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The European Cooperation is Facing new Challenges – Some Impact on Citizenship Education in the Netherlands

The crisis in Europe constitutes a major test for the very pursuit of European integration and for its legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens. In this paper a number of striking economic aspects of the crisis will be discussed next to political tensions concerning sensitive issues. Given the decline in the support for the European integration among the public over the past years it is necessary to improve the quality of citizenship education on European issues and to use a more critical approach. Teaching and learning in a balanced manner is necessary about issues like migration, free movement, populist political parties, enlargement and other themes, besides other regular topics. In contrast to current opinions we argue that to reach not only the higher levels of secondary schools but also the lower levels a too strong social-constructivist approach is not effective. Complicated European issues need a good instruction by the teacher in combination with an attractive didactical approach that builds on a common core European orientation curriculum improving students' knowledge and skills and thus enhancing opinions and attitudes.

Keywords:

(European) citizenship education, European and international orientation, European issues related to citizenship education, curriculum development in secondary education, internationalization in education

1 Introduction

For several years now Europe has been confronted with a crisis, starting as a financial one, developing into a full economic one and flowing into a social and political crisis. Citizens have lost their savings, have become unemployed, are confronted with cuts in wages, social security and tensions between social groups of diverse cultural background. Given the interdependence between the European countries financially and economically and the fact that financial support from the Northern member states to the Southern member states is provided under harsh conditions, this crisis constitutes a major test for the very pursuit of European integration and for its legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens. Combined with the rise of populist movements with an anti-Europe agenda in many countries, Europe is facing major challenges.

This article has two main objectives which seek to answer the following research questions, namely to:

- a. investigate some aspects of the crisis in Europe and the support among the citizens concerning European integration.
- b. identify the impact of the crisis on European issues related to citizenship education in secondary schools with a focus on the Netherlands.

In other words with regard to the first question: is the current crisis indeed a test for the pursuit of European

integration and is there a change in the public opinion concerning the European cooperation? And if the answer is affirmative, what are the main elements of these changes? Needless to say some features of the crisis are global, in the context of this thematic issue, nevertheless, the focus is on European aspects.

Following the line of possible changes, concerning the second question, it is necessary to consider some effects on the curricula and the teaching practice in secondary schools. Every secondary school curriculum in Europe is dealing with aspects under different names as there are: European and international orientation, European citizenship education, the European dimension or European issues related to citizenship education. Major changes in the European discourse will have consequences for the curricula of various subjects where European issues are dealt with and for the discussion between teachers and pupils in the classroom. In this part of the article the focus is on Dutch secondary schools.

2 Theoretical notions and research methods

The following three theoretical notions have guided the research activities in the area of citizenship education, as far as the issues in this paper are concerned.

A coherent rationale for conceptualizing citizenship education including the European aspects is provided by the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). In the Assessment Framework (Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito & Kerr (2008), civics and citizenship is 'organized around three dimensions: a content dimension specifying the subject matter to be assessed within civics and citizenship; an affective-behavioral dimension that describes the types of student perceptions and activities that are measured; and a cognitive dimension

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that describes the thinking processes to be assessed' (p. 13). The content is divided in four domains: civic society and systems, civic principles, civic participation and civic identities. Four affective-behavioral domains are identified: value beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions and behaviors. The two cognitive domains are: knowing and reasoning/analyzing. This concept forms a fruitful theoretical background of what European issues related to citizenship education are about.

An additional pedagogical approach is developed by Lange (2008, p. 92); he gives a description of the vital areas in which citizens in modern societies need to become competent: learning areas regarding social, cultural, economic, historical and political aspects. These aspects are referring to various subjects in secondary schools and all these areas and subjects have European aspects.

A third theoretical notion which has been used in this research is described by Van der Werf & Oonk in 'Internationalization in Secondary Education in Europe' (2011, chapter 16). In this work the authors are opposing the extreme social-constructivist view that students can only learn European competences by constructing their own knowledge in a context-rich learning environment and cooperative learning situations. They argue that the complicated European issues should be learned through a good instruction by the teacher, building on a common core curriculum in order to improve students' knowledge and skills while enhancing equal opportunities for all pupils.

With regard to the process of European integration the theoretical approach of ICCS is appropriate for the educational aim in this paper to identify important elements which need to be implemented in the curricula and school practice in the Netherlands and perhaps in other European countries. But the whole process of European integration after World War II since 1945 – i.e. greater economic, political and social cooperation, EU enlargement, the Euro- has of course many more dimensions than what is possible to teach and learn in schools. A very interesting source to understand all these dimensions is the grand history of postwar Europe, both east and west, written by Tony Judt (2005).

Whilst discussing the current challenges the European cooperation is facing, there are many conflicting opinions about the future of the European integration which are often summarized in 'more Europe' versus 'less Europe'. Habermas who is in favor of 'more Europe' thinks it necessary that the national arenas open their minds for the political activities in Brussels and Strasbourg and make citizens aware of the relevance of decisions which encroach deeply into daily life (Habermas 2013, p. 18,19). 'The elite project' should be redefined now on the basis of a broad participation of the populations (p.20). Scheffer, who is in favor of 'less Europe', stated in a recent article that the policy makers in Europe are refusing to explain the necessary political and economic steps, fearing the rejection by the public. He argues there is much to be proud of in Europe: equality, quality of life,

the constitutional state. Keep the diversity, do not continue federalization and offer in this way an alternative for populism. (Scheffer 2013). Although the authors have different opinions, both are convinced that it is absolutely necessary to involve the citizens in the next steps of the European integration.

The methods of researching the topics mentioned in this paper are a combination of analyzing documents, conduct literature reviews and analyzing statistical data.

3 Striking aspects of the crisis in Europe

This paragraph analyzes a number of striking aspects of the crisis in Europe in view of the economic, social and political developments, answering the first research question.

3.1 Economy in great problems

The Lisbon European Council held a special meeting on 23-24 March 2000 in Lisbon to agree on a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. This strategic goal for the next decade was formulated in the famous words: 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (Lisbon European Council, p.2). The document expresses a spirit of optimism about the macro-economic outlook, the successful introduction of the Euro, the completion of the internal market and the forthcoming enlargement which will create new opportunities for growth and employment.

When reading this text 15 years later it is hard to believe that the members of the European Council were convinced that the goals set were based on hard data. Besides their analysis of the Union's 'strengths', the members also discussed weaknesses, such as the 15 million Europeans who were out of work and the underdeveloped services sector. The general feeling however was that the time was right to undertake a positive strategy which embraced both competitiveness and social cohesion.

What a contrast with the opinions in the beginning of the second decade of this century! In the Preface of the 2011 European Parliament Report on the Financial, Economic and Social crisis, it was observed that the crisis contributed significantly to the debt crisis that engulfed some Eurozone members which gave rise to dramatic and controversial measures to keep the Euro together. The crisis is recognized as the worst financial meltdown since the Great Depression (European Parliament 2011, Dekker, den Ridder, Schnabel, 2012). In the years 2010-2012 financial mechanisms were put in place such as the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) to support European countries and to reduce the probability of a future crisis.

What follows are some figures on unemployment in general and more specific ones on youth unemployment. The Euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate



was 12,2 % in September 2013 and in the EU-28 11,0 %. Among the Member States, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Austria (4,9%), Germany (5,2%) and Luxembourg (5,9%), and the highest rates in Greece (27,6%) and Spain (26,6%). In September 2013, the youth unemployment rate was 23,5 % in the EU-28 and 24,1 % in the Euro area. In September 2013 the highest rates were observed in Greece (57,3%), Spain (56,5%) and Croatia (52,8%) (Eurostat, Sept. 2013).

Looking at those figures, particularly regarding youth unemployment, it is fully understandable that Europeans are deeply concerned about their future. Four Eurobarometer measurements in 2010 and 2011 show a growing pessimism among the population of several European countries about the development of the economy in general and the labor market in particular (Dekker, den Ridder, Schnabel 2012). In the Standard Eurobarometer 79, Spring 2013, the main concerns of Europeans being rated at national level have all an economic aspect, except crime: unemployment (51%), economic situation (33%), rising prices/inflation (20%), government debt (15%) and crime (12%) (European Commission 2013). In the second half of 2013 and the first half of 2014 the economic indicators became more positive but still the problems in most European countries remain unabated.

A broad range of European citizens is confronted with the current crisis, but the younger generation is particularly vulnerable as we see in the Eurostat figures, resulting in a growing uncertainty about their future.

3.2 Political tensions and debates in the European Union

The process of European integration has always been accompanied by discussions and conflicts. This time around, nevertheless, on the top of the economic crisis we are also confronted with tensions and debates concerning such fundamental issues as: policies regarding migration/immigration, free movement/enlargement, right-wing populist parties and the overall issue of the meaning of the nation state in the context of continuing European integration.

Migration/immigration

The results in the Eurobarometer of Spring 2013 include also other concerns next to the ones listed above such as health, social security (11%) and immigration (10%). Although 'immigration' as topic receives now less attention than earlier likely caused by the economic crisis, it is still an issue that creates discord in many Member-States. Certain groups of citizens see immigration and especially the Islamic part of it as endangering national identity; other groups are more positive and speak about an enrichment of society.

Scheffer published in a Dutch newspaper in the year 2000 an article titled 'The Multicultural Drama'; this article initiated a debate in the Netherlands about immigration and was followed by meetings, critical articles, papers and books (Scheffer 2000). In his book

'Immigrant Nations' (2011) he puts forward many issues for discussion: the openness of the receiving societies versus the traditional beliefs many migrants bring with them, questions about the position of women and freedom of expression, the difficulty with the phrase 'enrichment of the societies' used in the discussions regarding the newcomers and the difficult circumstances in which many immigrants and their children live, next to the problems schools are facing. In Scheffer's opinion 'clear choices need to be made about which immigrants to allow in; as selectivity is essential to successful integration. This idea was resisted for many years, with integration and immigration treated as separate issues' (p. 316).

In a study undertaken by the European University Institute at Florence an overview has been published about immigration in the EU, policies and politics in times of crisis (Jonjic, Mavrodi 2012). According to data provided by Eurostat, in 2010 there were 20.2 million third-country nationals living in the EU. In some southern Member States the size of the immigrant population is approximately 10 % of the total population (Spain, Greece and Italy). The authors state like Scheffer that immigration involves strong emotions and controversies in the areas of politics, economy and culture. A crucial observation is that 'the impact of immigration is mostly felt at the local level, where realities, opportunities and problems differ substantially' (pp. 7,8).

The researchers found that anti-immigration sentiments are on the rise in some southern countries, but it is obvious that the same is true in nearly all Member States. Migration and immigration issues are expected to remain very sensitive in the Member States and at the EU-level.

Free movement/enlargement

Free movement of workers is one of achievements of the European Union enshrined in Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and developed by EU secondary legislation and the Case law of the Court of Justice. But this achievement has become subject to discussion in some Member States, especially in Northern countries, influenced by the rise of unemployment. The perception is that EU-migrants bring advantages if they are highly qualified, but disadvantages in the case of low qualified workers who are pushing away the lower segment of the labour market. At the same time it must be acknowledged that on the other side of the coin thousands of East-European workers are fulfilling jobs that are not wanted by West-Europeans.

In a letter of the Dutch Minister Asscher of Social Affairs and Employment to the Lower House of the Dutch Parliament (Asscher 2013) is stated that the Netherlands cannot solve certain problems of EU-labor migration by itself. The Netherlands government is asking the European Commission and other Member States to have an eye for the reality that free movement of workers has not only advantages but also drawbacks. It is important



to discuss this kind of problems in order to avoid that public support for the EU is eroding.

In connection with the issue of 'free movement' there are also discussions concerning possible social security abuse. In the past years it was virtually impossible to discuss these problems: in the extreme European view free movement was a sacred principle that could not be discussed while in the extreme nationalistic view the concept of free movement had to be abandoned. It is a positive sign that the European Commission is aware of the concerns of some Member States regarding potential abuses related to mobility flows. Abuse weakens free movement and the Commission recognizes that local problems can be created by a large, sudden influx of people from other EU countries into a particular geographical area, but the Commission did not see the need to change the rules of free movement. (European Commission, 25 November 2013). However on Monday 9 Dec. 2013 the EU employment ministers agreed on a series of measures meant to end tax and other abuses among foreign workers, 'an increasingly sensitive issue just months ahead of European elections' (Press release France 24, 2013).

This article is not meant to come forward with concrete answers and solutions; the most important premise being that fundamental EU-principles can now be discussed in a politically political way. The discussion about the Schengen agreements should also be seen in relation to the enlargement discussions: as long as the external borders of the EU are not fixed and the impression is that the EU is enlarging without vision and clear policy, the uncertainty among the public about the internal borders will continue to grow; here clarity is needed.

Rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe

The economic crisis and the debates regarding sensitive topics like immigration/migration, free movement/enlargement and the national identity are all contributing the rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe. For many citizens, the main stream political parties and the established institutions these developments are rather shocking; as it is clear in newspapers, tv-programs, on the internet, in meetings, publications and in Parliaments. Although fruitful responses are difficult to formulate it is vitally important to discuss the problems with citizens who are suffering from certain developments and who are having a hard time distinguishing between real problems and populist slogans. What are the essential norms and values for the majority and the minorities? How far can minorities be asked to adjust to the norms of the country where they live or wish to live? In this context frictions in society associated with large-scale migration can be seen as an invitation to critical self-examination at a national and European scale.

The Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Chatham House in London, published a report on how to understand and how to counter populist extremism in Europe (Goodwin 2011). Supporters of PEPs (Populist

Extremist Parties) are often dismissed as political protestors, single-issue voters or economically deprived 'losers of globalization', their supporters share one core feature: their profound hostility towards immigration, multiculturalism and rising cultural and ethnic diversity'. It is not the economy which drives the supporters but the 'fear that immigration and rising diversity threaten their national culture, the unity of their national community and way of life' (Executive summary, pp. 1,2). The author sees no uniform response to PEPs, but describes some potential strategies for mainstream parties: exclusion, defusing, adoption, principle, engagement and interaction. The last two are focused more heavily on the local arena, where winning the hearts and minds of voters presents the best prospect for progress.

Others like Kukan from Slovakia, member of the European Parliament, are more pessimistic and think that these right-wing parties are ready to blame 'others' for their misfortunes. He is sometimes puzzled to see these trends in the countries that have been inspirations for newly independent and democratic countries such as in Slovakia¹.

We may observe that recently (in 2013) in some countries main stream political parties are changing their approach toward the issues addressed by the populist parties, although more work seems needed to bring the 'patriot' and 'the world citizen' closer to each other.

New balance between Nation state and European Union

All the issues mentioned above are part of a search for a new balance between the Nation state and the European Union. Since 1960 among the political and intellectual elite the opinion has been that modernizing society supposed a relativisation of cultural, national and religious identities. The ideal was the European unity, since national identity was something from the past which had caused disasters in the first part of 20th century. The majority of the citizens however were still attached to their country and gradually in the last part of the 20th century a gap arose between the European elites and the wider public, with regard to issues like migration, the Islam and European cooperation. Now in the second decade of the 21st century we see developments towards a renewed consciousness about the importance of the nation state resulting in a newly found patriotism.

A broader view, contrary to rather simplistic explanations is to be found with the Dutch historian and political philosopher Van Middelaar, who speaks about a Europe of States, Citizens and Offices, each stream has its own political style and recipe (Van Middelaar, 2013). In his study he explains that the European 'game' is not played only in Brussels, but that European politics are penetrating governments, parliaments, courts and populations in all Member States. We are living in a passage to Europe, but the question remains: which Europe?

In an interesting article with the title 'Heimat Europa', Heribert Prantl writes that Europe is the best that has



happened in our history but less and less citizens believe this (Prantl 2011). He points at the fact that the EU perceives everything that hinders the freedom of movement of persons, capital, goods and services as an obstacle. The European Court works also in this perspective. Citizens however want to know what the EU is doing for them. The policies of the EU-elite in Brussels and Strasbourg are not the way forward as seen by many EU-citizens.

The Nation state remains important in spite of the transfer of powers to multinational authorities like the EU. In fact there need not to be a contradiction between modest nationalism/patriotism and internationalism: you can love your country and still be a European. Or one might say that you can be a real European while loving your country. The German philosopher Safranski claims that the process of globalization enhances the need of one's own identity (Safranski 2003). Globalization as ideology shows a picture of a world society which is non-existent: humanity as a subject to act does not exist. He believes that we are making the wrong observations concerning globalization.

Looking at the Nation state in our times it is useful to refer to the French philosopher Ernest Renan (1882) who held a famous lecture at the end of the nineteenth century at the Sorbonne in Paris, with the title 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' [What is a nation?] The question is still relevant and useful in our times. A modern nation is the historical outcome of a series of events. Although factors like race, language, religion and geography played a part, the nation is finally a result of a history full of efforts, sacrifices and commitments. It supposes a past, but manifests itself in the willingness to live together: a nation is in fact a daily referendum.

The editors of the Dutch Renan translation explain, under the title 'A pragmatic plea for an enlightened patriotism' (Huijsen, Waling 2013), the strength of Renan's approach in combining pragmatic and emotional elements seen as indispensable in politics. The limited scale of the national European economies would have convinced the pragmatic Renan of the usefulness of a strong European cooperation. Also the practical meaning of the nation state in our times would have been emphasized as the basis for the parliamentary democracy and as a determining factor in the framework of international cooperation. An effective and democratic supervising alternative for the nation state, supported by a wide public is not yet available.

What do we see in the most important hall of the renovated Rijks Museum in Amsterdam? The Nightwatch of Rembrandt in the center, surrounded by only Dutch masterpieces of the Golden Age. After the Second World War such an exhibition with only Dutch masterpieces was impossible, at that time it was seen as too nationalistic, so non-Dutch if you like foreign paintings were exhibited in that hall as well. The current setting is possible, as explained by the director of the Museum, as a result of the European integration. That integration gave nationalism a different content and color and is no

longer seen as narrow-minded but as a trademark: is this the direction needed in Europe?

3.3 Declining support for the European integration

The second part of our first research question is about the support among citizens for European integration as a result of the described developments in paragraph 2, during the last ten years. In a report of 2000 about the Netherlands in Europe, Dutch and Italians indicate the greatest satisfaction with the European Union. In fact 73% of the Dutch stated that membership in the European Union is a good idea, 45% said that they would be disappointed if the European Union was disbanded and 64% indicated support for the primacy of the European Union in relation to national policy (SCP, 2000). A publication of the European Commission (2001) showed that nearly six out of ten European Union citizens felt very positive about strong ties to Europe.

In my doctoral thesis I wrote: 'If we look at the pains that countries have taken in order to join the Economic and Monetary Union, the result of which is the common form of currency the euro, and the efforts exerted by countries in Middle and Eastern Europe to qualify for membership in the European Union, clearly this European institution has a tremendous appeal to parts of the population and governments of the countries involved' (Oonk 2004, p. 20).

Comparing certain outcomes of the Eurobarometer 67, carried out in Spring 2007, just a year before the beginning of the crisis in 2008, with the Eurobarometer 79 carried out in Spring 2013, the following trends can be observed (only those items which return in every Eurobarometer has been used).

Image of the European Union

In 2007 57% of the respondents tended to trust the European Union; this figure has declined to 31% (- 26%) in 2013. Although the trust in the national government has also fallen back from 43% in 2007 to 26% in 2013 (- 17%), the decline of trust in the European Union is much greater. In 2007 over half (52%) of all citizens hold a positive image of the European Union, 31% was neutral and 15% negative. In 2013 30% was positive, 39% was neutral and 29% was negative. During these 6 years the positive image declined from 52% till 30% (-22%), the neutral image increased from 31% till 39% (+ 8%) and the negative image increased from 15% till 29% (+ 14%). 69% of the respondents were optimistic about the future of the EU in 2007 and 24% pessimistic; in 2013 that percentage optimistic has been diminished till 49% (-20%) and pessimistic increased till 46% (+ 22%).

In 2007 55% of Europeans said that their voice did not count in the EU; in 2013 67% (+12%). 35% said in 2007 that their voice counts, in 2013 28% (-7%). Awareness of the European Parliament is widespread in every Member State: 89% of the respondents have heard of the European Parliament in 2007 and 90% in 2013 (+1%). Since 2010 59% of the respondents knew that the members of this institute were directly elected by the



citizens of each Member State; in 2013 52% (-7%). In 2007 63% of the respondents supported the European economic and monetary union with a single currency, the euro; in 2013 51% (-12%).

3.4 Conclusions

The analyses of a number of striking aspects of the current crisis in Europe shows very high unemployment rates in several countries, particularly among youngsters, the sensitive nature of issues like migration, immigration, free movement, enlargement and as one of the consequences the rise of right-wing populist parties and a clear decline of the support among the citizens concerning the European integration process from a rather positive response in 2007 to a far more negative response in 2013. Several European scientists, journalists and politicians have made suggestions to solve certain problematic elements in European politics, for instance the acceptance that the principles of the freedom of movement of persons, capital, goods and services asks in our times for revision and to discuss the frictions in society as a result of large-scale migration. It is important to discuss the essential norms and values for the majority and the minorities in the Member States of the EU. Repeating the conclusion of Habermas in the introduction of this paper, 'the elite project should be redefined now on the basis of a broad participation of the populations'. A strong European cooperation in certain areas must be combined with a redefinition of the nation state in the framework of the EU as the basis for parliamentary democracy and as a determining factor in the framework of international cooperation in order to bring together European cosmopolites and patriots.

4 Impact of the crisis on European issues related to citizenship education in secondary schools: the case of the Netherlands.

This paragraph is focusing on the identification of the impact of the crisis on European issues related to citizenship education in secondary schools in general and more specifically in Dutch schools, answering the second research question. The policies described in the previous paragraph requires a better involvement of the citizens in the next steps of the European integration and therefore it is necessary to discuss possible changes concerning some aspects of citizenship education in schools. In other words, what could be or should be the effect on the curricula and the teaching practice in secondary schools? Before discussing the necessary changes it is important to give a general picture of the current situation

4.1 Current situation in secondary schools in Europe and more specifically in the Netherlands

To describe the current situation the best reference in this field is the European part of the International Civics and Citizenship education Study (ICCS) which was carried out between 2006 and 2009. It was the first time in the history of 'Europe at school' that in 24 European

countries 3000 schools, 75000 students in their eighth year of schooling and 35000 teachers were involved in a study to 'investigate students' knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship in a European context and their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors with respect to specific European-related civic and political issues, institutions and policies' (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz & Burge, 2009, p.3)

Knowledge, interests and opinions concerning European issues

In the Executive Summary of the European ICCS report we find that 'although a majority of students of grade 8 in the European ICCS countries demonstrated knowledge of main citizenship institutions and understanding of the interconnectedness of institutions and processes, substantial minorities of students had lower levels of knowledge. These findings suggest that there is still a need to improve learning about the EU as part of citizenship education' (p.14). The same outcomes can be mentioned concerning opinions regarding intercultural relations, European language learning, equal rights for immigrants and freedom of movement within Europe: a majority was positive but also here substantial minorities were negative. The report asks attention for the fact that according to most teachers and principals in the European ICCS countries, the focus of civic learning should primarily be on developing students' knowledge and skills and not necessarily on their participatory skills or strategies (p. 14). Here the authors see room for broadening the focus of citizenship education. An important finding is the fact that a consistent association was shown between students' national and European identities, in that students with more positive attitudes toward their country tended also to have a stronger sense of European identity.

Most of the outcomes of the Dutch pupils as part of the ICCS are generally not deviating from pupils in other European countries, but with regard to some topics the findings are remarkable. Although the Netherlands didn't meet the sampling requirements, the Dutch ICCS-researchers take the view that nevertheless it is possible to sketch a picture of the situation in Dutch schools (Maslowski, Van der Werf, Oonk, Naayer & Isac (2012, p.8).

In the overview of the civic knowledge, Finland and Denmark were the highest scoring European ICCS countries with an average of 576; the Netherlands reached with 494 position 18 in the ranking list just before Malta, Latvia, Greece, Luxembourg and Bulgaria (466) and Cyprus (453) with the lowest scores (Kerr et al. p.48). Students' attitudes toward Europe and the country in which they live and more specifically the statement, 'I see myself first as a citizens of Europe and then as a citizen of my country, the answers ranged from 25% in Poland to 50% in UK and 53% in Cyprus; the score for the Netherlands was 20%, the lowest from all participating European countries (p. 69). Countries with the highest level of support for equal rights for immigrants were



Bulgaria, Luxembourg and Sweden (with scale scores of 52); the lowest levels were reached in Belgium (Flemish), England and the Netherlands (with scale scores of 46; p.90). Support for free movement to live and work within Europe on single items reflecting acceptance of free movement for citizens from European countries within Europe, show the following outcomes: live and work anywhere in Europe (European average 90%, NL 79%); bring different cultures (European average 76%, NL 71%); good for economy (European average 70%, NL 68%) and understand other European cultures (European average 88%, NL 81%; p. 98).

Looking at these Dutch outcomes one would think that Dutch pupils are very critical with regard to the National and European institutions, but on the contrary, regarding the national percentages of students' trust in different local, national, European and international political institutions, the Dutch pupils have surprisingly a higher score than the European ICCS average: national government (ICCS average 61, NL 70); local government (ICCS average 65, NL 75); national parliament (ICCS average 52, NL 65); United Nations (ICCS average 65, NL 65); European Commission (ICCS average 58, NL 62) and European Parliament (ICCS average 59, NL 67) (p.84).

Looking to additional research in the Netherlands, an analysis of the implementation and the effects of a European and international orientation shows that students in upper secondary education have 'considerably more knowledge on Europe than students in lower secondary education'. But it is difficult to determine to what degree the higher knowledge can indeed be attributed to Europe-oriented education at school, rather than a 'natural' growth that could have been observed in other schools as well. (Maslowski, Naayer, Oonk & Van der Werf (2009). In the same study among 15 schools and 1193 pupils, responses of students in Grade 8 and Grade 11 were compared with attitudinal aspects: no differences between the two grades were reported, which means that all the Europe oriented educational activities during these three school years didn't change the opinions of pupils.

In another study (21 schools and 880 pupils) concerning the European and international orientation in bilingual schools in the Netherlands (Naayer, Maslowski, Oonk & Van der Werf (2011), several findings are interesting. Upper secondary pupils feel no stronger identification with Europe than lower secondary pupils; in some cases the older pupils are more critical. It is worrying that no significant correlations have been found between knowledge about Europe and opinions towards the European integration. Pupils from bilingual schools have a less strong identification with Europe than pupils from regular secondary schools (p. 105).

In lower secondary education schools need to follow the core aims and in case of European issues the most important core aim is: the pupil learns to understand the meaning of the European cooperation and the European Union for her/him self, the Netherlands and the world (SLO, 2007). Several questions need to be discussed:

what are the consequences of the European cooperation? What are the powers of the EU and what of the Netherlands? Cooperation is sometimes difficult if countries must give up certain competences. Several concepts and topics are mentioned in this core aim without explanation how to introduce these issues: institutions of the EU, open borders, migration, mobility, free movement of goods, capital, services and people, solidarity, democracy, the European citizen.

4.2 Towards a new approach

Higher level of knowledge on Europe related issues

The conclusion of ICCS is that a majority of students of grade 8 in the European ICCS countries demonstrated knowledge of main European citizenship institutions and understanding of the interconnectedness of institutions and processes. Substantial minorities of students had, nevertheless lower levels of knowledge; this applies also to the Dutch schools. The rather low position of the Dutch schools in the European ranking list of civic knowledge underlines the necessity for Dutch secondary schools to pay more attention to teaching and learning with respect to specific Europe related issues. The conclusion in other Dutch studies focusing on the European orientation in schools is that the growth in European oriented knowledge is not great from lower secondary education towards higher secondary education. This confirms the importance of the necessary approach and could stimulate more grounded opinions about European issues.

Critical approach of European issues

Comparing the rather descriptive core aim concerning European cooperation in lower secondary education in Dutch schools with the analyses of several sensitive issues like migration, immigration, free movement, enlargement, right-wing populist parties and a clear decline of the support among the citizens concerning the European integration process it is obvious that also in schools a more critical approach of the European developments is necessary in order to teach and learn besides facts and figures also problems and dilemma's. This more critical approach can also be found in the introduction of the ICCS European report where the authors describe the changed context of citizenship education since 2000. The authors are reporting some challenges for instance the balance between citizenship as status through nationality and citizenship as identity, including the added dimension of European citizenship. They are also reporting the migration of peoples in Europe and the movement of peoples from former colonies and from some Eastern European to Western European countries and how to balance the rights, cultures and traditions of diverse groups in society, including those from minority and majority groupings (Kerr et al. p.16/17).



A classic modern view

Referring to the three theoretical notions as explained in paragraph 2 of this paper it is now possible to elaborate these notions in a new pedagogical concept. The ICCS framework gives an adequate description of what citizenship education in general is about and more specific the European issues: four content domains, four affective-behavioral domains and the two cognitive domains: knowing and reasoning/analyzing (Schulz et al. (2008, p.13). Lange (2008, p.92) describes learning areas regarding social, cultural, economic, historical and political aspects which have a relation with various subjects in secondary schools. The third notion as explained is elaborated by Van der Werf & Oonk in 'Internationalisation in Secondary Education in Europe' (2011, chapter 16).

In that chapter we are opposing the extreme social-constructivist view that students can only learn European competences by constructing their own knowledge in a context-rich learning environment and cooperative learning situations. We think that the complicated European issues should be learned through a good instruction by the teacher, building on a common core curriculum in order to improve students' knowledge and skills while enhancing equal opportunities. Such a curriculum has a clear ordering of learning content developed grade by grade. From time to time during the schooling period students show their European orientation competences by completing achievement tests.

In such an approach there is still room for a constructivist element in the field of developing attitudes, opinions and beliefs by the students themselves. The knowledge and skills are taught by a good teacher whereas the opinions and attitudes can be developed in activities like school partnerships and exchanges: here pupils are outside their ordinary daily world and confronted with a diversity of other opinions and behaviors where as a consequence they are asked to reflect upon their own opinions.

I quote: 'One also might characterize this view as 'classic modern'. Classic because it emphasizes knowledge and skills that encompasses strong and long-lasting tradition and teaching methods that have proven to be effective, and modern because it also includes knowledge and skills that students need in the modern European society and that are supposed to be acquired by new methods suited to the new generation of European citizens' (Van der Werf & Oonk, 2011, p. 266).

5 Final conclusions

New challenges in the field of European cooperation in a period of declining support for the EU make it necessary to introduce a sustained critical approach concerning the developments in Europe. The current situation in Europe requires an enhanced participation of more citizens in order to go from a 'technical Europe' to a 'Heimat Europe'. It is not sufficient to inform pupils and students about the facts and the constructive elements of European decisions, but also needed is an explanation of

the negative and problematic aspects. Discussing both is vital to democracy: the European Union needs the support of its citizens and in that perspective citizenship education must give a balanced pedagogical response. A balanced teaching and learning is needed about issues like immigration, migration, free movement, populist political parties, enlargement, relation EU-Nation state and other sensitive themes. Complicated European issues need a good instruction by the teacher in combination with an attractive didactical approach, that builds on a common core European orientation curriculum improving students' knowledge and skills and enhancing opinions and attitudes. The crisis in Europe creates very serious problems but has as a side-effect that there is an opportunity to discuss issues that are fundamental for a future Europe.

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Endnote

¹ The Parliament, politics, policy and people; 9 Oct. 2013

