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Editorial: New Citizens for Globalised Societies? Citizenship Education from a Comparative Perspective

Comparative studies on civic and citizenship education have already a solid tradition. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) conducted its first study of civic education covering 10 countries in 1971. However, cross national education studies flourished only in turn of the Millennium when the number of studies and countries involved increased remarkably. The last IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) in 2009 had already 38 participating countries, among them 12 non-European countries and 16 emerging democracies.

Citizenship education has always been at the core of mass schooling in modern nation-states since the 18th century (Boli 1989). As nation states try to adapt to increasing economic, political and social interdependence, former approaches to citizenship education are called to meet the challenges of globalisation. The ICCS survey offers the opportunity to answer some pressing issues related to questions of social integration, equity and viability of democracies. What are the national approaches to education? How do schools combine educating knowledge, attitudes and values? Can schools reduce the impact of socio-economic and cultural disadvantages? Are the best educational practices transferrable to other countries? This is only a very short list of common issues in all international educational surveys. Besides these commonalities there are some special reasons why comparative studies on citizenship education gain importance today. Firstly, democracy and democratic governance itself are changing. The quality of governance is shifting and the effect of political institutions on the overall performance of contemporary democracies is faltering (Dalton 2004). Political representation – the linkage between citizens' demands and political decisions – is becoming problematic in globalised markets and multilevel political settings (Mair et al. 2009). This is thought to have led to problems of political participation. Citizens tend to be more critical and even to distrust democratic institutions (Milner 2010). Political engagement tends to diversify and citizens tend to adopt new modes of becoming informed about politics (Norris 2000). As political science literature reveals, established and emerging democracies react differently to these changes (Norris 2004; van Deth et al. 2007). The study of the mechanisms affecting civic trust and engagement can shed light on the working of democracy and provide a piece of the jigsaw in understanding the linkage between citizens and the government in globalised societies. Secondly, societies have become more dynamic and open. This implies that virtually all developed countries today are multicultural with a notable share of immigrant population. High migration combined with the economic

recession increase population disparities even further, which may spill over on civic engagement patterns. These fundamental changes in society and democracy also pose higher expectations on citizenship education. Schools are still expected to prepare young people to undertake their roles as citizens in a diverse and mobile world. The IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study provides a primary outlook to what extent countries have succeeded in this effort (Schulz et al. 2010). However, in order to have a real impact on learning practices and education policy, a more in-depth look is needed. This special issue of JSSE seeks to put large-scale survey data into specific national and local contexts. By choosing such an approach we want to stress that the key feature of citizenship education in the era of globalisation is not unification of learning practices but their growing interdependence. Although the common core of citizenship education around the globe is visible, the effect of global tendencies remains context specific. Furthermore, one of the key lessons of past research on political socialisation is that there seems not to be a “one best way” to educate youngsters into citizens. Every context forms a combination of different conditions that influence simultaneously schools, societies and outcomes. Also, most concepts related to citizenship are multifaceted and students as young citizens hold multiple identities. As such, more sophisticated theoretical models are needed in order to better understand what makes citizenship education work better. Our ambition is to discuss new perspectives as well as limitations of large-scale studies of civic and citizenship education. Such a discussion is made possible by accumulation of relevant datasets and several initiatives on comparative research in the field.

The articles in this issue cover a wide geography of countries ranging from established democracies such as the US and Western European countries to Slovenia and Hong Kong which have experienced fundamental regime change quite recently. Despite the different focus, all articles clearly underscore the central role that democratic attitudes play in contemporary citizenship education. Most articles are based on the IEA ICCS 2009 data, however, several of them (Kennedy, Huang, Chow; Barber, Torney-Purta) employ also data of the previous IEA CIVED 1999 study in order to examine changes over the time or expand the discussion base by introducing other databases (Wilkenfeld, Torney-Purta; Neubauer). The current methodological sophistication enables researchers to combine data from various sources to assess the impact of different conditions on aspects of citizenship education.

The first two articles try to assess the impact of contextual or aggregate variables on attitudes of young people, over and above the effect of individual level variables. The next two articles try to evaluate the methodological possibilities of studying attitudes over time in cross-national research. Finally, the last article tries to review a number of cross-national studies on a content based level.

The opening article by Isac, Maslowski and Van der Werf examines determinants of native students' attitudes towards immigrants in 18 European countries by focusing on the effect of immigrant share in the classroom. By using multilevel modelling the authors reveal that there is a small positive effect of immigrant share on attitudes towards immigrants of natives in most countries, which gives some evidence for the contact

hypothesis. However, some countries significantly differ from this overall pattern. These findings demonstrate how influential contextual factors can be and thus “one cannot take for granted that the opportunity for contact in classroom setting is enough to foster positive attitudes towards immigrants.”

While also focusing on the role of schools and neighbourhood contexts, the second article takes us to the US case. Wilkenfeld and Torney-Purta study how family, peers, schools and neighbourhood contexts are related to the civic empowerment gap. The authors found that a positive democratic environment in schools is more beneficial for students in poor neighbourhoods than in rich neighbourhoods. Less advantaged students experience more benefits from democratic and civic learning opportunities than more privileged students. Authors also stress that features of the contexts are at least partly responsible for the civic empowerment gap. The practical significance of this finding can't be underestimated – societies should consider different approaches to the citizenship education depending on varieties of community characteristics.

The third article is devoted to political trust. What makes this study interesting is that Kennedy, Huang and Chow investigate patterns in trust in a transition period in which Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty. In the course of regime change some institutions were more strongly endorsed by adolescents in 2009 than in 1999 (the courts and the United Nations), while others registered declining support (district councils and political parties). Also, they found that levels of trust towards particular institutions have a different impact on civic engagement. Trust in socio-legal institutions goes in pair with a higher willingness to vote, but inhibits other forms of political action. The direction taken by Hong Kong might indicate a shift towards a more “conservative” realisation of civic participation. The authors however warn us for an indiscriminate use of institutional trust. By using confirmatory factor analysis they come to the conclusion that political trust is a multidimensional construct in the context of Hong Kong.

The article by Barber and Torney-Purta continues the methodological issue raised by Kennedy Huang and Chow about possibilities and pitfalls in using the IEA CIVED and ICCS in comparative research. They note that despite visible similarities between the two surveys, they have been constructed as independent studies and therefore special care must be taken when comparing the two datasets. Barber and Torney-Purta illustrate how this can be done with the example of attitudes towards immigrants and political trust in five Nordic countries and point to the limits in interpreting the results.

The final article takes a critical look at various international initiatives on citizenship education research conducted in 2001-2010. Based on an extensive literature review, Neubauer argues that the conceptualization of citizenship has a significant effect on citizenship education research and educational practices. The dominant approach in both research and practice has been the narrow/liberal understanding of citizenship, which – according to the author – does not correspond to contemporary democracy. Looking for a “one best way” seems to reduce the diversity of contemporary societies at absurdum. Although the liberal concept has been modestly

revised and the “good citizen” is becoming replaced by the “active” or “critical citizen” it does not solve the crucial issue – the lack of research on global and multilayered forms of citizenship.

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