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Advancing citizenship through language arts education: conceptions of rhetoric in Scandinavian national curricula

Claire Hogarth ^a, Christina Matthiesen ^b and Jonas Bakken ^c

^aSchool of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden; ^bDepartment of Communication (Section of Rhetoric), University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark; ^cDepartment of Teacher Education and School Research, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT


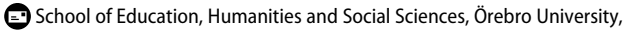
Scandinavian countries have a long tradition of widespread public schooling linked to civic education. In the most recent curriculum reforms, concepts from rhetoric appear in various forms in language arts subject curricula from primary to upper-secondary school. In this article, we examine how current Scandinavian curricula reflect rhetoric and rhetorical education through content analysis based on David Fleming's update of the classical triad in rhetorical education. We examine explicit and implicit references to rhetorical art, practice, and inquiry to gain insight into how rhetoric is reflected and conceptualized in national curricula, thereby providing a nuanced outlook for future research on the rhetorical turn of education. The analysis shows that the curricula for language arts subjects in all Scandinavian countries include several key components of contemporary rhetorical education, and in Swedish and Norwegian curricula, rhetoric is also explicitly linked to the development of democratic citizenship. However, references to rhetoric in curricula documents are sometimes implicit, and the explicit references that are present might give the impression that rhetoric should be taught only as a technical skill devoid of context or as critical text analysis.

KEYWORDS

Rhetoric; language arts; civic education; Scandinavia

Introduction

In 2012, in this journal, Brummett stated that '... now is a particularly appropriate time to re-examine the role of rhetoric in the curriculum', pointing to four reasons: an increase in cultural pluralism, the expansion of knowledge, greater use of media, and an expanding population (p. 811). Societal change also pressed ancient Greece, and in classical rhetoric, Isocrates and Aristotle viewed rhetoric as a civic art that aimed to handle the affairs and decision making of the *polis*. Thus, rhetorical theory recognizes language as a creative power through which we build cities, make laws, and dispute and 'confute the bad and extol the good' (Isocrates, 1929b, p. 255). Within society, we engage in disputes to seek out solutions to common problems across differences. This is the mark of the rhetorical community described by Miller (1994), which is characterized by the 'inclusion of sameness and difference, of us and them, of centripetal and centrifugal impulses that makes a community rhetorical, for rhetoric in essence requires both agreement and dissent, shared understandings and novelty' (p. 74).

CONTACT Claire Hogarth  claire.hogarth@oru.se 

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Rhetoric is highly relevant for civic education today because it prepares students for participation in public discourse and fosters civic virtues such as attentive listening, collaborative deliberation, the valuing of difference, the recognition of the contingencies of time and place, and the willingness to ‘challenge the customary’ and explore the new (Kinney & Miller, 2005, p. 143). The link between civic education and the rhetorical tradition has been stressed by many (Biesta, 2012; Hauser, 2004; Miller, 1994), and it can even be traced in Dewey’s (1966) thinking (Crick, 2014; Hildebrand, 2016). Just as Miller (1994) underscores shared understandings and novelty in her definition of a rhetorical community, Dewey (1966) argues that educators must seek out situations that rely on existing habits while evoking responses that lead towards something new, even, or especially, when uncertain and problematic. Dewey builds not only upon Aristotle but also upon the sophists of ancient Greece, acknowledging their sound sceptical attitude towards dominant institutions and doxa (Crick, 2014, p. 177).

Although much has been written about the role of rhetoric in education, less is known about how the art of rhetoric is implemented in school systems. Some research has been conducted on the role of rhetoric in the American Common Core State Standards (Collin, 2013; Rives & Olsen, 2015). Besides that, research has been primarily dominated by studies on the history of rhetorical education (e.g. Murphy, 2012; Walker, 2011; Zappen, 2012) and by discussions of the educational potential of rhetoric (e.g. Andrews, 2019; Bakken, 2019; Brummett, 2012; Fleming, 1998; Hogarth, 2019; Rutten & Soetaert, 2012). This article contributes empirical knowledge about the role of rhetoric in civic education today by examining how rhetoric is reflected in national curricula for language arts subjects in the three Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. We conduct a content analysis of national curriculum documents, using as our analytical framework an update of the classical triad for rhetorical education proposed by Fleming.

The Scandinavian school systems are interesting cases to explore, as they have a strong tradition of educating students for democratic citizenship. Furthermore, all three countries have included concepts from rhetoric in their national curricula for the language arts in recent curriculum reforms, and in the Swedish and Norwegian curricula, rhetoric is explicitly linked to the education of democratic citizens. Thus, an analysis of Scandinavian language arts curricula may provide education researchers, curriculum planners, and teachers in other countries insight into how rhetoric can be implemented in civic education. It may also expose pitfalls and challenges in the process of integrating the traditional art of rhetoric into contemporary educational systems.

Classical rhetorical education and the question of *paideia* and *bildung*

Aristotle defined rhetoric as a *techne*, productive knowledge, craftsmanship, or art, similar to other kinds of productive knowledge, such as architecture (Aristotle, 2000, 2018). *Techne* is goal-oriented, context-dependent production tied to specific subjects and situations. Often, it is described as a set of principles and strategies. Yet, as Atwill (1998) stresses, ‘A *techne* is never a static normative body of knowledge [. . .]. This knowledge is stable enough to be taught and transferred but flexible enough to be adapted to particular situations and purposes’ (p. 48). Here, Atwill points to the creative power of production rather than static guidelines. Indeed, *techne* resembles the teachings of Isocrates (1929a), who, in *Against the Sophists*, warns against ‘hard and fast rules’ (p. 13). Isocrates instead centres his teaching around two concepts in ancient Greece: *kairos*, the proper time for action, a qualitative notion of a timeframe in which change may be possible, and *phronesis*, the cultivation of practical wisdom, that is, the ability to make good judgements (Haskins, 2004; Isocrates, 1929a).

Isocrates did not ignore the relevance of principles and strategies. In *Against the Sophists*, he defines the triad of rhetorical education as individual talent, art (principles and theory), and practice. In Isocrates’s thinking, and later in the thinking of both Cicero and Quintilian, art is the least important element of rhetorical education (Cicero, 1967, III.121–125; Isocrates, 1929b, p. 292; Quintilian, 1998, II.19.2). Practice is paramount, especially the practice of imitation, which is based on situated exemplars in which art, ethics, and practice are united, thereby emphasizing creative

human agency and societal orientation. Thus, imitation not only involves observation and practice, but also prompts judgement and duality; when students emulate exemplar texts, they must attend to the worldly circumstances, textual content, rhetorical strategies of the exemplar, and to their own being and writing (Matthiesen, 2016; Terrill, 2011).

Central to imitation practice for mature students, as laid out by Isocrates and Quintilian, is an unrestricted approach to imitation that focuses on the context and content of selected pieces and the judgment and character formation of the student. As Quintilian (1998) puts it, imitation 'should not be confined merely to words. We must consider the appropriateness with which these orators handle the circumstances' (X.II.27). Isocrates taught that speech must be shaped by and address a specific communicative situation, providing his students with his own exemplars. The study of exemplars strengthened students' awareness of context and engaged them in the subject matter with the aim of cultivating practical wisdom (*phronesis*), that is, judgment related to the life of the *polis* and the common good (Benoit, 1991; Haskins, 2004; Walzer, 2005). Quintilian, by contrast, did not write fictive exemplars, but instead invited his students to seek out and become well-acquainted with a broad variety of texts and genres in use in society. The undemocratic situation in Rome in Quintilian's time led him to downplay the fostering of political judgment that is central to Isocrates's teaching and emphasize character formation instead, asking each student to reflect upon and critically judge their own development as rhetors (Quintilian, 1998, X.II.19).

In a special issue on rhetorical education in *The Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Biesta (2012) expresses doubts about the educational impact of rhetoric on the personal development of the individual. Biesta identifies the aim of rhetorical education as *paideia*, the cultivation of virtue, specifically civic virtue, which, he argues, has a socializing goal. As an educational process, cultivation forms individuals 'in light of existing traditions and standards' (Biesta, 2012, p. 816). He contrasts the rhetorical *paideia* with *Bildung*, a neo-humanistic educational ideal that aims to promote 'self-formation (*Selbstgestaltung*) through a dialogical interaction of the individual with culture and society' (Biesta, 2012, p. 817). Both educational ideals are concerned with forming, rather than merely training, the individual. However, they are premised on contrasting conceptions of the relationship between the individual and culture and society. According to Biesta, *paideia* aims to empower individuals by initiating them into existing ways of being and doing, thereby granting them the power to speak and act within cultural, social, and political contexts. *Bildung* is a reflexive process in which the individual establishes a relationship with the existing culture and society and adopts an evaluative stance that can ultimately lead to emancipation. With this distinction, Biesta aligns *paideia* with the second of three goals of a 'good education', namely 'socialisation', with the others being 'qualification' (preparation for work) and 'subjectification' (developing identity). While socialization is an important educational goal in Biesta's theory of education, only emancipation promotes subjectification, which is defined as 'the process of becoming a subject of action and responsibility' (Biesta, 2012, p. 823).

According to Biesta (2012), the challenge for educators is 'whether it is possible to deploy rhetoric in such a way that it goes beyond empowerment and towards emancipation' (pp. 824–825). We argue that empowerment and emancipation are interconnected educational ideals in rhetoric. Both ancient and modern rhetoric assume that civic discourse is characterized by contestation, not accord. Taking action in civic discourse therefore requires agency and ingenuity. If rhetorical education aims to empower individuals by 'socialising' them into existing orders, to use Biesta's term, it also aims to equip them with the tools they will need to challenge those orders. In other words, rhetorical education, past and present, ideally aims not only for empowerment, but also for emancipation. According to Biesta, emancipation is 'a process that challenges the particular orders that grant individuals the power to speak and act, so that new ways of speaking and acting, and ultimately new ways of being become possible' (p. 823). Rhetorical education can achieve this ideal when it enables individuals to engage with and utilize the dialogism already at work in a rhetorical community.

In 'Rhetoric as a Course Study', Fleming (1998) argues that rhetoric today has come to mean at least three different things: (1) anthropological rhetoric, a theoretical framework for interpretation and criticism, which understands rhetoric to be 'a constitutive force, deeply embedded in the human condition' (p. 176); (2) technological rhetoric, which is a kind of decontextualized skill-oriented training focused on teaching rhetorical strategies for effective communication; and (3) paideutic rhetoric, an educational programme that aims to form character, that is, 'the development of a certain kind of person: engaged, articulate, resourceful, sympathetic, civil' (pp. 172–173). As a framework for theory and criticism, anthropological rhetoric enjoys considerable academic prestige. Technological rhetoric, by contrast, has a low academic standing, which Fleming attributes to its tendency to present rhetoric as a bag of tricks for artificially enhancing natural discourse (p. 178). Only paideutic rhetoric aims to prepare students for active participation in civic life. Fleming advocates paideutic rhetoric as a model for contemporary rhetorical education, thus proposing that we follow the pedagogical path of Quintilian, especially in seeing the aim of rhetorical education as lifelong learning and the cultivation of character, or as Quintilian (1998) famously puts it, the cultivation of 'a good man, skilled in speaking' (XII.1.1).

Analytical framework

For a contemporary rhetorical education that follows the paideutic tradition, Fleming proposes a multifaceted course of study that integrates art, practice, and inquiry (an updated version of the classical triad). In the following, Fleming's categories are unpacked, discussed, and used as a framework for our analysis of curriculum documents. The purpose of the analysis is to examine how and to what extent the three components of contemporary paideutic rhetorical education on Fleming's definition are explicitly and implicitly present in the national curricula for language arts education in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

Art is 'theoretical vocabulary providing the language user (speaker, writer, listener, reader) with a way to isolate, analyse, and manage communication situations, goals, resources, acts, and norms' (Fleming, 1998, p. 183). In Roman rhetorical education, the function of art was to give language users 'a metalanguage for guiding discourse production and analysis' (Fleming, 1998, p. 182). In contemporary curricular terms, rhetorical art can take the form of terminology that enables language users to reflect on language choices and assess their impact in context. Fleming adds that contemporary rhetorical art needs a 'robust notion of human agency' and a theory of language that explains how it can be shaped by language users (p. 182).

Practice is the 'application or exercise of theory, not its opposite' (Fleming, 1998, p. 182). As the counterpart of art, it is characterized by 'practical sensitivity to particulars' that has three consequences for rhetorical education (Fleming, 1998, p. 182). First, *practice* reminds language users that every communicative situation is unique and that rhetorical action therefore requires an investigation into contextual contingencies. Second, it enjoins language users to understand their own community, 'its history, literature, laws, culture, and so forth' (Fleming, 1998, p. 183). Third, it underscores the idea that rhetorical ability is acquired through 'observation, imitation, and exercise' (Fleming, 1998, p. 183). The rhetorical tradition offers a broad repertoire of pedagogies for practicing rhetoric and developing its subskills, many of which are useful today. Fleming lists, for instance, Cicero's three-way adaptation to character, audience, and subject; Quintilian's programme of imitation; and Aphthonius' *progymnasmata*, which teach text types ranging from simple narration to complex argument. In contemporary curricular terms, practice is implied in references to repertoire building; activities, tasks, and exercises for developing communicative ability across the five rhetorical canons (invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery); and imitation exercises, which combine reception and production.

Inquiry is the study of discourse and its 'uses and functions' in various social situations (Fleming, 1998, p. 184). Its goal is to promote 'critical and substantive reflection about the situated relations of discourse to reason, character, and community in human action' (Fleming, 1998, p. 184). Inquiry is

integral to rhetorical practice, especially in imitation and the investigation of the particulars of a communicative situation. However, Fleming makes it a separate component in his triad for modern rhetorical education, presumably because inquiry has an identifiable educational goal that is related to, but distinct from, art and practice: the cultivation of language users who can think critically, rhetorically, and responsibly about the operation of discourse in society. In contemporary curricular terms, inquiry is implied in references to the rhetorical analysis of texts (spoken, written, and multi-modal) and in references to rhetorical reflection, especially with respect to social conflict and societal challenges.

The paideutic *aim* of this three-part programme is ‘the formation of the good rhetor, the person who has mastered the “knowledge” of speaking and writing well, and who is conceived firstly as a free and equal member of a self-governing community’ (Fleming, 1998, p. 184). Fleming argues that ‘to revitalise rhetorical education, we need to recapture this focus on the language user as citizen’ (Fleming, 1998, p. 184). So focused, rhetorical education becomes ‘author-centred, primarily concerned with the inherent *difficulties* of social discourse’ (Fleming, 1998, p. 184). Fleming describes this education as ‘inherently moral, although the virtues sought would be primarily discursive ones, such as fluency, adaptability, and civility’ (pp. 184–185). The good rhetor is a citizen capable of ‘discoursing “well”: i.e. effectively *and* responsibly’ in public discourse (Fleming, 1998, p. 185).

Methods

We studied national curricula for Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian language arts in primary and secondary schools using a qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As a conceptual framework, we have chosen to take a deductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), using Fleming’s triad for contemporary rhetorical education as well as his definition of its paideutic aim.

In the analysis, we searched for both explicit and implicit references to the categories of art, practice, inquiry, and paideutic aim in the curriculum documents. For a text passage to be categorized as an explicit reference, it had to include terminology that was clearly rhetorical, such as *kairos* or *rhetorical appeals*. If a text passage had content that was equivalent to one of the categories but lacked explicit rhetorical terminology, it was categorized as an implicit reference. Implicit references ranged from passages in which rhetorical theory appeared to be translated into non-specialist language to descriptions of language, text, and communication that aligned with a rhetorical perspective. We made no conjectures about whether implicit references were inspired by rhetoric or other similar communication theories. No matter what their sources, the presence of these four categories in a curriculum—both explicit and implicit—can all play a part in providing students with a contemporary rhetorical education in the paideutic tradition.

At the initial stage, the authors analysed the curriculum from their respective country. To make the analysis transparent, each categorization was backed up by a quotation from the curriculum text. Then, the two other authors reviewed, discussed, and adjusted these analyses as necessary. This validation process was particularly important in the analysis of the Norwegian curriculum, as one author was involved in the most recent curriculum revision in Norway (in 2020). Even though this revision only made minor adjustments to the existing rhetorical content in the curriculum, we wanted to reduce the risk of bias in the analysis.

Materials

School systems in Scandinavian countries are similar in structure. Primary and lower-secondary education is compulsory, and most students attend public schools. Upper-secondary education is elective, although most students enrol. Upper-secondary school is divided into vocational and university-preparatory programmes, and the latter are chosen by most students.

In each country, the overarching goals for education are described in national legislation. According to the Danish (Folkeskoleloven, 2017), Swedish (SFS, 2010:800), and Norwegian (Opplæringslova, 1998) Education Acts, the task of the school is to teach students about the world and the culture in which they live and to help them become active and responsible citizens. The development of students as citizens involves teaching them about the democratic system, preparing them for democratic participation, and promoting democratic values. The specific goals for each school subject, including Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian language arts, are described in the national curricula set by the Ministry of Education.

All three countries have, by and large, competence-based curricula that describe sets of competences to be reached at the end of certain grades. There are, however, some important differences. The Norwegian national curriculum defines only the overarching purpose of subjects and competence aims for students in specific grades; they give no guidelines for core content or teaching methods. The Swedish national curriculum specifies the aim and learning goals for each subject, and core content and assessment criteria for each grade level. Although the Swedish curriculum generally avoids directing teachers about teaching methods, its core content specifications sometimes imply certain pedagogical approaches. In Denmark, the national curriculum for primary and lower-secondary schools has extensive sets of competence aims for different grades. The curriculum is supplemented with a teaching guide that includes examples of content, progression, and teaching approaches for inspiration. Upper-secondary school in Denmark has a completely different type of curriculum, describing a subject's disciplinary aims, core content, teaching methods, and assessment criteria.

Because Denmark, Sweden, and Norway use somewhat different curriculum styles, the material we have chosen for our analysis varies for each country. From Denmark, we analysed the subject curriculum for Danish language arts in primary and lower-secondary school and the subject curriculum for Danish language arts in the most widespread, broadly academically oriented programme in upper-secondary school (STX). From Sweden, we analyse the subject curriculum for Swedish language arts in compulsory (primary and lower-secondary) schools and the upper-secondary courses Swedish 1, 2, and 3, as well as electives in literature, writing, and rhetoric, which students can take in addition to the compulsory courses. We have also included relevant definitions from the commentary material, a supplement to the Swedish curriculum that explains curricular choices and positions. From Norway, we analyse the subject curriculum in Norwegian language arts, which covers primary, lower-, and upper-secondary school.

Conceptions of rhetoric in Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian curricula

Denmark

In statements about the overarching aims of the Danish subject in compulsory and upper-secondary schools, there are no explicit references to rhetoric. Nevertheless, in compulsory school, the overarching aims reflect the aforementioned union of rhetoric as a civic virtue and a *techne*. For example, 'the subject [of Danish] should foster the ability to engage with the perspectives of others as well as cultivate an aesthetic, ethical, and historical understanding', and 'students should in the subject of Danish strengthen their language facility and their delight in using language individually and with versatility in interaction with others' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, paras. 1, 2). Additionally, Danish should foster students' character formation by promoting 'an open and analytical attitude towards contemporary and other periods' and cultures' modes of expressions' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, para. 2). The overarching aims for Danish in upper-secondary school also align with a rhetorical perspective, such as the development of 'analytical-critical awareness', as well as the fostering of 'creative abilities' and 'communicative fluency' to 'strengthen the students' opportunities as citizens to navigate and participate in a modern, democratic, digital and globally oriented society' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017).

Art in the Danish curriculum

The competence aims for Danish in compulsory school are listed under four main headings: reading, production, interpretation, and communication. General terms dominate, and limited disciplinary or technical terms or concepts, whether rhetorical, semiotic, or linguistic, are used. Nevertheless, many competence aims specify that students should be able to attune communication to context, especially those under the headings of communication and production. By stressing communication attuned to context, the curriculum resembles Isocrates' main point of rhetorical training (Isocrates, 1929a, p. 13). All the objectives have two dimensions: ability and knowledge.

Although the subject curriculum does not embrace the vocabulary of rhetoric (cf. art), in some instances, it explicitly points to a rhetorical body of knowledge. This is the case in the main area of the communication section, the competence aims of which are centred on dialogue, debate, and argumentation, as well as bodily communication and drama. After the ninth grade, students must have knowledge of 'forms of argumentation', 'rhetorical strategies', and 'democratic dialogue' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 13). The groundwork for this is established early. After the second grade, students must have knowledge about 'turn-taking'; after the fourth grade, they must have knowledge about how to communicate with voice and gesture; and after the sixth grade, knowledge of 'means available to the speaker' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 13).

Competence aims that implicitly reflect a rhetorical body of knowledge are found under the heading of production and are centred on planning, process, production, response, and presentation. After ninth grade, students must have knowledge of stages in production and of 'varied forms of expression fitting varied forms of audiences' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 11). Again, the groundwork for this is established early. After the second grade, students must have knowledge about 'genres' and 'criteria for evaluation' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 13), thereby pointing to functions of texts and cultivating judgment.

The subject curriculum for upper-secondary school describes three content areas: fiction, language, and media. In the language section, there is an explicit reference to rhetoric, which states that students will work with 'rhetorical analysis, including an analysis of situation, modes of appeals, and argumentation' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017, p. 2). Rhetoric is linked to the cultivation of analytical-critical awareness, with an emphasis on situated communication and deliberation. With the reference to the persuasive appeals—ethos, pathos, and logos—rhetoric is underscored as human discourse connected to character and ethical judgment.

Practice in the Danish curriculum

In the subject curriculum for Danish in compulsory school, *practice*, in the broad sense of fostering ability, is underscored throughout all competence aims. Thus, practice to the point of habituation for the individual student is emphasized, just as Cicero and Quintilian stressed in their discussions of *ars* versus *usus* (Cicero, 1967, III.121–125; Isocrates, 1929b, p. 292; Quintilian, 1998, II.19.2). In relation to reading and observation as elements of practice, students after the fourth grade 'must be able to participate in a dialogue about quality criteria' based on a reading, and after the ninth grade, students 'must be able to examine the relation between genre, language, content, and reality' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 12).

In the Danish subject curriculum in upper-secondary school, practice is less prominent. Yet, it does specify that students must be able to give presentations and build arguments, and, under teaching methods, the curriculum invites teachers to work with imitation in small-scale writing sessions, combining analytical reception with textual production. A similar combination of reception and production is indicated for teaching digital communication: 'The receptive and productive work with texts in digital communities educate the students to approach digital media critical-analytically, responsibly, and thoughtfully' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017, p. 3). In addition, the curriculum requires 'the development of the student's individual voice through creative writing exercises' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 1). The concept of *voice*, used in literary

criticism and creative writing, is also the cornerstone of the rhetorical tradition through ethos, as well as through Cicero's and Quintilian's emphasis on *natura* (Cicero, 1967, III.25–28; Quintilian, 1998, X.II.) and humour and wit (Cicero, 1967, II. 216–289; Quintilian, 1998, VI. 3.1–112).

Inquiry in the Danish curriculum

In the subject curriculum for Danish in compulsory school, rhetorical-oriented inquiry only appears implicitly. In the competence aims related to reading, inquiry is implied in references to critical reflection about the normative characteristics of situated discourse. After the fourth grade, students 'must be able to judge the relevance of webpages in relation to search words' and 'judge the angle of vision in texts' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 10). After Grade 9, students must be able to 'critically judge sources of user-generated and expert-generated content' and 'critically judge textual statements based on context' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 10). These aims align with Fleming's (1998) definition of inquiry as an examination of 'the uses and functions of written discourse in its various social situations' (p. 184). In the subject curriculum for Danish compulsory schooling, this examination is linked to criteria such as relevance and trustworthiness.

In the communication section, the competence aims explicitly combine inquiry with prompting an ethical orientation related to both the individual and the community, thereby resembling *phronesis* as understood by Isocrates (Benoit, 1991; Isocrates, 1929b). For instance, after Grade 6, students must have the ability to judge the consequences of messages on the Internet (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 13), and after the ninth grade, students must be able to discuss the effects of various forms of digital communication in relation to the life of the individual student and in relation to a community (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2019, p. 13).

In the subject curriculum of Danish in upper-secondary school, rhetorical-oriented inquiry is implied in the explicit reference to 'rhetorical analysis' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017, p. 2) and the ongoing use of the phrase 'critical-analytical'. This combination aligns with Fleming's definition of inquiry as encouraging 'critical and substantive reflection about situated relations of discourse to reason, character, community in human action' (p. 184). Furthermore, students must be able to 'examine problems and develop and judge solutions, using knowledge and methods from the subject of Danish' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017, p. 1). This resembles character formation based on reflection and a societal orientation with a progressive end. In addition, in the pedagogical principles section, teachers are directed to teach textual analysis in a manner that 'that supports the life world of the students and opens opportunities of immersion and new perspectives' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017, p. 2). Furthermore, teachers should create a democratic environment in which students are 'involved in considerations on the planning of the teaching, including choice of readings' (Børne- og undervisningsministeriet, 2017, p. 2). This aligns with the educational aims of *paideutic* rhetoric by fostering engagement in civil discourse and the becoming of equal members of a self-governing community.

Paideutic aim in the Danish curriculum

Despite the rather low level of explicit references to rhetoric, the Danish curriculum displays characteristics of Fleming's proposal for a contemporary rhetorical education: the ability to communicate and participate in public life with an ethical orientation.

In compulsory schooling, rhetorical practice, art, and inquiry are reflected in the systematically paired competence aims of communicative ability and knowledge. Communication and interaction are linked explicitly to situations, stressing the ability to understand the perspectives of others as well as critically examine texts and how they affect individuals and society. The subject curriculum for Danish in upper-secondary school emphasizes the modern analytical dimension of rhetoric, the cultivation of critical awareness, and the examination of media and problems in society. Yet, the curriculum also promotes cultivating engaged, sympathetic participation in civic life by developing both students' individual voice and joint problem solving.

Sweden

Rhetoric was introduced to the Swedish national curriculum in a reform in 2011. An explicit rhetorical progression was added to the upper-secondary school curriculum, creating a new emphasis on effective communication in speech and interaction. At the same time, the aim of the subject was reformulated. Whereas previous versions emphasized the cultivation of personal and cultural identity through language and literary studies, the 2011 version links personal development with flexible communicative ability at all school levels (Skolverket, 2019, p. 257, 2011a, p. 160). In upper-secondary school, teaching in the subject should moreover provide students opportunities to acquire the communicative abilities needed for active participation in academic, civic, and working life (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 160).

Art in the Swedish curriculum

As the Swedish national curriculum avoids specialist terminology, it makes few explicit references to rhetorical art. However, one of the subject's goals for upper-secondary school refers to the 'rhetorical work process: that is, the planning and carrying out of spoken and written productions in a structured and orderly way that take into account purpose, recipient, and communicative situation' (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 161). The concept is further defined in the commentary material with Latin nomenclature:

Intellectio: Investigating the communicative situation at hand and formulating a purpose for speech based on that assessment.

Inventio: Finding appropriate material and sound arguments.

Dispositio: Ordering material and arguments in an appropriate way.

Elocutio: Choosing language and style.

Memoria: Using scripts and presentation aids in a purposeful way.

Actio: Choosing appropriate delivery with the help of body language and the voice. (Skolverket, 2011b)

This definition reveals that the 'rhetorical work process' is a blanket term for the canons of rhetoric, which have served as a guide for crafting powerful speech, as well as a template for judging rhetoric, throughout the rhetorical tradition. While the canons are traditionally only five in number, the commentary material identifies six. An investigatory stage has been added, *intellectio*, defined as the formulation of a purpose in response to the communicative situation. The definitions of *inventio* and *disposition* identify argument as the primary material of rhetoric.

The function of the rhetorical work process in the Swedish curriculum is in line with the function of rhetorical art on Fleming's definition—to provide 'a metalanguage for guiding discourse production and analysis' (Fleming, 1998, p. 182). There are multiple references to the metacognitive application of the rhetorical work process in the curriculum for upper-secondary school. Swedish 1 covers the 'basics' of the rhetorical work process (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 161). Swedish 3 and the rhetoric elective cover 'in depth application of the rhetorical work process' for the planning and carrying out of spoken production, while the writing elective does the same for written production (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 176). The rhetoric elective covers 'the practical and theoretical areas of use for rhetoric, especially its role as a support for preparing for and carrying out spoken production as well as a tool for analysis' (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 14). All six parts of the rhetorical work process—complete with Latin nomenclature and definitions—are listed as core content for the rhetoric elective. The corresponding assessment criteria require students to 'give an account' of the rhetorical work process as a theoretical framework (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 14). Students should also be able to motivate their choices with respect to arrangement, expression, material, and presentation with reference to the rhetorical work process, thus demonstrating a metapragmatic understanding of how they have applied the process in their own productions.

Practice in the Swedish curriculum

The Swedish curriculum gives students ample opportunities to develop rhetorical ability through discussion, decision making, and debate. The groundwork for developing rhetorical ability in speech is laid in the curriculum for compulsory school, where the ability to ‘adapt language to various purposes, audiences, and contexts’ is specified in the learning goals, core content, and assessment criteria for Grades 7–9 (Skolverket, 2019, p. 261). Grades 4–6 cover the ability to ‘argue in discussions of various kinds and in decision making processes’ (Skolverket, 2019, p. 260). Grades 7–9 cover the ability ‘to lead a discussion, formulate and respond to arguments, and summarise content’ and give ‘oral presentations and spoken descriptions for various audiences on topics pertaining to school and civic life’ (Skolverket, 2019, p. 261). In upper-secondary school, the ability to speak in public and engage in discussion and debate is a subject goal: Teaching should give students opportunities to develop ‘the ability to speak before others in a manner appropriate for the communicative situation and to participate constructively in discussions and debates that require preparation’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 160). Swedish 1 covers spoken production ‘with a focus on audience adaption; factors that make oral presentations interesting and convincing; the use of visual aids to enhance and improve spoken compositions’ and ‘various ways of listening and responding that are adapted to the communicative situation’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 162). Swedish 2 covers the ‘spoken production of an investigative and argumentative character before a group’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 169). An assessment criterion for Swedish 3 requires students to make effective use of the persuasive appeals (*retoriska verkningsmedel*) in spoken production (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 176).

The Swedish curriculum also gives students ample opportunities to develop communicative abilities through written production. However, in the core Swedish courses, the character of writing practice is not overtly rhetorical. Frequent references to text types, language norms, standards, and conventions suggest the textual approach characteristic of genre pedagogy, not rhetoric. Nevertheless, the text types identified as core content for each course are relevant for rhetorical practice. In compulsory school, grades 7–9 cover ‘combinations of text types, for example, informative texts with elements of argumentation’ (Skolverket, 2019, p. 262). In upper-secondary school, Swedish 1 covers ‘argumentative techniques and written communication of argumentative text types’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 162). Swedish 2 covers ‘investigative and argumentative texts’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 162). In Swedish 2 and Swedish 3, students should additionally be able to formulate a thesis and back it up with well-developed arguments (Skolverket, 2011a, pp. 170, 177). The corresponding assessment criteria for all three courses require that students write argumentative texts that are coherent, structured, and ‘adapted to purpose, recipient, and communicative situation’ (Skolverket, 2011a, pp. 163, 170, 176). While these aims are compatible with a rhetorical approach to writing practice, they do not necessarily denote it (genre pedagogy is also concerned with adaptation to context, although for different reasons). The lack of corresponding references in the core content, specifying the goals of argumentation in a communicative context, makes the allusion to rhetoric allusive.

Whereas Swedish 2 and 3 focus on developing communicative abilities for professional and academic life, the rhetoric and writing electives focus on developing communicative abilities for active participation in the cultural and civic domains. The rhetoric elective covers ‘spoken production of various kinds and for various purposes in both solo production before an audience and in dialogical production in the form of contributions to discussion and debate, in various arenas, including the civic domain (*det offentliga rummet*)’ (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 14). This course also covers ‘active listening and the art of giving a constructive response’, which extends the definition of rhetorical practice to include receptive skills (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 14). The adjectives ‘active’ and ‘constructive’ indicate that these should be characterized by a stance of openness to alternative views, which are civic virtues. The writing elective covers ‘written production of various kinds of texts, informative, narrative, and argumentative-journalistic . . .’ (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 16). It also covers the subskills of written composition—structure, coherence, and textual patterns—which align with the rhetorical canons of arrangement and style. The core content specifications for the writing elective

also make a rare reference to pedagogy: ‘written production according to patterns and models’, a writing activity that has its roots in imitation pedagogy (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 16). The corresponding assessment criteria require that students demonstrate the ability to make choices about their writing. They should be able to reflect on their own written production in relation to ‘conventional text types, textual patterns, and eventual models’ and consider expressive alternatives (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 16). These reflective goals are also in line with rhetorical pedagogy, which aims to give students options so that they can make choices about their writing and thereby achieve communicative agency and self-efficacy. They also encourage creativity and experimentation, leading to subjectification on Biesta’s definition.

Inquiry in the Swedish curriculum

There are two implicit references to rhetorical inquiry in the upper levels of the reading progression, which works towards the goal of developing ‘the ability to read, work with, reflect on, and critically examine texts and to produce their own texts based on that reading’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 161). Both Swedish 3 and the rhetoric elective cover ‘the application of the rhetorical work process as . . . a tool for analysis’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 177, 2011c, p. 14). The corresponding assessment criteria require students to apply ‘basic rhetorical concepts’ to the ‘analysis of rhetoric’ (Skolverket, 2011a, p. 177), which the rhetoric elective specifies as ‘speech scripts and oral productions in various media’ (Skolverket, 2011c, p. 14). In describing the rhetorical work process as an analytical tool, the Swedish curriculum implies that some texts are best understood as situated social action, formulated in response to a communicative situation, a view that aligns with Fleming’s definition of rhetorical inquiry.

Paideutic aim in the in the Swedish curriculum

Overall, the aim of rhetorical education in the Swedish curriculum is to help students develop the communicative skills needed for active and constructive participation in public discourse—in higher education, working life, and democratic society. While this aim can be discerned in the reading and writing progressions, it is especially noticeable in the speech and interaction progression, where the ability to communicate effectively is associated with civic virtues such as formulating a purpose, adapting to an audience, listening to others, and responding constructively. A comment in the commentary material makes this aim explicit: ‘Being able to convey a message with the goal of informing or persuading others is . . . an important part of what is commonly called citizen competence (*medborgarkompetens*). One of the important tasks of the Swedish subject is to promote the development of students as democratic and responsible members of society (*samhällsmedborgare*)’ (Skolverket, 2011b). As in Fleming’s proposal for contemporary rhetorical education, the aim of rhetorical training in the Swedish subject, especially in regards to spoken production, is to cultivate citizen-rhetors who can communicate effectively and responsibly in democratic society.

Norway

Traditionally, an overarching goal for Norwegian language arts teachers was to strengthen students’ national identity by exposing them to the nation’s linguistic, literary, and cultural heritage. The 2006 curriculum reform, however, transformed Norwegian into a contemporary literacy subject, focusing on the development of the ability to read, write, and communicate orally as the basis for participation in work life and democratic society (Berge, 2005). In this context, rhetoric was introduced as a theoretical framework for critical text analysis in the final grades of university-preparatory programmes. In the 2013 curriculum revision, rhetoric expanded into lower-secondary school, vocational programmes, and all three grades of the university-preparatory programmes. Rhetoric was also included in the teaching of oral skills. The revision in 2020 made only minor adjustments to the way rhetoric is presented in the curriculum.

One important change in 2020, however, is the introduction of core elements, highlighting the most important areas in the subject. The core elements in Norwegian are as follows: 1) 'text in context', 2) 'a critical approach to text', 3) 'the writing of texts', 4) 'oral communication', 5) 'language as a system and a possibility', and 6) 'linguistic diversity' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). These core elements reaffirm the status of Norwegian as a contemporary literacy subject. The core elements and the overarching goals for teachers of Norwegian reflect essential aspects of classical rhetorical education, that is, a focus on situated communication and the cultivation of judgment, as stressed by Isocrates (1929b). Furthermore, the national curriculum highlights civic education by making democracy and citizenship an overarching topic to be studied across subjects.

Art in the Norwegian curriculum

In the subject curriculum for Norwegian, the art of rhetoric is explicitly mentioned in the competence aims for lower- and upper-secondary school. In lower-secondary school, students are introduced to the classical Aristotelian theory of rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos (Aristotle, 2018). Rhetorical appeals are also included in the competence aims for upper-secondary school in both university-preparatory and vocational programmes. Students in university preparatory programmes also learn a key theoretical concept in modern rhetoric, namely the rhetorical situation, which refers to the ways in which a rhetorical utterance must be adapted to a specific context to persuade the audience (Bitzer, 1968).

The competence aims for primary school do not mention rhetorical concepts explicitly, but from the very first grade, students are presented with a view of language and communication that aligns with the rhetorical view. Rhetorical theory emphasizes the idea that utterances and texts are deeply embedded in specific contexts and that they can influence people and 'produce action or change in the world' (Bitzer, 1968, p. 4). 'Text in context' is a core element based on the idea that context shapes our understanding of a text, and according to the core element 'a critical approach to text', students should learn to 'reflect critically on the influence and credibility of texts' and use 'literary and rhetorical devices appropriately in their own oral and written texts' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Similar perspectives can be found in several competence aims. After the second grade, students should learn to discuss and reflect on 'how the words we use affect others', after the fourth grade, 'how we adjust and change our language in different situations', and after the seventh grade, 'how the students present themselves and others in digital media' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Throughout primary school, students are taught to discuss language choices and their functions in different situations. In secondary school, rhetorical terms are introduced as a metalanguage for such discussions.

Practice in the Norwegian curriculum

According to the subject curriculum, the art of rhetoric should be internalized and put into practice when students speak and write in different contexts. In lower-secondary school, they should learn to 'use literary devices and rhetorical appeals' and to adapt their oral and written texts to different 'recipients and media' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). In upper-secondary school, there is a specific focus on the application of rhetorical theory in oral debates, and students should learn to 'listen to others, build up factual arguments, and use rhetorical appeals in debates' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Additionally, students in university-preparatory programmes should learn to use 'rhetorical skills in debates and oral presentations' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). In line with the rhetorical tradition, practice in the Norwegian subject curriculum involves socializing students into existing orders while encouraging them to challenge them. 'Language as a system and a possibility' is a core element that underlines the idea that the students 'must master established language and genre norms' but also 'play, explore, and experiment with the language in creative ways' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019).

In Fleming's framework, practice refers to the practical application of rhetorical theory in specific communicative situations. There are clear similarities to the way rhetoric is implemented in the Norwegian subject curriculum. The concept of practice, however, also includes the ways in

which the art is internalized by students, that is, through observation, imitation, and exercise. In the Norwegian curriculum, references to these traditional rhetorical teaching methods are scarce. The national curriculum does not give guidelines for the choice of teaching methods, and this applies to the teaching of rhetoric as well as to all other academic topics in all school subjects. Still, there are some passages that indicate that observation, imitation, and exercise could be relevant methods for internalizing the art of rhetoric. A competence aim for lower-secondary school states that students should both 'recognise and use' rhetorical appeals, indicating that students can learn to use the appeals themselves by observing and imitating others (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). There are, however, no references to the use of repeated exercises in the teaching of rhetorical skills. On the contrary, the curriculum stresses that students should be free to experiment, try and fail, and discuss their progress with their teachers. This deviates from the traditional methods for teaching rhetorical skills presented by Fleming. Yet, both Cicero and Quintilian stressed that practice, not art, was the foremost crucial experience in the development of an orator.

Inquiry in the Norwegian curriculum

According to the subject curriculum for Norwegian, the art of rhetoric should also form the theoretical basis for enquiry—that is, the study of rhetorical discourse in various contexts. In secondary school, students go through a progression from a simple form of rhetorical analysis to one that is more complex. In lower-secondary school, students learn to recognize the three rhetorical appeals, and in the first year of upper-secondary school, they 'describe and reflect upon the use of rhetorical appeals and literary devices in non-fiction texts' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). In their second year of upper-secondary school, students in university-preparatory programmes go on to 'reflect upon non-fiction texts and describe the rhetorical situation in which they are made', and after their third year, they should be able to 'write rhetorical analysis and interpretations of non-fiction texts' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). Rhetorical analysis is not explicitly mentioned in the competence aims for primary school, but as noted earlier, there is a focus throughout primary school on how language and texts relate to context and how they affect recipients. The purpose of teaching rhetorical analysis is to develop students' ability to reflect rhetorically and critically on the operation of discourse in society. According to the core element 'a critical approach to text', students should learn to 'reflect critically on the influence and credibility of texts' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). The core element 'text in context' underlines the idea that students should learn to interpret texts in light of their historical contexts and compare that to how the texts could be understood today and related to students' own lives.

Paideutic aim in the Norwegian curriculum

This focus on rhetorical art, practice, and inquiry in the subject curriculum for Norwegian is closely related to the overarching aim of the school subject, which, in Fleming's terms, may be described as the development of character. As a literacy subject, Norwegian is responsible for developing students' 'oral and written rhetorical skills so that they can express their own thoughts and opinions and take part in civic life and democratic processes' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). The curriculum also highlights the virtues students must develop to become well-functioning members of democratic society. These virtues 'form the basis of constructive interaction', including 'understanding, tolerance, and respect for the opinions and perspectives of other people' (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). By focusing on particular values, genres, language norms, and analytical strategies, the Norwegian subject and its rhetorical content is oriented towards socializing students 'into existing ways of being and doing', as Biesta (2012, p. 818) describes it. However, the curriculum promotes subjectification and emancipation by stressing that students should become critical and reflective readers, experiment with genres and language, 'act and affect society through language', and develop their own identity (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019). As shown in the analysis, rhetoric plays an important role in working towards these goals.

Discussion

An important educational goal in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway is the development of students as active and responsible democratic citizens. As our analysis has demonstrated, the national curricula for the language arts subjects in all three countries specify, to various degrees, elements of rhetorical education that may help students reach this goal. All three curricula reflect a rhetorical view of communicative practice as a situated social action and highlight competences that are important for democratic participation in the civic domain. Students learn to achieve their purposes in speech and writing and engage with others. They adapt their spoken and written productions to different purposes, situations, and audiences; critically evaluate and respond to texts; and reflect upon how discourse functions in social context. Furthermore, all three curricula promote civic virtues necessary for constructive democratic dialogue such as the ability to listen to, examine, and engage with the perspectives and opinions of other people. This is especially stressed in the Danish curriculum.

Although rhetoric has a presence in these curriculum documents, none of the three national curricula presents a broad rhetorical educational programme comparable to the ancient rhetorical education described by Isocrates and Quintilian or recommended by Fleming in his framework for a contemporary paideutic rhetorical education. As the analysis has shown, each of the three national curricula highlights certain aspects of rhetoric while omitting or downplaying others. Furthermore, the categories of rhetorical art, practice, and inquiry, as well as the paideutic aim of character formation, are in many cases only mentioned implicitly. The consequence may be that it is largely up to the individual teacher to decide how curriculum documents should be interpreted for teaching the language arts in Scandinavia, and the result may not necessarily be in line with a paideutic rhetorical education.

In fact, certain aspects of the curriculum documents may signal other understandings of rhetoric. The Norwegian and Danish curricula for upper-secondary school both explicitly highlight rhetorical analysis as an important competence. This might give the impression that rhetoric should be taught as what Fleming has labelled anthropological rhetoric—a theoretical framework for interpretation and criticism of little relevance for students' own communicative practice. Such an impression is strengthened by the marginal space given to rhetorical practice in the Norwegian and Danish upper-secondary school curricula, even though developing communicative skills and participation in a democratic society are listed as important aims.

The Swedish curriculum, on the other hand, uses explicit rhetorical terminology to describe an approach to communicative practice that students should apply when planning spoken and written productions, engaging with others, and analysing certain kinds of texts. However, for this approach to be genuinely rhetorical (and not just process pedagogy), teachers need to recognize the significance of the first step of the rhetorical work process—*intellectio*, the formulation of a purpose in response to a communicative situation—which gives communicative practice a rhetorical orientation. While this orientation is reinforced in the speech and interaction progression, it is harder to discern the core content of the writing and reading progressions. This inconsistency is problematic in the writing progression, which refers to argumentative techniques and text types with no connection to a communicative situation. If teachers perceive rhetoric as decontextualized communicative power, there is a risk that they will teach it as what Fleming calls technological rhetoric, skill-oriented training in effective communication, without regard for exigence or ethics. In this type of training, rhetorical education is detached from the goal of cultivating civic virtue and emptied of its social relevance.

A possible explanation for the mainly implicit and partly fragmented reflections of rhetoric in these curriculum documents is the curricular style employed by each country. When specialist language is to be avoided, as in the Swedish curriculum, the possibility of using rhetorical terminology, an important part of rhetorical art, is limited. The Swedish Ministry of Education attempts to circumnavigate this by supplying terminological definitions in the commentary material. The Norwegian curriculum is competence-based, with no core content specifications or methodological directives. This precludes a major part of rhetorical practice, namely, the means by which art is

internalized by students through observation, imitation, and exercise. In the Danish curriculum, we observe a clear difference between compulsory and upper-secondary education. Compulsory education follows a competence-based curriculum, where explicit references to rhetoric are few and mainly appear in relation to oral competencies. Upper-secondary school follows a curriculum that specifies both core content and teaching methods, and here the references to rhetoric are more distinct and pronounced with respect to art and inquiry, and, to some extent, practice. It seems, therefore, that a competence-based curriculum, together with an avoidance of specialist language, restricts the explicit inclusion of rhetoric in a national curriculum.

Although the national curricula for Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian language arts do not describe broad rhetorical education programmes in the paideutic tradition, these curricular documents nevertheless challenge Biesta's main criticism of rhetorical education, namely, that it only has a socializing goal—the formation of individuals 'in light of existing traditions and standards' (Biesta, 2012, p. 816). As we have previously argued, the classical rhetorical education advanced by Isocrates, Quintilian, and Fleming involves both socialization and subjectification as two sides of the same coin. This duality is also expressed in at least two of the national curricula. The Norwegian curriculum links knowledge of genres and the critical analysis of various texts with students' historical understanding and personal reflection as well as creative experimentation, promoting both socialization and subjectification. In the Danish curriculum for upper-secondary school, socialization and subjectification coexist through rhetorical analysis and the fostering of a personal voice in written production. In the Swedish curriculum, rhetorical education is primarily concerned with what Biesta refers to as empowerment. To a higher degree than the Danish and Norwegian curricula, the Swedish curriculum focuses on educating students to become effective speakers and rhetorical agents with the ability to participate in democratic discussion and thereby influence and change the society in which they live. With the ability to effect social change comes the possibility of subjectification.

Conclusion

Based on the results of our study, we conclude that Denmark, Sweden, and Norway have made significant progress in applying rhetorical education for all citizens by including it in the national curricula for compulsory language arts subjects. Rhetoric is also linked to the overarching goal of forming democratic citizens. However, the analysis has demonstrated that the link between rhetoric and civic education, as well as the rhetorical content itself, is largely implicit in the curriculum documents for Denmark and Norway and some parts of the Swedish curriculum. When there are few explicit references to rhetoric in curriculum documents, individual teachers' interpretations of the curriculum will tend to determine how rhetoric is taught to students. Therefore, to obtain a better understanding of the role of rhetoric in Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian language arts, more research is needed on how language arts teachers in Scandinavia interpret the curriculum and how rhetoric is presented in textbooks and teacher education.

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Notes on contributors

Claire Hogarth is assistant professor of English at Örebro University. Her research interests include rhetorical pedagogy, composition studies, and arts-based language education.

Christina Matthiesen is an associate professor of rhetoric at the University of Copenhagen. Her research interests include the history of rhetoric, textbook analysis, composition studies, and rhetorical education.

Jonas Bakken is an associate professor of language arts education at the University of Oslo. His research interests include textbook analysis, curriculum history, rhetorical education, and education for sustainable development.

ORCID

Claire Hogarth  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3303-7390>
 Christina Matthiesen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3043-4785>
 Jonas Bakken  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1064-980X>

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