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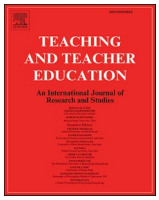

Research paper

How to teach for democracy? Identifying the classroom practices used by expert teachers of democracy

Jip Y. Teegelbeckers [a,*], Hessel Nieuwelink [a], Ron J. Oostdam [a,b]

[a] Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE), Faculty of Education, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Wibautstraat 2-4, 1091 GM Amsterdam, Netherlands
[b] Research Institute of Child Development and Education, University of Amsterdam, Roetersstraat 11, 1018 WB Amsterdam, Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

To stimulate democratic competences through teaching, it is necessary to have an understanding of actions and behaviors that are considered effective in teaching methods. In this study, we investigated these actions and behaviors, referred to as *classroom practices*, by interviewing 20 expert teachers of democracy in the Netherlands. We identified six relevant practices: meaningful embedding, providing multiple perspectives, thinking about solutions from divergent perspectives, independent information collection and presentation, taking socio-political action, and critical reflection on subject matter. We show how these practices are associated with democratic competences and provide examples of how the practices are implemented in teaching methods.

1. Introduction

Teachers play a crucial role in the development of young people's democratic competences (Gainous & Martens, 2012; Martens & Gainous, 2013). This includes fostering democratic knowledge, democratic values, and skills and attitudes related to dealing with differences and political engagement (Barrett, 2020; Dekker, 1996). For example, they can contribute to young people's understanding of the importance of citizen participation and the protection of civil rights and liberties (Donbavand & Hoskins, 2021; Teegelbeckers et al., 2023). The development of young people's democratic competences through education depends on several factors. Previous research indicates that a formal citizenship curriculum focusing on subject matter and courses related to democracy is crucial (Geboers et al., 2013). Additionally, many studies show that an open and safe classroom climate is a relevant factor (e.g., Knowles et al., 2018; Pace, 2019). Research also suggests that the teaching methods used to present subject matter (e.g., lectures, discussions, and simulations) are important, as they can stimulate various democratic competences (Campbell, 2019; Teegelbeckers et al., 2023; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022).

Teaching methods refer to the overall approach and activities of a lesson that teachers and students engage in to achieve specific learning goals (e.g., Larson, 2016). However, the actions and behaviors that teachers and students engage in as part of a teaching method and that contribute to learning remain partly a black box. Through this study, we seek to provide greater insight into these actions and behaviors, which we refer to as *classroom practices* (cf., Kyriakides, 2013; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007). Such insights into relevant classroom practices can help explain the causes of effective teaching methods.

Previous research on social studies education has provided valuable insights into potentially relevant classroom practices, but this literature is limited in scope regarding teaching for democracy. First, insights into the association between classroom practices and the stimulation of democratic competences are often based on theoretical assumptions, but there is a lack of detailed empirical understanding of how teachers perceive these practices for teaching democratic subject matter (e.g., Abrami et al., 2015; Bermudez, 2015; Carretero, 2016; Guérin, 2017; Westheimer, 2019). Second, studies often examine and describe educational programs in which classroom practices are presented in combination and as sequential steps; however, these practices are rarely examined separately with regard to their potential to foster particular democratic competences (e.g., Campbell, 2019; Jerome et al., 2024; Levinson, 2012; Lin et al., 2015; Reinhardt, 2015). Third, the studies that do provide insights into teachers perspectives on these classroom practices often focus on a single teaching method, resulting in a limited perspective on their potential relevance for other teaching methods (e.g., Nelsen, 2023; Schmidt, 2021). Therefore, the aim of this study is to gain more insight into which specific classroom practices are considered

* Corresponding author. Faculty of Education, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Wibautstraat 2–4, 1091 GM Amsterdam, Netherlands.
E-mail addresses: j.y.teegelbeckers@hva.nl (J.Y. Teegelbeckers), h.nieuwelink@hva.nl (H. Nieuwelink), r.j.oostdam@hva.nl (R.J. Oostdam).

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effective in teaching democratic subject matter and competences according to teachers, and how these practices are integrated into different teaching methods.

To address our aim, we explored classroom practices that are considered effective by interviewing 20 expert teachers of democracy in Dutch secondary and tertiary vocational education. A better understanding of relevant classroom practices can be gained from these expert teachers because they have relevant experience in the classroom and can reflect on their practice-based insights (Anderson & Taner, 2022). These experts can also provide concrete examples of the practical implementation of classroom practices. For our research, we formulated the following research questions:

1. What classroom practices do expert teachers of democracy consider effective for teaching democracy?
2. In what ways are these classroom practices integrated into the teaching methods used by these expert teachers?

2. Theoretical background

Democracy is considered an essentially contested concept and can be conceptualized in various ways (Collier et al., 2006). This study centers on teaching for liberal democracy, with particular attention given to the political-democratic institutions that support it and the paradoxical values underlying them (e.g., liberty and equality) (e.g., Diamond, 2008; Mouffe, 2000). The democratic component of this concept focuses on popular sovereignty, which refers to the ability of members of the state to influence the decision-making processes of the rules to which they are subject (Dahl, 1998). This component includes various models of citizen participation in political decision-making and power evaluation, featuring representative democracy (e.g., free and fair elections, equal participation, and pluralism) and participatory democracy (e.g., referendums, citizens' assemblies, and grassroots organizations) (Diamond, 1997; Held, 2006). The liberal component emphasizes the rule of law, separation of powers, and fundamental rights, addressing issues of equal status as well as the freedoms and protections upheld by democratic institutions (e.g., the judiciary and the constitution) (Bingham, 2011; Zakaria, 2003).

The focus of this study is on teaching democratic subject matter and stimulating content knowledge related to the above conceptualization of democracy. In conjunction with teaching democratic content knowledge, this study also focuses on stimulating liberal democratic values through teaching, such as freedom and equality, while recognizing that these values can conflict (Thomassen, 2007). Furthermore, teaching for democracy in this study involves fostering engagement of students in politics and democracy, including competences such as political participation and critical evaluation of governmental and democratic institutions (Weiss, 2020). In addition, teaching for democracy involves teaching students how to deal peacefully with conflict and different perspectives on democratic issues (Englund, 2016; Hess & McAvoy, 2014). Relevant competences that can be fostered in this regard include perspective-taking and democratic decision-making skills (Barrett, 2020; Sandahl, 2020).

Teachers can use different teaching methods associated with fostering specific democratic competences (Campbell, 2019; Teegelbeckers et al., 2023; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). Lectures and text readings (e.g., on constitutional rights and civil liberties), as well as students' application of the acquired information in assignments (e.g., written reflections on noticing concepts of liberty in the daily environment), are associated with fostering democratic knowledge (Alongi, 2016; Green et al., 2011). Discussing subject matter during whole-class or group work that addresses topics such as inequality and social justice is related to developing the ability to engage with different perspectives (Andersson, 2015; Krings et al., 2015). Conducting research assignments (e.g., in a civic project) on societal issues in the community and the school (e.g., on poverty and climate change) is related to greater political efficacy and engagement (Levy, 2011; Ozer & Douglas, 2013). Democracy can also be experienced through, for example, simulations of democratic decision-making, which are associated with greater democratic knowledge, political efficacy, political engagement, and the ability to deal with differences (Levy, 2019; Mariani & Glenn, 2014).

When teaching democratic subject matter by means of teaching methods, teachers and students can engage in different types of classroom practices. Teaching democracy involves classroom practices that include both general and domain-specific elements (Kyriakides et al., 2013; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007). For example, there are general practices focusing on the classroom environment, such as classroom management and creating a safe classroom climate (e.g., Marzano et al., 2003; Pace, 2019). There are also general practices supporting individual students in acquiring competences, such as providing feedback (e.g., Hattie, 2009). In addition, certain classroom practices can be more specifically implemented for the effective teaching and learning of particular subject matter and domain-specific competences (e.g., Reinhardt, 2015). Because our study focuses on domain-specific education, it emphasizes the latter type of classroom practice. We focus on specific classroom practices related to the teaching and learning of democratic subject matter and the promotion of democratic competences. We emphasize this type of classroom practice because we are interested in the ways in which teachers teach about democratic subject matter in conscious and purposeful ways.

Although there is currently limited empirical insight into expert teachers' perspectives on domain-specific classroom practices for teaching democratic subject matter, the literature on social studies education provides some relevant insights. In this literature, classroom practices are often mentioned within educational programs (e.g., Campbell, 2019; Lin et al., 2015; Reinhardt, 2015) and are discussed within a broad theoretical framework, such as 'action civics', 'project--based learning' and 'inquiry-based learning' (e.g., Carretero, 2016; Jerome et al., 2024; Levinson, 2012). We draw upon such literature to understand which classroom practices the expert teachers we interviewed consider relevant (see, Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

An example of a potentially relevant classroom practice is relating subject matter to contexts that are relatable and meaningful to students (i.e., aligning it with students' personal experiences), such as the violation of students' civil rights and liberties, which could resonate with students from minority groups (Clay & Rubin, 2020; Nelsen, 2023; Schmidt, 2021). Other examples of potentially relevant practices include encouraging students to think critically about the subject matter (e.g., arguments about voting rights and freedom of choice) and providing different perspectives (e.g., taking on the perspectives of historical and cultural figures) (Abrami et al., 2015; Bermudez, 2015; Gehlbach, 2011; Mahoney et al., 2023; Westheimer, 2019). It also seems relevant for students to think collaboratively about solutions for socio-political issues (e.g., penalties for law violations), to collect and present information on the subject matter (e.g., on how the legislative process works), and that they can take action on an issue (e.g., by sending letters to legislators) (Guérin, 2017; Levinson, 2012; Reinhardt, 2015).

Some studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between such classroom practices and democratic competences. Özdemir et al. (2016), in a cross-sectional study in secondary education, showed a positive relationship between an engaged and meaningful approach to teaching and students' willingness to engage in discussions about political and social issues. In another cross-sectional study in secondary education, Alscher et al. (2022) demonstrated a positive relationship between teachers asking critical questions and students' political engagement. A review study by Johnson and Johnson (2016) indicated that collaboration in problem-solving contributes to various outcomes, such as political self-efficacy and the endorsement of democratic values like equality. A recent review by Jerome et al. (2024) suggested that collecting information on issues and taking action on them may potentially contribute to political engagement and internal political efficacy.

Through examining classroom practices, we seek to understand the

processes whereby teaching methods contribute to learning about democracy. The qualitative approach adopted by this research can provide more insights into this process (Maxwell, 2004; Tacq, 2011). Through qualitative research, classroom practices that are considered effective by teachers can be inventoried and categorized (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). These practices can then be compared across contexts, and the sequences that describe the processes whereby these classroom practices are effective in particular contexts can be examined (Miles et al., 2019). The current study focuses specifically on the first aspect, inventorying and categorizing classroom practices that are considered effective, to provide a first step in understanding the processes within teaching methods that contribute to learning about democracy.

To gain insight into classroom practices that are considered effective, we conducted interviews with expert teachers of democracy. Expert teachers are recognized for delivering high-quality lessons, possessing subject-specific knowledge, employing innovative teaching methods, and creating supportive learning environments (Berliner, 2004; Shulman, 1987; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995). Being considered an expert usually involves a combination of teacher training, additional professional development, and active participation in teaching communities (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hattie, 2009; Looney, 2011). Additionally, expert teachers often have more than 4.5 years of experience, along with traits such as talent and motivation (Berliner, 2001).

The interviews of the current study focused on the expert teachers' democracy-specific pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). PCK refers to the teacher's understanding of the subject matter and its translation into the classroom, which is necessary for teaching in an engaging and effective manner (Shulman, 1986). PCK encompasses various elements, including teachers' knowledge of classroom practices (e.g., Gess-Newsome et al., 2019). The PCK literature suggests that expert teachers, due to their experience and qualifications, are able to reflect on their PCK and consequently on their classroom practices in a clear manner (Anderson & Taner, 2022; Berliner, 2004; Shulman, 1987).

The current study is descriptive in nature and aims to gain further insights into which specific classroom practices are considered effective in teaching democratic subject matter and competences, as well as how these practices are integrated into different teaching methods.

3. Research method

3.1. Research context

To address our research questions, we conducted interviews with expert teachers of democracy in the Netherlands, in which secondary education is legally required to actively contribute to students' understanding of and respect for liberal democracy (De Groot et al., 2022). In the Netherlands, there are three main secondary educational tracks. According to the *VO-raad* (the Dutch association of secondary education schools), approximately 60% of students are enrolled in a pre-vocational education track (ages 11–16), 20% in general secondary education (ages 11–17), and 20% in pre-academic education (ages 11–18) (VO-Raad, 2021). In these tracks, the subject of democracy is particularly addressed in civics and history courses (Nieuwelink & Oostdam, 2021). In addition, students in pre-vocational education often continue their education in a tertiary vocational education track. In this track, there is a requirement to teach explicitly about citizenship themes, such as democracy. This is often carried out in a separate course called Citizenship (Den Boer & Leest, 2021). Given that expert democracy teachers teach explicitly about democracy in the above-mentioned courses (civics, history, and citizenship), we expect that they can provide valuable insights into relevant classroom practices and how these are integrated into teaching methods.

3.2. Participants

Our sampling approach was to ask key stakeholders to nominate potential participants and verify their expertise, which is a common approach in expert teacher research, as indicated by Anderson and Taner (2022). To this end, we initiated a search within our network to identify expert democracy teachers. In this search process, we first approached teacher trainers specializing in civics, history, and citizenship education and asked for their recommendations of expert democracy teachers who were suitable for interviews. In addition, we circulated a message among our network of teacher trainers, asking for individuals who self-identified as expert democracy teachers. As a result, we received a list of teachers together with their contact information. After the search process, we verified the expertise of the identified teachers, using the following criteria:

- We inquired about the teachers' *experience* as civics and/or history teachers in secondary education or as citizenship teachers in tertiary vocational education, considering factors such as educational background and years of teaching experience.
- We confirmed the *quality and expertise* of the teachers (i.e., teaching skills and subject knowledge) by consulting various teacher trainers.
- We confirmed the teachers' *participation in professional development*, such as additional coursework and in-service training related to teaching for democracy, by consulting various teacher trainers.
- We conducted an online search to determine whether the teachers were *actively involved in the professional community*. This involvement could include authoring professional books, writing textbooks, holding positions in professional associations for civics/history education and/or citizenship education, and contributing to relevant blogs.
- We conducted an online search to determine whether the teacher was *recognized as an expert in the media* (e.g., quoted in newspaper articles on democratic/citizenship education).

Finally, the expertise of these teachers was re-evaluated by both a senior lecturer specializing in history education and another senior lecturer specializing in civics and citizenship education. Following this verification process, we interviewed 20 teachers for this study. Once these teachers had been interviewed, there was a sense of repetition, as the classroom practices identified were recurrent across the teachers.

The interviewed teachers showed a wide range of teaching characteristics. In terms of courses, 14 teachers focused on teaching civics in secondary education, five taught history in secondary education, and three taught citizenship courses in tertiary education. In addition, one teacher was employed at an innovative secondary school in which the subject of democracy was not linked to a specific course but covered in various projects. In terms of educational tracks, four teachers taught in pre-vocational education, 13 in general secondary education, 13 in pre-academic education, and three in tertiary vocational education. The teachers' experience with these courses and tracks was on average 15 years, ranging from a minimum of four years to a maximum of 35 years. The total number of courses and tracks taught by the teachers exceeded the total number of teachers, as some teachers taught several courses or students in different tracks.

3.3. Semi-structured interviews

To address the research questions, we conducted semi-structured interviews between January and April 2021. Prior to the interviews, we sent the participants an email asking them to provide a brief overview of their learning goals and teaching methods in relation to liberal democracy (Appendix A). This pre-interview email was designed to encourage the participants to reflect on their democracy classroom practices and help us prepare for the interviews. Most participants ($n = 16$) responded to this email.

During the interviews, we first discussed the teachers' specific learning goals in relation to democracy. Next, we discussed the different teaching methods used by the teachers, briefly touching on each

method. The teachers then selected two teaching methods that they felt were most effective in achieving their learning goals. We then went into more detail about these chosen methods and discussed how they were carried out step by step. Finally, we discussed the classroom practices that the teachers believed caused the effects of the teaching methods. The interview guide used is found in Appendix B. Its validity and usability were confirmed by conducting six pilot interviews with pre-service teachers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted remotely using online platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams) or by telephone. As this study focuses on actual classroom practices, we explicitly asked the teachers at the beginning of the interviews to focus their responses on teaching outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, as emergency remote teaching was the norm during this period. Due to the constraints, planned observations were not possible. The interviews were recorded with the active consent of the participants (University of Amsterdam ethical reference number: 2020-CDE-12713). The interviews lasted on average 71 min (min. = 45 min, max. = 119 min).

3.4. Data coding and analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then coded using MAXQDA (Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2020). The main focus of this study is on classroom practices and teaching methods. To this end, we used two main categories for coding, whereby we derived the codes from the data while drawing on insights from the literature in our theoretical framework (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). In this iterative process, the first author extracted codes from the data, discussed them, and refined them with the co-authors based on theoretical insights, and then revisited the data with the refined codes. Coding within the two main categories was conducted as follows:

- *Classroom practices*: In this category, we coded text passages that indicated classroom practices, such as *meaningful embedding* and *providing multiple perspectives*, and to which ends these practices were used. This included both text passages in which the teachers explicitly stated that these classroom practices were effective in achieving the learning goals and text passages that illustrated the classroom practices.
- *Teaching methods*: In this category, we coded text passages that indicated a teaching method (e.g., *lecture* and *application assignment*). We asked the respondents at the beginning of each interview which two teaching methods they thought were effective for achieving the learning goals; therefore, it was possible to code two large sections of each interview as different teaching methods.

To ensure the reliability of our main categories, we established an inter-coder agreement (Cohen's k) for the codes by having sections of text coded independently by the first author and an independent coder. The coders independently coded 42 text segments related to classroom practices, yielding $k = 0.89$, indicating a high level of agreement. For the teaching methods segments ($N = 40$), we found that $k = 0.71$. This indicates a moderate level of agreement. After deliberation, we adjusted the names and definitions of the codes in our teaching methods coding scheme. A second round of coding resulted in $k = 0.87$, indicating a high level of agreement. The coders discussed any classroom practices and teaching methods on which they still disagreed, resulting in a consensus on their classification.

After coding, we conducted a thematic analysis within and across the teaching methods to explore the classroom practices. This involved comparing data segments to identify relationships, similarities, and anomalies regarding the classroom practices integrated in each teaching method. In doing so, we looked for consistent patterns in the data. Our main focus was on the classroom practices, which we interpreted in the contexts of the teaching methods and the teachers' learning goals.

4. Results

The interviewed teachers explained in detail how they implemented their teaching methods and, subsequently, the specific classroom practices involved. The expert teachers seemed to be very conscious of—and able to easily articulate—what they considered to be effective. They consistently articulated their rationales for the contributions of classroom practices to students' learning about democracy. They seemed to base these ideas on what they had seen in the classroom and the development they saw in their students. The teachers also structurally indicated that the conditions for successful classroom practices were an open and safe classroom climate. For example, one teacher said: "You need a safe climate in the classroom where students feel free to express themselves, and then you have much more interaction between students."

Based on the interviews, six core classroom practices were derived: (1) providing a meaningful embedding of the subject matter; (2) providing multiple perspectives on democracy and socio-political issues; (3) facilitating students in thinking about solutions for socio-political issues while taking into account divergent perspectives; (4) facilitating students in collecting and presenting information independently; (5) encouraging students to take socio-political action; (6) encouraging critical reflection on subject matter. These classroom practices reflect the idea that an open and safe classroom climate is necessary to make teaching for democracy successful. For example, providing multiple perspectives and thinking about solutions from divergent perspectives are only possible when these conditions are met.

During the interviews, the teachers gave examples in which various classroom practices were combined. For example, one teacher provided a detailed explanation of a democratic decision-making simulation in which several practices were involved:

> Students are divided into left and right factions, interest groups, and media [Practice 2]. Each party member spends an hour in the library. […] And then they come back to the political faction room and tell each other what their parties' stances are [Practice 4]. The party members go to the school hallway, and students from different parties discuss with each other. […] The party members return to the faction room and discuss with their fellow party members about which other parties they can best collaborate with [Practice 3].

However, to gain as specific an understanding as possible of the different classroom practices, each practice is discussed separately in this results section.

We begin by discussing each classroom practice in detail, elaborating on the meaning of each classroom practice and describing why the teachers believed it contributed to the development of students' democratic competences. For each classroom practice, we provide concrete elaborations on how it was carried out. In addition, we offer an overview of how it was integrated into teaching methods, including examples provided by the expert teachers (Tables 1–6). In the tables, for the sake of brevity, we provide two examples per classroom practice for each teaching method (although additional examples were discussed during the interviews). The examples of classroom practices are from the following teaching methods: lecturing, discussion of beliefs, application assignments, research assignments, and democratic decision-making simulations.

4.1. Meaningful embedding

This classroom practice involves teachers not only explaining abstract democratic subject matter but also making it meaningful by relating it to students' existing knowledge and by creating experiences that are relevant and interesting to them. In this way, students can make a connection between the new abstract knowledge and what they already know and understand, enabling them to better understand and remember the new knowledge. This also engages students more in

politics and democracy. The teachers interviewed achieved this by linking the subject matter to current events and the students' everyday lives. In addition, the teachers used props, adapted the setup and decoration of the classroom, and created conflict and emotion, to provide concrete experiences as examples of what politics looks like in reality.

An example of linking subject matter to everyday life came from a teacher who used the metaphor of a school building in a lecture to illustrate the concept of the separation of powers. In doing so, he drew a parallel between politics (abstract) and school (meaningful), which helped students better understand the subject matter. The teacher explained as follows:

> I draw a kind of house or school building with three floors, and you should be able to write in it. Then we will fill in the school building. And then I ask, "Who would make the rules in school?" "Who enforces them?" "Who monitors the school rules?" "Who sends you a letter if you are late?" And later on, I will relate those roles to real life, or at least to how it works in politics [i.e., the separation of powers].

This quote shows that by drawing a school building on the board and asking questions about making, monitoring, and enforcing rules, the teacher made connections between these school principles and the democratic principle of separation of powers. This made it easier for students to understand democratic subject matter in relation to the wider society outside of school.

Another teacher gave the example of making the subject matter meaningful through the classroom setup and decoration. This was achieved during a decision-making simulation based on a city council meeting, aiming to introduce students to the topic of the legislative process. The teacher explained as follows:

> We are going to simulate a city council meeting, so we really have to dress very formally. So I want a boy to come in a suit, with a tie. I have that on myself too. And some of the students, not all of them, wear that. It just adds that little bit more [to the experience]. I also have a gavel and a mayor's chain. The moment I put the chain on and strike the gavel, then I am also the mayor. […] The setup in the classroom is that we all sit in a square […], and each political party has its own corner. […] I apply the same structure as in a city council meeting.

This quote illustrates how the teacher was able to give meaning to the decision-making simulation through the way in which he organized the classroom. Thus, the simulation became an immersive experience, placing students directly in the dynamics of the democratic process to help them better understand democratic institutions.

Table 1 shows the ways in which the teachers integrated this classroom practice into different teaching methods, including some of the examples mentioned during the interviews.

Table 1
Integration of *meaningful embedding* in teaching methods.

Teaching method	Classroom practice	Examples
Lecturing	The teacher links the subject matter to issues of personal relevance to students, with the use of concrete examples.	• The teacher links the separation of powers to rules and their enforcement in school. • The teacher links political ideology to the content of current events shown in popular television programs.
Discussion of beliefs	Students engage in discussions about political beliefs on issues that are personally relevant to them.	• Students discuss sensitive topics, such as cancel culture and discrimination. • Students discuss how they perceive (the behavior of) public representatives.
Application assignment	Issues and perspectives that are relevant to students are included in assignments.	• Students analyze arguments about sustainable purchasing behavior and food prices in preparation for the analysis of complex democratic issues. • Students analyze stories in which there is no democracy, such as what dictatorship does to people in their everyday lives.
Research assignment	Students conduct research on a topic of interest to them.	• Students research how the local government of the city or village in which they live is addressing sustainable development goals. • Students research perspectives on street violence in the neighborhood and how political parties approach the issue.
Decision-making simulation	Students experience decision-making in a simulated political setting on a societal issue of interest to them. This involves the use of props, adapting the classroom setup decoration, and creating conflict and emotion to provide an example of what politics looks like in reality.	• Students make decisions on issues, such as whether to have an elected head of state (monarchy or republic) or whether to prohibit racist stereotypes (e.g., blackface). • The classroom is made to look like a real city council and local political conflicts are enacted.

4.2. Providing multiple perspectives

This classroom practice involves teachers offering a variety of (substantiated) political perspectives and explicitly identifying the beliefs and values underlying these perspectives. In this way, students come to understand different points of view and ideologies. Thus, they come to understand the existence and validity of different ways of looking at democracy and society, and learn about their own preferences. The teachers interviewed achieved this by making use of the different perspectives of students present in the classroom. In addition, they themselves included different perspectives in the subject matter presented.

An example of using the different perspectives of students present in the classroom came from a teacher who facilitated a classroom discussion. In this example, the teacher made sure that the students recognized the legitimacy of their different beliefs. The teacher explained as follows:

> I help the students to articulate their own opinions. […] Through questioning, I try to help them understand why a person holds a particular belief. It's not about getting them to agree with each other, but rather, I try to ask, "What do you think about [student] A's statement?" or "What do you think about [student] B's actions?" and "Why do you think [student] B is doing this?"

This quote illustrates how the teacher allowed students to discuss their perspectives and asked questions to help them understand each other. As a result, students came to realize that neither side had the best argument and that their perspectives were instead based on different beliefs.

Another teacher gave the example of how he included different perspectives in an application assignment. In this assignment, students analyzed different behaviors and ideologies during the Weimar Republic leading up to Nazi Germany. Through this approach, the teacher provided students with a better understanding of the reasons behind people's actions. The teacher explained as follows:

> [Students read] interviews of a Jewish journalist who returned to Germany shortly after the Second World War and conducted in-depth interviews with ordinary citizens. The citizens reflect on their attitudes and experiences, using their own diaries as a

Table 2
Integration of *providing multiple perspectives* in teaching methods.

Teaching method	Classroom practice	Examples
Lecturing	The teacher includes and clarifies different perspectives on socio-political issues and ideologies.	• The teacher explains different political parties and ideologies. • The teacher addresses the perspectives underlying the dilemma between restricting freedoms and ensuring public health.
Discussion of beliefs	The discussion gets different students to dialogue with each other and learn from each other's perspectives.	• Students discuss perspectives on religious freedom and why students are or are not religious. • Students discuss perspectives on voting or not voting.
Application assignment	Different perspectives and ideologies are included in an application assignment.	• Students analyze different perspectives on democratic and authoritarian governance and the reasons for them. • Students analyze different arguments and political positions on issues such as bodily autonomy.
Research assignment	Students conduct research on different perspectives and ideologies regarding a socio-political issue.	• Students conduct research on the perspectives of various interest groups and (sub) cultures on socio-political issues. • Students investigate how different levels of government perceive a socio-political issue.
Decision-making simulation	The decision-making simulation includes different perspectives and ideologies relating to the roles that students play during the simulation.	• Students role-play various political organizations: pressure groups, activist groups, and political parties. • Students role-play different political parties with specific ideologies: left-wing, right-wing, progressive, and conservative.

> reference. […] I select specific passages from these interviews for the students to read and analyze. They have to consider why these people acted the way they did and what was happening in Germany at the time. […] By placing these individuals in their historical context, students can explain the behavior [of the Germans interviewed].

This quote illustrates how this particular assignment, in which different perspectives were systematically analyzed, compared, and evaluated, served as a tool for the teacher to foster in students an awareness that politics and political history are shaped by individuals with unique thoughts and actions. In this process, students were exposed to different perspectives and learned to understand the reasons behind these perspectives.

Table 2 shows the ways in which the teachers integrated this classroom practice into different teaching methods, including some of the examples mentioned during the interviews.

4.3. Thinking about solutions from divergent perspectives

This classroom practice involves students thinking about solutions to socio-political issues in a democratic way, in which divergent and conflicting perspectives are at play. With this practice, the teachers emphasized that it is not about reaching a final solution but about the process of exploring possible solutions while considering divergent perspectives. Through this, students come to understand that in a democracy, individuals may not always get everything they want; rather, compromise is often necessary for harmonious coexistence. The teachers interviewed achieved this by encouraging students to approach a socio-political issue from a broader and more overarching perspective, considering all relevant factors and perspectives (i.e., a holistic approach to problem solving). They also encouraged students to think about possible solutions to problems through negotiation and compromise.

One teacher gave the example of how he encouraged students to consider all relevant factors and perspectives of a socio-political issue during a research assignment. In this assignment, students investigated different stakeholders in relation to a socio-political issue. They then wrote a "proposal for action", proposing a solution to the problem. The teacher explained as follows:

> Students don't just choose any two groups in society [to do research on], but they look for cases where the interests are so far apart that you could say they are conflicting interests. And they have to resolve that in their proposal for action. […] This methodology forces students to look more closely: "Which interests of others am I affecting with this proposal?" […] And so such a dilemma sharpens the problem, rather than [students coming up with] solutions that are quickly agreed upon.

This quote emphasizes the importance of students actively seeking out perspectives within conflicts that are not self-evidently reconcilable. Students need to consider how to resolve these conflicts and integrate their solutions into proposals that consider the divergent perspectives discovered in the research.

Another teacher gave the example of a decision-making simulation in which he had structured a process of negotiation and compromise seeking. In this process, students were asked to seek compromises based on their own beliefs. The teacher guided the students to think about which beliefs they were willing to weaken and which they were not in

Table 3
Integration of *thinking about solutions from divergent perspectives* in teaching methods.

Teaching method	Classroom practice	Examples
Discussion of beliefs	At the end of a discussion, students are encouraged to collaboratively think about a conclusion or solution that considers all the different perspectives.	• After a discussion in which arguments have been weighed up, students reach a collective conclusion, for example, on whether voting is important or to what extent civil disobedience is permissible.
Research assignment	Students collaborate on conducting research and developing solutions for socio-political issues. A solution emerges from the convergence of different ideas, perspectives, and stakeholders involved in the research.	• Based on the research of different political party programs, students collectively write a political party program for their own fictional party. • After researching different perspectives on a socio-political issue, such as compensation for government failures, students work together to develop a solution.
Decision-making simulation	Students make decisions together by voting, deciding on what the most convincing arguments are and reaching compromises.	• Students in different groups role-play political parties with different ideologies and must negotiate to reach a coalition agreement. • Students deliberate on issues such as alcohol prohibition, express their personal opinions on the matter, and finally try to reach a collective compromise.

order to reach an agreement. The teacher explained as follows:

> We discuss how we can get closer. Let's see how we can compromise and still get along and think, "I am satisfied with what we have agreed upon here if we were to govern." […] There are situations where someone says, "Well, I'm not going to give up anything," and the other person says, "Oh, I'm not going to give up anything either." […] First, let's discuss what the non-negotiable demands are, what the less stringent demands are, and then have a discussion together about a compromise. And then you'll see that the students come closer together.

This quote illustrates how the experience of finding solutions was a central part of a decision-making simulation and could sometimes be a challenging process. The teacher guided the students step by step so that they eventually realized that even on issues on which they might strongly disagree, a collective solution could be found.

Table 3 shows the ways in which the teachers integrated this classroom practice into different teaching methods, including some of the examples mentioned during the interviews.

4.4. Independent information collection and presentation

This classroom practice involves the teacher giving students the opportunity to collect and present information themselves. As a result, students actively acquire information, gain experience in using media, draw conclusions, and actively process the subject matter, ultimately leading to a better understanding of how politics and democracy work. There are two key steps in this process. The first step is collecting data, with students conducting research and drawing conclusions from the gathered information. The second step is the presentation of data, with students communicating the information and conclusions they have found to an audience. Both mechanisms are intertwined and are almost always combined.

An example of this practice was a teacher's use of a research assignment in which students collected information through discussion and research using their textbook. Students then presented their findings to their peers by creating their own lecture. The teacher explained as follows:

> I show the students some examples [of lectures], and then I give them the rest of the lesson to discuss with each other. [I ask each group,] "What subject do you have?" "Political ideologies?" "What do you already know?" "Sit down and brainstorm." "I'll give you a big A3 paper, and just write down what you already know." Then in the next lesson, I say to them, "Open your textbook, and see what's in there, read the concepts associated with your subject, and check the textbook for assignments. See if there are any tasks that you find interesting to present."

This quote illustrates how students learned to think in a structured way about what they already knew about a topic and how to find more information about it. They then presented this information to an audience (i.e., their fellow students). The teacher explained that through this process, students themselves became "experts" on the topics they had researched.

Another teacher gave the example of a decision-making simulation in which she had students collect and present information. In this teaching method, the teacher simulated the West Berlin Africa Conference (1884–1885), with students taking on the roles of colonized and colonizing countries. Before the simulation started, students conducted research about their assigned roles. They then used this information in the decision-making simulation to make speeches to their peers about the sovereignty and independence of African countries. The teacher explained as follows:

> Students work together in pairs to research why African countries were colonized. So they get a homework assignment every week to prepare their speech. For example, [for the colonizing countries,] it is a policy plan explaining why they have the right to claim a part of Africa, and [for the colonized countries,] it is why they are glad that they are now independent.

This quote shows that students first had to carefully research their positions in a decision-making simulation, which gave them a deeper understanding of the roles and the subject matter. Their speeches provided an additional learning experience, allowing students to present the information once again, thereby deepening their understanding of the subject matter.

Table 4 shows the ways in which the teachers integrated this classroom practice into different teaching methods, including some of the examples mentioned during the interviews.

Table 4
Integration of *independent information collection and presentation* in teaching methods.

Teaching method	Classroom practice	Examples
Research assignment	Students conduct desk and/or field research on socio-political issues and present this information orally and/or in writing.	• Students create their own lesson about a political topic, such as political ideologies, and teach it to their fellow students. • Students research a local issue, such as noise pollution, by talking to local residents and then present their findings to a local councilor.
Decision-making simulation	As part of a simulated decision-making process, students research role-specific information and present this information in speeches.	• Students are given the role of a country. They research why it may or may not be sovereign and then give a speech about it. • Students search the library for information about their assigned political party and present it to their classmates.

4.5. Taking socio-political action

This practice ensures that students actively engage with the subject matter by putting it into practice and creating change to improve society and the environment in which they live. Students experience and learn that they can make their voices heard when addressing socio-political issues. As a result, they experience that politics is not a distant issue but is relevant to them. The teachers interviewed achieved this by enabling students to take proactive measures to address socio-political issues. They also ensured that students had positive encounters with political authorities.

One of the teachers gave the example of a classroom discussion in which she encouraged students to take an active part in addressing social issues. She mentioned using the discussion as a platform to motivate students to take concrete steps, such as scheduling meetings with city council members, initiating petitions, or sending emails. The teacher explained as follows:

> When we discuss something, I notice that the students have strong opinions. Then I always ask, "What are you going to do about it? When are you going to do something? Have you already made an appointment with a councilor?" […] Then I try to point out: "If this is so important, or if you really believe this, why don't you do something about it?" […] And then the question is simply, "What can you do now? Think of something." They really know a lot. I always find it so unfortunate when people say that they don't know anything. They come up with signatures themselves, and they mention that they can email. […] And sometimes I say, "Let's just do

Table 5
Integration of *taking socio-political action* in teaching methods.

Teaching method	Classroom practice	Examples
Discussion of beliefs	Students take socio-political action based on issues discussed in the classroom.	• Based on a class discussion, students write a letter to the school board, for example, to make menstrual products freely available. • Based on a class discussion, students initiate a petition focusing on, for example, organ donation legislation.
Research assignment	Students develop and implement their own solutions based on research into socio-political issues. In the process, students have positive encounters with authority (e.g., government officials and politicians).	• Students conduct research on a local issue, devise solutions, and facilitate discussions with local politicians who then act on this issue. • Students' voices are heard when, for example, they write a letter to the European Parliament.

it, right now, on the spot. Find out: What email address? Who do you need to be with? How can you find this person?"

This quote suggests that within the discussion, the teacher gave students the freedom to take socio-political actions on the issues under discussion. In this way, the teacher showed students that addressing a socio-political issue in the formal political sphere, or having an impact on politics, was something that students could do themselves.

Another teacher gave the example of a positive encounter with a political authority during a research assignment. He had his students write a letter to the European Parliament. When the member of the European Parliament (MEP) responded seriously, the students felt that they really were being heard by the political sphere. The teacher explained as follows:

> The European Parliament, for example, always responds; they have a good budget for that. If you send a letter to a member of the European Parliament, you almost always get a response. When it comes to international relations, students have to write to the European Parliament, and they get a response. And then they realize, "Wow, I got a reply from a member of the European Parliament, and they actually looked into my question."

This suggests that students felt that their voices were being heard by an MEP, even though the EU might seem like a distant institution. This made politics less of a far-off affair and more accessible.

Table 5 shows the ways in which the teachers integrated this classroom practice into different teaching methods, including some of the examples mentioned during the interviews.

4.6. Critical reflection on subject matter

This classroom practice involves encouraging students to reflect on the current state of democracy or their own opinions on socio-political issues. Students reflect on the strengths, limitations, different angles, and fallacies of the issues and arguments involved. In doing so, they develop critical thinking skills by evaluating both the legitimacy of democratic institutions and principles and their own reasoning on socio-political issues. Critical reflection can take place when the teacher asks questions about the rationale behind democratic concepts and perspectives on socio-political issues. In addition, teachers can promote critical thinking by asking students to reflect on the validity of arguments and reasoning through analytical tasks.

One teacher gave the example of the critical questions she asked during a lecture to encourage students to reflect on the legitimacy of democratic concepts, such as the separation of powers. The teacher explained as follows:

> I start with a question like "Why is it necessary to separate the powers?" And then I want to hear something from the class, and we discuss it: "For example, what would happen if we didn't have it?" Or "What would happen if we did it differently?"

This quote suggests that when students engaged in questioning and reflecting on the need for the separation of powers, they were actively involved in a process that fosters a deeper and more critical understanding of how democracy works and its important role in governance.

Another teacher explained how he motivated students to critically reflect on the quality of their own arguments by having them analyze their arguments in an application assignment. In this particular example, the teacher used a software program to help students structure and

Table 6
Integration of *critical reflection on subject matter* in teaching methods.

Teaching method	Classroom practice	Examples
Lecturing	The teacher explains and questions students about the reasons for the existence of democratic institutions and principles, as well as their strengths and limitations.	• The teacher explains and questions how central power and decentralized powers are related and what the limits of these powers are. • The teacher explains and questions the separation of powers, why it is important, and what would happen if it did not exist.
Discussion of beliefs	Students question their own arguments and reasoning on democratic and socio-political issues.	• Students discuss how much power they think the European Union (EU) should have and what limits should be placed on it. • Students discuss their sources of information on public health policy and its limitations.
Application assignment	Students analyze the quality of their own and others' arguments and reasoning on democratic principles and socio-political issues in analytical tasks in assignments.	• Students analyze their own opinions on the topic of freedom in a schematic way. In this process, they analyze their arguments, including their form and content, and evaluate internet sources. • Students draw a quadrant with political parties and ideologies at the ends. They are then encouraged to think critically about how and why their own opinion does or does not fall within one of these ends.
Research assignment	Students write a reflective report as part of a research assignment. This involves asking students to reflect on the strengths, limitations, fallacies and their personal opinions regarding the results they have found.	• Students research a political party's arguments for a solution to an issue, such as taxation, and analyze why these arguments are or are not in line with the party's ideology. • Students relate their research findings to political ideologies, such as liberalism and socialism, and argue how they personally perceive these ideologies in relation to the research findings.
Decision-making simulation	During or after a decision-making simulation, students are questioned about role-specific arguments on the simulated legislation and about the strengths and limitations of decision-making processes.	• Students reflect on the extent to which their assigned political ideology is consistent with a proposed law resulting from a compromise. • During and after the simulation of the West Berlin Africa Conference (1884–1885), students discuss how the process unfolded and the strengths and limitations of the decision-making process.

analyze their own arguments. The teacher explained as follows:

> So if you have specific claims or arguments, you can say "This, because that," "This follows from that." Students write down and structure their arguments. I present a proposition, a claim, and there are arguments to support it and objections to consider. They should also make the assumptions transparent. […] Making these assumptions visible also affects the idea of how "true" something is.

This quote illustrates how an application assignment served as a tool for students to organize and reflect on their argumentation in a structured way. Students were able to work step by step on their logical reasoning skills, and, by making arguments transparent and engaging in reflective practices, they came to realize that reasoning can sometimes be influenced by fallacies.

Table 6 shows the ways in which the teachers integrated this classroom practice into different teaching methods, including some of the examples mentioned during the interviews.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to gain more insight into which specific classroom practices are considered effective in teaching democratic subject matter and competences according to teachers, and how these practices are integrated into different teaching methods. To this end, we explored the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of 20 expert teachers of democracy through semi-structured interviews. From the interviews, we identified six classroom practices that the expert teachers considered effective: meaningful embedding, providing multiple perspectives, thinking about solutions from divergent perspectives, independent information collection and presentation, taking socio-political action, and critical reflection on subject matter. We also explored the ways in which these classroom practices were integrated into the teaching methods used by the expert teachers. Our findings showed various combinations between the classroom practices and the different teaching methods.

6. Discussion

In this study, we identified classroom practices that are consistent with the literature on teaching for democracy (e.g., Campbell, 2019; Carretero, 2016; Lin et al., 2015; Reinhardt, 2015; Westheimer, 2019). Our findings provide empirical support for these practices from the perspective of expert teachers and expand on earlier work by detailing how these practices can be carried out. For example, previous literature has linked critical reflection on subject matter to teaching democracy (e.g., Abrami et al., 2015; Bermudez, 2015). The expert teachers we interviewed consistently emphasized that critical reflection on democratic subject matter can contribute to more well-reasoned democratic insights. In addition, the experts provided more concrete examples of how this classroom practice can be implemented, such as by questioning the separation of powers and by schematically analyzing personal opinions and arguments on the topic of freedom.

Our study also provides further insight into the independent functioning of classroom practices for stimulating democratic competences. Previous literature has often described classroom practices in combination with one another within educational programs, teaching methods, and related theoretical frameworks (e.g., action civics, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, see: Carretero, 2016; Jerome et al., 2024; Levinson, 2012). However, previous studies have not examined classroom practices separately, nor have they distinguished which specific practices are important for stimulating particular democratic competences. Our study offers directions for further exploration of how specific classroom practices are associated with particular democratic competences. For example, our findings indicate that collecting and presenting information about subject matter such as political parties and ideologies can contribute to a better understanding of politics. While this practice can be sequenced by other classroom practices, such as thinking about solutions from divergent perspectives, our findings also suggest that these practices can be implemented independently.

The classroom practices identified provide greater insight into the black box of teaching methods and the reasons they might contribute to learning. In our view, this is an important step in the process of gaining more insight into *what works* in relation to teaching for democracy. As with the classroom practices, the teaching methods found in this study are largely consistent with previous research (Campbell, 2019; Teegelbeckers et al., 2023; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). Both our study and previous research identified teaching methods such as lecturing, discussions, application assignments, research assignments (within projects), and practicing democratic decision-making through simulations. The results of our study also provide greater insight into what might account for the effectiveness of these teaching methods. For example, the practice of meaningful embedding can explain why lectures and assignments might contribute to knowledge acquisition (e.g., Alongi et al., 2016; Green et al., 2011).

Finally, our study shows how expert teachers integrate classroom practices into a variety of teaching methods. A number of previous studies have already provided empirical evidence on specific classroom practices, but these studies were often limited to a single teaching method. Our findings provide further insights into how these classroom practices can be integrated into other teaching methods, with the interviewed teachers offering a range of examples. This is the case with, for example, studies on the classroom practice of meaningful embedding (Clay & Rubin, 2020; Levinson, 2012; Nelsen, 2023; Schmidt, 2021). Studies of meaningful embedding often focus on research assignments, action projects, and classroom conversations. Our findings provide more examples of this classroom practice in other teaching methods, such as linking abstract democratic principles to meaningful contexts in lectures, engaging students in discussions and assignments about real-world democratic issues, and creating meaningful sensory experiences through simulations by using props and adapting the setup and decoration of the classroom.

6.1. Limitations

Although this study has provided relevant insights into classroom practices in teaching methods, it also has some limitations. Because of the study's qualitative nature, we could not determine the actual effectiveness of the classroom practices; instead, we gained insights into practices that are considered effective by this particular group of expert teachers. Accordingly, our research focused on how teachers teach rather than how students learn. While this research focus is important for insights into potentially effective teaching, it does not tell us whether the identified classroom practices truly resonate with students and contribute effectively to their learning about democracy (Oser & Baeriswy, 2002).

Furthermore, we interviewed relatively more teachers teaching in general secondary education and pre-academic education than in pre-vocational education and tertiary vocational education. Although we identified similar practices in different types of education, suggesting that these practices are relevant for teachers in different educational tracks, it is possible that we have biased results. Teachers in general and pre-academic education teach students with different cognitive abilities and personality traits compared to vocational education (Brandt et al., 2020). Therefore, whether teachers in vocational programs believe that their students need specific classroom practices remains largely an open question.

6.2. Implications for future research

The initial exploration of this study is a first step in understanding the processes within teaching methods that contribute to learning about democracy (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). Therefore, based on the above discussion, we suggest some directions for future research. Subsequent

studies can further explore how classroom practices contribute to learning about democracy by contrasting different contexts and scenarios, such as novice and expert teachers, or through in-depth analysis of rich data, such as case studies (Maxwell, 2004; Miles et al., 2019). To gain a fuller understanding of what contributes to effective teaching for democracy, future research can combine the classroom practices we have identified in analyses of general classroom practices (e.g., safe classroom climate, management, and feedback) (e.g., Hattie, 2009; Marzano et al., 2003; Pace, 2019). In addition, quantitative research is needed to substantiate the effectiveness of the classroom practices we have identified through experimental studies in which the practices vary in presence, absence, or intensity across different interventions (Maxwell, 2004; Tacq, 2011). Future studies could also examine and compare classroom practices integrated within different teaching methods and subsequently evaluate these methods. For instance, classroom practices in interventions focused on explaining democracy could be compared with those focused on direct experiences with democracy (e.g., Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019).

Furthermore, future research with more vocational teachers would be beneficial to substantiate the relevance of the identified classroom practices. In addition, the practices need to be tested on other samples of teachers in different contexts. It would also be beneficial to conduct future research on students' perspectives of the effectiveness of these practices, and how the practices can be used by preservice teachers and teacher educators. These studies could, for example, explore the extent to which the classroom practices support students with varying levels of prior democratic knowledge and different starting positions regarding democratic competences (e.g., Gainous & Martens, 2012).

Finally, future research should focus on how the identified classroom practices can compensate for anti-democratic influences in emerging and consolidated democracies (see, e.g., Diamond, 2020; Galston, 2020). Young people can fully develop democratic competences if they grow up in a society with a strong democratic culture and legitimate institutions (e.g., Diamond, 1997, 2008). This process can be hindered by authoritarian and neoliberal tendencies that promote attitudes such as obedience, social dominance, competition, and utility maximization rather than, for example, critical thinking and engaging with different perspectives (Brown, 2015; Osborne et al., 2023). Whether the identified classroom practices can counteract market-driven socialization and authoritarian influences remains an open question and requires further investigation (see also recommendations by Apple, 2011; Westheimer, 2019).

All in all, the classroom practices of the expert teachers of democracy provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of teaching methods related to teaching for democracy. With the results of this study, we have clarified which factors are specifically relevant to teaching democracy. We have provide further empirical evidence on existing assumptions about classroom practices that contribute to the effectiveness of teaching methods, and we have provided additional explanations. Future research can further investigate the identified classroom practices to gain more insight into the process of a teaching method that makes it effective. This may lead to a better understanding of the effectiveness of teaching for democracy.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Jip Y. Teegelbeckers: Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Hessel Nieuwelink:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Ron J. Oostdam:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Conceptualization.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

Statement: During the preparation of this work the author(s) used ChatGPT and DeepL in order to improve readability and language of the work. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Appendix A. Pre-interview email

Dear respondent,

We are going to have an interview next week. Could you please email me some answers to the following questions in advance? These answers will guide the interview. The interview will be about teaching methods and classroom practices in the education you provide to your students to teach them competences related to democracy. When we talk about democracy in this interview, we will be talking about concepts such as (1) representation of the people, parliament, and the cabinet, (2) elections, and (3) the separation of powers. The interview will include the following questions:

1. When teaching about democracy, what do you think is important for students to learn? In other words, what learning goals do you want to achieve?
2. How do you ensure that your students learn about democracy? In other words, what teaching methods do you use?

Please also think about the reasons why you have chosen these teaching methods rather than others. You don't need to send these reasons to us yet; we will go into more detail in the interview.

Appendix B. Interview guidelines

Learning goals (in general)

1. You indicated in the pre-interview email that you consider the following *learning goals* to be important when teaching about democracy: [fill in learning goals here.]
   - Can you tell me more about them? Why are they important?

Teaching methods (in general)

2. You indicated in the pre-interview email that you consider the following *teaching methods* important when teaching about democracy: [fill in teaching methods here.]
   - Can you tell me more about them? Why are they important?
3. Which two teaching methods do you think are most effective in achieving the learning goals?

Teaching method (specific)

4. You have indicated that you use [teaching method] in your teaching:
- What do you mean by [teaching method]?
- What subject matter do you cover in this teaching method?
- What do you start with? Why this aspect? And which aspect after that? And why?
- Do students need prior knowledge? What and why?
- What scope is there for students' own input?
- Do you try to link information in the teaching method to the students' lived world? If so, why?
- How do students interact with each other during this teaching method?
- How do you create a classroom climate in which everything can be said and done through this teaching method?
- To what extent do you give feedback to students? How do you do this?

Depending on the specific teaching method, additional questions were asked, such as:

- What kind of classroom setup does [teaching method] take place in?
- What different roles are there? Why specifically these roles?

5. Is the way that you use [teaching method] the same for each course and track? If not, what could be different?
6. You use this teaching method to achieve the following learning goals: [fill in learning goals here.]
- Are there any skills, knowledge, or attitudes you forgot to mention?
- Is this teaching method the same or different for each competence? Why?
7. Classroom practices considered effective:
- Why do you consider this teaching method effective? What do you see in the classroom?
- Why don't you use another teaching method to achieve the learning goals?

Closing

- Are there any things you would like to ask or say yourself before ending this interview?

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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