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Category: Innovations in Social Practice and Education

STUDYING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS. A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO RESEARCHING THE TEACHING, SHAPING AND ENACTING OF CITIZENSHIP IN THREE DUTCH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

Since February 1, 2006, Dutch primary and secondary schools are legally obligated to promote "active citizenship and social integration" among their students (OCW, 2005). The government aims for students from divergent cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to obtain an equal vision of how to contribute to society as citizens (OCW, 2004). However, in accordance with the law on "freedom of education", schools are free to decide on how citizenship is defined and incorporated into the curriculum (OCW, 2004). This raises questions. Firstly, it can be doubted if establishing a common image on this topic is possible, both in terms of the schools' freedom to implement citizenship education according to their own particular worldview, and considering the diversity within Dutch schools and society. Secondly, it is interesting to look at how (shared) visions of citizenship among students can be researched in a way that does justice to the style and the context in which citizenship is shaped and enacted.

Current Dutch studies on children's citizenship[1] mainly measure this in terms of competences, and they often do so in a quantitative way. Citizenship is, however, not only about competences for democratic behavior and for acting in a socially responsible way. It additionally entails questions around identification and options to participate which coincide with societal structures and positions; questions on the role of nationality and cosmopolitanism; and questions on the interplay between government, policies and citizens with their own particular worldviews and enactment of these. In this article, we argue that research on citizenship and its education should also take these questions into account in order to reach a more profound view of what citizenship means both to children and teachers, how it is taught, shaped and enacted, and how that corresponds to the Dutch OCW core goals around citizenship. In the following section we will present our conceptual approach and three intended qualitative research projects addressing these questions.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

National consciousness, knowledge, attitudes and stereotypes appear and increase in children from the age of five (Barrett, 2007, pp. 196-198). The school is one key site for the construction of national citizenship, as it is where the cultural, political, religious and legal principles of a nation are taught (Anderson, 2006). Scholars such as Schiffauer, Baumann, Kastoryano, and Vertovec (2004, p. 10) correspondingly describe schools as the primary places where national identity is shaped. Others characterize them as "containers and conveyers for culture" (Pollock & Levinson, 2011, p. 4).

Citizenship is, however, not only taught and learned within schools. The environment and the media as well as the participation in traditions, rituals, and everyday practices are additional and important influences (Anderson, 2006; Barrett, 2007, p. 21; Gellner, 1983). Furthermore, the enactment of citizenship also takes place both within the school and outside of it, for example at home, in one's neighbourhood and during leisure activities (Jans, 2004). According to Pollock and Levinson (2011, p. 4), (citizenship) education should, therefore, not only be understood as schooling but as teaching and learning which happens throughout our daily lives. Consequently, one can describe citizenship education as the "efforts of societies and social groups to educate their members to imagine their social belonging and exercise their participation as (democratic) citizens" (Levinson, 2011, p. 284). Citizenship education, thus, encompasses questions around citizenship and identity. It defines who is part of a community and who does not belong to the (political, national or local) collective or group, and it implies an active participation and/or expression of that belonging.

Our projects will take the school as a point of departure to study the education of citizenship, but they will also take both the local and the global environment into account. This will be explained further in the next section.

CITIZENSHIP AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

Current Dutch studies on children's citizenship (education)[1] seem to overlook the identity-related aspects of citizenship. They mainly measure children's citizenship in terms of competences (for example for democratic behavior and for acting in a socially responsible way) and they often do so in a quantitative way. Although this is a useful method to measure part of the "results" of citizenship education, scientific literature shows that citizenship involves more than competences and we argue it should be studied accordingly in order to properly reflect policies and practices regarding citizenship education.

Recent academic debate has moved from solely understanding citizenship as being a member of a community with rights and responsibilities (see Marshall, 1950) to a conception that focuses more on how citizenship relates to identification and belonging to a group (Yuval-Davis, 1999). It comprises "relationships between rights, duties, participation and [national] identity" (Delanty, 2000, p. 9) which are negotiated and expressed through the interplay of people's agency, the way they participate, and in the power relations within societies (Ong, 1996; Faulks, 2000).

Citizenship, thus, includes both bottom-up and top-down practices of belonging and identification that happen in daily life. It is therefore crucial to focus both on the individual identifications and participation of citizens, and on the socio-political contexts in which citizenship is practiced and given meaning (Faulks, 2000). According to De Waal (2015), researching citizenship as a practice can reveal possible discrepancies between the way attention is paid (for example in schooling) to the topic, and the reality in which children and adolescents grow up.

Additionally, some scholars have posited citizenship as being "multi-layered", pervading and being continually defined by intersecting levels (such as gender, class and ethnicity, but also national/supranational) of social belonging, identification and corresponding ideals thereof (Ong, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1999). This calls into question the traditional notion of citizenship as being tied exclusively to the nation-state (Bloemraad, Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 1999) and makes it interesting to study different approaches to being a citizen. Cosmopolitan theory, for example, contends that citizenship identifications and belongings operate above and below national borders. Such an approach is, of course, also related to the challenged role of the nation-state resulting from aspects of globalisation (Beck, 2002).

In the following section we will elaborate on how we intend to study these approaches to citizenship in the everyday practices of primary schools in the Netherlands.

RESEARCHING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

Zooming in on the Netherlands, the Dutch law making the promotion of "active citizenship and social integration" at primary schools mandatory was introduced by the government in 2006 in order to address particular disquiets about changes in Dutch society relating to growing individualisation and fears about the loss of national values due to increased diversity. This legislation aims to cultivate a unified vision amongst Dutch primary school children about what being a Dutch citizen, with its attached duties, rights, community of belonging and participation therein means (OCW, 2005). Schools in the Netherlands have the freedom to approach this in their own way due to the constitutional "freedom of education".

However, this autonomy makes it questionable whether a unified conception can be achieved within a society where a national discourse of "inclusion and tolerance" goes hand in hand with cases of ethnic profiling by the police, the existence of "black and white schools", and discrimination on the labour market – to name a few of the contemporary issues in the Dutch

public debate on diversity. Moreover, it has to be questioned whether the potential reaching of this goal can be measured in terms of predefined competences among students, as current research tends to do. Apart from missing essential dimensions of citizenship experienced and enacted by children, one might also be interested in the way teachers influence and are being influenced while teaching citizenship. Finally, the context of globalization may require a supra-national conception of the duties, rights, community of belonging and participation of citizenship. Consequently, when studying children's citizenship it is crucial to look beyond the perspective of competences and to study the shaping of citizenship among children in a broader sense.

This entails, firstly, questions about how children of different social and ethnic backgrounds (or "social locations") are and feel represented within the school's curriculum and in society. As Biesta (2007, p. 18) states, it is of little use to teach adolescents to be active and responsible citizens if they do not have the chance to influence situations that are important to them in their daily lives, if their voices are not being heard: if they do not actually have opportunities to participate.

Moreover, as the development of children's citizenship is influenced by both schooling and by local or environmental factors, and Dutch findings on citizenship competences report differences that significantly correlate with gender, age, cognitive level, socio-economic status and ethnicity[1], it is consequently essential to take children's divergent backgrounds into account while studying how their citizenship takes shape. Therefore, one of our research projects will address the question how citizenship identity is being taught, experienced, constructed and negotiated among primary school students.

Furthermore, alongside studying the development of citizenship among children on a "local" level, approaching to the topic in a broader way also means looking above, as well as below, the national level. Cosmopolitan theory holds that, due to globalisation "from within" (Beck, 2002) the national is already becoming cosmopolitan which "implies a sense of solidarity with strangers in distant places but it also requires solidarity, a sense of shared humanity and dialogue with those in the local community and the national community whose perspectives may be very different from our own" (Osler, 2008). Focusing on how children see themselves as part of the wider world, our second research project will thus examine the interaction of ideas of cosmopolitan and national citizenship in the shaping and enactment of citizenship among children within the primary school context.

Finally, citizenship is a practice that entails negotiations between governments, policies and citizens "on the ground". Our third project will study the way teachers operate within the citizenship

frameworks set by the state, and at the same time bring in their own ideals and opinions and how they take the opportunity to express these within their teaching, thereby influencing the students in turn.

The research projects will take place among seventh and eighth grade students and their teachers in two primary schools in Amsterdam-West and one in Culemborg, between February and May 2017. During these four months we will conduct participant observation within the schools and their classrooms, carry out interviews with teachers, directors and policy-makers, and organize focus groups with the students in which the topic of citizenship will be discussed in a playful way. With the resulting qualitative data, we aim to provide an alternative, in-depth contribution to the existing body of knowledge on citizenship education and to formulate new questions for both qualitative and quantitative studies.

NOTEN

1 See Geijsel, Ledoux, Reumerman & Ten Dam, 2012; Netjes, Van de Werfhorst, Dijkstra & Geboers, 2011; Peschar, Hooghoff, Dijkstra & Ten Dam, 2010; Ten Dam, Geijsel, Reumerman & Ledoux, 2011.

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