Journal of Social Science Education
Volume 12, Number 4

ISSN 1618-5293

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Editorial: Citizenship and Civic Education in Postcommunist Countries

Keywords:
citizenship, civic education, collective identity, postcommunism, Eastern Europe

Research in social sciences has dealt for decades with the concept of citizenship. Depending on the epistemological access to citizenship, scholars in general subscribe either to a normative account of citizenship or to the historic-functionalist one. Normative accounts of citizenship often refer to a lost ideal of Ancient Greek or Roman citizenship (e.g. Pocock 1992), canonising it into a universal citizenship standard. In contrast, historic-functionalist approaches to citizenship deal with the explanations of specific citizenship forms and their development as associated with functional requirements of societies such as military aspects of social life or the mode of economic activity (e.g. Marshall 1950; Weber 1998). This special issue deals with post-communist citizenship and the related topic of civic education. In this sense, postcommunist citizenship refers to concepts and practices of citizenship in societies that underwent deep political, economic and social transformations and where both legacies of the past and newer postcommunist developments overlap.

Robert Putnam's studies of social capital have enjoyed wide readership across Europe, but have they had a deserved impact on our understanding of the role education has on levels of social capital in general and social trust in particular? We, the editors, and our authors, are in agreement that more could be salvaged from the widely cited – but only superficially understood – hypothesis on "hunkering down" of social capital across Europe. The papers in this special issue additionally claim, that though the role of the "social lubricant" has been changing continuously in postcommunist societies, these changes reflect the shifting importance ascribed to education in the context of transition societies.

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In short, the question the authors in our special issue address explicitly follows from the attention paid in all transition societies to the important role played by real-existing, desired and/or imagined collective identities. Beyond doubt, the relevance and the role perceived to be played by a range of identity markers across postcommunist societies has been discussed at great lengths in the past, if anything suggesting the significance of ethnocentrism and importance of statehood across the range of societies undergoing transition from socialist to European. The wide receptiveness of domestic publics, policymakers and not least academics to the thesis of "civilisational clash" by Huntington gives us just a small hint as to the perceived need for an antidote for experience of the past in a situation of 'social anomie,' where one's ethnolinguistic kin, socioeconomic group, or national community is being valuated in relation to an idealised community of "european" societies. Rightly so, some claim, because whilst postcommunist, "eastern european" societies define their members via congruity between societal and social communities, most societies in the west have placed premium on individual choice to and identification with the community of citizens. Superficially the distinction between the Eastern and Western nations still holds sway for many analyses of social processes: in postcommunist societies individuals are presumed members of homogeneous communities (largely of ethnic, linguistic, cultural groups), in the West – they are identified as members of communities that have made a choice to stick it through, even if not "bowl" together.

We however, believe that the reference to community as a building block of an individual identity is misleading. It is for two reasons: First, all societies across Europe demonstrate increasing concern for limits of social cohesion experienced particularly as a result of economic crisis, allegedly shaking up the very foundations of social fabric. Euroscepticism is on the rise across the EU societies revered in the past for their welcoming attitudes of the EU project, inward looking parties are claiming for decisions to be made closer to home in nearly every state and many political parties brandishing centrifugal political agendas have seem run off on their offices of late. All of this indicates that west-east regardless, contemporary citizens in Europe are concerned with perks their community will maintain under increasing constraints experi-enced in backsliding European economies; and to counter their fears, they gain points by turning on their community-focused rhetoric to activate the bond that binds easiest, the ethno-cultural bond. There is little difference between East and West in Europe in this regard.

Second, feelings and actions of individual members of societies broadly associated with ethno-nationalism should not be read off the page discussing Eastern European states. As has been the case throughout the world, most accounts focussing social transition have made broad and fertile references to social impact institutional changes have on the mechanics of societal cohesion. These very mechanics are often said to change as a result of disorientation in the newly established political, economic and social circumstances individuals find themselves in and undoubtedly result in changes in individual behaviours. However, while going over postcommunist states with a small brush marks these societies as different, we as researchers are acutely aware of causal mechanisms behind social change should use a broader brush: no society is static, just as no society is locked in practices that cannot be improved. If anything, the very fact that we as social scientists engage in the study of processes of change observed throughout the post-communist region, suggests that these societies are on a trajectory for more open, more liberal and more diverse future.

We as editors of this special issue sought to offer our authors a veritable platform to debate the issues pertaining to social change and problematise these by reference to specific institutional aspect of that change: education. On this way, we have offered our authors but a generous margin of reference indicating that discussion of input education as a process locked in an education system has into individual and broader societal development should not be considered overdetermined by experiences of the past. We have also suggested that while much ink was spent on brushing over specific transformations in education since socialism there is precious little on transformation towards more liberal approaches in education. This in itself posed a huge challenge for us, the editors: Do we project a yet to be identified goal in education development for postcommunist societies? How can we factor in the legacies of the past education practices into discussions of the contemporary education? Having in mind the overall preponderance to treat post-communist states as being different from those with no experience of communism, do we urge our authors to discuss approaches to and dialectics in education that surpass ethno-nationalist concerns of general publics? The editors decided these pivots to be unnecessary. Instead, we supposed that transformation in postcommunist societies is set on the 'democratic' path, it is market-based not only in economic terms – societies buy what they want also in terms of what they perceive is necessary *within their value system* and act accordingly. For this purpose, the only term that needs explanation however is collective identity, which we are carefully distinguishing from emotive references to national, ethnic and plethora of others "cultures with army" concepts.

Between the two covers of this virtual special issue, we refer to collective identity as a practice – and this ultimately different from what other authors would see as a "construct" - of individuals, who are, as we acknowledge are citizens with their own goal-setting capacities, who have been historically subsumed to be objects of communist institutions and as such reactive agents of change: making choices and undertaking action only where no penalty followed. In short, we carve out the dearly needed space for thinking of potentialities brought into social processes by institutionalised forms of state-citizen interaction, particularly interactions with those citizens that will be shaping future political institutions, define social priorities and indeed, work off assumptions about their individual and collective freedoms. We are concerned with the interface of objects and objectives in education, the relationship between the students and content, between educators and their assessment of ways to impair, between subject specific content and developmental ideas of fostering active citizens out of students.

For the abovementioned reasons, we are keen on moving away from discussing collective identities as pinnacles of state-citizens relations commonly emphasised in discussions of (political) participation in Western Europe and (ethnopolitical) mobilisation in Eastern Europe. In so doing, we would like readers to be aware of the quasi-familial relationships of dependency projected upon education systems in many states, systems, institutions and agents of teaching, impairing little but compliance. Though we see the point in many case studies that put forth the ideas of state paternalism, not dissimilar to that of socialist regimes, our special issue contributions emphasise the link between opportunity to access education – and by extension a chance to form one's opinion oneself – with political rights, respect for ethno-cultural diversity and, ultimately participation in a social cohesion project of wider European scope. It is here that we see strengthening the bond between members of society individually and as a whole as feeding into the concept of state-society relationships that emphasises a moral tie linking subjects with the state through their rights to share in and tap the jointly developed social product. In so doing we radically break the concept that postcommunist citizens are subjects neither socially and politically active for the benefit that is not their own, we presume that postcommunist education has already bred a generation of citizens that are not merely grateful recipients, like small children in a family, of benefits their leadership conferred upon for them.

Naturally, one of the key answers our authors have on offer to the question whence the impetus for social change has originated, lies in the confrontation head on with legacies of communist education. While compliance with official rules was a must in public sphere, it is widely acknowledged that individuals enjoyed quiet a considerable margin for implementing rules learnt. This selective rule implementation is the asset that all postcommunist publics can rely on to navigate the complex and intransparent (i.e. unpredictable) set of rules and requirements. Could we go as far as to suggest that

the subject disposition presumed by the past regime facilitated societal transformation after communisms collapse? Possibly, however our focus on citizens collective identities suggest much less scalar implication of dependency relationships observed in the past: rather than pursuing their own goals, set and pursued by independent agents of change, post-communist citizens were ascending to what was on offer, as a result coping with the collapse of practices and legal frameworks better than rule reliant citizens would have had. Proverbial solidarity, mutual support, and 'thick' social bonds that required cooperation and networks of solidarity have offered a kinship-familial metaphor for individuals to enjoy some certainty under conditions of multifaceted transformation.

This is where we come full circle that allows us – and our authors – to see education as framework that spurs collective identities as practices that sustainably shape interpersonal relations. In fact, education establishments as objects that frame societal transition highlight two important issues in fostering citizenries. First, they focus our attention at practices that maintain stability across generations while facilitating contestation of the established norms by younger cohorts in society. Shaped by the ideological baggage of the past (and not too distant past that is), the educators construct the and expose the younger citizens to subjectivities they have experienced as ones making sense to them; this sensitivises the younger members in postcommunist societies to differences in the way ideas are expressed, to ask questions as to what, and why is being impaired upon them. Second, it shakes up the mechanisms in place that were perceived to be reflecting the (socialist?) promise of a new, albeit still paternalist relation between subjects and state in the early years after communism. Particularly this process influences the prospects for both social and political change in states and societies that are located closer to the EU, enjoy opportunities for free movement into EU member states and can negotiate their own mechanism of individual and collective integration into the EC community of active citizens.

The papers in this special issue come mainly from the conference that took place at the University of Wroclaw in February 2013. During the two days in the Willy Brandt Centre, our authors alongside a dozen other participants have reflected upon dynamics in practices of citizenship across postcommunist states with particular focus on countries which have experienced considerable institutional changes as a result of state building. While we were interested in comparative studies of societies that saw practices of citizenship changing since early 1990s as a result of border changes (including territorial adjustment and dissolution of socialist federations), population dynamics (both demographic, as a result of in and out migration, and resettlement after warfare) and amendments to their citizenship regimes (issuing passports to an ethnic kin folk and provisions for extraterritorial citizenship), the focus on education as a widely neglected experience of political socialisation caught our sight immediately.

During the conference participants reflected on the impact structural factors have had on comparative developments in practices of citizenship across postcommunist region and we have established that too many studies discuss citizenship as if it was a fixed set of attributed (e.g. T.H. Marshal, W. Kymlicka, Jo Shaw). Everyone of us (we presume) has run through an institutional experience of education outlets: kindergardens, schools, universities, administrations of all kinds that maintain their relevance for us as citizens in societies where we live either to make sense of others' behaviours, relate to experiences of others that are not known to us, or contrast our (perceived) successes with (perceived) failures of our counterparts. All these hinge upon personalised analyses of continuities and changes in practices – political participation, civic engagement, community activities – related to formal criteria defining us as members of a wider society, itself contained within a "pot" of a state, that marks all of us by means of citizenship status, passport as members of collectivities.

Simona Szakács's article deals with the consequences of the 1989 for the civic education in Romania. The paper presents empirical evidence supporting the claim that the postcommunist civic education in Romania exhibits similarities with the post-war concept of the 'good citizen'. The findings of the paper suggest a complex picture, combining liberal, communitarian and cosmopolitan aspects of the postcommunist "new citizen" in Romania. This complexity is often overlooked in the research on postcommunist countries, as its dominant focus lies on the failures to comply with an idealized Western liberal model. Simona argues that the Romanian case invites us to reconsider both the pitfalls and the opportunities of postcommunist citizenship education by considering them from the angle of wider socio-cultural change that is gradually being institutionalised at the world level.

Helga Zichner's article focuses on Moldovan citizenship in the context of the Erasmus Mundus Programme of the EU. The paper explores in how far external actors such as the EU can impact citizenship in postcommunist countries. First, the article discusses the rhetoric employed in EU documents on internal and external education policy. Helga uses a differentiated concept of citizenship highlighting the boundary between insiders and outsiders of a community. In this context, the paper analyses what kind of integration the EU intends for formal non-EU citizens by offering them certain opportunities of participation. Second, the article takes a look at individuals from Moldova participating in the EU's Erasmus Mundus programme and the meaning their stays abroad had for them. The paper shows in how far their experiences abroad influence their daily practices as citizens of their countries.

Jennifer Bruen's paper compares political education in postcommunist and post-colonial states with the cases of Eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland. Jennifer points out that that some post-communist states including the former German

ISSN 1618-5293

Democratic Republic practice a narrow form of civic education in their school curriculum focusing on the mere transmission of facts. This type of civic education tends, however, to produce citizens who are more likely to accept the status quo, rather than to critically engage with it. The paper shows that this is also the case in the Republic of Ireland which espouses a different historical background but can be categorized as postcolonial. The article uses attitudinal data from the European/World Values Survey and the European Social Survey to compare Eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland on key attitudes towards politics and society. The paper lends support to the hypothesis that attitudes in both Eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland tend towards the compliance highlighting the importance of broader forms of civic education for democratic socialisation both in post-communist states and postcolonial states.

The fifth and final paper of this special issue engages with the European citizenship and collective identity in the context of the enlarged EU. Stanisław Konopacki shows the limits of European citizenship, focusing on the accession of postcommunist countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 and 2007. The paper argues that the introduction of transitional periods for the free movement of persons with regard to the 'new European citizens', as well as the deportation of Roma from France in 2010, demonstrated how porous the practice of the EU citizenship is, which as a result weakens the often conjured 'European identity'. The paper highlights that the fear of the Other has become an essential element of European identity which poses a normative challenge to the construction of European identity. Against this background, the paper draws on the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida to sketch the contours of more open concepts of European identity.

Overall, the focus of this special issue on practices of collective identities as mediated through education opens the door to consideration of the role civic education plays across the wider European region in framing identities during transition. Papers reflecting on the role of formal and informal education, cooperation between individuals through social, political and cultural networks collected here illustrate ways in which the extant social, political and cultural practices can be and are translated into individual and group identities of active citizens. As the editors of the special issue we welcome you, the reader, to relate these issues to your own experiences of education, policies and initiatives emphasising actions of civil society. The five erudite and stimulating essays presented here offer insights into different country case studies, but much more than this, they invite their readers to assume greater ownership over own identities and engage with opportunities to think of "years lost to schooling and education" as processes building individual social capital, contributing to and general agreement on the import of social cohesion in transition societies.

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