

Beatrice Buegler and Jan Hodel

“Political Perspectives” in the Classroom – Results of Video Analyses in History and Civic Education¹

Civic education is not taught as a separate subject at Swiss schools. In this context, it is of great interest to look for specific characteristics of how civic education can be observed as a cross-disciplinary subject in schools through video recordings. The empirical analysis is based on classroom observation in ninth grade classes in various Swiss cantons (Aargau, Bern, and Zurich) from 2003 to 2007. Criteria that allow the identification of elements of civic education in various school subjects are developed, the concept of “political perspective”. The analysis provides useful hints for planning and running classes where civic education is used as an overarching, cross-disciplinary approach. The concept of “political perspective” should not be taken as substitute for institutional knowledge. But the concept can rise above the function of an analytical tool and become a tool that serves the planning and designing of lessons. The perspective could as such be related to the postulate for epistemological knowledge.

Keywords:

Civic Education, class room research/study, empirical study/research, Switzerland, 9th grade, video study, political perspective, political knowledge

1. Introduction

Civic education is not taught as a separate subject at Swiss schools (Ziegler, Jung 2007, 252-263). While conceived and practised in terms of a disciplinary orientation within teacher training and course book development, civic education must establish itself in everyday school practice as a subarea amongst a host of social science subjects. This situation is unlikely to change in the near future, as the current debate on the new curriculum for German-speaking Switzerland suggests. Therefore, civic education is bound to be and also remain hugely significant as an overarching, cross-disciplinary principle in the educational careers of Swiss youth. Not only does this raise the question of how civic education should be implemented as a cross-disciplinary subject, but also whether and how it is currently taught. Should every subject have to include a similar number of elements (or units) related to civic education, or should the various subjects be distinguished in this respect? Which criteria should these elements fulfill in order to be considered as elements of “civic education”, and who should decide this? Are these elements related to content or to methodology – and by whom are they developed: subject-specialists or civic-education specialists?

These questions suggest that the concrete shape that civic education assumes in Swiss state schools is still rather ambiguous. In order to successfully establish civic education in educational routines, it is thus of utmost importance to examine current practice in order to empirically measure the reality of what actually occurs in the classroom, and to draw conclusions

for the development of appropriate theories and for the implementation of civic education.

2. Research question

In this context, it is of great interest to look for specific characteristics of how civic education can be observed as a cross-disciplinary subject in schools through video recordings. Therefore, the term “civic education” is used as a “collective term for all forms of political education” (Sander 2007, 17). Such an approach would help determine if one can define or develop criteria that would allow for the identification of elements of civic education in various school subjects. Relevant studies (Richter 2000; Richter, Schelle 2006; Henkenborg, Kuhn 1998; Kuhn, Massing 1999) indicate that interpretive classroom research in civic education has until recently barely touched upon how civic education can be identified as a cross-disciplinary principle in classrooms.²

The empirical analysis undertaken within this research project is based on already existing classroom observation forming part of a previous project (for further information, see below). These records do not contain statements made by teachers and learners that could be used for the goals of this study. Instead, the present analysis focuses on what became apparent during the lessons. In turn, such observation can help to identify characteristics of instruction that can be labeled as elements of civic education. Such analysis is conducted in the full knowledge that identifying such occurrences of the “political” in the classroom is without a doubt not enough to declare actual teach-

1 The present text is a revised version of a previously published paper (Buegler, Hodel, 2010). Chapter 4.3 presents additional findings.

2 Peter Weinbrenner has sought to define the political dimension of lessons based on political categories and key questions derived therefrom. However, he was unable to successfully apply these categories to an actual class (an elementary school social studies lesson), and therefore opted for social science categories instead (Weinbrenner 2000). By contrast, Hans-Werner Kuhn and Peter Massing selected “teaching examples that have politics at the ‘heart’ of the subject”, without, however, detailing the criteria underlying their assessment of teaching sequences (Kuhn, Massing 1998, 255).



ing practice as "civic education". However, it can be assumed that it can lead to learning about politics, and can therefore be said to potentially qualify as civic education. In order to ascertain whether such learning really occurred, it would be necessary to have information about the prior knowledge of those involved, about their perception of what happened in the classroom, and about the learning process and its consequences.

The study described here focuses entirely on whether criteria allowing for the identification of instructional sequences of civic education can be defined and applied to classroom situations. Because there is no separate subject called "civic education" at Swiss schools, the aim is to look for single elements of political education in the context of specific subjects like history. Focusing exclusively on topics that could indicate the presence of elements of civic education seems inadequate for this research interest. While topics explicitly indicating a political content (for example, political parties) are often in line with an institutional dimension (polity aspect), they deal less with questions about policies, political processes, forms of participation, or the value of human rights. To identify criteria that allow for including all forms of political education, as mentioned, it is interesting to choose a more genetic-interrogative-problem-based approach. This is also in line with a general understanding of politics as a process of problem-solving in a societal context and allows one to look for different aspects of political elements within this definition.

The findings of this study should facilitate a better and more differentiated understanding of how civic education is effectuated in practice. Further, they also provide useful hints for planning and running classes where civic education is used as an overarching, cross-disciplinary approach.

3. Methodological approach

Based on various theoretical concepts, we first developed a definition of the "political". On the one hand, this definition should include the essence of the "political" in order to be able to pinpoint instances of civic education within the various subjects. On the other hand, it should also be capable of identifying as many opportunities of civic education as possible through classroom observation. If possible, the definition should therefore not exclude teaching sequences that are inappropriate due to their being based on differing convictions about civic instruction (learning about politics vs. learning about democracy). Nor should it exclude sequences that civic education experts might consider unsuccessful, incorrect, or imprecise. Secondly, we applied this defined category to selected lessons. The existing audiovisual recordings of lessons stem from a project entitled "History and Politics in the Classroom". The project was run in

ninth grade classes in various Swiss cantons (Aargau, Bern, and Zurich) from 2003 to 2007; the recordings were subject to previous, albeit more cursory evaluation (Hodel, Waldis 2007,91-142). Using these video recordings makes sense, since it can be assumed that encountering "political" forms of instruction in history lessons is highly probable. The choice and sequence of the various lessons were random. Evaluation then focused on lesson transcripts. If these passages were found interesting, based on the formulated definition of the "political", and thus called for more precise analysis, then the video recordings and the materials used by the teachers were consulted. The lessons were worked on one after the other in pairs and the findings were logged. While our analysis is based on Mayring's qualitative content analysis³, the explanations and subsequent evaluation draw on Kruse (2008). The first round included six of the forty-one lessons according to this method.⁴Based on these findings (see 4.1 and 4.2), six further lessons were analyzed on the basis of a specific choice of cases (see 4.3).⁵

4. Findings

4.1 Definition of the "political" in classroom situations

Based on the formulated prerequisites, the theoretically-founded version of politics or of what is "political" should be operationalized on the one hand, and thus be made applicable to the observed lessons. On the other hand, it should also capture as many different forms of civic education as possible. One key requirement of the definition is its suitability for identifying the political as a cross-disciplinary principle at work in the practice of civic education within different subject-specific contexts.

Lange (2007) describes political awareness as a process in which people move from subjective ideas based on individual interests to collective responsibilities. The concept of political rule in this case rests on the institutionalization of this process in a given political structure. This concept is thus depersonalized and therefore understood as a skill for the creation of collective responsibility (Lange 2007, 207). Establishing collective responsibility is the core of political processes, as described by Patzelt's definition:

"Politics are those human actions aimed at establishing a sense of general bindingness or obligation, particularly of collectively-binding rules and decisions, within and between human groups" (Patzelt 2007, 16, translation by authors).

3 Narrow and broad contextual analysis; see. Mayring 1998, 70ff.

4 Refers to the lessons with the following IDs: (in order of evaluation): 122, 212, 9, 403, 14, and 8.

5 Refers to the lessons with the following IDs: 4, 10, 121 (single lesson), as well as 202, 203, 211 (double lesson).



Patzelt's definition of politics, which underpins this research project, also focuses on a problem-based approach as a key element of politics. Implicit in this widely recognized definition of "politics" is the question of *when* and *why* human groups are concerned with the creation of collective rules, or, put differently, what the concrete "object" of this process might be. The explanation of this rather often neglected question appears to be of central importance to the definition of the "political" in the classroom.

In determining this "object" – which is congruent neither with the content nor with the topic of a process – the collective goods theory developed by the economist Mancur Olson can be useful. Processes aimed at creating collective responsibility appear in particular when a conflict of regulation or when the creation of public goods are concerned. As a consequence, public goods (as well as collective goods) can be seen as the "object" of political processes. They are characterized by the criteria of their use being neither exclusive nor competitive. The criterion of non-exclusiveness arises from the inadequate allocation or feasibility of property rights to the said property, for which there may be various reasons (economic, technological, institutional, normative, etc.). For example, it is not possible (for ethical or technical reasons) to exclude someone from consuming the object of a "clean environment". Such non-exclusiveness, however, does not in itself constitute the existence of a public good. As a feature of the good, this characteristic is much more frequently granted through political decision-making and regulatory processes. The criterion of non-competitiveness is defined by the possibility of the simultaneous use of a good by several individuals (Olson 2004). If, however, due to the scarcity of the good, the situation known as the "tragedy of the commons" (Ostrom 1999) occurs, the regulation of its use becomes inevitable.

It is thus central in this respect to note that a political process is set in motion when a group is forced to create or adapt generally binding regulations for the distribution or use of public, limited goods. Through this process, different interests from different stakeholders interact with each other in the context of given institutional structures. This in turn leads to political conflicts, which may be understood as conflicts of interest. Politics are thus a complex interplay between interest-based issues, conflicting actions, and more or less stable structures involved in establishing general bindingness or obligation within the regulation or creation of public goods.

In applying the above definition of the "political" to the classroom, the following analysis assumes that in the teaching context politics do not manifest themselves as a material object (that is, as content and topics), but rather as a formal object, that is, as a specific perspective on a specific content (see Mass-

ing 2004, 87). The decisive factor in identifying the "political" in the classroom is therefore not exclusively the appearance of political contents or categories, but rather how the discussion of subject materials shapes the notion and understanding of the "political". For example, a political perspective would be adopted in a physics lesson if classroom discussion suggested that given different, conflicting interests concerning the distribution of various resources (environment, health, electric supply or earning power), corresponding political processes should lead to generally-binding regulation.

In our attempt to determine a political perspective in the classroom, the absence of data did not allow us to assume teacherly intentions. We therefore had to identify such intentions based on the actions and interactions observable in the classroom. Our working assumption was that such a perspective is established and construed through corresponding acts of communication within the learning community. To determine such a perspective on the object of investigation, it thus seemed feasible to analyze the linguistic interactions within that community (which consisted of the students and their teacher). Correspondingly, the chosen units of analysis were the students' and the teachers' recorded statements. 6 out of the 41 lessons were selected at random (by drawing lots). Each member of our research team first examined the transcripts of the recorded lessons on their own. Individual analysis aimed to find statements from which the adoption of a political perspective could be inferred. Subsequent joint evaluation involved presenting and verifying the findings of the previous individual analysis. Where our findings did not coincide, we sought to establish a consensus in our assessment of the corresponding statements.

4.2 How do "politics" become apparent in the classroom? The "political perspective" as a challenging phenomenon

Lesson analysis reveals that the so-called "political perspective" becomes particularly evident in explanations and assignments, which serve to introduce and structure a lesson, just as much as questions and answers, however, which allow one to infer a specific problem.

The following examples indicate how the analysis of in-class events proceeds with regard to identifying a political perspective during a lesson. The table below illustrates a lesson entitled "Introduction to National Socialism". This lesson shows in an exemplary fashion key findings that can also be found in other lessons. Three aspects become evident: first, various perspectives can be identified within one and the same lesson; secondly, instances can be identified within that lesson at which specific perspectives (including a po-



litical one) can be adopted, even if such opportunities are not always taken; and thirdly, it became clear that adopting a specific perspective can be induced and initiated not only by the teacher but also by the students themselves.

Thus, lesson analysis reveals that sequences comprising a "political perspective" can clearly be identified during the course of a lesson. Moreover, a political perspective is observable in various forms, which in turn raises epistemological and practical questions.

On the other hand, it must be noted that our research focused on identifying a "political perspective". Other identifiable perspectives, which failed to meet the aforementioned categories of the "political", were not examined more closely. We dispensed with definitions of historical, geographical, social science, or other perspectives. Our study was interested exclusively in identifying political perspectives. Analyzing other perspectives identifiable in the classroom, as well as their interactions and interdependencies, will be the subject of future research.

Table 1: Lesson "Introduction to National Socialism" (ID 122, various clips)

Time	Step	Analysis
02:07-03:03	The term "National Socialism" is written on the board and the students are left open to brainstorm what it could possibly mean.	No specific perspective
03:03-04:33	Teacher: "So that you may, and this is the goal of this lesson, better understand these times, and so that you may also come to a judgment about the present ..." "...would like to take this lesson to go through the topic from your experiences and by using your imaginations. Thank goodness we can say, if we look at the current situation, that it is very nice where we live. We really don't have any problems, do we?"	No political perspective, rather a historical perspective – the main purpose of this lesson is a societal situation at a specific historical moment and its relationship with today. This opening statement would permit a political perspective, but it is not taken up.
05:21-06:21	The teacher requires that the students, in free association, note down current problems: "Problems meaning difficult situations, and write down everything that comes to mind without thinking too much about it." (...) Student: "Are we now linking this to Switzerland or to National Socialism?" Teacher: "From today, from yesterday, about us, about the entire world."	Those perspectives that should or could be taken up were kept explicitly open in the task instructions even though the students would have liked more concrete instructions. The students, however, make connections to exclusively societal problems and thus pick up on one specific perspective.
27:57-28:27	Teacher: "A tour group is traveling across the desert. Suddenly the leader notices that all the water flasks are empty. The next water station is two days away on foot. There is no phone connection. Assign roles, act out the scene, and how it continues."	A classic public goods dilemma: in this teaching situation, the focus is on the social aspect, "How do we behave" (social perspective), and not on decision-making or rule-setting, "Who decides and how will this decision be implemented" (political perspective).



The above analysis shows that a differentiated observation of a so-called "political perspective" in the filmed sequences is necessary. Such differentiation raises even more questions. As such, it is worth noting that the chosen perspectives can either be related to the entirety of a lesson (identifiable in the stated goals of the lesson or in the instructional steps) or to a smaller sequence within the lesson. Should these perspectives be treated equally in subsequent evaluation or should different criteria apply to perspectives related to an entire lesson, as compared to those stemming from a shorter sequence? How are larger and smaller perspectives interrelated? Do they have a functional interdependence? Does the smaller perspective serve the larger one? Do they perhaps not even have any subject-specific implications? Do they mutually exclude one another: is the larger perspective present during the smaller one, or are they complementary? This series of questions will be expanded upon in two further empirical examples:

a) In one lesson (ID 08), the teacher begins with a quick review of the topic treated in the previous lesson – an explanation of the French Revolution and Liberalism. Then, she introduces the subject of the new lesson:

Teacher: "But now it was about actually implementing these civil liberties, and in the nineteenth century, the liberals took the lead. Their task was – or rather, they were committed to ensuring that these new civil liberties could also really be enjoyed. This is where we are now. In the next thirty-five minutes, we are going to work on six such civil liberties." (ID 08 04:12-04:37)

In the remaining lesson time, civil liberties were discussed based on case studies about the universality of the various liberties in the light of the concrete and current political situation. For the rest of the lesson, classroom work thus leaves behind the historical perspective and adopts a political perspective. Civil liberties were not seen as objects developed under special conditions in the nineteenth century. Instead, they were examined with respect to their congruence with rules and their daily consequences for the students.

The perspective determining the lesson (both in terms of the teaching time used as well as the goals defined by the teacher) is thus a political one. Based on the observations made, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the historical situation is only a negligible, brief episode at the beginning of the lesson, or whether it plays an important role for the subsequent political perspective.

b) In another lesson (ID 09), the class treated Stalin's "Great Leap Forward" at the end of the 1920s, and then focused on the forced collectivization of farming in 1928. Following an intense discussion about the concrete measures adopted as part of this forced collectivization and the suffering of those affected, the teacher said:

Teacher: "Let's stop there for a moment, and step back to reflect on matters. What are your thoughts about this plan? Is it good, sensible, and well thought-out, or is it bad?" (ID09, 24:41-25:06)

Based on this particular example of forced collectivization, the students discussed the sense and nonsense of such a *political* undertaking quite excitedly and controversially. For a brief period, the lesson adopted a political perspective and discussed the (undemocratic and by no means negotiated) implementation of universally applicable group rules. The class discussed how such rules for the collective good of farming had come into being, how "the use of land" had developed, and to what extent this solution should be assessed. Is this short sequence no longer history teaching, but rather a part of civic education, because a political perspective can be elicited from it? Or is this short sequence rather not about civic education because the lesson was clearly dedicated to history and the political perspective as such served only as a means of accessing and judging history? Could this short sequence suggest that history teaching can adopt a political perspective in order to encourage learning about politics, and thereby contributes towards civic education – and yet undeniably remains history teaching?

This raises the question of how the defined "perspectives" must be differentiated, and how they interact in everyday school life. Such changes in perspectives can be assumed to constitute not only a phenomenon associated with politics, but that they are also observable in other subjects.⁶ Furthermore, the extent to which the adoption of a political perspective contributes towards civic education is also left open. Is a short teaching sequence enough to adopt a political perspective? Or is an entire lesson the minimum requirement for such a perspective? These questions are crucial to making recommendations to teachers about how they need to incorporate civic education into their respective subjects.

4.3 How do "political perspectives" become apparent in civic education?

Further analysis considers whether the political perspective in terms of a formal object can also be observed in lessons dealing with "politics" as a material object, and whether such a perspective could thus also serve as a criterion for identifying potential civic and political learning processes.

For this purpose, three single and three double lessons centrally concerned with political contents were selected from the total of forty-one lessons forming

⁶ For more information about the problem of the boundaries between history and civics education, see also Hodel, Waldis 2007a.



part of the "History and Politics" project (on the basis of their title and abstract).

The findings of these analyses were explicit. A clear political perspective was found in only one of the lessons. This lesson was about the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union and their effect on Swiss transport policies, mainly the transportation of goods through the Alps (ID 121). The students had to play a business game where they assumed the roles of stakeholders, analyzed the problem from their standpoint, and then brought this perspective into a plenary discussion. This problem-oriented approach to conflict, or more precisely to the problem of goods distribution, characterizes a lesson designed around a political perspective. In the other lessons, no political perspective as defined in this research project could be found: in these lessons, political parties, as well as past and upcoming elections, were not treated in terms of their ability to create collectively-binding rules or universally applicable decisions, but rather they were treated exclusively as a part of the political system.

In other words, these lessons mainly deal with various aspects of knowledge about political structures, knowledge that is limited to institutional and procedural dimensions of state functions. It is worth mentioning that dealing with knowledge about structures can be observed on different levels: as a short, intermediate treatment of a concept ("consociationalism", "autonomy"), which arises in the context of reading newspapers together in a lesson on "current affairs", or as an entire lesson dedicated to a detailed examination of a conceptual context (political parties, federal elections). Irrespective of the aforementioned lesson ID 121, political or civics issues occur only marginally in this lesson; neither is there an in-depth discussion of these issues and their treatment by politicians.

Based on this observation, the relationship between "institutional political knowledge" and political perspectives has to be reconsidered. According to the observed lessons, it seems that "institutional political knowledge", which focuses on the existence and mechanisms of governmental and non-governmental institutions, can either serve as a basis for the treatment with political problems or can rather be developed by discussing political problems. The question of how much knowledge about the underlying political system is required for a meaningful application of political perspectives to lessons remains open.

What is also interesting is that the students observed in our research are almost always confronted with the teacher's opinion, and are challenged to state their own opinions, whether implicitly or explic-

itly. What appears to be crucial here is a distinction between forming a judgment, as an element of teaching politics, and the rather more diffuse emergence of general opinion in the classroom. According to Henkenborg, political judgments are specified by five characteristics:

- (a) justifiability and rationality;
- (b) a more elaborate way of thinking in terms of intersubjective rationality;
- (c) an interrational discernment where different forms of rationality come together and must be weighted;
- (d) dialogue and discursiveness; and
- (e) questions and tasks for a political science thought process, where a distinction between factual and value judgments is made (Henkenborg 2007, 74). Judgments can thus be described as a prerequisite for richer mental processes, which do not allow for any rationally-founded statements without sufficient basic knowledge.

In this context, it seems relevant to observe that forming a political judgment is hardly possible on the basis of an abstract knowledge of structures, but instead requires an examination of contents. This is reflected, for example, in a lesson (ID 202) in which students are asked to take a stance on the outcome of the presidential elections in the United States. A handout on the American electoral system was given out. Being a standard part of their instruction, the students understood how the exercise works: it aims to distinguish fact from opinion and how they are accounted for in the media. Nevertheless, the students had difficulty in going beyond platitudes in expressing and articulating their views on the presidential elections. The stated rationales show that the students refer to their forming of opinions through specific contents (for example, war) even though these opinions were not discussed in class.

Teacher: "(Pedro)⁸, Could you please read what you have written?"

Student: "Bush was reelected president of the USA by 51%. I don't think it was good that Bush was reelected because I am against the war."

Teacher: "That was two sentences. What do you (Marina)⁹ think about this?"

Student: "It's an opinion; in my opinion it's right."

Teacher: "Mhm (yes). I think it's perfect. Great!" (Lesson ID 202 – LK1 37:37 – 38:14)

Students are also confronted with various kinds of "opinion", which they are expected to consider. Sometimes they are called upon to express a personal opinion: *Student: "What's your opinion about how the parties are represented in the Federal Council generally? Should another party also have a seat in the Federal Council or*

7 That is, "Konkordanz", a term that is used in Swiss politics to describe the everyday practice of an informal coalition of the most important parties.

8 Name altered.

9 Name altered.



how – what do you think?" (Lesson ID 10, Student-led discussion about the 2003 federal elections, 06:20–06:35)

On some occasions, it also remains open as to whose "opinion" is to be discussed: *Teacher: "Good, now here's some further input. You know the situation in Iraq fairly well. Hmm, what could happen if the Americans say, 'Yeah, okay, we'll pull out right away. Is that a good idea? A bad idea? Promising, or...what do you think? You can't say exactly as it hasn't happened but you can certainly form an opinion.'" (Lesson ID 04, Reading newspapers about current affairs, 31:52 – 32:49)*

On other occasions, students are required to understand a third-party opinion, and to express this in class or at least to reiterate it:

Teacher: "What does the truck driver think about it? What goals do you have?"

Student 1: "Hmm, the vehicles should also be allowed to go through overnight – hmm – you should be able to drive throughout the night, – hmm – because you can make progress and there is less traffic."

Teacher: "I'm not sure if truck drivers will like having to drive through the night as well."

Student 2: "That's their choice."

Teacher: "Hmm [yes]. This goal should be rethought through the eyes of the truck driver. I don't think that all the truck drivers would be happy about this. After the truck driver, we have people living in the Alpine valleys. What do you think?"

Student 3: "Well, we want our air to remain clean".

Student 4: "And because our cows get sick faster..."

(Lesson ID 121, Simulation of a bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU concerning transport policies, 39:15 – 40:10)

These observations suggest that it is necessary to distinguish as precisely as possible between taking a "political perspective" as a methodological and analytical approach to a politically relevant issue, the voicing of "opinions" as an expression of personal attitudes or values, and judgments as logical and justifiable conclusions. In the observed lessons, these differences are rarely made so as to show the students exactly what is expected of them. In the observed lessons, the teachers did not make these goals clear either in their expectations of the students or in their own statements. However, their actions were driven by the desire to arouse student interest and that they understood the importance of the issues treated. For this purpose, the teacher, however, used implicit statements, sweeping generalizations, or provocative sharpenings of a topic. Importantly, however, it remains unclear how far these assertions are based on methodological analysis and well-founded judgment. Evidence thus raises the question to what extent lessons conform to or contravene against the prohibition of overwhelming the student according to the Beutelsbacher Consensus ("Beutelsbacher Konsens"). In this respect, Tilman Grammes observes that on the level

of teacher-student relations contraventions against the Beutelsbacher Consensus can occur by appealing to morals, co-optation, ignoring objections, or harmonizing persuasion (Grammes 1996, 143 ff.).

The findings obtained from these observations illustrate the complexity of classroom analysis as soon as various conditions determining teaching are compared. Thus, the political perspective needs to be related to the preconditions (such as knowledge creation) and objectives (for example, forming opinions and judgments) of civic education, as well as to clearly differentiating between them. Such an approach seems a prerequisite for a meaningful analysis of the intentions of teachers and their effects on students, if these are recorded in additional surveys. What exactly do teachers have in mind when they demand that their students form an opinion? Do they want to guide student interest towards a political aspect of a problem, and thereby attempt to solicit the adoption of a political perspective? Or do they want their learners to form an opinion? Moreover, how do students perceive these challenges, and what actions do they lead to?

Conclusion

The questions raised within the research described here can be divided into three areas. The first concerns whether a specific political perspective can be observed in the classroom. Where a political perspective appears, opportunities for civic education might occur. As the analysis of the empirical examples shows, political perspectives were indeed identified in the lessons observed. The ability to use this criterion would now have to be validated through other subjects. Already at this juncture, further questions were raised about the various forms of political perspectives. The discovery of "long" and "short" instructional sequences, in which a political perspective is adopted, gives rise to empirical analyses and theoretical discussions about how civic education actually materializes as an overarching, cross-disciplinary principle in the classroom. The political perspective shows the potential of "smaller" sequences that occur in everyday school life more often than in lessons dedicated entirely to civic education. How important should these different instances of political perspectives be in the implementation of civic education as an overarching, cross-disciplinary principle, and how are they embedded in the policy guidelines of educational theory?

A second area concerns the role of political perspectives in teaching contexts that deal explicitly with civic topics such as political systems. It still needs to be clarified how far dealing with a knowledge of political structures can and should be associated with civic questions. Moreover, the question arises as to the differentiation of the political perspective as an analytical approach to the educational goal of the ability to make sound judgments.



Thirdly, a further issue emerges from the limitations of the analysis described above. A survey of those involved in teaching and learning settings can provide information about their intentions and perceptions, and thus shed further light on the importance of the political perspective for civic learning and thus also for civic education.

In addition, one should examine to what extent the criterion of the political perspective can be meaningfully applied to the different target levels of civic education. From an initial glance at the results of analysis, one might conclude that the political perspective can be observed especially in teaching situations where students are trained to understand, categorize, and evaluate political issues and processes. Here is a target level, for example, that Sander has characterized as individuals possessing "political judgment ability" (Sander 2007, 75-91). The more challenging cases were those where students were faced with political problems but where their "political activity ability" (Sander 2007, 91-95) needs to be developed. This leads to the following widely discussed, but as yet inconclusively answered, question: what is the relationship between civic and social learning in everyday teaching? Identifying a "political perspective" can be a useful analytical tool, especially when the focus on a political problem (that is, adopting a political perspective) causes those involved to reflect upon their social experiences with regard to their political implications.¹⁰

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¹⁰ For more information, see Sander on the question of social and political education Sander (2007, 20).



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