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Editorial: Multiperspectivity, Values and Criticism in Economic and Civic Education

Keywords

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1 Introduction: Facing multiple and multipolar crises

Until last year the European Union was overshadowed by severe economic crises including various ordeals by the referendum on the United Kingdom's membership and the Grexit option and the troubled debates in national parliaments about help for the most affected countries. In issue 2013-2 about Crisis and Economic Education in Europe we still characterized that with multiple crises.

Even if these crises would not have been really mastered, additional crises appear. Wars developed at the edge of the EU and raised the question of support or intervention. At the risk of life nearly a million persons flee 2015 from Zones of war, crises and poverty to the affluent societies in the EU, that seem to be safe, with the exception of raising terrorist attacks. While European countries differ between welcoming culture and separation, anxiety about social decline creates the rise of xenophobic groups. Even if those groups use democratic forms, threats to democracy are developed. However, the freedom to migrate is also used by others, who do not flee out of fear for their lives, but want to secure their own capital in safe havens before nationalization.

As long as capital finds the means to migrate to avoid taxes, only economic growth seems to be the panacea against national and global poverty. But as the rates of growth are narrowing in OECD countries, the high rates of emerging markets reached their peak recently. With the evidence, that social inequality rises with economic growth, because capital income grows stronger, the French economist Thomas Piketty also warns about dangers for democracy and economy, as inherited assets concentration causes power imbalances and the lack of host-economic growth affects the economic base. Meanwhile, the world is trying to compensate for the lack of growth and global inequality through free trade. In Bali 2013, a new free trade agreement was agreed, that should allow better access to the markets of the industrialized and emerging countries, pledging financial and development aid and agreeing on eliminating agricultural subsidies.

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Even if the poor countries as well as the countries with emerging markets are not really content, the strong economic areas continue forcing free trade by bilateral negotiations. NGOs demonstrate their concern, that the fight against protectionism could undermine future democratic self-determination of nations by independent arbitration courts and regulatory councils that create extended space for lobbyism. At the end of 2015, the countries of the world committed to climate protection in Paris in order to keep global warming "far below" two degrees. This historic agreement was possible because national targets have not been set, voluntarily climate targets were allowed, while the agreement should be realized within five years and the balance of greenhouse gases by mid-century.

2 Interdependence of crises versus narrowing perspectives

These global entanglements of social, economic, political and environmental challenges as well as regional, national and global crises can be mastered by confrontation and decoupling, or by cooperation. Facing such crises shows, how strong economic, political and social developments on the one side, regional, national and global developments on the other side are intertwined. Economic and civic education should enable students for a better understanding of the world in its social, politic and economic dimensions and prepare them to take part in creating a world they want to live in. It has also to deal with such intertwinements that ask for different perspectives, dealing with values and critique.

In contrast in Germany, the results of international comparative studies such as Pisa led to contradictory developments in economic and civic education. The orientation towards competences on the one side went hand in hand with loosing content but favouring competencies for problem solving, while the stronger focus to a domain narrows the perspective and limits didactical orientation. Already, some German states offer for lower secondary schools two separate subjects for Economics on one side and Civics on the other. Since both subjects have scarce hours for studying, they need to focus on their own essentials. Functional mechanisms of the political and economic system gain supremacy, while issues of social inequality or a critical view are marginalized. Taking a stronger focus on economic topics leads to dominance of finance education before a broader consumer education, leading to an entrepreneurship education more dominant than labour view. Based on one single discipline, households are quickly reduced to suppliers and demanders in markets coupled to others by the flow of money and goods. By focusing by different subjects either the political systems or the market system gains the dominant role, which reveals - by intention or not - a significant leaning to neoclassical consideration within those economic subjects.



Looking at the discussion in Europe and its individual countries, we see that the discussion about narrowing perspectives in subjects is not just a German phenomenon. European debates on economic education - such as the Joint declaration of AEEE 2015 -, as well as the contributions from Jacek Brant (UK) and Hervé Blanchard/Yves Coleno (France) show the demand for different perspectives, inclusion of values and a critical focus of real world phenomena.

3 Limiting interpretation and explanation to a mainstream perspective

Also on the sovereignty of interpretation and explanation of social, economic and social phenomena, exist different views, as clearly presented this year by a conflict over a teaching material called "Economy and Society", which was edited by Bettina Zurstrassen, university of Bielefeld, and published by the German Federal Agency for Political Education. Employers' organizations had lobbied, with the support of the Ministry of the interior, that this publication should not be distributed. The employers association found themselves denounced in one of twelve articles which was about lobbying. Unintentionally, they delivered with their attempt, simultaneously an authentic lesson for lobbying. The publication did not strive to conduct a comprehensive economic education basic set, but offered socio-economic issues by way of example, in a critical, pluralistic way that does not use only economics, but also the approaches of other social sciences to analyze economic reality. In addition to the claim of other social sciences to deal with economic phenomena and contribute additional perspectives, the question arises, about how far critical perspectives are sacrificed on the altar of functionalism even in democratic systems, if the approaches are problem-oriented and controversial. (see Case Study: Controversy versus Unilateralism or Lobbying against Interdisciplinary)

4 Pluralism, values and criticisms in science

Long time calls for pluralistic economic perspectives for the analysis of real-world phenomena seem to be unique to heterodox and pluralist economists, who have doubts about the liberalization of markets as a last resort panacea. Nowadays even liberal economists emphasize more strongly the social relevance of liberal values. As the former chairwoman of the Hayek Society, Karen Horn confirmed strongly to liberal values in order to defend liberal position against right-wing-movements. She stressed the fundamental humanitarianism of liberalism, which derives from the fundamental value of liberty also values of openness, pluralism, tolerance and respect for those who think differently. As a result of an escalating dispute about liberalism vis-a-vis national fundamentalism and conservatism, liberal economists, politicians and managers left the society in solidarity with Horn, while actually opposing the narrowing of the debate culture, and the lack of attention on unconventional positions in a scientific association. With this step the liberals have taken a position against sim-

plification, intolerance, dogmatism and they want to distinguish themselves against inhuman positions (see Case Study: Liberalist against Liberalist or Liberal Humanism against Right-wing-Inhumanism).

5 Contributions of this issue

Originally the issue was planned as "Teaching Economics in a Europe in Crisis". With the multipolarity of crises associated with confrontation and segregation, as well as cooperation and compromise with regard to common values entangled between regional, national and global issues we decided to expand the focus. On first sight this issue is gathering quite heterogeneous contributions. An in-depth examination presents a lot of similarities, which can be characterized by the fact that a special importance is attached to multiple perspectives, to the consideration of values and to the role of a critical approach. In many conceptions of civic and economic education those principles have become self-evident, but their actual implementation seems to be anything else than self-evident.

Jacek Brant, Senior Lecturer in Business and Economics Education at the Institute of Education at the University College London calls for a new conception of Economics Education in order to understand the world's historical and political relations involving criticism as well as the moral and social dimensions. The scientific claim of neo-classicism with its over-reliance on mathematical methods, especially leads to a neglect of important issues such as those of an inclusive capitalism. Referring to the philosopher Roy Bhaskar, Jacek Brant suggests a transcendental realism with access to the world by way of structures and mechanisms, and a critical realism perceiving human beings not only as passive sensors, but also by their different approaches. Thus, he recommends the DREIC model of Bhaskar to economic education: First a description is needed, then the 'retroduction' of hypotheses, wherein the unrealistic has to be eliminated, the realistic has to be identified and at least the model has to be corrected. Even if the economic contribution to the understanding of the economic and social environment has to be appreciated, an inquiring, critical and reflected approach to studying economic behaviour from multiple perspectives and a consideration of alternative approaches is necessary. Brant shows, that a new curriculum in the United Kingdom allows teachers and students to reflect about business and economy, and assess their impacts on social systems using an experience-based approach, considering values, interests and purpose of economic activity equally. Economic Models should not be taught as if they were real, instead concepts should be distilled by experience. Explanation opportunities should be checked as well as social or political embedment.

Hervé Blanchard and Yves-Patrick Coleno examine the integration of market in French curricula and textbooks. While the market first found it's place in the Curriculum in 1981, twenty years later, the market coordination has developed into a major part of the curriculum, whereas the adjective political view disappears in favour of the



concept of market. This favouring leads to the dominance of microeconomic models, which seems to be the main approach, even the notion of market did not appear in need of explanation. Looking to academic economic encyclopedias they present the normative neoclassical market as modelled for efficiency and optimization, whereas the values have been abolished. While the market is not doubted as a means of social regulation, the value of freedom presides over equality. They criticize the attempts of educational policy, to address the lack of economic culture by glorifying the virtues of the market. The authors show the lexicon of capitalism as a combination of market and capital: Markets are an indisputable reality, welfare is justified by human capital, Money is not even mentioned, and the concept of man is not clarified, whereas work as a decisive word disappears and a labour market is nothing more than another market. Blanchard and Coleno criticize the depletion of economics and demand in accordance with their English colleague, that the subject of economic education has to look for goals and be associated with values as well.

As the prior contributions analyse and conceptualize problems in economic education in different countries, Isolde de Groot and Wiel Veugelers relate to democratic deficits and gaps in democratic commitment. While social scientists explain those problems with a depolarization of the political debate, a lack of appreciation of opposing positions, and the decline in the importance of civil institutions promoted by the dramatization of the media, the educationalist complain, that democracy is presented as a neutral political system, whereas the attention for values decreases with the decline of religious education, and a technical rationality overwhelms the confrontation of power and social justice. Their own democratic model is composed upon a democratic theory viewing a political system under construction, whose deficits are never completely overcome, but recognized, reduced and refined. From 27 narratives of 16-20-year-old Students, de Groot and Veugelers developed a typology, in which they characterize 'passive, thin and thick' democratic commitment types. They are distinguished according to their perception and appreciation of democracy and diversity, and in their sense of effectiveness of citizenship and responsibility. According to this, it is difficult to the passive and thin type to develop an appreciation for democracy, if they just perceive the system as a legal one. Instead they should get chances to develop deliberative and critical participation skills and investigate their ideals. With this innovation of the typology regarded by the more complex conception of imagination and the consideration of democracy as ethos, the authors want to formulate facets, how a strong commitment to democracy could be cultivated. Looking at this we can conclude that acceptance is based on understanding as well as on critiques.

Parvin Safari and Nasser Rashadi show in their contribution that the promotion of critical thinking is not limited to social science education. In their case,

language teaching can include critical pedagogy as well, that should enable students to critical thinking about oppressive power relations, inequality and lack of freedom. Referring to Paulo Freire they contrasted his critique on the banking model of education with his central concepts of critical Pedagogy (practice of dialogue, critical consciousness). In focus interviews with language teachers in private institutions in Iran the authors try to identify obstacles, frustrations and problems, which resist an integration of critical pedagogy. According to their findings the teachers complain about the many lacking issues (background knowledge, competence, appropriate resources), but they also find an avoidance of controversial issues that could conflict with traditions, ethnic cultures and religion and the habituation of the banking model. The teachers also anticipate a reserved image of their students because of their lack of knowledge about critical thinking and democratic freedoms, a familiarity with the banking model, and also a resistance to the changes in attitudes, values and identity. They conclude that an education that will empower marginalized students and minorities against oppression and subordination, must overcome the bank model by broader forms of civic education, but it also cannot disregard sociocultural and socio-political conditions.

From the viewpoint of Sociology and Education Science, Martin Tolich, Bonny Scarth and Kerry Shephard evaluate how sociology students in research internships train their identity as qualitative researchers. These internships are placed in local community projects according to specific clients. Studying the role of fear, support, feedback, teamwork, use of research methods, and project benefits, the authors observe a significant development of self-confidence by experiential learning in real situations, whilst the students have to deal with the challenges of limited research planning in a non-linear world. The development of students has been interpreted by way of different educational theories, model of experiential learning, high-impact learning, the self-efficacy approach, social constructionism, communities in practice, affective learning model. Remarkable is the demand for a public sociology that uses qualitative research to improve communities and the quality of life – and allows at the same time, the creation of research competence and promotes employability.

Julia Prieß-Buchheit presents a project in teacher training at the University of Kiel, where student learn to analyze standardized tests, regarding their function and consequences as instruments of New Public Management. They also study the underlying values in order to develop their own point of view. In a final examination carried out as a simulation beyond colleagues, students discuss the test application. Prieß-Buchheit also points out, that the lack of sociological and political knowledge especially complicates the understanding of interdisciplinary relationships.

All these specific examples of heated debate are related to the importance of multiple perspectives, the relevance of values and the necessity of criticism and

discourse about the problems of real life world, in science as well as in school. All of the contributions in this issue, regardless of whether they come from France, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Iran or the New Zealand claim the role of multiple perspectives, the debate about values, the relevance of criticism in regard to the phenomena and challenges of the real social, economic and political world.

Finally the two congress reports of the Association of Economics Education 2014 in Aix en Provence, France,

and the Nordic Conference of civics and citizenship education 2015 in Helsinki, Finland, represent a vivid impression in the multi-perspective, interdisciplinary and critical debates in the Social Science Education fields. At least Jennifer Bruen discuss the manual of Stephen McCloskey on Development Education in Policy and Practice. We appreciate also those formats, which inform the international audience about interesting debates and publications in the field of social science education.

Case study I: Controversy versus Unilateralism or Lobbying against Interdisciplinary

The case is about the recent teaching material "Ökonomie und Gesellschaft" [Economy and Society], edited by Bettina Zurstrassen, professor at Bielefeld university and distributed by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BPB) (Federal Agency for Political Education, in Bonn). The 12 lesson units were written by academics from economic and civic education. The units are about such different topics as lobbying, financial crises, social balance in an economic order, development and continuance of markets, money in modern societies, responsible action in consumer societies, sustainable economies with or without economic growth, labor-relations, subject and society, discrimination in the workplace, the EU and the world economy (1).

Peter Clever, vice president of the German employer organization (BDA), worries especially about an article about lobbying that does not deliver arguments about the engagement of enterprises for vocational education of the youth. As a very few additional sentences in two other units did not meet his pleasure, he asked the agency and the ministry above to stop the distribution of the publication (2).

Comparing the criticized quotations with the publication the editor Bettina Zurstrassen found fundamental reductions and content isolations in the criticized citations (3).

According to the freedom of information act, the government has to provide clarity about the whole process (4). Mass media criticized the lobbying (5/6), and scientific organizations of civic education (GPJE, DVPB) as well as the Association of Sociology (DGS) were outraged against this act against freedom of science and the option to offer students more than just standard economic views. The scientific association of economists (Verein für Sozialpolitik) did not really take attention, but their officer for young academics Rüdiger Bachmann wondered that there were not only economists among the authors (10). Pressured, Peter Clever does not take the chance to glorify his name, but needs to confirm his critique against unilateralism (11). The public may use the chance to form their own impressions about Unilateralism, controversy, interdisciplinary and lobbying.

The controversial book and the attempt to stop his distribution

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<https://www.bpb.de/shop/lernen/themen-und-materialien/200345/oekonomie-und-gesellschaft>
2. Letter of Peter Clever (BDA) addressed to agency and ministry
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3. Zurstrassen, Bettina 2015: Comparison of the BDA citation with the original publication
http://www.iboeb.org/aktuelles/detail/iboeb/bundesinnenminister_verbietet_oekonomie_und_gesellschaft.html
4. The blog for freedom of information portal: Ask the state: Sales Ban on BPB Publication.
<http://blog.fragdenstaat.de/2015/bpb-bda-okonomie-publikation/>

Critique against Lobbying by massmedia and against freedom of Science by Social Science organisations

5. Oppel, Max: Wie Lobbyisten ein Schulbuch stoppten [As Lobbyists stopped a textbook]
http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/arbeitgeberverband-gegen-bundeszentrale-wie-lobbyisten-ein.2156.de.html?dram:article_id=335876
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<http://www.soziologie.de/de/nc/aktuell/meldungen-archiv/aktuelles-singleview/archive/2015/10/23/article/vorlaeufiges-vertriebsverbot-der-sammelpublikation-oekonomie-und-gesellschaft-bundeszentrale-fuer-politische-bildung-durch-das-bundesministerium-des-innern.html>

Criticism of Criticism

10. Rüdiger Bachmann, Verein für Sozialpolitik, (officer for young academics at the Economic Association)
<https://www.socialpolitik.de/De/die-bundeszentrale-f%C3%BCr-politische-bildung-bpb-antwortet>
11. Final Statement of the employer associations vice president Peter Clever
<http://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/id/BECOC1AE8494AFB1C1257EEB0054D771?open&ccm=200025>

Case Study II: Liberalist against Liberalist or Liberal Humanism against Right-wing-Inhumanism

In an article the former chairwoman of the Hayek Society, Karen Horn, discuss the foundation of liberalism and warns against reactionary infiltration. She criticizes xenophobic attempts as well as the glorification of discrimination and the call for authority in the name of liberalism. Instead of those occupations of the liberalism through to the right wing, she confirms the beginning of liberal thinking from the individual and not from a collective with never ending truths. From this appreciation of the individual results the respect for the individual themselves and for his appreciated forms of living and his personality. From this deeper moral of liberalism are the values of openness, pluralism and respect for those who think differently derived, and from this point of view she argues strongly against any kind of discrimination against different sexual orientation, against feminism, atheism, pluralism and other cultures, and gives according to the fundamental principles of humanism within liberalism, a passionate plea to openness, pluralism and tolerance (1, as well in 2).

As a result of an escalating dispute about the values of liberalism against national fundamentalism and conservatism (3;4,5) a lot of liberal economists, politicians and managers left the society in solidarity with her former chairwoman Horn, and the attacks against her (6). Those Liberals actually oppose against the narrowing of the debate culture and the lack of attention to unconventional positions in a scientific association. With this step the liberals took a position against simplification, intolerance, dogmatism and wish to distinguish themselves against inhuman positions.

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