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Symbols of Citizenship Education in Schools: A Pictorial Analysis

This gallery is designed to simulate a walk through a school building regarding symbols, moments and rituals of formal and informal citizenship education as it might appear to a pupil/student/teacher during the course of a normal school day.

The five contributions from Japan, Poland, Luxemburg/Germany¹, Germany and Denmark document examples from the actual citizenship studies curriculum.

A contribution from Turkey had to be halted owing to a failure to obtain permission for the project from the Ministry of Education.

The following elements (motifs) were to be included in all of the examples to facilitate comparability:

1 The school entrance

(open/closed; name of the school; security facilities ...)

2 The school grounds/courtyards

(with symbols and signs of belonging)

3 The entrance foyer

as often displaying a mission statement, flag or other forms of identification and affiliation

4 Corridors to the classrooms, including wall decorations

(official artefacts, student work ...)

5 The interior of a Civics or Social Studies classroom

a) The front of a classroom with the teacher's desk (if there is one), and black or white board, including wall decorations around it

b) Civics or Social Studies lesson of, students engaging in individual or group work or indicating a desire to speak in a plenary setting, seating arrangements, examples of the clothes students might wear including school uniforms.

c) Wall decoration in the classroom (poster with classroom rules, examples from student work, ...)

6 A "typical" page from a civics textbook

7 An assembly hall, probably during a particular school event

(associated in some way with CE)

8 An entrance to a teachers'/staff room

(open to everybody/closed)

9 School events related to Citizenship Education ("Independence Day" or substitute)

10 The school's homepage: the presentation of the school to the wider public

(with reference perhaps to how the school got its name or to other facets of its history)

The various elements are presented below in two ways:

First in a "vertical" gallery arranged randomly by school and secondly in a "horizontal" gallery according to theme with commentaries omitted in the latter.

All photographs were taken by the authors; in one case (Denmark), the team employed a professional photographer.

The inclusion of students and staff in the photographs was not specified in advance. In the Japanese collection, students and staff are included in most pictures.

Two of the schools (Deutsch-Luxemburgisches Schengen-Lyzeum Perl; Stadtteilschule Am Hafen, Hamburg) have an explicit "European" profile. The Danish educational site is an example of a university campus and does not contain all of the motifs. With the exception of the Japanese gallery, the individual contributions focus on one location only. Furthermore, bilingual commentaries are available in the case of the Japanese contribution in order to facilitate analysis of the translation.

Additional motifs for own attempts might for example be:

- A student assembly room or student assembly in progress
- Links with the outside world: for example a student project or service learning in the local community or other form of contact with the general public
- Power and access: For example access to different forms of digital tools; students with or without iphones during breaks/school site online or off-line

For use in academic seminars, the photographs can be printed in colour and sorted into groups, commenting on the nature of the classifications afterwards. Interpretation in seminars could focus on explicit or informal symbols, rituals, gestures and performative elements (Bergstedt, Herbert, Kraus, Wulf 2012, Wulf 2012).



Which similarities and which differences do we observe? Do the explicit and implicit codes of the photographs represent specific regional or national cultures or a kind of international “world” CE-classroom? Issues around the arrangement of signs and symbols of affiliation at different levels could be discussed including the local level (the school’s mission statement or the school name), the regional level, the level of the state, the European level and finally in a more global sense (for example references to human rights).

The following references give a flavour of existing research in the field: Ito 2011, Schiffauer et.al. 2002, Su 2010, Journal of Tacit Pedagogical Knowledge

This material is intended to stimulate comparative research. JSSE would like to publish research on this material or on additional aspects including for example national holidays and their relationship with citizenship (Sauer 2012).

References:

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Wulf, Christoph. 2012. Mimesis in Rituals. A Case Study on the Mechanisms and Effects of Implicit Knowledge. In: Bergstedt et. al. 2012, 15-26.

Endnote:

¹ The „Deutsch-Luxemburgisches Schengen-Lyzeum Perl/German-Luxembourgish Schengen Lyceum Perl“ (official school name) is situated in the town of Perl in the federal state of Saarland, Germany. Provider of the school are Germany and Luxembourg. “Schengen” is a small village in Luxembourg, where in 1985 the Schengen agreement was signed.

