

Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE)

Report 5

Expert Workshop: *School as a Democratic Space*

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1. Conference Report

The European debate on the question of how to transform schools into a democratic space based on principles of equality, responsibility and participation is ongoing. It is embedded in the broader discussion on citizenship education and school development (school self-governance) in Europe. The NECE-workshop “School as a Democratic Space” took up this debate exploring the complex field of learning and living democracy in school within the framework of four parallel workshops. These were composed under the following focal points:

- Citizenship and democracy education in the curriculum
- Citizenship and democracy education in the school community
- Citizenship education in partnership with the wider community
- The European and international dimension in citizenship education

These four dimensions of Democracy/ Citizenship Education, however, did not only reflect the “microcosm” of school (school community, curriculum etc.) as a democratic space but also included strategies to engage with the wider and even the international community. The workshop brought together the formal and the non-formal sector of democracy building. The debate in the four workshops was structured by distinguished sets of questions (see the four workshop reports), that addressed main challenges of the respective focal point.

The workshop was conducted as a cooperation of the *Institute for Citizenship* in the UK and the *Federal Agency for Civic Education* in Germany. It took place in London from the 17th to the 18th of November 2005. The conference was officially opened by **Dr. Harald Geiss** (*Federal Agency for Civic Education*, Germany) and **Damien Gilchrist** (*Institute for Citizenship*, UK). The participants came from 8 different European countries (Poland, Netherlands, Germany, UK, Czech Republic, Sweden, Finland and Bosnia).

The first presentation was given by **Marion Steinberger** (Eurydice, Brussels) who gave an overview on the Eurydice Report on “Citizenship Education at School in Europe”¹.

The Eurydice survey *Citizenship Education in Schools in Europe* started in early 2004 and was published in June 2005. The instrument to gather the information was a questionnaire devised by the Eurydice Euro-

¹ The survey can be downloaded from www.eurydice.org.

pean Unit and sent to 30 Eurydice network member countries. The first part of the survey is a comparative analysis of national approaches adopted by schools in imparting the basics of responsible civic behaviour and positive civic attitudes. The second part consists of detailed national descriptions from all countries scrutinized in the study.

The study concentrated on the following questions:

- How is the idea of promoting ‘responsible citizenship’ expressed in national educational legislation?
- What approaches are adopted in official school provision of citizenship education?
- What are the main aims of provision, its content and the different forms of competence that pupils should acquire as a result?
- How is the responsible civic behaviour of pupils promoted in daily school life through the ‘culture’ of schools, and the way they are organised and interact with civil society?
- How is school provision of citizenship education evaluated and how are pupils assessed?
- What is the situation regarding teacher education in citizenship education and what resources are used to support teaching?
- Is there a European/international dimension in citizenship education?
- What is the state of ongoing debate and reform concerning citizenship education in European countries?

The main results of the study may be summarized as follows:

- Many European countries perceive the term ‘responsible citizenship’ as relating to the knowledge and exercise of **rights and responsibilities**, as well as to **civic values** such as equality, participation, partnership, solidarity, tolerance of diversity and social justice. However, in several countries, the term ‘citizenship’ still mainly denotes a legal status and judicial relationship between the citizen and the state.
- Many European countries include citizenship education in the formal school curriculum in one way or another. It may be provided as a **single separate subject**, or **integrated into several conventional subjects** (such as history, social studies, geography, philosophy or religious education/ethics) or, yet again, be conceived as a **cross-curricular theme**. In primary education, most countries tend to offer citizenship education as an integrated or cross-curricular theme. By

contrast, in secondary education (or at certain stages of it), nearly half of all European countries have established a separate subject for teaching citizenship.

- Most countries are convinced that educating pupils to become active and responsible citizens should form part of a more comprehensive strategy. It is thus envisaged that school education in citizenship should not just try to **develop political literacy** of pupils, but **convey positive civic attitudes and values** and **promote active participation in society**.
- Most European countries highlight, in their educational legislation or other official documents, the importance of promoting a **participatory school culture** that is shaped by democratic values and encourages young people to become active and responsible citizens. Furthermore, all countries support the idea of a '**democratic school**' in which democratic teaching methods prevail and in which all those concerned (teachers, parents and pupils) are involved in school management and decision-making. However, it should be noted that, in most countries, the focus is mainly on **pupil's rights**, including the right to express one's opinion freely or the general right to a secure learning environment. Only some countries expand the concept of pupil's rights by explicitly introducing **duties and obligations** incumbent on pupils.
- An increasing number of countries try to develop an active '**learning by doing**' approach to citizenship education. Many help pupils to experience and practise responsible civic behaviour both in daily school life and the wider community.
- Many countries are aware of the importance of introducing a **European dimension into citizenship education**, thus promoting awareness among pupils that their country forms part of a larger European entity with shared roots and heritage and with a common future. Some countries have even decided to go one step further by conveying an **international dimension** to their pupils, depicting responsible civic behaviour as an established aim worldwide.

Steinberger concluded with some major challenges that lie ahead for most European countries, such as:

- The **evaluation of schools** concerning their performance in providing education in citizenship.

- The **assessment of pupils with regard not only to** knowledge of theoretical material, but also to civic attitudes, values or actual behaviour.
- Special **training courses for teachers** of citizenship education.
- Working towards a general **agreement on the aims of citizenship education** in Europe (standardisation of terminology and approaches).
- Exploring new ways of stimulating the **active participation of pupils** in and outside of school.
- Clarifying the relationship between **European and general citizenship education**.

The next panel was arranged as a **British-German dialogue** on democracy and citizenship education. The dialogue between **Dr. Karl-Heinz Dürr** (*State Agency for Civic Education, Germany*) and **Prof. Ian Davies** (*University of York, UK*) explored various dimensions and types of citizenship education and discussed different and similar connotations of terms related to practices of citizenship education in both countries.

The second day of the workshop was devoted to the presentations and discussions in four parallel workshops and working groups (see themes above). The workshops were composed of a combination of theoretical inputs and best practice examples allowing participants to reflect theory in the light of practice and vice versa.

The workshop “**Citizenship and Democracy Education in the Curriculum**” was moderated by **Dr. Karl-Heinz Dürr** (*State Agency for Civic Education, Germany*) and dealt with the following set of questions:

- What are/were challenges to install citizenship in the curriculum?
- What obstacles are/had to be overcome?
- What strategies can be/were applied in order to implement citizenship as a subject or a discipline in school?
- If citizenship is considered a cross-curricular task: Where does it come up in the daily school practice?
- How are teachers educated and professionally prepared for teaching citizenship?

- Are the results/effects of citizenship education evaluated? If so, how? (e.g. School inspection, tests for students, standardisation processes)
- Does citizenship education in your country concentrate on a national concept of citizenship or does it also imply other dimensions of citizenship?(e.g. European or global)

Dr. Viola Horska (*Research Institute for Education, Czech Republic*) in her statement presented the concept of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) as promoted by the *Council of Europe*. With regard to the position of EDC in the curricula of schools in Europe, she outlined four strategies of integrating EDC: (a) EDC as an „umbrella concept“ for the whole school curriculum, (b) EDC as a separate subject, (c) EDC as a cross-curricular theme and (d) EDC integrated into others subjects.

Horska stressed the need to promote a democratic learning environment and introduce new forms of participation. She emphasized the importance of interactive, participative and constructive teaching and learning methods in EDC. And she made the point that it is crucial to experience democracy in school. Therefore, it is very important to create opportunities for pupils to actively participate in decision-making and exert their democratic rights in school, she emphasized.

Horska concluded with some thoughts on evaluation asking about the indicators for a democratic school. She distinguished between “school level indicators” and “pupil level indicators.” Horska highlighted four aspects of school level indicators: democratic atmosphere in school, (2) open partnership and cooperation, (3) school as a „citizenship laboratory,“ and (4) access to information for all. The pupil level indicators she identified were (1) active participation in school/community life, (2) active involvement in projects and (3) beneficial work for the community.

The next presentation was by **Ton Remmers** (*Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development*) who outlined the challenges and strategies of integrating Citizenship Education in Dutch schools.² According to Remmers’ presentation the following objectives have to be achieved in the Netherlands until 2007/2008.

- developing a curricular framework for citizenship education for 4 to 15-year olds, which will include a clarification of concepts, a vision, continuous teaching guide lines, and a number of practical examples

² See the article on “Citizenship and Social Integration. Educational Development between Autonomy and Accountability” by Jeroen Bron, Amsterdam 2005.

- setting up a consultation course for action, with the aim of improving the curricular framework and to create a broad basis
- involving/initiating (university) research in viable didactical arrangements and strategies for implementation
- in collaboration with schools: testing the teaching guide lines in practice, and creating practical examples / teaching arrangements
- developing tools for self-evaluation for schools
- exploring the testing possibilities for citizenship education
- carrying out an international orientation into comparable developments within Europe (including participation in the projects ‘pupil assessment in citizenship education’ and ‘pupil voice, involving pupils and students in curriculum development’).

Remmers also presented a best practice project from a school in the Netherlands (*Zernike College*) called “Ask the Pupil.”³ At this school, Remmers explained, a team of pupils is researching the quality of their own school. The research results are translated into recommendations for improvements (e.g. the atmosphere on school, the teachers, the building, the books, the computers etc. etc.).

The parallel workshop “**Citizenship and Democracy Education in the School Community**” facilitated by **Prof. Ian Davies** (*University of York, UK*) dealt with the following set of questions:

- How can democratic consciousness and democratic procedures be installed in schools?
- How can students participate in creating the school community? What are the limits to student participation in school?
- How democratic can a school be when considering the fact that teachers are grading students according to their achievement?
- Can democratic attitudes and competences be taught and assessed?
- What elements of citizenship are relevant to students in the school community?
- Can democratic school communities seen as microcosms of society?
- What are good examples for creating democratic school communities?

The opening statement by **Dr. Ulrike Wolff-Jontofsohn** (*University of Freiburg, Germany*) was designed as a general overview on the field of

³ For detailed information see: www.vraaghetdeleerling.nl

school development with a focus on democracy. She highlighted three objectives of democratic school development: (1) Equal opportunity, (2) Participation of students and (3) the diminishing of undemocratic forms of organisation within school. She then examined the German case of democratic school development explaining the peculiarities of the German school system. Wolff-Jontofsohn concluded that in Germany three steps have to be taken in order to approach a more democratic culture in school: (1) Enforcing equal opportunity, (2) Providing more professionalism in dealing with diversity and (3) Including all stakeholders in the development of a democratic school culture.

A project presentation from **Stefan Trautmann** and **Helmut Bobitka** from the *Gutenberg School* in Mainz (Germany) added a practical example to the discussion. The school participates in a big German project (network) on “Learning and Living Democracy in School.” Within this framework the *Gutenberg School* introduced a *Service Learning Project*. In the project, students are encouraged to regularly and practically engage in community matters. By doing so they learned to take over responsibility for the social needs in their community. The project documented impressively how the approach of *Service Learning* can contribute to bridging the gap between social learning and social acting.

The workshop “**Citizenship Education in Partnership with the Wider Community**” was facilitated by **Dr. F. Klaus Koopmann** (*University of Bremen, Germany*). The workshop dealt with the following set of questions:

- What is the relationship between school(s) and the communities in your country?
- What are the benefits of opening schools to the communities?
- What are the difficulties of co-operating with communities?
- How can successful partnerships between school and community be formed?
- What are examples of good practice with respect to schools embracing the broader communities?
- How can the community and the specific issues of the community be reflected in school?
- How can schools and students become relevant agents for change in their communities?

Bernie Flanagan (*Children's Trust, York, UK*) opened the workshop with a contribution elaborating on the local work of the Children’s Trust

(CT) in York. The CT is linking health, education and social care. Flanagan gave an overview over the various activities of the CT that initiates and encourages citizenship learning and practicing with children and youngsters. Building links with the community is of central importance for the work of the CT as Flanagan illustrated with many examples (e.g. Children's Champion, local councillors in schools and the participation in decision-taking of children under 5 years). She concluded with a list of benefits of linking schools and communities:

- Supporting the improvement in standards
- Enabling children to have fun and develop new skills
- Enhancing support for vulnerable children
- Encouraging greater parental involvement
- Making better use of school facilities
- Providing better help to staff and parents to address children's wider needs
- Reducing health inequality through greater take up of school-based health and social care services

Within this workshop two more projects were presented. The first project was a research project called "MitWirkung" – "With Effect!" carried out by the *Bertelsmann Foundation* in Germany. The project coordinator **Sigrid Meinhold-Henschel** explained the approach of the survey on communal participation and presented the main results as well as the consequences to be drawn from them. The project "With Effect!" aims at:

- gaining insight to current youth participation practice of young people
- identifying examples of good practice
- developing effective strategies for fostering youth engagement in public affairs
- designing staff training programmes for local authorities
- providing practical tools for implementation

Meinhold-Henschel presented the so called "participation spiral" as a major finding of the study. The spiral shows how interrelated different factors and (pre)conditions of participation are. With regard to the participation of young people, she said, that their needs must be addressed appropriately by offering a wide spectrum of schemes, by using a variety of communication channels as well as supporting a face to face communication. Young people are moreover more likely to participate where they spend their leisure time and feel most comfortable. And: young people feel competent

when considered as equal partners. As a consequence Meinhold-Henschel suggested the following measures to be taken in order to motivate young people to participate: (1) target group oriented activities with a low entry threshold, (2) Development of mentoring models and (3) Training courses for adolescents. She also stressed that participatory satisfaction is related to the quality of offered schemes. From the target group perspective, Meinhold-Henschel explained, quality is generated by (a) the attractiveness of schemes, (b) the process design and (c) the implementation of results. She considered it essential that communities provide structural preconditions for quality assurance. She concluded with the perspective that the *Bertelsmann Foundation* will test new models of youth participation and promote public awareness of young people's participation.

Alicja Pacewicz (*Centre for Civic Education*, Poland) introduced the project “Traces of the Past” initiated by the Centre.⁴ The project suggests that young people shape their own identity by discovering the past of their local community and region. By dealing with the past, it is assumed, that they will build a sense of responsibility for their own and other’s future and begin to feel as citizens. Also dealing with the past shall encourage young people to undertake actions for the local community. The aims of the project Pacewicz summarized as the following: (1) developing a sense of belonging to a “little homeland,” (2) engaging students and local community in protecting monuments, (3) teaching local history and the region’s culture and (4) engaging students in activities promoting their village, town or district.

Pacewicz described many examples how Polish students scrutinized the past in their village, town or region, (re)discovering neglected objects (e.g. cemeteries, crosses, chapels, monuments) or elements of non-material culture (e.g. life stories, legends, customs, local heroes). By doing so, Pacewicz argued, students would symbolically adopt these “objects” and take care of them in order to restore them to the common memory of the local community. Today the project is supported by the *Adam Mickiewicz’s Institute* and the *Leopold Kronnenberg Foundation* as well as by representatives of the local authorities, the cultural institutions (museums, libraries, archives, monuments’ conservators) and the local media. It has so far attracted more than 300 schools and reached about 6000 students.

⁴ See www.ceo.org.pl

Critically reviewing the projects presented by the *Children's Trust* (UK), the *Bertelsmann Foundation* (Germany) and the *Centre for Civic Education* (Poland), the working group identified the following list of core criteria/principles for good practice in democracy/citizenship learning/teaching:

- process: participatory, reflective, appropriate to participants
- authenticity of issue/problem and process
- sustainability of participants' efforts: staying involved after ending of project; acquiring lasting skills; transferring skills
- meaningfulness of project (issue/problem/process) to participants
- relevance of project to the public
- replicability of the project
- good project management (planning, structure, guidance)
- project should contribute to integrating different social groups
- well defined, well balanced role of adults: recognizing participants as autonomously acting individuals – but not leaving them alone (adults as moderators)
- considering students' (tight) schedule
- openness of community to youth project
- tangible outcome
- evaluation of the project

The workshop “**The European and International Dimension in Citizenship Education**” was facilitated by **Dr. Liam Gearon** (*University of Surrey*, UK). The workshop addressed the following set of questions:

- What characterises a European or international dimension of citizenship?
- How is a European dimension of citizenship to be distinguished from an international dimension?
- What are the benefits of including a European or international dimension to citizenship education?
- What are the challenges of further developing and implementing a European or international dimension to (national) citizenship education?
- What is the relationship between citizenship education with a national focus and citizenship education with a European or international focus?
- What are adequate strategies identifying promising models of European citizenship education?

- Should there be a consensus on one model of European citizenship education? Or should each country or region define its own concept of integrating a European dimension to its citizenship curriculum?

Agneta Derrien (*Council of Europe, COE*) the organisational structure and the objectives of the *European Year of Citizenship Through Education (EYCE)* by the *Council of Europe*. Derrien gave an overview on the local, national and European actors involved in the EYCE and thereby made visible that civil society represented by NGOs plays a crucial role.

The objectives of the EYCE-year 2005 she summarized as follows:

- To promote the implementation of Recommendation Rec. 12 (2002) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship
- To bridge policy and practice by empowering policy makers and practitioners at all levels to set up and develop sustainable programmes for EDC and Human Rights Education (HRE)
- To raise awareness, strengthen the commitment of member states
- Provide member states with a framework and tools
- To encourage the development of initiatives and partnerships to promote EDC and HRE

She furthermore highlighted some of the activities and products of the COE coordinating the year, such as

- the dissemination of information and publications in member states through
- the EDC Pack (*Tool 1* on key issues for EDC policies, *Tool 2* on democratic governance in education, *Tool 3* on teacher training for EDC and HRE and *Tool 4* on quality assurance and self-evaluation in EDC)
- the Coordinator meetings, conferences and teacher training
- the Special website on the “Year” with links to the national websites

The presentation of **Prof. Yasemin Soysal** (*University of Essex, UK*) was titled “**What Do We Teach Future European Citizens?** Soysal based her contribution on a large-scale comparative project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in Britain, in which she subjected secondary school textbooks and curricular debates from five European countries to systematic and longitudinal analysis. She sampled history and civics textbooks and curricula used in secondary schools in Germany, France, Britain, Greece and Turkey from 1945 until now with particular focus on

three time points, the early 1950s, the 1970s, and the 1990s, when major curricular reforms took place in the case countries.

Critically reviewing the difficulty of the formation of a European identity, she examined the shifting significance of Europe in textbooks and curricula. Soysal concluded that Europe has apparently gained more prominence in textbooks and curricula over the years. However she said that would not mean that Europe replaces the nation. She found that the teaching of the nation and national histories still take up a significant place in national education. A substantial proportion of history teaching in schools is still devoted to national or local history. Soysal remarked though that the textbooks increasingly situate the nation and identity within a European context. By doing so, she argued, the nation is being reinterpreted and recast. In relation to this, Soysal identified four trends: (1) National narratives become normalized, (2) Heroes and myths are domesticated, (3) National space is reorganized and (4) Nation is revised to incorporate diversity.

The problem Soysal came across is that on the one hand Europe is presented in terms of a 'transnational normativity' (human rights, progress, democracy and equality) and legitimized by a transnational society. On the other hand teaching still emphasizes national history, society and citizenship. The contradiction, Soysal argued, is that the citizen is still envisioned in national terms while the reality of the citizens in Europe has become transnational.

Soysal considered three aspects relevant to this development in the countries examined: (1) A change of the institutional structure of the educational systems and the textbook production, (2) the educational reforms in the 1970's towards comprehensive schooling and (3) the process of the European unification.

Soysal concluded "The transnational normativity of good citizens emerging in European educational sphere is a correction to biases, prejudices and myths that afflict much of the national modalities of citizenship. The new textbooks and curricula are much more balanced in their representations. They refrain from self-congratulatory accounts of national history and heroes, treat others' histories and cultures in a more comprehensive manner, and accommodate diverse identities more at ease. The normativity that is at work in textbooks and curricula also emphasizes (and facilitates) global connectivity, in particular by accentuating environmental consciousness and sensitivity to "world problems" (such as human rights, poverty, and womens' rights) as proper assets of being a good citizen."

However Soysal, ended her analysis, stressing that it is important for the future of Europe that the education of European citizens takes into

account that Europe evolved in a history of conflicts and struggles. Only this way, future citizens will understand that what are defined as European ideals were results of fierce struggles, clashes and forced dominance.

The workshop was closed by a presentation of **Kirsten Stamm** who is the coordinator of the initiative **Europe as a Learning Environment in School (ELOS)**⁵ in the Netherlands.

ELOS was launched during the Dutch EU-presidency in 2004. ELOS aims at high-level education, which explicitly includes the reality of the European Union and prepares students at secondary (12-15) and upper secondary (15-19) level for their role as European citizens, by embedding them in a ‘European Learning Environment’.

At the upper secondary level, there is a choice of ‘streams’: ‘European and International Orientation’, deepening the basic programme; ‘European Vocational Orientation’, targeting specifically students at the lower educational levels (such as pre-vocational schools), with a focus on pre-vocational European competencies and practical training abroad; and/or ‘Science and Technology’, highlighting the International and European perspective in this subject area.

ELOS invites schools to join the network and subscribe to a European and International Orientation (EIO) in the curriculum, the subject areas and their international activities with partner students and teachers abroad. The ‘European competencies’ of students and teachers are defined with regard to the “Lisbon strategy” as well as with regard to indicators for a successful ‘European’ standard at schools in Europe. ELOS supports schools and offers case studies, best practices and curricula plans in order to process the formation of these standards.

The ELOS-network receives support from the European Commission (*Comenius 3*) and national authorities. Schools take part in monitoring and evaluation activities, which are steered by a scientific committee. Schools will eventually receive an ELOS school certificate based on the common standard and a visitation procedure.

The **conference ended** with an exchange of the results of the four parallel workshops that tackled different but related dimensions of school as a democratic space.

⁵ See www.elos.eu

2. Feedback of Participants

- All participants appreciated the opportunity to exchange perspectives on such an important issue as school and democracy
- All participants stressed that they gained relevant information for their work
- Participants expressed their wish to continue the dialogue, sharing knowledge, experiences and theoretical insights
- Participants appreciated the network building character of the workshop
- Participants stressed the good quality of the examples presented from practice
- One participant criticized that the debate had a rather western European focus and hence neglected the specific experience of eastern European countries with regard to citizenship education
- Two participants criticised that there was too little time to fully explore the topics

3. Recommendations for Future Activities

The discussants of the four workshops came up with the following ideas on future activities to be seen as a useful follow-up to the NECE-workshop “School as a Democratic Space?”

(a) Follow-up-workshops:

- A workshop on implementation strategies of citizenship education in different European countries
- A workshop linking school development with community building
- A workshop on the significance of diversity in different educational systems/approaches in Europe
- A workshop on evaluation of citizenship education (focus: how to integrate students into an evaluation process)
- A workshop for policy makers on implementation strategies of citizenship education
- A workshop on new forms of democratic participation/governance in schools
- A workshop on core values with regard to citizenship education

(b) Other recommendations:

- Identification of criteria for citizenship education (completing, elaborating and disseminating criteria and verifying criteria in practice)
- Research project on criteria (see above)
- Research on involving parents and grandparents in the school community
- Developing best practice examples on the basis of criteria (see above)
- Establishing a database of projects
- Starting a European standardization process: agreeing on the aims of citizenship education, terminology and approaches
- Discussing and clarifying the relation between European and general citizenship education
- Developing models of student assessment with regard their active participation in school and community life
- Developing and testing new and innovative ways of stimulating the active participation of pupils in and outside school teacher training
- Teacher training for citizenship education has to become part of the education of teachers
- Teacher training in citizenship education focusing on marginalised students

- Creating a special website for teachers/headmasters on democratic governance in schools
- Collecting and publishing models of democratic governance in schools
- Lobbying for the idea of “democratic schools”
- Developing a model concept to be adapted in other European countries