Abstract

Workshop I: Web 2.0 and Citizenship Education in Europe

Citizenship Education and Web 2.0 – in search of the active citizen

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In recent decades the concept of citizenship and its understanding has changed as a consequence of a multitude of diverse processes, such as globalization, multiculturalism, supra-nationality and the development of information and communication technologies. As citizenship has evolved from a static, narrow and formal concept depicting the relations between the state and the individual based in the classic "Marshallian" paradigm of civic, social and political rights, we have also witnessed a dramatic and continuous development in ICT formats and platforms. Web 2.0 represents one of the most exciting and powerful tools for enabling, expressing and performing contemporary citizenship on a global scale, as it creates environments that enable scholars, educators, policy makers, etc. to go where the citizens are. Furthermore, it represents an environment where a multitude of knowledge and skills for contemporary citizenship can be developed. *The main question and dilemma for citizenship education is how to harness the possibilities and advantages of Web 2.0 without intruding, overwhelming and in the long run estranging the users of Web 2.0.*

Similarly to other European countries, Slovenia has witnessed a steady increase in use of Web 2.0 for socio-political activities. Analyses and research into the content and approach to citizenship education (both formal and informal), which is one of the main objectives of the Citizen(ship) in a New Age project, being carried out at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, has shown a lack of use of Web 2.0 in citizenship education in Slovenia. The NGO sector, which is the predominant stakeholder in non-formal and informal citizenship education, has made some use of Web 2.0 in order to raise awareness on different relevant topics. The formal education sector in the field of citizenship education has been lagging behind in this respect. Certain initiatives have been introduced, particularly through official government portals and e-learning content, but in comparison to a number of EU countries Slovenia still has ground to gain.

From an integral, global and European perspective a need to address citizenship education through Web 2.0 needs to be prioritized, but one of the arguments of this paper is that scholars and policy makers alike should make note of the fact that Web 2.0 and other contemporary ICT tools should be understood only as tools, representing a possibility to deliver citizenship education in a contemporary manner. They should not however be understood as a problem solution frame, which has been the case in fields such as eGovernment and eHealth. Recent global developments have provided an insight into the "power" of Web 2.0 in political and social struggles of citizens, but we need to keep in mind, that revolutions and reforms are not spurred by technology, but by the people, and that Web 2.0 exclusively represents a new media and communication platform for citizens' socio-political involvement. We argue that a similar understanding of the possibilities of Web 2.0 in citizenship education should be fostered, be it at the national (Slovenian), supranational (European) or international (global) level.