

Editorial

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In this autumn issue of the JSSE, we are pleased to present five original articles. These contributions deal with social science education in different contexts and from different educational settings, reminding the reader of the heterogeneity of our common research field. Two of the articles deal with teacher training, two with considerations and understandings of teachers and one focusing on young peoples' understanding of social issues. However, the similarities in the research contributions are also evident. All of the articles focus on the importance of inclusive, critical and balanced social science education in different ways and with different outset. In times when democracy and human rights are being contested, it is important to highlight the role of democratic and civic education and what it can contribute with.

The first contribution is "*Citizenship education in teacher training: A systematic review.*" Noelia Pérez-Rodríguez, Elisa Navarro-Medina and Nicolás de-Alba-Fernández, University of Seville, Spain, is dedicated to analysing empirical research articles developed in the field of teacher training in citizenship education. The authors selected 62 studies, written in English or Spanish, present in the Web of Sciences and Scopus in the years 2017-2022 where the majority of the selected studies were concentrated in Europe. The authors mapped five different thematic dimensions that have been addressed in empirical research within teacher education: teaching strategies and resources; teachers' conceptions; teaching content; teacher education programs; and design of teaching resources. The studies were unevenly distributed, with the majority focusing on teaching strategies and resources. Interestingly, they found that teachers' conceptions of citizenship are dominantly cosmopolitan and global in their visions. The authors conclude that their systematic review reveals the topics in citizenship education in teacher training and makes less researched areas visible for further research.

In their article "*Ultra-Orthodox female student-teachers' motivation to learn and teach global education*", Nurit Chamo and Liat Biberman-Shalev discuss what meanings global education is given in the *Haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) community in Israel. This community has not been studied much in social science education, although it is an intriguing and influential part of Israeli society. Thus, it is very welcome that Chamo and Biberman have chosen this focus. Female Haredi teacher-students' motives to teach and learn global (citizenship) education is a relevant topic, considering that *Haredi* religious identity and their prevalent views on the state, civic duties and gender entail challenges to global education. The authors suggest their study may support future research on the strategies to meet challenges in encounters between global education and distinct religious groups, for example, in how different conceptions of globalisation are probed in educational settings.

Linda Ekström from Södertörn University in Sweden explores in her article *“Between compassion, anger, resignation, and rebellion: Vocational civics teachers and their struggle to fulfil the intentions of the civics subject”* the significant challenges vocational civics teachers face in Sweden while striving to meet the goals of democratic citizenship education. The study, grounded in the framework of “street-level bureaucracy,” highlights how these teachers work within a system that limits their ability to fully engage their students. She carefully examines how vocational students, who are often marginalised by the educational system, encounter barriers such as limited instructional time, reduced curricular content, and lower levels of engagement compared to their peers in academic tracks. Vocational students only receive a condensed curriculum that hinders their ability to engage with critical democratic skills and concepts. The paper focuses on the emotional responses of the teachers, which range from compassion for their students’ difficulties to frustration and resignation about the structural inequities in the educational system and illustrates the means teachers use to overcome these barriers by bending the rules or creatively enhancing the curriculum to provide a more meaningful civic education for their students. Despite these pedagogical efforts at the individual level, these results raise concerns about the broader societal implications of systemic governance issues. The article argues that if vocational students continue to receive a diminished civics education, it may perpetuate social inequalities and lead to reduced political engagement among a group that is already vulnerable to political exclusion.

In *“Controversial issues in Norwegian social science classrooms,”* Anders G. Kjølsvedt and Evy Jøsok from Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway, discuss how the inclusion of controversial issues in civic education may contribute to reducing the significance of the students’ background for their political efficacy. Based on semi-structured interviews with social science teachers in Norwegian lower-secondary schools, Kjølsvedt and Jøsok argue that the inclusion of controversial issues in civic education in itself does not automatically contribute to social equalisation in terms of political efficacy. They argue, however, that teachers’ openness towards controversial topics in teaching and different understandings of controversial issues has the potential to do so. An important implication for social science teaching is that teachers may benefit from approaching controversial issues in less personal ways, favouring epistemic and political criteria rather than emotional ones.

Klas Andersson and Kristoffer Larsson’s article *“Mapping elementary students’ understanding of the police”* charts how young students understand the police as a social institution in Sweden. Departing from research on conceptual change, they examine through phenomenographically analysed interviews how students in years 1–3 display different ways of understanding the police. Their findings show that students have three very different understandings. Firstly, students understand the police in a concrete way through their attributes (e.g., clothes, equipment and means of transport). Secondly, students understand the police through their activities (e.g., prevention and intervention), which can be seen as a concrete understanding but also more substantial than the first category. The third and final understanding is that the police are a part of the democratic welfare state in terms of governance and funding. Andersson and Larsson argue that a teaching that aims to develop students’ understandings of the police can benefit from taking the three different ways of understanding into consideration.