

Citizenship and Intercultural Education in Denmark

Claus Haas & Bente Meyer

The Danish University of Education

haas@dpu.dk bm@dpu.dk

Citizenship education

- Is not restricted to transmitting knowledge about politics and society (political literacy).
- Is not restricted to learn how to be active participant in different social and political processes.
- Is not restricted to teach about formal rights and duties.
- Is not restricted to specific school subjects

Citizenship education

- Is in a broad sense about membership of one or several political and /or cultural communities, and what do membership mean in practice
- The construction of political subjects
- Insiders and outsiders
- The politics of belonging and identity.
- An essentially contested concept

Document analyses

- Legal frameworks of primary and lower/upper secondary schools
- Curriculum
- Policy discourses

Legal framework 1960

The school should - through its activities - both transmit knowledge and bring up children and form their character. It should develop and strengthen the children's awareness of ethical and Christian values, give them a sense of respect for human life and for nature, love of their home, and our people and country, respect for other people's opinions, a feeling of community between peoples, and a feeling of togetherness with the other Nordic peoples

Legal framework 1975

The “Folkeskole” prepares pupils for participation in a democratic society and responsibility for the solution of shared tasks. The teaching and the daily life of the school should therefore be based on freedom of thought and democracy.

Legal framework 1993

The “Folkeskole” should make pupils familiar with Danish culture and contribute to their understanding of other cultures and of man’s interaction with nature. The school prepares pupils for participation, responsibility, rights and duties within a society based on freedom and democracy. The teaching and daily life of the school should therefore be based on freedom of thought, equality, and democracy.

Legal framework 2006

The “Folkeskole” should - in cooperation with parents - give pupils knowledge and skills that prepare them for further education and motivate them to learn more, make them familiar with Danish culture and history, and give them an understanding of other countries and cultures, contribute to their understanding of man’s interaction with nature and promote each pupil’s general development

The Danish Minister of Education (July 2, 2006)

The subject history is a narrative of fate. The subject history is about the self-understanding of the people. Thus, the subject history should comprise the mythological material from ancient times, and of special importance are those historical events that have contributed to define us as a people (...)

Conclusions document analyses in general

- Only a few examples of references to intercultural dimensions of citizenship education
- Europe exists as a school sub-theme, but not as part of citizenship education
- The homogenous Danish nation is hegemonic nodal point of official national politics of identity, but contested even from within.

Multicultural identity politics (1)

The Future of the subject Danish (2003) (Fremtidens Danskfag)

- “In a foreseeable future there will be no return to a mono-cultural or mono-lingual Denmark, which by the way has always been an illusion (...) There is a tendency to regard cultural influences as clash between “the particularly Danish” and “something coming from the outside, but it has been overlooked that “the particularly Danish” was already influenced by previous currents (from the outside”, that were incorporated.

Multicultural identity politics (2)

- The particularly Danish is the result of the history of this geographical region. And that is not something in particular (...) it is not the aim of the subject to articulate a Danish culture, but to be the meeting spot for all cultures living in Denmark. Culture is not something you have but something you do, and anyway the concept of culture is rapidly becoming more relative and dynamic.

Interviews with teachers

- *Teachers as citizens*: the teacher's role as educator and as citizen, and the degree to which the teachers see their work as an act of citizenship
- *Teachers as cultural workers*: The teachers' professional role in developing a multicultural society and/or multicultural nation-state
- *Teachers as transformative intellectuals*: Teachers' commitment to transform society/teaching/learning as a transformative process

Teachers as citizens

- Do you see your role as a citizen as connected with your role as an educator?
- Have you been actively involved in any social or political campaigns related to, for example, ethnicity, multiculturalism, race, language or citizenship?
- Are you a member of a political party, member of a school board, board of parents, or active in any group or association concerned with educational, ethnical or multicultural issues?

Teachers as citizens

- Teachers do not generally explicitly state their roles and teaching practice as an act of citizenship
- Teachers identify with the tradition of democratic education
- Teachers define themselves as social workers within the context of the school rather than political actors in society

Teachers as cultural workers

- Is there a connection between your identity and function as a teacher in the Danish “folkeskole”/gymnasium, and the cultural diversity of the Danish society?
- If there is a connection: How does it find expression/ is it expressed in the planning and accomplishment of your teaching?
- Do you think that your teaching contributes to changing the pupils’ understanding of what democracy is or ought to be ?
- Do you think, that you contribute to changing the pupils’ understanding of what it means to belong to one or a diversity of cultures?

Teachers as cultural workers

- Teachers often understand ‘culture’ as something very specific, distinct and demarcated
- Teachers often associate intercultural education with integration issues and ”problems”
- Teachers challenge the negative stereotyping of children
- Teachers raise awareness of intercultural issues through classroom dialogue

Teachers as transformative intellectuals

- Which educational strategies do you find most effective in order to educate your students to become integrated members of a multicultural society?
- Are you in your teaching engaged in encouraging one or more of the pupils' identities, for example the pupils identification with the Danish national community and/or a European community?
- Are there other identities you find important to include in your teaching, for example the pupils' ethnic/ religious identities?
- Are there one or more issues of identity, you find ought to have a special place in your teaching and in the education of the pupils?

Teachers as transformative intellectuals

- Teachers do not generally see the curriculum as a representation of a hegemonic discourse
- Teachers understand dialogue, talk, discussion and group work as transformative practices
- Teachers do not understand their teaching as a discursive strategy
- Teachers generally associate “democratic education” with giving the students tools to act democratically and not with teachers’ commitment to transform society.
- Teachers generally assume that active democratic students will become active democratic citizens and they do not connect critical thinking with promoting political action.

Conclusions