

European Citizenship Education: Business as Usual or Time for Change?

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The current issue of the Journal of Social Science Education is devoted to European citizenship education (ECE). We wonder whether it is business as usual or time for change and conceptually and empirically explore some key aspects of the ECE question, providing proposals, answers and highlighting where further discussions and actions are needed.

The international situation is changing dramatically, European citizens are facing new challenges on the local, national and global level, economic problems, migration crisis, political developments like the Brexit and dangerous conflicts across the world mean that nowadays educators operate in contexts that are markedly different from the early years of the 21st century. For the further development of Europe competent citizens are needed, the improvement of European citizenship education is top of the agenda.

Authors from across Europe – France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom – contribute to this edition of the JSSE. They open different perspectives on educational matters in the civic, social and economic field addressing the programmatic question “What is European citizenship education for?” and the pragmatic question “How can we make European citizenship education work more effectively?”.

Formal or non-formal European citizenship education is expected to support students in their way to discover the world they are living in and to enlarge their view, to contribute to the socio-political and economic life and be aware of the questions included in the common European project.

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Johanna F. Ziemes, Katrin Hahn-Laudenberg, Hermann J. Abs (Germany) analyse in their work *'From Connectedness and Learning to European and National Identity Featured topic'* the concept of national and European identities through a multidisciplinary lens, and reflect upon the dimension and desirability of overarching identities. They examine empirically how school develops those identities in adolescents. Correlation and regression analyses are conducted with data from over 45,000 students from fourteen school systems of European countries, employing data from the ICCS International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016. Questions on national and European identity are clarified, the results imply, for example, that fostering national identity is empirically not considered to be connected to the devaluation of outgroups, students who experience a positive social climate at school will develop a balanced national and European identity, and formal learning opportunities are shown to be relevant for fostering a European identity.

Umberto Morelli (Italy), in his contribution *From National Cultural Paradigms to European/Global Cultural Paradigms: A Copernican Revolution*, starts from the observation that national cultural paradigms are still very common and that the European Union is experiencing a polycrisis. Morelli notes that the nature of the European Union as it was conceived by the founding fathers is changing; over the past few years, public attitudes towards European integration have also changed (s. spread of Eurosceptic and nationalist movements). He suggests that the European unification process can no longer be founded on market and economic criteria alone, rather a sense of belonging to Europe needs to be boosted to make it a point of reference for identity, for shaping the European citizen, who must undertake a Copernican revolution in the paradigms used to interpret the contemporary world, overcoming the nation-centric logic and rethinking what is a nation. For Morelli, a nation is not a blood community, but rather includes all those who live within a given territory and share the fundamental principles of living together. According to the author, launching a Copernican revolution in our mentalities is a task for the education system, which should not only shape the citizens of the nation-state, but also the citizens of a united Europe.

The article of Vasiliki Missira (Greece), *Strengthening European citizenship education*, identifies whether and to what extent the educational activities supported by the action programmes of the Council of Europe, as well as the European Union, contribute to the promotion of active European citizenship. The author suggests that further efforts are needed to enhance the participation of young people in public life in a Europe characterised by political apathy, discriminations and high unemployment rates. Missira's proposals are: making Education for Democratic Citizenship a main compulsory school subject, ensuring specialized training and retraining of teachers with the aim to adopt more learner-centred teaching and to improve the approach of the EU project by school textbooks. Further proposals are, to intensify the dialogue between citizens and the institutions, to foster respect for the identity of the 'other', „European solidarity” and “European patriotism”, to organise European summer universities with students from different Member States and further similar activities, strengthening the regular citizens' dialogues across Europe.

The analysis of Matteo Tracchi (Italy), *The 2017 Council of Europe Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education - 'Connecting the Dots' between Responses from Governments and Civil Society Organisations Debate*, is a brief introduction to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE), underlining the importance of Human Rights Education, and focussing on the review process of its implementation. Tracchi examines the 2017 Council of Europe Report on the state of citizenship and Human Rights education (second review cycle 2016), which is an extremely useful source of information. On the other hand, its insights are limited because it provides two unrelated summaries, one based on data collected by governments and the other one from the perspective of civil society organisations, without linking the answers, although they show discrepancies (e.g. measures taken and activities planned to promote EDC/HRE) between governments and NGOs besides analogies (e.g. lack of media interest). This analysis offers a contribution to a reliable methodology of interpreting the results of surveys by linking them. It would be interesting to know whether this discrepancy is due to real differences or only to different perceptions by respondents originating in their different roles in society.

What is the impact of an experiential interdisciplinary course on students' attitudes towards social and economic inequality? Kristin Johnson, Jill K. Doerner and Liam C. Malloy (USA) present the results of pre-test-post-test-design in their paper *Inequality and the American classroom: Experiential strategies for teaching social justice*. The survey results show that attending the course tends to improve the self-awareness of one's own position in society and to open the mind for information on inequality even if it irritates one's personal world view. The more, however, information and evidence touch profound beliefs closely connected to personal identity about the individual responsibility of economic success in contrast to structural conditions of upward mobility, the less students changed their prior understanding of the causes of inequality. However, the authors are confident that learning about inequality in an interdisciplinary and active experiential design provides better opportunities of addressing prevailing world views with contradicting information from social sciences.

In the next paper, *Students' understanding of causation in pricing*, Ann-Sofie Jägerskog, Peter Davies, Cecilia Lundholm (Sweden and UK) present a phenomenographic analysis and turn the attention to the students' understanding of causation in pricing. The aim of this study is to extend previous research on conceptions of price by highlighting variation in students' understanding of causality. It starts from the premise that causality is a key dimension in developing a complex understanding of pricing and also aims to offer a new way of using 'dimensions of variation' in phenomenographic research to analyse the structure of conceptions of complex phenomena. The study yielded a total of 328 open responses, which were analysed phenomenographically; it examines conceptions of causation in pricing and considers relationships between three dimensions of variation. The work confirms that the way in which a problem is posed seems to substantially affect the kind of understanding of a phenomenon or concept. This conclusion is highly relevant for research as well as teaching. The authors suggest that it is highly relevant to consider how a question or problem is presented to the students, as this



considerably affects what understanding of the phenomenon is included in their answers.

Publishing country reports has a long tradition in the *Journal of Social Science Education* going back to its first volume published in 2002. In *Civic Education for Democratic Citizens: To What Extent do Civic Education Curricula and Textbooks Establish Foundations for Developing Active Citizens in the Republic of Macedonia?*, Ana Mickovska-Raleva presents a critical review of 20 years of citizenship education policy from. The author leans on the concept of civic key competences of the European Council and the European Union and applies methods of content analysis to Macedonian curricula and textbooks. Her research reveals a prevailing factual knowledge bias concerning the disadvantage of skills, values and behaviour. Accordingly, content like institutional knowledge and tasks centred on memorisation are dominant in the textbooks. Although there is some space left for the development of students' critical thinking, institutionalized civic education underwent a conversion from "initial emphasis on a student-centred and problem-centred approach" to "a teacher and assessment-centred approach, strongly prioritizing knowledge over civic skills and especially behaviors". The author argues for a recollection of the initial approach which should be realised in a curriculum reform.

European citizenship education is getting more and more demanding and this issue of the *Journal of Social Science Education* intends to face this challenge. It aims to have an impact on practice as well as on theory, to provide a clearer and more contextualised understanding which goes beyond doing 'business as usual'. In sum, 'active competent citizenship can be developed by strengthening knowledge and responsibility as well as the awareness of the importance of decisions on the future of European policies and institutions, the relationship of the European and the national citizenry'.