

ValiDE-Handbook V1 Article (draft)

Project Result 2: Development of Teacher Students' Value Attitudes - an Empirical Study

Democracy education, defined as the process of equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active and informed citizenship within democratic societies, is crucial for the preservation and growth of democratic principles (Parker, 2003). To serve this goal, student teachers' beliefs and knowledge about democratic education need to be developed to strengthen democracy (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). ValiDE aims to improve future teachers' competences in dealing with value diversity in the classroom and to promote democracy, especially as international developments and empirical studies show a demand to promote teaching competencies among future primary school teachers for learning democratic values. Participants of the course are expected to benefit from the opportunity to reflect on and develop their beliefs and didactic skills in relation to values education in the context of different learning opportunities.

In the ValiDE project we not only wanted to set up a student course from what evidence and theory offer so far. For further investigation, it seemed convincing to use the opportunity and generate empirical data on how future teachers think and feel about democratic values and their responsibility as educators in that field. By setting up a study exploring this question and developing an according instrument simultaneously the evaluation of the study course could be targeted. Findings from the study as well as the experiences made with instrument promised to be of use in future projects in different contexts of teacher education at different institutions.

For the described research, two different studies had been designed with the student groups of all three turns of the exchange:

- (1) To investigate what initial teacher training should focus on with regards to values and democracy education, under the lead of the UiA-team in Norway, we conducted a comparative curriculum analysis on the implementation of competences for democratic culture (Council of Europe, 2018).
- (2) Furthermore, it can be assumed that student teachers' initial beliefs and knowledge are important factors in relation to the learning outcomes of a teacher education program (Parker, 2002). Therefore, led by the UEW-team in Germany, a survey study was conducted to investigate the knowledge and beliefs of the students participating in the course program about democracy, values, and democracy education.

Study 1: Self-assessed competences as starting point to a tri-national teacher training on values and democracy education

Background and aims

The role of teachers in imparting democracy education is pivotal, as they shape the attitudes and behaviours of future citizens (Barr & Halsey, 2002). The competencies of teachers for democracy education comprise knowledge as well as attitudes and beliefs. Models of teacher education show that it is necessary to take preliminary knowledge and beliefs of teacher students into account. This background could have an impact on the development of professional competences and the use of learning opportunities in teacher trainings.

Self-assessments are discussed as an instrument to support teacher students' learning and development of competences. Self-assessments can stimulate self-reflection on current

learning experiences and can manifest themselves in more elaborate knowledge. Especially in democracy education self-reflection is being discussed as a pivotal part of teacher competence in this field (Barrett et al. 2018c). As values and democracy education can be seen as complex tasks for teachers, teacher education shows a need to focus primarily on positive, self-efficacy-enhancing experiences of action and a need to optimize the calibration of self-assessments, in particular by improving awareness of the demands of professional tasks and self-perception of personal strengths and weaknesses (Pajares, 1996). Therefore, learning processes during a tri-national exchange and training for teacher students had been accompanied by a self-assessment at the beginning and the end of the program. This gave the participating students the opportunity to reflect on their starting points and ways of development, as well as to learn about the changes pre and post training. ~~In this paper the preliminary self-assessments data are presented.~~

Methodology

To get to know about from which points of view the participants had started into the program they were asked in a structured survey about their self-assessed preliminary experiences, knowledge and beliefs on values, values education, and cooperation as part of their competences (Likert scale 1=not at all; 6= completely). They also were asked to name the five democratic values they find most important. As the teacher training was focused on fostering didactical competences on values and democracy education and on tri-national communication and cooperation on these topics, the participants were asked to assess their competences referring to their own educational system and also referring to the systems of the partner countries. Seven items addressed the knowledge and understanding of values and democracy (4 items own country, $\alpha=.68$; 3 items partner countries, $\alpha=.87$), 12 items were about didactical knowledge and skills (4 national guidelines and curriculum, $\alpha=.82$; 4 instructional approaches, $\alpha=.90$, 4 aims and content, $\alpha=.85$), four items asked for knowledge about teachers' competences ($\alpha=.85$).

In a first round of the exchange and training the survey has been communicatively validated and further developed. The findings of the survey of both rounds ($n=32$) were analysed descriptively. Differences between scales were examined using t-Tests.

Perspectives

The results promise to give evidence on knowledge and beliefs teacher students of different European countries hold on behalf of democratic values and their importance in democracy education. Besides their belief it is their knowledge which forms the basis for their prospective teaching attitudes towards values education for democracy. The findings can be expected to offer new aspects of the interrelations that teacher students attribute to democracy and the role of values. It may answer to whether they identify demands of intensified commitment, and if they regard the respective demands of similar manifestation in all three countries. The study's findings may also show, if teacher students reckon themselves fit for realising matching learning scenarios in a didactically profound way, or if they call for more knowledge, skills, and assistance to meet this task. It will have to be analysed critically, whether future teachers dispose the didactical competence and the attitudes necessary to meet the cross-sectional task of values education in primary education.

References

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Study 2: Self-reported output in an exchange and training program on democracy education for teacher students

Background and aims

The objectives of a tri-national training and exchange program are based on the European reference framework for Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). This framework, published by the Council of Europe (CoE) in 2016, emphasizes three themes as fundamental to democratic competences: a) democratic culture, b) intercultural dialogue and c) human rights (Barrett, 2020). Although the framework is primarily intended to provide teachers with guidance on how to work with their students on democratic competences, it also applies to describe the competences of teachers (Barrett, 2018). The aim of the study program is to develop didactic skills regarding values and democracy education. At the same time, teacher students should reflect on and develop their own ideas on democratic values. Between these two facets of competence is the ability to communicate and collaborate with other people about democratic values in various contexts. In this way, values, attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs as well the skills anchored in the RFCDC are addressed.

The study program provides learning opportunities in different ways. During a three-week program a fix group of teacher students work and travel together. At the three participating universities the students learn and discuss principles of democracy, values in democracy and didactical concepts. They also work on tasks about teaching methods and didactic scenarios. The three NGOs involved in the program contribute varying perspectives on democracy, society and individual (historic, interreligious, and intercultural, civic). The program, comprising the mentioned formal and informal learning activities, is going to last for the future and offer the opportunity of participating in an international exchange and learn about values and democracy education. Therefore, findings are requested to get an insight into the benefit of the program and to improve learning opportunities.

Methods

The study was carried out as an evaluation study. The research aimed to study students' self-reported learning experiences in the second edition of the implementation of the trans-national student collaboration program. The presented results are based on the Norwegian, Polish, and German students-participants of the project exchange program (September 2023). The study is going to be repeated in the fall semester of 2024 (n=48 in the end).

The analysis was guided by the following research question: What are the learning outcomes the participants experienced during a three-week course and exchange program?

The participating student teachers were given a logbook to reflect on their specific learning experiences at the end of the program. The questions they had to answer to comprised (1) What I have learned about values and democracy; (2) What I have learned about values and

democracy education; (3) What I have learned about communication, language, and collaboration in general. The results of n=24 logbooks are reported in this paper. The thematic text analysis (Clarke, Braun, Terry & Hayfield, 2019) is used to run a qualitative analysis across the n=24 logbooks. To analyse question (1) and (2) categories have been built alongside the RFCDC. For question (3) the framework as a whole didn't apply because the question itself relates mainly to skills. Therefore, categories have been developed inductively and compared to the key descriptors for skills in the RFCDC (Barrett et al. 2018b).

Perspectives

Expected findings of the study will have to be related to the course and the exchange program in their impact on partaking teacher students. The reported reflections can reveal the way in which the offered learning experiences represent themselves in the students' awareness and show what influences the representation of the content. The role of content knowledge building as well as its impact on shaping or transforming the students' attitudes may be drawn from the analysis of the data provided. By relating the findings to the RFCDC, it may become clearer, to which extent the claimed concept of competence and the importance ascribed to values for democracy can be addressed and modified through a course program. Learning and teaching strategies adopted in the course program, such as exercises of self-reflection, discourse and cooperation tasks or creative elements, are put to the test, too. Results from the study promise to offer criteria for further development of effective course designs for future teacher education concepts in the field of values education for democracy.

References

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