



War narratives, trust, lifeworld, participation and post-conflict society: The JSSE open issue 2023

Reinhold Hedtke^a, Jan Löfström^b, Andrea Szukala^c

^aBielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany ^bUniversity of Turku, Turku, Finland ^cUniversity of Augsburg, Augsburg, Germany

In this issue, the JSSE tradition of publishing articles submitted to JSSE Open Calls once a year is continued. It presents seven papers covering a wide range of topics: It spans from war narratives, trust in democracy, experiences of democracy in schools, the relationship between the lifeworld and the academic world, young people's political participation in Portugal and Italy, to teacher training in the Basque Country.

In the article "*Learning peace and citizenship through narratives of war?*", Knut Vesterdal discusses approaches to the topic "war" in citizenship education. Different narratives of war intertwine with different kinds of citizenship notions as the representations of war in those narratives also convey, openly or implicitly, messages about the societal dynamics of war. Vesterdal constructs a typology of what role war can have in the context of citizenship education: it can be studied analytically as a historical, social and political phenomenon; it can be explored normatively from the perspective of peace education and conflict prevention; it can be studied as an ethical problem; it can be studied as part of a nationalist identity narrative where war is at the centre of the nation-building process; and it can be used as a tool for creating enemy images and justifying conflicts. Some of these uses go against the aims of inclusive critical citizenship, as Vesterdal points out. Typologies like this can help to identify which elements in the discourses of war support which kind of citizenship ideals, and thus also help to identify the challenges that teachers in citizenship education face when confronted with the issue of war and armed conflict.

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Corresponding author:

Reinhold Hedtke, Universitätsstr. 25, Postfach 10 01 31, 33501 Bielefeld, Germany.
E-Mail: reinhold.hedtke@uni-bielefeld.de

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Maria Jansson, Patrik Johansson, and Johan Sandahl in the article *“Trust as subject content: Developing students’ reasoning on democracy through displacement”* report on a practice-oriented research project conducted in collaboration with upper-secondary social science teachers from two schools in Sweden. The study analyses and discusses how trust as a subject can facilitate the students’ ability to deal with the tensions between embracing and scrutinising democracy. As the main result of this study, the authors conclude that “inquiry-based teaching about democracy enhances the opportunities for students to deepen their knowledge about democracy while enabling them to critically scrutinise the democratic system.” As it can be inferred from this conclusion, this type of inquiry-based practice-oriented studies are very valuable in terms of improving students’ knowledge and experiences in various contexts and providing rich data for researchers to discuss.

In the article *“Experiences of school democracy connected to the role of the democratic citizen in the future. A comparison of Swedish male and female upper secondary school students”*, Johanna Jormfeldt discusses the parameters of political socialisation of young people with special attention to possible gender differences. The focal point is the question whether and how the experience of school democracy differs between male and female students and whether gender affects the way those experiences give some indication of the student’s future participation in democracy through voting in elections. The data come from a survey of Swedish upper secondary school students that has got new relevance in the context of current discourses on democracy and civic education in schools in Sweden. In her statistical analysis, Jormfeldt is probing the potential of the questionnaire data to give an answer to the afore mentioned question. The results suggest that upper secondary school students’ experiences of school democracy do not affect their attitudes to voting in future general elections. However, even if such influence on the students’ voting intention was not found, students’ views on democracy are related to their experiences with school democracy, which is why it is important to pay attention to the structures and practices of school democracy.

How can the new ways in which young people look at the political be combined with traditional disciplinary perspectives on political issues? Nora Elise Hesby Mathé and Johan Sandahl explore this question in their contribution *“Between the lifeworld and academia: Defining political issues in social science education”*. They study “mutual ways of framing politics” that connect these different settings of relevance. Based on an outline of different theoretical perspectives on the political, they adapt a model from history education to describe the processes that link scientific and lifeworld practices. From interviews with students and researchers in Norway and Sweden, four common patterns for describing politics and its characteristics are identified: political issues as the collective, the conflictual, the present and the context of the public in contrast to the private. The authors argue that these four approaches lend themselves to fruitfully relating the two practices of dealing with the political.

The article entitled as *“Constraints on and facilitators of young people’s participation: The case of border regions of mainland Portugal”* by Sofia Marques da Silva, Nicolas Martins Silva, Sara Arezes, Paulo Sérgio Martins, Sara Faria, Vitor Dias, and Ana Milheiro Silva focuses on youth civic and political participation in Portugal. This mixed design study documented the level of civic engagement of high school students in a border region of Portugal. The qualitative dimension of the study reveals and discusses the constraints on civic and political participation based on young people’s and policy makers’ interview responses. The study has great potential to develop some ideas and take action for improving youth civic participation in Portugal and even other parts of the world.

In the article *“Teenagers’ participation in the public life in Italy: Insights for education from a web survey”*, Stefania Chimenti, Sabina Licursi and Emanuela Pascuzzi explore the forms and methods of participation of Italian adolescents in public life, as experienced within the family, at school, among peers, and in other contexts (e. g. on the Internet). The aim of the article is to identify the interests of adolescents towards collective issues, and to define how they approach public debate in school and

in society. A web survey and focus groups were carried out, studying the students' expectations and hopes to detect influence exerted on young people by school stakeholders (teachers and students) and parents. In terms of social involvement, the majority (56%) of students who are interested in what is going on around them often/always get information from newspapers and/or television. In terms of activism, the researchers point out that young people's active and visible participation is often weak, but there is neither a general lack of interest in society nor complete apathy: one in five young people have been involved in associations, and 42% of the sample take the floor in the school assemblies.

The paper "*Teacher training for social sciences education and a democratic citizenship in post-conflict society: The case of the Basque country*" of Aritza Saenz del Castillo Velasco, Joseba Iñaki Arregi-Orue, Leire Agirreazkuenaga Onaidia and Joseba Jon Longarte Arriola presents their research from the Teacher Training School of the University of Basque Country (UPV-EHU). The study deals with a multi-narrative approach to the recent violent past, as in the Adi-Adian Program, developed by the Basque Government education department, that aimed to introduce the testimonies of all victims of political violence in the classroom to deal with the challenges of internal tensions of the post-conflict society. To assess the effectiveness of the Adi-Adian experience, the authors conducted research in the form group discussions and surveys focusing on student feedback, involving 160 students, male and female between 18–22 years. Considering the results of the post-test, all students recognized the importance of being aware of the suffering of the victims in building a democratic society, which suggests the program Adi-Adian could be considered successful.

The international research team from Norway, Belgium and Italy – Nanna Paaske, Siri Mohammad-Roe, Wouter Smets, Ama Amitai, Noami Alexia Randazzo and Lihong Huang – discuss the question of assessing student's democratic citizenship in the article, "*Challenges for European teachers when assessing student learning to promote democratic citizenship competences*". They draw attention to a dilemma that teachers in many countries are likely to face when looking for a way to support their students' democratic citizenship skills, values and attitudes. Democratic citizenship competences can reasonably well be approached in formative assessment in school, but the trend in educational politics in many countries emphasises summative assessment and also students' parents often wish to see summative assessment results. In their article Nanna Paaske et al. show, on the basis of their interview study among lower secondary school teachers in eight European countries, that when it comes to assessing students' democratic citizenship competences, teachers find themselves often using summative assessment methods. These are not optimal for capturing democratic citizenship competences because these competences are difficult to operationalise, for summative assessment purposes in particular. The authors of the article suggest that teachers are offered more knowledge about formative assessment and more practice in its implementation so that they do not fall into using summative assessment when formative assessment would be more appropriate.