Book Review

Moral and political dimensions of critical-democratic citizenship education: Enhancing social justice, a global orientation, and equity in schools and society

Wiel Veugelers

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The book "*Moral and Political Dimensions of Critical-Democratic Citizenship Education*" brings together articles and book chapters of Wiel Veugelers, published in the past 25 years, each one introduced by the author. They deal with moral and citizenship education from different points of view.

Veugelers is an Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, an international expert in the areas of moral and citizenship education, member or coordinator of several international projects and research boards.
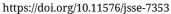
The author deals with a) the moral dimension of education and citizenship education; b) the concepts of citizenship and global citizenship and the Critical-Democratic Citizenship Education, c) a humanist perspective on moral development and citizenship education integrating them together; d) policy and practice of citizenship education, teaching ways and on how teachers have to deal with values and with moral education at school; e) future perspectives in learning and teaching in a critical-democratic citizenship education.

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a) Veugelers starts discussing a moral perspective on education, reflecting on values in teaching and on different ways of teaching values that consider the main international developments.

Values play a primary role in the definition of good citizenship. Values are defined as judgements based on more or less explicit and systematic ideas about how a person relates to his/her environment, and norms are social conventions based on values. Moral values are embodied in concrete events and situations that are characterised by power relations politically, socially, and culturally.

Veugelers, in comparing different perspectives of moral education, highlights the different dimensions assumed by values ranging from socially oriented to critical reflection on values.

At school, values are expressed in the subjects, inter-school activities and teachers' teaching actions, as well as in the school culture, so they cannot simply be transferred, but teachers can try to cultivate their development (stimulation of values). Values are learnt from a social constructive perspective. Values have a knowledge, skill and attitude component. The affective component of values is a learning process for which the learner has. Moral education can also be seen, therefore, as a transformative practice based on moral values such as justice and care.

b) The author formulates the theoretical foundations of different kinds of citizenship; he analyses the transformative and reproductive processes of moral and citizenship education and develops a Critical-Democratic Citizenship Education for enhancing Social Justice and Equity in Schools and Society in a Global Orientation.

In several points, he describes three types of citizenship as ideal-typical constructions: the adapting citizen, the individualistic citizen, and the critical democratic citizen.

The concept of citizenship has recently broadened and deepened; it is not linked to the nation-state only, getting a global dimension; several concepts, such as sustainability and natural and biological perspectives, are also becoming part of citizenship and citizenship education.

From a review of the literature, Veugelers identifies three forms of global citizenship: open global citizenship, moral global citizenship, and social-political citizenship.

He reminds us that the 'global free market' ideology emphasises comparability and standardising, economic and technological development, and the international competitive position of countries (s. organisations like the World Bank and OECD); UNESCO emphasises human rights, democracy, cultural diversity and sustainability. Economic globalisation goes together with ideological globalisation, as the spread and dominance of ideas.

c) Veugelers support a humanist perspective on moral development and citizenship education. Democratic education is a humanising project, as democracy relates not only to the political level but also to the interpersonal level, the daily interaction in schools, in work organisations and in the public domain. According to Dewey, it is a way of life. Democracy must be won repeatedly and maintained.

The author sees a tension between forces that focus on social reproduction and forces that focus on social transformation; critical theory and critical pedagogy try to enforce transformative processes.

In particular, the author notes the presence of important changes over time that have led to some aspects being evaluated differently. For example, in the 1960s, collective empowerment and peace were valued as the basis of a process to create a better world; towards the end of the 1970s, a technological-instrumental approach became predominant.

Nowadays, a neo-liberal perspective has a strong influence on educational systems worldwide as a hegemonic ideology, that is, an ideology that doesn't present itself as an ideology but as a natural way of organising life and society.

It focuses on privatisation, marketisation, performativity, knowledge society and competition, and control of management and information systems, and it includes an entrepreneurial identity of citizens.

Veugelers expresses criticism of the orientation on adaptation, referring to thinkers like Paul Freire, who worked for personal and collective emancipation and underlined the importance of making the moral more political and the political more moral, showing how moral values are embedded in political power relations.

Citizenship education should enable a concrete exercise of democracy through respect for the ideas of others, dialogue with others, and valuing different perspectives. Active participation of students in schools encourages practising democracy.

d)Veugelers analyses the research and the educational practice of citizenship in the EU and in the member countries, especially in the Netherlands and reflects on the policy and practice of teaching.

Education should challenge students to think about values and norms and their own moral development; people should develop the skills to make moral reasoning and moral judgments independently.

The basis of critical democratic citizenship education requires reflective and dialogic learning processes. 'Critical thinking' is needed, as well as learning to reason logically and being able to develop and substantive one's own opinion.

Dialogical methodology is recommended, creating appropriate working conditions in the classroom and holding dialogue with parents, avoiding politicisation of school.

The Integration of Moral and Citizenship Education is important, and neglecting the morals in citizenship education results in a technical rationality that mystifies the ideas about living together.

The author pleads for a multi-perspective approach and appreciates a Multicultural Society against segregation.

Teaching and learning controversial values recently gathered significant attention in many countries. Avoiding the discussion of controversial issues in schools means that education leaves it to the students themselves to form their opinions on these controversies and, to this end, to choose their own channels of information, thus neglecting the pedagogical function of education.

Veugelers is aware that theory is easier than practice and that working in a transformative perspective means great demands to the teachers; the first step is bridging the gap between the abstract level and concrete activities, learning from the experience of others, and exchanging good practices among countries.

In the process of 'value forming education', teachers are not neutral but stimulate specific values (value stimulation) in their interaction with students, who develop values on their own. Teachers educate students consciously and, above all also, unconsciously; they cannot withdraw from showing which values they believe to be important and are expected to work with their own values and articulate what type of citizenship they want.

There is a strong tradition regarding moral dilemmas to enable students to approach values from different perspectives, and teachers have to find a good balance.

The realisation of 'multiple perspective teaching' is demanding because of inadequate teaching materials and inadequate organisational conditions, but mainly because Teacher training courses

have not prepared them for this kind of pedagogical work and because of the lack of experience in teachers.

Evaluating students in this field is difficult, as is monitoring the teaching of common values. The international longitudinal study ICCS (International Civic Citizenship Study) provides benchmarks to help countries in evaluating and adapting teaching.

e) The final chapter is a synthesis of Veugelers' work; he presents a programme for future theory, research, policy and practice in moral education and citizenship education.

He explains the Integration of Moral and Citizenship Education and criticises the strong focus on the individual and its adaptation to society. He argues for a stronger link to social concern and social justice, connecting the moral and the political, for a critical and dynamic concept of democracy. Citizenship education should be about the question of what constitutes good citizenship.

The book is full of information and proposals; it is also an effort to influence theory, policy and practice of moral and citizenship education in a transformative, emancipatory and critical democratic perspective in the hope that researchers and policymakers will find the book helpful and inspiring.