

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session 7: Implementing Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights

Education (EDC/HRE) in History Education

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Introduction

History Education is of vital importance to the new generations because it provides all children the opportunity to travel back in time, learn from past events and develop the ability for a better understanding and evaluation of the current socio-political situation (Johnson, 2016). History has been associated with time and timeline: the past, the present, and the future. Thus, in this sense, history is the science of time (Bloch, 1994). The past is viewed as a written 'product' that people of the present have created. It is a 'product' that should be re-produced and re-interpreted, and be subjected to constant reflection and review.

In this context, it is important to draw an interconnection between the subject of History and its teaching and the promotion of Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE), but also of Intercultural Education. To this end, this paper focuses on the analysis of specific creative pedagogical strategies and practices that may be used by teachers so as to cultivate the critical examination of key concepts related to citizenship education, democratic culture and intercultural dialogue through the study of History. Initially, this paper sets out

to discuss the challenges teachers may face in implementing EDC/HRE and IE in History Education. Within the context of such challenges, a discussion takes place regarding what kind of citizens should we aim to develop through the teaching of history. Last but not least, this paper examines in what ways we should teach History in order to promote EDC/HRE.



Challenges to the implementation of EDC/HRE in History Education

Arguably, History Education may be used as both the venue and the tool to promote peace building, reconciliation in conflict situations, respect to diversity, mutual understanding and empathy, and safeguarding of human rights (Klerides, 2016; Klerides & Zembylas, 2017; VV. AA., 2016). Although history is taught at the present, it is mainly implemented in the school curricula in order to draw a rather linear interconnection between the past, the present, and the future (Nordgren, 2017). History is a process of understanding the past and the constant interaction between the past and the present (Carr, 2015). This is exactly why teaching history entails a big challenge to our educational system and teachers: in many education systems in Europe and beyond, there is a nationalistic tendency in the teaching of history leading to the interpretation (or misinterpretation) of social phenomena through the prism of a nation-state and ultimately puts blinkers on other layers of society (Nordgren, 2016; 2017).

In most countries around Europe and the world, education policies and school curricula put the subject of history under the umbrella of ‘national history’, by promoting a discourse of ‘purification’ and ‘justification’ of national fights (Poulsen, 2013). Such policies and curricula promote dominant ideologies by providing accounts and interpretations of events and phenomena grounded only on the ‘desirable’ past elements of history and by presenting school history as the ‘undeniable truth’ (Yogev, 2013; Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2017). This is what, along with other elements, reinforces the view for a reformation of the current structures of our educational system. It thus should be argued that the firm belief that depicts school history as what shapes national identity must be reviewed from a different

perspective (Klerides, 2016). To this end, it is important to reflect upon what kind of citizens should we aim to develop through inter alia History Education, an issue that we discuss in the following section.



What kind of citizens should History Education envisage?

History Education is considered as the ‘mechanism’ shaping the kind of citizen that a state desires to have. At the same time, History Education, in many countries around the globe, is often considered as the ‘vehicle’ for building national identity and a sense of belonging to the ‘nation-state’ (Yogev, 2013; Grim, 2017). However, many scholars and academics around the world contend that our education systems, in general, and history teaching, in particular, should balance this sense of historical continuity and purity with the feeling of being a global citizen. According to Mutluer (2013), in the teaching of History, it is more than important to replace the term of ‘national identity’ with the terms ‘global identity’, ‘political liberties’, and ‘preservation of democracy’.

Having said that, the following dilemma arises: should History Education envisage the development of citizens, who are ‘loyal’, ‘compliant’ and ‘passive’ towards the ‘nation-state’ or should school history should cultivate active citizenship skills, such as critical process information, observing and questioning the trustworthiness of the Mass Media, the information appearing online or even historians themselves (Haydn, 2012)? Although theoretically, such dilemma is relatively simple to answer, yet research shows that there is a considerable gap between theory, policy and practice: although the majority of educational policies practices across Europe aim at developing citizens who have the skills to productively function within modern globalised societies, History Education seems to be the exception (Hajisoteriou, Solomou & Antoniou, 2019).

What the aims of History Education should be with regards to EDC/HRE?

In the context of the aforementioned discussion, the ultimate aim of History Education and the teaching of history should be the cultivation of active citizenship (Solomou, Hajisoteriou & Antoniou, 2019). It should aim to enable *all* people to play a fully participatory role in society. The notion of active citizenship pays more attention to citizens' responsibilities rather than rights, such as the responsibility to respect and safeguard human rights. It draws upon the idea of active participation by promoting the feeling of belongingness to a community. Active citizenship also has a normative value, as it usually refers to participation that requires respect for others and that does not contravene human rights and democracy (Hoskins, 2014).

Moreover, History Education should also aim to promote intercultural competences, which may be grounded on the knowledge of various social-cultural developments, the ability to comprehend and interpret cultural diversity and variations, and the ability to reflect upon and reinvent accordingly personal values, beliefs, and attitudes (Nordgren, 2017). Last but not least, History Education as a subject of the school curriculum should aim to cultivate citizen's attitudes against racism and social discrimination, and their positive stances towards safeguarding human rights (Leontsinis, 2007). Nonetheless, History Education should not idealise the peaceful and harmonious co-existence or conceal tensions, throughout history, between natives and foreigners, between tradition and change, between locals and immigrants (Nordgren, 2016; 2017). This is because the past is very complex, should not be used to promote ethics and morality.

Historical literacy for EDC/HRE



In order to promote EDC/HRE through History Education, we should promote historical literacy. Historical literacy empowers students and makes them capable of searching, selecting, studying critically, justifying, associating, evaluating, synthesising, and communicating historical information. Historical literacy is concerned with studying history in relation to its social utility and it plays an essential role in the overall development of the individual and also in the shaping of an individual's capacity as a citizen (Solomou, Hajisoteriou & Antoniou, 2019). Therefore, historical literacy develops in individuals the ability to think and understand the modern world and to define themselves within this world.

Nowadays, cultivating students' historical literacy is viewed as an imperative need in order to help students realise the importance of the historical events and develop their ability to think critically as a result of their research of pertinent sources. Historical literacy draws upon multiperspectivity, meaning that as teachers we should encourage our students to construct historical narratives according to different perspectives, to understand the historical language and to correlate the present with the historical past (Solomou, Hajisoteriou & Antoniou, 2019). Historical literacy is a multi-tool for the adaptation of learning to our constantly changing society, since it combines the knowledge of the past and the concepts of the historical content with historical reflection, which makes individuals capable of understanding and correlating historical events. Moreover, it contributes in the development of historical consciousness, which in turn, helps in the comprehension and interpretation of human actions so that present and future events are managed more responsibly.

We therefore conclude that historical literacy is the stepping stone towards promoting EDC/HRE through History Education, as it allows critical reviewing, understanding and acceptance of historical and socio-cultural and diversity.

In what ways we should teach History to promote EDC/HRE?

According to Smyrneos (2013), History Education has rather an interdisciplinary character, and was established as a distinct scientific field just around the 80's. History Education necessitated the transition from academic history to its school version, which is the kind of history that can be taught in primary and secondary education. For the purposes of the development of history-education curricula, the 'historians' history' has to be reformed, reframed, and re-synthesised. In order for History Education curricula to promote EDC/HRE, they should favour inquiry-based learning and include various types of knowledge: declarative (knowledge of what, knowledge that describes and explains) and procedural (knowledge of how, which leads to sophisticated, rational and effective acts) (Salvaras, 1996). Therefore, the content and layout, objectives, teaching methodologies and the pedagogical challenges should be our major concern.

In order to promote the goals of EDC/HRE, History Education and history teaching should refrain from its traditional character and move towards more innovative paths. Traditionally, History Education has been 'event-oriented' by giving important emphasis on important figures and battles, in order to instill in the future citizens envisaged characteristics, such as loyalty to the 'nation-state'. The main method of teaching was narration, and great importance was placed on the searching for the causes of the historical events and on catechetical education,

pointing to what was moral for future citizens (Smyrneos, 2013). Traditionally, History Education claimed to provide students with impartial and objective accounts of past events. However, more recently, the objectivity of such a method was disputed, thus giving its way to historical relativism. The emphasis transcended from great personalities and battles to common people and everyday life. As the goals of reinforcing democratic citizenship and safeguarding human rights through education prevailed in the school curricula, 'narrative-dominated history' was downgraded as it included propaganda and failed to promote future citizen's critical thinking, and other traits making them democratic (Romm, 2004).

If we want to cultivate the goals of DCE/HRE through History Education, there is an urgent need for using historical sources in history teaching and promoting students' active participation in learning processes so they are not merely passive recipients of taken-for-granted historical narratives, but rather actively engage and "create history" themselves. We should place students in the centre of the learning process, and we should act as facilitators of learning, since students should take the responsibility of researching and discovering knowledge themselves under our guidance.

Conclusion

In promoting DCE/HRE through History Education, students' work with historical sources introduces them in the practices and methodology of professional historians (Van Hover et al., 2016), a teaching strategy which - according to the findings of past research (Lee, 2006; Monte-Sano, 2011) - develops skills related to active citizenship, respect for cultural pluralism, and protection of human rights that



are central to DCE/HRE. Moreover, students' work with historical sources contributes to the democratisation of teaching and the freedom of thought, avoiding monolithicism, dogmatism and the abuse of history; thus leading to the development of democratic citizens who respect not only human rights, but also diversity and multiperspectivity. Last but not least, according to Monte-Sano (2016), the promotion of argumentation in History classrooms may lead to the successful preparation of democratic citizens.

In conclusion, what emerges is that the teaching of history in a reflective way utilising the appropriate tools and pertinent teaching practices, may contribute to intercultural openness, democratic citizenship, and human rights education. It can and should be a stepping stone to a new approach that is critical and evaluative, proposing solutions and practices that many educators today 'fear to touch'. In particular, History Education should provide students the opportunity to learn about the interactions between people within the historical narrative taught at school, as history can and should play an essential role in contemporary societies. It must cultivate ideals and values, including social solidarity, democracy, respect to the laws, and acceptance of diversity. Moreover, history education may support the development of critically-thinking global citizens that are characterised by intercultural competence.

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