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(Hidden) Normativity in Social Science Education and History Education

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Normativity, Social science education, History education, Citizenship education, Citizenship learning

1 Introduction

Hidden and unhidden normativity in Social science education and History education are being intensively researched and criticized in both educational scientific and media discourses (Gatto 2002). In addition, they are extensively discussed in teacher education and concealed or explicated in education policies and curricula for these school subjects. These discussions are further, to more or less extent, related to civic and citizenship education, as well as to political discourses more generally (e.g. Papastephanou, 2007; Hedtke, Zimenkova & Hippe, 2008 in previous issues of JSSE).

Not only do political actors at macro level try to provide for citizen formation with help of Social science education and History education. A multitude of other actors at regional and local level – be it non-governmental, religious or economic actors, or parents – bring their own agendas and normative stances into the school subjects of Social science education and History Education. The term “hidden curricula” and the idea of (hidden) normativity are further associated with national and supra national policy agendas and grand cultural narratives. However, local and regional specifics that are intimately connected to the normatively laden conceptions of citizenship education and learning inside and outside of school, we argue, can and should be provided increased attention in research. In this special issue, two school subjects are highlighted: Social science education and History education.

The very idea of normativity of Social science education and History education is being evaluated quite differently in different national educational settings and subject didactic traditions. It encompasses the whole range from being considered as allowable and wishful in order to reach some central moral, political or other normative goals of society to absolute ban and resolute absence of any substantive or normative qualification of social science and history

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teachers as professionals (for the German discussion, cf. Besand et al., 2011).

This special issue of the JSSE, entitled (Hidden) Normativity in Social Science Education and History Education brings together empirical, methodological and theoretical contributions that in one way or the other elaborate on normativity in Social science education and History education. Central questions addressed in the call are: How is normativity visible and formed within Social science education and History education? How can these processes be approached empirically? Is there something wrong with normativity, and if so why? Which role does normativity play for social science teachers and history teachers in their profession? The authors in this issue have created vital responses to these questions, suggesting new comparative methodologies and opening up innovative areas of empirical research in more or less theoretical framings. The following specific approaches to research on normativity in Social science education and History education are embraced by the authors:

- Normativity is stressed as a phenomenon indisputably related to Social science education and History education. But the modes of normativity, its explicitness, direction, strength and actors alter. Education policy and practice are deeply entwined, and processes of normative change come to the fore in critical and constructive investigations of central concepts in these school subjects, at different school levels and over time. Out of different theoretical and methodological approaches, the authors demonstrate convincingly the necessity to consider different sources of empirical material in order not only to map and describe different facets of normativity in Social science education and History education. But also to make a case for the complexity involved in the intermingling of hidden and unhidden normativity in the everyday practice of teaching and learning of these school subjects.

- Focusing different forms of knowledge and conceptual uses in policy and practice in Social science education and History education (at mainly upper secondary level) allow for approaching normativity not only as a matter of detecting where it is situated in these school subjects and why this is so. It also contributes to the development of relevant subject specific methodological frameworks that may be considered key for the development of this field of research.

- Sociological and other educational theories and methods deriving from social sciences are being used innovatively by the authors. In doing so, we argue, they open up for a widening of the scope as



regards the meaning and importance of theoretically underpinned comparative approaches to the research field of subject didactics.

- By stressing critical concepts and conceptual uses in Social science education and History education, the intimate connection between these subjects and their assigned task to see to citizenship learning and social formation emerges.

2 In this special issue

Göran Morén and Sara Irisdotter Aldenmyr describe in their article *The Struggling Concept of Social Issues in Social Studies* the shifting meanings within Social studies at upper secondary school over time. With help of critical discourse analysis they provide a broadened view of the relationship between conceptual change and the direction of normativity in policy and teaching practice in Social science education (see also *Sandahl*, and for History education *Potapova* in this issue). The authors discuss the how's, what's and why's of Social science education, while bringing together the changes of syllabi and teaching conceptions in the subject. Taking point of departure in the concept of social issues as a critical concept, their article contributes to the development of comparative approaches in the field in two ways; by focusing on (hidden) normativity in this subject over time, and by providing knowledge about subject specific meaning making in the Swedish situation (Anderson-Levitt 2003). Taken together, *Morén and Irisdotter Aldenmyr*, as well as *Sandahl and Potapova*, demonstrate how attention to concepts is suitable for pointing out the shifting character of the why's, what's and how's of Social science education and History education, and the inherent shifts of normativity related to these shifts.

Another way of centring on normativity in Social science education is demonstrated in the article *Social science teachers on citizenship education: a comparative study of two post-communist countries*, by **Margarita Jeliaskova**. In using the examples of Bulgaria and Croatia, Social science teachers in upper secondary schools' self-perceptions and understandings of their professional role as citizenship teachers are investigated. While demonstrating that the positions of these teachers never overlap directly with official positions and ideal types, the production of normativity in the teachers' descriptions feeds into the need for deepened insights into this group of actors in Social science education. Based on relevant literature and pilot research, *Jeliaskova* applies a group-grid theory framework on attitudes and self-perceptions of teachers, studied with help of Q-methodology. Out of this study, she does not only provide intriguing empirical material to the field. She also contributes to creating a methodological approach capable of identifying differences and commonalities in social science teaching traditions, as is interlinkage to citizenship education. The work of hers thus proposes a concrete and applicable metho-

dological base for comparative research in Social science education in and beyond nation state borders.

Jeliaskova addresses the on going discussion about what is being taught and how in Social science education. In doing so, she illustrates how the self-perception of the teacher is a crucial precondition for their choice of second-order concepts to use in the subject teaching (see also *Sandahl*). In addition, she demonstrates in what way the notion of relevancy of teaching facts (or competences etc.) in this school subject is being actualised in the teacher's didactical approach. The method suggested allows for both mapping of individual self-positioning of the teacher and of simultaneous organisation of the research results along an axis of basic attitudes and beliefs in politics and society in general. In doing this, it is highlighted how national curricula undergo reformulation in Social science education in relation to the teacher's individual self-perception as a subject teacher. Further, the article contributes to making visible that social science teachers make choices in a pre-assumed dichotomisation between knowledge and attitudes in subject specific content and teaching aims. These choices have bearing for the direction taking in citizenship and political learning in the classroom, which brings us over to the text article in the issue.

Johan Sandahl addresses in his article *Preparing for Citizenship: Second Order Thinking Concepts in Social Science Education* two aspects as relation the function of Social science education. On the one hand, as in *Jeliaskova*, social science teachers of upper secondary school emerge as actors (producing the normativities, reformulating the curricula, and bringing their individual understandings into the teaching process). On the other hand, light is shed on the specific second order thinking concepts they use in their teaching practice. In raising these two aspects, the article contributes in a constructive way to an empirically based reconstruction of second order thinking concepts in Social science education, but also as regards the systematisation of these concepts. We gain insight in how processes of social science teaching works, and which competences and capacities teachers reflect on as being the most important ones for social science teaching. The outcomes are related to the subject didactic task of providing for citizenship learning beyond factual knowledge. The article contributes to highlighting how empirically based contributions serve the aim of revealing and elaborating questions of knowledge and/ vs. competences as goal settings in Social science education in relation to this task. The analyses by *Sandahl and Jeliaskova* not only open up for possibilities of international comparative research. They may also be used in implementation research and in teacher training, in order to strengthen reflection on teaching and learning (second order) concepts in Social science education, and in relation to the subject's role as a subject for citizenship-learning.



In her article *Paradoxes of Normativity in Russian History Education*, **Natalia Potapova** takes a similar approach as *Sandahl* and *Jeliazkova* on History education. She undertakes an investigation of hidden and unhidden normativity in Russian history textbooks, asking herself how far normativity can be considered as hidden and from what and whom is it hidden. Different rationalities and shifts in history teaching over time are described to the end of elaborating the depiction of history teaching as patriotic education and its development. As in *Morén and Irisdotter Aldenmyr*, and *Jeliazkova* the shifts and instabilities of normativity in History education become visible. Addressing a strong patriotic component in History education, Potapova demonstrates how critical thinking about society and social issues are neglected in this school subject. She also highlights how the subject teaching is used as a legitimization of current political order through a focus on learning for patriotism. In her analysis she asks how second order concepts become suitable for establishing patriotic pride and loyalties through History education, thus opening the discussion on normativity or neutrality of the second order concepts as 'bearers' of different, changing normativities over time, involving different "hidden" curricula (see also *Morén and Irisdotter Aldenmyr*) (Koselleck, 2004). Elaborating on very specific understandings of History education and teaching as a school subject and as a space for evaluation of the political present, *Potapova* makes visible how unhidden normativity (which, in its turn can become *hidden* for the teachers and learners themselves if the absence of critical reflection brings about blindness towards normativity) is constructed in history teaching.

Taken together, the contributions in this special issue stress the imperishable relationship between normativity and subject didactics in general, and in Social science education and History education in particular. Taking on the articles' topics, this relationship might be formulated in another way, namely as a normative 'pressure' coming from society itself, with its alleged politically driven desire to provide for a sustainable development of society at the present and in the future. Social science education and History education can be considered as school subjects that stand in the midst of this concern (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Out of this framing, we wish to meet up with two questions stemming from the research field of citizenship education and learning: "what kind of citizens are intended [in these school subjects, *guest editors' comment*]?" And "what are the conditions for civic existence and action taking involved in these conscious and unconscious intentions"? (Hedtke & Zimenkova, 2012; Olson 2012a, 2012b; Nicoll et al., 2013). These questions were not explicitly presented in the open call for papers for this issue, nor did the editors communicate it to the selected authors later on in the process. Nonetheless, we find them to be central for the development of the

subject didactic research field in which the role and function of schools subjects in school and society are at the fore of the interest.

3 Miscellanea, reacting to the open call

Christopher Schank and Alexander Lorch emphasise in their article *Economic Citizenship and Socio-Economic Rationality as Foundation of an Appropriate Economic Education* the importance of considering business ethics as a vibrant part of Economic education, and further citizenship education. Highlighting the role of business ethics in a qualified and well-argued manner they point to the fact that economy to higher extent should be seen as part of society and its related value- and decision-making. Framing the argument with help of theoretical arguments inspired by Habermas, they make a case for a non-atomistic view of the individual in economic education in order to provide for important moral insights from economics to citizenship education in school. **Robert Joseph McKee** also focuses on moral aspects in school. In the article *Encouraging Classroom Discussion* he claims that teachers should be more active in promoting student participation in classroom discussions. Linking the argument to an initiated presentation of a previously carried out qualitative study, he claims student participation to be of utmost value in the teaching and learning of democracy and citizenship in school. In addition, *McKee* offers concrete ways of heading for such promotion for the teachers. Like *McKee*, the last article in this issue, *The Value Preference of the Parents in Turkey towards Their Children*, also shed light on the role and function of 'lived' values, but from the home situation. Through a thorough qualitative study **Zafer Kus, Zihni Meray and Kadir Karatekin** map and analyse the value orientation among Turkish parents as regards the value formation they consider to be most important to pass on to their children. They found honesty and family unity to be the strongest values, which responds to historically established notions belonging to the history of Turkey. Such analyses are of utmost importance for the on going development and refinement of citizenship learning inside and outside of school. Taken together, these three additional articles responding to the open call of this issue (*Hidden*) *Normativity in Social Science Education and History Education*, bring vital aspects of normativity into the centre of this issue in at least two ways. First, they stress the need to see to the relationship between Social science education and History education other school subjects in school. Secondly, they bring in practice-related and informal learning aspects into the discussion of the hidden and unhidden normativity in school as a historically established institution for the reproduction and renewal of society itself.



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