Hana Cervinkova

*Academy of Sciences Czech Republic*
*Dolnośląska Szkoła Wyższa we Wrocławiu*

# ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND GLOBALIZATION

Abstract. Cervinkova Hana, *Anthropological perspectives on democratic citizenship education and globalization* [Antropologiczne perspektywy edukacji w demokracji obywatelskiej i globalizacji]. Studia Edukacyjne nr 27, 2013, Poznań 2013, pp. 253-262. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2691-8. ISSN 1233-6688.

The author draws on recent North American scholarship in the anthropology of education to show emerging trends in research on school-based democratic citizenship education. She gives examples of research, both at the level of national policies and individual schools, which addresses ways in which global and local influences interact in the creation and implementation of programs on democratic citizenship.

**Key words:** citizenship education, anthropology of education, action research, youth, participation, globalization

## Introduction

In this paper, I draw on selected trends in research on school-based citizenship education emerging in the tradition of North American educational anthropology to identify critical aspects of citizenship education that this research helps to illuminate. I begin with a reflection of the dynamics of global and local politics as it plays out in the implementation of programs of citizenship education, drawing primarily on the work of Bradley Levinson who suggests that programs of school-based democratic citizenship education are a particularly appropriate setting for studying "how democracy becomes 'glocalized'.[1] I then move to action research in

---

[1] A.U. Levinson Bradley, *Programs for Democratic Citizenship in Mexico's Ministry of Education: Local Appropriation of Global Cultural Flows*, Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, 2005, 12, 1, p. 251-284.

concrete school settings to show work that challenges the adequacy of state-planned programs on citizenship education as they apply to youth from diverse backgrounds.[2]

## Glocalizing Democracy

In his illuminating research on Mexican programs for democratic citizenship education, American educational anthropologist Bradley Levinson addresses the interplay between the globalization of educational policy on the one hand, and the formation of local educational programs that are often a complex fusion of global and local dynamics. He argues that in places like Latin America – an area of his anthropological interest – the sovereign state is on the one hand conditioned by external influences in matters of general policy, while

> the developments in curriculum and pedagogy more explicitly engage the terrain of ideologies and cultural values, and are arguably less malleable to external conditioning or subject to external oversight.[3]

Levinson argues that when one moves from level of general policy to that of curricular content, teacher education or textbook production, "the effects of neoliberal globalization are much less clear."[4] In his approach, Levinson draws on the distinction between economic globalization and cultural globalization, which seems to be much more malleable to local transformations than the former.

A particularly conducive area for studying the dynamics of global and local in countries undergoing democratic transformations is in the area of citizenship education policy. This is because most often, Levinson argues, national governments charge mass public education "with substantially forming the citizen"[5] and generally it is Western political theory that is exported in the form of available international schemes for democratic citizenship to newly democratizing countries.[6] To illuminate the ways in

---

[2] R. Abu El-Haj Thea, *"I Was Born Here, but My Home, It's Not Here": Educating for Democratic Citizenship in an Era of Transnational Migration and Global Conflict*, Harvard Educational Review, 2007, 77 (3), p. 285-316; R. Abu El-Haj Thea, *Imagining Postnationalism: Arts, Citizenship Education, and Arab American Youth*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2009, 40 (1), p. 1-19; B.C. Rubin, B.F. Hayes, *"No Backpacks" versus "Drugs and Murder": The Promise and Complexity of Youth Civic Action Research*, Harvard Educational Review, 2010, 80 (3), p. 352-378.

[3] A.U. Levinson Bradley, *Programs for Democratic Citizenship*, p. 251.

[4] Ibidem.

[5] Ibidem, p. 253.

[6] Ibidem.

which this glocal dynamics develops, Levinson focuses in his analysis on two programs for democratic citizenship for middle basic education (*secundaria*) prepared by the Mexican Ministry of Education and implemented between 1994-2000 and 2001 onwards. Both policies, Levinson shows, were inspired by programs on democratic citizenship existing in the West, primarily the United States, Western Europe and Japan as well as international policies fostered by transnational organizations, such as UNESCO, but their implementation in Mexico was not a simple transfer of foreign technology. Instead, the programs were the results of the complex and divergent processes of local appropriation of global cultural flows.

Work on the first of these programs was launched in mid-1990s when the Secretary for Education was charged with forming a new program for all three years of middle basic education – an agenda that came to be known as the "civic and ethical formation" (FCE). Through research behind the scenes of this educational policy, the author shows, that FCE was created through a process in which the Secretary of Education and his wife engaged in extensive world travel that involved learning on existing programs of democratic citizenship followed by extensive consultations and team work of an expert committee of academics and top-level educational specialists in Mexico. Both the Secretary and his wife were deeply invested in the project, which reflected their vision of democratic citizenship as a key element in building the modern Mexican state. The final policy document, which charts the concept of an education for critical citizenship reveals a strong influence of both globally circulating discourse on education for democratic citizenship inspired by progressive educational theories on participatory pedagogy and critical education as well as a strong tendency toward the ideal of social solidarity and integration, a leading official educational and social paradigm in Mexico since the Revolution of 1917. Thus the resulting FCE program on citizenship education implemented between 1994-2000 is a result of local appropriation of "globally circulating discourses and conceptions of education for democratic citizenship" on the one hand[7], and on the other hand it

> bears the imprint of the FCE authors' and sponsors' personal and ideological trajectories as members of the left-leaning opposition oriented to a democratic revolution within, of the authors' international experiences and familiarity with international materials and of the authors' intention to be as inclusive as possible of societal concerns.[8]

This program for democratic citizenship education, dominated by the vision of a "critical citizen" was radically changed after the elections

---

[7] Ibidem, p. 281.
[8] Ibidem, p. 274.

of 2000, which ended a long-standing single-party rule in Mexico and brought to power a new governing right-leaning party – Partido de Acción Nacional. The new Secretary of Education, unlike his predecessor, did not take leadership of the civic education reform, leaving the agenda to his sub-secretary for basic education – Lorenzo Gómez-Morín Fuentes. Levinson artfully traces the intertwining of global and local factors that influenced the formation of Mexican programs for democratic citizenship, showing how Fuentes first imported a US program to the Mexican province of Baja California, and then began implementing it on a national scale when he became the deputy Secretary of Education. The original version of the program called "Culture of Lawfulness" was a project of a Washington, D.C.-based conservative think tank that became adapted to the Mexican context under the title "Citizenship Formation, Towards a Culture of Lawfulness" (ECL). The program postulates that democratic citizenship is based an adoption of a culture for whom the rule of law will be paramount and school-based civic education is fundamental for the nurturing of this democratic culture; to be a good citizens is to fight crime for which one needs to know and appreciate the law. The program developed by the private American organization is meant to "travel" across borders - its authors aim at its implementation across different countries and cultural contexts. According to Levinson, it

> appears to retain certain core meanings, relatively impermeable to local re-signification, as it flows around the world. Among these core means is a postulate that to be a "good citizen is to fight crime, and to fight crime one must know and appreciate the law, thereby contributing to a culture of lawfulness."[9]

In the context of contemporary Mexico, where corruption and criminality pervade media discourse, this US-developed program which positions lawfulness as a key element of democratic education struck a cord; this ready-made program has since been appropriated and implemented on an unprecedented scale through a far-reaching program for democratic citizenship across the country.

I draw here on Levinson's study because his comparison of two recently adopted programs for democratic citizenship education in democratizing Mexico show the different ways in which the global and the local can interplay in the formulation and creation of educational policies. While in both cases global models are used as inspiration for the creation of national programs on democratic citizenship education, their implementation is a result of different processes of local appropriation. In the case of FCE, what got adopted by the national ministry was a "variety of

---

[9] Ibidem, p. 280-281.

globally circulating discourses and conceptions of education for democratic citizenship"[10]. However, a team of local specialists reconfigured these heterogeneous elements into the final policy and curriculum. The final products were thus not a result of the direct transfer of a global model, but were en effect of a creative process which was influenced among other aspects by the personal biographies of team members, their political aspirations and the advice of external collaborators. ECL, on the other hand, represents an adoption of a ready-made curriculum outline that is globally imported across borders and that is not substantially transformed in the process of local implementation. The investigation of these two programs for democratic citizenship education show ways in which different conceptions of democracy are becoming glocalized on the level of educational policy. It shows the unique lens that anthropology brings into the study of educational policy – focusing on the processes and interactions that accompany the formulation of strategic documents, helping to expose educational policy as a contingent process involving the complex intertwining of institutional, political and personal factors.

## Congruence and Disjuncture in Citizenship Education

Levinson's research on the glocalization of democracy through educational programs for democratic citizenship is rather rare in the tradition of North American anthropological research on education, which much more frequently focuses on how citizenship education "happens" on the level of individual schools and students' lives. Much of this research is critical toward top-down civic educational curricula and points to the inadequacy of traditional citizenship education to respond to the challenges faced by youth in the context of global geopolitical complexities.[11] Traditional notions of citizenship education rely on the vision of the state as the author and guardian of citizenship, and foresee its implementation through regulatory biopower practices enforced through school curriculum. Anthropologists show how in schools, traditional citizenship education aimed at the standardization of students' diverse subjectivities comes into conflict with

---

[10] Ibidem, p. 281.
[11] R. Abu El-Haj Thea, *"I Was Born Here, but My Home, It's Not Here"*, p. 285-316; R. Abu El-Haj Thea, *Imagining Postnationalism*, p. 1-19; J. Cammarota, M. Fine (eds), *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*, New York – London 2008; A.U. Levinson Bradley, *Citizenship, Identity, Democracy: Engaging the Political in the Anthropology of Education*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2005a, 36 (4), p. 329-340; S. Popen, *Democratic Pedagogy and the Discourse of Containment*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2002, 33 (3), p. 383-394; B.C. Rubin, B.F. Hayes, *"No Backpacks"*.

the lived realities of youth, who must find their sense of belonging in the local complexities of globally existing struggles. Minority and immigrant youth are especially challenged by such contradictions, but inconsistencies between official versions of citizenship and students' everyday experiences of school and out-of-school life permeated as they are by the effects of world-wide economic and political conflicts and crises, confront also those young people whose legal and national status seemingly determine them as standard citizen subjects. Citizenship education, which enforces uniformity of histories and identities for the consistency of the national narrative is challenged by the ongoing tensions in youth's everyday life raised by the multiple discrepancies of class, gender, race as they relate to issues of social justice and sense of belonging. In addition, anthropological research shows how citizen-subjects are created by school curricula infused with the disempowering effects of global neoliberalism.[12]

Anthropologists bring into the study of citizenship education the important focus on daily life of school and students' lived experiences as they relate to their civic identities - their sense of who they are as citizens – which draw on their lives both in and outside of the classrooms. Very frequently, civic education curriculum does not take into consideration the complex identities of youth as they relate to their sense of being citizens. Beth Rubin captured this fundamental dilemma of civic education as it relates to students' lives in the framework of the ideas of *congruence* and *disjuncture* in her important study of how students' daily experiences and social positions affect their experiences of civics curriculum at schools.[13] Congruence, according to Rubin, is the sense that

> "one's immediate civic institutions are working for one's benefit", while disjuncture expresses the sense that "one's immediate civic institutions are not looking after one's best interests."[14]

The results of Rubin's study carried out in 4 different schools show that in the uneven social and cultural landscape of American schools students experience citizenship curriculum in fundamentally different ways. While students of color frequently point to disjunctures in how they experience the civics curriculum, which includes such material as the Pledge of Allegiance or the Bill of Rights, white students and students

---

[12] P. Lipman, *Educational Ethnography and the Politics of Globalization, War, and Resistance*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2005, 36, 4, p. 315-328; P. Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*, New York 2011; R. Gutstein, *Reading And Writing The World With Mathematics: Toward a Pedagogy for Social Justice*, New York 2005.

[13] B.C. Rubin, *"There is still not justice": Youth civic identity development amid distinct school and community contexts*, Teachers College Record, 2007, 109, p. 449-481.

[14] B.C. Rubin, B.F. Hayes, *"No Backpacks"*, p. 353.

from higher-income families experienced congruence between civic ideas of liberty and justice and their personal experiences. As a result, the civics curriculum left many students with the impression of incongruence – a feeling of being left out of the official version of citizenship, of not belonging to the community of citizens the curriculum was fostering. Both categories of feelings, according to Rubin, have deep implications for civic participation.

Based on these findings, Rubin and Hayes implemented an action research project whose goal was to develop a new approach "designed to transform civic learning into a meaningful endeavor that leverages, rather than denies, students' daily experiences as citizens."[15] As a part of the study, students were encouraged to identity problems of their school and communities that they would later address through action research projects completed within the school year. The goal of this civic action research was to create learning experiences that would connect students' civic identities to their civic participation.

Rubin and Hayes postulate that there is a fundamental difference in how civics curriculum is taught and learned in congruent and non-congruent school settings. For teachers in congruent school settings, the situation is somewhat easier – their students experience civics curriculum as being in line with their identities and as a result, students feel that civic institutions are more responsive to them as citizens. Because students feel high degree of congruence, however, their stance tends to be more complacent on civic issues

> seeing civic problems as irrelevant to them and viewing the role of citizens as restricted to voting and paying taxes. As a result, nurturing of participatory civic activities is often difficult for teachers in congruent settings.[16]

Teachers of civics in schools of disjuncture have a more difficult situation, not only because of economic and social disadvantages which their institutions face, but primarily because their students experience civic institution as unsympathetic to them. This frequently leads to disenchantment and lack of interest in citizenship education which is seen as irrelevant by youth in marginalized settings. However, Rubin and Hayes point to an enormous potential for civics teachers in schools characterized by high levels of students' feelings of disjuncture. They argue that teachers have a great chance at cultivating participatory civic identities of their students who are critically attuned to issues of social justice if they manage to find ways of making the civics curriculum relevant to youth's everyday lives.

---

[15] Ibidem, p. 355.
[16] Ibidem, p. 373.

This challenge is taken up by a colleague of Rubin from Rutgers University, educational anthropologist Thea Abu El-Haj, who applies participatory action research methodologies in her works with Palestinian American high school youth. In her work, Abu El-Haj exposes the precarious situation in which Palestinian youth find themselves in schools and classrooms in the United States in the times of the intifada and the aftermath of terrorist attacks of September 11. She explores the experiences of Palestinian students in American public schools where their communities are frequently framed as invisible or as belonging to the "terrorist" community. She describes ethnographic examples of exclusion, discrimination and symbolic violence inflicted by teachers, classmates and US institutions of legitimate violence against Arab Americans. She argues that these school experiences have deep ramifications for citizenship of Palestinian youth who are positioned as "enemies within" and feel themselves not belonging to the American nation. This creates a deep identity conflict for students who hold American citizenship, but who do not tie their national identities to the United States, but to Palestine.[17] This predicament, expressed by one of the author's respondents as "I was born here, but my home, it's not here" inspires Abu El-Haj to pose questions concerning the relevance of traditional democratic citizenship education as it is practiced in American public schools and its ability to respond to "the nature of belonging in the era of transnational migration, as youth are positioned and position themselves in relationship to multiple imagined communities."[18] She argues, that the youth's sense of belonging to a community has deep implications for their participatory activities and civic engagement, which should happen "within *and* across the boundaries of the nation-state in which they reside."[19] Abu El-Haj draws on methodologies of youth participatory action research to create, together with her colleagues, spaces outside of school where Arab youth can deliberate on and creatively express their identities and present them to the larger community to nurture their sense of belonging and participation. Abu El-Haj's and Rubin and Hayes' civic action research projects represent educational anthropologists' efforts to develop bottom-up educational programs that help nurture students' sense of belonging to the communities which they inhabit and thus nurture participatory forms of democratic citizenship.

---

[17] R. Abu El-Haj Thea, *"I Was Born Here, but My Home, It's Not Here"*, p. 287.
[18] Ibidem.
[19] Ibidem.

# Conclusions

Anthropological research on citizenship education on which I drew in this article approaches democratic citizenship on two different levels – the level of national policy and the level of its implementation in public schools. In both settings, anthropological research points to crucial ways in which processes of globalization affect citizenship education. On the level of policy, globally existing programs for democratic citizenship are to a different degree adapted for use in local contexts by the ministries of education of nation states. In the process, which is deeply impacted by local political, institutional and personal interests, particular kinds of democracy become glocalized through educational policy and curriculum.

These glocalized policies are implemented through curriculum in public schools, which anthropologists study as key sites of the production of citizens.[20] Schools are deeply affected by global processes of economic neoliberalization, conflict and inequality and it is here that students of diverse backgrounds are confronted with top-down citizenship education programs that usually do not take into account students' diverse experiences, backgrounds and lives outside of school. Immigrants, minority students (religious, ethnic), women and students from families of lower economic status often feel that programs for citizenship education are not congruent with their identities. As a result, their sense of belonging as citizens is challenged, which deeply affects levels of their democratic participation. Research shows, however, that even those students who feel high level of congruence with the kinds of citizenship that school-based civics education is fostering, do not necessarily translate these feelings of congruence into democratic participation. This is because citizenship education programs are mostly not designed to engage students in a meaningful dialogue and explorations that would help them see global dimension of local issues that immediately affect their lives and encourage them to take agency and responsibility as citizens of the world. In response to these crises of official citizenship education curricula, educational anthropologists are developing bottom-up action research programs on democratic citizenships that aim to be responsive to students' experiences, to nurture the abilities of students' and teachers' to speak and listen to each other across differences, and to encourage students to reflect on their own role as global citizens.

---

[20] B. Levinson, D.E. Foley, D.C. Holland (eds), *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, Albany 1996.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu El-Haj Thea R., *"I Was Born Here, but My Home, It's Not Here": Educating for Democratic Citizenship in an Era of Transnational Migration and Global Conflict*, Harvard Educational Review, 2007, 77 (3).

Abu El-Haj Thea R., *Imagining Postnationalism: Arts, Citizenship Education, and Arab American Youth*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2009, 40 (1).

Cammarota J., Fine M. (eds), *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*, Routledge, New York – London 2008.

Gutstein R., *Reading And Writing The World With Mathematics: Toward a Pedagogy for Social Justice*, Routledge, New York 2005.

Levinson B.A.U., *Programs for Democratic Citizenship in Mexico's Ministry of Education: Local Appropriation of Global Cultural Flows*, Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, 2005, 12, 1.

Levinson B.A.U., *Citizenship, Identity, Democracy: Engaging the Political in the Anthropology of Education*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2005a, 36 (4).

Levinson B.A.U., Foley D.E., Holland D.C. (eds), *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1996.

Lipman P., *Educational Ethnography and the Politics of Globalization, War, and Resistance*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2005, 36, 4.

Lipman P., *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City*, Routledge, New York 2011.

Popen S., *Democratic Pedagogy and the Discourse of Containment*, Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 2002, 33 (3).

Rubin B.C., *"There is still not justice": Youth civic identity development amid distinct school and community contexts*, Teachers College Record, 2007, 109.

Rubin B.C., Hayes B.F., *"No Backpacks" versus "Drugs and Murder": The Promise and Complexity of Youth Civic Action Research*, Harvard Educational Review, 2010, 80 (3).