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Sub-theme 4. Research and Practice in Teacher Education

Title:

Teaching the ‘good’ citizen in a diverse classroom:
Teachers’ conceptualization and approaches to citizenship education
In Austria and Portugal

Abstract

For the past few decades, there has been a worldwide interest in teaching about democracy and democratic citizenship. The rise and re-emergence of challenges, such as violent extremism, populism and apathy among young people has alerted to the need to provide the kind of education that is capable of safeguarding and sustaining peace, plurality and democracy. ‘Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship’ through school education is one of the main objectives in the context of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020).

The current study targets two European countries that have recently reformed the curriculum of citizenship education in an effort to further strengthen its role and impact. Citizenship education has been taught as a cross-curricula theme in Portugal and the teaching of a new compulsory separate subject 'citizenship and development' in grades 5 to 9 is being piloted for the year 2017/18, in public and private school clusters. In Austria a new curriculum was piloted for the academic year (2015/16), with compulsory citizenship education modules stressing human rights and European and global outlooks (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

Many debates have characterized the discourses surrounding the curricula of citizenship education but little has been done to investigate what happens in the classroom. Working within a transformative education framework, the study aims to examine teachers’ conception of citizenship and democracy and the impact on their practice and decision-making in the classroom. The study will provide a critical examination of citizenship education, its goals and implementation, and highlight some of the tensions facing it in increasingly diverse contexts and the different ways the two countries envision education for democracy through policies and practice.

The Research Question:

-How do (secondary) school social studies/ citizenship education teachers in Austria and Portugal view citizenship and democracy and how does that reflect on their pedagogy, approach to the curriculum, (including student's assessment and it is considered as desired outcomes) in a diverse classroom?

This current study will use a variety of data collection methods, including surveys, teacher interviews, analysis of documents (curriculum, class materials, etc) and classroom observations.

Keywords: citizenship education, transformative education, critical, teachers, and democracy

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