2, to answer the third research question.

The ICCS study uses two-stage cluster samples of student surveys and teacher surveys, and schools were selected at the first stage using probability proportional to size, as measured by the number of students at a school. The data from questionnaires completed by the school principals carry the base weight, which is defined as the inverse of the school’s selection probability (i.e., school size) and an adjustment weight for non-responses, which together make up the final school weight (TOTWGTC) (Köhler et al. 2018). As the participation rates of school principals in all Nordic countries fulfilled the ICCS study standard in both cycles, national representativeness of the data can be assumed. A simple descriptive analysis was performed with percentages, and a chi-squared test was performed on the significance of the difference between 2009 and 2016 using school weight TOTWGTC.

### ***3.5.2 Analysis Results***

Table 3.1 presents the percentages of school principals’ responses to the question of the most important aims of civic and citizenship education in 2009 and those in 2016.

As shown in Table 3.1, on average, the three most chosen CCE aims of the principals of four Nordic countries differ; only one of the three most chosen aims is the same among the Nordic school principals and in comparison with the aims chosen

**Table 3.1** The three most important CCE aims chosen by principals in ICCS 2009 and 2016, percent (standard error)

	2009					2016				
	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	International	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	International
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking	<b>81 (3.6)</b>	<b>84 (2.8)</b>	<b>64 (6.7)</b>	<b>89 (3.6)</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>85 (3.2)</b>	<b>80 (3.4)</b>	<b>75 (5.2)</b>	<b>81 (8.6)</b>	<b>64</b>
Promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view	7 (2.3)	9 (3.8)	8 (2.8)	16 (3.6)	15	16 (3.8)	18 (6.8)	16 (5.1)	16 (3.9)	21
Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions	<b>54 (5.0)</b>	<b>47 (4.5)</b>	<b>54 (7.8)</b>	21 (3.7)	<b>42</b>	<b>55 (3.7)</b>	30 (4.9)	<b>51 (8.1)</b>	18 (3.5)	37
Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities	43 (4.6)	44 (4.0)	<b>35 (6.4)</b>	<b>79 (5.0)</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>55 (4.2)</b>	44 (6.0)	25 (3.7)	<b>78 (4.3)</b>	<b>61</b>
Promoting students' participation in the local community	13 (2.5)	10 (2.4)	22 (3.8)	1 (0.7)	18	13 (3.1)	10 (2.7)	35 (5.5)	3 (1.6)	24
Promoting students' participation in school life	4 (1.4)	10 (2.7)	22 (4.1)	13 (4.3)	18	9 (3.0)	21 (4.1)	27 (5.5)	10 (2.7)	25
Preparing students for future political engagement	23 (3.4)	4 (1.7)	9 (3.9)	3 (2.4)	12	18 (3.3)	2 (0.9)	2 (0.7)	4 (1.8)	10
Promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment	15 (3.7)	<b>49 (4.7)</b>	21 (5.9)	24 (4.7)	31	9 (2.4)	<b>47 (6.1)</b>	30 (5.8)	<b>41 (4.7)</b>	38

(continued)



Table 3.1 (continued)

	2009					2016				
	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	International	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	International
Supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism	15 (4.0)	6 (2.6)	31 (8.5)	<b>31 (6.0)</b>	8	2(0.7)	8 (2.1)	21 (6.6)	32 (5.4)	8
Developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution	<b>46 (4.5)</b>	36 (3.8)	34 (7.7)	23 (4.5)	33	41 (4.8)	<b>47 (6.0)</b>	<b>43 (5.7)</b>	25 (4.6)	<b>44</b>

*Notes:* Numbers in bold indicate the three most chosen CCE aims. All results are calculated using IDB Analyzer and applying the total school weight. International averages are retrieved from international reports of ICCS 2009 [Schulz et al. 2010] and ICCS 2016 [Schulz et al. 2018]

**Table 3.2** Changes of percentage points of principals' responses about the most important CCE aims from 2009 to 2016

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking	+4	-4	+11 <sup>a</sup>	-8
Promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view	+9 <sup>a</sup>	+9 <sup>a</sup>	+8 <sup>a</sup>	0
Promoting knowledge of social, political, and civic institutions	+1	-17 <sup>a</sup>	-3	-3
Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities	+12 <sup>a</sup>	0	-10 <sup>a</sup>	-1
Promoting students' participation in the local community	0	0	+13 <sup>a</sup>	+2 <sup>a</sup>
Promoting students' participation in school life	+5 <sup>a</sup>	+11 <sup>a</sup>	+5 <sup>a</sup>	-3 <sup>a</sup>
Preparing students for future political engagement	-5 <sup>a</sup>	-2	-7 <sup>a</sup>	+1
Promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment	-6 <sup>a</sup>	-2	+9 <sup>a</sup>	+17 <sup>a</sup>
Supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism	-13 <sup>a</sup>	+2	-10 <sup>a</sup>	+1
Developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution	-5 <sup>a</sup>	11 <sup>a</sup>	+9 <sup>a</sup>	+2

*Notes* + indicates an increase in percentage, and — indicates a decrease in percentage from 2009 to 2016; <sup>a</sup>indicates a significant change of percentage at a 0.05 level

by international principals in both 2009 and 2016. However, if we compare the five most chosen aims, the Nordic school principals have more in common. In 2009, three of the five most important CCE aims were similar among the Nordic school principals. These three aims are “promoting students’ critical and independent thinking,” “developing students’ skills and competencies in conflict resolution,” and “promoting knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities.” In 2016, only two of the five most important CCE aims were similar across the four countries: “promoting students’ critical and independent thinking” and “developing students’ skills and competencies in conflict resolution.” Although rather different in percentages, Nordic school principals shared two least chosen CCE aims: “promoting the capacity to defend one’s own point of view” and “promoting students’ participation in school life.”

There are some significant differences among Nordic school principals. In both 2009 and 2016, “promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions” was one of the five important CCE aims in Denmark, Finland, and Norway but not in Sweden. While “promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment” was one of the five important CCE aims only in Finland and Sweden in 2009, it became one of five in Norway in 2016 but never in Denmark. “Supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism” was one of the five important CCE aims in Norway and Sweden in 2009 and only in Sweden in 2016. “Preparing students for future political engagement” was the fifth most important CCE aim only among Danish principals in both 2009 and 2016, while “promoting students’ participation

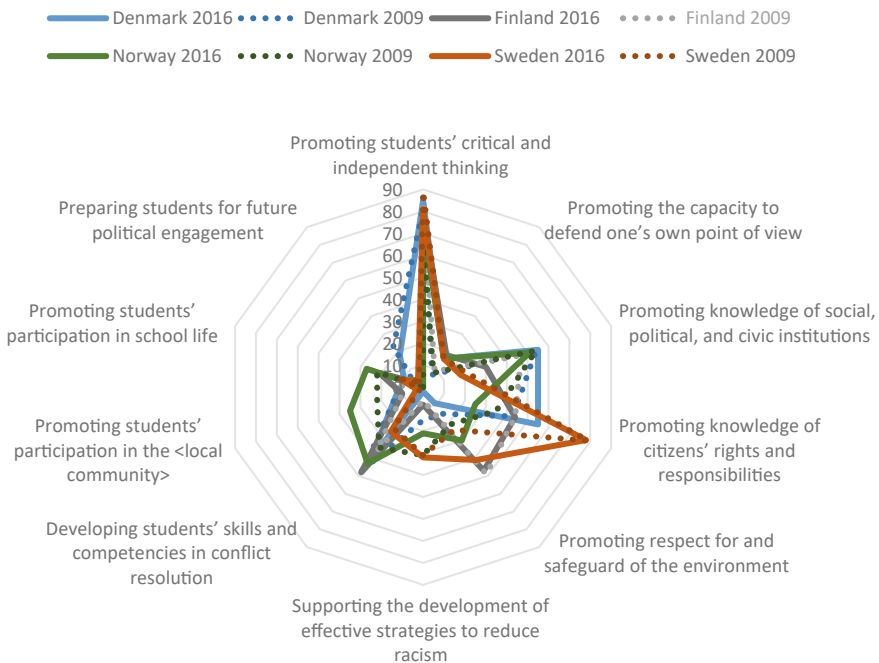
in the local community” became one of the five important CCE aims in 2016 only in Norway.

Nevertheless, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden’s five most important aims remained more or less the same between 2009 and 2016. In Norway, only four of the five important CCE aims remained the same from 2009 to 2016: in 2016, the participation-related aim of “promoting students’ participation in the local community” became one of the five most important aims, replacing “promoting knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities,” which was one of the five most important aims in 2009.

Figure 3.1 is a visual presentation of the results shown in Table 3.1, from which we can see a pattern in Nordic school principals’ responses about the most important aims of CCE, showing only small changes between 2009 and 2016. Except for some significant differences between the countries, the Nordic principals chose similar aims as the most and least important.

Table 3.2 presents the percentage changes between 2009 and 2016 of the CCE aims chosen by school principals.

In general, although there were some significant changes between 2009 and 2016, as shown in Table 3.2, there was not a common direction of change among the Nordic school principals. For instance, the largest changes for Danish principals include a



**Fig. 3.1** Visual presentation of the most important CCE aims chosen by Nordic principals from ICCS 2009 and 2016 (Notes Chart created by Excel 2016 software function. Diagrams using percentages presented in Table 3.1)

12 percentage point increase in the aim of “promoting knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities” and a 13 percentage point decrease in the value-related aim of “supporting the development of effective strategies to reduce racism.” The largest changes for Finnish school principals include a 17 percentage point decrease in the aim of “promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions” and a 12 percentage point increase in the skill-related aim of “developing students’ skills and competencies in conflict resolution.” In Norway, changes are significant for all CCE aims except that of “promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions” while the biggest change is a 13 percentage point increase in the participation related aim of “promoting students’ participation in the local community.” School principals in Sweden had the fewest significant changes with only three, including a 17 percentage point increase in the aim of “promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment.”

### 3.6 Discussion

The analysis shows that, at the institutional level, only two of the Nordic principals’ most-prioritized CCE aims were consistent between 2009 and 2016, namely “promoting students’ critical and independent thinking” and “developing students’ skills and competencies in conflict resolution.” In 2009, the Nordic principals ranked “promoting knowledge of citizens’ rights and responsibilities” as CCE aim number three, but in 2016 they diverge on this aim. For all the other ICCS survey items, there is less consistency among Nordic principals regarding the most important CCE aims.

The international sample of principals from outside the Nordic countries also values students’ critical and independent thinking and promoting students’ rights and responsibilities. In this way, the Nordic and the international samples of principals are fully aligned in their first priority for CCE aims. However, if the results are examined more closely, it becomes clear that the support for promoting students’ critical and independent thinking is stronger in the Nordic sample than in the international sample of principals. Still, the principals’ relative support for critical thinking fluctuated between 2009 and 2016 within the Nordic sample. While this aim was given increased importance in Norway and Denmark, relative interest decreased among principals in Sweden and Finland.

In our previous analysis of CCE aims at the national level in four Nordic countries, we found a consistent emphasis on knowledge/qualification. In the curricula, knowledge, skills, and abilities are meant to enable students to participate in society at large, including in democratic processes. This connection between knowledge and participation resembles Westheimer’s (2015) participatory citizen ideal. However, the Nordic principals ranked all three survey items concerning democratic or political participation last. The analysis thus reveals a discrepancy between how aims concerning knowledge or qualification are linked to participation at the national curricula level and how these aims are assessed at the institutional–pedagogical level.

Viewed against the backdrop of the national aims of CCE in the curricula, Nordic principals' diminished interest in democratic participation is puzzling, but this finding is also consistent with the priorities of principals in the international sample, both in 2009 and 2016. This trend is thought-provoking, as there has been a general down-turn in democratic participation in countries with long-standing democratic traditions, especially among younger people (Schulz et al. 2016). It is possible, in line with Ekman and Amnå (2012), to suggest that principals believe education is a tool for stand-by citizenship, meaning that schools should prepare students for future political agency. The relatively strong support for different CCE aims highlighting knowledge and abilities in the ICCS survey could also indicate what Galston (2004) has described as the belief that participation is promoted by knowledge. This relationship between cognitive skills and active citizenship is also an underlying principle of the framework for ICCS (Schulz et al. 2016).

Then how should we understand Nordic principals' support for critical thinking and, especially, their stronger support for this item than in the international sample? Here, we may once more turn to macro-political debates on CCE (Weinberg and Flinders 2018). According to Ryen (2020), the concept of critical thinking as a skill or competence is currently the object of major interest in education worldwide, with the support of OECD, which refers to this as a "21<sup>st</sup> century skill." Technical-economic rationality and measurement introduced by international educational agencies have influenced education in the Nordic countries since the 1990s (Telhaug Mediaas 2006; Imsen et al. 2017). Nordic principals' preference for promoting students' critical thinking abilities may therefore be interpreted as a result of international agencies' influence, one of several aspects of the neoliberal turn in education worldwide.

Critical thinking may, on the other hand, be viewed as a prerequisite for action (Ryen 2020). We recognize this especially in Westheimer's (2015) ideal of the social justice-oriented citizen, in which critical assessment of the causes of societal problems and arguments about fairness should guide democratic participation. It is possible to relate the Nordic principals' support for critical thinking to this citizenship ideal, but we do not actually know *why* principals ranked this survey item number one. One interpretation may be that their support for critical thinking align with the political left's traditional interest in broader structural arguments and social critiques (Weinberg and Flinders 2018).

This possibility brings us back to the social democratic welfare state regime as the framework for the Nordic education model. Wiborg's (2013) main argument about this neoliberal turn is that it was not due to the factual shift to right-wing or conservative government that took place in these countries during the 1980s and 1990s, but to significant shifts within the social democratic parties' political response to economic challenges. The Nordic principals' strong support for critical thinking may then be interpreted not as traditional social democratic ideology but as a consequence of ideological shifts within the social democratic regime itself. As a result, at the institutional level, civic and cognitive skills such as critical thinking seem to have surpassed political participation in the notion of what good citizenship means. This is a break from the ideas of citizenship underpinning the traditional Nordic model

of education, as well as a divergence from the national CCE aims in the Nordic countries.

Notably, the literature presents a third option for the meaning of critical thinking in the context of the Nordic education model. This option follows from the *Bildung* ideal, described at the beginning of this chapter. *Bildung* is frequently contrasted with neoliberal shifts in education policies, but there have also been attempts to align the two positions through the latter's emphasis on skills and competencies. Ryen (2020) goes further in this direction, trying to unite recent theory on critical thinking and the German/Scandinavian *Bildung*-centred Didaktik, which uses processes of lesson planning to facilitate students' meaningful encounters with pedagogical content. Ryen highlights the "classroom as a community of enquiry," which was a major educational ideal of the original critical thinking movement in the second half of the 20th century. For the critical-constructive Didaktik movement, the crucial point is the teacher's ability to lead students toward *Bildung*, meaning self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity through the experience of meaning. If students are given examples they can connect to, new insight might help create personal and political agency.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined ideas of citizenship in the Nordic education model through the aims of CCE across four Nordic countries at the national political level and the institutional level. We find that, as curricula at the national level combine knowledge and ability with an ideal of participation, principals at the institutional level prioritize "critical thinking" above political and democratic participation, as an aim for CCE.

While prioritizations of CCE aims at the national level are aligned with values traditionally associated with the social democratic welfare state, the principals' low ranking of democratic participation indicates a break from this regime at the institutional level. However, shifts toward neoliberal educational policies have to a certain extent also been embraced, in some respects even lead, by the social democratic parties. The Nordic principals' strong support for knowledge and competencies may in that respect be on par with recent developments within the social democratic welfare state.

Within this web of potential continuations or breaks in the notion of citizenship that are embedded in the Nordic model of education, we also present the possibility that Nordic principals see a connection between critical thinking and *Bildung*, as this concept has had a strong influence on the educational ideals of Nordic countries for generations. Interpreted as *Bildung*, critical thinking may represent both a reminiscence and a continuation of the original citizenship ideals of the Nordic education model, uniting individualization and participation in a society where education is considered the main social equalizer and the mind is considered to be free.

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# Chapter 4

## Developing Digital Citizenship and Civic Engagement Through Social Media Use in Nordic Schools



Ingrid R. Christensen, Heidi Biseth, and Lihong Huang

**Abstract** In this chapter, we explore the factors involved in developing digital citizenship through social media use in schools for 14-year-old students in four Nordic countries. The call for digital citizenship and digital citizenship education stems from the new and multiple ways in which young people are engaging in and communicating about civic issues through the use of social media. Schools could be considered to play a core part in developing students' digital civic engagement, yet the field of digital citizenship education and the factors that enable engagement in schools are underexplored. To address this issue, in this chapter we have completed a mixed methods study analyzing the national curricula in the four Nordic countries and complementing this with an analysis of data from school leaders, teachers, and 14-year-old students participating in the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016. The findings of the analysis show that digital citizenship and citizenship in general are prevailing ideals in the national curricula and that schools are well-equipped technologically. Yet, both teachers and students are ambivalent in their use of social media for developing digital citizenship. Thus, we argue that digital citizenship in education is a manifold and emerging phenomenon and that students might be important guides for its further development in schools.

**Keywords** Digital citizenship education · Civic engagement · Social media · International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016 · Nordic countries

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## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the factors involved in developing digital citizenship education and promoting civic engagement through the use of social media<sup>1</sup> among 14-year-old students in four Nordic countries. The call for digital citizenship education stems from a fast-developing society with new and multiple ways of participating in global knowledge circuits and engaging with the world. The internet and social media have paved the way for a new era of global communication (Loader and Mercea 2011; Sevincer et al. 2018), moving beyond the context of the nation-state (Jorba and Bimber 2012). Consequently, new forms of global citizenship and political participation are emerging (Frau-Meigs et al. 2017; Carretero et al. 2017; Parker and Fraillon 2016). Digital resources have opened up new possibilities for civic engagement. Social media represent several opportunities for learning and enhancing employability as well as a means of managing one's own social life and developing civic engagement. These digital developments increase the space for interaction and change our ways of connecting and engaging with each other in what could be seen as a new public space and a modern arena of political and civic engagement. Digital tools and social media (e.g., online social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, blogs, forums, and videos) have paved the way for individuals to participate in and engage with local and global issues through innovative means. New and varied digital tools and social media continually trigger further evolution in the way people—especially young people—communicate with friends, access entertainment, and engage with communities of interest (European Commission 2009, p. 3). However, the constant flow of information and targeted content may also challenge individuality and critical discernment. Digital tools represent shifting and multiple realities, blurring the means and ends of the polis (Frau-Meigs et al. 2017). Thus, the digital represents both possibilities and challenges, making digital civic engagement a complex enterprise.

School authorities have high aspirations for the school and its role in developing digital citizenship on local, national, and international levels. Schools can be considered to be a key factor in developing digital citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Along with the aims of developing digital competencies, educating informed and responsible citizens is a major challenge (e.g., Parker and Fraillon 2016). Teachers can be expected to be role models for employing digital skills in their classrooms, supporting students in developing their digital competencies and manoeuvring in the digital arena (Biseth et al. 2018). Digital citizenship is counted as a core competency for students in the 21st century (e.g., Voogt and Roblin 2012)—it targets the availability of technology

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<sup>1</sup>In our discussion of social media, we used the term “social media” to describe a collection of online social networking sites and tools (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) and shared content sites (e.g., blogs, discussion forums) that people use to socially interact and distribute content with other groups of people (Koršňáková and Carstens 2017).

<sup>2</sup>Conference on the Future of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe (Strasbourg, France, June 20–22, 2017, [www.coe.int/en/web/edc/report-on-the-state-of-citizenship-and-human-rights-in-europe](http://www.coe.int/en/web/edc/report-on-the-state-of-citizenship-and-human-rights-in-europe)).

and digital tools as well as the competencies to handle, participate in, and engage in society. Yet, the area of digital citizenship education is not settled as a field, and the development of definitions of digital citizenship is considered a key need (e.g., Council of Europe 2020). Furthermore, the development process of digital citizenship from initiating digital citizenship in the national curricula to the specific skills the students learn may not be a streamlined one. Different levels and actors in the school organization might accentuate various factors as important for developing digital citizenship.

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016 of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is the first study to establish measures for investigating the conditions for digital citizenship education. Unlike ICCS 2009, ICCS 2016 includes items that connect digital tools, social media, and democratic engagement in regard to both principals, teachers, and students. The international report from ICCS 2016 lists some factors for citizenship (Schulz et al. 2018a), such as social media. The access to social media is high across all the countries in the ICCS 2016 study. The students' use of social media for civic engagement is increasing, but it varies considerably across the participating countries (Schulz et al. 2018a, p. xvii).

The research on digital skills in the education field is vast, but limited research has been conducted on how to develop citizenship through digital tools and even less through social media (Purvis et al. 2016; Biseth et al. 2018). Schools seem to have fallen behind in promoting digital citizenship compared to out-of-school activities (Gleason and von Gillern 2018). Kahne et al. (2016) argue that teaching about the dangers of digital participation discourages the students' online political participation and suggest principles of supporting the students for civic engagement in teaching. However, few studies investigate the many factors needed for the development of digital citizenship. The development depends not only on the teacher but also on different organization levels in schools.

Thus, this study aims at mapping the current contributory factors for the development of digital citizenship through social media use in schools. The Nordic schools are of particular interest, being ranked as top-level democracies and as technologically advanced and having well-funded public education systems (Economist Intelligence Unit [EIU] 2018; Freedom House 2019). We, therefore, pose the following research question:

*What factors indicate the development of digital citizenship through social media use in schools in the four Nordic countries?*

In this study, we map and explore the contributory factors for the development of digital citizenship through social media use on different organization levels in schools. We have conducted a mixed-methods study of qualitative and quantitative data from the four Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. First, we examine how the national compulsory school curricula describe factors for the development of digital citizenship through social media use in schools. Second, we analyze factors for developing digital citizenship as described by Nordic principals, teachers, and students participating in ICCS 2016.

## 4.2 Conceptual Framing of Digital Citizenship in Education

The overall field of this study is digital citizenship education, a relatively new research area. Digital citizenship education is a constructed phenomenon that combines digital tools, social media, and citizenship education. At the heart of digital citizenship education lie ideas of democratic education. Democracy and citizenship education are also socially constructed phenomena, comprising several values, discourses, and practices of civic society and dependent on human interaction and participation. Democracy in the education context is limited not only to academic knowledge about political systems and students' ability to use their political competence to influence school life and in society; democracy also represents the ideas, values, civic attitudes, and skills needed to engage with each other and to live together despite different interests (Zyngier 2012; Barber 1984, pp. 117–120). Education can be understood as a core enterprise for the promotion of civic values and for developing individual and collective democratic intelligence (Goodlad 1994). The ways in which citizenship is understood and practised in educational politics by principals, teachers, and students are decisive for what kind of citizens the society can foster (Westheimer and Kahne 2004).

Civic engagement in political and social issues has in recent decades increasingly been dependent on social media, creating the field of digital citizenship (Kahne et al. 2014). Digital citizenship can be defined as “the confident, critical and creative use of ICT [information and communications technology] to achieve goals related to work, employability, learning, leisure, inclusion and/or participation in society” (Ferrari 2013). Another definition is “confident and positive engagement with digital technology” used to actively participate in society, communicate with others, and create and consume digital content (Frau-Meigs et al. 2017, p. 14). The field of digital citizenship education embraces several pedagogical and political ideals and has yielded several teaching models (e.g., Kahne et al. 2016).

Nevertheless, a basic problem regarding digital citizenship in education is that it lacks conceptual groundings on a practice level (Kahne et al. 2016). We assume part of this problem is that digital citizenship appears to be due to the different priorities and values in school. Goodlad (1994) pinpoints the challenges of promoting and developing moral values in school, which he sees as a non-linear process. The intended moral values on a policy level in schools might not be the same as how the teachers teach or what the students learn in school. Goodlad (1994) describes different levels of the curriculum, for instance, (1) *formal curriculum*, the formal and legal documents concerning the education system and what should be taught at schools; (2) *perceived curriculum*, which can be understood as the interpretation of users, such as principals and teachers<sup>3</sup>; and (3) *curriculum experience*, which reflects the students own experience of the content in school. Moral values are not

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<sup>3</sup>Goodlad (1994) refers to two more curriculum levels—“ideal curriculum,” the ideological basis upon which a country chooses its formal curriculum, and also the teachers’ “practiced curriculum.” This model has been widely used and elaborated upon (e.g., Westbury 2008; Akker 2004), however, less with the aim of describing the complexity of the promotion of moral values in education.

only differently understood on different curricula levels but they appear as separate practices, accentuating different concepts and factors in regard to how they can be developed (Westbury 2008). In this study, the exploration of different curricula levels might facilitate the creation of a wider “map” showing various factors for the development of digital citizenship through social media use.

### 4.3 Data and Methods

To explore and map the factors indicating the development of digital citizenship through social media in schools, we have selected material from the Nordic countries. We have selected the Nordic countries as they have many similar historical, political, societal, and cultural characteristics and tend to have comparable and general high scores on democratic indicators (e.g., EIU 2018; Ringen 2007, 2011; Freedom House 2019).<sup>4</sup> They also have well-equipped public school systems, technically and materially, representing an “ideal” scenario for the development of digital citizenship through social media.<sup>5</sup> Rather than seeking to prove a Nordic profile and contrasting it with the results from other countries, we treat the Nordic results as a single-case study and investigate how educational policies and practices may vary and interact on different curricula levels between countries with relatively similar societal features over the course of a decade (e.g., Arnove 2013; Bray and Thomas 1995).

The data analyses present both qualitative and quantitative information representing the different curricula *levels* through mixed methods (Borrego et al. 2009) and a sequential exploratory design (Cabrera 2011). The curricula levels of Goodlad (1994) have served as a guiding framework for structuring the analysis. We used qualitative data from the national curricula of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden and quantitative data from these Nordic countries obtained through the ICCS 2016 study. The qualitative national curricula represent the *intended curriculum* on the emphasized factors for developing digital citizenship in schools. The quantitative ICCS data provide information about the *perceived curriculum*, including principals’ and teachers’ information and views on the technical and didactical factors for developing digital citizenship. The quantitative ICCS data also illuminate factors of the *experienced curriculum* from the student responses on their use of social media and civic engagement.

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<sup>4</sup>This does not mean that the Nordic findings do not have similarities with findings from other countries in the ICCS survey. However, we delimit the Nordic context as one case and discuss possible links between discourse and pedagogical and practical facilities across these countries.

<sup>5</sup>The ICCS 2016 international report concludes that, for instance, high socioeconomic status is associated with increased student civic knowledge (Schulz et al. 2018a, p. 22).

### 4.3.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis is performed on the national primary school curricula and represents the *intended curriculum* level (Goodlad 1994). The contents from these documents suggest factors that support the development of digital citizenship through social media. The materials of analysis consist of the Danish *fælles mål* (common goals) for the subjects of Danish and social studies (Undervisningsministeriet 2009a, b); the Norwegian *generell del* (core curriculum) in the national curricula *Kunnskapsløftet K06* (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006); the core curriculum in Finland, *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Perusopetuksen opetus-suunnitelman perusteluonnos)* (Finnish National Board of Education 2016); and the Swedish core curriculum (*Läroplan L11*), particularly the section prescribing the mandate and overall aim given to the sector (Skolverket 2011).<sup>6</sup> Knowledgeable/native educators have read the Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian curricula in these languages. The Danish *fælles mål* is used in planning, implementing, and evaluating education, and are thus similar to the core curricula in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. These common goals are nationally prescribed aims that students should reach in each subject by the end of their compulsory education. The education acts and core curricula constitute the legal outline for Nordic schools. The formal curricula chosen for analysis are the core curricula of the four countries that were valid for the period in which ICCS 2016 was conducted. These curricula were developed at different points in time, from 2006 in Norway to 2014 in Finland. In addition, we assume some differences between the countries based on, for example, each country's tradition, conventional practice, digital equipment available, as well as the effectuated date of the core curricula that may have had a possible impact on the development of the concept and its consequences for perceived and experienced digital citizenship. In treating the Nordic countries as four case studies that we can compare, we aim at mapping conceptual factors indicating the development of digital citizenship through social media in schools.

To analyze the qualitative material, descriptive thematic analysis is performed using NVivo (Boyatzis 1998; Bryman 2012). The indicators for the promotion of digital citizenship were generated from reading the curricula and creating themes from the material. After a general reading of the document, we first used the document finder and searched for “digital citizenship” and “social media.” Second, we extended the terms of “citizenship” into “citizen,” “civic,” and “democracy/democratic” and “digital” into “ICT” and “media.” Third, we conducted another search using associated terms such as “participation,” “engagement,” “technology,” and “values.” In all these three stages we analyzed how the different curricula emphasize different keywords and how they were combined.

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<sup>6</sup>We selected the national curricula in the Nordic countries. Some of the core curricula specify indicators of digital citizenship through social media use in the general parts, some in the subject descriptions.



### **4.3.2 Quantitative Data Analysis**

The quantitative analysis using the ICCS 2016 data enables access to principal, teacher, and student emphasis on factors that enable digital citizenship. ICCS 2016 applied a sampling strategy to ensure representativeness of the data (Köhler et al. 2018) from all participant countries, while the pooled data used in the analysis of this chapter from the four Nordic countries contain responses from students ( $n = 18,962$ ), teachers ( $n = 6,138$ ), and school principals ( $n = 630$ ) from 669 lower secondary schools (for more details on the ICCS data, see Chapter 1 of this book and also Köhler et al. [2018] and Schulz et al. [2018a]). To perform the quantitative analysis, we used the IEA IDB Analyzer to perform descriptive statistics such as percentages and means of responses along with correlation analyses. Country sampling weights were applied respectively in analyzing responses from school principals, teachers, and students, and standard errors are computed using the jackknife repeated replication (JRR) method (Köhler et al. 2018; Schulz et al. 2018b).

### **4.3.3 Mixed Methods**

We have mapped both data sources on different curricula levels to display discourses and priorities in the national core curricula, available equipment, teachers' teaching activities, and students' experienced content. We did not seek to predict or define any conceptual correlations between the curricula levels as each level gives different information and represents different practices (Cohen et al. 2007; Yang 2007). Rather than attempting to determine causal relations between all the curricula levels, we aim at bringing forward the complexity and nuances in the relationships between them in the teaching of digital citizenship and civic engagement through social media in schools. Separating the curricula into different levels shows that the curriculum is more than teaching content and methods and measuring success as results—it also consists of different understandings that might entail different social practices and draw on various discourses and logics. We conclude by discussing the relevance of different factors for making analytical generalizations about digital citizenship education (Flyvbjerg 2011; Roald and Kjøppe 2009).

## **4.4 Factors in Teaching Digital Citizenship Through Social Media in the Formal School Curricula**

The national curricula provide information on factors that enable digital citizenship and civic engagement via social media in schools through the formal curricula that were operational at the time ICCS 2016 was conducted. The national curricula in the four countries indicate the political intent behind developing digital citizenship

education through the use of social media. All four countries have education acts that describe democratic values as fundamental underpinnings of their education systems. These education acts describe school as an important space for developing democratic traits, values, and skills (Undervisningsministeriet 2007; Basic Education Act 1998; Ministry of Education and Research 1998; Utbildningsdepartementet 2010). However, the curricula may vary between the Nordic countries and may also show development over the years.

The **Norwegian** core curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006) places relatively low importance on citizenship, and there is no description of digital tools and no occurrence of any terms connected to social media. Citizenship is not mentioned explicitly, and democracy is described in general terms, for example, a major task for education is to promote democracy, national identity, and international consciousness (p. 2). Common knowledge, traditions, and values secure a democratic society as well as the democratic rule of law and equal political participation (pp. 3, 15), preventing undemocratic manipulation and to prevent social inequalities (p. 14). One aim of education is to expand student participation (p. 2). Neither digital tools nor ICT are explicitly mentioned. Yet, the curriculum describes technology not in specific terms but rather in philosophical terms, being a tool for problem-solving and for improved solutions (pp. 6, 9, 20). Technology is also described as a promoter of values; for instance, it is often used as an expression of empathy, facilitating the lives of vulnerable humans (p. 9), and represents historical mediating artefacts for a division of labour and power balance (p. 9). Technology seems to contain an ambiguity by also including negative connotations—as something being used in destructive weapons and the destruction of the environment (pp. 2, 9, 20). Media and mass media are mentioned in general as a flow of news (p. 15) and that natural relations are exchanged through media (p. 18), indicating a divide between the digital and the so-called “real” world. The students are supposed to have training in getting in touch with authorities and media (p. 18). Thus, technology and references to the internet can indicate a divide between the digital and the analogue, treating digital media from a distance, something that one should protect oneself against and use with caution.

In **Denmark**, the core curriculum is described in subject-specific documents. The curriculum for the subject of Danish expresses themes that may indicate citizenship and the use of digital tools in the *fælles mål* (common goals). ICT as a skill is particularly visible in the subject of Danish, where students are expected to be “able to make presentations using digital tools” (Undervisningsministeriet 2009a, §2-2, Point 15), acquire knowledge of printed and electronic media (§2-3, Point 8), and make use of ICT and multimedia (§2-3, Point 9). In a democratic society such as Denmark, the citizen must have access to and experience with using the media, for instance, for reading letters, paper articles, blogs and letter writing to public authorities (p. 57). The digital, however, is somehow described as a particular genre (digital texts, which are named in addition to fiction and academic literature) (pp. 6, 8, 10). Digital texts are also cited as something other than printed texts (pp. 14, 19, 20, 22). The main digital competence is represented by information searches (pp. 6, 24, 27, 28) although the students are also supposed to use the digital media and

critically relate to them in analysis, communication, and in production (pp. 28, 30). However, the means of communication and production are not specified.

Issues of democracy permeate the Danish social studies (*samfundsfag*) curriculum. Concepts such as “digital” or “social media” do not appear; instead, it describes “information technology” (IT) and “media.” Students are supposed to give examples of how IT affects political participation and how power is exercised locally, nationally, and globally (Undervisningsministeriet 2009b, pp. 7, 9). However, the curriculum presents the following three different perspectives on the use of information and communication technology ICT<sup>7</sup>: a collection of information, communication, and collaboration (p. 48). To a large degree, ICT and media are connected to using the internet and to collecting and critically evaluating information (pp. 38, 48). The internet is described as central, and its major advantage is accessing information (p. 48). The curriculum mentions weblogs and blogs as possible channels for communicating with other students nationally or abroad (p. 49): “The contact with other students and the exchange of information, attitudes, and products can, for instance, happen in connection with the work contained in the everyday lives of young people” (p. 49, our translation).

The **Swedish** national curriculum begins with the statement that the Swedish school rests on the foundation of democracy (Skolverket 2011, p. 1). It emphasizes the students’ capabilities to act in a complex reality, including increased digitalization and the flow of information and rapid changes (p. 3). It states that schools should contribute to the students’ understanding of how digitalization affects individuals and the development of the society (p. 3). Digital competence is defined as the use of digital techniques and understanding the possibilities and risks of the digital information and having a critical and responsible approach to digital techniques (p. 3). The promotion of moral values is described in terms of how students are expected to take and express ethical stands based on human rights, foundational democratic values, and personal experiences. It does not mention digital tools or competencies in its description of the students’ learning nor students’ possibilities to influence society. One of the principal’s responsibilities is to provide updated learning tools, such as a school library and digital tools (p. 12).

In the **Finnish** core curriculum, the information and communication technology (ICT) competences are one of seven transversal competences; they are described as an important civic skill. The Finnish curriculum underscores technology as a moral enterprise and claims that technology is based on human values (Finnish National Board of Education 2016, p. 39). Technology is also considered a matter of moral responsibility and the curriculum encourages the school to “steer technology into a direction that safeguards the future of humans and the environment” (p. 39). The school should teach students to make “sensible technological choices” and to be guided in how to use technology responsibly and ethically (p. 57) as well as to practice source criticism and critical insight in terms of how information is produced (p. 945). ICT is described in the Finnish core curriculum both as “an object and a

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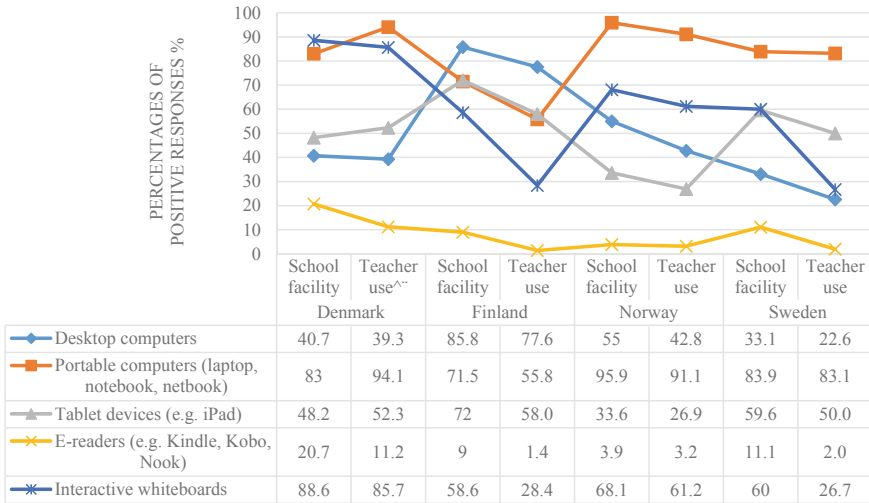
<sup>7</sup>The curricula documents use different terms for digital communication; for instance “IT” (information technology) and “ICT” (information and communication technology).

tool of learning” (p. 59) as well as an opportunity for individual creativity: “ICT provides tools for making one’s thoughts and ideas visible in many different ways” (p. 60). ICT is a means of “practical skills and personal production” and “information management and inquiry-based and creative work” as well as of collaborative working skills (p. 27) and interaction and networking (pp. 944–945). The teaching and learning include using social media services to experience the importance of cooperation and interaction for learning, exploratory work, and creativity (p. 946). In the Finnish core curriculum, the use of ICT is not only a skill but a competence to be used for meaningful communication and media to practice generic skills, and also to practice civic skills (p. 59) The several ways of using social media for interaction, networking, taking responsibility for communication, and for involvement are described for students in grades 7–9 (p. 945). This shows that digital media is not only a matter of communication as such but that it bears on elements of responsibility for roles and communication as well as involvement.

Through their formal curricula, all four countries’ education systems are given a relatively strong political role in promoting societal values. The national core curricula active at the time of the ICCS 2016 study, however, indicate varied and relatively weak positions on digital citizenship education and not least the role of social media in it. Citizenship seems an important feature of all the school curricula, however with highly variable approaches—from a philosophical approach to technology (Norway, Sweden), to technical digital tools (Denmark), to value-driven engagement in social media (Finland).

#### **4.5 Teaching Digital Citizenship Education Through Access to Digital Equipment in Schools**

In this section, we present and discuss aspects of the perceived curriculum (Goodlad 1994) for digital citizenship education and report the access to digital equipment among principals, teachers, and students. Figure 4.1 is a visual presentation of the percentages of school principals’ responses to the question as to whether their schools are equipped with IT facilities for teaching and teachers’ responses in regard to whether they have ever used those IT facilities in teaching during the current school year. According to the principals’ reporting, the Nordic countries have a high level of access to a variety of digital tools. The schools in Norway have the highest access to portable computers (95.9%), with Sweden and Denmark next highest (83.9 and 83%, respectively). Finland has a relatively high use of desktop computers (85.8%). Almost all Danish classrooms have interactive whiteboards, whereas the lowest access to interactive whiteboards is in Finland (only 60% have one). Meanwhile, teachers’ use of these devices in teaching appears to correspond to the availability of these devices in schools. Figure 4.1 shows that, in general, portable computers and interactive whiteboards are most in use by teachers in Denmark and Norway, while Swedish teachers use mostly portable computers and tablet devices in teaching. In Finland,

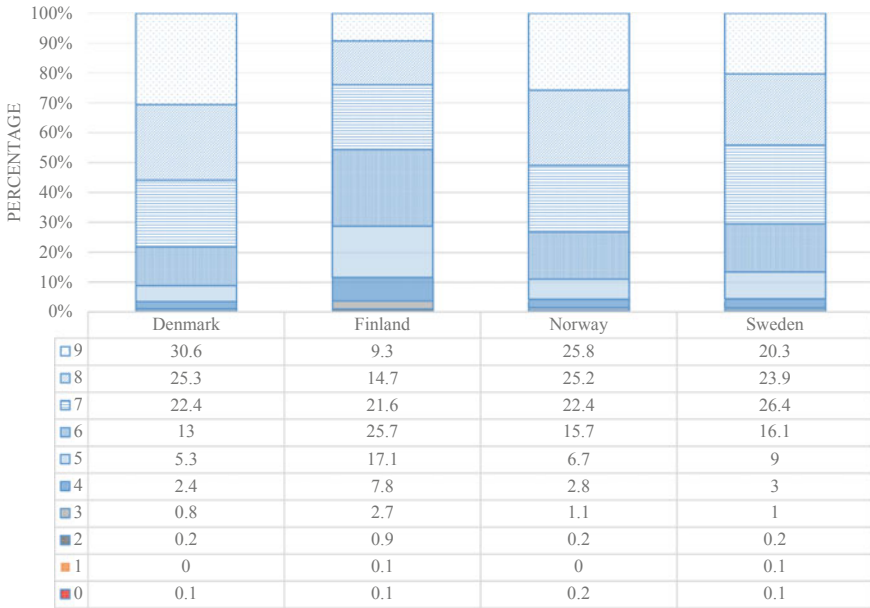


**Fig. 4.1** Principals’ responses in regard to IT facilities available for teaching at their schools and teachers’ responses as to whether they have used these devices in their teaching during the current school year (*Notes* All calculations are facilitated by the IDB Analyzer by applying total school weights to school principals’ responses and applying total teacher weight, respectively [see Appendix Table 4.3]. No significant test is performed as we consider it not necessary. ^ Participation rates for the teacher survey were below the ICCS 2016 international standard in Denmark)

the most in-use devices are desktop computers and portable computers together with tablet devices. However, it appears that e-readers are the least available and least in-use devices in all Nordic schools.

Principals, teachers, and students in each country report a variation of online devices and levels of access to digital devices. The students in all the Nordic countries report nearly full access to the internet (99%), while nearly all students have online opportunities via phones, tablets, and computers (see Fig. 4.2). Figure 4.2 shows that the majority of student homes in all four countries have more than six digital devices in regular use. Although less than 1% of student homes have none or only one or two devices, this still can be a concern as 1% represents several thousand in each country. However, the results presented in Figs. 4.1 and 4.2 show that students have almost full access to online information devices both at school and at home for collaboration, participation, and engagement among all Nordic countries.

In the second section, we analyze the next factor to investigate how teachers make use of digital opportunities for teaching and learning activities. Figure 4.3 presents teachers’ positive responses to the question asking if they have received training either from pre-service or in-service or both trainings on topics and skills related to responsible internet use (Q19) and the question asking how much teachers feel well-prepared or very well-prepared to teach the subject of responsible internet use (Q18) (see Appendix Table 4.4 for descriptions). The majority of the teachers in the Nordic schools feel well-prepared to teach the subject of responsible internet use although

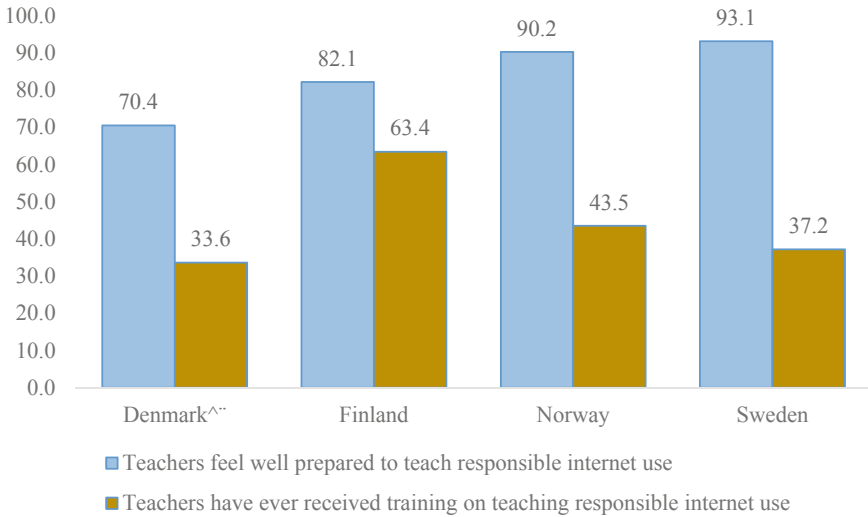


**Fig. 4.2** Percentages of student homes with numbers of IT devices in regular use (*Notes* Number of IT devices is derived from the sum of students’ responses to the question “How many of the following devices are used regularly in your home?” (Q12) on three types of devices, i.e., desktop or portable computers, tablet devices or e-readers, and mobile phones, with the response options “None = 0, 1 = 1, 2 = 2, and 3 or more = 3” (see [Appendix Table 4.3]). Calculations presented here are facilitated by IDB Analyzer applying total student weight [see Appendix Table 4.3 rows at the bottom])

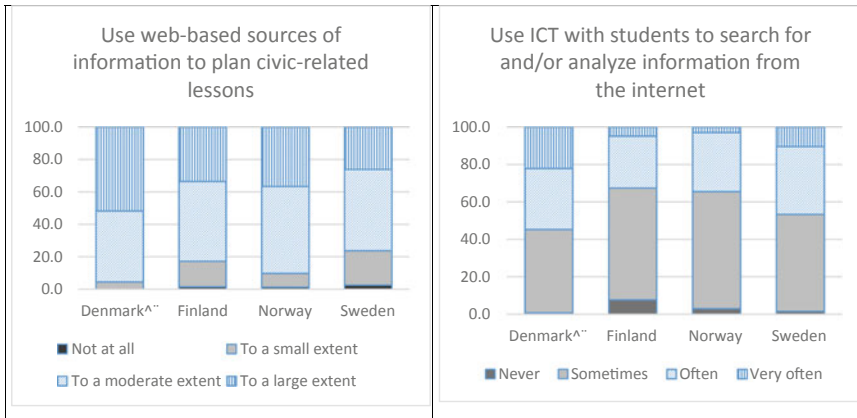
only one-third of the teachers in Denmark and Sweden and less than half of those in Norway have received training on this subject. Among all the Nordic teachers, it appears that a higher proportion of teachers in Finland have received relevant training than in the other three countries, while teachers in Sweden and Norway feel most well-prepared to teach the subject of responsible internet use.

Meanwhile, most teachers in Nordic schools use internet information and ICT both for lesson preparation and for teaching in the classroom although there are small differences in the usages of ICT between the countries. Figure 4.4 shows the percentages of teachers’ use of ICT in two form, one is using the internet for information when they prepare lessons (Q16), and the other is working with students to use ICT and internet information in classrooms (Q17) (see Appendix Table 4.4 for descriptions). Over half of the Danish teachers both use the internet for information in preparing lessons to a large extent and use ICT when working with students on information from the internet—more than those in the other three countries.

In general, teachers in all four countries report a high level of use of the internet in their classes. In Denmark, less than 1% never use the internet for information, whereas 8% of the teachers in Finland report the same. The teachers report a high level of use of



**Fig. 4.3** Percentages of teachers who have received training and feel well-prepared for teaching responsible internet use (*Notes* ^ Participation rates for the teacher survey were below the ICCS 2016 international standard in Denmark. Calculations presented here are facilitated by IDB Analyzer applying teacher weights [see Appendix Table 4.4])



**Fig. 4.4** Teachers' use of ICT for working on planning lessons and working with students in the classroom (*Notes* Participation rates for the teacher survey were below the ICCS 2016 international standard in Denmark. Calculations presented here are facilitated by IDB Analyzer applying teacher weights [see Appendix Table 4.4])

web-based sources to plan civic-related lessons. In Denmark, Finland, and Norway, 75–95% of the teachers report using web-based sources to plan civic-related lessons. However, almost no teachers in any of the countries work with students on any social network, forum, or blog to support environmentally related actions (see Appendix Table 4.4).

## 4.6 The Use of ICT and Social Media for Digital Citizenship and Civic Engagement in Schools

In this section, we examine the use of ICT in connection to civic issues as well as civic engagement for political or social issues. In this stage, we examine the experienced curriculum and the students' reporting of digital citizenship on social media in school. Table 4.1 presents the descriptive data of three questions and six items the students answered regarding their use of IT for civic engagement now and in the future (in %).

The students seem to neither post nor share political or social issues on the internet as about 80% in all four countries answer that they never share any political or social content. It is worth noting that about 10% in all countries share political or social content online once a month or more often, indicating a gap between a large “never engaged” and a small “very engaged” cohort. However, 30–40% of the students in all four countries think that they will contribute to an online discussion forum on a social or political issue *in the future*. There seems to be a divide between sharing an online discussion and initiating any online activity themselves. Roughly 15–20% of the students are likely to organize an online group to take a controversial political social or political stance in the future, with higher scores in Norway and Sweden. Those who would certainly or probably participate in an online campaign yield identical results in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, with 35–40%; Finland has 28%. For all the questions about participating and engaging in an online discussion, organizing a group, and participating in an online campaign, students in the four different countries are quite similar: a large group, 50–60%, do not think that they will engage in any of these activities in the future.

Most of the students report that they never comment on a political or social issue on the internet or social media or even on other people's online posts. Furthermore, most of the students report that they are not likely to take part in organizing an online group to take a stance on a controversial political or social issue. There is a slightly higher probability that they will contribute to an online discussion or an online campaign on political issues. These findings are similar across all four Nordic countries.

Table 4.2 presents a correlation analysis between current and future online participation with current and future offline civic engagement using scales derived from student responses to items of specific questions on their current and future participation both online (items in Table 4.1) and offline (current civic engagement in the



**Table 4.1** Student responses and experienced curriculum: ICT use (in %)

Items of interest	Response alternatives	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Students' current use of ICT to find information about political and social issues (Q14G)	Never	30.6 (1.0)	55.3 (1.0)	39.8 (0.8)	34.7 (1.0)
	Monthly	31.6 (0.7)	26.9 (0.8)	33.6 (0.6)	32.1 (0.9)
	Weekly	26.5 (0.7)	14.2 (0.8)	20.6 (0.6)	24.2 (0.9)
	Daily	11.4 (0.6)	3.6 (0.4)	6.1 (0.3)	9.0 (0.6)
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Students' current use of ICT to post about political or social issues (Q14H)	Never	88.9 (0.6)	88.8 (0.7)	86.9 (0.5)	85.3 (1.0)
	Monthly	7.8 (0.4)	8.2 (0.6)	8.7 (0.4)	9.8 (0.7)
	Weekly	2.2 (0.2)	2.5 (0.3)	3.0 (0.3)	3.3 (0.3)
	Daily	1.1 (0.2)	0.5 (0.1)	1.4 (0.2)	1.6 (0.3)
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Students' current use of ICT to share about political or social issues (Q14I)	Never	85.4 (0.7)	86.1 (0.8)	83.3 (0.6)	79.1 (1.2)
	Monthly	10.2 (0.6)	10.4 (0.7)	12.0 (0.5)	13.9 (0.7)
	Weekly	3.3 (0.3)	2.7 (0.3)	3.4 (0.2)	5.2 (0.6)
	Daily	1.1 (0.2)	0.8 (0.2)	1.3 (0.1)	1.9 (0.3)
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Students' future contributions to an online discussion forum about social or political issues (Q30E)	Certainly will not do this	15.1 (0.6)	11.7 (0.6)	16.9 (0.5)	12.4 (0.7)
	Probably will not do this	55.8 (0.9)	56.9 (0.9)	47.6 (0.8)	46.0 (0.8)
	Probably will do this	25.1 (0.7)	26.1 (0.8)	28.0 (0.7)	31.7 (0.9)
	Certainly will do this	4.0 (0.3)	5.3 (0.5)	7.6 (0.4)	9.9 (0.6)
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Students' future organization of an online group to take a stance on a controversial political or social issue (Q30F)	Certainly will not do this	19.9 (0.6)	18.6 (0.7)	22.1 (0.6)	19.4 (0.7)
	Probably will not do this	63.9 (0.8)	65.1 (0.8)	57.0 (0.7)	61.9 (1.2)
	Probably will do this	13.8 (0.6)	13.1 (0.6)	16.1 (0.6)	14.5 (0.9)
	Certainly will do this	2.3 (0.2)	3.2 (0.3)	4.8 (0.4)	4.2 (0.4)
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>
Students' future participation in an online campaign (Q30G)	Certainly will not do this	13.4 (0.6)	10.6 (0.7)	16.9 (0.5)	16.0 (0.7)
	Probably will not do this	47.1 (0.8)	53.7 (1.1)	44.5 (0.7)	55.2 (1.1)
	Probably will do this	34.7 (0.9)	30.5 (0.9)	31.0 (0.7)	23.7 (0.8)
	Certainly will do this	4.8 (0.3)	5.1 (0.4)	7.5 (0.4)	5.1 (0.6)
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

**Table 4.2** Correlation coefficients between current and future online civic engagement with offline current and future civic engagement\*\*

		Students' current engagement with social media	Students' willingness to participate in social media in the future
Students' current participation in the wider community	Denmark	0.21	0.19
	Finland	0.25	0.15
	Norway	0.25	0.25
	Sweden	0.25	0.25
Students' expected active political participation	Denmark	0.24	0.44
	Finland	0.22	0.44
	Norway	0.27	0.52
	Sweden	0.27	0.49

*Notes* Analysis using IDB Analyzer applying student weights. \*\*all correlation coefficients are significant,  $p < 0.01$ . A correlation  $< 0.20$  is weak, between  $0.20$ – $0.30$  is moderate, between  $0.30$ – $0.40$  is strong, and  $> 0.40$  is very strong

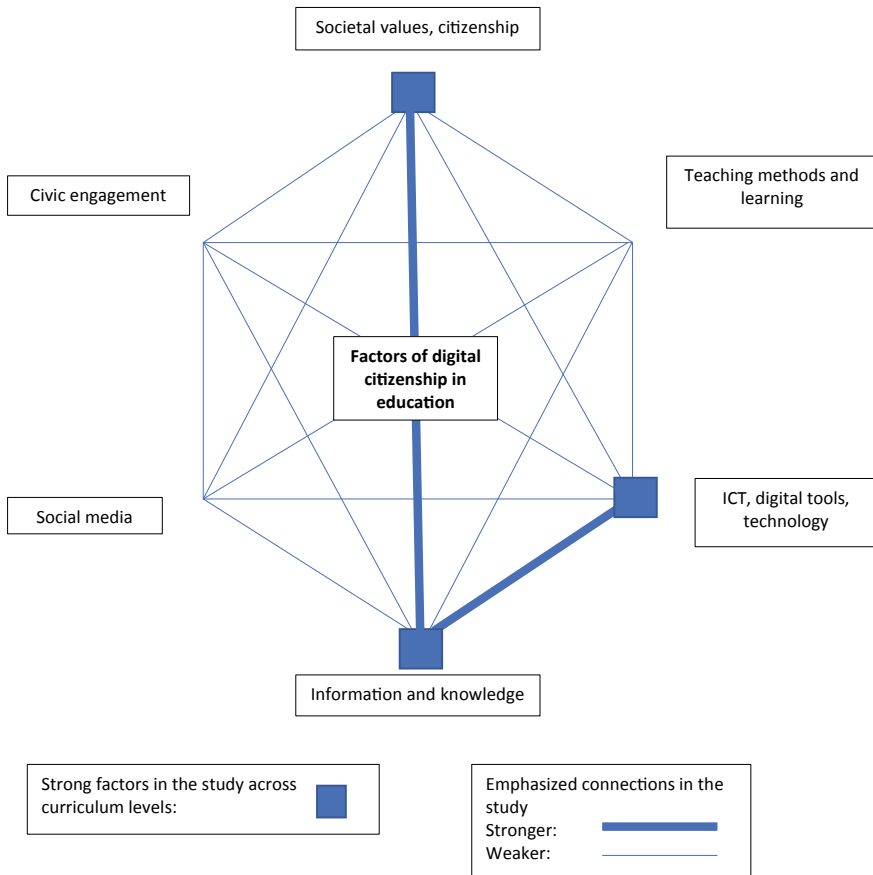
community and expected future political engagement) using information resources and technology (IRT)-weighted likelihood estimates (Köhler et al. 2018; Schulz et al. 2018b).

First, all the correlation coefficients are significant and positive in all four countries, which means the higher the students' reported online participation, the higher their intention of future online civic engagement and the higher their offline civic engagement both currently and in the future. Second, all four countries are similar in terms of current student online participation—it is moderately to strongly correlated with both their current and future offline participation (see Table 4.2, column 3). Third, there are some small differences between the four countries in the correlations between students' willingness to participate in social media in the future and their future offline political participation—the correlation is very strong in all four countries.

Nevertheless, we find only a few significant but very weak correlations between the ICT resources in schools (i.e., the devices available for teaching at school) with students' current and future online engagement. It is all significant but very weak and positive only in Finland, whereas it is not at all significant in Denmark. However, school ICT resources have a very weak and positive correlation with students' future online engagement in Sweden and a very weak and negative correlation with students' current online participation in Norway. Yet, ICT resources at home have a significant, very weak, and positive correlation with both students' current and future online participation in all four countries.

### 4.7 Discussion

The background for this chapter is the complex and partly blurred field of digital citizenship in education. IEA’s ICCS 2016 was the first study to establish a small number of measures for investigating the factors for digital citizenship education. In this chapter we have, therefore, aimed to elaborate on this and attempted to map digital citizenship and civic engagement through social media in schools by identifying the factors that indicate the teaching of digital citizenship on social media in schools in four Nordic countries. The main finding is that the development of digital citizenship through social media in schools consists of *multiple and emerging factors*. The analysis resulted in a conceptual map that can be summarized under the heading of six major themes regarding digital citizenship education in the Nordic countries and is illustrated in Fig. 4.5.



**Fig. 4.5** Map of factors promoting digital citizenship on social media in school in the four Nordic countries

Figure 4.5 suggests six main factors that indicate the promotion of digital citizenship on social media in education in the mixed-methods study, as follows:

1. **Societal values and ideas:** All the Nordic countries have a quite strong emphasis on *societal values and ideas* promoting digital citizenship at the formal curriculum level.
2. **ICT, digital tools, and technology:** Elaborate descriptions of ICT, digital tools, and technology exist at the formal curriculum level; whereas good access to ICT devices and the internet are described as present, and constituting the perceived curriculum level.
3. **Handling of information and knowledge:** At a formal curriculum level, handling of information and knowledge are emphasized in all the four countries. However, a variation between describing knowledge development in general, using digital tools to gain information, and using technology to promote knowledge exist. At a perceived curriculum level, the teachers were well-prepared to teach the handling of information, and on an experienced curriculum level, many students were likely to use ICT to find information about political and social issues.
4. **Teaching methods and learning:** At a formal curriculum level, Finland extensively describes digital tools for learning, and in the perceived curriculum, 75–95% of the teachers in Finland, Norway, and Denmark reported that they use web-based sources to plan civic-related teaching.
5. **Social media:** At a formal curriculum level, social media concepts such as “digital” or “social media” are not established concepts. Instead, in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, it is often referred to using terms such as “the internet” and “media.” In contrast, in the Finnish curriculum, there is a more extensive conceptualization of social media. At a perceived curriculum level, the teachers report a high level of readiness to teach about online ethics and that they use the internet and social media to teach about civic issues. However, on an experienced curriculum level, the students report very low positive responses on the posting of civic issues online, and the teachers do not report modelling civic participation in online discussions or social media in their teaching.
6. **Civic engagement:** At a formal curriculum level, few curricula use the term “civic” or “citizenship” except for the Finnish core curriculum. However, all the national curricula mention participation or engagement in society and becoming democratic citizens in general. At the perceived curriculum level, most of the teachers in Finland, Denmark, and Sweden teach about civic issues. However, on the level of experience, almost none of the students report that they are likely to engage in political or social issues online, whether it be sharing, posting, or making arrangements.

Overall, digital citizenship through the use of social media is not a single phenomenon but is represented by multiple practices on different curricula levels. The results of the analysis suggest six common features of digital citizenship in schools.

These features are sometimes stronger or weaker on different curricula levels and there is some variation between the Nordic countries.

The next overall finding is that there are some new emerging factors regarding digital citizenship education. The map in Fig. 4.5 shows some established factors and connections to digital citizenship. In addition, the map also illustrates weaker factors, which we have interpreted as possibilities for the future development of digital citizenship in education. For instance, there is a difference between the factors for teaching digital citizenship in the Norwegian core curriculum from 2006 and the Finnish curriculum from 2014. The curricula could be described as incompatible for comparison because of the differences of time periods. However, such differences might also give insights into how the curricula have developed in the Nordic context.

Digital citizenship education might also be seen as emerging when considering discrepancies between the ideals of digital citizenship as formulated at the formal curriculum level and how it is practised by the students. Thus, these discrepancies can show that the formal, national curricula represent ideals preceding practice. However, the belief that ideals precede practice might be a misconception of the development of digital citizenship in education. According to Goodlad (1994), there is no cause–effect between different curriculum levels in promoting moral values. Each curriculum level represents a separate practice, with its logic being worth listening to. The lack of civic engagement through social media might be the students' unique way to raise their voice and bring new questions about which factors support the development digital citizenship. One question is to what extent *can* 14-year-olds engage in civic questions online and on social media in school? Are 14-year-old students mature enough to address civic engagement? Maybe they are not. The correlation analysis shows that many students report the belief that they probably will participate in online civic discussions in the future. It seems likely that they imagine that civic engagement online is something separate from their present reality. It is also possible that students and teachers take political formation in school as a given, assuming that engagement will evolve in one way or another.

Another question is a moral one and asks whether 14-year-olds *should* engage in civic questions online and in media in school. Although many teachers report that they have the ability and feel well-prepared to promote civic awareness and engagement, they do not use social media to engage in online discussions with their students. Perhaps the use of the internet and social media in questions of civic engagement touches upon a moral hesitation among teachers. If this is the case, we are missing an explicit moral discussion about our expectations for young people's participation in political issues as the idea of participation is connected to a moral standard of a "better citizen" and thus a better person (Westheimer and Kahne 2004).

One more question concerns the agency of the pupils themselves. The question is whether 14-year-olds *would* engage in civic questions online and in social media in school. When introducing digital citizenship and hope for posting on social media, there is a danger that we confuse moral values of engagement with cultural values of socially accepted values. Our results may indicate a reluctance among young people towards online participation concerning civic issues. One explanation might be that

young people see the online space as a private space as well as a space for play and relaxation.

It might be too much to expect young people to engage personally in a formal setting such as school. However, young people do engage. As Schulz et al. (2018a, p. 208a) suggest, school is not the key actor in the development of digital citizenship and engagement on social media. This is a major challenge for schools. We believe that these challenges might stem from a misconception in the national curricula about the schools' role in creating civic engagement. Young people engage not only because of the national curricula, the principals, or due to what teachers or educational researchers believe engagement to be. The challenge for education—and the further development of the ICCS study—is to cease to treat engagement as top-down activities to be evaluated or measured as individual performance indicators. Instead, there is a need for new perspectives on what engagement can mean, and a “re-ontologisation” of education (Floridi 2007; Amnå and Ekman 2014; Lieberkind and Bruun, Chapter 2 in this volume). First, these new perspectives should not treat digital citizenship and engagement as technical and virtual domains and as separate from other forms of civic engagement. The curricula in school need to consider the virtual space as any other political space and engage with the youth to jointly develop digital citizenship through social media use. Second, digital citizenship and engagement are social and mediated processes (Purvis et al. 2016). Thus, the measures should include process indicators *between* actors in education and *between* school, political leaders, teachers, and students. Third, digital citizenship and engagement represent not only competencies but also ways of living. The challenge in defining and assessing factors for developing digital citizenship education is to be able to capture the transformative processes (Dewey 1916). Understandings of digital citizenship education and digital civic engagement should thus embrace the complexities of life. Developing digital citizenship can emerge if it is not only the students that learn but also if the education systems and assessment frameworks learn from the experiences of the students.

## Appendix

See Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

**Table 4.3** Descriptive data of questions and measures of IT resources available for teaching at school, and in use at home ICCS 2016 data

Items of interest	Denmark <sup>a</sup>		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.
<i>Principals' responses to the questions "Are the following devices with internet access provided by the school to the students for their learning activities?" (Q10) (Yes = 1, No = 0), percent</i>								
Desktop computers	40.7	4.2	85.8	5.1	55.0	5.4	33.1	4.3
Portable computers (laptop, notebook, netbook)	83.0	3.7	71.5	4.6	95.9	1.4	83.9	3.4
Tablet devices (e.g. iPad)	48.2	3.6	72.0	5.1	33.6	7.7	59.6	5.7
E-readers (e.g. Kindle, Kobo, Nook)	20.7	3.0	9.0	2.2	3.9	1.4	11.1	5.3
Interactive whiteboards	88.6	3.7	58.6	6.0	68.1	7.0	60.0	4.9
<i>Teachers' responses to the question "How frequently do you use the following devices with internet access provided by the school for your teaching activities with students" (Q13) (Never and Not provided by the school = 0; Yes in some lessons and Yes in most lessons = 1), percent</i>	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.
Desktop computers	39.3	4.7	77.6	1.7	42.8	3.1	22.6	2.4
Portable computers (laptop, notebook, netbook)	94.1	1.5	55.8	2.2	91.1	1.2	83.1	1.9
Tablet devices (e.g. iPad)	52.3	3.3	58.0	2.7	26.9	3.9	50.0	3.5
E-readers (e.g. Kindle, Kobo, Nook)	11.2	1.7	1.4	0.2	3.2	0.5	2.0	0.4
Interactive whiteboards	85.7	3.7	28.4	2.6	61.2	3.9	26.7	2.6

(continued)

Table 4.3 (continued)

Items of interest	Denmark <sup>a</sup>		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Students' responses to question "How many of the following devices are used regularly in your home?" (Q12) (None = 0, 1 = 1, 2 = 2, 3 and more = 3)</i>								
Desktop or portable computers (laptop, notebook or netbook)	2.6	0.6	2.0	0.8	2.5	0.7	2.4	0.8
Tablet devices or e readers (e.g. iPad or Kindle)	2.0	1.0	1.4	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.8	1.0
Mobile phones with internet access (e.g. smart Phones)	2.9	0.4	2.8	0.5	2.9	0.4	2.9	0.4
Students' responses to question "Do you have an Internet connection at home?" (Q13) (Yes = 1, No = 0)	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.	Yes	s.e.
Response percent	99.7	0.1	99.3	0.1	99.0	0.1	99.2	0.2

Notes: Calculations presented in the table are performed by IDB Analyzer applying school weight, teacher weights and student weights, respectively

<sup>a</sup>Participation rates for the teacher survey were below the ICCS 2016 international standard in Denmark



**Table 4.4** Descriptive data of question items on the use of devices of information technology for civic- and citizen-related teaching and student activities (in %)

Items of interest	Response alternatives	Denmark <sup>a</sup>	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Teachers work with students on a social network, forum, or blog to support environment-related actions (Q12c)	Yes	3.4 (0.9)	1.6 (0.3)	2.9 (0.7)	2.5 (0.4)
	No	96.6 (0.9)	98.4 (0.3)	97.1 (0.7)	97.5 (0.4)
<i>Total</i>		100	100	100	100
Teachers use web-based sources of information to plan civic-related lessons (Q16g)	Not at all	0	1.4 (0.5)	1.2 (0.5)	2.5 (1.0)
	To a small extent	4.4 (2.2)	15.8 (1.6)	8.5 (1.8)	21.3 (3.0)
	To a moderate extent	43.8 (5.8)	49.2 (2.5)	53.6 (3.1)	50.1 (3.6)
	To a large extent	51.7 (85.8)	33.5 (2.5)	36.6 (2.9)	26.1 (3.3)
<i>Total</i>		100	100	100	100
Teachers use ICT with students to search for and/or analyze information gathered from the internet (Q17f)	Never	0.7 (0.7)	7.7 (1.0)	2.9 (1.0)	1.6 (0.8)
	Sometimes	44.5 (6.4)	59.8 (2.5)	62.6 (2.8)	51.8 (3.9)
	Often	32.6 (5.9)	27.7 (2.1)	31.6 (2.9)	36.2 (3.6)
	Very often	22.1 (5.6)	4.9 (1.1)	2.9 (0.9)	10.5 (2.2)
<i>Total</i>		100	100	100	100
How much teachers feel well prepared to teach responsible internet use (Q18)	Not at all prepared	2.1 (1.6)	0.9 (0.5)	0.3 (0.2)	0
	Little prepared	27.4 (6.2)	16.9 (1.9)	9.5 (1.7)	6.9 (2.0)
	Well prepared	42.0 (5.3)	56.6 (2.1)	51.1 (3.8)	51.2 (3.6)

(continued)

**Table 4.4** (continued)

Items of interest	Response alternatives	Denmark <sup>a</sup>	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<i>Total</i>	Very well prepared	28.4 (7.0)	25.5 (2.3)	39.1 (3.9)	41.9 (3.9)
		100	100	100	100
If teachers have received training on topics and skills related to responsible internet use (Q19)	Never	66.4 (5.9)	36.6 (1.8)	56.5 (3.9)	62.8 (3.7)
	Yes, pre-service training	12.5 (4.9)	18.3 (1.6)	16.1 (2.8)	22.1 (3.0)
	Yes, in-service training	8.4 (3.9)	32.3 (2.8)	18.0 (2.9)	4.5 (1.8)
	Yes, both pre- and in-service training	12.6 (3.5)	12.8 (2.2)	9.4 (1.8)	10.6 (2.4)

*Notes* Calculations presented in the table are performed by IDB Analyzer applying teacher weights

<sup>a</sup>Participation rates for the teacher survey were below the ICCS 2016 international standard in Denmark

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# Chapter 5

## Socioeconomic Inequalities in Civic Learning in Nordic Schools: Identifying the Potential of In-School Civic Participation for Disadvantaged Students



Bryony Hoskins, Lihong Huang, and Cecilia Arensmeier

**Abstract** This chapter provides an analysis of the complex role of Nordic schools in both enhancing and reducing socioeconomic inequalities in civic competences. A multilevel analysis method was used to examine the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 and 2016 data of all four Nordic countries. The results show that unequal access to civic learning (in-school civic participation and open classroom climate) exist in all Nordic countries. We found differences in access within schools in which students with more advantages experienced greater opportunities to participate. Additionally, we found differences between schools. Those schools that had an intake with a higher proportion of socioeconomically advantaged students tended to provide more civic learning opportunities and open classroom climates. Inequalities in access to civic learning activities manifested itself in different ways in schools across the Nordic countries. There is some evidence that this happens more regularly in Sweden than Finland, though Norway recorded the highest levels of unequal access inside schools, and no Nordic country provides equal access to all the forms of civic learning we studied. At the same time, however, there were forms of civic learning in Nordic schools that were found to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in civic competences. The results showed that when disadvantaged students gained access to civic learning, they mostly appeared to benefit either the same or more from the experience than their more advantaged peers. A unique contribution of this chapter to the field of citizenship education is that we found that in-school civic participation can compensate for a disadvantaged background for developing future electoral participation and civic knowledge in students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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## 5.1 Introduction

The Nordic countries have long and well-respected traditions of maintaining low levels of socioeconomic inequality (Piketty 2013). The Nordic welfare model is well known for using the education system as policy tool for fostering equality (Lundahl 2016), and countries' education systems achieve high levels of equality in many outcomes (Bauer and Riphahn 2006; OECD 2019). The countries are known for healthy democracies and highly engaged citizens (Hoskins and Mascherini 2009), who are fairly satisfied with how their democracies function (Fora et al. 2020). In contrast, since the Second World War, much of the Western world has become increasingly unequal (Piketty 2013) and more dissatisfied with democracy (Fora et al. 2020), and it has suffered from mounting social inequalities in political engagement (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). This feeling of political alienation not only excludes certain voices from decision-making processes but also creates untapped frustration, which populist and extremist parties have exploited in referendums and elections (Huber and Ruth 2017; Kriesi 2014). These parties and their political agendas have successfully positioned themselves as outsiders agitating against the political elite and have had some success in politically mobilizing disaffected and lower socioeconomic groups, as exemplified by the United Kingdom's 2016 referendum on European Union membership, United States President Donald Trump's 2016 election, and the victories of populist anti-immigrant parties in the 2018 Hungarian and Italian parliamentary elections. Socioeconomic inequalities within the education system and unequal access to civic learning have been identified as important contributors to socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019).

This chapter investigates if Nordic education systems are following these trends. There are signs of increasing income inequality in Nordic countries (Aaberge et al. 2018), and radical right-wing populist parties have established themselves in all four countries (Widtfeldt 2018). Are there now signs of socioeconomic inequalities in civic learning in Nordic schools as well? This chapter focuses on identifying the role Nordic schools are playing in reducing and increasing socioeconomic inequalities in the levels of students' civic competences.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, we address two issues: access to civic learning and differential gains from experiencing the opportunities offered in schools.

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<sup>1</sup>Civic competence is defined in this chapter as the "knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable a person to become an active citizen" (Hoskins et al. 2011, p. 84).



## 5.2 Education Equality and the Nordic Education System

Nordic countries are associated with an education model that prioritizes education equality and social justice (Lundahl 2016). Nordic education systems have aimed at enabling equal access to high-quality education regardless of students' social backgrounds by developing a comprehensive education model in which ability grouping between or even within schools is largely prohibited (Lundahl 2016; Telhaug et al. 2006). The Nordic comprehensive education system, which was originally developed in the 1960s, has been tested and strained by the influence of global neoliberal education debates (Lundahl 2016). Nevertheless, there are differences across the Nordic countries to the extent that policy changes have been introduced and educational inequalities have risen. Of the four countries, Finland has been identified as maintaining a fully comprehensive education system, and it has low levels of education inequality (measured by the amount of variation in PISA [Programme for International Student Assessment] outcomes) and comparatively high levels of average education performance (Parker et al. 2018). In PISA studies, Finland, Denmark, and Norway are all well below the average OECD level of explained variances in cognitive scores by socioeconomic status (SES), while Sweden meets the international average (OECD 2019; Skolverket 2019). Sweden has also been identified as a country in which education inequalities have been on the rise since the 1990s, with the introduction of free schools, increasingly run by corporations for profit, and a market for competition for students between schools (Lundahl 2016). Up until 2012, the average educational performance in Sweden, as measured by PISA scores, was also declining, and this paralleled the increased levels of variations between schools and students (Parker et al. 2018). The last two PISA studies showed some improvement in Swedish scores, though higher levels of education inequality remained when compared to the other Nordic countries (Skolverket 2019). Building from this context, we might expect to find differences between the Nordic countries in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) data as well, with greater education inequalities in Sweden, although we note that Sweden does not have high levels of inequality in its PISA results when compared to other OECD countries.

## 5.3 The Role of School in Reproducing Inequalities in Political Engagement

Hoskins and Janmaat's (2019) theory of the social reproduction of inequalities in political engagement identifies two ways in which schools can reinforce and reproduce socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement. First, schools may fail to provide the same level of access to civic learning opportunities, either differentiating opportunities inside a school according to socioeconomic background of the students

or differentiating teaching methods between schools according to the different socioeconomic intake. Second, schools may fail by providing learning opportunities from which advantaged students benefit more than disadvantaged ones, which has an accelerating effect. This can happen when students who have developed higher levels of competence in their home lives are able to excel more than others in a school-run activity.

In the United Kingdom context, a lack of access to learning political engagement in school was found to contribute to the reproduction of existing socioeconomic inequalities in political engagement (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). No accelerating effects were found. Nevertheless, a systematic analysis of the Nordic countries on these issues has yet to be undertaken. Research on Denmark found inequalities in access to open classroom climates in the ICCS 2016 data (Deimel et al. 2020). Research on Sweden found unequal access to civic learning activities in the 2009 ICCS data (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019), and research on Sweden using IEA Civic Education Study (CIVED) 1999 data suggested that students in schools with a higher advantaged-student intake reported higher levels of open classroom climates (Almgren 2006).

The second aspect was the accelerating effects of privileged students benefiting more from learning opportunities than their disadvantaged counterparts because they have experience and skills on which to build. The only research that we have been able to identify that found an accelerated effect was based in Belgium, where Hooghe and Dassonneville (2013) found that students who had a higher level of political knowledge benefitted more from civic education classes in terms of enhanced political engagement.

An alternative theory suggests that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds can benefit more from a school learning experience, and this has been called the compensatory effect (Campbell 2008). The premise behind this concept is that socioeconomic inequality in political engagement is transmitted from one generation to the next through political socialization at home. When working-class children benefit more from a certain learning opportunity, it compensates for missing parental socialization and disrupts or mitigates the transmission process (Campbell 2008). In other words, access for less advantaged students to open classroom climates and in-school political activities may reduce inequalities, as these students can catch up in terms of their political learning.

Several scholars have identified education's compensatory effects on aspects of civic competence (Campbell 2008; Castillo et al. 2015; Deimel et al. 2020; Gainous and Martens 2012; Hoskins et al. 2017; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). These scholars have mostly identified compensatory benefits in terms of students acquiring a greater amount of civic education (Deimel et al. 2020; Gainous and Martens 2012; Hoskins et al. 2017; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). Campbell's (2008) research in the United States suggested that open classroom climates had a compensatory effect on future civic engagement. Nevertheless, Castillo et al. (2015), using the Chilean ICCS sample, and Persson (2015), using the Swedish sample from the CIVED 1999 study, found no differential effects of classroom climates on intentions to politically engage. Persson (2015) suggested that the difference between his results and those of Campbell could be ascribed to Sweden's greater level of equality: if social inequality is less

pronounced in the first place, it is not surprising to find no compensatory effects for disadvantaged groups. However, as levels of inequality have risen in Sweden since 1999, one wonders if those results have changed. Our research examines whether different forms of learning can compensate for young people having a disadvantaged background in the four Nordic countries today.

## 5.4 How Can Schools Facilitate the Learning of Civic Competence?

In this chapter, we will explore two forms of learning civic competence—open classroom climate and in-school civic participation activities. We selected these methods because one of the prominent principles in understanding the teaching and learning of civic competence is learning through participation (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). This processes of learning is understood to occur through open dialogue and the practicing of political engagement, and it has been widely identified through empirical research to be an effective way to learn the skills of political engagement (Hoskins et al. 2012; Hoskins et al. 2017; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018). The evidence suggests that young people learn to become politically engaged in real-world environments or contexts that reflect the real world, such as mock elections. Learning is a social process developed through interaction with others and within the communities in which students live (Hoskins et al. 2012). Using this approach, schools can be understood as communities that young people join and in which they participate in negotiations of norms, meanings, and rules.

### 5.4.1 *Open Classroom Climate*

The most frequently cited participatory method of civic learning is an open climate for classroom discussion (Campbell 2008; Hahn 1998; Hoskins et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012; Torney-Purta 2002). This refers to a situation in which students feel free to ask questions, bring up issues for discussion, express their own opinions, make up their own minds, perceive that teachers respect their opinion, and be taught by teachers who present different sides to an argument. The characteristics of a classroom based on these principles align with participatory approaches to learning in which it occurs via interaction, negotiation, and joint enterprise. There is a great deal of research that has drawn on both cross-sectional and longitudinal data to demonstrate that the open classroom learning method is effective in enhancing political engagement (Campbell 2008; Hoskins et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012; Torney-Purta 2002), positive attitudes towards political engagement (Geboers et al. 2013), critical thinking (ten Dam and Volman 2004), citizenship skills (Finkel and Ernst 2005), and political knowledge (McDevitt and Kiousis 2006).

### **5.4.2 *In-School Civic Participation Activities***

Participatory processes of learning political engagement also occur when young people are offered the chance to practice civic engagement and decision-making at school (Hoskins et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018). This can be accomplished through activities involving class councils, school parliaments, clubs, societies, and mock elections, and there is considerable evidence of their effectiveness (Hoskins et al. 2012; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Keating and Janmaat 2016). Youth participation activities are said to lead to the development of different aspects of civic competences, such as deliberation, compromise, public speaking, the expressing of opinions, the learning of how to work in groups, and the assimilating of other people's opinions (Quintelier 2008). Additionally, they are also said to provide students with greater awareness of the issues in their communities and build the efficacy needed to become involved in the creation of community change (Keating and Janmaat 2016; McFarland and Thomas 2006). Finally, longitudinal data have demonstrated that in-school civic activities have direct and sustainable effects on voting (Keating and Janmaat 2016) and indirect effects on enhancing levels of civic competence while students are in school (Beck and Jennings 1982).

### **5.4.3 *Civic Competence***

In this chapter, the term “civic competence” is defined as the “knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable a person to become an active citizen” (Hoskins et al. 2011, p. 84). European countries have established a wide variety of attributes needed to become civically competent (Barrett 2020; Hoskins et al. 2011, 2014). In this chapter we will focus on three aspects of them. First, we will focus on civic knowledge as measured by the IEA ICCS testing of student understanding and ability in order to apply knowledge in four domains: civic society and systems, civic principles, civic participation, and civic identities (Schulz et al. 2017). Second, citizenship self-efficacy, which has been found to be strongly associated with actual levels of political engagement (e.g., Blais 2000; Moeller et al. 2014). Third, intended future electoral participation, which has also been found to be strongly associated with actual voter turnout (Achen and Blais 2010). These two attitudinal measures were constructed from student responses to a survey in the ICCS study (for more details, see the Sect. 5.5).

Accordingly, this chapter investigates two research questions: (1) are there inequalities in students' access to participatory forms of learning in schools in Nordic countries? (2) Do these activities offer differential learning of civic competences according to students' SES?

## 5.5 Data and Measures

The data used in this chapter are from Nordic countries that participated in the 2009 and 2016 IEA ICCS studies of grade 8 students (grade 9 in Norway).<sup>2</sup> Table 5.1 provides the descriptive statistics of the scales developed from the ICCS student survey data in 2009 and 2016, which were used in this chapter's analysis. We included two self-reported measures related to learning political engagement: open classroom climate and students' in-school civic participation, both of which had been developed by IEA. The open-classroom-climate scale was derived from student responses to a six-item question asking when and how often teachers encouraged their students to form their own opinions, express them, respect those of others, and raise current issues when discussing politics or society during regular lessons. The scale of students' in-school civic participation was constructed from student responses to a question asking whether they participated in in-school decision-making, debate organization, student council, and activities to improve the school environment, either by voting or running for office. From the descriptive data presented in Table 5.1, we can observe differences among Nordic countries and between them and the international mean of 50 in all scales in both 2009 and 2016. Although data were largely unchanged between 2009 and 2016, some small but significant changes did occur. There was a decrease in Denmark and an increase in Sweden in students' perceptions of open

**Table 5.1** Descriptive statistics (mean and standard error) of the ICCS scales used in the analysis

	Year	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	International <sup>~</sup>
Civic knowledge	2009	576 (3.6)	576 (2.4)	538 (4.0)*	537 (3.1)*	500 (0.7)
	2016	586 (3.0)	577 (2.3)	564 (2.2)*	579 (2.8)*	517 (0.7)
Open classroom climate	2009	55 (0.3)*	49 (0.2)	53 (0.5)	51 (0.3)*	50 (0.1)
	2016	54 (0.3)*	49 (0.2)	52 (0.3)	52 (0.4)*	50 (0.1)
Students' participation at school	2009	48 (0.3)*	48 (0.3)	54 (0.2)	50 (0.3)*	50 (0.1)
	2016	50 (0.2)*	48 (0.2)	54 (0.2)	53 (0.2)*	50 (0.1)
Students' sense of citizenship self-efficacy	2009	50 (0.2)*	46 (0.2)*	49 (0.3)*	49 (0.3)*	50 (0.1)
	2016	51 (0.2)*	48 (0.2)*	51 (0.2)*	52 (0.2)*	51 (0.1)
Intended future electoral participation	2009	49 (0.2)*	49 (0.2)*	52 (0.3)*	49 (0.3)*	50 (0.1)
	2016	52 (0.2)*	51 (0.2)*	54 (0.1)*	53 (0.2)*	51 (0.1)

*Notes* All means are calculated by utilizing IDB Analyser and applying total student weight. \* $p < 0.05$  for differences between 2009 and 2016. <sup>~</sup>Significance test was not performed as the number of countries participated in ICCS 2009 is different from that in ICCS 2016. School and Student level numbers are available in Chapter 1

<sup>2</sup>Chapter 1 of this book presents further details on the representative sample for each of the Nordic countries, including the number cases and schools per country.

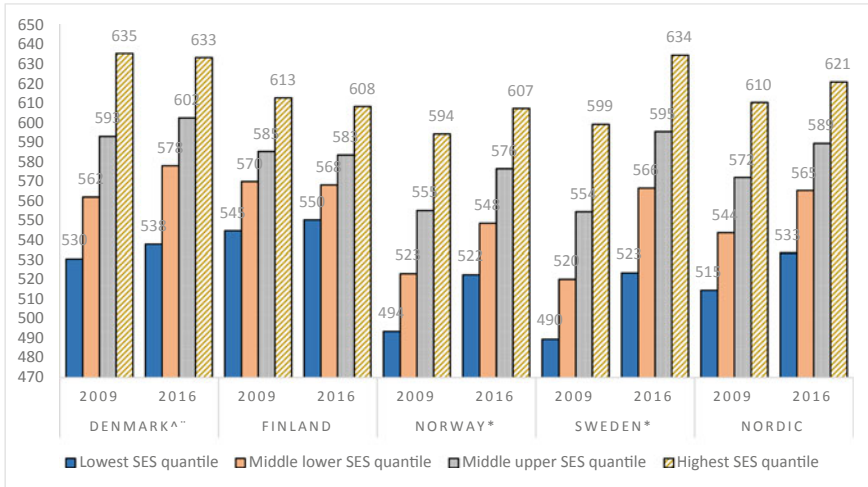
classroom climates, and there was an increase in students' in-school participation in Denmark and Sweden.

We included three measures of civic competence in our analysis: civic knowledge, citizenship self-efficacy, and intended future electoral participation with higher values indicating higher achievement of these scales. As discussed in the above section on civic competence, our measure of civic knowledge captures students' understanding and ability to apply knowledge in the four domains of: civic society and systems, civic principles, civic participation, and civic identities (Schulz et al. 2017). We measured civic knowledge using five plausible values using item-response-theory scaling to summarize student scores on test items. The other scales, all of which IEA had previously created, were derived from student responses to questions using item-response-theory weighted likelihood estimates (Köhler et al. 2018; Schulz et al. 2018). The scale of students' sense of citizenship self-efficacy was derived from a seven-item self report question asking how well they thought that they could follow, discuss, debate, and present to an in-school audience on social, political, or controversial issues, stand as representatives of student council, and write to a newspaper giving opinions on a current issue. The scale of students' intended future electoral participation was derived from their responses to a three-item question asking if they would vote in local or national elections as adults or get information about candidates before doing so. From the descriptive data presented in Table 5.1, we can observe some significant changes between 2009 and 2016 in the **average** student scores on items related to acquiring civic knowledge (increases in Norway and Sweden). There was also a Nordic-wide increase in students' sense of citizenship self-efficacy and intended future electoral participation.

To measure students' SES, we used the national index of socioeconomic backgrounds, which is a standardized score with an international/national mean of zero, a maximum value of 4.73, and a minimum value of  $-5.27$ . The national index is based on three indices: parents' highest occupational status, parents' highest level of education, and the number of books at home. We included students' gender (boy = 0; girl = 1) and migrant status (0 = child and at least one parent were born in country; 1 = student or both parents were migrants) as control variables (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 for the distributions of these variables).

To understand the levels of socioeconomic inequalities in civic competences, we used the national socioeconomic index variable to divide the ICCS data into four equal groups: students in lowest SES quantile, middle-lower SES quantile, middle-upper SES quantile, and highest SES quantile. Figure 5.1 provides a visual presentation of the average civic knowledge achievement of students in ICCS 2009 and 2016 by SES group and by country. Tests were performed to assess if differences between SES quantiles or changes over time (2009–2016) were significant. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 present these same parameters for citizenship self-efficacy and intended future electoral participation.

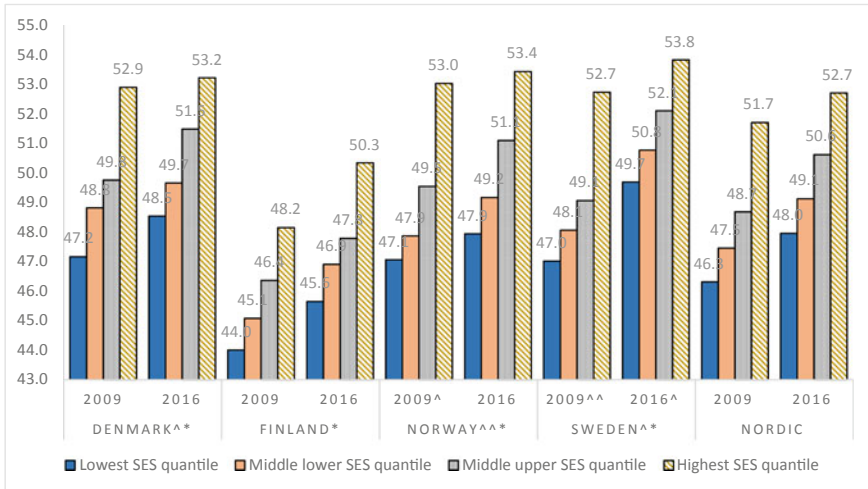
In analyzing the three measures of civic competence, a pattern emerged between the quintiles that showed that higher levels of SES corresponded to a higher level of



**Fig. 5.1** Student civic knowledge achievement in four socio-economic strata and changes from ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016, by country (Notes All means are calculated by utilizing IDB Analyzer on the five plausible values and applying total student weights. All differences between SES groups are significant unless notified otherwise. ^Difference between lowest SES quartile and middle lower SES quartile not significant; ^^difference between lowest SES quartile and middle lower SES quartile and difference between middle lower SES quartile and middle upper SES quartile not significant; ^\*changes from 2009 to 2016 are all significant except the group of highest SES quartile; ^^\*changes from 2009 to 2016 are significant only for groups of middle lower and middle upper SES quartiles but not significant for the lowest SES and the highest SES quartiles; \*all differences between all four SES groups were significant at each point of time, and changes from 2009 to 2016 were all significant)

civic competence. For civic knowledge (Fig. 5.1), differences between the quintiles were significant for all countries in both 2009 and 2016. The students with the highest level of citizenship self-efficacy (Fig. 5.2) for all four Nordic countries were the young people from the highest SES quintile. Differences between the lowest SES and middle-lower SES groups were not significant in Norway in 2009 or Sweden in 2009 and 2016. For intended future electoral participation (Fig. 5.3), the situation was almost the same, but the two middle quintiles in Finland in 2016 were not significantly different.

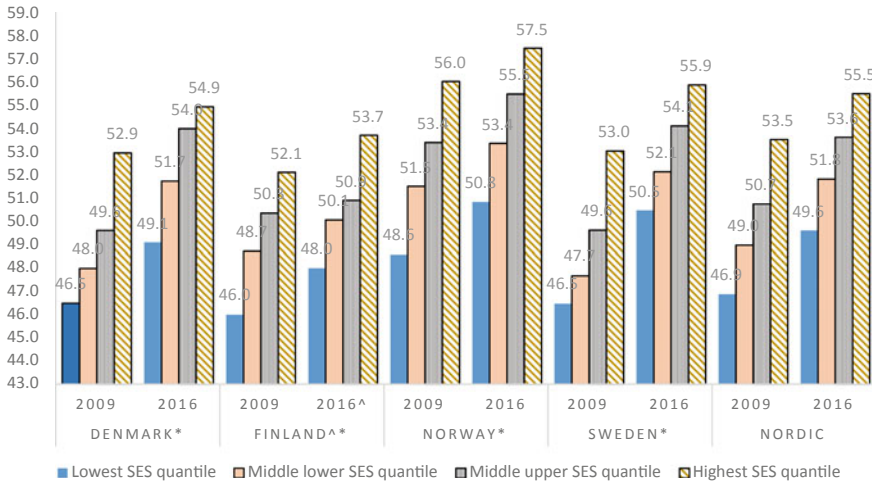
When we look for variations in inequality between countries, we saw that in the case of civic knowledge (Fig. 5.1), the distance between the lowest and highest SES quartiles was similar in Denmark (105 points in 2009 and 95 points in 2016), Norway (100 points in 2009 and 85 points in 2016), and Sweden (109 points in 2009 and 111 points in 2016) whilst the gap was smallest in Finland. Meanwhile, the gap was gradually narrowing in all countries except Sweden. Regarding citizenship self-efficacy (Fig. 5.2), the inequality gap was similar in Denmark (5.7 points in 2009 and 4.7 points in 2016) and Sweden (5.7 points in 2009 and 3.9 points in 2016) with a significant decrease from 2009 to 2016. While the gap in 2009 appeared smaller in Finland (4.2 points in 2009 and 4.7 points in 2016), and Norway (4.9 points in



**Fig. 5.2** Student citizenship self-efficacy in four socio-economic strata and changes from ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016, by country (*Notes* All means are calculated by utilizing IDB Analyzer and applying total student weights. All differences between SES groups are significant unless notified otherwise. ^Difference between lowest SES quantile and middle lower SES quantile not significant; ^^difference between lowest SES quantile and middle lower SES quantile and difference between middle lower SES quantile and middle upper SES quantile not significant; ^\*changes from 2009 to 2016 are all significant except the group of highest SES quantile; ^^\*changes from 2009 to 2016 are significant only for groups of middle lower and middle upper SES quantiles but not significant for the lowest SES and the highest SES quantiles; \*all differences between all four SES groups are significant and changes from 2009 to 2016 are significant for all SES groups)

2009 and 5.5 points in 2016) with some non-significant increase, the gap in Norway in 2016 became larger than that in other three countries. Regarding intended future electoral participation (Fig. 5.3), the differences between highest and lowest SES quintiles were similar in all countries (approx. 6.1–6.5 points in 2009 and 5.4–5.8 points in 2016) and in both studies except that the gap was largest in Norway both in 2009 (7.4 points) and in 2016 (6.7 points). Between 2009 to 2016, almost all SES groups in all four countries experienced significant increases in intended future electoral participation; the middle-upper SES quantile in Finland did not.





**Fig. 5.3** Expected electoral participation when becoming adults of students in four socio-economic strata and changes from ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016, by country (Notes All means are calculated by utilizing IDB Analyser and applying total student weight. All differences between SES groups are significant unless notified otherwise. \*Changes of all four SES quantiles are significant from 2009 to 2016; ^difference between middle lower SES and middle upper SES quantiles is not significant; ^\*changes from 2009 to 2016 are significant for all SES quantiles except middle upper SES quantile)

## 5.6 Methods

For the main analysis, we applied a multilevel regression analysis to simultaneously model the school-level (L2) and individual-level (L1) predictors of various outcomes. We first examined the extent to which access to civic learning was associated with SES by using the dependent variables of citizenship teaching methods: open classroom climates and in-school civic participation. We used the individual level (in this study this is referring to the individual student) and school-level variables of SES as our independent variables. Then, we used a multilevel regression analysis with interactions between SES and the two learning methods (open classroom climates and in-school civic participation) on civic competence (knowledge, citizenship self-efficacy, and intentions of future electoral participation). Studying the interaction between students’ SES and civic learning opportunities enabled us to estimate the possible mitigating and accelerating effects of political learning experiences on civic competence. We will present the analysis results from random intercept models and by country so we can compare results between the four Nordic countries. We used Mplus (Muthén and Muthén 2012) to estimate the models, and we applied full information maximum likelihood estimators to include cases with missing data in some of the analysis variables. We also applied sampling weights by including student weights at individual-level (L1) and school weights at school level (L2) in our multilevel model testing in Mplus.

## 5.7 Results

### 5.7.1 *Inequalities in Access to Civic Learning and Open Classroom Climates*

First, we estimated a null model to attribute the variance of the open classroom climate outcome to the individual and school levels. The analysis showed that roughly 5–15% of the variations of experiences of open classroom climates could be accounted for by differences between schools. Finland had the lowest, with a variation of 6.3% between schools in 2016. Denmark had about 16% in both cycles. These results suggest that there is a difference between schools in Denmark in terms of the student experience of open classroom climate but in Finland differences between schools are negligible.

Second, we added the SES of students at the individual level and the average SES of students attending a school (school intake) at the school level to the model. The purpose of this was to understand whether students from different schools reported different levels of open classroom climate and to test if that level was higher in classrooms composed of students with higher SES.

At the individual level, students' SES had a significant positive relationship with their experience of access to an open classroom climate in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in 2009 and 2016 (see Table 5.2). This suggests that for these countries, the higher the social class, the more students felt that the classroom was open and that they were able to participate in class discussions. Surprisingly, Norway had the largest regression parameters for SES on perceived openness of classroom climate in 2016. In Finland, the interaction was not significant in 2009 or 2016, suggesting that SES does not have to limit students' experience of access to an open classroom climate. In general, there were few changes between the studies, but an increase in the parameters of Sweden and a decrease in those of Denmark can be seen. The explained variance of the model at the individual level was very low (1–3%).

Despite there only being a small amount of variation between schools, SES appears to be a more important variable in explaining the variation at the school level than at the individual level. At the school level in Denmark and Sweden, the relationship between the SES of the school's student intake was significantly related to open classroom climate in 2009 and 2016 (see Table 5.2). This indicates that in Denmark and Sweden, the higher the average social class of the students attending the school, the more likely it was that they reported access to open classroom climates, implying that there were differences between schools in the methods used in classrooms according to the SES level in the school's intake. In 2009, the regression parameter was significant in Norway, though it was no longer so in 2016. In contrast, in Finland, school-level SES increased and became significant in 2016, suggesting that inequalities in students' experiences between schools were starting to appear. The explained variance at the school level in 2016 was high in Denmark, at 28%; in Finland and Sweden, it was about 14%. In Norway, it was 4%.

**Table 5.2** Two-level regression analysis of student background on citizenship learning at school—including unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors

Dependent variables	Independent variables		Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
Open classroom climate	<i>Between school variance (Model 0) %</i>		15.8	15.8	7.0	6.3	19.4	7.8	11.5	10.9
	Female		<b>1.66 (0.3)</b>	<b>1.96 (0.3)</b>	<b>1.27 (0.4)</b>	<b>1.22 (0.5)</b>	<b>3.40 (0.8)</b>	<b>2.54 (0.4)</b>	<b>3.23 (0.4)</b>	<b>2.56 (0.4)</b>
	Migrant background		-0.72 (0.9)	0.63 (0.6)	1.55 (1.2)	-0.94 (1.3)	-1.78 (1.1)	<b>1.20 (0.5)</b>	-0.60 (0.8)	1.19 (0.7)
	Home SES background		<b>1.14 (0.2)</b>	<b>0.85 (0.2)</b>	0.31 (0.2)	0.19 (0.3)	<b>0.82 (0.4)</b>	<b>1.03 (0.2)</b>	<b>0.55 (0.2)</b>	<b>0.73 (0.2)</b>
	SES at school level (L2)		<b>2.93 (1.0)</b>	<b>4.18 (0.7)</b>	1.23 (0.7)	<b>1.51 (0.5)</b>	<b>5.85 (1.9)</b>	1.55 (1.6)	<b>3.01 (0.7)</b>	<b>2.56 (0.7)</b>
	<i>Between school variance explained %</i>		12.0	27.8	6.3	13.6	17.9	3.9	20.2	13.6
	<i>Within school variance explained %</i>		2.2	1.8	0.9	0.6	3.3	2.5	3.3	2.2
Civic participation at school	<i>Between school variance (Model 0) %</i>		6.1	6.4	7.9	13.5	4.3	3.0	9.2	10.0
	Female		<b>1.36 (0.4)</b>	-0.39 (0.3)	<b>2.01 (0.5)</b>	<b>1.36 (0.4)</b>	<b>1.41 (0.6)</b>	<b>0.89 (0.3)</b>	<b>1.25 (0.5)</b>	<b>1.73 (0.5)</b>
	Migrant background		-0.01 (0.7)	<b>1.10 (0.5)</b>	0.21 (1.0)	1.14 (1.2)	-1.73 (1.0)	0.28 (0.5)	0.79 (0.7)	<b>1.30 (0.6)</b>
	Home SES background		<b>1.95 (0.2)</b>	<b>1.31 (0.2)</b>	<b>1.66 (0.2)</b>	<b>1.41 (0.2)</b>	<b>2.26 (0.3)</b>	<b>1.85 (0.2)</b>	<b>2.04 (0.2)</b>	<b>1.16 (0.2)</b>
	SES at school level (L2)		<b>1.44 (0.6)</b>	0.82 (0.6)	<b>2.49 (0.7)</b>	<b>4.18 (1.0)</b>	<b>3.02 (0.9)</b>	<b>1.25 (0.5)</b>	<b>2.61 (0.7)</b>	<b>2.37 (0.7)</b>
	<i>Between school variance %</i>		6.9	3.1	17.3	43.2	26.3	8.6	20.5	17.0
	<i>Within school variance %</i>		3.8	1.9	4.5	3.1	5.2	3.9	4.6	2.7

Notes  $p < 0.05$  for coefficients in bold. Model estimates from using Mplus with full information maximum likelihood estimators in treatment of missing data and applying sampling weights

### 5.7.2 *In-School Civic Participation*

As with an open classroom climate, the first step in our analysis of in-school civic participation was to estimate a null model and attribute the variance of the outcome in-school civic participation to the student and school levels. The null model showed that the between school variance was very small in Norway (4.3% in 2009 and 3% in 2016), the highest level and with the highest increase was Finland (7.9% in 2009 and 13.5% in 2016) and then Sweden (9.2% in 2009 and 10% in 2016) while it was small and stable in Denmark (6.1% in 2009 and 6.4% in 2016).

Second, we added the socioeconomic status of students and the average socioeconomic status of the school intake (school level) to the model to study whether students from different schools reported different levels of in-school civic participation and to test if the amount of participation was higher in schools composed of students with higher SES.

At the individual level, there was a significant positive relationship between students' SES and in-school civic participation across all Nordic countries in 2009 and 2016 (see Table 5.2). This suggested that in all Nordic countries, social class may well influence access to in-school civic participation. In 2016, the regression parameter of SES at individual level were largest in Norway (2.26) and smallest in Sweden (1.16). Between 2009 and 2016, the parameters were reduced in all Nordic countries, suggesting a reduction in inequalities related to in-school civic participation. The explained variance at the individual level was low (2–5%).

The variation among schools can be partly explained by the SES level of the student intake. In Finland, Norway, and Sweden in 2009 and 2016, we found differences between schools concerning access to in-school civic participation according to the SES intake of the school. For these countries we found that there were more in-school civic participation activities in schools that had more high-level-SES students. In Denmark, this was not the case in 2016. The explained variance of the school level differences appears quite varied, for example, for Finland in 2016 it is 43% and in Denmark in 2016 it is only 3.3%. It is important to note, however, that the amount of variance explained between schools relates to the size of the null model—how much variation there actually is between schools. This means that although these differences can look large they are actually much less dramatic. For example, in 2009 the Finnish model on in-school civic participation explained 43% of the 13.5% variation that exists between schools that equates to 3.2% of the overall variation of students in-school civic participation. In contrast, the Danish model in 2009 where there was only 6.9% explained variance was actually explaining the 6.1% of variation that was existing between schools in Denmark in 2009 and that the 6.9% actually equates to 1.1% of the overall variation in in-school civic participation of Danish students.

We recognize that different experiences among students in schools and between schools according to the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students are not the only explanation for differing levels of civic competence—for example, the learning in the home environment is also very important for developing civic competences. Nevertheless, our results suggest that schooling in the Nordic education system,

as in the English education system (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019), is playing a role in limiting access based on student SES to two important ways of civic learning (in-school civic participation and open classroom climate) in all Nordic countries.

### 5.7.3 *Learning Civic Competence*

The importance of **access to civic learning** becomes clear when we look at the relationship of these forms of learning with different dimensions of civic competence. The results of our multilevel regression analysis are presented in Tables 5.3 and 5.4. First, we estimated a null model to attribute the variance in the outcome of each of the three aspects of civic competence (civic knowledge, citizenship self-efficacy, and intended future electoral participation) to the student and school levels. The level of variation between schools explains between 11 and 17% of the variations in the civic knowledge scores of students in Sweden and Denmark (see Table 5.3). In 2016 in Finland and Norway, it was only 6%. For citizenship self-efficacy and intended future electoral participation scores, there was very little variation explained at the school level (see Table 5.4). Citizenship self-efficacy ranged between 2% and 5%, while intended future electoral participation ranged between 5% and 10%, except for Norway in 2016, when it was 3.4%.

Second, we added the civic learning variables (open classroom climates and in-school civic participation), the socioeconomic status of students (at the individual and the school level), and the interaction variables between the individual-level socioeconomic status and individual-level civic learning opportunities in order to identify mitigating or accelerating effects.

At the individual level, there was a direct and significant relationship between both forms of civic learning opportunities (open classroom climates and in-school civic participation) on each of the three aspects of civic competence in all Nordic countries in both 2009 and 2016. This adds further compelling evidence of the importance of these methodologies in learning civic competence to the already-significant literature in the field (e.g., Campbell 2008; Hahn 1998; Hoskins et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012; Torney-Purta 2002).

Understanding the extent of the **importance of students' peers' experiences** (open classroom climates and in-school civic participation) on an individual student's civic learning was more complex. When comparing the school and the individual level effects on civic knowledge (see Table 5.3), individual experiences of civic learning stood out more than the collective student experience. This could be seen in our models, which showed that the school-level forms of participatory learning appeared to be less important in explaining differences in civic knowledge. The mean level of peers' civic participation had almost no significant relationships with civic knowledge (the exception here was a significant positive result for Sweden in 2016). The mean level of open classroom climate on civic knowledge had a significant and positive relationship in half of our results. A consistent significant relationship was

**Table 5.3** Two-level regression analysis of student background and school learning factors on student civic knowledge achievement—including unstandardized coefficient with standard errors

Independent variables	Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
<i>School variance (Model 0) %</i>	16.4	17.3	9.3	6.0	13.7	5.6	16.9	11.4
Female	<b>2.83</b> (3.1)	<b>17.97</b> (2.7)	<b>23.53</b> (4.1)	<b>30.76</b> (3.9)	<b>13.88</b> (4.5)	<b>25.43</b> (2.9)	<b>11.87</b> (4.7)	<b>28.80</b> (4.5)
Migrant background	<b>-37.89</b> (7.4)	<b>-29.43</b> (5.8)	<b>-51.13</b> (11.0)	<b>-71.72</b> (10.4)	<b>-40.40</b> (8.6)	<b>-47.03</b> (5.1)	<b>-35.07</b> (6.4)	<b>-51.40</b> (6.3)
Home SES background	<b>36.16</b> (8.3)	<b>27.02</b> (7.3)	<b>34.46</b> (12.2)	<b>37.07</b> (12.2)	<b>42.20</b> (22.7)	<b>45.38</b> (16.0)	<b>39.97</b> (12.6)	<b>39.66</b> (21.35)
Open classroom climate	<b>1.66</b> (0.2)	<b>1.87</b> (0.1)	<b>0.43</b> (0.2)	<b>1.05</b> (0.3)	<b>1.91</b> (0.3)	<b>1.22</b> (0.2)	<b>1.32</b> (0.3)	<b>1.33</b> (0.2)
Civic participation at school	<b>1.83</b> (0.2)	<b>0.97</b> (0.2)	<b>1.40</b> (0.2)	<b>1.11</b> (0.3)	<b>2.03</b> (0.3)	<b>1.45</b> (0.2)	<b>1.84</b> (0.2)	<b>1.85</b> (0.3)
SES*Open classroom	-0.19 (0.2)	0.00 (0.1)	0.20 (0.3)	-0.25 (0.3)	0.16 (0.5)	-0.14 (0.3)	-0.24 (0.2)	-0.20 (0.3)
SES*Civic participation at school	0.01 (0.2)	-0.05 (0.1)	<b>-0.41</b> (0.16)	-0.10 (0.2)	-0.53 (0.3)	-0.30 (0.3)	0.03 (0.2)	-0.02 (0.3)
SES at school level (L2)	<b>63.84</b> (6.9)	<b>50.83</b> (6.4)	<b>22.51</b> (7.2)	<b>22.50</b> (6.9)	<b>53.50</b> (10.7)	<b>40.84</b> (5.2)	<b>62.96</b> (5.9)	<b>58.20</b> (7.2)
Open classroom climate (L2)	<b>1.92</b> (0.7)	<b>2.76</b> (0.7)	<b>2.94</b> (1.0)	0.37 (1.0)	<b>2.38</b> (0.8)	1.30 (0.8)	<b>3.44</b> (0.7)	1.42 (0.73)
Civic participation at school (L2)	0.05 (0.9)	-0.63 (0.9)	-0.45 (0.8)	0.93 (1.0)	2.22 (1.4)	2.23 (1.2)	-0.90 (1.0)	<b>1.77</b> (0.7)
<i>Between variance explained %</i>	62.6	66.1	24.4	43.0	67.7	66.4	75.7	85.7
<i>Within variance explained %</i>	21.6	14.9	25.7	25.0	31.0	30.3	22.7	25.0

*Notes* Model estimates from using Mplus with full information maximum likelihood estimators in treatment of missing data, applying sampling weights and using all five plausible values.  $p < 0.05$  for coefficients in bold

**Table 5.4** Two-level regression of student background and school learning factors on student citizenship self-efficacy and intended future electoral participation—including unstandardized coefficient with standard errors

Dependent variables	Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
Students' sense of citizenship self-efficacy	1.6	2.7	3.4	2.5	4.6	1.6	5.20	3.40
<i>School variance (Model 0) %</i>								
Gender	<b>0.95 (0.3)</b>	0.37 (0.3)	0.29 (0.4)	-0.44 (0.5)	0.93 (0.5)	0.52 (0.3)	0.48 (0.5)	0.60 (0.5)
Migrant background	0.85 (0.8)	0.64 (0.5)	<b>3.47 (1.6)</b>	0.17 (1.2)	1.28 (0.8)	0.07 (0.7)	<b>2.21 (0.7)</b>	<b>1.69 (0.8)</b>
Home SES background	0.85 (3.4)	1.10 (1.3)	0.18 (3.2)	-2.13 (1.4)	<b>3.99 (1.9)</b>	-0.61 (3.2)	0.50 (3.2)	<b>-5.42 (1.7)</b>
Open classroom climate	<b>0.15 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.16 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.14 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.18 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.10 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.13 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.18 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.13 (0.03)</b>
Civic participation at school	<b>0.37 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.34 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.38 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.33 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.45 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.42 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.40 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.41 (0.03)</b>
SES × Open classroom	-0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.02 (0.03)	<b>-0.06 (0.03)</b>	0.00 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)
SES × Civic participation at school	0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	0.07 (0.04)
SES at school level (L2)	<b>1.79 (0.4)</b>	<b>1.30 (0.5)</b>	<b>1.21 (0.5)</b>	0.28 (0.5)	<b>3.46 (0.7)</b>	<b>1.55 (0.5)</b>	<b>1.12 (0.5)</b>	0.33 (0.7)

(continued)

Table 5.4 (continued)

Dependent variables	Independent variables		Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
Intended future electoral participation	Open classroom climate (L2)	<b>0.12 (0.05)</b>	<b>0.10 (0.04)</b>	<b>0.24 (0.1)</b>	<b>0.17 (0.08)</b>	0.10 (0.1)	<b>0.20 (0.1)</b>		<b>0.19 (0.06)</b>	0.09 (0.1)
	Civic participation at school (L2)	<b>0.19 (0.05)</b>	<b>0.29 (0.07)</b>	<b>0.19 (0.07)</b>	<b>0.23 (0.06)</b>	<b>0.29 (0.1)</b>	<b>0.49 (0.1)</b>		<b>0.34 (0.1)</b>	<b>0.47 (0.1)</b>
	Between variance explained %	75.3	74.2	48.9	57.5	63	81.3		60.3	71.5
	Within variance explained %	19.4	15.2	17.3	21.5	32.4	16.1		21.8	35.4
Intended future electoral participation	School variance (Model 0) %	4.8	8.1	4.6	7.2	6.8	3.4		9.8	4.5
	Female	<b>1.02 (0.3)</b>	<b>1.83 (0.2)</b>	0.33 (0.4)	0.75 (0.4)	0.90 (0.6)	<b>1.36 (0.3)</b>		<b>1.05 (0.4)</b>	<b>0.73 (0.33)</b>
	Migrant background	-0.47 (0.7)	<b>-1.41 (0.6)</b>	-0.06 (1.5)	<b>-4.45 (1.2)</b>	-1.28 (1.0)	<b>-2.88 (0.6)</b>		0.08 (0.6)	<b>-1.58 (0.7)</b>
Home SES background	<b>2.96 (1.0)</b>	<b>3.86 (1.0)</b>	<b>3.50 (1.4)</b>	<b>3.70 (1.0)</b>	<b>6.51 (1.5)</b>	<b>5.97 (1.0)</b>		1.84 (1.9)	<b>4.07 (1.6)</b>	

(continued)



Table 5.4 (continued)

Dependent variables	Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
Open classroom climate	<b>0.14 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.15 (0.01)</b>	<b>0.13 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.16 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.13 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.14 (0.01)</b>	<b>0.16 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.09 (0.02)</b>
Civic participation at school	<b>0.23 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.17 (0.01)</b>	<b>0.20 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.19 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.26 (0.03)</b>	<b>0.20 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.18 (0.02)</b>	<b>0.21 (0.02)</b>
SES × Open classroom	<b>-0.04 (0.02)</b>	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
SES × Civic participation at school	<b>0.02 (0.01)</b>	<b>-0.02 (0.01)</b>	<b>-0.05 (0.02)</b>	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)	<b>-0.07 (0.02)</b>	-0.02 (0.02)	<b>-0.08 (0.02)</b>
SES at school level (L2)	<b>2.71 (0.4)</b>	<b>2.85 (0.4)</b>	<b>2.57 (0.4)</b>	<b>3.36 (0.4)</b>	<b>4.24 (0.7)</b>	<b>2.85 (0.4)</b>	<b>3.46 (0.8)</b>	<b>2.56 (0.4)</b>
Open classroom climate (L2)	<b>0.26 (0.04)</b>	<b>0.18 (0.04)</b>	<b>0.31 (0.07)</b>	<b>0.24 (0.07)</b>	0.11 (0.07)	<b>0.15 (0.06)</b>	<b>0.25 (0.07)</b>	<b>0.14 (0.04)</b>
Civic participation at school (L2)	0.05 (0.04)	<b>0.11 (0.06)</b>	<b>0.15 (0.06)</b>	0.05 (0.07)	<b>0.44 (0.08)</b>	0.12 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.1)	<b>0.12 (0.05)</b>
Between variance explained %	81.2	75.7	73.9	74.2	88.9	58.4	53.8	84.4

(continued)

**Table 5.4** (continued)

Dependent variables	Independent variables		Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
	<i>23.0</i>	<i>26.6</i>	<i>22.7</i>	<i>23.8</i>	<i>37.6</i>	<i>43.1</i>	<i>11.9</i>	<i>39.0</i>		
	<i>Within variance explained %</i>									

*Notes:* Model estimates from using Mplus with full information maximum likelihood estimators in treatment of missing data and applying sampling weights. *p* < 0.05 for coefficients in bold

only found in Denmark. This suggests that an inclusive student experience of an open classroom climate for the whole class were important to the development of civic knowledge only in certain education contexts.

In contrast to civic knowledge, peer's learning experiences appear to be important in the learning of citizenship self-efficacy. The results show that the mean level of peers' civic participation at school consistently appears to be supporting the individual students' learning of citizenship self-efficacy (see Table 5.4), as the results were significant and positive for each Nordic country in both studies. Thus, it appeared important to a students' citizenship efficacy that their peers were also involved in in-school civic participation; we can call this a participatory school community. For citizenship self-efficacy, there was also a fair amount of evidence for the benefits of wider and more inclusive open classroom climates that could be experienced by most students, as the vast majority (six of eight) of results showed a significant positive relationship (except for Norway in 2009 and Sweden in 2016).

For intended future electoral participation, the experience of the school-level mean of open classroom climate had positive significant coefficients (see Table 5.4) for all Nordic countries in both studies (except for Norway in 2009). This suggests that an inclusive classroom could be an important component in students' developing of their intentions to vote. There was a mixed picture, with four out of eight results suggesting a relationship between school-level civic participation and future electoral participation. It remains unclear why school-level civic participation was less consistently associated with students' future electoral participation than it was for developing citizenship self-efficacy.

#### *5.7.4 Direct Effects of SES on Civic Competence*

We will now examine the **direct relationship between SES** and levels of civic competence (please note that we controlled for the learning methods; see Tables 5.3 and 5.4). The results showed a consistent significant relationship between SES and levels of civic knowledge for all Nordic countries in both studies. The coefficient was highest in Norway, where a one standard deviation increase in SES was equal to a 42-point increase in 2009 and a 45-point increase in 2016 in students' civic knowledge scores. For Sweden in 2016, the increase was 40 points. For Finland, in 2016 it was 37 points. For Denmark in 2016, it was considerably lower at 27 points.

The relationship between SES and intended future electoral participation was similar to civic knowledge as there were nearly all consistent significant positive coefficients in all four countries in both studies (the exception was Sweden in 2009). In 2016, Norway had the largest size coefficient (5.97), followed by Sweden (4.07), Denmark (3.86), and Finland (3.70).

In contrast, there was less evidence to support the existence of a direct relationship between SES on levels of citizenship self-efficacy as the results were only significant in 2016 in Sweden and 2009 in Norway. Instead, our results indicate the possibility that the relationship between the SES index and citizenship self-efficacy

could perhaps be more indirect and through the significant relationship of SES on students' experience of learning opportunities such as open classroom climate and in-school civic participation (see Table 5.2) which then in turn may have a significant direct influence on citizenship self-efficacy both at the individual student and school levels (Table 5.4).

The relationship between the **socioeconomic student intake of the school** (mean level) and civic competence was clearer. In referring to Tables 5.3 and 5.4, we can see that there were consistently large and significant coefficients for civic knowledge according to the socioeconomic student intake of schools in all four countries in both studies. This suggests that schools with higher socioeconomic intakes were more focused on developing students' levels of civic knowledge than schools with lower socioeconomic intakes. For civic knowledge in 2016, the results had the largest association in Sweden, where a one standard deviation increase in the average socioeconomic intake of a school resulted in a staggering 58-point increase in an individual student's civic knowledge score. We found similar results for the relationship between the school's socioeconomic intakes and future electoral participation, and this was mostly the case for citizenship self-efficacy (the exception was Finland and Sweden in 2016).

### 5.7.5 *Compensatory or Accelerating Effects*

Finally, we considered the possibility that a civic learning experience can compensate for a disadvantaged background by examining the results of the **interaction between SES and the three aspects of civic competence** (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4). The literature in the field identifies that a significant negative result suggested a compensatory effect, while a significant positive result suggested an acceleration effect (Campbell 2008). The results showed that there were almost no significant positive results indicating that there were almost no evidence that levels of inequalities in future political engagement were being enhanced by participating in a civic learning experience. The one exception is for Denmark in 2009 where there was a small (0.02) significant accelerating effect for in-school civic participation on future electoral participation. Thus, in the main our analysis showed that once a student accessed civic learning, there was little in the way of evidence that these experiences by themselves made inequalities in civic competence worse.

Further, we can report that we found seven significant negative coefficients that indicate that civic learning can compensate for low SES backgrounds. In Table 5.4, we can see the results of the interactions between SES and civic participation at school on future electoral participation, and four of the coefficients had a small but significant negative result and this was in 2016 for Denmark ( $-0.02$ ), Norway ( $-0.07$ ), and Sweden ( $-0.08$ ) and in 2009 for Finland ( $-0.05$ ). This can be interpreted as indicating that students from disadvantaged backgrounds benefited more from civic participation in schools in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in 2016 and in Finland in 2009 in terms of improving their levels of intended future electoral participation.

These results suggest that students from a disadvantaged background who were able to access in-school civic participation were able to learn more about the importance of voting from undertaking this experience than those from more privileged backgrounds who were engaged in these same activities. Although the Danish results were the smallest they had managed to change from a significant accelerating effect to a significant mitigating effect between the two time points.

In Finland in 2009, participation in in-school civic participation was also found to compensate for low SES on students' learning of civic knowledge ( $-0.41$ ). This was the largest mitigating effect that we found, and it stands out in comparison to the small effects found in the literature (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019).

In more cases than not, the individual experience of an open classroom climate had the same benefit for each student regardless of their SES. Nevertheless, there were two cases where a small mitigating effect was found. The experience of an open classroom climate in 2009 reduced inequalities in citizenship self-efficacy in Norway ( $-0.06$ ) and in future electoral participation in Denmark ( $-0.04$ ).

### 5.7.6 *Explained Variance of the Models*

Regarding civic knowledge at the individual level, our model explained 15–31% of the variation. The model worked particularly well in Norway, with consistently 30–31% of the variation being explained in both studies. Our models measured a high level of explained variance at the school level, ranging from about 25% in Finland to 86% in Sweden.

For citizenship self-efficacy, our model explained 15–35% of individual-level variation. The model worked particularly well at the individual level in Sweden in 2016, explaining 35% of individual level variation. The school-level variables in our model explained 49–81% of school-level variation. Norway was the country where the model was able to explain 81% of the explained variance.

For future electoral participation, the model explained a substantial amount of the variance at the individual level, mostly between 23 and 43%. Here, the model worked particularly well in Norway in 2016, accounting for 43% of the individual-level variations. Our model explained a large degree of school-level variation, ranging between 54 and 89%. Again, in Norway, the model fit well and explained just shy of 90% of variations among schools.

## 5.8 Discussion and Conclusion

Before beginning the discussion, it is necessary to note that in contrast with Hoskins and Janmaat's (2019) longitudinal research, the research used in this chapter was only based on cross-sectional data from the IEA ICCS, meaning it is necessary to be cautious regarding causality and effects, and it also necessary to understand the results

as exploratory. Additionally, the learning experiences and attitude measures were self-reported by students, which means deliberately incorrect or desirable responses could have been provided. Nevertheless, the quality and representative nature of the data collected by IEA are internationally regarded as meeting a very high standard. Further, being able to replicate the analysis in each Nordic country over the course of two studies helped provide assurance regarding the certainty of the results.

Even when taking these cautionary principles into account, we found substantial evidence suggesting that schools may well influence socioeconomic inequalities in civic competence in Nordic countries. Much as in the United Kingdom, the issue of access is key. We found evidence that disadvantaged students comparatively to socioeconomic advantaged students experience a lack of in-school access to civic learning in all Nordic countries. Concerning civic participation in schools, Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) argued convincingly that this is often a result of the voluntary nature of these activities in schools, and middle-class students are more likely to volunteer and be asked by the teacher to participate because of their higher levels of cultural capital. Social class distinctions and conflict begin also to explain differences in the perception of how open a classroom is for discussion. Nevertheless, how social class manifests itself in Nordic schools requires more research.

In addition to access-related differences within schools, there is also a difference in access to and opportunities for civic learning between schools. Our results suggested that the much-applauded Nordic comprehensive education system is not as equal as presented within its policies. This chapter's evidence points towards schools with higher socioeconomic student intake as hosting more in-school civic activities and having more classrooms that are open to discussion (except Norway in 2016 regarding open classroom climates and Denmark in 2016 regarding civic participation). It is true that between schools, differences are not that high in Nordic countries compared to that of the rest of the world (as was demonstrated by the low levels of between-school variations). Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that schools are now teaching differently according to their socioeconomic student intakes. We can hypothesize that Nordic schools may now also be influenced by neoliberal arguments for the need for schools with low socioeconomic student intakes to prioritize basic skills and the passing of tests; they may also be influenced by the belief that these outcomes are achieved in schools by keeping stricter order rather than prizing open discussion (Ben-Porath 2013; Bischoff 2016).

The results also showed that socioeconomic inequalities have a strong, direct, and additional relationship with levels of civic knowledge and future electoral participation. The higher the SES, the higher the levels of these civic competences. As our data are not longitudinal, fully explaining this process is difficult. Nevertheless, based on the literature in the field (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019), we can speculate that these effects are partly due to additional learning at home in the context of families with high SES who are more likely to openly discuss family decisions and politics and also act as role models participating in political activities.

We also found large between-school differences in civic competence based on socioeconomic student intakes. We controlled for our civic learning variables at the school level, meaning that the explanation cannot relate to more open classroom

discussion or more participation in civic activities at school. These effects could be due to more or better citizenship education at these schools, or it could be due to students learning from each other about civic competences. Further research is needed to be certain which is the more likely explanation.

### ***5.8.1 A Nordic Model of Inequalities in Civic Learning?***

Although the issue of inequalities in access to civic learning are apparent in all Nordic countries, it did not manifest in the same way in each. Due to the introduction of several neoliberal reforms, we had suspected that Sweden would be the most unequal of all Nordic countries regarding inequalities in civic learning. There is some evidence to support this. The Swedish results indicated inequalities in access to both forms of civic learning at the individual and school levels in 2009 and 2016, and Sweden was the only country that identified inequalities across the board on the question of access. Sweden had socioeconomic inequalities at the individual level in 2016 for all three forms of civic competence, including citizenship self-efficacy (which was not the case for the remaining Nordic countries in 2016). Sweden had the highest differences between schools on civic knowledge scores in which a one standard deviation increase in a school's average socioeconomic student intake resulted in a staggering 58-point increase in an individual student's civic knowledge score.

Finland, which we had expected to have the most equal education system of the Nordic countries, had no socioeconomic inequalities related to access to open classroom climate at the individual level and regularly had one of the lower effects compared to other Nordic countries. In 2016, Norway was another example of equality in the learning of civic competences, as its education system achieved socioeconomic equality between schools regarding the levels of open classroom climates. In 2016, Denmark enabled civic participation equality between schools. The fact that these countries managed to attain equality of students' experience of civic learning regardless of SES is an important reminder for all education systems: it is possible to achieve this.

Nevertheless, the results did not fit neatly into the boxes of expected socioeconomic inequalities in the education systems of the different countries. All four countries experienced an individual direct relationship between SES and civic knowledge, future electoral participation, and inequality of access to in-school civic participation. Finland had both school- and individual-level inequalities regarding access to in-school civic participation. Additionally, the evidence points to Norway as having the highest individual level inequality of access to open classroom climate and in-school civic participation. When it came to the direct relationship between socioeconomic inequalities in levels of civic competence, Norway again had the largest individual-level relationship. For example, in 2016, a one standard deviation increase in a students' SES was equal to a 45-point increase in their civic knowledge score. Nevertheless, as stated above, Norway was the only Nordic country that did not have

between-school differences regarding open classroom climates in 2016. In Norway, perhaps, inequalities reside in access to learning within schools.

### ***5.8.2 What Should Schools Do to Reduce Inequalities in Civic Competence?***

The chapter's results identified that civic learning (open classroom climates and in-school civic participation) in each country in both studies is likely to be enhancing each of the three forms of civic competence (civic knowledge, citizenship self-efficacy, and intended future electoral participation). Equally, the results indicated that when students accessed these forms of learning, disadvantaged students appeared to benefit either the same or more than their advantaged peers. Perhaps the most important finding of this chapter is that when less advantaged students get access to civic learning, they can experience mitigating/compensatory effects on their civic development. This was found most frequently when less advantaged students were able to access in-school civic participation, which appeared to develop their intended future electoral participation—although it should be noted that in keeping with the results found in this field these effects were not large. In Finland, in-school civic participation also compensated for inequalities in civic knowledge in 2009 by quite a considerable size. These results of the benefits of in-school civic participation is new to the field of citizenship education, as previous research has only found mitigating effects for citizenship education (Deimel et al. 2020; Gainous and Martens 2012; Hoskins et al. 2017; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019) or open classroom climates (Campbell 2008). Thus, we can conclude that the targeted provision of access to civic learning—in particular in-school civic participation—for less advantaged students can provide an important tool that schools can use to combat inequalities in civic competence and has the potential to reduce future inequalities in political engagement.

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# Chapter 6

## The Young Environmental Citizens in Nordic Countries: Their Concerns, Values, Engagement, and Intended Future Actions



Lihong Huang and Saiki Lucy Cheah

**Abstract** This chapter presents an analysis of students' concerns, values, engagement, and intended future participation on environmental issues in relation to their home socioeconomic background, gender, and migrant status. Analyzing IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016 data of Nordic countries, we first present descriptions of student responses to all questions related to environmental issues and compare Nordic results with European and international averages. Then, we construct a composite score of student environmental citizenship for investigating its relationship with student background factors such as gender, migrant status, and home socioeconomic status through comparing means between student groups with different background characteristics. Lastly, we apply factorial ANOVA analysis method to examine the effect sizes of student background factors and the interactions between them on youth environmental citizenship in the four countries. The results show that there are both similarities and small variations in elements of student environmental citizenship among the Nordic countries and in comparison with their European and international peers. Nordic students stand out as the concerned environmental citizens while they are somehow lower than their European and international peers in engagement, values, and intended participation of environmental citizenship. We find that student environmental citizenship is socially divided in all Nordic countries as it differs significantly between students from different socioeconomic strata and genders. Although not all differences of student environmental citizenship by migrant status are statistically significant among the Nordic countries, we find some significant influence of migrant status interaction with socioeconomic statuses and genders.

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**Keywords** Environmental citizenship · Socioeconomic background · Nordic countries · Citizenship education · International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

## 6.1 Introduction

Youth activism and engagement in the recent climate change movement have illustrated that students are practicing and exercising active environmental citizenship to demand and advocate means for change at present and future. Climate and environmental activists have demonstrated a combination of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in activism and engagements through organizing the student movement, setting pro-environmental examples, making their voices heard, demanding for immediate actions to address environmental problems. For instance, Greta Thunberg (aged 15 then) started a School Strike for the Climate protest outside the Swedish parliament regularly on Friday since August 2018 and inspired a series of national and international mass student protests. These protests have become Fridays for Future (FFF), Youth Strike for Climate and Youth for Climate, which have extended the exercise of youth environmental citizenship across schools, local, national, and international levels. Their goals are to demand effective actions from political leaders now and future to prevent climate crisis by means of reducing carbon emissions aggressively and environmental injustice from political leaders worldwide.

Over the course of the School Strike for the Climate movement from December 2018 to September 2019, significant numbers of parents, educators, scientists,<sup>1</sup> healthcare professionals, civil servants, and public figures support and participated in the youth activism and its cause (Carrington 2019). By December 2020, more than four million protesters around the world participated in the world's two largest climate strikes. One of the main victories from the youth climate activism is gaining worldwide recognition and support including the United Nations (UN) General Secretary António Guterres who claimed that "My generation has failed to respond properly to the dramatic challenge of climate change" and "concrete realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020" (Guterres 2019).

In the youth climate protest movement, students and young people exercised their environmental citizenship through youth activism and civic engagement. The continuity and success of the movement also demonstrated students' willingness and competencies to enact pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes in private and civic life for change to take place now and in the future. The exercise of environmental citizenship is strongly associated with a citizen's capacity to act in society as an agent of change and a citizen's capacity to make change also depends on the development of a person's willingness and competence for critical, active, and democratic engagement in preventing and solving environmental problems (Reis 2020). Moreover, civic engagement depends on students and their "motivation to participate

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Scientist4Future, Scientists4Climate, Nature Weekly Scientific Journal, Science Magazine, Club of Rome.

in civic activities, their confidence in the effectiveness of their participation, and their beliefs about their own capacity to become actively involved” (Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018, p. 72). In sum, through youth activism and civic engagement, young people have exercised and practiced the essential properties of young environmental citizens; for instance, they have demonstrated their willingness (e.g., values and attitudes) for environmental protection, as well as competencies (e.g., critical understanding and behavioural skills) for dealing with environmental crisis at present and future.

Meanwhile, environmental activism enables the exercise of students’ environmental rights and duties, as well as the identification of the underlying structural and systemic causes of environmental problems, developing the willingness and the competences for critical and active engagement to address complex environmental issues, making personal and collective efforts through democratic means for change. We find most appropriate for this study a recent and comprehensive definition of environmental citizens derived from the definition of environmental citizenship and sequential environmental citizen by the European Network for Environmental Citizenship (ENEC, 2017–2022):

*Environmental Citizen* is defined as the citizen who has a coherent and adequate body of **knowledge** as well as the necessary **skills, values, attitudes** and **competences** in order to be able to act and participate in society as an **agent of change** in the **private** and **public sphere**, on a **local, national** and **global scale**, through **individual** and **collective actions**, in the direction of **solving** contemporary **environmental problems**, **preventing** the creation of new environmental problems, in **achieving sustainability** as well as **developing a healthy relationship with nature**. *Environmental Citizen* is the citizen who **exercises his/her environmental rights and duties**, is able to identify the underlying **structural causes** of environmental degradation and environmental problems, and has the **willingness** and the **competences** for **critical** and **active engagement** and **civic participation** to address those structural causes, acting individually and collectively within democratic means and taking into account **inter- and intra-generational justice**. (ENEC 2018)

We focus on all the elements of environmental citizens, i.e., concerns, values, engagement, and intended participation as measured by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) student survey (Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018). This chapter investigates the extent to which students’ home socioeconomic background, gender, and migrant status in the Nordic countries are associated with youth environmental citizenship.

## 6.2 The Role of School and Home in Environmental Citizenship and Youth Activism

In recent years, environmental citizenship has become an integral element of civic and citizenship education curricula, both globally and at the European level (Council of Europe 2018; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2017; Gericke et al. 2020). From a pedagogical perspective, youth activism and civic engagement exhibit active

and experiential learning among student participants who apply environmental citizenship education across their school, local, national, and global levels. In the context of environmental citizenship, Reis (2020) refers activism to a process of collective, democratic, research-informed, and negotiated problem-solving action on socio-environmental problems. Previous research show that school can support and foster a students' civic learning and engagement through open classroom/school climates (e.g., Campbell 2008; Hoskins et al. 2017; Knowles et al. 2018), democratic structures within schools (e.g., Hoskins et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018), and early opportunities for active participation (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Reis 2020). Putting in place these elements for democratic activism, school can increase levels of civic engagement among young people as the sense of not feeling empowered enough hinders citizens' participation in decision-making processes (Hodson 2014). The role of school in empowering students through activism is to develop an atmosphere of shared responsibility and commitment and a collaborative relationship between schools and communities, through which students become critical producers of knowledge, in the attempt to find appropriate solutions for the problems they identify as important and socially relevant (Hodson 2014; Reis 2020).

The existing analyses on the 2016 ICCS study (e.g., Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018; Chapter 5 in this book) show that students' characteristics and social background are important predictors of their civic knowledge while parental interest and students' interest in civic issues were the strongest background predictors of expected civic engagement. These analyses also found that students' perceptions of open classroom climate for discussion as well as their civic engagement at school remained significant predictors while experience with civic engagement in the community or at school tended to be positively associated with students' expected civic engagement as adults. Furthermore, students' belief of the importance of civic engagement through established channels were also more likely to predict future civic participation while female students were less inclined than male students to expect they would become actively involved politically in the future. In sum, Schulz, Carstens, et al. (2018) suggest students' characteristics (e.g., perceptions, values, interests, self-efficacy, gender) and social background (e.g., school climate, interactions at homes and schools, channels for engagement, and socioeconomic background) to be positively associated or significant predictors for citizenship practice.

Moreover, previous analysis (Cheah and Huang 2019) provided important evidence that environmental citizenship education practice in Nordic schools has a significant positive association with heightened attitudes and magnified behaviours among students toward environmental actions now and in the future. In addition, the same analysis (Huang and Cheah 2019) found that background variables such as parental education levels, migrant status and gender of the students also played a role in explaining the variation of student environmental citizenship in Nordic schools. There are signs of increasing income inequality in Nordic countries (Aaberge et al. 2018) and growing research evidence indicating a strong link between socioeconomic inequality and exposure to environmental injustice (Shen et al. 2020; Walker and Burningham 2011; Cutter et al. 2003). There is evidence of socioeconomic inequality in young people's civic learning opportunities and their civic competence



achievement in the Nordic schools (see Chapter 5 of this book). This chapter asks the question: Are there signs of socioeconomic inequalities in youth environmental citizenship in Nordic countries as well? We will analyze ICCS 2016 data and focus on a few question items that can be used as indicators of student environmental citizenship.

### 6.3 Data and Measures

The data used in this chapter are from Nordic countries that participated in IEA's ICCS 2016.<sup>2</sup> We use eight question items from the student data to measure environmental citizenship including students' concerns, values, engagement, and intended future actions relating to environmental issues (see Appendix Table 6.3 for descriptions). First, students' concerns on environmental issues are measured by two items (IS3G28A: pollution and IS3G28I: climate change) of a question asking students to identify the biggest threat to the world future with four response alternatives (recoded: 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to a moderate extent, 4 = to a large extent). Second, two items measure the values of environmental citizenship by student responses to the question "How important are the following behaviours for being a good adult citizen?" The items are IS3G23J "taking part in activities to protect the environment" and IS3G23N "making personal efforts to protect natural re-sources," which have four response alternatives (recoded: 1 = not important at all, 2 = not very important, 3 = quite important, 4 = very important).

Third, student learning as a part of engagement is a subjective measure from student responses to a question item IS3G18C "At school, to what extent have you learned about how to protect the environment (e.g., through energy-saving or recycling)?" with four response alternatives (recoded: 1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = to some extent, 4 = a lot). Student engagement includes also two question items asking about student participation in environmental actions at school (i.e., IS3G16F) or in environmental organizations or groups outside school (i.e., IS3G15B) during the past with three response alternatives (recoded: 1 = never, 2 = yes, before the past year, 3 = yes, during the past year). Finally, student intended future participation as part of their values of environmental citizenship is from a question item IS3G31J "When you are an adult, will you make personal efforts to help the environment?" with four response alternatives (recoded: 1 = I would certainly not do this, 2 = I would probably not do this, 3 = I would probably do this, 4 = I would certainly do this).

The eight items measuring different dimensions of student environmental citizenship form a scale with marginally acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha range from lowest 0.65 for Denmark and Norway to highest 0.72 for Finland, using student weight TOTWGTS). By computing the sum from these eight items, we create a new

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<sup>2</sup>Chapter 1 of this book presents more details on the representative sample, including the number cases and schools per country.

variable with accumulated values of the students' environmental citizenship (with minimum = 8, maximum = 30, and a Nordic mean of 22.2; standard deviation = 3.1), which contains student concerns, values, attitudes, learning, and participation, and intended future participation for protecting the environment.

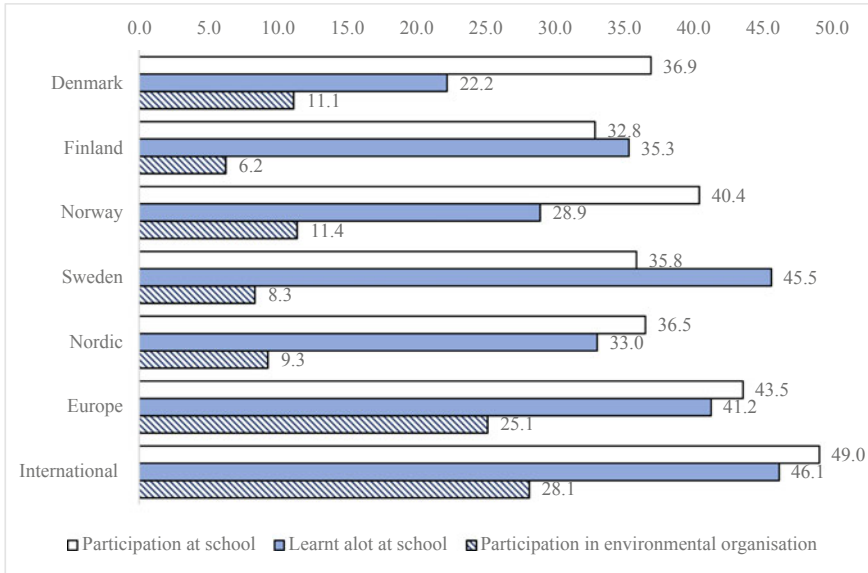
## 6.4 Analysis Plan

We analyze the data and present the results in three steps. First, we present descriptions of student responses in three subsections describing the Nordic environmental citizen (Table 6.3 in the Appendix contains detailed descriptions of the eight items). The descriptions include concerns (see Table 6.1, with numbers in bold highlighting the two most chosen concerns), learning and their engagement (Fig. 6.1), and values and future intended participation related to environmental issues (Fig. 6.2), in comparison between the Nordic countries and with that in Europe and international averages. Then, we explore if student environmental citizenship differs by their socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and migrant background. We use the national index of SES, which is a standardized score with an international/national mean of

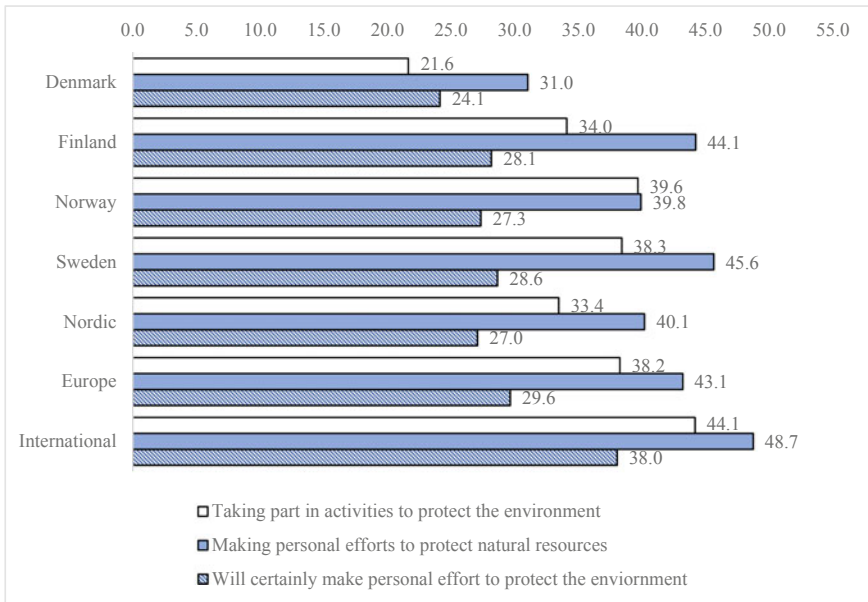
**Table 6.1** Students' response "to a large extent" on issues of their consideration as the biggest threats to the world future, percent (standard error)

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Nordic	Europe <sup>^^</sup>	International <sup>^</sup>
<b>Pollution</b>	<b>75 (0.9)</b>	<b>66 (1.0)</b>	<b>76 (0.7)</b>	<b>79 (0.8)</b>	<b>74 (0.4)</b>	<b>74 (0.3)</b>	<b>76 (0.2)</b>
Terrorism	58 (0.8)	57 (1.0)	54 (0.8)	51 (1.1)	55 (0.5)	<b>67 (0.3)</b>	<b>66 (0.2)</b>
Water shortage	54 (0.9)	44 (1.1)	41 (1.0)	46 (1.1)	46 (0.5)	63 (0.3)	65 (0.2)
Food shortage	50 (0.8)	49 (1.2)	52 (0.8)	48 (1.3)	50 (0.5)	61 (0.3)	62 (0.2)
Infectious diseases	46 (0.9)	36 (0.8)	40 (0.9)	34 (0.9)	39 (0.4)	56 (0.3)	59 (0.2)
<b>Climate change</b>	<b>64 (1.2)</b>	<b>62 (1.1)</b>	<b>66 (0.8)</b>	<b>68 (0.9)</b>	<b>65 (0.5)</b>	56 (0.3)	55 (0.2)
Poverty	41 (0.8)	36 (1.1)	49 (0.6)	43 (1.2)	42 (0.5)	51 (0.3)	53 (0.2)
Crime	30 (0.8)	27 (0.3)	33 (0.8)	28 (0.9)	29 (0.4)	44 (0.3)	50 (0.2)
Violent conflict	27 (0.7)	28 (0.8)	32 (0.7)	34 (1.2)	30 (0.4)	42 (0.3)	46 (0.2)
Global financial crisis	33 (0.8)	32 (0.9)	38 (0.7)	31 (0.9)	33 (0.4)	40 (0.3)	44 (0.2)
Energy shortage	35 (0.7)	27 (0.9)	28 (0.7)	30 (1.0)	30 (0.4)	38 (0.3)	43 (0.2)
Unemployment	26 (0.7)	30 (0.8)	28 (0.7)	27 (1.1)	28 (0.4)	38 (0.3)	41 (0.2)
Overpopulation	39 (0.8)	27 (1.1)	37 (0.9)	41 (1.1)	36 (0.5)	38 (0.3)	39 (0.2)

*Notes* Data presented here are from ICCS 2016 student survey question Q28 items IS3G28A-M. In bold are the two items with highest percentages of students responding "to a large extent;" <sup>^</sup>Tables 5.13 and 5.14 in Schulz et al. 2018b; <sup>^^</sup>average of 14 European Union member states participated in ICCS 2016

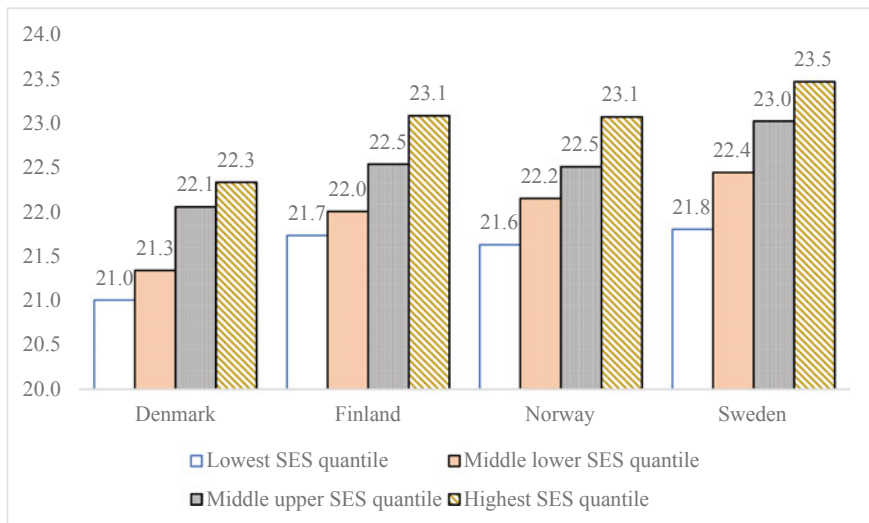


**Fig. 6.1** Student responses to their learning (IS3G18C) and participation in activities at school (IS3G16F) related to protecting the environment and their participation in environmental organisations outside of school (IS3G15B), percent (standard error in Appendix Table 6.3)

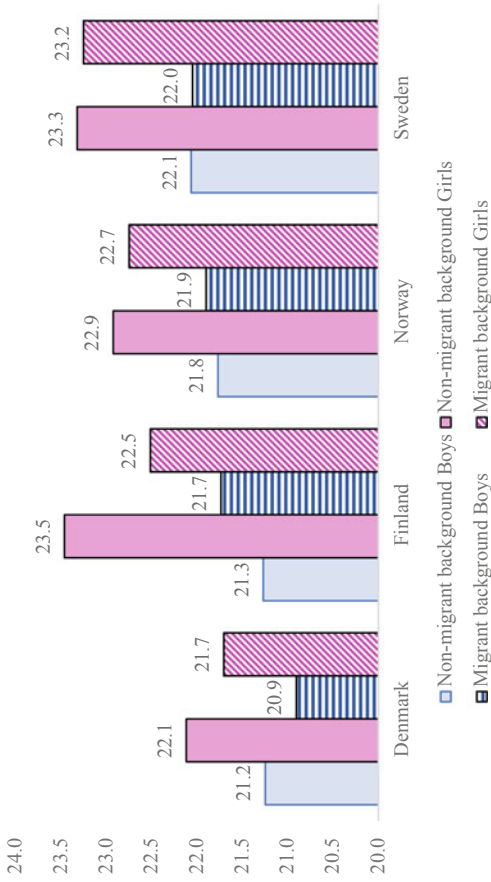


**Fig. 6.2** Students' responses "most important" individual traits of being a good adult environmental citizen (IS3G23J, IS3G23N) and "will certainly do" in participation of future environmental efforts (IS3G31J), percent (standard error in Appendix Table 6.3)

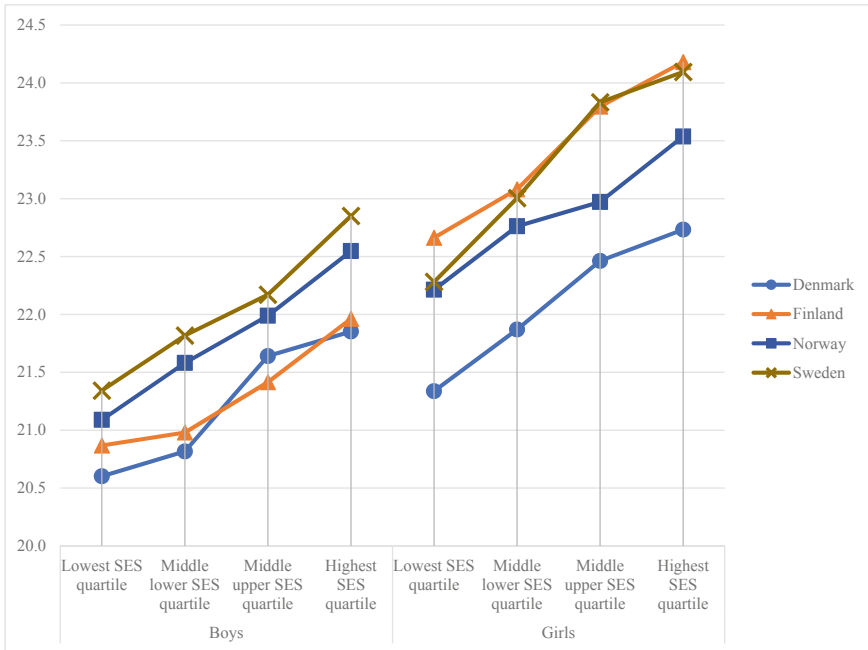
zero, a maximum value of 4.73, and a minimum value of -5.27. The national index is constructed on three indices: parents' highest occupational status, parents' highest level of education, and the number of books at home (Schulz, Carstens, et al. 2018). To understand the levels of socioeconomic inequalities in environmental citizenship, we used the national socioeconomic index variable to divide the ICCS data into four equal groups in each country: students in lowest SES quartile, middle-lower SES quartile, middle-upper SES quartile, and highest SES quartile. Figure 6.3 provides a visual presentation of the average environmental citizenship by four SES strata in the Nordic countries. We also performed t-tests to assess if student environmental citizenship differs significantly between SES quartiles, by dividing the difference by its standard error estimated by using jackknife replication in the IEA IDB Analyzer. With this goal in mind, we performed the same analysis to assess differences between student genders (boy = 0; girl = 1) and migrant status (0 = at least one parent were born in country; 1 = both parents were migrants), as presented in Fig. 6.4 (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 of this book for the distributions of gender and migrant status). Finally, we present means of student environmental citizenship by SES strata and gender interaction (Fig. 6.5) and SES strata and migrant status interaction (Fig. 6.6), using Factorial ANOVA technique available at SPSS analysis programme to test the strength of effect of all three background factors and interactions between them on student environmental citizenship (see Appendix Table 6.4 for all estimated means).



**Fig. 6.3** Student environmental citizenship in four socioeconomic strata, by country (Notes All differences between the socioeconomic strata are significant at 0.05 level, except the non-significant differences in Finland between lowest and middle lower SES quartiles and in Denmark between middle upper and highest SES quartiles. See Appendix Table 6.4 for numeric values with standard errors)



**Fig. 6.4** Student environmental citizenship between genders and migrant statuses (*Notes* All differences between boys and girls are significant at 0.05 level. Difference between migrant boys and non-migrant boys is significant only in Denmark and difference between migrant girls and non-migrant girls is significant in Denmark, Finland, and Norway but not in Sweden. See Appendix Table 6.4 for numeric values with standard errors)

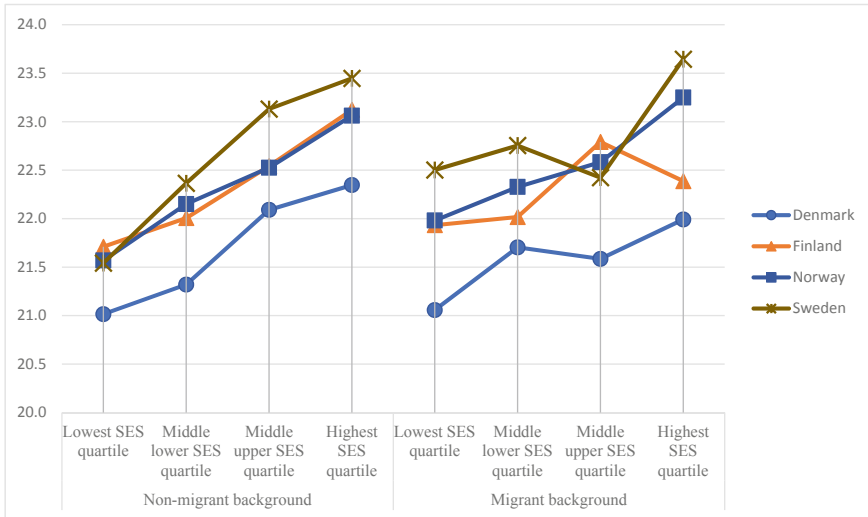


**Fig. 6.5** Means of student environmental citizenship in gender groups and four socioeconomic strata (Notes All differences are significant except: For boys, in Denmark non-significant differences between lowest and middle lower SES strata and between highest and middle upper SES strata; in Finland non-significant differences between lowest and middle lower SES strata and between middle lower and middle upper SES strata; in Sweden non-significant difference between middle lower and middle upper SES strata. For girls, in both Denmark and Sweden non-significant difference between highest and middle upper SES strata; in Finland non-significant difference between lowest and middle lower strata; in Norway non-significant difference between middle lower and middle upper SES strata. See Appendix Table 6.4 for numeric values with standard errors)

We also report ETA-squared as a comprehensive measure of inter-class differences in the multiple comparisons.

## 6.5 Result 1: Description of Students’ Environmental Citizenship

First, we present descriptive analyses of student responses to all questions related to environmental issues also in comparison between Nordic countries and European and international averages. In three subsections, we present students’ biggest concerns, their learning and current engagement, and their values and intended participation.



**Fig. 6.6** Means of student environmental citizenship in non-migrant and migrant groups and four socioeconomic strata (Notes For non-migrant background, all differences are significant except non-significant difference between highest and middle upper SES strata in both Denmark and Sweden, non-significant difference between lowest and middle lower strata in Finland. For migrant background, all differences are non-significant except significant differences between the highest and both the lowest and middle lower SES strata in Norway, significant differences between the highest and both middle upper and the lowest SES strata in Sweden)

### 6.5.1 Students’ Biggest Concerns with the Environment

Table 6.1 provides the description of students’ responses to the question on the biggest threats to the world future in the four Nordic countries and in comparison with European and international averages. Nordic students are most concerned with pollution and climate change as the two biggest threats to the world future while their European and international peers are most concerned with pollution and terrorism. Interestingly, pollution and climate change as the top two concerns of Nordic students are two closely related issues that highlight the current crisis and demonstrate the relationship between human behaviours and the future of the world.

Taking these two biggest concerns together underlies the structural causes of the environmental crisis. More than their European and international peers, Nordic students considered that climate change would pose the biggest threat to the world future. However, there are small variations between the Nordic countries in terms of the students’ responses to the category “to a large extent” regarding both pollution and climate change as the biggest threats to the world future. While students in Finland appear to have slightly lower percentages for both concerns than their counterparts in the other three countries, students in Sweden have slightly higher percentages than their counterparts in the other three countries.

### ***6.5.2 Students' Learning and Practice of Environmental Citizenship***

Figure 6.1 visualizes students' responses to questions asking if they have learnt or participated in activities related to protecting the environment at school or in environmental organizations or groups outside of school (see Appendix Table 6.3 for detailed data description). On the whole, lower percentages of Nordic students than those of their European and international peers have participated in or learnt a lot on protecting the environment. Among the four countries, Finland has the lowest percentage of students who have participated in both school activities (32.8%) and environmental organizations outside of school (6.2%) while Norway has the highest percentages of students for participation both at school (40.4%) and outside (11.4%). Denmark has the lowest percentage of students who have learnt a lot at school on protecting the environment (22.2%) while Sweden has the highest percentage of students who have learnt a lot on this subject (45.5%). However, significantly higher proportions of students in Finland and Sweden than those in Denmark and Norway, report to have learnt a lot school. This corresponds well with the fact that "promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment" has become one of the three most important aims of civic and citizenship education in their schools in 2016 as reported by school principals in Finland and Sweden but not by those in Denmark and Norway (see Table 3.1 of Chapter 3 in this book).

### ***6.5.3 Students' Values and Intentions with Respect to Environmental Citizenship***

Figure 6.2 shows students' responses to the category "very important" for a good adult citizen to take part in activities to protect the environment and to make personal effort to protect natural resources; their responses to the category "will certainly make personal efforts to protect the environment when becoming an adult" are also shown (see Appendix Table 6.3 for data descriptions). Here again, the percentages of Nordic students are lower than those of European and international students who responded "very important" on values of a good adult environmental citizen and their willingness to participate when becoming adults.

Among the four countries, Denmark has the lowest percentages in all three indicators of values and intention of environmental citizenship, Sweden has highest percentage of students who responded "very important" on making personal efforts to protect nature resources while with regard to intended future participation there are similar percentages in Finland, Norway, and Sweden.



## **6.6 Result 2: Differences in Terms of Students' Environmental Citizenship by Socioeconomic and Migrant Background and by Gender**

To answer the second research question—"Are there signs of inter-individual and socioeconomic inequalities in youth environmental citizenship in Nordic countries?"—we apply factorial ANOVA analysis on effect of student background factors on youth environmental citizenship and the interactions between them in the four Nordic countries. Here, we present means of the composite score of student environmental citizenship for investigating its relationship with student background factors such as gender, migrant status, and home socioeconomic status through comparing means between student groups with different background characteristics. At the same time, we report on the effect sizes of the background variables and interactions between them, respectively.

### ***6.6.1 Differences According to Socioeconomic Status***

Figure 6.3 represents the average scores of environmental citizenship in four socioeconomic groups (for the numerical values, see Appendix Table 6.4). In all countries, students from the highest SES group have significantly higher average scores of environmental citizenship than those from the lowest and middle lower SES strata.

Among the Nordic countries, students of the lowest scores of environmental citizenship are from the lowest and middle lower SES strata in Denmark and students of the highest scores of environmental citizenship are from the highest SES group in Sweden. Also, the students from the highest SES strata in Finland and Norway have the same score of environmental citizenship as those from middle upper SES group in Sweden. However, the average scores of environmental citizenship in all four SES strata in Finland are nearly identical with those in Norway.

### ***6.6.2 Differences According to Gender and Migrant Status***

Figure 6.4 shows average scores of environmental citizenship between boys and girls with and without migrant background (see Table 6.4 in Appendix for descriptive means). In all four countries, girls have significantly higher scores than boys do regardless of their migrant statuses while the gender difference is biggest among non-migrant students in Finland and smallest in Denmark.

A difference between non-migrant and migrant students is significant in both gender groups in Denmark, Finland, and Norway but not in Sweden. Interestingly, migrant girls appear to have lower scores than non-migrant girls do in Denmark, Finland, and Norway while migrant boys have lower scores than non-migrant boys

only in Denmark but they have higher scores than non-migrant boys in Finland and Norway. However, as shown in Table 6.2 gender effect size is smallest in Denmark ( $ETA^2 = 0.0062$ ) and biggest in Sweden ( $ETA^2 = 0.0228$ ). Migrant status effect is significant only in Denmark ( $ETA^2 = 0.0013$ ) and Finland ( $ETA^2 = 0.0002$ ) while an interaction between gender and migrant status is significant only in Finland ( $ETA^2 = 0.0018$ ) and Norway ( $ETA^2 = 0.0002$ ).

**Table 6.2** Partial ETA-squared values of the ANOVA means testing of environmental citizenship by socioeconomic strata, gender, migrant status, and interactions

		Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Figure 6.4	Intercept	0.9431	0.8766	0.9551	0.9695
	Gender (girls = 1)	0.0062	0.0079	0.0107	0.0228
	Migrant status (both parents migrants = 1)	0.0013	0.0002	–	–
	Gender × migrant status	–	0.0018	0.0002	–
	<i>R-squared (corrected model)</i>	0.0227	0.1224	0.0341	0.0407
Figure 6.5	Intercept	0.9822	0.9840	0.9826	0.9833
	Gender (girls = 1)	0.0219	0.1221	0.0313	0.0433
	Socioeconomic status	0.0320	0.0307	0.0286	0.0425
	Gender × socioeconomic status	0.0004	0.0014	0.0002	0.0019
	<i>R-squared (corrected model)</i>	0.0536	0.1479	0.0604	0.0837
Figure 6.6	Intercept	0.9143	0.8245	0.9453	0.9621
	Migrant status (both parents migrants = 1)	–	–	0.0004	0.0005
	Socioeconomic status	0.0059	0.0020	0.0089	0.0142
	Migrant status × socioeconomic status	0.0006	0.0003	0.0002	0.0050
	<i>R-squared (corrected model)</i>	0.0323	0.0303	0.0303	0.0467
Total model	Intercept	0.9143	0.8405	0.9469	0.9635
	Gender (girls = 1)	0.0041	0.0052	0.0082	0.0227
	Migrant status (both parents migrants = 1)	–	–	0.0004	0.0009
	Socioeconomic status	0.0060	0.0025	0.0089	0.0155
	Gender × migrant status	–	0.0014	0.0002	0.0002
	Gender × socioeconomic status	0.0004	–	0.0002	0.0016
	Migrant status × socioeconomic status	0.0004	0.0002	0.0002	0.0044
	Gender × socioeconomic status*migrant status	0.0002	0.0004	0.0003	0.0004
	<i>R-squared (corrected model)</i>	0.0540	0.1498	0.0617	0.0891

Notes –indicates a non-significant effect

### 6.6.3 *Interaction Effects Between Socioeconomic Status and Gender*

Figure 6.5 is a graphical representation of mean differences in terms of student environmental citizenship in interaction between SES and gender (see Table 6.4 in the Appendix for numeric means). It shows that girls have higher scores than boys across all SES strata while students from higher SES strata have higher scores than those in lower SES strata regardless of genders. In Finland, girls of the lowest SES have higher average score of environmental citizenship than boys of the highest SES while in the other three countries, girls of the middle lower SES have similar score of environmental citizenship as boys of the highest SES.

However, the interaction between SES and gender is significant in all four countries and girls have higher scores of environmental citizenship regardless of their socioeconomic strata. Table 6.2 presents the results from factorial ANOVA analysis testing means variance explained (i.e., partial Eta squared). Although gender has significant effect in all four countries, biggest gender effects on student environmental citizenship in all four SES strata are in Finland ( $ETA^2 = 0.1221$ ) while the weakest gender effects are in Denmark ( $ETA^2 = 0.0219$ ). Meanwhile, SES has weakest explanation power in Norway ( $ETA^2 = 0.0286$ ) and the strongest power in Sweden ( $ETA^2 = 0.0433$ ) but SES appears to have more effect for girls than for boys in the Nordic countries as there is a significant positive interaction effect between SES and gender in all countries (see Table 6.2).

### 6.6.4 *Interaction Effects Between Socioeconomic Status and Migrant Status*

Figure 6.6 is a graphical presentation of mean differences in terms of student environmental citizenship according to SES and in interaction with migrant status (see Table 6.4 in Appendix for numeric values). It shows that in all four countries, for the non-migrant students, the average scores of environmental citizenship increase along with the increase of socioeconomic strata but this is not the same case for migrant students. For the migrant students, SES appears to have a less clear, linear relationship with student environmental citizenship in both Denmark and Finland where the differences are not statistically significant between SES strata. While in Norway, only the differences between migrant students of the highest and those of both lowest and middle lower SES strata are significant, in Sweden, only the differences between migrant students of the highest and those of both lowest and middle upper SES are significant.

Although migrant status does not appear to have any notable effect on student environmental citizenship in Denmark and Finland, factorial ANOVA analysis shows that the interaction between SES and migrant status is statistically significant in all four countries (see Table 6.2). Moreover, migrant status makes a significant difference

among students in all socioeconomic strata only in Sweden where migrant students have higher scores of environmental citizenship than non-migrant students in the lowest, middle lower, and the highest SES strata while non-migrant students have higher score than migrant students only in middle upper SES group. Among the other three countries, significant differences between migrant and non-migrant students can be found only in some social strata but not the others. For instance, non-migrant students have higher scores of environmental citizenship than migrant students do only in middle upper and the highest SES strata in Denmark, the highest SES group in Finland, and the lowest SES group in Norway. Nevertheless, in all four countries, there is a significant SES\*migrant status interaction effect (see Table 6.2).

### **6.6.5 *Limited but Persistent Effects of Background Factors on Environmental Citizenship***

Using factorial ANOVA analysis, we estimated the effect sizes of all student background factors together with their interactions (i.e., gender\*migrant status, gender\*socioeconomic status, migrant status\*socioeconomic status, gender\*socioeconomic status\*migrant status) on the composite score of student environmental citizenship. As shown in Table 6.2, all background variables taken together explain rather limited amount of variance in all four countries, i.e., 5.4% in Denmark, 15% in Finland, 6.2% in Norway, and 8.9% in Sweden. However, SES and gender have stronger effects than any other variables in all countries.

## **6.7 Discussion and Conclusion**

Our analysis shows that there are both similarities and variations in elements of student environmental citizenship among the Nordic countries and in comparison with their European and international peers. First, Nordic students stand out as the concerned environmental citizens when most of them consider pollution and climate change as the two biggest threats to the world's future while their European and international peers' biggest concerns are first pollution and second terrorism. Nordic students are less engaged in environmental activities at school and in environmental organizations. Moreover, they are lower in their endorsement of the relevant most important values and are less certain in their willingness of future participation in environmental efforts, than their European and international peers. Among Nordic students as well as their international peers, the discrepancies between concerns and understanding on the one hand and engagement, values, and intended participation of environmental citizenship on the other hand might change after the student climate strike movement, inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg who incidentally, was within the target student population participated in ICCS 2016 study. As the

movement of School Strike for the Climate had generated opportunities to exercise active environmental citizenship across school, local, national, and international levels. Future research may revisit this topic and examine the effectiveness of youth activism in closing the gap between values, concerns, and understanding of environmental crisis and engagement, and intended participation in tackling environmental issues.

Second, student environmental citizenship is socially differentiated in all Nordic countries as it differs significantly between students from different SES strata and genders. In all countries, students from the highest SES group have significantly higher average scores of environmental citizenship than those from the lowest and middle lower SES strata. The students from the highest SES strata in Finland and Norway have the same score of environmental citizenship as those from middle upper SES group in Sweden. In all four countries, girls have significantly higher scores than boys regardless of their migrant status. The interaction between SES and gender is significant in all four countries and girls have higher scores of environmental citizenship regardless of their SES strata. SES appears to have more effect for girls than for boys in the Nordic countries except in Norway where SES has more effect for boys than for girls. However, in all four countries, for the non-migrant students, the average scores of environmental citizenship increase along with the increase of SES strata but it is not the same case for migrant students. For the migrant students, SES strata appear to have little to do with student environmental citizenship in both Denmark and Finland where there is no remarkable difference between SES strata. Although not all differences of student environmental citizenship by migrant status are statistically significant among the Nordic countries, there is some significant influence of migrant status interaction with SES and genders.

However, the present analysis provided some evidence as to the research question: "Are there signs of socioeconomic inequalities in youth environmental citizenship in Nordic countries?" First, there is a clear sign of socioeconomic inequality of youth environmental citizenship in all four countries in that students from higher SES strata have higher average score of environmental citizenship than those from lower SES strata. Second, socioeconomic inequality of environmental citizenship is larger for girls than for boys in all Nordic countries except in Norway, where the opposite is true. Third, whereas migrant status alone has little effect on student environmental citizenship, socioeconomic inequality is larger for non-migrant students than for migrant students while the gender effect in favour of girls is larger for non-migrant students than for migrant students as well.

In this study, the results and hypothesis concerning the relationship of SES and student environmental citizenship can be linked to the theories of socialization process, economic capital, and cultural capital on education achievement. In the process of socialization, the main components of the SES used are in fact cultural capital (i.e., parents' educational attainment, parents' occupational status, and numbers of books at home) as embodied disposition, tendencies, and social group influences. Those from higher SES strata tend to have more economic capital and cultural capital transfer to the next generation. While not all types of cultural

capital are transferable or transmissible, namely embodied disposition and tendencies, those from higher SES strata are more capable of providing the time, resources, and social environment to cultivate certain cultural capital in the next generation. Hence, students from higher SES strata are more prepared to deploy cultural capital (e.g., disposition, language skills, and social network) for building the components of environmental citizenship with appropriate disposition, skills, pro-environmental understanding, and behaviours.

As a final note, we must admit that our conclusion is constrained by the data limitations. Although the quality and representative nature of the ICCS 2016 data are of high standard internationally, it is important to note that the survey variables considered here are based on self-reports as measures of environmental citizenship. Environmental citizenship is presently an omnipresent subject around the world accompanied by the current highly mobilized youth consciousness of environmental crisis but research of this concept is rather fragmented geographically and across different scientific disciplines at different analytical levels. We are aware that a number of studies have explored concepts and measures relevant to environmental education, e.g., teachers' understanding of sustainable development and student attitudes and consciousness towards the environment, school education and student learning for environmental citizenship, and a collective effort in conceptualization of environmental citizenship (Hadjichambis et al. 2020). The current state-of-art in research, however, lacks a comprehensive measurement that is able to assess and compare youth environmental citizenship across systems and national borders. We therefore encourage future research and in particular international studies such as ICCS 2022 to develop a comprehensive measurement of student environmental citizenship.

## Appendix

See Tables 6.3 and 6.4

**Table 6.3** Descriptions of question items measuring student environmental citizenship

Student survey questions	Recorded response alternative	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Nordic	Europe	International
Have you ever been involved in environmental organizations or groups (IS3G15b)	2 + 3 = Yes, have been	11.1 (0.7)	6.2 (0.5)	11.4 (0.5)	8.3 (0.6)	9.3 (0.3)	25.1 (0.3)	28.1 (0.2)
	1 = Never	88.9 (0.7)	93.8 (0.5)	88.6 (0.5)	91.7 (0.6)	90.7 (0.3)	74.9 (0.3)	71.9 (0.2)
Have you ever been participating in an activity to make the school more environmentally friendly (IS3G16f)	2 + 3 = Yes, have done	36.9 (1.2)	32.8 (1.1)	40.4 (1.1)	35.8 (0.9)	36.5 (0.5)	43.5 (0.4)	49 (0.3)
	1 = Never	63.1 (1.2)	67.2 (1.1)	59.6 (1.1)	64.2 (0.9)	63.5 (0.5)	56.5 (0.4)	51 (0.3)
A school, to what extent have you learnt how to protect the environment (IS3G18c)	4 = A lot	22.2 (1.1)	35.3 (1.1)	28.9 (0.9)	45.5 (1.3)	33 (0.6)	41.2 (0.4)	46.1 (0.3)
	3 = To some extent	39.2 (0.8)	50 (1.0)	40.5 (0.8)	38.4 (0.9)	42 (0.4)	37.9 (0.3)	34.7 (0.2)
	2 = A little	31.7 (1.0)	12.8 (0.7)	25.7 (0.9)	13.3 (0.8)	20.9 (0.4)	16.5 (0.2)	15.2 (0.2)
	1 = Not at all	6.9 (0.5)	1.9 (0.3)	4.9 (0.3)	2.8 (0.5)	4.1 (0.2)	4.4 (0.2)	3.9 (0.1)
How important for a good adult citizen to participate in protecting the environment (IS3G23j)	4 = Very important	21.6 (0.8)	34 (0.9)	39.6 (0.8)	38.3 (1.2)	33.4 (0.5)	38.2 (0.3)	44.1 (0.2)
	3 = Quite important	50.9 (0.8)	48.5 (0.9)	46.2 (0.7)	45.1 (1.1)	47.7 (0.4)	43.8 (0.3)	41.3 (0.2)
	2 = Not very important	23.8 (0.8)	15 (0.7)	12.1 (0.6)	13.8 (0.7)	16.2 (0.3)	15.1 (0.2)	12.1 (0.1)
	1 = Not important at all	3.7 (0.3)	2.5 (0.3)	2.1 (0.2)	2.7 (0.3)	2.7 (0.1)	2.9 (0.1)	2.5 (0.1)
How important for a good adult citizen make personal effort to protect the environment (IS3G23n)	4 = Very important	31 (0.9)	44.1 (1.1)	39.8 (0.8)	45.6 (1.1)	40.1 (0.5)	43.1 (0.3)	48.7 (0.2)
	3 = Quite important	53.6 (0.8)	45.8 (0.9)	47.3 (0.8)	42.4 (1.2)	47.3 (0.5)	43.9 (0.3)	40.7 (0.2)
	2 = Not very important	13.7 (0.7)	8.6 (0.6)	11 (0.5)	9.6 (0.7)	10.8 (0.3)	10.9 (0.2)	8.8 (0.1)
	1 = Not important at all	1.7 (0.3)	1.4 (0.2)	1.8 (0.2)	2.4 (0.4)	1.9 (0.1)	2.1 (0.1)	1.9 (0.1)

(continued)

**Table 6.3** (continued)

Student survey questions	Recorded response alternative	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Nordic	Europe	International
Biggest threat to the world future is pollution (IS3G28a)	4 = To a large extent	75.2 (0.9)	66.4 (1.0)	75.5 (0.7)	79.5 (0.8)	74.2 (0.4)	73.6 (0.3)	75.3 (0.2)
	3 = To a moderate extent	20.4 (0.8)	29.8 (1.0)	19.6 (0.6)	15.8 (0.7)	21.4 (0.4)	21.5 (0.3)	20 (0.2)
	2 = To a small extent	3.5 (0.2)	3.1 (0.3)	3.9 (0.3)	3.2 (0.3)	3.4 (0.2)	3.7 (0.1)	3.5 (0.1)
	1 = Not at all	0.8 (0.2)	0.7 (0.2)	1 (0.1)	1.5 (0.3)	1 (0.1)	1.2 (0.1)	1.2 (0.0)
Biggest threat to the world future is climate change (IS3G28i)	4 = To a large extent	63.7 (1.2)	62.1 (1.1)	66 (0.8)	68.4 (0.9)	65.1 (0.5)	55.6 (0.3)	56.8 (0.2)
	3 = To a moderate extent	27.2 (0.9)	28.1 (0.9)	25.4 (0.6)	23.9 (0.7)	26.2 (0.4)	29.6 (0.3)	28.4 (0.2)
	2 = To a small extent	7.7 (0.5)	8.2 (0.6)	7.1 (0.5)	6 (0.5)	7.2 (0.3)	11.9 (0.2)	11.9 (0.1)
	1 = Not at all	1.4 (0.2)	1.6 (0.3)	1.4 (0.2)	1.7 (0.3)	1.5 (0.1)	2.9 (0.1)	2.8 (0.1)
When becoming adult, will you make personal efforts to protect the environment (IS3G3 1j)	4 = I would certainly do	24.1 (1.0)	28.1 (1.1)	27.3 (0.8)	28.6 (1.2)	27 (0.5)	29.6 (0.3)	38 (0.2)
	3 = I would probably do	52.7 (0.8)	49.5 (1.0)	43.7 (0.6)	43.3 (0.9)	47.3 (0.4)	45 (0.3)	41.4 (0.2)
	2 = I would probably <u>not</u> do	19 (0.6)	18.1 (0.8)	20.8 (0.6)	21.5 (0.9)	19.9 (0.4)	19.2 (0.2)	15.3 (0.2)
	1 = I would certainly <u>not</u> do	4.2 (0.4)	4.2 (0.4)	8.2 (0.85)	6.6 (0.6)	5.8 (0.2)	6.1 (0.2)	5.3 (0.1)

*Note* Calculations presented in this table are facilitated by IDB Analyzer applying student weight



**Table 6.4** Descriptive means of student environmental citizenship of ANOVA analyses (Standard error)

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	
Socioeconomic status	Lowest SES quantile	21.0 (0.1)	21.7 (0.1)	21.6 (0.1)	21.8 (0.1)
	Middle lower SES quantile	21.3(0.1)	22.0 (0.1)	22.2 (0.1)	22.4 (0.1)
	Middle upper SES quantile	22.1 (0.1)	22.5 (0.1)	22.5 (0.1)	23.0 (0.1)
	Highest SES quantile	22.3 (0.1)	23.1(0.1)	23.1 (0.1)	23.5 (0.2)
	Total national average <sup>a</sup>	21.7 (0.1)	22.3 (0.1)	22.3 (0.1)	22.7 (0.1)
Non-migrant background	Lowest SES quantile	21.0 (0.1)	21.7 (0.1)	21.6 (0.1)	21.5 (0.2)
	Middle lower SES quantile	21.3 (0.1)	22.0 (0.1)	22.2 (0.1)	22.4 (0.2)
	Middle upper SES quantile	22.1 (0.1)	22.5 (0.1)	22.5 (0.1)	23.1 (0.1)
	Highest SES quantile	22.3 (0.1)	23.1 (0.1)	23.1 (0.1)	23.4 (0.2)
	Boys	21.2 (0.1)	21.3 (0.1)	21.8 (0.1)	22.1 (0.1)
Migrant background	Girls	22.1 (0.1)	23.5 (0.1)	22.9 (0.1)	23.3 (0.1)
	Total non-migrant	21.7 (0.1)	22.3 (0.1)	22.4 (0.1)	22.7 (0.1)
	Lowest SES quantile	21.1 (0.2)	21.9 (0.7)	22.0 (0.3)	22.5 (0.2)
	Middle lower SES quantile	21.7 (0.5)	22.0 (0.7)	22.3 (0.2)	22.8 (0.3)
	Middle upper SES quantile	21.6 (0.4)	22.8 (0.6)	22.6 (0.4)	22.4 (0.4)
Boys	Highest SES quantile	22.0 (0.5)	22.4 (0.7)	23.2 (0.3)	23.6 (0.5)
	Girls	20.9 (0.2)	21.7 (0.6)	21.9 (0.2)	22.0 (0.2)
	Total migrant	21.7 (0.2)	22.5 (0.4)	22.7 (0.2)	23.2 (0.2)
	Lowest SES quantile	21.3 (0.2)	22.1 (0.4)	22.3 (0.2)	22.6 (0.2)
	Boys	20.6 (0.1)	20.9 (0.2)	21.1 (0.2)	21.3 (0.2)

(continued)

Table 6.4 (continued)

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Middle lower SES quantile	20.8 (0.2)	21.0 (0.2)	21.6 (0.1)	21.8 (0.2)
Middle upper SES quantile	21.6 (0.1)	21.4 (0.2)	22.0 (0.2)	22.2 (0.2)
Highest SES quantile	21.9 (0.2)	22.0 (0.2)	22.5 (0.1)	22.9 (0.2)
Non-migrant	21.2 (0.1)	21.3 (0.1)	21.8 (0.1)	22.1 (0.1)
Migrant	20.9 (0.2)	21.7 (0.6)	21.9 (0.2)	22.0 (0.2)
Total boys	21.2 (0.1)	21.3 (0.1)	21.8 (0.1)	22.0 (0.1)
Lowest SES quantile	21.3 (0.1)	22.7 (0.2)	22.2 (0.1)	22.3 (0.2)
Middle lower SES quantile	21.9 (0.1)	23.1 (0.2)	22.8 (0.1)	23.0 (0.1)
Middle upper SES quantile	22.5 (0.1)	23.8 (0.1)	23.0 (0.1)	23.8 (0.2)
Highest SES quantile	22.7 (0.2)	24.2 (0.1)	23.5 (0.1)	24.1 (0.2)
Non-migrant	22.1 (0.1)	23.5 (0.1)	22.9 (0.1)	23.3 (0.1)
Migrant	21.7 (0.2)	22.5 (0.4)	22.7 (0.2)	23.2 (0.2)
Total girls	22.1 (0.1)	23.4 (0.1)	22.9 (0.1)	23.3 (0.1)

Notes: Calculations presented in this table are facilitated by IDB Analyzer applying student weight; \* all differences between the countries are significant except the one between Finland and Norway

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# Chapter 7

## Civic and Citizenship Education: From Big Data to Transformative Education



Heidi Biseth, Bryony Hoskins, and Lihong Huang

**Abstract** This chapter brings the results from the chapters in this book together to explore how civic and citizenship education can be or is relevant in a context beyond school. We have demonstrated that IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) provides results based on conventional understandings of democracy but also includes elements allowing us to address issues supporting the need for profound changes in education and, hence, relevant for both policymakers and practitioners working to make education relevant to the world the students are entering. To enable and support our young citizens in their civic actions in a rapidly changing world, we need transformative civic education. A Nordic lens on civic and citizenship education allows questions relevant for an advanced technological future and promoting civic engagement through education for environmental sustainability. How to measure and to teach civic and citizenship education is relevant to the extent that it is addressing the reality in which we live, the societal and environmental challenges we face.

**Keywords** Citizenship education · Education for sustainable development · Transformative civic education · International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

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## 7.1 Introduction

The long history of democracy, equality, and human rights in the Nordic countries are often seen as an example, a “northern light” that many countries wish to learn from. These countries’ relatively extensive welfare systems, rather egalitarian societies, combined with the comprehensive public-school systems, stand out as a common Nordic model. This model was expected to influence civic education and young people’s civic competences. In the following sections, we elaborate on how the topics of this book have addressed elements of this Nordic model. This includes a contestation of the passive-active dichotomy in the discourse of youth, including the Nordic youth (Chapter 2), with a call for an elaboration of what counts as democratic engagement. Authors of Chapter 4 echoed this when analyzing the digital citizen and the need for schools, teachers, and researchers to capture all the ways in which Nordic youth civically engage in a fast-developing digital space. In addition, Chapter 3 addressed how principals in the Nordic countries work with citizenship education, highlighting their prioritization of critical thinking, and explaining that this is part of the educational *Bildung* ideals of the Nordic countries and a continuation of the original Nordic citizenship ideals. Despite the Nordic comprehensive school, a part of the relatively egalitarian Nordic model, Chapter 5 examined how socioeconomic inequalities affect civic competences and schools’ facilitation of civic learning. The socioeconomic background of students also influences their environmental citizenship as analyzed in Chapter 3.

The international results from the IEA ICCS 2016 study indicate a need to strengthen the capacity for civic and citizenship education that take account of all students. This can help to alleviate the performance gap between girls and boys, and between students based on socioeconomic background, migrant status, and other factors (Schulz et al. 2018). Currently, there is no obvious link between the results from large datasets, such as the ICCS study, to evidence an impact on an education system, in particular to the extent that the changes are noticeable by the students. International large-scale studies can inform the research community. Yet, so far, the ICCS studies have, it is argued, had limited influence on policymakers, teacher education, and school practices (see e.g., Biseth et al. 2021, in press). The themes in the ICCS studies are, nevertheless, of importance to stakeholders in the education sector because they provide information on civic and citizenship education practice and on the democratic knowledge, skills, and competences of the youth. Thus, more effort is needed to ensure the connection between evidence with policy and practice. In addition, as democracy is not a constant and changes rapidly, studies like ICCS need to stay up to date in order to remain relevant to policymakers.

## 7.2 Nordic Lights on the Research, Policy, and Practice Triangle

Too often, complex research using ICCS data remains within academic journal articles and the results are not translated into the education field. With this book we have aimed to make some such research from the Nordic countries readily available for researchers through each thematic chapter. In this concluding chapter, we aim to sum up and identify potential implication for the education field, both for policymakers in each of the Nordic countries as well as teachers, teacher educators, and other practitioners in the education sector. To achieve these aims we explore the implications from each chapter thematically. Although each chapter touches on these matters, we want to further elaborate on how policy and practice can attempt to tackle the issues that have been raised concerning effective citizenship education, socioeconomic inequalities and learning, the interplay of power in schools and digital citizenship education, and environmental citizenship education in the Nordic countries. ICCS can form a basis for collaboration and enable the translation of research into everyday practice in schools. The most effective way for this to happen is through collaboration between the triangle of research, policy, and practice.

### 7.2.1 *Effective Practice: The Nordic Citizenship Education Model*

The Nordic picture of civic education can be understood as a success story according to the results of Chapter 2, with Nordic countries having high and rising levels of civic knowledge and positive values and attitudes towards equality. The youth may lag behind other countries on participatory attitudes but some research suggests that these differences appear to be reduced as young people get older (Amnå and Zetterberg 2010). So, what then can be considered the success factors of Nordic civic education that other countries' policy and education practice can learn from?

Chapter 3 outlines how the Nordic education model on citizenship emphasizes social mobility, equity, democratic participation, and citizenship within a comprehensive and unified school system and identifies that Nordic educators tend to prioritize independent and critical thinking in schools and conflict resolution (see also Hoskins et al. 2011). In terms of pedagogy, Chapter 5 shows us that Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are above the international mean for students reported experiences of an open classroom climate and students reported experiences of citizenship activities in the school. Altogether perhaps these factors can be considered useful foundations for teaching citizenship education or at least for the reserved citizen who will become active as needed and when they are older. The extensive use of digital tools for teaching and learning purposes, as discussed in Chapter 4, can be further explored and exploited to increase civic engagement among youth at platforms with lower

thresholds for participation than conventional democratic methods, when using social media.

### ***7.2.2 Inequalities and Learning Political Engagement***

Nevertheless, even in Nordic countries where comprehensive education is prioritized, there are significant socioeconomic differences in levels of civic competence (measured in Chapter 5 by civic knowledge, citizenship efficacy, and voting intentions) and student environmental citizenship (measured in Chapter 6 by student concerns, values, engagement, and intended actions towards protecting the environment). Two processes within the school were seen to influence these results: access to the learning and differential effects from the experience. First, Chapter 5 identified that there were socioeconomic inequalities in access to the learning of political engagement across all Nordic countries for both open classroom climate and citizenship activities at school. Access was found to be an issue at two levels. At the school level we found that schools that have more disadvantaged students report less experiences of these two types of activities. At the level of the students, we found that students from more advantaged backgrounds report more experiences of open classroom climate and citizenship activities at school than their less advantaged peers in the same school. Second, there were differential effects of the learning experiences for different social groups and there were some positive examples where these political learning experiences (open classroom climate and citizenship activities at school) actually benefited disadvantaged students more. From these two results we can conclude that it may well be possible to use the education system to create greater levels of equality in political engagement if disadvantaged young people are supported to access these learning opportunities.

The implication for policy and practice is that in schools with high numbers of students from a low socioeconomic background, and even within what is considered excellent comprehensive school systems in the Nordic countries, there is a need to step up efforts to organize activities that allow these students to practice democracy. The results showed that these schools trailed those with a more privileged intake in providing this important learning opportunity. Moreover, there is an important assignment for all schools to encourage students of disadvantaged backgrounds to make use of the civic learning opportunities provided (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019) as our findings from Chapter 5 reveal that students from less advantaged backgrounds within the same classroom as their more advantaged peers report participating less in citizenship activities. The ICCS data cannot provide answers as to why this is the case but it could be because these students feel less able to, they are less interested to do so, or that their teachers ask the more advantaged students to do these activities.

To tackle the inclusion of all social groups within open classroom discussion and civic activities requires changes to initial and continuing professional development of teachers and school leaders. Teacher education and local professional development programs also need to include substantive content on social class and on how to



include young people from disadvantaged communities within the school and on how social class influences classroom interaction.<sup>1</sup> (see e.g., Burner and Biseth 2016). Inclusive teaching involves developing a learning environment whereby all students not only have the right to access all learning activities but are in reality included within class discussions and democratic activities in the school community (Carrington et al. 2015; Biseth 2010). This requires teachers to develop a deep knowledge of their students' backgrounds and for them to be able to analyze the reasons for difficulties in accessing democratic activities and having their say in the classroom (Ainscow et al. 2006). Such knowledge may enable teachers to rethink how to address, for example, student defiance and non-conformity within the school environment, especially when unexpected and even unwanted behaviour occurs. These moments can, at times, be reinterpreted as potential opportunities to start a discussion on how to take action and create change in the school and wider community (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Nolan 2011, 2018). Thus, moments of defiance could potentially become an opportunity to plant the seed for future political engagement.

To arrive at more inclusive schools, there may be a need to implement structural changes to reduce the increasing inequalities between schools and a reconsideration of policies such as Swedish education policies on school choice that reduce the comprehensive nature of the education system. In addition, it may well be beneficial to identify curricular change for teacher education by policymakers at the relevant level and where autonomy exists for teacher education at the level of the college or university so that social and economic inequalities and their effects are better understood. Furthermore, budgets can be targeted for schools with higher numbers of disadvantaged young people to support the organization of democracy activities in these schools and to encourage the most able teachers to work in them. In addition, inspections can be organized to observe and ensure that all social groups are involved in the decision-making activities of the school.

### ***7.2.3 The Interplay of Power Within Schools***

A theme that developed in Chapter 5 is the issue of power. Democracy is one form of organization of power within a country. Schools can implement to a certain degree opportunity for students to take decisions through school councils but by and large, it is another system of power where typically unelected principals take the most important decisions, teachers implement the decrees of the principal, and conformity to rules by students is obtained by a combination of reward and punishment (see e.g., Børhaug 2007a, b; Biseth 2011). According to critical theorists, the rules of the school are typically those which have been developed within middle-class households and are easier to understand and apply by those who have been brought up under these conditions (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Defiance in this context could be

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<sup>1</sup>Ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and disabilities, and intersectionality between these groups, are equally necessary to take into account.

understood as a demonstration of how the system of power in schools is not equal for all (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Nolan 2011, 2018). It is possible to question what kind of civic agency students learn within the existing power structures in school. Additionally, practitioners may want to address how they convert democratic values into civic virtues to ensure a stronger sense of democratic practices in future classrooms and schools (White 1996; Carr and Thésée 2019).

### 7.2.4 *Digital Citizenship*

Chapter 4 discusses how citizenship education and digital learning are kept in different silos within the curriculum, and despite high levels of online and collaborative equipment and a high perceived level of competence in navigating online communication, the teachers avoid working with students on social media platforms. The students are learning *about* civic engagement from digital media content. However, the teachers do not facilitate civic engagement by modelling how to participate online and in social media. On top of this, the students report that they are currently not participating in or posting on social media on civic or political topics. There are significant inequalities with this situation as the less advantaged are unlikely to have the home support on how to create digital political content and if this is not covered in school the issue of socioeconomic inequalities in digital political engagement will only increase.

To tackle this, the digital world needs to be integrated into the citizenship education curricula to inform the development of digital citizenship education. This can be developed at the national policy level and incorporated into national curricular and developed within schools themselves. Again, policymakers can make budgets available for schools to develop their digital citizenship education and guide both initial and teacher education to support teachers to change their teaching approaches. The same teaching and learning principles that apply for citizenship education (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019) can be applied for digital citizenship education and the active creation of digital content is likely to be the most effective method (Bowyer and Kahne 2020). In the world of YouTube and influencers, young people currently enjoy developing their own films and this could be used for civic education purposes. Moreover, simulations of content development within closed school forums may be an alternative safer space for young people to start to learn the skills for the creation of digital content and civic engagement online. Gamification in education is an upcoming trend helping to motivate students with teaching methods close to their everyday activities (Dichev and Dicheva 2017; Kocakoyun and Ozdamli 2018), and at the same time providing teachers and teacher educators with the possibilities of roleplays, play out scenarios, and creating other learning activities conducive of stimulating civic engagement relevant for students and for the future society and labour market they will occupy.

## 7.3 Active Citizenship for Crisis?

### 7.3.1 *Transformative Education and Global Citizenship*

The ICCS studies provide results based on conventional understandings of democracy but also include elements allowing us to address issues supporting the need for profound changes in education and, hence, relevant for both policymakers and practitioners. Faced with a world of many political conflicts, an environmental crisis and a pandemic, more than ever, our conventional democratic values and civic engagement are put to the test. Do our schools and teachers manage to display our civic virtues, in both physical and digital classrooms, towards our young citizens with whom experiences and concerns for the future may not be shared (Biesta 2006)? To what extent are schools and teacher education prepared to address, develop, and nurture civic knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills needed by our young citizens facing an uncertain future? To enable and support our young citizens in their civic actions beyond conventional democratic activities, we need transformative civic education. Transformative education is to be understood in a broad educational context as forming an ideological nexus between liberal education, progressive education, environmental education, and education for sustainable development (Mezirow 1996; Pavlova 2013). Freire utilized the term transformation, postulating that individuals would develop a critical consciousness as transformers of the world (Freire 2000). For Freire, this conscientization was linked to individual empowerment and the transformation of reality more broadly. Transformative education is tasked with fostering transformative learning for both the teacher and the learner. Here, the role of the teacher and learner become intertwined where transformative learning for both parties in the classroom through critical reflection and dialogical methodology on issues of common interest (Taylor 2017). Transformative learning in civic and citizenship education should consider personal transformation of both the learner and the teacher, going beyond its foundation as the personal transformation of only the learner (McWhinney and Markos 2003). Taylor (2017) has correctly pointed out a learner's potential for transformation to developments of globalization and the associated change in demography, which is increasingly providing the inter-cultural integration required for transformative dialogical encounters. This is a step further from the understanding that education promoting transformation places specific emphasis on student-centered learning, democratic education, and encouraging learner action (Kitchenham 2008). Through transformative education, both schools and teacher education need to face the same realities of uncertain futures as our young citizens do, and to educate students and teachers who jointly can become agents willing and able to make an impact (Apple 2017; Sahlberg and Brown 2017). Such transformative education in civic and citizenship education is a matter for educators. Results for the ICCS studies can provide some insights into dilemmas in need of thematizing in civic and citizenship education for global citizenship.

### 7.3.2 *Climate Change—Education for Sustainable Development*

Nordic countries are ranked high in international development indices. They are among the top 10 countries of the best achievement in all 17 sustainable development goals with an average of 72 points out of 100 (Sachs et al. 2019) while they are in the top 15 countries of best achievement of environmental sustainability goals with points ranging from 77 in Norway to 81.6 in Denmark out of 100 (Wendling et al. 2018). However, these results do not necessarily mean that Nordic countries have achieved all sustainable development goals and there are considerable variations between the Nordic countries despite the distinct similarities in social, political, and education systems among them.

Whilst ranking together at the top of civic knowledge achievement in both ICCS studies, Nordic education systems show considerable difference in education for environmental sustainability both from each other and in comparison with the international averages. First, comparing to the international average, a substantially lower proportion of Nordic school principals especially in Denmark (15% in the 2009 dataset and 9% in the 2016 dataset) consider “promoting respect and safeguard the environment” as one of the three most important aims of civic and citizenship education, except in Finland where near half of their principals did so (see Table 3.1 of Chapter 3 in this book). Second, lower than the international average of 58% are the percentages of teachers in the Nordic schools (except 60% in Finland) that have received pre-service and in-service training on subjects related to environment and environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, near the international average of 84%, most Nordic teachers (between 77% in Denmark and 92% in Sweden) feel well prepared for teaching these subjects (Tables 2.11 and 6.19 in Schulz et al. 2018). Third, teachers of Nordic schools report considerably lower than international averages of working with their students on several actions related to environmental sustainability (Tables 6.13 and 6.15 in Schulz et al. 2018). However, combinations of school learning activities related to environmental sustainability show some significant differences between the Nordic countries (Cheah and Huang 2019).

On the other hand, Chapter 6 presents how Nordic school students show remarkable unity not only in their civic knowledge achievement but also in their environmental sustainability-related attitudes, civic engagement, and future participations. First, a substantially higher proportion of Nordic students (between 62% in Finland and 68% in Sweden) than both the international average (55%) and European average (56%) consider climate change to be the biggest threat to the world future (see Table 6.1). Meanwhile, the 8th European Social Survey in 2015 shows that only about 20% of the adults in the Nordic countries are worried about climate change (Poortinga et al. 2018). Second, similar with the international average, the majority of Nordic students consider “taking part in activities to protect the environment” as an important indicator of a good adult citizen (see Appendix Table 6.1). Third, combining several indicators of their environmental sustainability-related attitudes

and behaviours, Nordic students are very similar in environmental citizenship regardless of their country of residence (see Appendix Table 6.2 of this book; Cheah and Huang 2019).

In all previous analyses, we notice a rather large discrepancy between the low levels of priority placed on the environment by principals for citizenship education in comparison to students' high levels of environmental citizenship, both internationally and in the Nordic contexts. Moreover, it is surprising to see how small the effect of school education practices of environmental sustainability are on student environmental citizenship in the Nordic countries, and the effect is not significant in Sweden (Cheah and Huang 2019). In general, Nordic students appear to be ahead of their school principals and the adult population in terms of environmental sustainability and their environmental citizenship which seems to have limited dependence on education practices at their schools as well as home background such as ethnicity and parents' higher education attainment (Cheah and Huang 2019).

This mirrors the current global youth movement, way ahead of the adult population, illustrated by the school strike for the environment initiated by the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg who was at age 14 during the ICCS 2016 study. These results call for serious reflections among school staff and teacher educators and action on education for environmental sustainability.

### ***7.3.3 In the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic***

We dare to venture into a topic not touched upon in any of the previous chapters, but a contemporary situation significantly influencing our lives and highly relevant to civic and citizenship education: The COVID-19 pandemic developed while this book was written (Worldometers 2020). This situation illustrates how the world is interconnected and the need to direct our attention and efforts into developing global citizenship education. COVID-19 spread rapidly in late 2019 from China to all continents. Populations have been instructed on a large scale to clean hands and keep a safe distance from those outside of your household. With quarantine regulations and restrictions on being outdoors, grassroot initiatives emerged among citizens supporting those in need of help (grocery shopping, buying medicine and other necessities).

While COVID-19 has spread, local and world travel has slowed down, and air pollution has dropped. This rapid change in our behaviour has resulted in a climate benefit, an unintended result of the politically decided lockdown, yet good for our planet. For the Nordic students already understanding environmental sustainability-related attitudes and engagement related to democratic citizenship, the COVID-19 pandemic may ensure a current and future forceful engagement. For practitioners, this situation may illustrate the need to put more emphasis on sustainable development as part of civic and citizenship education.

For those children and youth affected by the school lockdown in the Nordic countries, teaching and learning activities have been going on through digital platforms

and tools. Several publishing houses have made teaching material digitally available for free during the lockdown. Teachers and students have experienced a steep learning curve in the use of digital tools and social media for learning purposes. Adding independent and critical thinking skills, and action, to their democratic capabilities, it would be possible to see digitally competent students use their competencies in a global crisis to provide critical and innovative resources (Carr et al. 2018). One example is the 17-year-old boy in Seattle, Avi Schiffmann, who has made a website, <https://ncov2019.live/data>, collating data from several official sources within many countries affected by COVID-19 and providing immediate updates and data to reporters and others who want critical input on a global scale (Democracy Now! 2020). In one way, it is possible to claim that Mr. Schiffmann has practiced global citizenship, making use of his innovative skills to provide a free tool in a situation of crisis.

Despite the crisis emerging due to COVID-19, youth may learn civic engagement locally based on a global situation—for example, how to help and support neighbours in need, and effective measures in everyday lives to ensure that health workers can do their job to the benefit of society. These are examples of how democratic values such as equality and solidarity, human dignity, shared responsibility, trust, respect, and compassion are, or can be, converted into practice (White 1996). During a time of crisis, youth can learn global citizenship through their everyday lives—and educators may use this in school to strengthen their work on education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, and global citizenship when responding to the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (United Nations 2020).

What will happen with the solidarity of a global citizen when an effective vaccine for COVID-19 is developed? Will the youth experience Nordic and European politicians call for solidarity with low-income countries with poorly developed health care systems? How will the education system respond to the civic and democratic challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic? Will we see a need for transformative education preparing youth to understand how local actions may have global impacts—and their role as global citizens to join forces in critically questioning and acting upon the status quo of a world with large inequalities? This pandemic, as devastating as it is, provides youth with experiences that may influence their civic understanding, attitudes, and engagement.

## 7.4 In Closing

All the analyses on data from ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016 take as a point of departure the existing education acts and national curricula at the time of data collection. Denmark implemented a new Education Act (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet 2019) with subsequent changes in the national curricula from 2019. Finland presented the new national core curriculum late in 2014 (Vahtivuori-Hänninen et al. 2014; Finnish National Board of Education 2016). Norway implemented a new core curriculum as well as subject curricula from August 2020 (Utdanningsdirektoratet

2020a, b). Sweden had the curricula revised in 2019 (Skolverket 2019). The changes to the education policy documents have not been analyzed in this volume, but several of them will have a significant impact on civic and citizenship education. For example, democracy and citizenship becoming one of three crosscutting themes in Norwegian education, the comprehensive role of education for sustainable development, and transversal digital skills emphasized in all four countries. The education sector is responding to contemporary societal challenges and needs. This will certainly impact civic and citizenship education, and the results of the ICCS 2022 study. Questions in the ICCS studies measuring trends are important. However, changes in what the Nordic societies need of their citizens, as in other countries, and what skills and virtues are required to cope with a rapidly changing world, are not likely to be covered through questions based on what was a good citizen in the past. Perhaps a Nordic lens on civic and citizenship education could allow questions relevant for an advanced technological future in which adaptability to rapid societal changes is a treasured skill. Education for environmental sustainability would be another core element for civic engagement in which students can make use of their independent and critical thinking skills to act effectively at a local and global level. By doing so, the ICCS 2022 study in the Nordic countries can measure both international trends in addition to topics of societal challenges relevant to civic and citizenship education in the Nordic countries.

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