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Editorial: Controversial Issues in the Political Classroom – *Continued*

Keywords

Controversial issues, global citizenship education, structured academic controversy, national narrative, history textbook, education for the respect of animals, value education, radicalisation

In democracies, citizenship and citizenship education are about sharing commonalities and caring for controversies. Living in a common polity, citizens, politicians and teachers are usually confronted with contested policies and politics. Many real world controversies are potentially present in classrooms and lecture halls because students as well as teachers are part and parcel of societal, political and economic contentions and conflicts of the outside world. Moreover, controversies on paradigms, theories, methods and recommended measures are looming large in the social sciences. Research on civics and citizenship education, therefore, should address controversial issues as a matter of scientific and political content, of teaching and learning and of related competency of the citizenry. Doing research and doing classes should regard both, common ground and common controversy in a polity, a society and an economy. However, this approach is itself subject to contention, especially from governments, political parties and educational administration bodies which tend to expect education to create consensus and conformity – with respect to their own positions, of course –, not dissent and divergence among the students as citizens. In sum, it is a matter of course that controversial issues are continuously debated in the Journal of Social Science Education. The papers of the present issue are mainly contributing to this topic area.

Curricula policies of global citizenship education provide a telling example of normative, controversial or one-sided framing in the field of citizenship education. In her paper *The Educational Governance of German School Social Science: The Example of Globalization*, Andrea Szukala raises the question “if and to what extent certain

perspectives and canonizations are favoured in curricular scheduling and why others are discarded”. This is the key question of research on controversy as a principle of curriculum construction. Drawing on structural educational sociology and on comparative curriculum analyses, the paper traces the transformation of social science knowledge into canonised school knowledge using the globalisation issue as an exemplary case for a qualitative multilevel study of curriculum policies over the last 25 years. In the dominant perspective of the curricula of some German Länder, globalisation appears above all as an economic issue (competing countries) and more as a challenge for states and democracy than an option. The curricula turn out to be far from fostering global citizenship. The analysis shows the change of pedagogical legitimation code and dominant value judgements on globalisation in the course of time.

Going to the next paper means to shift from the analysis of curricular frames to classroom practices. It is sometimes observed that controversial teaching in classroom using the classical format of discussion and pro-contra debate leads to verbal exchange, black and white thinking and broad-brush argumentation which do not correspond to the complexity of policies and politics and, therefore, usually lead to common pitfalls. Quite a few teachers, however, are reluctant to deal with controversial issues in the political classroom. Jennifer Bruen, Veronica Crosbie, Niamh Kelly, Maria Loftus, Agnès Maillot, Áine McGillicuddy and Juliette Péchenart address this issue in their paper *Teaching Controversial Topics in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Ireland: Using Structured Academic Controversy to develop multiperspectivity in the learner*. Evidence suggests that teachers’ reluctance may be partially overcome by making them familiar with didactic approaches and tools which help to scaffold the handling of controversial issues without alienating students. Specifically, the article considers the potential advantages and pitfalls associated with a particular approach known as ‘Structured Academic Controversy’ (SAC). Developed nearly three decades ago and originating in the political science classroom, SAC is designed to assist learners in developing and clarifying their position towards controversial topics and in understanding the positions of others (Johnson and Johnson 1988). The paper of Bruen et al. presents experience from academics using this approach and thus may inform and improve the practice of others. An example of SAC is the issue of linguistic diversity and language policy in Ireland, a controversy closely

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connected to different understandings of the notion of nation.

Idealisation and glorification of the nation, aggressive nationalism, self-referential isolationism, xenophobia and exclusionary concepts of society are looming large in Europe and beyond. These trends are politically fuelled and exploited by nationalist governments and parties, not only from the extreme right. Striving for interpretational sovereignty over national narratives, a long-standing strategy of governments and their fellow travellers in social sciences and teacher education is rewriting civics and history textbooks. They try to shape or even manipulate the content and the learners' minds for securing political support of the future electorate. The Journal of Social Science Education has a long tradition in critically analysing diverse forms of instrumentalisation of teaching and learning for governmentally predefined national identities and nationalist attitudes (see for instance JSSE 2-2016, 3-2015, 1-2015, 3-2014, 4-2013, 4-2011, 1-2011, 2-2010, 1-2010, 4-2009, 1-2008, 2-2007). In the current issue, Jana Šulíková analyses ethnocentric models of education in textbooks against the scholarly state of the art. Her paper *Unintended Revelations in History Textbooks: The Precarious Authenticity and Historical Continuity of the Slovak Nation*, addresses the nature of nations and the preconditions of its origination processes in a case study approach. The research is guided by a theoretical framework comprising primordialism, constructivism and ethno-symbolism as social science key perspectives on the notion of nation and national narratives. The textbooks of lower secondary education mainly stick to essentialist, primordial, ethnocentric and homogeneous understandings of nation and national tradition. Unwillingly, however, they also deliver much evidence for a constructivist approach. In sum, Slovakian history textbooks turn out to be an exemplary case of a biased and inconsistent approach to the teaching of the topic of nation in schools.

With the next paper, we enter a quite different field of controversy about norms and values which is exemplarily discussed in a national frame (Spain): Should the general goals of social education embrace the respect toward animals as a part of the general respect for life? Is it legitimate to try to change the society's attitude toward non-human beings via education? Do educators have to engage in a post-humanist education which bridges the gap between humans and other species? In the programmatic paper *The Need of Education in the Respect to Animals (ERA) as a Subject of the Social Education Degree at the University: An Overview Focused on Spain*, Eduardo Barona and Elena Carrió strongly support this form of an "education for ..." (cf. JSSE 4-2012; Simonneaux et al. 2012). They claim that the respect for animals cannot be simply subordinated to human interest, but has to be taught as a value per se. Drawing on this normative stance the authors identify a societal deficit of acknowledging animals' rights and propose an ERA-specialisation in teacher education. The

outline of the curriculum is multidimensional, multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective. Like all "educations for", however, the education for the respect for animals does not emphasise students' systematically critical reflection about its goals and measures. Rather, these specialists in the field of social education are expected to act as propagators who motivate teachers, schools and communities for an education for the respect for animals. Certainly, the ERA-approach itself will provoke controversial debates, because it goes beyond the anthropocentric approach of education for sustainable development (cf. Barthes and Jeziorski 2012; JSSE 3-2009, papers in German).

To date, social sciences and social science education has largely ignored the existence, relevance and intrinsic value of non-humans and, in consequence, the relationship of humans and non-humans. Thematising this issue will bring about much controversy because it touches images of humanity, world views, collective understandings of society and individual self-perceptions.

Having a look at France, we encounter a further topical case example of an "education for": the French programme Grande mobilisation de l'École pour les valeurs de la République (Great Mobilisation of the School for the Values of the Republic) introduced by the Minister of Education in 2015. Other European countries are proposing or launching similar policies. The British Department for Education, for instance, requests schools to strive for "promoting fundamental British values" (Departmental advice from November 2014). In Germany, the longstanding tradition of Werteverziehung (value education) is resurging against the background of challenges like increasing right-wing extremism and Islamist jihad among the youth. The flourishing discourse on value education in India and other Asian countries provides evidence from beyond the borders of Europe indicating a general or even global tendency to an increased awareness of values in education.

Recently, many European countries have experienced tendencies of deepening social and economic heterogeneity, inequality and cleavages, high degrees of youth unemployment, a so-called crisis of flight and migration, Islamist terrorist attacks or terror attempts. Consequently, societal discourses have often become polarised nurturing controversy on the key features of a "good society". The idea and institutions of an open, democratic society has come under pressure triggering legitimisation crises of the respective polities. Moreover, the model of a heterogeneous society is principally called into question. Surprisingly, these developments lead the French government to radically rearrange political education in schools. Measures of the above mentioned Grande mobilisation were a new school subject, the expansion of participation in schools and the reinforcement of republican value education. Nancy Morys und Matthias Busch (Luxembourg) outline the main traits of the reform politics and the public discourse on the Ministry's measures. Their documentation of newspaper articles *Mobilising for the Values of the Republic*—

France's Education Policy Response to the "Fragmented Society" presents selected contributions from teachers, scholars, students, unionists and politicians. They demonstrate how approaches and challenges of the policy and its programs are debated in the French society and illustrate difficulties and chances of a democratic political education in a society which is perceived as becoming more and more "heterogeneous".

The JSSE editors welcome, again, the bilingual presentation of this paper. They want to strengthen the editorial policy of bilingualism and encourage authors to submit articles in two languages. The editors appreciate the format of a newspaper article documentation of controversial debates about educational policies. Any documentation, of course, is selective by nature and inclined to provoke disagreement. Therefore, comments and scholarly papers from the francophone world are much desired. The editors are looking forward to such submissions and to continuing the debate (see the [JSSE Call for Papers 3-2017, Character Education und Citizenship Education](#)).

Last but not least, the JSSE reader may enjoy the book review of *Christopher Baker-Beall; Charlotte Heath-Kelly; Lee Jarvis (Ed.). 2015: Counter-Radicalisation. Critical Perspectives, London, New York: Routledge*. As Kurt Edler points out, the editors present critical approaches to the impact of anti-terrorism policies on democratic and heterogeneous societies in Australia, Denmark, The Netherlands and Germany. Scholars of the field of citizenship education should be aware of goals and side effects of these policies because they make great demands on schools, teachers and teaching. These educational requests, too, have effects and side effects which should be subject to careful, sober and controversial scholarly analysis.

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