

Editorial: Gender Issues – Still Relevant for Social Science Education?

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In the past three decades a far-reaching change has taken place in the relationship of genders. Today young women formulate the claim for an independent life, demanding the unhindered access to all areas of public life, and bank on the fair and equal distribution of chances in life. The equalisation of gender is to a large extent an accepted norm. Most of the previous male domains have provided access for women, and the success of girls in the educational system is unprecedented. Parallel to this success story, however, is a continuity of gender-specific inequality: Women are still a minority in managerial positions, the labour market is still gender-specifically segregated in large areas, differences in income between women and men have hardly levelled off, and housework and raising and caring for children remain largely a female domain. Simultaneously new social inequalities arise on a global scale, not only between women and men, but also increasingly between women.

This complex omnium-gatherum of adjustment and difference, integration and social exclusion, of formal equalisation and (now more subtle) actual discrimination represents a curricular challenge for the social sciences instruction. Gender issues are in no way “out”, but have clearly become more complex. Gender topics must be newly formulated in order to make them relevant for the curriculum and attractive for female and male students. This issue assumes that the analysis of contradictory tendencies in gender relations is important for the understanding of current upheavals and developmental trends in many social areas. Furthermore, the integration of gender issues is indispensable for bridging the gap between micro and macro perspectives, between social structures and today’s world for female and male students. Questions concerning their own life style in regard to participation in the workforce as well as the arrangement of the private sphere of life are more relevant than ever for the younger generation and tend to become more and more demanding. The problems related to this also always point directly or indirectly to aspects of gender relationships and their political regulation.

However, a glance at the guidelines, curricula, schoolbooks, and teaching materials reveals that this kind of understanding of gender issues is up to now not anchored enough, not to mention the implementation in the actual teaching. While gender-specific prerequisites for learning as an element of gender-sensitive didactics has come more than ever into the view of didactic developments, there seems to be little new on the curricular level. The innovation by gender studies which has brought important impulses for the theoretical categories like empirical research in the reference disciplines of social science education only seems to reach the social science class level after long delays. When gender issues are also taken up, then not seldom with a falling back on older theoretical concepts of women and gender research. Often corresponding instruction topics orient themselves on the concept of the gender roles and on socialisation-theoretical questions; gender as a social

construction and as a structural category is still under-represented. Gender issues in the area of economic learning are hardly represented; up to now the topic of globalisation has been largely spelled out in most of the instruction materials and schoolbooks while disregarding gender; also the treatment of topics like social security and welfare state or political structures and decision processes make do overall without a gender perspective. This is all the more amazing since the welfare state and employment system as well as other institutions of modern industrial societies rest on the foundation of a hierarchical gender order and actual changes in this area inevitably raise the question of a redesign of the gender contract.

What waits to be done is a gender mainstreaming for the curriculum of the social and civic education, a gendering of the contents, which relates to all topic areas of the curriculum, and takes up the current state of gender research in the reference sciences of social science education. This special issue on "Gender Issues" places its emphasis on the the areas of curriculum and gender research in the social sciences. The first three contributions examine which relevance gender issues have in the curricula of social and civic education and analyse possible causes of the still limited integration of gender issues in syllabi and instruction materials. Three articles demonstrate in the areas of social inequality, globalisation, and time the relevance of gender for the analysis of social, political and economic structures and cultural contexts in connection with the accelerated change of modern societies.

The contribution by Madeleine Arnot demonstrates how specific concepts of citizenship education play their part in the marginalisation of women. She analyses the implicit gender assumptions which form the basis for the liberal as well as the republican understanding of citizenship, illustrated by an initiative for developing new curricula for citizenship education in England and Wales. And she shows how both concepts largely lead to the suppression of questions in social inequality and therefore also to a neglect of gender equality in the English and Welsh civic education curricula. She sees a substantial cause for this neglect of gender issues in a specific concept of citizenship oriented on a male model which is focused on the male-centred public sphere. She develops an alternative concept of citizenship, which includes the affective and private domains and integrates the contradictory developments in the area of family and ways of life and the complex change of gender relations in the curriculum. These are topics of central importance for adolescents and young adults. This enhanced gender-sensitive understanding of civic education could encourage women's participation and agency.

The article by Oechsle/Wetterau takes stock of the implementation of gender issues in the instruction of social science. Proceeding from the question whether gender issues are still relevant in social science education in view of a modernisation of gender relations, the authors discuss the relevance of gender under three aspects: They inquire about the significance of gender-specific prerequisites for learning, analyse the state of curricular implementation of gender topics through exemplary illustrations, and discuss the curricular challenges and innovation potentials in the didactics of the field, which result from integration of gender perspectives.

Katrin Späte takes up the question of considering gender in the development of curricula and queries the influential factors in this process. She perceives a deficit in general in the empirical curriculum research since the 1970s. Within the framework of an online-research concerning implementation of gender topics in syllabi of the "Civic

Education” area, she notices that gender issues are rarely implemented in syllabi for social education; only in a few curricula are gender issues subject-matter in syllabi, and besides that, it seems that this depends on incidental personal constellation. She inquires how curricula are developed, analyses the influence of the actors, and traces the German civic education discourse with regard to gender. Her analyses make it clear that gender mainstreaming represents also an important task in the development of a curriculum.

In her contribution “Social Inequality and Gender”, Eva Cyba looks into a classical topic of sociology – the problem of social disparity. She points out that through feministic research not only the empirical knowledge about social disparity between the genders has become well-differentiated, but her article also makes it clear, that through the perspective of female and gender research, concepts and theories of social inequality have changed. In an overview about empirical facts and tendencies in the area of social disparity between genders and a discussion of traditional approaches concerning the explanation of social inequality, she describes mechanisms of production and reproduction of social disparity between genders, which are suitable for clarifying the change as well as the inertia of gender inequalities in the different areas. Her contribution demonstrates that the problem of social inequality has not been settled with the increasing inclusion of women in education, employment, and the public environment, but has the need of differentiated analyses. The analysis concerning the interaction of different mechanisms of social closure is suitable for developing a series of interesting thematic perspectives for the education in politics as well as instruction in social science.

Brigitte Young analyses the different ways globalization affects women in her article about “Globalization and Shifting Gender Governance Order(s)”. She shows that the theoretical as well as empirical analysis of globalization processes without a gender perspective will be left wanting. Her contribution is based on the thesis that the transformation of specific historic systems of capitalism go hand in hand with the reconfiguration of gender governance orders. Essential elements of this process are the decline of the family wage model, the reconfiguration of the public and the private spheres and the increasing polarisation among women, and the reprivatisation of social reproduction. These changes do not imply only negative consequences for women; they also have the potential of weakening and dissolving local, patriarchal cultures and systems of male domination. Using the examples of the emerging nations in East Asia, she demonstrates the ambivalence of shifting gender governance orders and emphasises the necessity of future research including the gender perspective. Young’s article opens a variety of thematic perspectives regarding social studies and civic education and names possibilities of implementing a gender perspective in the analysis of globalization processes which, up to now, have been explicitly underexposed in the guidelines and teaching materials.

In her contribution about “Gendering Time”, Carmen Leccardi looks through the lens of time and gender at the present crisis of the Fordist regime with its deregulation and flexibilisation of time and employment structures and the erosion of the previous gender contract, based on the gender-specific division of labour. Her article makes it clear that time and gender are cultural constructions as well as forms of experience, each shaped historically and socially – both running the risk of reification. Time and gender are therefore very important categories to understand the process of social construction of social reality, and Leccardi’s analysis shows the potential of a gender

perspective (not only) in this field of research. Analysing the ways in which young women face the transition to adulthood and construct their biography, Leccardi could shed light on problems of work-life planning in a post-Fordism society, more and more also valid for young men. Gendering time as Leccardi does in this contribution offers not only the possibility of taking into account possible differences in the thematic interests of girls and boys, but also shows starting points for bridging the gap between micro- and macro-levels.

Christian Boeser's "Gender Issues and Civic Education" presents a research survey about the state of discussion and research in Germany. The topics of discussions he reports on reach from various didactic concepts like gender orientation as a didactic principle, over the question of gender-specific access to issues in civic education, particularly didactic approaches like subject-centred orientation to empirical research on gender-specific interaction and communication of male and female students in civic education lessons and gender-specific differences in favourite topics and methodological preferences.