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Editorial

The role of education in promoting civic knowledge, dispositions and skills has been at the centre of the educational debate in Europe and beyond since the late 20th century. As citizens show growing signs of political disaffection –resulting, to name just a few, in disengagement, distancing from politics, or choosing unconventional ways of protesting – and democracies are said to be experiencing a crisis, education is once again viewed as a device for reinvigorating politics and citizenship. But the "crisis" of democracy is not new and has multiple meanings. To begin with, this "crisis" is shared both by traditional and emerging democracies, as political skepticism seems to affect citizens independently of the historical institution of democracy; data from the European Social Survey (ESS), for instance, reveal that levels of political interest and trust in political institutions tend to be low across European countries. On the other hand, and as in the late sixties, citizens' engagement and participation is experiencing "an acute crisis (...) [because] new people want to participate, in relation to new issues, and in new ways" (Verba 1967, 54) – meaning that while traditional forms of political and civic engagement and participation seem to be in recession, other contexts and types of civic engagement and participation are certainly expanding (Barnes, Kaase 1979; Norris 1999).

How is education dealing with this "crisis"? Is civic and citizenship education actively confronting these problems and assuming a critical and political perspective, or are these conflicting topics disregarded? Are children and young people recognized as political actors that should have a say (here and now, irrespectively of their age) in current debates or merely viewed as future "political spectators who vote", who are to be prepared for fulfilling their duties after becoming "full" citizens? Does a common, European approach of critical education request an abstraction from the differences of European democracies and their different shortcomings? Are there any relevant differences between "old" and "new" democracies left at all? And if, how do they affect political thinking and acting, teaching and learning? Do historical experience and consciousness influence critical education and political discourse in the classroom?

This volume of the Journal of Social Science Education (JSSE), *"Critical Civic and Citizenship Education: Is there Anything Political about it?"*, aims at contributing to this discussion. The authors depart from a reflection on national experiences in six European countries (Portugal, Bulgaria, Turkey, Switzerland, Germany, Finland) to consider the tensions between educational rhetoric and actual practices, historical narratives and

citizenship goals, identities and diversity, and globalization opportunities and social exclusion. In all cases, the lack (and the need) for a critical political perspective is emphasized, at the risk of turning citizenship education into a disempowering experience with no actual relationship with "real" daily life in- and out-of-school.

In *"Unpolite Citizenship: The Non-Place of Conflict in Political Education"*, Hugo Monteiro and Pedro Ferreira address the "contradictory realities that value citizenship at the same time undermine politics", by discussing what they designate as "the non-place of conflict in school practices and discourses". Hugo and Pedro assume that citizenship and political education in schools risk to be cursed by the school's "Midas touch" as "everything that the school touches becomes school-like" – thus implying that school-based citizenship education is hardly emancipatory and empowering. In line with Derrida and Rancière, the authors claim that conflict and dissensus are at the core of democracy and that educational practices and policies should be repoliticized.

"How come a generation which had not been exposed to the influence of civic education performed better in civic competences as compared with their followers a decade later?" is the basic question, intriguing educational researchers and put forward by Georg Dimitrov's research in Bulgaria, *"State-Orchestrated Civic Education versus Civic Competencies of School Students: Some Conceptual Implications from a National Case Study."* Using the data from the most recent IEA study in citizenship education, the ICCS, the paper questions whether the apparent decline in Bulgarian pupils' civic knowledge and competencies is related to the teaching of civics and the democratic ethos of the schools. The author argues that traditional school teaching and organization negatively interferes with the goals of promoting active and critical citizens –illustrating how the analysis of the impact of citizenship education should take into account the larger historical, cultural and political pictures.

In an analysis of citizenship education in Turkey, *"Turkey's New Citizenship and Democracy Education Course: Search for Democratic Citizenship in a Difference-Blind Polity?"*, Kenan Çayir considers the recent introduction of a "citizenship and democratic education" course in grade 8 and discusses both its potentials and frailties, underlying that "unless human rights are addressed in the context of national and international politics and, in terms of the rights and the responsibilities of the citizen, human rights education courses might improve a country's image, but they would not necessarily provide the basis for democratic citizenship" In fact, Kenan argues, in line

with Seyla Benhabib, that not acknowledging the tension between (particularistic) citizenship rights and (universalistic) human rights can result in a disempowering experience for young citizens, with no relationship to their real life experiences outside the classroom – a topic especially relevant for citizenship education practice in migration and multinational societies. The same could be said on the importance of the recognition of identity(ies) and difference(s) in the context of a multicultural society such as Turkey – and surely, this discussion and the claim for "a new pluralist imaginary" is relevant all across Europe.

Nathalie Muller Mirza discusses the results of a qualitative research that addresses cultural diversity in the school, *"Civic Education and Intercultural Issues in Switzerland: Psychosocial Dimensions of an Education to 'Otherness'"*. By assuming the challenges of intercultural education at school, namely the tension between promoting autonomous and critical citizenship and *"la forme scolaire"*, Nathalie confronts the problems of assimilationist pedagogical conceptions for immigrans, particularly at it views "difference in terms of 'deficit'". But she also highlights the challenges of more recent European perspectives on intercultural education in a qualitative study in primary and secondary schools in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The study considers actual classroom practices, teacher perspectives and intentions and students opinions, and pinpoints the dificulties of implementing intercultural education in schools that remain "largely individual-oriented, monocultural and monolingual".

The paper by Jukka Rantalla, *"The Reflection of a Warlike Historical Culture in the Attitudes of Finnish Youths",* concentrates on the historical experience and consciousness in Finland, and reflects upon the way it is disseminated in families, schools and popular media (e.g., videogames). The interesting point of this paper is that it reminds us how citizenship development occurs in multiple contexts, and narratives about "national identity" circulate in diverse ways – as it analyses how a "a warlike historical culture" continues to be the prevalent heritage, especially for boys. Confronting the persistence of the issue of "national identity" in the context of an "old" democracy is essential for renewing the reflection on positioning national identities within citizenship education in all European countries, instead of considering it per se as a phenomenon of developing democracies. The paper raises several questions regarding the relationship between this glorification of war and the phenomena of violence in Finland, and expresses a particular concern with the lack of a critical appraisal of this tradition.

In *"The Political Dimension of Global Education: Global Governance and Democracy"*, Bettina Lösch discusses the implications of globalisation for a political education, departing from the analysis of pedagogi-
cal approaches for global education and education for sustainable development in Germany. Following Nicola Humpert, Bettina emphasizes the tendency for an "apolitical" global learning, that does not critically evaluate the global agenda and politics, recognizing not only the novel participation opportunities, but also "the exclusion mechanism of democracy and politics" that are accentuated by globalisation – and gives various examples of contemporary tendencies that menace the quality of democracy and should, therefore, be acknowledged in political education.

In his detailed review on Brigitte Geissel's book *"Kritische Bürger. Gefahr oder Ressource für die Demokratie?" ("Critical Citizens: Risk or Resource for a Democracy?")*, Dominik Allenspach discusses Geissel's attempt "to untangle the two concepts of political support and political critique" Her conception of "political attentiveness" seems to be rather promising also in the context of citizenship and civic education. Dominik discusses from the point of view of democratic theory the sufficiency of Brigitte Geisel's argument of the necessity to introduce the category of "political attentiveness" in order to explain the state-citizen relation.

Finally, under the rubric of a praxis report in this JSSE volume we suggest a report on *"Citizenship Education and Curriculum Development in Nigeria"* by Oyeleke Oluniyi. Oyeleke demonstrates the paths of development of citizenship Education in Nigeria between historical dependencies, national identities, multiculturalism and modern societal developments, while attempting to answer the question, what are the main specifics, tasks, challenges, declared and de facto occurring developments, processes and goals within the citizenship education in Nigeria. Providing the view on citizenship education specifics in Nigeria, the praxis report shows similarities of citizenship education developments and challenges in different world regions and thus offers new platform for reflection on the citizenship education developments.

This collection of papers does live to our expectations of a volume that would critically consider the role and challenges of citizenship education in Europe (and beyond). We thank the authors, the reviewers, the editors of the JSSE and the editorial office for their support during the making of this volume.

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