

## Review of the Book:

**Hedtke, Reinhold; Zimenkova, Tatjana. 2013 (eds.). Education for Civic and Political Participation. A Critical Approach. New York/Abingdon: Routledge, 276 pp., 84.00 GBP.**

The active promotion of citizens' participation in public life has become a prominent target for European and national education policies. Many European schools work with institutionalized programs of a participatory citizenship education (PCE). The critical approach of the reviewed anthology fundamentally questions the objective of this program. It is not enough, as Reinhold Hedtke and Tatjana Zimenkova (University of Bielefeld, Germany) argue, to work towards the acceptance of democratic structures. Rather the encouragement of critical reflection should be the base to actively participate in real political decision-making processes.

The common focus of the articles is on:

- a) a sound criticism of the presumptions of existing PCE-concepts as regards democratic theory
- b) an analysis of the political context of the educational concepts and specific PCE lesson practices
- c) the officially expected educational progress of the learners as compared to a more realistic estimation of learning outcomes that can in fact be expected.

The starting point of the editors is the assumption that especially the participatory philosophy of the EU and the Council of Europe is based on premises that are too optimistic and harmonised. This either leads to uncritical, affirmative democrats or to an instrumentalisation of citizens for state purposes. The actual aim of a truly political and more controversial PCE that is also oriented towards the subjective interests of the citizens should rather be the common clarification of questions like: Which form of political participation privileges which interests? How can political influence be achieved? How can the reflection on one's own political power or political powerlessness in respective political systems be supported?

Detlev Sack argues to impart a realistic conception of democracy, so that citizens can deal with the likely failure of an active democratic participation more easily. This implies citizens with a reflected individual perspective on politics who have developed a professional, or in Sack's term ironic distance from over-enthusiastic participation philosophies. Tatjana Zimenkova emphasizes the theoretical distinction between the political and the non-political aspects of PCE. She develops a highly differentiated categorization to analytically approach the concepts of democracy, participation and state-citizen-relations in comparative perspective. Only then can the great variety of European societies and democratic cultures be perceived adequately. Reinhold Hedtke sees

education policies in Europe stemming from governments unhappy with the participatory performance of their citizens. Hedtke thus argues that the responsibility for weaknesses of existing democracies is strategically shoved onto the citizens. In his view, this concept of Citizenship Education implies a functionalist rationality as young people are misused as a resource for the political system. Ideally, as he writes, students should be "entangled in diversity and controversy and, thus, personally embody pluralism, controversy and debate in the classroom" (p. 74).

Hermann Josef Abs und Sarah Werth analyse the education policies of the Council of Europe and the EU that are meant to influence PCE in member states. Interesting differences between the two educational actors include a stronger focus on human rights (CoE) and the attempt to foster a stronger European identity and supportive acceptance of EU institutions (EU). Anu Toots carefully contextualises a competence-oriented concept of Civic Education into country specific historical and political contexts and presents first results with regard to possible links between political knowledge and political action. Avril Keating und David Kerr show how the English government's plan to establish an obligatory curriculum for secondary schools has developed since the 1990s. Challenges seem to have appeared on three levels: policy-design, policy implementation and changes in the policy context. Tristan McCowan und Elaine Unterhalter discuss in detail the problem of how to enable young people to an active political participation with the same rights, especially in poorer countries. Maria Olson conceives the hypothetical figure of a migrant to critically demonstrate that there are many people living on European territory, who, as a group, are hard to reach with PCE programs. Tatjana Zimenkova analyses to what extent Service Learning can generally imply political participation or political learning. She questions the functionality of such an approach on system level and critically asks whom the participants in Service Learning programs actually serve? Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski develops an interactive analytical tool called relational citizenship to explain citizens' roles, citizenship education and participation in democratic as well as in authoritarian systems. Pedro D. Ferreira et al. examine present Spanish and Portuguese PCE learning material asking whether and how the preceding Iberian dictatorships are viewed in retrospect.

The exceptional value of this anthology results from the embedment of the editors' committed plea to a truly political participation (Chapters 2, 3 and 9) into a remarkable framework of articles that mirror the many facets of PCE-research: Theoretical foundations,



objective and well-informed analyses as well as innovative comparative methods. The question of which politico-educational constellations rather distract citizens from real political problems - thereby reducing them to social, even individual challenges - is thoroughly probed. Furthermore the work offers detailed criteria for analysis: The options of compliance or insubordination, the differentiation between participation and non-participation as a matter of personal freedom and the differentiation between political and non-political participation as a matter of how extensive individual personal influence shows itself. Education for Civic and Political Participation distinguishes itself by the interplay between political theory, comparative politics and civic education. Future debates on political participation and respective educational programs will orientate towards this anthology.

Future international research could take teacher training more into account. Reinhold Hedtke's demand for more controversy and classroom debate pre-supposes well-qualified teachers in the respective nation states. Then European educational programs would not meet learners unfiltered to such a degree. The relevance of a critical and reflective translation task by good teachers as the central actors in education should also be considered more when evaluating the European educational programs. In reference to the special pre-requisites/requirements of supranational educational programs, the Critical Approach could be seen in relative terms. The Council of Europe's focus on common values such as human rights or tolerance results from its politically restricted mandate that is aimed for long-term convincing. Also its rather heterogeneous membership structure needs to be taken into account. The theoretical pre-suppositions of PCE-concepts need to be rather vague. Putting them into a more concrete or politicized form could have counterproductive effects in some member states.

The anthology concludes with a fascinating spectrum of further research questions – an encouragement to follow-up the impetus of this rich work in educational theory and practice.

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