Abstract

Future citizens on pedagogic texts and educational policies –
Examples from Sweden, Turkey and Lebanon

(Seminariet kommer att hållas på svenska)

Neither “liberal” nor any other category of citizenship can be detached from its time and context – temporal, geographical and institutional. Indeed what it means to be a citizen inside and outside school differs between countries and cultural contexts (e.g. Olson 2012; Osler & Starkey, 2003). This is very much evident in our on-going inter-disciplinary research project Future citizens in pedagogical texts and education policies – Examples from Lebanon, Sweden and Turkey.

A starting point for our study is that simultaneous, and often contradictory, processes are of great importance of how the “right” kind of future citizen is formed in mandatory schooling. The overall aim is to investigate processes of globalization in education policies and in pedagogic texts with focus on civic education and the fostering of the future citizen in Lebanon, Sweden and Turkey. One Nordic country and two countries along the eastern Mediterranean allow for interesting points of comparison, both historically and geopolitically. Although each country has its own history and local context, each is also very much a part of a world of migration and mobility. Sometimes the countries even “share” the same citizens due to transnational processes. Central questions in the project are:

• How is “the citizen” constructed in relation to place, nation, language, religion, ethnicity and gender in education policies and in pedagogic texts?

• How are relations between national and global perspective treated in relation to “the citizen”?

1 The project is financed by the Swedish Research Council’s Committee for Educational Sciences (721-2010-4926). The research team consists of Annika Rabo (project leader), Rima Bahous and Mona Nabhani focusing on Lebanon, Marie Carlson and Tuba Kanci focusing on Turkey and Sabine Gruber focusing on Sweden.
• Which civic rights and obligations are given attention and which individuals are included or excluded?

The overall theoretical/methodological framework of the project is linked to critical discourse analysis that provides for studying how the ‘citizen’ and different subject positions are constructed in both text and practice. Empirical data mainly consist of educational documents and curricula for subjects like history, civic and religious education in the three national settings. Three different case studies are varied out and a so called soft comparison is used. We scrutinize/analyze selected textbooks in the later years in the mandatory school system. We also interview politicians, educational bureaucrats, NGO activists as well as teachers and authors of textbooks in the three national settings. Some interviews are still to be done – in the Turkish case study teachers and authors of textbooks will be interviewed further on.

At the seminar some preliminary results from the textbook and policy analysis and from the interviews will be presented.

In the Lebanon case preliminary findings imply there is no consensus on the importance of teaching a unified history and using books on civics in Lebanon (Bahous, Nabhani, Rabo 2013). The Lebanese situation can be seen as an “extreme example of educational heterogeneity where ‘national’ interests are weak and where the various communities, interest groups or foreign organizations push there own interests through their own schools – or have them pushed upon their children” (ibid: 64). From this point of view the country has had a globlized and liberal education policy since its birth where the choice (of parents) has played an important role in political rhetoric as Lebanon prepares students to compete in the regional and international job market (ibid). For the ‘right’ and the ‘future’ citizen in the material there is not one but many. The researchers have not found a distinct ‘national’ Lebanese citizen in the material, but “rather a citizen who can often combine a very parochial and narrow outlook on Lebanon with an open an inclusive outlook on the world outside the country” (ibid: 74). This means that the Lebanese can be seen as caught between the global and the parochial, with little space for the national. According to Bahous, Nabhani and Rabo (ibid) the education in the country both reflects and contributes to this dilemma.

In the Swedish case on the discursive level the country is described to be highly culturally diverse and mobile, where there hardly exists any shared conceptions of what characterizes a good citizen in a heterogeneous nation like Sweden (Ljunggren 2012: 13). However in various empirical studies one still find dominant discourses/narratives on “Swedishness” (e.g. Carlson 2007; Pred 2000). When analysing 52 history textbooks and 54 student texts written in 2010 Danielsson-Malmros identified five meta-narratives about “Swedishness” (Danielsson-Malmros 2012). The five meta-narratives about “Swedishness” were the narrative about neutrality, the narrative about the prosperity of the welfare country, the narrative about the role model country of democracy, the narrative about the stranger and the narrative about the world’s most gender equal country.

In Turkey with recurrent turbulence on democratic issues in the contemporary society there are persistent discussions about democracy courses/ citizenship education in school. Critics wonder if it is possible to give/have courses on democratic citizenship in a “difference-blind polity” (Cayir 2011). Cayir and Gürkaynak (2008: 56) argue that the despite its inclusion of human rights themes, citizenship topics of the current curriculum (2005) promote a particularistic notion of citizenship. They also make a statement that citizenship education still maintains “the four basic elements of the state-centric operation of Turkish modernity:
Strong-state tradition, national developmentalism, organic vision of society, and a republican notion of citizenship (Keyman & Içduygu 2005, see also Keyman & Kanci 2011).

The presentation at the seminar will also pay attention to a discussion on “rights” and “obligations” related to the concept of citizenship in the three countries in our study. For example while in Sweden rights and obligations often is mentioned simultaneously, one in Turkey when discussing “citizenship’, often questions the requirement of obligations and instead emphasizes citizen's rights.

References


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