

NECE – Networking European Citizenship Education

Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 23 – 26 September, 2004

Workshop II: Organisations for European Citizenship Education (public sector):

Referees:

Joao Pedro Gonçalves Simoes da Costa, Ministry of Education of Portugal

Anne Looney, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Dublin, Ireland

Sabine Mandl, Service Office for Civic Education of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, Austria

Klaus Koopmann, University of Bremen, Germany

Chair:

Reinhold Hedtke, University of Bielefeld, Germany

Reporter:

Kimana Zulueta Fülcher, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

Da Costa offered an overview of a project, called "Singing the Janeiras", which took place in the mountain village of Fajao. In this project, through the discovery of an almost forgotten local tradition, people in that town discovered other regions, countries and cultures. That means, through the discovery of a self owned distinction, they developed an interest on and an appreciation of other's differences, which is the basis of a multicultural education and of European citizenship; through The local, they started understanding the "other", the international.

In this case, it was a state organisation which promoted civic education in the local level, through the work of teachers, and contributed to the understanding of other national and even European local cultures.

So, the two innovative aspects pointed out by this project were: 1) The possibility of working on education and training with excellent results, out of school, with the funding and organisation of state institutions (public and non-public institutions together), and 2) the reflection on local culture as a starting point for the reflection on other's cultures.

Anne Looney talked about the particular interest of the work of schools with children and young people in the Irish context. Civic education is, since 1993 and compulsory since 1997, part of the school curriculum for children from 4 to 16 years, and is planned to be extended to the upper secondary level in the near future. For 12-15 year olds, assessment in Civic Social and Political Education also forms part of the Certificate examinations taken towards the end of compulsory schooling.

Her presentation outlined the current provision, the issues associated with its development and the emerging challenges for Citizenship Education (CE) in the Republic of Ireland. The challenge they are facing is how to educate for Irish, European and global citizenship all at once. And one of the responses comes out of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, which mentioned: participation, flexibility, independence, reflection and responsibility, political or democratic skills.

So, in her speech it came out that schools were the intermediary Organism between civil society and state institutions for civic education. Its legitimacy was clear in relation to the new situation Ireland is facing in

the midst of the European Union, and a more and more globalized world. The principal aim of the civic education courses is to promote participation in different social and political contexts, in relation to democracy, rights and responsibilities, human dignity, interdependence, development, law and stewardship. But after 10 years, and due to the always ongoing development of civic education and democracy, the place of citizenship in curriculum has been established but remains insecure, it has a great responsiveness to new situations, but there still is a great challenge in relation to evaluation and a contestation between citizenship and education of it.

Sabine Mandl gave her speech on "Civic Education and Human Rights Education in Austria". She stated that civic education in Austrian schools is taught 1) in form of the educational principle, established by the Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs in 1978, which includes a sum of Key competencies, like: to provide cognisant knowledge and understanding to support the development of political attitudes and opinions to develop intellectual and social skills and insights to inspire individuals to act responsibly and promote the ability for political participation and 2) as independent compulsory subjects, in the level of pre-vocational school, vocational schools and different combinations in secondary and technical schools, with a subject called "History and Civic Education" introduced in the school year 2001/2002 in the 11th and 12th grade, which rose the awareness about the necessity of civic education in school in the broader context of active citizenship.

The conclusion of Sabine Mandl yet pointed out that the implementation of the principle largely depends on the engagement and resources of the individual teacher, at least in Austria, and that it is therefore difficult to evaluate in relation to the outcome and general impact. For that reason she stressed that an expansion of the subject besides the educational principle in the school area as well as strengthening civic education in the adult education area are absolutely necessary.

She also mentioned a whole range of formal and informal actors in the field of democratic citizenship. The formal level comprises the Service Centres of Civic Education and Human Rights Education, through the Ludwig Boltzman Institute for Human Rights in Vienna, and through several projects Like "internet platform for teachers", "a world of difference", a peer group education program, workshops called "Rechte hat jeder?!/ Everybody has rights/is right?!", and other projects within the framework of the "Civic Education Action Days" and the "Human Rights Days", or the Project "National Socialism and Holocaust: Past and Present". In the non formal level a great variety of non governmental organisations and institutions are working in the field of Education for Democratic Citizenship, as the Democracy Centre in Vienna, Interkulturelles Zentrum, European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Amnesty International in Austria and a NGO called Baobab.

Klaus Koopmann, gave his speech on "Public civic (political) Education in Germany". He pointed out some institutions which provide Public Civic Education, which are: public schools, public institutions of Higher education (universities, etc.), public institutions of youth and adult education, governmental agencies for civic education, foundations being affiliated with major political parties and being public in so far as they are founded by the federal government and the armed forces. He focused in his speech on civic education at German schools.

Koopmann stated that the responsibility for public education on the whole lies with the 16 state governments, and the terms, contents, curricular settings, the goals of civic education vary with the states. And in addition, in Germany, they have a highly selective school system, which is under debate in the different "Länder".

He also pointed out some primary goals of civic education: to help people evolving into self determined, autonomous and critical citizens in a humane and democratic society being able: to analyse social and political situations, problems, conflicts to obtain and apply appropriate analytical methods and skills to make informed and reasoned judgements and decisions on social and political issues to recognise and handle constructively and tolerantly controversial issues as well as alternative perspectives and views in a culturally diverse society to participate reflectively and democratically in public policy processes.

In relation to European citizenship education he made a series of very interesting questions, which are right now in discussion in Germany, in relation to how, what and why should European Citizenship Education be and be taught in German (and other European) schools.

One strategy he proposed was in the frame of the project "We the people. Project Citizen", where students are learning by (inter)acting, by cooperating and reflecting in the context of an authentic policy process dealing with an authentic public problem.

In the discussion which followed the presentation of the different papers the participants came to the following conclusions:

To have a successful education, one has to take into account the demands of the people, what means, their interests; there should be created some links between the authorities and the people, and between the public and the private institutions.

Civic education not only has to do with the schools or universities, but there are also other even less formal organisations which also promote this kind of education.

There is a harsh competition between the educational system and the media.

Civic education is not to be presented as a finished model, as well as democracy, it is an ongoing process, which needs a lot of flexibility to be efficient.

Goals of civic education:

Foster social participation

Introduce means to solve social problems, realising that civil society is directly related to political institutions. Social issues become political through participation. Engage formal and non-formal participation to improve civic education:

Starting early with it, and dealing with hot issues which have to do with one self.

Linking classrooms with community learning. Beneficiaries of civic education: the community, the teachers and the students.

When the discussion dealt with the European level, the participants first had to define what it meant to be a "European citizen". The arguments went on through the differentiation of citizenship and identity. Although Koopmann tried to stress that citizenship was only a rational type of identity within a broader range of identities, others meant that to be a European citizen was a mixture between emotional values and other institutional (and maybe more rational) ones it was a mixture between an affective dimension, a cognitive and a formal one, according to Michela Cecchini. Maybe this question has to remain open, or at least has to be further discussed.

Reinhold Hedtke pointed out that there was no difference between European and national citizenship, but others pointed out that that was only in the formal level. European citizenship seemed not to be yet relevant to everybody, and from an educational point of view, one had to stress, according to Michela Cecchini, two perspectives which would help to enhance the European feeling for citizenship: Mobility (bilateral and multilateral) and language learning, and of course to know more about cultures and history of the different states of the Union.