Editorial

Change in citizenship and social science education in (post)war time

Violetta Kopińska[a], Mehmet Açıkalın[b]

[a]Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland, [b]Istanbul University - Cerrahpaşa, Istanbul, Turkey

According to the Global Conflict Tracker (https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker), there are currently 27 conflicts in the world, which vary in type and status. In contrast, the Rule of Law in Armed Conflict Online Portal (RULAC), which defines armed conflicts under international humanitarian law, indicates that it is currently monitoring more than 114 armed conflicts in the world (https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts). Some of these conflicts are in the headlines; others are not. However, they all change the lives and functioning of people living there or those who neighbour them. How does education respond to current, future, and past armed conflicts? This question seems particularly relevant to citizenship education and social sciences education, as the concept of a citizen is highly sensitive to such situations. The authors of the articles in the *thematic section* considered this an important research issue and decided to tackle it. The background is two armed conflicts: between Russia and Ukraine and between Israel and Palestine.

The section opens with an invited article, *"The transformative role of research in democratic civic education during times of armed conflict"* by Aviv Cohen. The article provides an excellent introduction to the topic as it provides a meta-perspective on civic education during armed conflict. The author does not focus directly on the changes concerning the practice of civic education but on the changing role of (student) researchers who, while conducting research in the field of democratic civic education, suddenly collide with a situation of armed conflict.

Corresponding author:
Violetta Kopińska, Lwowska 1, 87100 Toruń, Poland. E-Mail: violetta.kopinska@umk.pl

Declaration of conflicts of interests: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

The author's motivation to undertake the research effort is unique. It relates to his professional identity, the sense of researching democratic education in a reality that changes everything, and the effectiveness of efforts to promote democracy through education.

The article presents analyses of personal testimonies from a diverse group of seven students who attempted to answer the question, 'What is the role of educational research in such times?'. As a result, Cohen concludes with a transformative vision of educational research in times of conflict, noting, among other things, that such research enables a better understanding of social complexity in conflict situations, can also contribute to the promotion of peace, support dialogue and reconciliation, and contribute to more profound educational experiences that respond to complexity. Cohen calls on the international academic community to engage in research on citizenship, education, democracy, design innovations, and build collaborations for effective education for democracy in armed conflict.

Armed conflict as an emerging issue within educational practice is the focus of two further articles: the first – by Evgenia Efimova and the second – by Harald Borgebund and Kjetil Børhaug.

Evgenia Efimova, in her article entitled '*Russian teachers dealing with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine as a classroom issue*', presents the research results on the approach of teachers working in Russia to a controversial issue that emerges in classrooms. That controversial issue, in this case, is Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022. In the Russian regime, this situation raises conflicting explanations, significantly different assessments, and supporting arguments. The data for the analysis was collected in March 2022, i.e., one month after the outbreak of a full-scale armed conflict. Based on a study of 26 teacher interviews, she identified five pedagogical approaches: emotion, relation, civics, politics, and avoidance. She also added two dimensions to the analyses - student voice and pursuing political commitment. The results show, for example, that political commitment is demonstrated by experienced teachers with an established professional background and working in schools with strong communities. Besides, the need for political commitment is also shown by teachers who are dissatisfied with the status quo. However, it is not only teachers with liberal views but also those who are pro-war of the state but feel that their students have too liberal views.

Harald Borgebund and Kjetil Børhaug, in their article "*Citizenship education after Ukraine: Global citizenship education in a world of increasing international conflict*", pose the question of whether models of global citizenship education are appropriate for the current international situation marked by tensions and war. Their analysis concludes that it is necessary to supplement global citizenship education with the basics of international politics, why conflicts arise, how states relate to the international scene, what the conditions for international cooperation are, and how citizens may promote international collaboration among states. In their article, they discuss the basic theories of international politics and then explain how they can be used in teaching. The article is a valuable contribution to the development of global citizenship education because, on the one hand, it

shows what, in times of armed conflict and international tensions, is missing there. On the other hand, it shows specific proposals for expanding the content and a convincing argumentation about the relevance of these issues for understanding the contemporary world.

The relation between war and education is also the subject of the article "*Securitisation in citizenship education in Poland: critical analysis of the discourses linked with the changes in core curricula following the Russo-Ukrainian war*" by Violetta Kopińska and Natalia Stek-Łopatka. Using a discursive approach, the authors analyse the change in the core curriculum for general education in Poland that occurred under the influence of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This change involved introducing defence education (instead of health education), including shooting training. The starting point in the research was the concept of securitisation (see JSSE 1-2023). The analyses showed, among other things, how the 'securitising actors' used the threat (the war in Ukraine) to implement their party politics concerning changes in the school concept of civic education.

The thematic section ends with a *book review* that corresponds well with the special topic of the issue. Daniel Shephard wrote a review titled "*Citizen identity formation of domestic students and Syrian refugee youth in Jordan: Centering student voice and Arab Islamic ontologies*" (by Patricia Kubow). As Shephard pointed out in the book review, this book is based on a "locally grounded piece of research drawing on the voices of Jordanian and Syrian students in Amman to investigate their citizen identity formation" in post-war time.

The first article of the *general topic section of this issue* is "*Situationality in discussing controversial topics: (When) does controversial equal difficult?*" written by Bjorn Gert-Jan Wansink, Mikhail Mogutov, Koen Damhuis, and Larike Henriette Bronkhorst. In this large-scale quantitative study, the authors investigate what controversial topics secondary teachers in the Netherlands perceive as difficult to discuss in the classroom and also if and how this difficulty is related to teachers' background and context characteristics. The researchers used structural equation modelling (SEM) to investigate the relations between different variables among 1034 respondents. Their findings demonstrate that teachers find topical events that influence the students the most difficult to discuss. Teachers also find that it is easier to discuss controversial issues if there is support from the school itself. The likelihood of discussing controversial issues is partially context- and person-specific, involving, for instance, classroom composition, school subject and teachers' age. The authors also discuss how the results can inform the development of subject and context-specific teaching materials and training programs in democratic education.

The next article, by Jacky Yaakov Zvulun and Shahar Gindi, is entitled "*Preservice teachers' attitudes toward citizenship education in Israel.*" This is another quantitative study conducted with 235 preservice teachers from Israel. The study reported on the preservice teachers' views about the most important citizenship education topics that should be taught in schools and which contents should be discussed in academia that relate to citizenship education. The authors conclude that while the participant preservice teachers recognized the importance of citizenship education, they had some confusion regarding

teaching methods and curriculum implementation, which may stem from fear of addressing political issues and the pressure of the tight mandatory curriculum.

The last article of the issue is entitled *"Reproduction of assimilationist thinking in Norwegian social studies education: Breaking the cycle through reflective practice"* by Christian Engen Skotnes and Priscilla Ringrose. This article is based on an assignment given to secondary social studies course students asking what they recommend to a migrant classmate "to fit into Norway." Skotnes and Ringrose analysed students' submitted assignments, and they found out that the assignment drew assimilationist responses from the students, which had not been the assignment intended. Finally, the authors took a critically reflective approach in order to re-create and transform the assignment into different forms based on the feedback they received from their colleagues regarding the original assignment and the analyses of the students' submitted homework.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Violetta Kopińska, PhD, habilitation degree in Social Sciences, Associate Professor, is a researcher at the Institute of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. She focuses her research interests on citizenship education, civic participation, and anti-discrimination education. She studies discourses of citizenship education from the perspective of critical pedagogy. She analyses the relationship between politics and education in a discursive approach.

Mehmet Açıkalın is a professor in the Department of Social Studies Education at Istanbul University - Cerrahpaşa, Türkiye. He received his master's degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 2002 and PhD from The Ohio State University, USA, in 2006. His research interests are computer-supported instruction in social studies, global education and social studies teacher education