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Reinhold Hedtke,
Jan Löffström,
Andrea Szukala

Editorial

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

^aBielefeld University, Bielefeld, Germany; ^bUniversity of Turku, Turku, Finland;
^cAugsburg University, Augsburg, Germany

In this issue of the JSSE, the first three articles are dedicated to quite related topics and problems. They address political diversity, homogeneity and open discussion in the classroom, examine the handling of debate seeking and conflict avoidance and the focus on disagreement in the classroom as well as the strengthening of dialogical encounters through theatre in order to counteract social polarisation. Two further articles focus on other aspects. One examines an international comparison of intellectually demanding activities in social studies lessons, while the other explores the effect of participatory settings on environmental awareness and engagement. The reader can also look forward to a comparative review on democracy education and a systematic literature review on student participation.

In her article *Open classroom in a closed society: Effects of patriotism and ideological diversity in the Russian school*, Evgenia Efimova discusses the complex dynamics between the experience of open classroom climate, ideological diversity/homogeneity in the classroom, and the level of civic knowledge. Using data from the International Civic and Citizenship Studies ICCS surveys in 2009 and 2016, focusing mainly but not only on the case of Russia, Efimova shows that there is no straightforward connection between perceptions of open classroom climate and there being a wide scope of ideological view in the classroom or the students being knowledgeable in civic matters.


Corresponding author:

Reinhold Hedtke, Bielefeld University, Universitätsstr. 23. 33501 Bielefeld, reinhold.hedtke@uni-bielefeld.de

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It varies between countries, and there are specific national circumstances, like in Russia the state-led strong emphasis on nationalist ideology (usually called patriotism in Russia) that must be considered in hypotheses about interconnections between the afore mentioned aspects. Conflicts can support development of students' qualified deliberation in the classroom but how they support or coexist with experiences of open classroom climate may vary. Openness of the discussions also does not necessarily entail that they are intellectually stringent and support the student's autonomy and subjectivity; discussions may still work in a unifying direction – never mind that they are felt being open. As the author points out Russia is not unique among the countries in the ICCS studies, but it presents an intriguing case. Reflecting on the picture that emerges in the analysis by Evgenia Efimova, one can relate the findings of her study to the current bleak reality of Russian politics and society and outline some of the obstacles there are to building a more positive future for democratic citizenship in Russia.

Kjersti E. Dahl analyses how youth engage in politically conflict-laden situations and on which factors this depends. In *Becoming a disagreeable citizen – disagreement orientation and citizenship education. A multilevel analysis of Norwegian adolescents' disagreement orientation*, she explores debate seeking and conflict avoidance which are seen as key dimensions of disagreement orientation. With a multilevel modelling approach it is analysed, how citizenship education influences young people's orientation toward disagreement. Based on her research findings, Dahl develops an empirically supported typology of disagreement orientation with the four types of non-participants, debaters, avoiders and situational participants. It turns out that the two dimensions of disagreement orientation—debate seeking and conflict avoidance—are influenced by different factors. While the first is more dependent on individual variables like political interest, engagement and participation, the second is more influenced by the type of citizenship education the young people have experienced. Therefore, allowing disagreement should be learnt as an element of citizenship education in teacher training.

The article *Towards public social pedagogy: Participatory theatrical events as pedagogical encounters*, authored by Sanna Rynänen delves into the pedagogical utility of participatory theatre in fostering dialogue on social and political issues. Through a series of ethnographically researched participatory theatrical events in Finland, the study explores how these temporary spaces for dialogue can serve as a counterbalance to societal polarization, nurturing dialogic competencies and communal discussion. The research draws upon Gert Biesta's taxonomy of public pedagogy, aiming to contribute to the discourse on citizenship education within the public sphere. It highlights participatory theatre's potential in creating dialogical encounters that not only facilitate understanding of complex social issues like ethnic relations and racism but also promote a form of public social pedagogy. This approach, characterized by its emphasis on the pedagogical processes related to the public sphere, not only offers innovative insights into the development of new citizenship education forms. The findings also underscore the importance of fostering

pedagogical spaces that encourage engagement with and reflection on societal issues, thereby facilitating a more inclusive and deliberative public sphere.

Peter Nicolai Aashamar, Kirsti Klette and Anders Stig Christensen investigated *Teaching higher-order thinking in social studies: The role of content coverage and intellectual challenge*. Their paper presents the results of the analysis of videotaped classroom observations in social studies of three Nordic countries including a cross-national comparison. The study focussed on two research questions concerning the extent of lessons focussed on content explanation and intellectually demanding activities and their impact on providing chances for higher-order thinking. The authors developed a typology of constellations of intellectual challenge with conceptual richness of instructional explanations to understand how teachers integrate these two elements within lessons. They illustrate their findings by describing exemplary teaching units in the subject of social studies and identify different teaching patterns and discuss possible connections between different emphases in the national curricula and the identified teaching styles.

The article *The Healthy Waters science-based educational intervention program*, authored by Joel Bruno da Silva, Diogo Silva, Marta Oliveira Barbosa and Mariana Rodrigues, explores the efficacy of a science-based educational intervention in fostering environmental citizenship among students through participatory methodologies. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research assesses environmental citizenship dimensions, revealing significant improvements in environmental efficacy among the intervention group. Despite the study's limitations, such as the small sample size, findings underscore the importance of incorporating participatory and collaborative learning strategies within educational settings to enhance students' environmental awareness and engagement. This research contributes to the field by demonstrating the potential of educational interventions in promoting environmental citizenship, suggesting a paradigm shift towards more interactive and participatory approaches in environmental education.

The two *literature reports* in this issue deserve special attention. *Tilman Grammes* presents a differentiated comparative review of a German and an international handbook on democracy education. In his conclusions for future research, he calls for more attention to be paid to topics such as political socialisation, decision making, social learning, subject matter didactics and the intersection of general didactics and curriculum studies.

Inês Sousa and *Elisabete Ferreira* provide a systematic literature review of students' participation in democratic school management which includes publications from 15 countries. They systematise the types of participation experiences and show that student councils are the dominant form. The study concludes that democratic participation in decision-making in schools is still in its infancy.