

The Teacher of the 21st Century:
Quality Education for Quality Teaching

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CONTENTS

ATEE Spring Conference 2013	ix
Editorial Board	xi
Review Committee	xii
About the Articles.....	xiii
Chapter One.....	1
Development of Support Systems for Decreasing Social Exclusion Linda Daniela, Dita Nīmanīte and Gunta Kraģe	
Chapter Two	14
Educational Robotics in Teacher Education: An Innovative Tool for Promoting Quality Education Dimitris Alimisis	
Chapter Three	28
Addressing Diverse Learning Needs: Differentiation Behaviours of Five Teachers Towards the Same Class of Students Alaster Scott Douglas	
Chapter Four	40
Problem-Based Learning in Portugal: Contributions of the SCENE Project to Promote Teachers/Trainers Skills for the 21st Century Paulo Dias, John Mergendoller and Ana Sofia Bastos	
Chapter Five	53
Interaction of Teachers' Professional Development and the School Environment: Practice and Possible Solutions Karīna Brikmāne and Alīda Samuseviča	
Chapter Six	71
Where Does the Difference Between PIRLS 2006 and PISA 2009 Results Come From? Antra Ozola and Andrejs Geske	

Chapter Seven.....	83
Pushing the Boundaries: A Study of Higher Education Students' Responses to a Creative, Art-Based Learning Experience Jan Watson	
Chapter Eight.....	98
Curriculum Development for Quality Teaching and Learning Rudite Andersone	
Chapter Nine.....	106
Towards Integrated Learning: Linking Psychology, Sociology and School Experience in Initial Teacher Education Anne Ryan and Leah O'Toole	
Chapter Ten	132
Teacher Education for Inclusion: Challenge for the 21st Century Teacher Sarmīte Tūbele	
Chapter Eleven	146
Assessment of Student Teachers' Professional Activity During Practicums Using the Validpack Instrument Evija Latkovska and Lūcija Rutka	
Chapter Twelve	162
In Search of Quality Language Teacher Education in the Polish Context: Attitudes and Multilingualism Katarzyna Cybulska	
Chapter Thirteen.....	177
Teacher Authority as a Basis for School Culture: Pedagogical Ethos, Interaction Culture and Effective Learning Sandra Smilga, Ineta Lūka and Irena Zogla	
Chapter Fourteen	194
The Existential Meaning of Personal Experience in the Learning Process Martins Veide	
Chapter Fifteen.....	208
Impact of Six Sigma: Dmaic Approach in Learning ICT Concepts by Prospective Teachers R. Hariharan and K. Mohanasundaram	

Chapter Sixteen	219
Teachers' Beliefs and Understanding about the Learning and Teaching Process: From Student Years to an Experienced Professional Rea Raus and Sandra Ozola	
Chapter Seventeen.....	228
Experienced Emotions by Prospective Teachers as Primary School Pupils in Mathematics Lessons Ineta Helmane	
Chapter Eighteen	239
The Influence of Teachers' Citizenship Activities on Students' Civic Knowledge and Skills Ireta Cekse and Andrejs Geske	
Chapter Nineteen.....	250
Upbringing Phenomena in Modern Families Dace Medne	
Chapter Twenty	262
Primary School Staff Assessment of Features: State and Success Factors of Kurzeme District Schools Ivars Muzis	
Chapter Twenty-One	270
Directions of Changes in Teacher Thinking in the Context of Improving the Quality of Education Agnieszka Nowak-Łojewska	
Chapter Twenty-Two.....	282
Nature Studies and Technologies Competence and Criteria of its Development in the Context-Oriented Process of Learning Physics Jānis Poplavskis and Jānis Dzerviniks	
Chapter Twenty-Three.....	297
Learning Environment and Study Process as Tools for Facilitating Leadership Development Ineta Lūka, Maija Rozite and Janis Eriks Niedritis	

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' CITIZENSHIP ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS' CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

IRETA CEKSE AND ANDREJS GESKE

Abstract

The paradigm of citizenship and citizenship education has changed since Latvia and Estonia regained independence and have become members of international organizations, such as the European Union and NATO. Nowadays, each member of society, including the teacher, is responsible for the development of democratic values. All subject teachers are accountable for citizenship education and the development of school environment.

Information for this paper was compiled on the basis of teacher data obtained from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2009 (ICCS) in Estonia and Latvia. Data processing was done using the SEM multi-modelling method-forming teachers' civic activities influence model in order to investigate the importance of teacher citizenship activities on student civic knowledge and skills.

The results show that in comparison to teachers in Estonia, Latvian teachers' civic and citizenship education aims do not have statistically significant influence on students' civic knowledge and skills.

Keywords: teacher citizenship activities, citizenship education, ICCS 2009, SEM.

Introduction

The family, school, teacher, and society are the most significant factors influencing civic and citizenship education, as pointed out in the context of

individual civic and citizenship education development during pre-school and school.

Finnish education researcher L. Hirsto (2001) divides the education environment in two categories – primary and secondary. He describes the primary category as the family environment where a child is in the beginning of life and which is the most significant. The secondary environment is school, which fills the functions of the individual's socialisation and culturalisation.

The significance of family is emphasized at the pre-school age, and studies show that the sense of belonging is formed while a child is four to seven years old (Heater, 2004). B. Zepa (2010) points out the vital parental role in a child's choice in further education, drawing attention to parents' inability to provide their child with confidence in possibilities for a good education and participating in society and the labour market. At school age, the influence of the family decreases, and the role of other social factors increases in youth development (Print, Saha, Edwards, 2004; Saha, Print, Edwards, 2008; Torney-Purta, Lehaman, Oswald, Schulz, 2001).

More vital at school age is the influence of schoolmates, teachers, the school environment, and curriculum on student civic skills, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour development (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Stephens, 2003; Torney-Purta, Lehaman, Oswald, Schulz, 2001; Crick, Advisory Group on Education for Citizen Schools, 1998; Marschal, 1950). That is why school is considered to be an essential factor in the development of positive civic experience – the understanding of equality and strengthening the awareness of being an equal member of society (Gutmann, 2004; Walzer, 1983). The school environment influences the development of a common identity, including the sense of national belonging, and stimulates a democratic sense of citizenship. For instance, for students from minority groups, a strengthened sense of national belonging might not correspond to ethnic identity. This is why the school aim is to promote an ethnic and national identity, side-by-side and in cooperation (Habermas, 1992).

It has been indicated that a prerequisite for the previously mentioned is the coordination of education aims with real life, thus promoting a feeling of equality in society (Gutmann, 2004). Several authors (Homana, Baber, 2006) have pointed out that teachers and school administration work to create a civic atmosphere at school that promotes welfare, academic attitude, and the development of citizenship. The basis of this mutual relationship has been formed by a precisely formulated school mission and support policies, which promote the formation of civic understanding and development.

A significant factor is the teacher's interest in professional and personal development, because the teacher is the person who develops and influences student thinking by listening to the student's opinion, respecting expressed ideas, and trying to develop critical thinking and various competences (Torney-Purta, Lehaman, Oswald, Schulz, 2001). The teacher's role in the education process has decreased due to changing education paradigms. The teacher's role in modern schools is not necessarily predominant. However, the teacher must take on a partner role with focus on new knowledge and dialogue (Rathenow, Weber, 1995), thus developing her/his class as a micro-model of society that enables youth to mature as citizens of the future (Ponder, Lewis-Ferrell, 2009).

K. Baber (2006) emphasizes teacher attitude and methods used in work with students as essential factors in the acquirement of civic and citizenship education. Teachers, who comprehend the interdisciplinary meaning of civic and citizenship education (Homana, Baber, 2006), are able to delve into students' opinions, attitudes, and behaviour. Changes are most effective if there is a mutual understanding and a discussion-challenged dialogue.

Taking into consideration previously examined theoretical viewpoints, we investigate the importance of teachers' citizenship activities on students' civic knowledge and skills.

Materials and Methods

We use the latest International Civic and Citizenship Study 2009 (ICCS 2009) comparative data concerning Estonia and Latvia. The next international civic and citizenship education study will be carried out in 2016 (ICCS 2016).

The teacher sample from Estonia and Latvia was based on school selection in ICCS 2009 and represents diverse types of schools in different regions (The number of teachers..., EHIS, nd).

Grade 8 teachers, who conduct lessons in research schools, were included in the ICCS 2009 teacher selection; 8.9 % of all teachers in Latvia and 12.6 % in Estonia participated in the research. Exactly 3,940 teachers – 1,863 from Estonia and 2,077 from Latvia – participated in ICCS 2009.

Data from the teacher questionnaire was used in the research. The questions are ranked according to the four-point Likert-type scale where, after logical trans-coding, 1 represents a negative response (never or not once), and 4 represents an affirmative response (frequently, all or almost all). Only three of the questions were about civic and citizenship education

aims at school. This question was trans-coded as dichotomous (1 – no, 2 – yes).

The descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) methods were used in the research. SEM is a method that combines regression and factor analyses. The SEM method allows the exploration of relations (connections and influence) between the manifesting and latent variables (Everitt, 2002).

The SEM model was worked out in several steps (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, Black; 1998; Zaksa, 2012). First, the latent and manifesting variables were defined, which were used to measure the construct. The measurement model was developed in the second step, showing the mutual relations of indicators and variables. The fit of the sample's scope was assessed in the third step. The chosen assessment methods and the proper fit of the method of processing the missing data were evaluated in the fourth and fifth steps. The structural model was worked out in the sixth step and, taking into account the indicators of the suitability of the model, the fit of the measurement model was assessed in the seventh step.

Several indicators were used to determine the suitability of the model (Schreiber, 2008) including relations of the Chi square (χ^2) and number of degrees of freedom that explain the absolute fit indices.

RMSEA (The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) and absolute credibility indicators indicate whether the developed model is valid. RMSEA is considered optimal if it is less or equal to .06, but is no lower than .02. When analysing RMSEA index for small samples, it is necessary to take into account the sample error. Indices are also used for measuring the suitability of the model – SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) and GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index).

Similarly, the incremental suitability index CFI (Comparative Fit Index) is used, which helps to check how well the collected data fit the measurement model and whether the model is valid (Goodness-of-Fit Index). Optimal CFI is $\geq .95$. The similar indices that are measured to identify suitability are GFI and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index).

The SEM multi-model has been used to examine the influence of Estonian and Latvian teachers' civic activities. The model helped to compare teachers, taking into consideration nationality. The statistical data processing programmes SPSS and structural equation modelling AMOS were used for data processing.

Latent and manifest variables are enumerated in Table 1.

Table 1. Latent and manifest variables included in the teacher's civic activities influence model

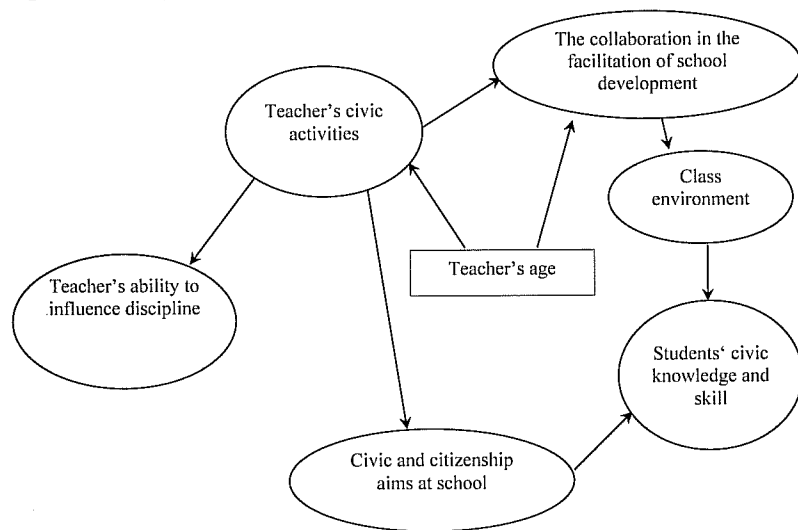
	Variable	Variable (Question from teacher questioner)	Likert scale points
Latent variable	Teacher's civic activities	Besides the activities carried out as part of your school work, how often in the last twelve months have you personally taken part in activities promoted by the following organisations/groups? Environmental organisations (for example, UNESCO) Cultural and/or educational organisations (e.g. Save the Children!, Women's Rights Equality) Political parties or organisations Groups helping disadvantaged people Cultural groups promoting the integration of ethnic minorities	1 – not at all 4 – more than once per month
	Civic and citizenship education aims at school	What do you consider to be the most important aims of civic and citizenship education at school? Promoting knowledge of social, political and civic institutions Promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities Promoting students' critical and independent thinking	1 – no, 2 – yes
	Class environment	In your opinion, how many of your Grade 8 students get on well with their classmates? are well integrated in the class? respect their classmates even if they are different? have a good relationship with other students?	1 – no one or almost no one, 4 – all or almost all
	Teacher collaboration in the facilitation of school development	With reference to the current school year, how many teachers in this school actively take part in school development? encourage students' active participation in school life? cooperate in defining and drafting the school development plan?	1 – no one or almost no one, 4 – all or almost all
	Teacher ability to influence students' sense of citizenship	Please indicate how frequently each of the following problems occurs among students at this school. Vandalism Bullying Violence	1 – never, 4 – frequently
Manifest variable	Teacher's age	How old are you?	Only one answer is possible

Research Results

To verify the model fit, the multi-group model of measurement was worked out, where $\chi^2=2979$, $df=732$, $\chi^2/df=4.06$ ($p<.05$), the model confidence index $RMSEA=.02$, and the model utility $CFI=.99$. The model development indicators were optimal in order to develop the conceptual model of teacher civic activities influence on student civic knowledge and skills (see Figure 1).

Teachers' civic activities influence multi-group conceptual model fit chi-square $\chi^2=2728$, degrees of freedom $df=732$, which follows that the amount correlation of chi-square and degrees of freedom $\chi^2/df=4.06$ ($p<.05$). Comparative Fit Index $RMSEA=.019$, and comparative fit index $CFI=.99$ for the developed model. In comparison to indicators of the measurement model, $RMSEA$ is greater for .001 units in the conceptual model, which is not valued as significant. The model overall conforms to standards.

Figure 1. Conceptual teachers' civic activities influence model



The standardized factor scale of latent and manifest variables are displayed in Table 2 and point to a statistical importance.

Teachers' civic activities are a factor, which positively influences school environment. In comparison to Estonia, Latvian teachers' civic activities influence collaboration in the facilitation of the school

development (Latvia – standardized factor scale $\beta=.22$, $p<.01$, Estonia – $\beta=.18$, $p<.01$) and the ability to influence discipline (Latvia – $\beta=.21$, $p<.01$, Estonia – $\beta=.11$, $p<.01$). Conversely, Estonian teachers' civic activities influence civic and citizenship education aims at school ($\beta=.19$, $p<.01$).

Table 2. Manifest and latent variables standardized factor scale of teachers' civic activity influence model

Relationship between variables		Sample of the standardized regression coefficients		
		Total	Estonia	Latvia
Teacher's civic activities	← Teacher's age	.15**	.11**	.18**
Collaboration in the facilitation of school development	← Teacher's age	.10**	.13**	.09**
Collaboration in the facilitation of school development	← Teacher's civic activities	.20**	.18**	.22**
Civic and citizenship education aims at school	← Teacher's civic activities	.13**	.19**	.07**
Class environment	← Collaboration in the facilitation of school development	.20**	.16**	.25**
Students' civic knowledge and understanding	← Class environment	.10**	.12**	.09**
Students' civic knowledge and understanding	← Civic and citizenship education aims at school	.05**	.09**	-.02
Teacher's ability to influence discipline	← Teacher's civic activities	.15**	.11**	.21**

** $p<.01$

In comparison to Estonia, Latvian teacher collaboration in the facilitation of school development has more significant influence on the class environment. (LVA $\beta=.25$, $p<.01$; EST $\beta=.15$, $p<.01$).

Overall, teachers' planned influence of civic aims and class environment on student civic knowledge and skills is low. The class atmosphere in Estonia ($\beta=.12$, $p<.01$) has greater influence on student

civic knowledge and skills than in Latvia ($\beta=.009$, $p<.01$). In comparison to Estonian teachers, Latvian teachers' aims of civic and citizenship education influence on student knowledge and skills is not statistically significant (EST $\beta=.09$, $p<.01$, LVA $\beta=-.02$).

Discussion

The results of the survey indicate significant conclusions, which describe the influence of teachers' civic activities on student civic knowledge and skills.

Several authors (Hildebrandt, Eom, 2011) indicate age is a motivating factor for the development of the teacher's professional character and emphasize teacher's age in acquiring the native language (Mullola, et al., 2011). The results of the survey show, that the teacher's age can influence his or her civic activities. The results indicate that in Latvia, teacher's civic activities are influenced by teacher age, whereas in Estonia, the teacher's age does not have a significant influence.

In comparison to the teachers from Estonia, in Latvia the aims of the teacher's civic and citizenship education do not have statistically significant influence on students' civic knowledge and understanding. A passive environment at school is caused by teachers' low civic activities – the teacher who does not participate in different civic activities, does not see the need to teach civic and citizenship education or draw students' attention to the citizenship process and the meaning of collaboration in the development of democratic society. TALIS research concludes (OECD, 2009) that teacher self-efficacy significantly influences the environment in a classroom and school. However, Sarmiento and Freire (2012) indicate that the most important factor in teaching civic knowledge and skills to pupils is the parent and teacher cooperation. Teacher and parental roles in the development of civic attitude (Hirsto, 2001; Zepa, 2010) are stressed in the formation of role models for understanding and acquiring good knowledge.

Conclusions

The relationship between teachers' civic activities and students' civic knowledge and skills was studied on the basis of the results collected from teacher questionnaires and students' civic and citizenship education knowledge and skills test in ICCS 2009.

Teacher data from Estonia and Latvia was compared using the teacher civic activities influence model by noting indirect influence of teachers'

civic activities on student civic knowledge and skills. The research points out that teachers in Estonia have more significant influence on education aims at school and indirect influence on the level of student civic knowledge and skills. The data explain Estonian students' high results in civic and citizenship education test in comparison to 38 participating countries.

It can be concluded that teacher civic interest and everyday civic activities influence the teacher's desire to create civic responsibility and a favorably inclined environment at the level of student civic and citizenship education.

These results should be taken into account when developing the politics of improving teacher knowledge, as well as forming the policy of education and civic and citizenship education, thus, providing a holistic approach in developing civic and citizenship education for school-aged youth.

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