

Democracy-promoting Education through Digitalization? Empirical insight into South-North partnership

**** Abstract ECER ****

Susanne Timm & Annette Scheunpflug

With empirical data from Madagascar, Cameroun and further Sub-Saharan countries we ask for opportunities that arise from digitalisation for democracy-promoting education in the global horizon. Our question overarches four sub-questions, namely

1. What are the experiences of school leaders and those responsible for partnerships with school partnerships and how do they relate them to the democracy-promoting education?
2. What ideas can be identified for the localisation in a digital global society?
3. What digital opportunities and resources are used in the context of South-North partnerships?
4. What supporting and adverse factors can be identified for the practice of South-North partnerships?

In this project, we theoretically presuppose the fact of digitality (Stalder, 2017) in the global society (Luhmann, 1982) for all contexts. At the same time, we assume that digitality is realised locally, in different traditions, with different resources and under different political conditions. We are therefore dealing with a glocal phenomenon (Robertson, 1995). From a pedagogical perspective, we draw on research on learning democracy, which increasingly emphasises democratic experiences and emotions beyond the mere transfer of knowledge about democratic rules and values. There are also claims for reflection democracy-promoting education on a transnational level (Culp, 2019). Other scholars ask for relating digital education to democracy and citizenship (Choi & Cristol, 2021; Knowles et al., 2023). We also draw on research on South-North partnerships, in which their embedding in processes of reflection can be identified as a condition for sustainability (Krogull & Scheunpflug, 2013; Jääskeläinen, 2015; Bourn & Cara, 2012).

Based on the qualitative content analysis of group discussions (n=7) and interviews (n=10), we can show the following results. Material resources and, in some cases, political constellations make it difficult to sustain South-North partnerships that can stimulate educational processes that promote democracy. In addition, there are different attitudes to the opportunities offered by digitality, a spectrum of understandings of democracy and the need for curricular harmonisation. On the other hand, we can formulate the following chances deriving from South-North-partnerships: By engaging with an external perspective, the understanding of democracy in its complexity is enhanced for all participants. Participants acquire skills to articulate and reflect on their own involvement in an educational and political culture. The practical use of digitality becomes more complex and accessible for reflection.

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