

# ***Democracy and togetherness: between politics and education***

## ***- A case study of primary and lower secondary education in Denmark***

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### **Introduction**

Democracy is a complex concept. There are numerous ways of understanding the concept of democracy, just as it covers a wide field of ideas, principles, and political values. On a general level, politicians, pressure groups, and educators agree on the fundamental principles of democracy; however, it is much more difficult to come to an understanding of the relative value of these principles and how to carry them out in practice. What might for one person be the most self-evident argument for a certain democratic value might appear controversial from another viewpoint. In recent decades, democracy and citizenship education has become even more complex. As a result of the process of globalization and an expanding knowledge economy, political values and the degree of democracy espoused by nation states in their labor markets, their institutions and their education system are no longer simply a matter of attitudes, principles and approaches towards society. Human rights, equality, justice, working conditions, fair trade, sustainability and so on have furthermore become labels that increase the value of a brand, service, commodity or even a particular nation. Hence, democracy and other similar concepts have become strategic concepts in the global competition (Christensen, 2009). Similarly, democracy and citizenship education have a political and strategic value that makes it possible to identify and reject unfamiliar and hostile ideologies. Additionally, citizenship education is recognized by national parliaments all over the world as an educational method to maintain and recreate national identity and social cohesion under pressure from globalization and migration (Osler & Starkey, 2006, p. 436).

Despite the unquestionable values of democracy, it is important to recognize that it is a contested and often ambiguous concept (Osler & Starkey, 2006). Democracy in and through education and citizenship education make up an important battlefield for political and educational debates, since this is where young people's sense of togetherness to a great extent is developed and where the attitudes of the future generation towards citizenship, politics, participation, solidarity are formed. What is the right balance between liberty and equality, freedom of speech and religious freedom, ideology and brand? And what is the right balance between democracy through education and democracy in educational practice and institutions? This will be a central theme of this article.

Since the early 1990s, Denmark has worked with what is known as 'the unified school', which makes no distinction between pupils<sup>1</sup>. In law, the primary purposes of school are to bring children up into democratic understanding and to develop the skills and qualities of each child. In these aims, democracy and togetherness are complementary preconditions. Togetherness is the driving force of democracy; just as freedom, equality and democracy are the driving force behind the sense of togetherness. There is an underlying belief among politicians and educationalists that this foundation to the school system has an unequivocal quality. The argument for the unified school system was based on the unquestionable virtues of democracy such as equality, solidarity, and

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<sup>1</sup> The unified school comprises primary and lower education, which covers a 10-year period of compulsory education, including one year of pre-school. Denmark is unique in having a dual school system, 1) the public school (*folkeskolen*) and 2) private schools and the so-called free schools (*friskoler*). Both are funded by the state. About 81 per cent of pupils attend *folkeskoler* while 16 per cent attend private schools and *friskoler*.

community, and, furthermore, on a holistic view of the student. In addition, democracy and the sense of togetherness relate to the opportunities of individual students (Ofstedal Telhaug, Asbjørn Mediås, & Aasen, 2006, p. 253) and to the individual's personal development, dignity and life as a in general. Hence, democracy and togetherness do not just comprise a narrow form of socialization for citizenship and social cohesion, that is to say, to form the individual's attitudes towards the public domain. In pedagogical terminology it is often explained as "Bildung" (a German term), a concept that is crucial in Scandinavian and German educational philosophy (Louis & Velzen, 2012; Moss and Kofod, 2012). Bildung embodies the formation of a person as a whole (knowledge, skills, sociality, culture, morals, mind, heart). These political and educational beliefs are still present; in the preamble of the Danish Public School Act it is stated:

"The public school shall prepare pupils for participation, joint responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy. The daily activities of the school must, therefore, be conducted in a spirit of intellectual freedom, equality and democracy" (Public School Act, 2006 and 2014, my translation).

In this article, I will explore and discuss the Danish primary and secondary education and the class as context for democracy and togetherness. The assumption is that democracy presupposes togetherness, but also that togetherness is an ambiguous concept which favors certain forms of cohesion and solidarity and excludes others. I will suggest that the Danish school, with its particular foundation in Bildung and its strong tradition of citizenship education, is able to identify and characterize important challenges related to democratic education and democratic togetherness: 1) what kind of political and democratic togetherness is practiced in Danish primary and lower secondary schools? 2) what kind of citizen does this educational practice develop and form? The idea is not that the Danish education system and school context are unique in this respect, but rather that the case of Danish primary and lower secondary education illuminates and characterizes a general and pressing challenge posed in many countries.

The thesis of the article – supported by and elaborated on through the empirical material presented – is that the Danish education system, and especially the primary and lower secondary school, is based on and promotes a strong educationalized version of democratic togetherness. In addition, this should be considered as a result of the fact that the re-establishment of the Danish welfare state in the post-war period was based on an expansive educational policy and an educationalization of the challenges of the modern world. The modern process of educationalization was not just a way to improve the population's knowledge and skills in an ever more industrialized and specialized world. It was also a method for reconstituting democracy, fostering modern citizenship and developing a sense of togetherness. There is a counter-thesis to this article – based on Jacques Rancière's (2007) critic of the pedagogized society – that the educationalization of young people in and through education runs the risk of erasing the political togetherness that is the condition for actual influence and participation, agreement and disagreement, and political struggle and solidarity. This article will explain and interpret the thesis – and the counter-thesis – based on an international comparative study of civic and citizenship education and a national student well-being survey for the purpose of understanding and discussing the status of democratic togetherness in and through education.

## **Frame of article**

The article consists of three parts. The first two parts are a secondary analysis of the two quantitative studies of Danish students mentioned above, covering the period from 2009 to 2015. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2009 (ICCS) offers some remarkable findings relating to the Danish students' perception of their school and classroom environment and of their influence on decision-making at school in an international comparative perspective. The study was carried out by the independent International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). As its title indicates, The National Student Well-being Surveys (2015) (NSWS) will focus on the national level, and, within their narrowed scope, they support the findings of ICCS and provide more details of the views of Danish students. The well-being survey is a digital survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and carried out by the private analysis and consultancy services, TNS Gallup. These parts also include some historical considerations on the Danish education system. ICCS 2009 and the NSWS 2015 confirm a well-established pedagogical tradition of preparing students to undertake roles as political and democratic citizens. However, they also reveal a remarkable discrepancy between students' political and educational status.

The third and last part puts the empirical findings into perspective by exploring and discussing a certain challenge that to a large extent is overlooked due to the modern process of educationalization and the unequivocal and unquestionable quality that the relation between democracy, togetherness and education has achieved in the Danish primary and lower secondary school throughout the post-war period. This part provides a theoretical exposition and discussion of the students' perceptions of and status in the school and classroom as a context for political and democratic education and togetherness. The article will use a methodical concept borrowed from Max Weber (1995; 2003) to distinguish between two "ideal types" (Weber, 2003, p. 105) of democratic togetherness, namely educational and political democratic togetherness. The scope of the third part is limited and in some ways selective. The reason for this is primarily to stay focused given the normativity of the article's subject matter and the enormous scope that characterizes the discussion of democracy and togetherness at the interface between politics and education.

### **Bildung and democratic knowledge**

The Danish education system has a long-standing tradition of joint responsibility, equality, freedom and democracy (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Hermann, 2007; Læssøe & Öhmann, 2010 ). The tradition derives, in part, from the free and independent school movements founded in the 1850s. The pastor and politician N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) and the pedagogue and teacher Christian Kold (1816-1870) had significant influence on the development of these movements. They introduced educational ideas about the teaching of enlightenment for life, about schools for life, and the living word etc. Furthermore, their critique of narrow views of knowledge and skills and of the brutal teaching methods of contemporary schools became an important factor. Their ideas and those of other independent educators, including those associated with the reform pedagogical movements, resulted in the Free School Act in 1855 (Hermann, 2007; Rifbjerg 1974). These ideas and movements had – and still have – an enormous influence on the education system in Denmark, especially in terms of democratic socialization and Bildung. However, not until the reconstruction of the welfare state after the Second World War were these educational ideas officially implemented. "The Blue Report", a crucial teaching manual from 1960, was the first time at the governmental level that the purpose of the school was defined as Bildung: "first and foremost, the purpose of the school is to promote all opportunities for children to grow up as harmonious, happy and good human beings"

(Blue Reports, 1960, p. 29, my translation). The culmination of these ideas of Bildung and democratization in and through education is found in the Public School Act of 1975:

“The public school prepares students for social cohesion and collaborative decision-making in a democratic society, and for joint responsibility in solving common tasks. The teaching and everyday life of the school, in its entirety, must therefore build on intellectual freedom and democracy” (Public School Act, 1975, my translation).

It is important to emphasize, as mentioned above, that the humanization and democratization of schools and teaching methods throughout the post-war period was also part of the broad process of educationalization in the industrialized world (Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008; Lieberkind 2016). The general idea was that economic growth and the establishment of the welfare system was closely linked with civic, citizenship and political education, and, in Scandinavia, to Bildung. Education and pedagogy were seen as an important instrument in order to develop citizens who would support, maintain, and legitimize the re-established order of the welfare state and the ideology of the “Free world”. After 1989 and throughout the 1990s, educationalization and the purpose of democratic Bildung have had a slightly different twist. Today, the project of nation-building has faded into the background to be replaced by a new agenda, namely, securing and improving the nation’s competition advantage in the global knowledge economy (Pedersen, 2011). Educationalization has also become a matter of gaining human capital. This certainly challenges the earlier democratization programs of the Scandinavian countries, as many critics have pointed out (see e.g. Biesta (2010)), but not in the way the critics have supposed. The purpose of school is still to prepare the students for “participation, joint responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy” (Public School Act, 2006 & 2014); furthermore, this is emphasized in the national curricula. As we shall see, the ICCS test confirms a strong educational tradition of preparing students for their role as future democratic citizens.

Generally, countries participating in ICCS consider that it is important to include citizenship education in the curriculum. However, there are a myriad approaches to how this should be done. In Denmark, there is no specific subject of citizenship education, neither compulsory nor optional. Citizenship education is integrated into other subjects as a cross-curricular theme (W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillon, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 47). In the 8th grade, only a few months before the Danish students were submitted to the ICCS test, they were, however, introduced to a new subject, social studies, which is related to some of the topics of citizenship education. However, it is the range of subjects and the teachers’ attitudes towards democratic education that supports the Danish students’ performance in the ICCS test.

The ICCS cognitive test measures the students’ knowledge of economic, social, political, and democratic issues and their abilities to analyze and understand them. The test consists of 80 items, which are reported as scale scores. The final scales have a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100; the scales are based on the Rach model (W. Schulz, Ainley, & J., Fraillon,, 2011; W. Schulz & Fraillon, 2011).

Danish students, together with their Finnish counterparts, represent the highest performing students in the cognitive test with a mean score of 576. The Danish students – and students from Finland, Republic of Korea (565), Taiwan (559), Norway (538) and Sweden (537) – have a significantly greater knowledge of subjects relating to citizenship education than the average student with a score of 500 (Bruun, 2010; W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillon, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 75).

ICCS also includes a series of items that examines teachers' ratings of the most important aims of citizenship education. 89 percent of Danish teachers emphasize the promotion of students' critical and independent thinking; the ICCS average is 52 percent (W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillion, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 182). The ICCS cognitive test provides a clear impression that the Danish primary and lower secondary school is grounded in a long-standing educational tradition that enhances knowledge of economic, social, political and democratic themes, and promotes the students' abilities to analyze and critically reflect on these subjects.

### **The school as context of togetherness**

Preparing children and young people to undertake their roles as democratic citizens is not just a matter of passing on knowledge and analytical skills, but also developing an environment and a context of togetherness in which they will encounter political and democratic practices. As stipulated in the Public School Act (2006 and 2014), the daily activities in the Danish primary and lower secondary school must be based on intellectual freedom, equality and democracy.

The second part of ICCS focuses in part on the students' perception of the school and classroom as a context for Bildung and democratic socialization. This part is based on questionnaires measuring the students' self-efficacy, values, and perceptions, including aspects of the relation between politics, democracy, education and togetherness. The aim is not to test or rank knowledge and skills, but to explore, identify, and compare young people's attitudes towards political, social, and democratic issues. To facilitate comparison, the result of each country is displayed and calculated in Likert scales. Each scale is set to a metric with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for the equally weighted national samples (W. Schulz, Ainley, & J., Fraillion,, 2011). ICCS provides a number of important findings in this context. However, this article concentrates on two instruments, which in connection with the test results reveal a remarkable contrast between the student as a political subject and as an educational subject. The two items are 1) students' perceptions of openness in classroom discussions, and 2) students' perception of their influence on decisions about school (W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillion, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 167).

In ICCS, the school climate and the openness of the classroom are based on items investigating students' perception of their relation to each other and the teachers. The theme, perception of openness in classroom, includes six items. Three items concern the teachers' encouragement of the students to make up their own minds, express their opinions, and to discuss with people who have different opinions. The students are also asked whether their teachers present several sides of a given issue. There are two items which study the students' own preparedness and willingness to bring up political events for discussion in class, and to express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from those of most other students (Bruun, 2010; W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillion, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 174).

The outcome of the international comparison of scale scores across the ICCS countries shows that Danish students' perceptions of the classroom are very positive. They certainly share a sense of togetherness. The Danish students experience the highest degree of openness, achieving a scale score of 55, which is far above the ICCS average of 50 (Norway: 52; Sweden: 51)(W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillion, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 176). The students emphasize above all the teachers' ability to promote and encourage students on these matters (Bruun & Lieberkind, 2012, p. 111). The percentage distributions of actual student responses show very clearly the teachers' dominant position. 93 percent of the students respond that the teachers "often" (68 %) or "sometimes" (25%)

encourage the students to express their opinions; similarly, only 8 percentage answer that teachers “never” or “rarely” encourage them.

These results are confirmed by the National Student Well-being Survey (NSWS 2015). 82 percent of the students from pre-school class to 3rd grade say that they are “yes, very” pleased with their teachers, and 79 percent state that their teachers are “yes, very” good at supporting them at school. In this age range, 6-10 years old (pre-school – 3rd grade) there are three response categories: “no”, “yes, fairly”, and “yes, very”. In addition, 71 percent of the youngest students answer that they are “yes, very” school. The NSWS 2015 clearly shows that pre-school and primary school students identify the school and the classroom as an open and accommodating place; other and similar questions underpin these results (National Student Well-being Survey, 2015). In the higher classes (lower secondary education, 4th – 9th grade), the students give similar answers to these kinds of questions. The age range in lower secondary school in Denmark is 11-16 years old, which also means that the students are able to offer more accurate and nuanced responses to the items. Therefore, the response categories are extended from three to five possible answers. I will focus on the two most positive categories. 79 percent of the students in 4th-9th grade state that they either are “often” or “very often” happy about their class. Also, they enhance the teachers’ crucial role for their own and their classmates’ well-being at school; 73 percent respond that the teachers support and help individual students when necessary.

The results reveal not only that school climate, the experience of togetherness in the class, and the teachers’ accommodating and encouraging attitudes are central to pedagogy in the Danish schools, but also that the teachers’ pedagogical control of the school, classroom environment, and the sense of togetherness have a vital function.

Beside the openness and encouraging environment of the school and the classroom, an essential part of the child’s democratic education is his or her experience of actual influence on decision-making processes. In an educational institution, it is primarily the duty of the school principal and teachers to ensure that its educational objectives, including knowledge, skills, and interpersonal abilities, are carried out and met. The ICCS percentage distribution of Danish students’ perception of their influence on school also shows that it is low, especially among European students (Bruun & Lieberkind, 2012, p. 118). Nevertheless, as the school and the school activities consume much of the young people’s time, a certain political and democratic influence on planning and activities of their everyday lives should be expected. Although young people increasingly are being subject to educational discourses: teaching, learning, training, testing and educational evaluation – an educational subject – they must also be regarded as political subjects with duties as well as rights, for example under the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. Furthermore, it is hard to deny experiencing decision-making processes is crucial to the students’ understanding of the political processes and to developing the ability to take part in a democratic society.

In ICCS, this theme includes six items measuring to what extent the students experience influence on decisions about: 1) the way classes are taught, 2) what is taught in classes, 3) teaching and learning materials, 4) the timetable, 5) classroom rules, and 6) school rules (W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillion, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 164). In NSWS, there are a number of similar questions that examine the students’ experiences with influence on decision-making processes. The two assessments, which cover the period 2009 to 2015, both show very clearly that students barely experience any actual influence on decisions about school. The Danish students’ scale score of 45 clearly represents a surprisingly low result. The scores are five scale points below the ICCS average, and only two points above the South Korea students, who experience the lowest degree of

participation and influence. A result five scale points below the international average is rare in this context (W. Schulz, Ainley, J., Fraillion, J, Kerr, D., & Losito, B., 2010, p. 167).

The lack of influence at school experienced by Danish students is underscored by the percentage distribution of their actual responses to these items. 90 percent of the students find that their influence on the timetable is “small” or “not at all”; 84 percent respond “small” or “not at all” about influence on learning materials, and 79 percent register these responses about influence on school rules. In comparison, these figures in Norway are 46 percent for the timetable, 48 for learning materials, and 40 percent on schools rules (Bruun & Lieberkind, 2012, p. 118). Although it is the principals’ and the teachers’ duty to conduct, plan, and ensure that requirements concerning the classroom environment, the learning process and academic objectives are met and although they must bear the responsibility for decisions in these areas, it is nevertheless expected that an “intellectual free, equally, and democratic school” (cf. the Public School Act 2006, 2014) offers students political and democratic influence. International comparison reveals that this does not apparently taking place in the Danish primary and lower secondary education.

The same conclusion can be drawn in 2015 in the National Student Well-being Surveys. The students are, as we have seen, very happy about school and their teachers, but to the question “do you have influence on what is going on in class?” 49 percent of the students in pre-school class to 3rd grade answer “no”. Correspondingly, only 8 percent answer “yes often”. In 4th to 9th grade, 82 percent of the students respond that they “never”, “rarely”, or only “occasionally” are taken into account regarding activities in class; 17 percent experience “often” or “very often” having influence on the activities (National Student Well-being Surveys, 2015).

### **Educationalized togetherness**

ICCS 2009 and NSWS 2015 clearly indicate that democratic togetherness in Danish primary and lower secondary education is understood and carried out as a strong educational phenomenon; that is to say, as an object of teaching (knowledge and skills) and learning processes which include the school and the classroom as a context of educational goals. In this perspective, democratic togetherness comprises a highly educationalized recognition of togetherness.

The international and the national surveys both sketch a picture of a school model in which students, on one hand, are, as the ICCS test indicates, extremely skilled and knowledgeable in terms of politics, society, and democracy. Similarly, their perception of the classroom climate indicates that they appreciate and are motivated to discuss, debate, and express their opinions. 61 percent of the students in 4th to 9th grade respond that they “often” or “very often” state their opinions when they feel that something is unfair (National Student Well-being Surveys, 2015). On the other hand, they experience that their opinion and statements are not heard and taken into account; the extent to which the students experience influence on decision-making processes is extremely low in Denmark. Similarly, the students experience a remarkable sense of togetherness at school and in classrooms based on democratic values such as an open environment, debate culture, and positive disagreements; however, the two studies show very clearly that this perception of democratic togetherness is constituted and controlled by teachers and educational intentions. Apparently, the students’ opinions and statements as individuals and as a group have a significant educational value in the classroom; in particular, the skills and abilities to express are encouragingly met. However, the opinions seem so have very little actual political status at school; the students’ personal opinions are highly educationalized and taken into account to a very limited degree. These findings identify a complex problem regarding the Danish students’ Bildung and democratic education. The purpose of

the article has been to explore and discuss the school and the classroom as context for democracy and togetherness in and through education. The article suggests that the Danish primary and lower secondary education has a certain approach to democracy and togetherness. Democratic togetherness represents an educationalized sense of togetherness that favors the learning subject and their interrelations rather than the political subject and the political community.

The educationalization of the student is not unique to Denmark, though it is remarkable; it presents a still more pressing challenge to the students' everyday life at school around the globe. In the wake of the global economy, education and education systems have become an essential resource for developing growth potential and for responding to political and social issues. The increasing focus on education, training, and schooling implies that ever more democratic features are being educationalized and subjected to pedagogical testing and evaluation. Hence, analogue tendencies of educationalizing the students' influence can be found across the ICCS countries. However, in no other country can such a huge divergence be found. The case of Denmark is not unique; rather, it is relevant to a wide range of countries around the world. In attempting to understand and discuss this divergence, Denmark seems to be an interesting case due to its pedagogical tradition of *Bildung*, its holistic view of the student, and the relation between democracy and togetherness.

In modern society, the process of educationalization is per definition unproblematic since education and learning have become the natural answer to the majority of economic, social, personal, and democratic challenges (Lieberkind, 2016; Depaepe & Smeyers, 2008). Furthermore, it serves as a national strategy (Christensen, 2009). However, it is important to recall that this is actually much more complicated for the young people and their lives. A child and a young person is more than an educational subject in an educationalized community; he or she is also a political subject in the political community. Children and young people are political subjects to the extent that they – as adults – acquire influence on their everyday life (including their everyday life at school). It is, as mentioned, stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that the child has the right to express his or her opinions freely in all matters that affect the child, that these opinions must be heard and respected, and, furthermore, that the child must be provided with the opportunity to have influence on his or her everyday life (article 12 and 13). The Convention – implemented in Denmark in 1991 – ensures that children gain status as citizens, which provides them with basic civil, democratic, and political rights. As the Danish Professor of childhood and youth Jan Kampmann states in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention:

“Children are also citizens – not just somebody we are waiting for to become adults. They have been given independent political, democratic here-and-now-rights” (National Council for Children, 2009, p. 5, my translation).

On the same occasion, on a critical note, Jan Kampmann adds that educators and politicians from all over the world previously came to Denmark to see how formal rights were translated into informal practice; this is no more. Norway and Sweden are more advanced in identifying methods to ensure children's political influence (National Council for Children, 2009, p. 5).

Hence, the conclusion of this article is that democracy and togetherness as the foundation and purpose of education and *Bildung* make for a rather complex constellation. In a highly educationalized school and classroom, democratic togetherness seems to favor a certain understanding of the students' expressions; namely, the students' and student groups' potential and

ability to act as and to become future democratic citizens. The two surveys give the clear impression that the students' actual political actions, opinions, and attitudes are secondary to the young persons' educational development. A challenge to the ongoing process of educationalization is that young people, democracy, and togetherness are increasingly subject to educational discourse by which the individual to a great extent is reduced to a learning subject and the sense of togetherness at schools primarily is conceived as a context for individual training.

Educationalization and, by extension, the educationalization of democracy and togetherness, or as Jacques Rancière explains in a broader sense "the integral pedagogicization of society" (Rancière, 2007, p 133), is founded on a certain educational principle that distinguishes between young person's actions and expressions as either ignorant/knowledgeable, mature/immature, active/passive, social/antisocial, or democratic/undemocratic etc. The young people, conceived as the educationalized subjects, will always be able to develop and unfold their potential further and better; they can always learn more and be more knowledgeable, mature, active, social, and democratic. Thus, a key political document in the field – Agreement between the Danish Government (2013) – states that the public school must prepare the students for further and higher education and encourage their desire to keep learning: "it is crucial for all students to get the opportunity to unfold their potential fully" (Agreement between the Danish Government, 2013, p. 1). Rancière adds:

"The master is always a length ahead of the student, who always feels that in order to go farther he must have another master, supplementary explications. (...) 'Any man who is taught is only half a man'" (Rancière, 2007, p 21).

The educational staging of the students' expressions and actions seem to infantilize (Rancière, 2007, p. 133) the young person, or, as Immanuel Kant states in *What is Enlightenment?*, become a question of imposed immaturity: "Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another" (Kant 1983, p. 41). Infantilization and imposed immaturity is a matter of being conducted and guided by another, as Kant says; which is a condition of dependence and a lack of autonomy. This, I will conclude, challenges the conventional political status of young people. The empirical studies used in this article are not able to determine the degree of the effect of the educationalization of the political subject in Danish schools. The sole purpose of the article has been to raise, explore and discuss this question. It is important to emphasize that the conclusion is not that young people are apolitical, but that the educationalization of society is changing the conventional forms of politics and, consequently, young people's attitudes towards democracy and togetherness. On this basis, I suggest a new research question: What does political expression and action mean for young people today?

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