

Abstract to AFRICE EDUCATION IN AFRICA: REFLECTIONS BEYOND 2015 MDGs -
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

E-LEARNING – OPENING A NEW SPACE FOR DEMOCRACY IN TEACHER
EDUCATION?

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Moving beyond the 2015 MDGs and *access* to education, this paper address and discuss how the use of e-learning and social media provide new potential spaces for promoting democratic practices in teacher education. The ways in which we design and implement teacher education will affect the skills and performances of our coming teachers, and, hence, on the qualities and capacities of future citizens in our democracies.

This paper is based on the following research question: *How can we prepare our teacher students to make use of new democratic spaces created through digital technology?*

Although a decrease in traditional democratic participation, such as voting in elections, is visible in several countries, democracy cannot simply be measured through this indicator (Dahlgren, 2009). Digital technology is now used in mundane activities and the introduction of social media has paved way for a citizen-centered perspective on democracy (Loader & Mercea, 2011). The increased possibilities of strengthening social networks and establishing new connections, locally, nationally and globally, have expanded through social media. Our societies are also, to a larger extent than before, influenced by global issues that concern all of us, for example international trade, environmental dangers, and infectious diseases such as Ebola and HIV. In other words, neither the individual citizen nor society are restricted to the context of the nation-state (Dahlgren, 2009; Jorba & Bimber, 2012). Digital media promotes and facilitates this process as well as being used by individuals as a mechanism to connect and engage with other individuals in the modern *polis*. The democratic cosmos offered through technology provides us with a hybrid space that to a new extent is capable of hosting both public and private interests.

In this paper, I reflect and discuss on my own practice as a teacher educator and on activities with teacher students in which digital technology is consciously used to improve and expand critical thinking, professionalism and democratic capabilities. Although taking place in Norway, comparative links to the African context is possible.