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Beyond National Frames: Education and Cultural Complexity in Europe

Cultural Complexity and the Limits of National Educational Discourses.
Findings of a Cross-cultural Assessment within BAGSKOL

Culture and education in Sweden

"Culture" as a construct in the educational discourse - Reflections from Spain

Culture as a construct with the educational discourse - French perspectives

Culture as a construct within the educational discourse - Ukrainian Reflections

Rethinking the complexity and tensions of Culture and Education Beyond
National Frames: A culture responsive South African Perspective



University
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Press

Beyond National Frames: Education and Cultural Complexity in Europe

In educational and pedagogical debates, the concepts of *culture*, *nation*, and *society* are often insufficiently distinguished. In a rapidly changing and globalised world, this lack of differentiation raises crucial questions about how education can engage with cultural complexity beyond national frames and within diverse social contexts.

The EU-funded project BAGSKOL (2024–2027) addresses this challenge by exploring how the plurality and intersectionality of culture can be meaningfully integrated into school education and teacher training. The project seeks to connect educational practice with contemporary social challenges and to develop new perspectives on teaching and learning at different levels of teacher education.

Given the substantial national differences in how the relationship between education and culture is conceptualised and addressed, BAGSKOL adopts a cross-national comparative approach. An international consortium from Germany, France, Ukraine, Sweden, and Spain analyses national discourses in educational policy and research to identify both the potentials and the limitations of these perspectives. By doing so, the project contributes to a deeper understand-

ing of how cultural complexity can inform teacher education in Europe and beyond.

The contributions in this issue are based on the BAGSKOL project and will be thematically structured into the following aspects:

- culture as a political construct and contextualisation within the educational system,
- cultural considerations in relation to pedagogy and school (culture as *context* and as *content*),
- questions of diversity, plurality, and interculturality/transculturality in teaching,
- perspectives and implications for teacher training.

The contribution on *Cultural Complexity and the Limits of National Educational Discourses* (Claudia Bergmüller-Hauptmann, Gregor Lang-Wojtasik, Frederik Kowalik and Lucy Bell) provides an overview of findings of cross-cultural assessments within the BAGSKOL-project. The following articles are contributed by partners of the project – *Sweden* (Charlotte Silander and Matthias Lundin), *Spain* (Begoña Vigo-Ar-

razola, Pilar Lasheras-Lalana and Ana López-Fuentes), *France* (Lucy Bell), *Ukraine* (Olha Shevchuk and Illia Yahiianiev). Jerome Joorst wraps up the debates in this volume by *Rethinking the complexity and tensions of Culture and Education Beyond National Frames: A culture responsive South African Perspective*. Due to lack of space, the article on perspectives from Germany (Gregor Lang-Wojtasik, Claudia Bergmüller-Hauptmann and Frederik Kowalik) will follow in the next issue of ZEP.

We thank the reviewers, being members of the BAGSKOL editorial board (Jana Costa, Marcus Kindlinger and Simona Szakacs-Behling), for their tremendous work to have a critical-constructive view on the drafts of the texts within a very short period of time, helping to gain the quality of this volume.

Wishing you stimulating reading from Rennes (Lucy Bell, guest editor) and Weingarten (Claudia Bergmüller-Hauptmann and Gregor Lang-Wojtasik).

Claudia Bergmüller-Hauptmann,
Gregor Lang-Wojtasik & Lucy Bell
Weingarten & Rennes, December 2025
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Claudia Bergmüller-Hauptmann, Gregor Lang-Wojtasik, Frederik Kowalik & Lucy Bell

Cultural Complexity and the Limits of National Educational Discourses. Findings of a Cross-cultural Assessment within BAGSKOL

Abstract

After general considerations on the complexity of culture in the context of a world society, international discourses on the connection between culture and education from the BAGSKOL project are described in terms of their differences and similarities. Examples from master's theses produced within this project underscore the powerful impact of cultural boundaries, which prove to be only partially effective in addressing global educational challenges.

Keywords: *Culture, Complexity, World society, World Community, De-Nationalisation*

Zusammenfassung

Nach generellen Überlegungen zur Komplexität von Kultur im weltgesellschaftlichen Horizont, werden internationale Diskursangebote zum Zusammenhang von Kultur und Bildung aus dem BAGSKOL-Projekt in ihren Unterschieden und Gemeinsamkeiten rahmend beschrieben. Mithilfe von Beispielen aus in diesem Projekt entstandenen Masterarbeiten wird unterstrichen, wie wirkmächtig kulturelle Abgrenzungen sind, die im Horizont globaler Fragen als nur bedingt funktional betrachtet werden können.

Schlüsselwörter: *Kultur, Komplexität, Weltgesellschaft, Weltgemeinschaft, De-Nationalisierung*

Introduction

How can we grasp the complexity of culture, when it already exceeds the semantic horizon of a nation-state? What challenges arise when considering culture from multiple perspectives in the context of a world society? What consequences does this have for education and educational institutions, as well as for the framing discourses of education policy? This article addresses these questions by combining theoretical considerations with first empirical findings from the EU project BAGSKOL (<https://bagskol.hypotheses.org/>)¹. It focuses particularly on outlining how cultural complexity is dealt with in the educational context in specific countries (Germany, France, Spain, Sweden,

Ukraine). Selected findings from master's theses serve to illustrate both the challenges and the potential of aligned educational discourses against the backdrop of curriculum and textbook analysis.

Theoretical Concepts

Culture and Cultural Complexity...

Culture is a highly complex term that is understood differently depending on the disciplinary or discursive context and its historical and systematic quality. In all of this, the danger of “culturalization” (Römhild, 2018, p. 17; own translation) remains ever present, especially when it comes to the significance of culture and diversity in state contexts that are shaped by migration. The term often appears in compounds (Lang-Wojtasik & Conrad-Grüner, 2018) indicating its flexibility and the multiple ways it is mobilized in discourse. Culture is inextricably linked to the ultimate concept of the world, which is perceived differently by all and to which people can contribute to varying extents due to their differing circumstances and characteristics.

In consideration of the connection between cultural education and global learning, five central understandings of culture are systematically distinguished in terms of their interdependence:

1. *anthropological*: Culture as the human sphere of life, contrasting artificial and natural elements and generalizing human existence (cf. Timm, 2022, p. 96),
2. *individual*: Cultural subjectification as the result of education and socialization,
3. *collective*: The context of collective values and norms, where “internal unity, cohesion, and external distinction” create hierarchies (ibid, p. 97; own translation with DeepL),
4. *constructivist*: Culture as a construct in social relations, transcending ethnological and national boundaries, highlighting generalizable meanings through linguistic expressions, everyday cultural actions, artistic traditions or religious practices,

5. *aesthetic*: Culture linked to artistic practices, from sub-cultural (e.g., graffiti, breakdancing) to high culture (e.g., classical music, visual arts), visible in both products and processes (cf. *ibid*, p. 95–98).

Many debates about culture, especially in the context of interculturalism, are rooted in notions of ethno-national distinctiveness within the framework of nation-state contexts. This is somehow understandable because it creates a certain security and “a lasting potential for orientation and action that connects all members of a society or community, i.e., across all social differences” (Römhild, 2018; p.18 own translation with DeepL). Therefore, this dualism of “us” and “them” provides orientation. However, it also fosters boundaries that can lead to both conflict and understanding.

The “inter” in interculturality or internationality emphatically underscores this. It is based on the assumption that intercultural learning processes are also possible in international exchange processes. At the same time, it is always about people who bring with them a specific cultural experience, national orientation, and national identity, and who need to be able to share the world with others from this perspective.

... in view of World Society

This raises the question of whether the nation-state, and the notion of national society as a “container” concept, remains viable in the 21st century. After all, people live in the context of a world society that encompasses all available communication (Luhmann, 1982). In a functionally differentiated society, orientations and identities increasingly transcend national boundaries. It is becoming increasingly apparent that questions of identity can be described along multi perspective lines of difference in the field of tension between people and society (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014, p. 7).

Today's world society is characterized by variation manifoldness/diversity, risk, and uncertainty. From four perspectives, this involves

- the *spatial* dissolution of boundaries (of the nation-state), glocalization (as the interdependence of local and global processes), and networking (beyond artificial boundaries,
- the *temporal* phenomenon of de-temporalization, which involves communication processes beyond globally relevant time zones and individually manageable time expectations; added to this is the perception of accelerated processes of change, which are perceptible in abstract terms,
- the *factual* perspective, as all people are objectively confronted with a constantly increasing amount of information which makes it difficult to legitimize decisions and creates experiences of contingency, since the current selection always stands in contrast to other possibilities, and
- *socially* speaking, it is the phenomenon of individualization as a promise of the European Enlightenment that can, on the one hand, represent an overwhelming freedom for the individual and, at the same time, enable an opportunity for

pluralization in the sense of equal diversity as the norm (Scheunpflug, 2011; Trembl, 2000, p. 250ff.).

These four perspectives – spatial, temporal, factual, and social – interact in shaping experiences of culture and identity. While national cultural references provide orientation security and a sense of manageability, they are increasingly insufficient for addressing the challenges of a complex, interconnected world. Instead, a dynamic, world-societal understanding of culture is needed – one that enables reflexive positioning and “de-dramatized exchange about culture” (Lang-Wojtasik & Conrad-Grüner, 2018; Conrad-Grüner, 2021).

Thus, from the perspective of global learning, culture has two logics of understanding in this context: culture as a structuring, orienting character in the horizon of a world society and – at the same time – culture as a medium for learning processes in the global context.

How can an educational mandate of world society, understood in this way be related to national contexts of education policy? This is outlined below using the country reports on dealing with culture and education from the BAGSKOL project.

Education and Culture in international Comparison: the BAGSKOL project

Project Idea, Research Design and Questions

Dealing with cultural complexity in the classroom is a challenge for many teachers. Research shows that teachers often feel uncertain and overwhelmed when confronted with diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives (cf. a. o. Gay, 2018). Effective handling of such situations requires a high degree of self-reflection and openness to diversity. However, studies indicate that teachers frequently orient their practices towards national curricula and legal frameworks, which can limit their ability to address global and interconnected issues (Banks, 2016).

Teacher training programs therefore face the task of equipping educators with practical strategies for managing cultural complexity. This includes fostering intercultural competence, encouraging critical reflection on one's own cultural assumptions, and providing tools for navigating tensions between national guidelines and global realities. Empirical findings suggest that targeted professional development and collaborative learning environments can significantly enhance teachers' confidence and skills in this area (OECD, 2019).

Against this backdrop, the BAGSKOL project (Erasmus+ KA2) aims to deeper understand culturally complex teaching in schools and develop teacher training concepts that profoundly prepare teacher students to deal with cultural complexity in their future classrooms.

In order to understand the relationship between culture and education within the context of the respective national educational semantics, a comparative study was initiated. The participating project partners in Germany, France, Sweden, Spain and Ukraine were asked to prepare short country reports, distinguishing between four main

areas: culture as a general concept; culture as a specific task; culture as a teaching topic; and culture as a context relevant to teachers and their training.

The following questions were posed to the project partners:

1. Is there an *explicit discourse* about “cultural education” / “cultural pedagogy” (*Kulturpädagogik*) in your country's context? If so, please give a short overview of the central pedagogical principles.
2. If you focus on “culture” as *topic* of teaching in schools: a) What thematic aspects of “culture” come into view in your schools as teaching focus? b) Is there a normative discourse on how culture should be addressed as a teaching topic (cf. e.g. for the German discourse aspects like preventing othering, pedagogy of diversity etc.)?
3. Concerning the perspective of “culture” as *context* of education: What aspects of “culture” do predominantly come into view in the scientific (and if appropriate political) educational discourse of your country in this regard?
4. Is there an explicit official institutional discourse about how *teachers* should deal with cultural diversity in their classrooms (i.e. led by the ministry of education or other official institutions of education policy, teacher education etc.)? If so, what are the preliminary topics that are dealt with in this discourse?

All respective country reports served as basis for the essays from Weingarten, Nantes, Kyiv, Kalmar and Zaragoza together with Murcia documented in this issue of ZEP.

Selected results of the country comparison

There are three main results in the nation-specific context, presented as an overview:

- across all countries, the link between culture and education is embedded in values, socialization processes, and heritage, as well as in subjects such as the arts and languages,
- the cultural context of education is closely tied to migration (including refugees and internally displaced persons) and various concepts that focus on sensitivity towards diversity, empowerment, critical thinking, equality, non-discrimination, belonging, and the prevention of “othering.” This supports a broad understanding of inclusion, including pedagogies of diversity, difference, and multi-/inter-/polycultural approaches,
- an explicit ‘Cultural Education’ (*Kulturpädagogik*) is a very German-based discourse and plays a minor role in other countries. Nevertheless, it may offer valuable insights when re-evaluating nation-state educational discourses from a world society perspective.

Considering the overarching issues in an increasingly integrated Europe, several aspects must be taken into account in the discourse on education and culture. These include the tension between European multiculturalism

and a common European identity (“leading culture”), the differentiation of nation-states as democratic frames of diversity versus common European values anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the normativity of political will as described in various declarations versus the challenges of practical implementation.

Culture and education – especially cultural education in Germany – are viewed both as explicit and implicit tasks for fostering national identity (including the risk of “othering”) and as possible stimuli for approaches based on European values that transcend nation-state semantics. Cultural artefacts present both opportunities and challenges for cultural diversity. Schools and other educational institutions are increasingly tasked with addressing culture as both a topic and a context for future learning.

It becomes evident that cultural concepts within educational discourse are initially shaped by strong national references, providing orientation and security. However, engaging with cultural topics, contexts, and expressions also opens opportunities for universal connections –grounded in European values such as diversity, plurality, respect, and dialogue.

Empirical Examples: Three Master's Theses of Teacher Students in Germany/Baden-Württemberg

Within the BAGSKOL project, several master's theses were developed. This section highlights three examples from Baden-Württemberg, one of the sixteen federal states in Germany and the location of the University of Education, Weingarten, to give examples, how student teachers approach cultural complexity and illustrate different curricular approaches to cultural complexity within the Baden-Württemberg education system. Thus, the three studies are embedded in the context of the state's six cross-cutting guiding perspectives and the guidelines for democracy education.²

Discrimination and racism in Primary Education

One of the studies presents an analysis of the curriculum for primary school subjects in Baden-Württemberg. The focus is on finding ways to deal with *discrimination and racism as a complex subject matter* in the context of the cultural discourse (Höß, 2025). It is about the need for intercultural encounters in the face of social diversity, which can and should take place in schools that are attended by an increasing number of “multicultural children with different native languages” (ibid., p. 9; own translation with DeepL). This sentence alone clearly shows how culture can be both unifying and divisive, especially when considered in terms such as “inter” and “multi”.

The study examines curricula for physical education, games and sports, German, English, Protestant and Catholic religious education, art/crafts, mathematics, music, and general studies, along with seven textbooks from the years 2016 to 2021. Two central questions are addressed:

1. What thematic discussions of discrimination and racism in the context of culture can be identified in the curricula for primary schools in Baden-Württemberg?
2. To what extent are discrimination and racism in the context of culture implemented in school textbooks as complex subjects of instruction?

The analysis reveals that discrimination and racism are of comprehensive significance in the curricula but do not play an explicit role as separate topics in the textbooks examined. Instead, there are implicit references, mainly in illustrations and clip art depicting people with different nationalities, religious affiliations, skin colours, or disabilities. Occasionally, topics relevant to discrimination and racism are addressed, primarily concerning protection against discrimination and with the promotion of tolerance, acceptance, and values education in line with the guiding perspective mentioned above. This analysis reveals both the strengths and limitations of the current curriculum in addressing issues of discrimination and diversity.

Cultural education in primary school textbooks

Another study explores how *cultural content is taught and presented* in primary school textbooks (Holder, 2025). It posits that the way culture is taught influences how children perceive culture, and that the depiction of cultural aspects contributes to their general visibility. There is always the danger of a one-sided, stereotypical representations that promote the deepening of prejudices. To analyse the cultural images conveyed in school textbooks and describe missing perspectives, culture is broadly classified in relation to traditions, values, and norms, human coexistence, and their changing nature. Media as a vehicle of culture, the significance of art, literature, and music, connections to identity, belonging, and differentiation, as well as culture in (foreign) language teaching are all considered.

Examining categories of everyday life, literature, language, art, music and film, rules, values and norms, traditions and customs, the past, and other countries, it becomes clear that culture is primarily conveyed implicitly and its treatment changes over time. Older textbooks tend to reference national culture, while newer books also make universal references. Notably, none of the textbooks analysed contain critical reflection on their own culture; there is no discussion focusing on the influence of their own perspective. This highlights the challenge of moving beyond national perspectives toward a more reflective, pluralistic approach in educational resources.

Cultural Complexity in subject teaching (textile)

In the third example, *cultural complexity* is addressed as a didactic challenge using teaching materials on the subject of textiles in lower secondary education (Oßwald, 2025). The topic area “Consumption and Clothing” is used to promote awareness of global interrelationships (consumption and production patterns), that are fundamental to Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Clothing is understood as more than just an everyday commodity; it is closely linked to

identity formation, the communication of cultural meanings, and assignment to specific social groups. To this end, the curriculum for the subject everyday culture, nutrition, and social studies (AES)³ and selected teaching materials were systematically analysed. Key categories included cultural diversity (clothing in other countries, intercultural comparison, global fashion influences), tradition and cultural identity (traditional crafts, clothing as a symbol of identity, regional or national symbolism), sustainability and global responsibility (ecological textiles, fair working conditions, consumer criticism), stereotypes & representations (gender roles, media portrayals, cultural attributions), learning objectives of cultural education (self-reflection, perspective taking, discussion tasks).

In the AES curriculum, everyday culture is explicitly understood as the culturally diverse reality of children's and young people's lives. Cultural complexity is designed as a cross-cutting objective, represented in process-related competencies, and operationalized in the competency field of consumption in global contexts. The analysis of teaching materials shows that cultural diversity and global contexts in the subject area of textiles are generally addressed in all textbooks examined; however, this is predominantly done in a superficial, descriptive, and comparative manner. For example, items of clothing are examined in images or short text passages along the lines of the difference between traditional and modern or traditional and European everyday clothing. An intersectional perspective – gender, origin, social situation – is almost completely absent. Global value creation and consumption contexts play a central role, although there is a clear focus on deficit-oriented representations, especially in the case of textiles from the Global South. Here, the national educational context provides only a limited framework for addressing global and intersectional complexities, reinforcing the need for broader perspectives in curriculum development.

Discussion

The results show that educational discourses on culture are predominantly shaped by national frameworks, offering stability and orientation. Nonetheless, engagement with cultural issues enables references to universal values, particularly those promoted by the European Union, such as diversity, pluralism, respect, and dialogue. This duality highlights both the potential and the limitations of national educational systems in a globalized world.

The empirical examples from Baden-Württemberg illustrate how culture is often addressed implicitly in curricula and textbooks, with little critical reflection or explicit reference to global challenges. While national frameworks remain dominant, there is a need for education systems to open up to more dynamic, multi-perspective, and inclusive approaches – beyond the nation-state paradigm. This is especially important in light of growing cultural diversity and the challenges posed by global interdependence.

Summary and Perspectives

This essay situates cultural complexity within the educational context, balancing national semantics and global multiperspectivity. Drawing on theoretical foundations, comparative findings from the BAGSKOL project, and from three master's theses, the following key insights emerge:

1. Understanding of culture is diverse and has significance on many different levels – human, interpersonal, in relation to our shared world, and as part of a specific statehood – as well as in relation to the associated challenges of national and universal identity.
2. Most arguments within education discourses remain within the realm of national semantics, which emphasizes the close connection between culture and country-specific interpretations that offer clear guidance.
3. References to universal principles at the level of the United Nations – such as tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and overcoming discrimination – offer important points of reference for education beyond national understandings of culture.
4. In general, culture has both an orienting and at the same time demarcating function in view of a world society, which runs both along and beyond national borders. This also has consequences in the field of education, which continues to be organized on a national basis worldwide and thus institutionally reproduces the associated national cultural requirements.

Further research and policy development should focus on integrating global perspectives and fostering critical cultural awareness in curricula and teacher education, enabling students to navigate and contribute to a complex world society.

Notes

- 1 Dealing with Cultural complexity in school, racism and heteronormativity, body prejudices and education, justice and inclusion, the Erasmus+-project takes place from to October 2024 till September 2027. The consortium consists of Nantes University (France), University of Education, Weingarten (Germany), Murcia University (Spain), Zaragoza University (Spain), Linnaeus University (Sweden), Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv (Ukraine). It consists of various work packages – besides project management and Dissemination and networking for change – mainly state of the art and identification of crucial challenges, didactics and ethnography in the classroom: conception of lessons and common knowledge through the experimentation of student twinning, propositions for teacher training, teaching curricula and how to address the positionality of the teachers.
- 2 Education for sustainable development/Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE), education for tolerance and acceptance of diversity/Bildung für Toleranz und Akzeptanz von Vielfalt (BTv), prevention and health promotion/Prävention und Gesundheitsförderung (PG), career guidance/Berufliche Orientierung (BO), media education/Medienbildung (MB), consumer education/Verbraucherbildung (VB), (<https://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/Lde/LS/BP2016BW/ALLG/LP>).
- 3 AES (Alltagskultur, Ernährung und Soziales/everyday culture, nutrition, and social studies) is the taught subject in secondary schools, where textiles are part of the university subject Everyday Culture and Health.

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Charlotte Silander & Mattias Lundin

Culture and Education in Sweden

Abstract

This paper analyses how “culture” is constructed and mobilised in Swedish compulsory schooling and explores the implications of these constructions for teaching and teacher education. Drawing on the current national curriculum (Lgr22) and curriculum-historical research, culture is examined both as a normative framework for democratic citizenship and belonging, and as curricular content and expressive practice across school subjects. Persistent tensions are identified between stated intercultural ambitions and the positioning of Swedishness as an implicit normative centre, where language requirements, colour-blind ideals, and policy framings of diversity may reproduce boundaries between an unspoken “we” and an identified “them”. Culture is shown to function simultaneously as an object of knowledge—often positioning national minorities as curricular content—and as a potential resource for dialogical meaning-making. Recent debates, including proposals for a Swedish cultural canon, further intensify questions of heritage, representation, and exclusion. The paper concludes by outlining implications for teacher education, emphasising critical curriculum reading and pedagogical approaches addressing power, discrimination, and plurality.

Keywords: *Culture, Education, Sweden*

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag analysiert, wie „Kultur“ in der schwedischen Pflichtschule konstruiert und mobilisiert wird, und untersucht die Auswirkungen dieser Konstruktionen auf den Unterricht und die Lehrerbildung. Ausgehend vom aktuellen nationalen Lehrplan (Lgr22) und der lehrplanhistorischen Forschung wird Kultur sowohl als normativer Rahmen für demokratische Bürgerschaft und Zugehörigkeit als auch als Lehrplaninhalt und Ausdruckspraxis in verschiedenen Schulfächern untersucht. Es werden anhaltende Spannungen zwischen den erklärten interkulturellen Ambitionen und der Positionierung des Schweden­tums als implizites normatives Zentrum festgestellt, wo Sprachkenntnisse, farbenblinde Ideale und politische Rahmenbedingungen für Vielfalt Grenzen zwischen einem unausgesprochenen „Wir“ und einem identifi-

zierten „Sie“ reproduzieren können. Kultur fungiert gleichzeitig als Gegenstand des Wissens – wobei nationale Minderheiten oft als Lehrplaninhalt positioniert werden – und als potenzielle Ressource für dialogische Sinnstiftung. Jüngste Debatten, darunter Vorschläge für einen schwedischen Kulturkanon, verschärfen die Fragen nach Erbe, Repräsentation und Ausgrenzung weiter. Der Beitrag schließt mit einer Darstellung der Implikationen für die Lehrerbildung, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf kritischer Lehrplanlesung und pädagogischen Ansätzen liegt, die sich mit Macht, Diskriminierung und Pluralität befassen.

Schlüsselwörter: *Kultur, Bildung, Schweden*

Introduction

This paper examines how “culture” is constructed and mobilised in Swedish compulsory schooling, and what these constructions mean for teaching and teacher education. Drawing on the current national curriculum (Lgr22) and curriculum-historical research, we analyse culture both as a normative context for democratic citizenship and belonging, and as curricular content and expressive practice across subjects. We highlight persistent tensions between intercultural ambitions and the positioning of Swedishness as an implicit centre, where language, colour-blind ideals, and policy framings of diversity can reproduce boundaries between an unspoken “we” and an identified “them.” Against this backdrop, we discuss how recent debates—such as proposals for a Swedish cultural canon—intensify questions of heritage, representation, and exclusion. We conclude by outlining implications for teacher training, emphasising critical curriculum reading and pedagogical tools for addressing power, discrimination, and plurality in everyday classroom work.

Culture as context

Culture is a core part of the Swedish school’s value foundation and mission. According to the curriculum (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022, Lgr22), culture encompasses cultural heritage, diversity, and identity. Education should also strengthen students’ understand-

ding of and ability to live in a culturally diverse society. School is intended to function as a social and cultural meeting place, where students gain knowledge of cultural heritage while developing intercultural competence needed to navigate life. The concept of “culture” in the Swedish school system is constructed through a long historical and political trajectory shaped by curriculum policy, intercultural pedagogy but also broader social narratives about migration, diversity and national identity (Brantefors, 2015).

The growth of what we today call intercultural education, is strongly interconnected with society’s prevailing immigrant policies. Swedish educational policy has repeatedly shifted, from assimilation in the 1960s, to multiculturalism in the 1970s–80s, and later to interculturalism (Brantefors, 2015). Despite shifts to intercultural policies, Brantefors (2015) argues that the curriculum consistently positions Swedish culture as a normative centre. Historically, culture has been strongly linked to Swedish national heritage, something that the curriculum has framed as a shared foundation of values and traditions that all students must learn in order to become democratic citizens. Some of these concern fundamental democratic values, sometimes denoted core values. However, the curriculum also speaks of diversity, while Swedish culture remains the default reference point. An important marker of Swedishness is language which is a fundamental requirement for full belonging. For example, since the 1960s, Swedish formal curricula for compulsory school have positioned Swedish as “*the most important tool for integration*” (Brantefors 2015, p. 306).

The curriculum, even when promoting tolerance, human rights, and anti-racism, constructs a clear boundary between an unarticulated “we” and a defined “them”, not due to explicit xenophobia, but as an idea embedded in the cultural logic of educational policy, which frames Swedish culture as coherent and authentic while minority cultures appear as peripheral or supplementary. Essentialist understandings have continued to dominate educational practice, as intercultural educational approaches often build on essentialist notions where culture is frequently equated with ethnicity or origin (Åkerblom & Harju, 2019).

Bauer et al. (2024) add to the interpretation that Swedish culture is described as coherent and authentic in contrast to other cultures in their study on civic orientation for newly arrived migrants. They show how Sweden is constructed as developed in the world in terms of values and, how migrants are portrayed in contrast to such an idealized image. Another pattern that refers to culture in pedagogical practices is the communication of culture treated as something that minority students “have”, while Swedish students remain culturally unmarked. This includes the risk of understandings of culture as something fixed that children bring with them to school (Högberg, 2024). It also results in a simplistic pedagogy a “food-and-festival” approach, in which culture becomes associated with superficial aspects such as food, clothing or celebrations, while structural inequalities and discriminatory practices remain unaddressed.

Several scholars have highlighted Sweden’s strong national self-image as a tolerant and anti-racist na-

tion (Wahlström Smith, 2020; Hübinette & Lundström, 2022). This Swedishness is closely tied to a colour-blind ideal in which race is not acknowledged, and discussions of racism are often framed as impolite or “un-Swedish” (Wahlström Smith, 2020, p. 38). Bauer et al. (2024) show how well-intentioned teachers frequently emphasise similarity and sameness, believing this to be an anti-racist practice. In educational settings, this means that performing Swedishness also entails performing colour-blindness, avoiding explicit engagement with issues of race or structural inequality (Trulsson & Nilsson, 2024).

The connection between national identity, culture and education has recently been emphasized by the development of a *cultural* canon presented by the right-wing parliamentary parties (Swedish National Agency for Education & Swedish Arts Council, 2024). A cultural canon is intended as a state-endorsed selection of works and phenomena deemed to have had enduring significance for Swedish culture and societal development—across both artistic and civic domains—intended to promote civic “Bildung” that can strengthen social cohesion and broaden understanding of Sweden’s historical rootedness. The canon has been questioned regarding which cultural works, traditions, and expressions should be considered central to “Swedish culture” and also with respect to if it is at all possible to define a cultural canon highlighting a shared cultural heritage, and a national identity. Proponents argue that Sweden needs a clearer common frame of reference in a time of globalization, polarization, and rapid societal change and a way to articulate what is shared and cohesive. The idea is that certain works have had a particularly significant impact on Swedish history and cultural development and should therefore be emphasized. A canon means that the state actively selects certain works over others, which always raises questions about norms, representation, and politics (Borsgård, 2025). Critics argue that a Swedish cultural canon easily becomes a project that excludes the cultures of minorities and immigrants, since the selection is often based on a traditionally ethnic Swedish understanding of culture. Critics also emphasize that it entails a *fixation* of culture as something static in contrast to intercultural ideas seeing culture as changeable, dynamic, and diverse. A canon, by contrast, signals that some expressions are “more Swedish” than others and that culture can be defined from above.

Culture as content

Although not emphasized in the curriculum, culture appears in the aims and central content of several subjects (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). Swedish students learn about culture as *cultural heritage and identity*, where students are to develop awareness of their own and the shared cultural heritage and gain knowledge of national minorities. In Visual Arts, students are to gain experience of visual culture such as film, photography, design, and art. In Modern Languages, students learn to understand cultural and social conditions in the contexts where the language is used. In Swedish, they gain

knowledge about literature's historical and cultural contexts. In Swedish for Immigrants as well as in instruction in national minority languages, combinations of media such as film and theatre are treated as cultural forms of expression.

Culture is one of the general objectives of compulsory school as the formal curriculum (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022) states that students should have “acquired knowledge of the culture, language, religion and history of the national minorities (Jews, Roma, the indigenous Sami people, Swedish Finns and Tornedalians)” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022, p. 13) after completion of compulsory school. This means, for example, that students should be able to interact with other people based on knowledge of similarities and differences in living conditions, culture, language, religion and history. These formulations construct diversity primarily as an object of knowledge, something that pupils should “acquire knowledge of”, which risks positioning national minorities and cultural others as topics to be studied rather than as co-constitutive subjects within the school community with a risk of reinforcing an asymmetrical relationship between majority and minority positions, where the majority remains normative while the latter becomes curricular “content”.

Besides culture as knowledge, culture is also a means of expression (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). Students should be able to “use and engage in many different forms of expression, such as language, art, music, drama and dance, and has developed knowledge of society's cultural offerings” (ibid., p. 14). At the same time, by framing culture as a means of expression the curriculum opens up possibilities for teaching that engages pupils in intercultural meaning-making. This dual framing, culture as both knowledge content and expressive practice, creates an important tension for teachers when designing learning activities that move beyond mere recognition of difference towards dialogical encounters. This tension mirrors a pedagogical challenge: whether culture is approached as a static attribute tied to identity or as a dynamic process of meaning-making. The latter requires teachers to engage not only with curricular directives but also with the power relations that shape whose voices and experiences become legitimate in classroom dialogues.

Curriculum Frameworks for Diversity, Plurality, and Interculturality in Swedish Compulsory Schooling

When addressing the efforts of diversity, plurality and interculturality/transculturality in Swedish teaching, the impact of the curriculum needs to be taken into account. While diversity is often framed as a pedagogical aspiration, its realization is strongly conditioned by how teachers interpret and negotiate curricular mandates. The curriculum emerges as a strong framework for the organization of school activities, albeit curriculum interpretation is not a strict technical process, but a process where broader societal ideas on diversity and national identity are reproduced or challen-

ged. Wahlström and Sundberg (2015) showed that Swedish teachers place the curriculum at the centre of their work pointing to a high degree of loyalty to the intentions of the curriculum but also to a scope for professional interpretation, in which teachers negotiate between the demands of policy documents, local conditions, and their own pedagogical beliefs. An overwhelming majority views the curriculum as central to how they understand their teaching assignment, and even more regard it as decisive when selecting the content to be included in instruction. Teachers' assignments on diversity in the classroom are conditioned by the ways in which they read, negotiate, and translate the curriculum's value commitments into everyday teaching practices.

The current Swedish curriculum for compulsory school Lgr22 (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022), is highly normative in terms of values as it prescribes an intercultural approach: “The school's objectives are that each pupil can make and express conscious ethical judgments based on knowledge of human rights, fundamental democratic values and personal experience,” (ibid., p.11). Every child should learn not to “accept people being subjected to violence, oppression, discrimination and victimization” (ibid., p. 11). The guidelines for teachers indicate that they shall clarify” and discuss with pupils the fundamental values of Swedish society and their consequences in terms of individual actions” (ibid., p. 11).

The understanding of national minorities also has a parallel in the guidelines. There it is stated that everyone working in the school shall “actively combat discrimination and victimization of individuals or groups” (ibid., p. 11). This choice of wording is powerful as it requires not only teachers to react to discrimination and victimization of people, but also to take an active stance in this endeavour. To “actively” combat discrimination requires teachers to critically examine everyday routines, teaching materials, and interactional patterns that may reproduce exclusionary norms including addressing one's own bias (Lundin & Torpsten, 2018).

Furthermore, what counts as discrimination is addressed in the first section of the curriculum where it is explained that nobody is to be subjected to discrimination related to sex, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age or disability. However, by codifying discrimination through a fixed set of grounds, the legal framework may risk obscuring more subtle or intersectional forms of marginalization that do not neatly fit into these categories (Eek-Karlsson et al., 2020). The topic of religion and other beliefs needs particular attention in this context, as the opening paragraph of the curriculum states that the

“... sanctity of human life, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men and solidarity between people are the values that schools shall embody and impart. In keeping with the ethics embodied in the Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense

of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility.” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022, p. 5)

The choice of words pointing out “the Christian tradition and Western humanism”, found in the introductory clause of Lgr22 has been widely debated. Teachers have questioned what this choice of words implies in relation to other religions and, for example, Eastern humanism. History might shed some light as one of the aims of the broader school reform 1962 was to break away from the religiously influenced traditions of the old form of elementary school system, historically shaped by the Church. In the area of religious education, this shift was signalled by changing the subject's name from *Christianity to Knowledge of Christianity* to be integrated with the other social studies subjects, reflecting a move toward a more secular and academic approach rather than confessional instruction, but yet keeping the notion of Christianity in the introductory clause (Hartman, 2000). From a diversity and interculturality perspective, this raises the question of whether the curriculum implicitly establishes a hierarchy of traditions, where Christian and Western humanist ethics function as the taken-for-granted norm against which other belief systems are measured (Lundin, 2012). That is, implicit hierarchies are significant because they shape not only what is taught but also what is thinkable within educational discourse. When certain traditions are positioned as universal, others risk being framed as deviations rather than equally legitimate epistemic resources. Such an ordering risks constraining how religious and philosophical plurality can be addressed in teaching. The contrast between explicitly mentioning the Christian tradition and the statement in Lgr22 that “teaching provided in schools must be non-denominational” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022, p. 5) has also been debated for long. This enduring tension between a non-denominational school and a value base explicitly linked to Christian tradition and Western humanism can be understood as a structural ambiguity at the heart of the curriculum. For teachers, it creates a complex backdrop for designing teaching that is simultaneously faithful to the curriculum's value statements and genuinely inclusive of religious and philosophical plurality in the classroom.

Implications for teacher training

The analyses discussed in the preceding sections show that issues of culture, Swedishness, diversity and interculturality in school are marked by complexity, historical layering, and inherent tensions. For teacher education, this implies that student teachers need to develop both a deep conceptual understanding and a reflective and analytical stance toward how culture and identity are constructed within the education system. A key conclusion is that future teachers had better learn to recognise how cultural and linguistic norms, even when they appear neutral, shape the conditions for inclusion and exclusion. This requires teacher education to move beyond notions of culture as static content to be transmitted, and instead emphasise culture

as relational, dynamic and deeply intertwined with power.

Given that the curriculum functions as a strong governing framework for teachers' practices (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2015), student teachers must develop the capacity for critical curriculum reading. They need to analyse how value statements, references to national cultural heritage, and the curriculum's normative intercultural ambitions, particularly in Lgr22 (Swedish Agency for Education, 2022), structure their future professional agency. This entails learning to identify both possibilities and constraints within policy texts, for instance, how the construction of national minorities as objects of knowledge, instead of as co-constructors of it, may risk reinforcing distance and otherness. Such critical reading must also include an understanding of how the curriculum's formulations on Christian tradition and Western humanism interact with the school's mandate of non-confessional teaching, shaping teachers' work with religious and philosophical plurality.

Strengthening student teachers' ability to work with intercultural and anti-racist perspectives also requires attention to the conditions under which exclusion occurs. This requires knowledge of the legal grounds of discrimination, structural inequality, segregation and more subtle or intersectional forms of exclusion. It also calls for developing the professional courage and pedagogical tools necessary to actively prevent and counter discrimination. To sum up, teacher training must create reflexive spaces in which student teachers can critically explore their own norms, assumptions and positions. Such reflexive practice is a prerequisite for enacting the curriculum's intercultural ambitions in ways that acknowledge complexity, support all pupils' sense of belonging, and enable genuinely dialogical encounters in the classroom.

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Begoña Vigo-Arazola, Pilar Lasheras-Lalana & Ana López-Fuentes

"Culture" as a Construct in the Educational Discourse. Reflections from Spain¹

Abstract

In a context such as Spain, where people from different regions, countries and geographical areas coexist, educational and pedagogical debates on the concept of culture as context and culture as content often present limitations and contradictions. The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the development of knowledge in order to move towards educational practices that address cultural complexity beyond national frameworks and within diverse social contexts. The analysis is based on National discourses and previous research on educational policy and practices on cultures and cultural diversity. It highlights the need to overcome the limitations that sometimes hinder a genuine connection between policies and practices, recognising that the plurality and intersectionality of culture can be meaningfully integrated, developing new perspectives, into school education and teacher training.

Keywords: *Culture, cultural diversity, cultural complexity, education policy, education practices, teacher education*

Zusammenfassung

In einem Kontext wie Spanien, wo Menschen aus verschiedenen Regionen, Ländern und geografischen Gebieten zusammenleben, weisen pädagogische Debatten über das Konzept von Kultur als Kontext und für Kultur als Inhalt oft Einschränkungen und Widersprüche auf. Das Ziel dieses Kapitels ist es, einen Beitrag zur Wissensentwicklung zu leisten, um zu pädagogischen Praktiken zu gelangen, die sich mit kultureller Komplexität über nationale Rahmenbedingungen hinaus und innerhalb vielfältiger sozialer Kontexte befassen. Die Analyse basiert auf nationalen Diskursen und früheren Forschungen zu Bildungspolitik und -praxis im Bereich Kultur und kultureller Vielfalt. Sie unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit, die Grenzen zu überwinden, die manchmal eine echte Verbindung zwischen Politik und Praxis behindern, und erkennt an, dass die Pluralität und Intersektionalität der Kultur sinnvoll integriert werden kann, indem neue Perspektiven in die Schulbildung und Lehrerbildung entwickelt werden.

Schlüsselwörter: *Kultur, kulturelle Vielfalt, kulturelle Komplexität, Bildungspolitik, Bildungspraxis, Lehrerbildung*

Introduction

In a context such as Spain, which since the late 1990s has experienced migration from other countries (Portes and Aparicio, 2013), educational and pedagogical debates on the concept of culture as context and culture as content often present limitations and contradictions. Taking Gramsci (1971) as a reference, understanding discourses on culture is part of the culturally hegemonic forces that turn the ideology of the ruling class into an active force for shaping vulnerable groups. Spain's colonial past, like that of other European countries, has made its presence felt on numerous occasions (Beach and Dyson, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2013; Quijano, 2000). This pattern of colonial power has affected education, thus perpetuating situations of oppression that continue to this day (Quijano, 2000).

The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the development of knowledge in order to move towards educational practices that address cultural complexity beyond national frameworks and within diverse social contexts. National discourses on educational policy and research are analysed to identify both the potential and limitations of these perspectives. More specifically, the chapter explores how the plurality and intersectionality of culture can be meaningfully integrated, developing new perspectives, into school education and teacher training.

The document is structured as follows. First, culture is analysed as a political construct and its contextualisation within the education system. Next, cultural considerations as context and content in relation to pedagogy and school are discussed. Subsequently, issues of diversity, plurality and interculturality/transculturality in teaching are examined, based on research into practices in schools. Finally, perspectives and implications for teacher training are examined.

Culture as a political construct and contextualisation within the educational system

In the context of the Spanish education system, the discourse on culture took shape in the 1970s through the schooling of populations in vulnerable situations due to social or economic circumstances, which particularly af-

affected Roma children (Salinas, 2009) in separate schools. Subsequently, in the 1980s, through integration/compensation in mainstream schools (Llevot and Garreta, 2006) and, since the 1990s, the emphasis has been placed on education based on respect for cultures and on education in solidarity and cooperation. Currently, according to UNESCO (2015), Spanish legislation, through the Organic Law Modifying the Organic Law on Education (LOMLOE) of 2020, emphasises the idea of “a school for all”, which encompasses diversity, inclusive education, human rights, pluralism and democracy. However, the term “specific educational needs” is retained to identify children with special educational needs, children with various forms of disability, learning difficulties, socio-cultural disadvantages and belonging to ethnic minorities, as well as gifted pupils. Various decrees reinforce the adaptation of the curriculum only for labelled children and a common programme for other pupils, thus favouring homogenisation.

Thus, culture seems to be recognised as context, while culture as content seems to present significant limitations. More specifically, as can be seen in the following sections, these limitations arise in both discourse and practice.

Cultural considerations in relation to pedagogy and school (culture as context and as content)

Culture as a context

Spain, where there are different regions (Catalonia, Galicia, Andalusia, etc.) with a significant population density in large urban towns, as other European nations has experienced a migrant movement from other countries since the end of the 1990s (Portes and Aparicio, 2013). According to official statistics of 2020, up to 13.2% of students have foreign background, although figures vary enormously within and across different regions. This situation is currently in state education, placing new demands on the system and requiring changes in management and professionalism in terms of the preparation of current and future teachers in a context often characterised by the development of teacher-centred teaching models. Concerning management, education policies and school practices are at an intersection between inclusion and equity policies on the one hand, and competitiveness and excellence on the other (Verger et al., 2017). In this vein, while quantitative data about results in schools and institutional practices are based on competence and efficiency (OECD, 2020), ideas about equity and inclusion tend to be secondary for educational administrators.

Culture as a content

In Spain, the regulatory treatment of culture in education is presented as content per se, in a subject entitled “Education in civic and ethical values” in Secondary Education. This subject “Education in civic and ethical values” is considered as a necessary requirement both for the active and responsible exercise of democratic citizenship and for the development of students' moral autonomy and personality. This training involves mobilizing the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as the values that enable stu-

dents to become aware of their personal and cultural identity, address fundamental ethical issues, and adopt an attitude consistent with the interconnected and eco-dependent nature of their lives in relation to the environment; all with the aim of being able to appreciate and apply, with independent judgment, the norms and values that govern coexistence in a free, pluralistic, just, and peaceful society. The subject deepens and develops areas of competence such as (i) self-knowledge and the development of moral autonomy; (ii) understanding the social framework of coexistence and ethical commitment to the democratic principles, values, and norms that govern it; (iii) adopting attitudes compatible with environmental sustainability based on an understanding of our interdependence and eco-dependence on the environment; (iv) more transversally, emotional education. Each of these areas of competence includes, in an integrated manner, a more theoretical level, aimed at a meaningful understanding of the most relevant concepts and issues in the subject, and a more practical or instrumental level, aimed at promoting, through critical reflection and argumentative dialogue, behaviours and attitudes in line with the ethical, civic, and eco-social values that guide coexistence. More specifically a basic knowledge entitled “Society, justice, and democracy” refers to the prevention of exploitation and violence against girls and women, shared responsibility for domestic and care tasks, interculturalism, social inclusion and respect for diversity and ethnocultural and gender identities and LGTBIQ+ rights.

In Primary Education “Education in Civic and Ethical Values”, education in values is the fundamental basis for the critical and responsible exercise of citizenship and for the comprehensive education of individuals. In the first case, it provides the tools for students to make an active and autonomous commitment to the values, principles, and norms that articulate democratic coexistence. In the second case, it contributes to the intellectual, moral, and emotional development necessary for children to engage in personal reflection on the great challenges and problems that constitute our present. This education in civic and ethical values involves mobilising the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable students to become aware of their personal and cultural identity, reflect on ethical issues that are fundamental to coexistence, and responsibly assume the interconnected and eco-dependent nature of our existence in relation to the environment; all with the aim of appreciating and independently applying the norms and values that should govern a free, pluralistic, just, and peaceful society.

“Education in Civic and Ethical Values” in primary education includes the development of the four areas of competence already mentioned in secondary education. In relation to the basic knowledge in the section focused on the block called “Society, justice, and democracy”, the aim is for students to understand the social and cultural roots of their own identity, recognising the different structures and relationships that make up their social environment and reflecting on its normative, ethical, and emotional dimensions. To this end, it is important

for students to understand certain basic political and social concepts, to identify and explain the main characteristics of our democratic framework for coexistence, and to compare their knowledge and judgments with those of others through research and dialogue on relevant ethical issues (the human rights situation in the world, poverty, violence, effective equality and shared responsibility between women and men, respect for diversity and minorities, migration, the climate crisis, etc.), critically evaluating different ways of addressing them and justifying their own judgments in this regard.

The culture as a content is recognised across all subjects and areas too, both in primary and secondary education. The curriculum emphasises valuing Spain's cultural, social and linguistic diversity and fostering respectful attitudes toward difference (Neubauer et al., 2022).

At the national level, current education legislation (LOMLOE, 2020) recognises the role of culture as an essential dimension of the education system, mainly from two perspectives. One perspective is that of tangible and intangible heritage (art, literature, history, architecture, traditions and other cultural manifestations considered classic or representative of national heritage), promoted by various national (Merillas and Etxeberria, 2015) and international (UNESCO, 2017) organisations. The other perspective is that of social, inclusive and intercultural diversity, as referred to in the previous section.

In relation to the above, a thematic axis reflected across the curriculum is that of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity here is recognised through the different subjects (Mathematics, Social Sciences, Biology or Abroad Language, Physical Education, Music) in different regions. Through specific objectives and competences, the aim is to promote knowledge and respect for the different cultures present in Spain and in the school environment. It encourages recognition of linguistic plurality, appreciation of the cultural heritage of the regions and respect for cultural and ethnic minorities, such as the Roma population or students of foreign origin. In this regard, the LOMLOE (2020) explicitly includes the need to "promote knowledge and appreciation of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the different autonomous communities" (p. 122884) [own translation] and to work critically in the classroom on the history and culture of traditionally invisible groups. This dimension of culture is less addressed from the perspective of intercultural education mentioned above, despite it focuses on training for coexistence, the prevention of stereotypes, racism or any type of discrimination, and democratic citizenship. Recognition of linguistic diversity or appreciation of the cultural heritage of other regions outside Spain are not recognised aspects of the curriculum.

In this way, despite the incorporation of these new ideas about culture into official policy, several indicators show that schools are resistant to fundamental changes, as they continue with traditional teaching and curricula and restrict inclusion processes (e.g., Domingo et al., 2019; Echeita, 2013). In this context, culture connected with UNESCO's (2015) idea of inclusion is, indeed,

a standard category in the educational laws and policies of the Spanish regions from 2017 to 2021. This is a misunderstanding of "culture" and "cultural diversity".

An analysis of the discourses of policy makers and bureaucrats (cf. Vigo et al., 2022) on how they transfer and frame one of the current global perspectives of including cultural diversity in education reveals these limitations.

Questions of diversity, plurality, and interculturality/transculturality in teaching

A study on cultural diversity in Spain (cf. Vigo et al., 2023) allows to identify how diversity, plurality, and interculturality/transculturality in teaching is working. For example, in relation to the different languages spoken by students, a school principal explains a practice in which these languages are used as a means of strengthening students' identity and promoting cultural exchange.

"We are studying the different languages of Spain. The languages that appear in the textbook are Galician, Basque, Catalan, with the Valencian variant, in addition to Spanish as the common language. However, there are other languages that are missing. Aragonese is missing, and then we have Caló. There are Castilian words enriched by Caló, by Romani. Well, those words have been worked on. The kids have left school and asked about them at home, they've brought them in, and we've learned them as part of the normality of other languages (Headmaster, Epi)." (Vigo et al., 2023, p. 10). [own translation]

In another case, other studies showed (cf. Carrasco Macías and Coronel Llamas, 2017) the exchange of gastronomic knowledge as a recurring theme. One example is that of a teacher who uses the different foods that the pupils bring for lunch as a reference point.

"In this school, where pupils of different nationalities and cultures coexist, this situation, far from generating conflict or rejection, promotes interaction, exchange and curiosity. [...] the good thing is that everyone is also looking at what the others are having for lunch, saying things like, 'Let's see what you've ordered,' 'What have you brought?', 'What's this?', 'How is this made?', 'How do you say this?' ... I already know half of the nuts in Moroccan too [...] we share different things that we each have. Some things are the same, but others are not, and it's also good to know them [...] (Teacher, Epi)." (Vigo et al., 2023, p. 11) [own translation]

The same teacher recognised the value of cultural identity through storytelling in her classroom. Families are invited to the classroom even though some of them do not speak Spanish. This activity helps to reinforce the culture of families and the community:

"[...] Today a family came to tell a story in the classroom and is telling it in Moroccan. Previously, the

teacher had encouraged families to do so in their own language, telling them, 'I want you to tell the stories here as you tell them to your children' [...]' (Field notes from primary school class, February 2020 Epo) [own translation]

In this way, through this practice, as in other studies, the teacher recognises the cultures of groups other than the predominant hegemonic culture, based on the participation and recognition of families and their culture in the classroom (cf. Aguado-Odina, 2017; Aguado-Odina et al., 2017; Vigo-Arrazola and Dieste, 2017). However, these practices that recognise the value of diversity are combined with comments from the same teachers that are examples of the tensions and contradictions we experience in schools. One teacher recounts the difficulties she encounters in her classroom, referring to students from a culture other than the hegemonic one with terms such as "them", "different" and "difficult" (Teacher Epo). Thus, the representations assumed with regard to the foreign and Roma populations are manifested as if they were an external group in an education system for the middle-class, white population (Farley et al., 2021). This negative representation, under the term diversity, seems to be normalised by teachers in schools, as has also been pointed out in other studies (Franzé, 2008).

In this vein, several studies (cf. Garreta et al., 2020, 2022; Goenechea and Gallego, 2015; Torrelles et al., 2022; Vigo et al., 2022), have pointed out that, although both politicians and school teachers formally maintain inclusive and intercultural discourses, school measures are limited to managing difference, without critically integrating it into curriculum objectives and content, methodologies, or the way interpersonal relationships are built in schools.

Limitations are present in teaching practices when pedagogical approaches considering diversity, plurality and interculturality are only really considered and developed when there is an increase in the presence of vulnerable students belonging to ethnic minorities (Vigo-Arrazola et al., 2023), whether they are of Spanish or foreign nationality.

Perspectives and implications for teacher training

As mentioned above, within the Spanish regulatory framework there is a clear institutional desire to recognise different cultures and promote equity, inclusion, and attention to diversity (LOMLOE, 2020) and it is considered for teacher training in schools and in the university.

In Spain, there is a proposal from the authorities in education related to educational approaches and guidelines of the Strategic Plans for School Coexistence (PECE) in schools of the different regions. These plans include eight lines of action, evaluation and monitoring strategies, with an implementation schedule and budget distribution in relation to cultural diversity, one of the objectives is to promote equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship. This objective is based on the fact that "education and training policies should enable all citizens, re-

gardless of their personal, social, and economic circumstances, to acquire, update, and develop throughout their lives both the specific professional skills and the key competencies necessary for their employability, as well as to support lifelong learning, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue" (CNIIE, 2016, p. 8). [own translation]

At the university, teacher education related to recognise different cultures and promote equity, inclusion, and attention to diversity needs to be reinforced in order to materialise in its development in schools. Pre-service teacher training does not genuinely contribute to manage diversity, plurality, and interculturality/transculturality in teaching (Moliner et al., 2020). As shown the study conducted by Pérez-Castejón and Vigo-Arrazola (2024), teacher training should contribute to overcoming the interpretation of inclusion as a technical issue linked to student performance and reinforce the ethical, social, or cultural dimension oriented toward social justice. Research carried out by university professors/researchers requires an approach to educational reality and joint work in analysing the interests, needs, and possibilities of schools (Márquez-Vázquez and Sánchez-Fuentes, 2024).

Previous studies (i.e., Vigo-Arrazola et al., 2019; Pérez-Castejón et al., 2025) have highlighted the importance of taking as a reference point research in and from the educational reality based on (i) the experiences of pre-service and in-service teachers; (ii) reflection on their potential from the point of view of inclusion in relation to the scientific literature on the subject; (iii) development and expansion of proposals.

In this regard, through initial teacher training, in relation to inclusive and fair sustainable educational practice, from a theoretical point of view, we start from a committed position that is committed to (i) destabilising the institutional relationships and structures that have contributed to maintaining the status quo of inequality (Harris et al., 2015); (ii) generating ways of acting to help overcome situations of oppression, marginalisation and exploitation (Earick, 2018); and (iii) creating a pedagogical relationship in initial training processes in the interests of sustainable inclusive education.

It is not just a matter of acquiring knowledge from a performative perspective (Ball, 2003). The reference point is the need to align research and innovation interests with the interests and struggles of marginalised groups (Gramsci, 1971), promoting critical dialogue that makes teaching processes at the university a dynamic and dialectical process as opposed to a static and performative perspective (Madison, 2020), considering students as capable individuals and intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971). It is about developing critical theory to interpret and illuminate action (Jordan and Yeomans, 1995). It is about creating a space of possibility (Vigo-Arrazola and Beach, 2021; Milligan, 2016) that can support rather than force commitments to educational and social transformation as an objective (Madison, 2020), based on the relationship between theory and practice.

The value of student and teacher participation in the joint design and implementation of teaching and learning processes is recognised, without losing sight of the

value of research in promoting collective reflection, the participation of individuals as intellectuals (Lather, 1997) and illuminating the actions of future teachers.

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- 2 Name of a school.

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Lucy Bell

Culture as a Construct with the Educational Discourse – French Perspectives

Abstract

This paper analyses how culture is constructed and mobilised within the French educational discourse, with a particular focus on compulsory schooling. It shows that cultural education in France operates along two related but analytically distinct dimensions: as a set of legitimate knowledge and values promoted by the State in the name of equality and republican citizenship, and as a plurality linked to linguistic, social and cultural diversity. Drawing on policy texts, curricula and teacher-training frameworks, the paper examines how these dimensions are articulated within a centralised and normatively universalist educational system structured by the principles of *laïcité* and a strong distinction between “high” and “popular” culture. It argues that this configuration generates specific tensions for the pursuit of equality, both in terms of access to legitimate culture and in the ways cultural diversity is problematised and addressed in schools and teacher education. The paper concludes that culture is simultaneously mobilised as a common core to be shared by all pupils and as a dimension of social and linguistic heterogeneity. This dual framing shapes current policies and practices regarding citizenship formation and responses to social and cultural inequalities

Keywords: *Cultural education; Laïcité (secularism); Republican values; Cultural diversity*

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag analysiert, wie Kultur im französischen Bildungsdiskurs konstruiert und verwendet wird, wobei ein besonderer Schwerpunkt auf der Schulpflicht liegt. Es wird gezeigt, dass kulturelle Bildung in Frankreich entlang zweier miteinander verbundener, aber analytisch unterschiedlicher Dimensionen gehandhabt wird: als Zusammenhang legitimer Kenntnisse und Werte, die vom Staat im Namen der Gleichheit und der republikanischen Staatsbürgerschaft gefördert werden, und als eine Pluralität, die mit sprachlicher, sozialer und kultureller Vielfalt verbunden ist. Anhand von politischen Richtlinien, Lehrplänen und Rahmenwerken für die Lehrerbildung untersucht der Beitrag, wie diese Dimensionen innerhalb

eines zentralisierten und normativ universalistischen Bildungssystems artikuliert werden, das durch die Prinzipien der *Laïcité* und eine starke Unterscheidung zwischen „Hochkultur“ und „Populärkultur“ strukturiert ist. Es wird argumentiert, dass diese Konfiguration spezifische Spannungen für das Streben nach Gleichheit erzeugt, sowohl hinsichtlich des Zugangs zu legitimer Kultur als auch hinsichtlich der Art und Weise, wie kulturelle Vielfalt in Schulen und in der Lehrerbildung problematisiert und behandelt wird. Der Beitrag kommt zu dem Schluss, dass Kultur gleichzeitig als gemeinsamer Kern, der von allen Schülern geteilt werden soll, und als Dimension sozialer und sprachlicher Heterogenität in Anspruch genommen wird und dass diese doppelte Rahmgebung die aktuellen Politiken und Praktiken in Bezug auf die Bildung von Staatsbürgerschaft und die Reaktionen auf soziale und kulturelle Ungleichheiten prägt.

Schlüsselwörter: *Kulturelle Bildung; Laizismus (Säkularismus); Republikanische Werte; Kulturelle Vielfalt*

Introduction

The French education system attributes a central role to culture, conceived both as a shared repertoire of references that should be accessible to all pupils and as a dimension of the social and linguistic diversity present in classrooms. Within compulsory schooling, this dual conception is articulated through national policies, curricula and teacher-training frameworks that promote a humanist and republican vision of education whilst acknowledging plural cultural affiliations. In a centralised system structured by the principles of *laïcité* and marked by a strong distinction between “high” culture and popular culture, these frameworks define what counts as legitimate culture and how it should be transmitted in schools. This paper analyses how these definitions shape educational discourse and practice and discusses the tensions that arise when the universalist ambition of a common culture encounters persistent social and cultural inequalities in access to that culture and in the recognition of diversity.

Cultural Education

In France, the discourse on cultural education falls within the frame of Artistic and Cultural Education (ACE). Rooted in the legacy of André Malraux, the Minister for Culture when the Ministry was created in 1959, ACE is led jointly by the Ministries of Culture and of National Education, through national policies and institutions. The Ministry of National Education specifies that “The missions of National Education are to bring a humanist culture to all students and to develop their sensitivity through artistic practices. This has to do with artistic and cultural education and the promotion of teaching Antique languages and cultures. Because they help us better understand the world, contribute to the thriving of students and are essential factors of true equal opportunity, arts and culture are at the heart of School”¹. The 2018 Charter for Artistic and Cultural Education – written by the High Council for Artistic and Cultural Education and signed by the main organisations of public bodies (such as the Organisation of French mayors’ inter-municipality Presidents, or the Assembly of Departments of France) – brings together actors and institutions around *10 principles*, which are to:

- ensure access to cultural experiences for all,
- associate the visits of cultural spaces, the meeting of artists, the pursuit of artistic activities and the acquisition of knowledge,
- allow access to a diverse and emancipating culture in all its forms,
- ensure that culture and art should be emancipatory and develop critical thinking and aesthetic sensitivity,
- integrate artistic and cultural education into all aspects of their life, including time spent with friends and family,
- perceive artistic and cultural education as a means for young people to make sense of their experiences and better understand the world in general,
- enhance mutual engagement between different types of partners (educational and cultural communities, voluntary sector and civil society, State and local / regional authorities),
- base artistic and cultural education on a dynamic of projects associating these partners,
- train actors of artistic and cultural education, in order to promote mutual knowledge of each other, as well as the acquisition and sharing of common references,
- for research and evaluations to be conducted in such a way as to ascertain the impact of artistic and cultural actions, improve their quality and encourage innovative approaches.

Notable devices and policies include the “Pass Culture”, a financial aid for people between the ages of 15 and 21 to access cultural activities; History of Arts as a compulsory subject in middle school and one of the four subjects on which students are evaluated during their end

of middle school examination; and the creation of the National Artistic and Cultural Educational Resources Centres. In short, French Artistic and Cultural Education is conceived as a lever for equality, emancipation and personal enriching, whilst strengthening citizenship and the critical mind of students (Jonchery & Octobre, 2022).

Teaching culture in schools

In France, the thematic aspects of culture taught to students cover a wide variety of fields, reflecting a humanistic and artistic approach. In the French context, this humanistic orientation is rooted in a republican and Enlightenment tradition that conceives education as a means of forming autonomous, rational and critical citizens. Humanism here refers to a normative educational project that values access to shared knowledge, intellectual emancipation and the development of critical judgement. This tradition underpins the central place given to history, literature, arts and languages in school curricula, and frames culture as a common good to which all pupils should have access. Based on curricula from primary school and middle-school (MoNER, 2015; 2018), the main axes are:

- arts and cultural education: visual and plastic arts on the one hand, and artistic practices on the other,
- humanist culture: This encompasses history and geography – to contextualise historical and cultural events – as well as literature and heritage (French heritage, but also European and world heritage. This means teachers are authorised to work on texts from the Bible as a cultural document, not for reasons of proselytism),
- living languages: English is mandatory from primary school as well as a second language from middle school (usually German or Spanish, as well as Italian more recently), and a language not traditionally taught in the French school canon, such as Mandarin, as an optional 3rd language,
- regional cultures: According to the law of 21 May 2021, regional languages are taught (Breton, Occitan, Corsican, etc.) in educational settings that highlight folklore, crafts and traditions specific to each region,
- republican values such as equality and non-discrimination have been explicitly taught in the subject of intercultural education, which has been part of the curricula at all levels since 1978 (Ravez, 2019).

Regarding the normative aspects, the approach to teaching culture in French schools is essentially guided by the normative principle of *laïcité* (French secularism), rooted in the ideals of the French Revolution and solidified by the 1905 law on the separation of Church and State. The frame of *laïcité* shapes the relationship between individuals and the State, prioritising equality and shared citizenship over religious or cultural differences (Ferhat, 2025). This commitment to *laïcité* is also reflected in the education system, where it underpins the notion of a common national culture that transcends religious or ethnic divides. This leads to another normative principle guiding the teaching of cul-

ture: it must be a tool for students to become republican citizens of their country whilst also being open to other cultures, thanks to a learnt capacity to think critically, in a “neutral” way, understood here as the ability to adopt a reflexive distance from particular beliefs or cultural affiliations.

Culture as a context of the educational discourse

According to Letourneux & Passini (2021), the divide between a “high” culture and the “people’s” culture is particularly strong in France, a country that played a capital role in the 18th century. It established itself as a major cultural pole, imposing on European aristocratic and upper classes a language, a lifestyle, ideas and literary and artistic values. This historical position has contributed to the symbolic elevation of elite cultural forms, reinforcing the perception of high culture as a legitimate and superior reference within the French cultural space. Today, in a context of intensified international cultural exchanges, representations of culture in France tend to polarise around two opposing models. On the one hand, culture is increasingly associated with mass cultural production, characterised by consumption, entertainment and the massification of cultural goods. On the other hand, cultural actors emphasise France’s artistic vocation, presenting high culture as a distinctive national reference and as a marker of its continued role in global literary and artistic exchanges. This opposition has manifested into a stronger polarisation than elsewhere in people’s representations between a high culture (*haute culture*) and pop culture (*productions populaires*), to the point where the French cultural identity has been associated with the notion of high culture (Letourneux & Passini, 2021).

This divide impacts school curricula, as demonstrated by the sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in 1970. Not only that, but the authors underlined how the distinction between a “high” culture and a “people’s” culture impacted teachers’ expectancies, with students who mastered the high culture being implicitly rewarded for this (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970).

In recent years, there has been a political willingness to make these expectancies explicit and enable all students to acquire the “high” culture, for a variety of reasons. Indeed, since 2005, ministerial texts have stipulated that during compulsory education (*scolarité obligatoire*, from ages three to sixteen) a common base or core of knowledge, competences and culture (*socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture*) must be incrementally acquired and mastered by all students². Furthermore, the curriculum focuses on several key aspects of culture, including cultural forms whose modes of transmission are less socially selective: these are notably an emphasis on French language skills and literary works, with a “balanced choice of works between patrimonial literature, children’s classics and recent works”³ and a focus on arts, literature and philosophy as academic subjects.

Beyond questions of access to legitimate culture and of the socially differentiated ways in which it is acquired, the French education system is also confronted with cultural diversity, understood here as the coexistence of different social, linguistic and normative reference systems among pupils. These two dimensions of culture coexist within the same republican educational framework and raise partly overlapping challenges for equality.

Dealing with cultural diversity

In France, the public education system is principally seen by the Ministry as a system to integrate all students as citizens of the French Republic. This means that faced with cultural diversity, the Ministry has firstly focused on equality, secondly on other French republican values such as inclusion, social inequalities, secularism (Meunier, 2021; 2008).

The French education system is centralised to the point that teachers all take the same national entrance examination. Those who pass it are then sent, by the Ministry, to the school they will work in. Consequently, the main way for the Ministry to spread a discourse on how cultural diversity should be addressed in school, and more specifically how teachers should address cultural diversity in their classrooms, is through the requirements of that examination. In other words, the Ministry imposes a specific way of addressing cultural diversity through the Republic’s values, by requiring that students prove in the examination that they have understood this. And in order for that to be the case, teacher-training colleges train students to become actors of the educational system, but also prepare them to pass the national examination, which is indispensable to become a permanent teacher. Therefore, colleges construct their curricula in alignment with the requirements to successfully pass this examination.

For instance, the teacher-training college in Nantes includes – in the curriculum for training primary school teachers – a teaching unit titled “Le professeur, acteur de la communauté éducative et du service public de l’éducation nationale” (i.e. The teacher, actor of the educational community and the National Education public service, our translation). 66 hours are devoted to this unit, and it is worth 7 ECTS. It is composed of 4 elements (“éléments constitutifs”, i.e. constitutive components), among them:

- the 24-hour module “L’École de la république dans les classes: École inclusive, polyvalence, transdisciplinarité, numérique, laïcité, hétérogénéité” (The Republican school in the classrooms: an inclusive school, versatility, transdisciplinarity, digitalisation, secularism, heterogeneity, our translation),
- the 16-hour module “Valeurs de la république, éthique professionnelle et sens et finalités de l’école, inégalités socio-scolaires” (Values of the Republic, professional ethics, meaning and purposes of school, and socio-educational inequalities, *ibid.*).

Perspectives

Taken together, these elements illustrate how culture is constructed within the French educational discourse, both as a shared set of knowledge and values to be transmitted to all pupils and as a dimension of diversity to be taken into account within a republican framework. This framing shapes educational policies, which combine an emphasis on equality through access to common cultural references with expectations of neutrality towards cultural differences. Cultural education is therefore conceived as a central component of the formation of republican citizens, while also being mobilized in relation to social and cultural inequalities.

MASTER 1 MEEF

1^{er} degré (2022/2023)

Unités d'enseignement	Heures étudiants	ECTS
UE 11 Le professeur, acteur de la communauté éducative et du service public de l'éducation nationale (*)	66	7
EC1 : L'École de la république dans les classes : École inclusive, polyvalence, transdisciplinarité, numérique, laïcité, hétérogénéité	24	
EC2 : Valeurs de la république, éthique professionnelle et sens et finalités de l'école, inégalités socio-scolaires	16	
EC3 : Contexte d'exercice (d'école, géographique, social), système éducatif, histoire de l'éducation, cadre réglementaire	16	
EC4 : Développement de l'enfant et apprentissages	10	

Notes

- The Ministry of National Education stipulates that: "L'éducation nationale a pour missions d'apporter une culture humaniste à tous les élèves et de développer leur formation sensible au travers des pratiques artistiques. Cela passe par l'éducation artistique et culturelle et la valorisation des enseignements de langues et cultures de l'Antiquité. Parce qu'ils nous font mieux appréhender le monde, parce qu'ils participent de l'épanouissement des élèves et qu'ils sont les facteurs essentiels d'une véritable égalité des chances, les arts et la culture sont au cœur de l'École". Online: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-education-artistique-et-culturelle-7496>
- According to the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research: <https://eduscol.education.fr/139/le-socle-commun-de-connaissances-de-competences-et-de-culture>
- According to the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education And Research: "(...) un choix équilibré entre littérature patrimoniale (les œuvres de référence tombées dans le domaine public) ou classiques de la littérature jeunesse (œuvres plus récentes souvent étudiées et rééditées) et œuvres récentes".

MoNER – Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research (2015). *Bulletin officiel spécial n° 11 du 26 novembre 2015. Programmes d'enseignement de l'école élémentaire et du collège.*

MoNER (2018). *Bulletin officiel n° 30 du 26 juillet 2018. Ecole élémentaire et collège: modification sur l'Enseignement civique et moral.*

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Culture as a Construct within the Educational Discourse. Ukrainian Reflections

Abstract

This report examines the conceptualization and application of culture within Ukrainian educational discourse, particularly in the context of the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion. It identifies a central tension between the necessity of consolidating national identity through national-patriotic education and the parallel commitment to international standards of diversity and intercultural understanding required for European Union integration. While the official curriculum incorporates “cultural competence” as a core pillar of the New Ukrainian School reform, the practical implementation of diversity pedagogy is heavily influenced by the imperatives of cultural sovereignty, de-Russification, and the integration of internally displaced persons. The analysis reveals that although legislative frameworks support tolerance and respect for diversity, a significant gap persists in teacher preparation regarding specific methodologies for intercultural dialogue. Comparatively, Ukraine’s approach is distinguished from Western European models by its focus on national resilience and the immediate psychological and social needs of a war-affected population. The report concludes that while conflict has accelerated the prioritization of a monolingual national identity, balancing this with inclusive, pluralistic educational goals remains a primary pedagogical challenge for Ukraine’s future societal development.

Keywords: *cultural competence, national-patriotic education, cultural diversity, New Ukrainian School (NUS), de-Russification, intercultural education, war-affected education*

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Bericht untersucht die Konzeptualisierung und Anwendung von Kultur im ukrainischen Bildungsdiskurs, insbesondere im Zusammenhang mit der umfassenden russischen Invasion im Jahr 2022. Er identifiziert einen zentralen Konflikt zwischen der Notwendigkeit, die nationale Identität durch national-patriotische Bildung zu festigen, und der gleichzeitigen Verpflichtung zu internationalen Standards der Vielfalt und des interkulturellen Verständnisses, die für die Integration in die Europäische Union erforderlich sind. Während der offizielle Lehrplan

„kulturelle Kompetenz“ als einen Kernpfeiler der Reform der neuen ukrainischen Schule beinhaltet, wird die praktische Umsetzung der Diversitätspädagogik stark von den Erfordernissen der kulturellen Souveränität, der Entrussifizierung und der Integration von Binnenvertriebenen beeinflusst. Die Analyse zeigt, dass zwar die gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen Toleranz und Respekt für Vielfalt unterstützen, aber bei der Vorbereitung der Lehrkräfte hinsichtlich spezifischer Methoden für den interkulturellen Dialog nach wie vor eine erhebliche Lücke besteht. Im Vergleich zu westeuropäischen Modellen zeichnet sich der Ansatz der Ukraine durch seinen Fokus auf nationale Resilienz und die unmittelbaren psychologischen und sozialen Bedürfnisse einer vom Krieg betroffenen Bevölkerung aus. Der Bericht kommt zu dem Schluss, dass der Konflikt zwar die Priorisierung einer monolingualen nationalen Identität beschleunigt hat, die Ausgewogenheit zwischen dieser und inklusiven, pluralistischen Bildungszielen jedoch eine zentrale pädagogische Herausforderung für die zukünftige gesellschaftliche Entwicklung der Ukraine bleibt.

Schlüsselworte: *kulturelle Kompetenz, national-patriotische Erziehung, kulturelle Vielfalt, Neue Ukrainische Schule (NUS), Entrussifizierung, interkulturelle Bildung, kriegsbeeinträchtigte Bildung*

Introduction

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping individual and collective identities, influencing social structures and interactions. In contemporary Ukraine — undergoing significant transformation while defending its sovereignty — this role is especially salient. Culture encompasses both tangible elements (arts, literature, traditions) and intangible aspects (values, language, identity, daily practices). This report explores how this complex concept is defined, applied, and debated in Ukrainian educational discourse.

Understanding this context requires reflecting on the Soviet legacy. Though “proletarian internationalism” claimed to celebrate cultural diversity, it often enabled Russification and suppressed national identities, including Ukrainian. Ukraine’s independence in 1991

launched a phase of nation-building and cultural revival, which accelerated after the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and the Donbas war. The 2022 full-scale invasion further intensified this trajectory, reshaping cultural and educational priorities.

This report addresses four core questions: the presence of “cultural education/pedagogy” in Ukraine; the themes and norms around teaching culture; which cultural aspects are emphasized in policy and academia; and the institutional guidance for educators on cultural diversity. The analysis reveals ongoing tensions between the need to consolidate national identity — amplified by war — and the pursuit of international norms on diversity, human rights, and intercultural understanding, particularly in the context of Ukraine's EU integration (Barnett, n.d.; Likhachov, 2024).

Culture and Education

The German term *Kulturpädagogik*, linked to arts-based cultural education as in Germany's *Kulturschule*, lacks a direct equivalent in Ukraine's official or academic discourse (Kryvko, 2023). Nonetheless, similar aims are pursued through domestically framed concepts. Ukraine's approach is less centered on arts pedagogy and more on fostering identity, transmitting values, and promoting social cohesion in a national context.

A key concept is *cultural competence* (ukr. культурна компетентність), introduced in 2017 as one of the ten core competencies of the New Ukrainian School (NUS) reform (MESU, 2016). It includes understanding cultural specificities at national, regional, and global levels; valuing heritage; respecting cultural self-identification; encouraging creative expression; and supporting intercultural dialogue. This aligns with European educational standards and is a mandatory learning outcome in the 2020 State Standard (KMU, 2020).

In parallel, academic discourse has embraced *polycultural and intercultural education*, often seen as interchangeable (Ivashko & Kohut, 2012; Zajaczkowska, 2015). These concepts, informed by Western models but adapted to local conditions, address the integration of historical minorities (e.g., Hungarians, Romanians, Poles) and the educational needs of the growing number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) since 2014.

The most prominent and state-supported cultural pedagogy is *national-patriotic education* (ukr. національно-патріотичне виховання). While present since independence, its role expanded after 2014 in response to Russian aggression and was further intensified following the 2022 invasion. It focuses on Ukrainian resilience, language, identity, civic duty, and defense readiness, and is embedded in strategies through 2028 and 2030 (KMU, 2020; 2024). These strands converge in several pedagogical principles:

- *formation of Ukrainian National and Civic Identity*: A primary goal across educational levels (KMU, 2024),
- *valuing Ukrainian Culture*: Emphasis on Ukrainian

language, history, literature, traditions, and symbols, increasingly framed through narratives of resilience and distinction from Russian influence,

- *respect for Cultural Diversity and Human Rights*: Officially mandated through the Law on Education (Verkhovna Rada, 2017) and NUS principles (MESU, 2016),
- *fostering Tolerance and Intercultural Dialogue*: Stated goals within policy documents (KMU, 2020),
- *promoting Democratic Values and Citizenship*: Integrated primarily through Civic Education (MESU, n.d.),
- *creative Self-Expression*: Included as an element of cultural competence (MESU, n.d.).

Non-formal actors like museums and libraries complement formal education with cultural programs.

A key challenge is the tension between the strong national-patriotic narrative, aimed at unity amid existential threat (MESU, 2022c), and the parallel goals of diversity, dialogue, and democratic inclusion rooted in international standards (MESU, 2016; Verkhovna Rada, 2017). Balancing these priorities remains a central pedagogical dilemma in Ukraine's education system.

Culture as a topic in school

The Ukrainian school curriculum addresses culture both explicitly (through dedicated subjects) and implicitly across disciplines. The thematic and normative approach to cultural education has evolved notably in response to shifting socio-political conditions. In this section, the analysis focuses specifically on the education policy discourse, as articulated in ministerial documents, state standards, and official guidelines. While academic and political debates form the broader context, it is policy texts that directly shape how culture is framed, operationalized, and implemented in the school curriculum.

Thematic Focus

Culture is primarily taught through Ukrainian Language and Literature, History, Art, Music, and Civic Education (KMU, 2020). The curricular content centers on specific subject matter:

- *Ukrainian National Identity*: Central to education is affirming a distinct Ukrainian identity through language, literature, history, folklore, and national symbols. This counters imperial and Soviet narratives, underscoring resilience, and European orientation (MESU, 2022d),
- *De-Russification*: Since 2014, and especially after 2022, curricula have reduced or recontextualized Russian cultural content, asserting cultural sovereignty, and reframing relations with Russia (MESU, 2022c),
- *European Values*: Topics like democracy, tolerance, and human rights have gained prominence, reflecting EU integration goals (KMU, 2020),
- *Cultural Diversity in Ukraine*: While national minorities and regional cultures are acknowledged (e.g., Crimean

Tatars, Hungarians, Poles), their inclusion is often framed through national unity (Verkhovna Rada, 2017),

- *Universal Human Values*: Core NUS themes include dignity, freedom, equality, and rights (MESU, 2016).

Taken together, these thematic elements reflect how culture is formalized within the curriculum through policy-driven definitions of content and learning outcomes. At the same time, they point to the broader expectations placed on schools to shape cultural understanding in ways that align with current national priorities. This creates a foundation for the normative dimension of cultural education, where attention shifts from what cultural themes are included to how educators are expected to address them in practice.

Normative Discourse on Addressing Culture

Beyond the subject matter, educational policy sets clear expectations for the pedagogical approach used to handle cultural topics:

- *Legal and policy frameworks*: These mandate inclusion, tolerance, and nondiscrimination, with cultural competence defined as a mandatory learning outcome (Verkhovna Rada, 2017; MESU, n.d.; KMU, 2020),
- *Intercultural Dialogue*: Official guidelines encourage mutual understanding and recommend specific tolerance-building activities within the classroom (MESU, 2020),
- *The pedagogical challenge of “the other”*: While tolerance is endorsed, the wartime emphasis on defending Ukrainian identity complicates representations of “the other”, especially Russian culture, necessitating a careful pedagogy to avoid harmful generalizations (MESU, 2022c),
- *Diversity Pedagogy*: Initiatives regarding diversity are often framed strictly within the goals of national unity (KMU, 2024). This pedagogical framing can reduce the space for critical reflection on cultural power dynamics.

Overall, there remains a normative tension between fostering patriotic unity — amplified by war — and promoting inclusive, intercultural education (MESU, 2016; Verkhovna Rada, 2017). This tension operates not only at the level of declared principles but also within the pedagogical expectations placed on teachers. While the thematic content of cultural education outlines what students should learn — including Ukrainian identity, de-Russification, European values, and recognition of minorities — the normative layer concerns how educators are expected to approach these topics in practice.

In wartime conditions, the emphasis on cohesion, resilience, and cultural distinction often becomes the dominant pedagogical imperative, shaping the acceptable ways of engaging with cultural topics. Teachers are thus required to reconcile the state-driven priority of national consolidation with the simultaneous expectation to cultivate tolerance, openness, and intercultural dialogue.

Current realities tend to prioritize cohesion and cultural distinction over broader multicultural engagement, narrowing the space for critical reflection on diversity or for dialogical encounters between different cultural perspectives. As a result, the normative discourse increasingly influences not only what is taught but also the pedagogical boundaries within which cultural education is enacted.

Culture as part of educational discourse

Beyond being a subject of study, “culture” significantly shapes the educational context in Ukraine. Scientific and political discourse highlights key aspects where culture influences educational policies, practices, and challenges.

- *National Identity Consolidation*: Culture is often seen as the foundation of the Ukrainian nation-state (KMU, 2024). Education plays a central role in forging national identity, promoting the Ukrainian language, and cultivating civic consciousness (MESU, 2022c). This is especially important in countering Russification and resisting Russian aggression, where cultural sovereignty is linked to political sovereignty and national security. Educational policies are shaped by this nation-building imperative.
- *Language Politics*: The Ukrainian language is viewed as central to national culture and identity. Policies surrounding its role in education aim to strengthen the use of Ukrainian language and reverse past Russification, while balancing minority language rights (Verkhovna Rada, 2019; Language Ombudsman of Ukraine, 2021). In a significant shift on December 3, 2025, the Verkhovna Rada adopted legislation (Draft Law No. 14120) to update the official translation and ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This amendment removed Russian from the list of languages requiring state protection within the framework of the Charter (Verkhovna Rada, 2025).
- *Integration of Diverse Groups*: Ukraine’s diverse populations shape education: 1) *Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees*: Since 2014, millions of Ukrainians have been displaced. Their integration into schools involves addressing practical needs, providing psychosocial support, ensuring educational continuity, and fostering social cohesion. Recent changes to distance learning have raised concerns about their impact on IDPs and children in occupied areas (Zmina.info, 2024a). The cultural context involves shared nationality but diverse regional backgrounds and war experiences. 2) *National and Linguistic Minorities*: Ukraine is home to various national minorities. Balancing the promotion of the national language with the rights of these minorities to preserve their languages and cultures remains a challenge (Verkhovna Rada, 2019; Likhachov, 2024). Legislative changes in late 2023 aimed to expand minority language use, particularly in education, in response to European integration, but not the Russian language (Likhachov, 2024). According to mo-

monitoring data from the State Service for Education Quality and the Language Ombudsman's office conducted in early 2025, approximately 52% of schoolchildren across Ukraine continue to speak Russian during breaks, while in the capital, Kyiv, this figure reaches a significant 82%, while only 18% of students in Kyiv report speaking exclusively Ukrainian in the school environment (Radio Svoboda, 2025). These statistics have triggered a sharp negative reaction from the Language Ombudsman, who described the situation as a “threatening trend” resulting from insufficient institutional attention to language habits and the lingering influence of Russian digital content (UNN, 2025). In response, legislative efforts have intensified with the introduction of Bill No. 12086, which seeks to mandate a strictly “Ukrainian-language educational environment” by prohibiting the use of Russian during breaks and private communication on school grounds. While the Ministry of Education and Science supports the bill as a measure for national security and decolonization, critics and legal analysts argue that such a total ban on private speech may be perceived as a threat to personal freedom and a violation of fundamental human rights (Zmina.info, 2024b).

- *European Integration:* Ukraine's aspiration for European integration influences educational discourse (Shvachka, 2011). Reforms like the NUS aim to align Ukrainian education with European standards and values, including democratic principles, human rights, and cultural awareness (MESU, n.d.; KMU, 2020).

The ongoing war with Russia and the drive for European integration shape how culture is viewed in Ukraine. The need for national consolidation and resilience influences responses to internal diversity, often prioritizing unity and security, especially in relation to IDPs and historical minorities (KMU, 2024; MESU, 2022d). The debates around national minorities illustrate the intersection of cultural context with national identity, minority rights, and international relations, presenting ongoing challenges for the education system (Likhachov, 2024).

Dealing with culture within teacher education

The Ukrainian government, through the Ministry of Education and Science (MESU), has established policies addressing cultural diversity within the education system. However, translating these policies into effective classroom practices, especially through teacher preparation, remains a work in progress.

Official Institutional Discourse

Key legislative and policy documents outline the state's position on cultural diversity:

- the Law on Education (2017) promotes principles like humanism, democracy, tolerance, and national consciousness alongside understanding diversity (Verkhovna Rada, 2017),

- the New Ukrainian School (NUS) concept includes “cultural competence” as a key learning outcome, emphasizing respect for diversity and intercultural dialogue (MESU, 2016; MESU, n.d.),
- the State Standard of Basic Secondary Education (2020) mandates the development of social, civic, and cultural competences, requiring students to understand and respect cultural diversity and human rights (KMU, 2020).

Based on these frameworks, the Ministry of Education and Science issues guidelines encouraging schools to promote tolerance, mutual understanding, and civic values. However, these activities are often framed within the goal of fostering national unity and patriotism, reflecting prevailing political priorities (KMU, 2024; MESU, 2022c). While promoting tolerance, the guidance lacks specific pedagogical strategies for addressing cultural differences or conflicts (NUS, 2020).

Teacher Handling Cultural Diversity – Main Topics

The official discourse sets expectations for how teachers should address cultural diversity:

- *Cultural Competence:* Teachers are expected to implement curricula that foster cultural competence in students (KMU, 2020),
- *promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination:* Teachers are expected to create inclusive environments free from discrimination based on cultural, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds (KMU, 2020),
- *supporting IDPs and Refugees:* Teachers are focused on supporting displaced children, addressing trauma, and promoting solidarity (MESU, 2022a),
- *Language Support:* All teachers are expected to manage linguistic diversity and support students learning in Ukrainian (Language Ombudsman of Ukraine, n.d.),
- *instilling National Identity and Values:* Teachers are tasked with cultivating Ukrainian national identity and patriotism, particularly in the context of external threats (MESU, 2022c; KMU, 2024).

Teacher Preparation

Despite clear policy mandates, there is a gap between goals for handling cultural diversity and the practical preparation teachers receive. While training programs likely cover NUS principles and civic education, reports suggest a lack of concrete methodologies for effective intercultural education (Barnett, n.d.; Shvachka et al., 2022). Teachers may lack the skills to navigate cultural discussions, address prejudice, or adapt materials for diverse learners (Living Democracy, n.d.; Zaliznychne School Teacher, n.d.). This gap between policy and practical training is a critical bottleneck. The effectiveness of policies on cultural diversity depends on teachers' ability to implement them meaningfully in classrooms.

While supporting internally displaced students (IDPs) and addressing the rights and needs of national and linguistic minorities are both crucial components of

diversity management, the prevailing focus on national identity and security may divert attention from developing deeper intercultural competencies. As a result, national consolidation often takes precedence over broader diversity education goals.

These historical and policy shifts can be systematized across four major periods of Ukrainian educational development. To illustrate these shifts in a comparative and chronological format, Table 1 presents a structured summary of the key policy documents, dominant cultural concepts, and contextual drivers shaping cultural and diversity discourse in education.

Comparative perspectives

Situating Ukraine's discourse on culture in education within a broader European context provides useful insights. Comparisons with Germany and Sweden, with different historical approaches to diversity and cultural education, highlight key features of Ukraine's approach:

- *Conceptualization:* Ukraine's focus on "cultural competence" aligns with European trends but is closely tied to national identity consolidation and managing diversity related to national minorities and IDPs. This contrasts with Germany's "Kulturschule" model, which emphasizes arts and creative expression, and Sweden's integration of multiculturalism and democratic values in its curriculum, reflecting its history as an immigration country. Ukraine's focus is shaped by war and nation-building, prioritizing Ukrainian national cohesion and resilience,
- *Teacher Training:* The gap in practical intercultural training for Ukrainian teachers is not unique, but it is compounded by the need to train teachers in national-patriotic education and psychosocial support for war-affected children. This diverts attention from developing nuanced intercultural pedagogy, unlike Germany and Sweden, where dedicated intercultural education programs are more established,
- *Balancing National Identity and Diversity:* Ukraine's focus on national unity and cultural sovereignty is driven by external aggression, contrasting with Sweden's multicultural framework and Germany's emphasis on civic identity and confronting historical responsibility. The Ukrainian context demonstrates how conflict can shift the balance towards nation-building within cultural education discourse.

These comparisons show that while Ukraine engages with international concepts of cultural competence, its historical context and war heavily influence the prioritization of these concepts in education.

Conclusion

The discourse on culture within Ukrainian education is complex and shaped by historical and pre-sent struggles. Key points include:

- concepts like "cultural competence" and "national-patriotic education" influence pedagogy. Central principles focus on fostering Ukrainian identity, democratic values, and respect for diversity (Verkhovna Rada, 2017; MESU, 2016),

Time Period	Key Policy Documents/ Reforms	Dominant Concepts Related to Culture	Stated Approach to Diversity/Minorities	Key Drivers/Context
Soviet Era (pre 1991)	Soviet Constitution, Education Laws	Proletarian Internationalism, Socialist Culture, Russian Language Dominance	Formal recognition of nationalities, practical Russification	Communist ideology, Centralized control
1991-2013	Constitution (1996), Early Education Laws	National Identity Revival, Ukrainian Language Promotion, Cultural Heritage	Recognition of minority rights (Likhachov, 2024), Gradual Ukrainization of education	Postindependence nation-building, State formation
2014-2021	Law on Education (2017), NUS Concept, State Standard (2020)	National-Patriotic Education, Cultural Competence, Civic Identity, Intercultural Dialogue	Increased focus on Ukrainian language, Integration of IDPs, Continued minority rights debates, Emphasis on unity	Russian aggression (Crimea, Donbas), European integration drive
2022-Present	Wartime decrees/guidelines, Continued NUS implementation	Intensified National-Patriotic Education, Resilience, DeRussification, Cultural Sovereignty	Urgent focus on IDP/refugee integration, Emphasis on national unity/security, Continued de-Russification in cultural sphere	Full-scale Russian invasion, National survival

Table 1: Evolution of Policy Discourse on Culture and Diversity in Ukrainian Education

- culture in Ukrainian schools is heavily centered on monolingual national identity, history, and resilience, especially since 2014 and 2022, with a focus on differentiation from Russian influence (MESU, 2022c). Although tolerance is promoted, the national consolidation priority shaped by war affects practical implementation,
- cultural context influences education through national identity building, language politics, and integrating IDPs and refugees, with the geopolitical situation shaping this context,
- policies mandate respect for diversity and cultural competence (Verkhovna Rada, 2017; MESU, 2016), but a gap exists between policy goals and teacher training, especially in intercultural pedagogy (Barnett, n.d.; Shvachka et al., 2022). Teacher preparation faces competing demands, notably the focus on war-affected children and patriotism (MESU, 2022c; UNESCO, 2024).

The analysis reveals a tension between national unity and identity consolidation, intensified by external military aggression, and the adoption of international norms for diversity and intercultural understanding. The war accelerates the focus on Ukrainian linguistic identity and de-Russification, influencing how diversity is approached and prioritized. While policies support intercultural ideals, the practical realities of conflict and gaps in teacher preparation present challenges in fully achieving these goals. The needs of IDPs and refugees have become central to diversity management in schools.

These findings have implications for social cohesion, minority experiences, and Ukraine's Europe an integration, which requires commitment to diversity and human rights. Future research should explore classroom practices, regional teacher training differences, and the impact of NUS reforms on cultural competencies amidst conflict. Understanding Ukraine's navigation of culture, identity, diversity, and education is crucial for its societal development and resilience.

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Jerome Joorst

Rethinking the Complexity and Tensions of Culture and Education Beyond National Frames: A Culture Responsive South African Perspective

Abstract

More than 30 years after the official end of apartheid and the return to democracy in South Africa, structural and cultural violence is still present. Educational policy aspirations and practical implementation are worlds apart. The consequences of racist historiography are currently combined with the disenfranchisement of education within the neoliberal straitjacket. This is the framework within which the cultural complexity in the education sector of Bagskol's partners is viewed in a critical yet friendly manner.

Keywords: *post-apartheid, democracy, neoliberalism, South Africa*

Zusammenfassung

Mehr als 30 Jahre nach dem offiziellen Ende der Apartheid und der Rückkehr zur Demokratie in Südafrika ist die strukturelle und kulturelle Gewalt nach wie vor präsent. Bildungspolitische Ansprüche und praktische Umsetzungen gehen weit auseinander. Die Konsequenzen rassistisch geprägter Geschichtsschreibung verbinden sich aktuell mit Entmündigungen von Bildung im neoliberalen Korsett. Dies ist der Rahmen, in dem die kulturelle Komplexität im Bildungsbereich der Bagskol-Partner kritisch-freundschaftlich betrachtet wird.

Schlüsselworte: *Post-Apartheid, Demokratie, Neoliberalismus, Südafrika*

Introduction

In a world marked by growing cultural diversity, political fragmentation, and renewed nationalism, education is increasingly tasked with managing complex questions of identity and belonging. Yet many educational responses remain confined within narrow national frames that privilege dominant cultural norms and linear historical narratives. South Africa, emerging from a history of racialised cultural exclusion, offers a contrasting, but imperfect educational vision grounded in plurality, redress, and relational belonging. This essay argues that South Africa's experiences with cultural negotiation, multilingualism, and ethical frameworks such as Ubuntu can provide useful insights for rethinking education beyond national

frames, enabling more humane and inclusive responses to cultural complexity.

The complexity of culture

Generally, culture is understood as a group's shared way of life, encompassing beliefs, values, and social practices. In South Africa, however, culture cannot be separated from a history shaped by apartheid and enforced separation. While the post-apartheid state has taken symbolic and legislative steps toward a democratic, non-racial, and inclusive national culture, these ideals remain compromised by persistent implementation challenges. Despite extensive education policy reforms aimed at democratisation and social cohesion, the education system continues to face a profound structural and existential crisis (Kumalo, 2020; Madlingozi, 2018). This crisis is exacerbated by the failure to adequately confront the enduring legacies of imperialism and the dominance of neoliberal ideology, with race, language, and culture still determining educational access and quality.

In post-apartheid South Africa, culture has become closely entangled with the neoliberal socioeconomic order underpinning globalisation (Mayaba, Ralarala & Angu, 2018; Price, 2014). In higher education, this "neoliberal culture" has shifted institutional priorities away from pedagogical and public-good values toward competitive, entrepreneurial models, deepening inequalities in access (Munyaradzi, 2024; Price, 2014). At school level, an exaggerated focus on measurable outcomes has narrowed education's broader social purpose (Christie, 2008), leaving teachers to navigate persistent gaps between policy intent and classroom realities. Thirty-one years into democracy, former black schools remain largely under-resourced, while historically privileged schools flourish, reinforcing cultural hierarchies tied to elite forms of capital.

South African Education Policy

South Africa's legal and policy framework strongly affirms cultural diversity. Section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Government of South Africa, 1996) guarantees equality and prohibits unfair discrimination

while cultural competence is promoted (Moleya, 2018). The Constitution further safeguards language and cultural rights (Section 30) and the rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic communities (Section 31). In the education sector, White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) positions learner diversity as central to inclusive teaching and calls for systemic transformation to accommodate cultural, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic differences. Teacher preparation is guided by the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015), which requires teachers to understand diversity and address learning and social barriers collaboratively. Professional accountability is reinforced by the South African Council for Educators' Code of Professional Values and Ethics (SACE Act, 2000), which mandates respect for learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. At classroom level, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, national policy for all schools (Department of Basic Education, 2011), require teachers to plan for diversity through curriculum differentiation and responsive pedagogy.

Despite policy commitments to cultural diversity, a persistent policy-practice gap remains, with teachers often lacking the support needed to implement inclusive ideals in classrooms. Macro-level forces such as the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, neoliberal influence, and symbolic policy reforms undermine meaningful change. These intersect with micro-level realities of race, class, and language that continue to shape unequal access to quality education.

Conceptual underpinning of cultural responsive education and teaching

The essay draws on concepts that are anchored in broader theoretical traditions such as critical pedagogy, African philosophy, and social justice education, Fraser's 2016 conceptual framework of justice includes the first concept of redistribution. This refers to economic justice whereby economic inequalities produced by capitalist systems is addressed by focussing on the fair distribution of resources, wealth, labour, and opportunities. In schools this means funding inequalities between schools and providing equal access to quality teaching and resources for all. Injustice is not only economical but can also be cultural. Fraser's second concept, recognition implies cultural justice. In other words, respect for learners' diverse cultural identities, valuing indigenous knowledge systems and affirming diverse peoples' dignity and belonging. Fraser's third concept, representation, speaks to political justice and addresses who has voice in decision-making processes. Applied to schools, this pertains to who counts, who are excluded from educational policy formation or whose knowledge shapes the curriculum. In the context of Ubuntu and culturally responsive pedagogy, Fraser's framework allows us to identify global policy rhetoric such as SDGs that may promise justice but fail at representation in practice. An overt global disregard for international law by some signatory countries calls into ques-

tion the UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development goals of peace, non-violence, global citizenship, and cultural appreciation (UN, 2015, p. 17). Educationally, this is in sharp contrast with Freire's vision, which positions human rights and dignity at the heart of education (Freire, 2001, p. 59).

Teaching in neoliberal contexts demands cultural intelligence and a reimagined purpose for education, requiring both ideological shifts, i.e. understanding ourselves in relation to others and practical adoption of culturally responsive pedagogies. Ubuntu, as relational thinking, affirms one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others, fostering ethical and humane relationships grounded in compassion, forgiveness, generosity, and hospitality (Hlatshwayo, 2022). Ubuntu can offer a counter to the hollowed-out corporate culture of contemporary schooling.

Culturally responsive teaching pedagogies deliberately aims at incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into learning, promoting inclusivity and equipping teachers to navigate diverse classrooms. It involves empathetic, proactive efforts to respect and meet the needs of all learners (Maluleka, 2020, p. 141), preparing students to engage ethically and competently in complex social and educational environments. These concepts are anchored in broader theoretical traditions (critical pedagogy, African philosophy, social justice education), which keeps the overall orientation theoretical.

International-comparative perspectives within the Bagskol-project

Albeit with different foci, the importance and complexity of culture is formally acknowledged across countries, being represented within the Bagskol-project – Ukraine, Spain, Germany, France, Sweden – and this is the case in South Africa as well. Despite varied conceptualisation of culture, it generally forms a key site of social cohesion, citizenship formation, and national identity-building. Balancing national, patriotic identity building imperatives on the one hand whilst adhering to international goals and standards of diversity and democratic inclusion on the other, is however not easy, whether mid-conflict or post-conflict times.

In Ukraine, education has increasingly prioritised culture as a mechanism for national survival and cohesion, particularly in the context of war. While this emphasis is understandable given geopolitical threats, it tends to privilege a singular cultural narrative, leaving limited space for internal cultural plurality or alternative identities.

Similarly, in France, culture in education is framed through the republican ideal of universalism. Difference is tolerated insofar as it remains private while public education is expected to produce culturally neutral citizens aligned with a shared national identity. This system might project a sense of assimilation that prioritises sameness over plurality.

Germany and Sweden adopt progressive multi-cultural frameworks, especially in response to migration. In both systems, tolerance, democratic values, and intercultural competence is promoted. The approach to cultu-

ral diversity can however be perceived as instrumental, like something to be managed, integrated, or accommodated, rather than as epistemologically transformative.

Spain occupies a complex middle ground where culture is framed as territorially and historically specific. While regional identities (such as Catalan and Basque) are recognised within the education system, these recognitions might come across as reinforcing bounded cultural identities rather than fostering broader intercultural or pluriversal engagement. Across these European contexts, culture in education projects is centred around the nation state, where inclusion is conditional on integration into pre-existing cultural norms.

South Africa's educational approach to culture is shaped by different historical and ethical imperatives. Stemming from apartheid where cultures were rigidly segregated, the post-apartheid education project rejects monoculturalism. South African policy frameworks emphasise cultural diversity, multilingualism, social justice, and redress, positioning culture as dynamic, relational, and historically situated. This approach aligns with pluriversal thinking that recognises the coexistence of multiple ways of knowing, being, and belonging within a shared social space. While this approach is ideologically admirable, historic challenges remain at implementation level and are now exacerbated by a dominant neoliberal logic. There are however existing philosophies that can be internationally relevant. Ubuntu is but one such a framing which challenges individualistic and nationalistic models and gestures toward a more humane and ethical conception of culture, where interdependence is valued.

Conclusion

Culture and education are inseparable yet often treated as peripheral within contemporary education systems. In a fractured world, questions of culture, power, and belonging are urgent. Yosso's (2005) question, "Whose culture has capital?", exposes the privileging of dominant cultural norms and challenges the assumption that knowledge can be neutral or culturally unmarked. Drawing on Freire's (2001) vision of a humanitarian pedagogy grounded in justice and human dignity, education must reclaim its ethical purpose. In this vein, teaching becomes an act of critical awareness, naming oppression, interrogating power, and pursuing social transformation.

Ubuntu offers an ethical and pedagogical anchor. Rooted in relationality and mutual recognition, it foregrounds compassion, generosity, forgiveness, and hospitality as conditions for human flourishing. Learning must be grounded in learners' social, linguistic, and historical contexts while remaining open to global knowledge and shared human concerns.

Teachers cannot be reduced to technical implementers of curriculum. Culturally responsive pedagogies cultivate cultural intelligence, enabling teachers to navigate diversity, language equity, and historical injustice while preparing learners for ethical global citizenship. Beyond policy compliance, teaching must engage lear-

ners' lived realities, languages, and ways of knowing with care and respect (Maluleka, 2020). These perspectives invite a reimagining of education as culturally grounded, ethically responsive, and deeply human, honouring cultural difference as a source of knowledge, resilience, and possibility.

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Dr. Jerome Joorst

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ANGEL-Conference 2025

"Research Global Education. For Democracy, Peace, Human Rights, Sustainability, and Global Social Justice"

Die internationale ANGEL-Konferenz in 2025 ist die fünfte, die das Academic Network on Global Education & Learning (ANGEL) ausgerichtet hat. Seit 2017 haben sich die ANGEL Konferenzen zu einer der wichtigen internationalen Veranstaltung für die Forschung im Bereich der globalen Bildung entwickelt. Die Konferenz ist eine Plattform für den Austausch neuer Forschungsergebnisse und dient zur Förderung der Zusammenarbeit zwischen Forscher/-innen, politischen Entscheidungsträger/-innen und Praktiker/-innen. Dazu gehört auch die Präsentation politikbezogener Forschungsarbeiten.

„Research in Global Education and Learning: For Democracy, Peace, Human Rights, Sustainability, and Global Social Justice“ lautete das Thema der Konferenz, die vom 04. bis 06. Juni im Humboldt Forum in Berlin stattgefunden hat. Veranstaltet und organisiert wurde sie von der Universität Bamberg, namentlich Prof., Annette Scheunpflug und ihr Team als Boardmitglieder von ANGEL, dem Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), Engagement Global, dem Global Education Network Europe (GENE) und ANGEL.

Eröffnet wurde die Konferenz unter anderem von Prof. Elina Lehtomäki (Oulu/Finnland), die die doppelte Rolle der Forschung unterstrich. Forschung hilft dabei, die Komplexität der heutigen globalen Herausforderungen zu bewältigen und gleichzeitig andere kritische und vielseitige Perspektiven in die Diskussion miteinzubringen. In einer anschließenden Keynote verdeutlichte Dr. Verónica Boix-Mansilla (Boston/USA) anhand der Geschichte von Akual, einem jungen Mädchen aus einer Flüchtlingsfamilie, die transformative Kraft der Bildung, die Schüler/-innen dazu ermutigt, sich mit vielfältigen Narrativen auseinanderzusetzen. Rund 17 parallele Sitzungen, die sowohl Vorträge, Symposien, Workshops als auch Podiumsdiskussionen beinhalteten, ermöglichten den Teilnehmer/-innen Diskussionen über die neuesten Forschungsergebnisse zu führen. Prof. Ingrid Gogolin (Hamburg) leitete den letzten Konferenztag mit einer Keynote ein, in der sie die weltweit erheblichen Fortschritte beim Zugang zur Bildung betonte, gleichzeitig aber auch unterstrich, dass viele dieser Versprechen insbesondere für marginalisierte Gruppen immer noch unerfüllt sind. Mit einem heiligen Segenslied begann Nanaia Mahuta (Australien) als prominente Maori-Führerin ihre Keynote, wodurch sie bereits zu Beginn zeigte, wie indi-

gene Werte und Weltanschauungen die globale Bildung und Gesellschaft bereichern können. Immer wieder veranschaulichte sie, dass Bildung als Katalysator für soziale Gerechtigkeit und Inklusion dienen soll und nicht nur als Mittel zur Wissensvermittlung. Anschließend boten weitere 15 parallele Sitzungen vielfältige Möglichkeiten, sich unter anderem über globale Bürgerbildung, ethische Forschungszusammenarbeit sowie über Nachhaltigkeitspädagogik auszutauschen. Die darauffolgende Podiumsdiskussion „The Dublin Declaration in Dialogue“ bot eine ausführliche Diskussion über die Frage, wie die Europäische Erklärung zur globalen Bildung bis 2050, auch bekannt als Dubliner Erklärung, für die globale Bildungspolitik und -praxis dienen kann. In der Abschlusssitzung der ANGEL Konferenz wurde sowohl über wichtige Ideen der Konferenz reflektiert als auch verschiedene Perspektiven aus Forschung, Politik und Praxis zusammengetragen. Dr. Jens Kreuter (Engagement Global/Berlin) schloss die diesjährige Konferenz mit folgenden Worten ab: „In times of crisis, there also lies the potential for transformation — and there is always reason to hope. Let us hold on to this as a guiding light to sustain and deepen our collaboration and solidarity.“

Weitere Informationen zu ANGEL und der Konferenz sind unter dem folgenden Link abrufbar: <https://angel-network.net/ANGELconference2025>

Fiona Riecks
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Globale Bildung zwischen Krise und Hoffnung: Ein Rückblick auf die Global Education Week 2025

Die Global Education Week ist eine jährlich stattfindende europaweite Bildungskampagne, die seit über 25 Jahren Globales Lernen als Instrument für Solidarität und Wandel sichtbar macht. Letztes Jahr fand sie unter dem Motto „Hope in Action! Shaping a Just, Peaceful & Sustainable Future“ vom 17. bis zum 23. November statt.

Die Kampagne möchte Hoffnung in Zeiten von Unsicherheit, Klimakrise, Kriegen und gesellschaftlicher Spaltung in konkretes Handeln übersetzen. Globale Bildung ist dabei ein Schlüssel: Sie fördert kritisches Denken, Verantwortungsbewusstsein und weltweite Solidarität.

Das Jahresthema 2025 knüpfte an die Agenda 2030 für nachhaltige Entwicklung an und umfasste deren fünf Kernbereiche People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace und Partnership. In einer Zeit wachsender Ängste – etwa durch Kriege, den Klimawandel oder Desinformation – will die Global Education Week zeigen, dass Bildung ein Motor für Hoffnung, Resilienz und gesellschaftliche Erneuerung ist. Sie schafft Räume für Reflexion, Dialog und globales Engagement und ermutigt insbesondere junge Menschen, sich als Gestaltende einer gerechten, friedlichen und nachhaltigen Zukunft zu sehen.

Die Global Education Week wird vom Nord-Süd-Zentrum des Europarats ausgerichtet, unterstützt von Koordinationsstellen in zahlreichen Ländern und in Deutschland koordiniert von der Informationsstelle Bildungsauftrag Nord-Süd des World University Service (WUS) e. V. Diese listet die von verschiedenen Nichtregierungsorganisationen und Bildungseinrichtungen eingereichten Kampagnenbeiträge – darunter Fortbildungen, Filmfestivals, Wettbewerbe, Social Media-Aktionen und Veranstaltungen – auf der Website www.globaleducationweek.de.

Die Beiträge zur Kampagne waren auch im Jahr 2025 sehr vielfältig, haben aber eines gemeinsam: Sie stehen alle im Zeichen der Agenda 2030 mit ihren 17 Nachhaltigkeitszielen, den SDGs. So waren unter den Einreichungen zahlreiche Bildungsformate vertreten, die globale Herausforderungen exemplarisch aufgriffen und sie mit konkreten Lern- und Handlungsräumen vor Ort verbanden. Ein thematischer Schwerpunkt lag auf Fragen globaler Ernährungssicherheit und nachhaltigen Konsums: Projektwochen und Workshops zu Ernährungssouveränität, Lebensmittelverschwendung und Ressourcenschonung machten sichtbar, wie eng individuelle Konsumentenscheidungen mit globalen Macht- und Verteilungsfragen verknüpft sind. Andere Beiträge setzten bei der Rolle von Bildung selbst an und thematisierten hochwertige, inklusive und gerechte Bildung als Voraussetzung demokratischer Teilhabe – etwa durch partizipative Schulprojekte, Peer-to-

Peer-Ansätze im Globalen Lernen oder Lehrkooperationen in der beruflichen Bildung, die globale Perspektiven systematisch in den Fachunterricht integrieren.

Darüber hinaus spiegelten viele Beiträge das breite methodische Spektrum Globalen Lernens wider: von handlungsorientierten Projekttagen, Planspielen und kreativen Upcycling-Workshops über digitale Formate wie Social Media-Kampagnen, virtuelle Begegnungen und digitale Schnitzeljagden zu den SDGs bis hin zu Filmfestivals und medienpädagogischen Projekten, die globale Lebensrealitäten, Machtverhältnisse und Fragen von Identität sichtbar machten. Auffällig war zudem die starke Betonung von Beteiligung und Perspektivvielfalt – sei es durch Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung, durch den Einbezug von Akteur/-innen aus dem Globalen Süden oder durch die bewusste Thematisierung marginalisierter Stimmen. In ihrer Gesamtheit verdeutlichen die Beiträge der Global Education Week 2025, dass Globales Lernen nicht nur Wissen über globale Zusammenhänge vermittelt, sondern als reflexiver Bildungsansatz Räume für Hoffnung, Solidarität und kollektive Zukunftsgestaltung eröffnet – ganz im Sinne des Mottos „Hope in Action“.

Alle Beiträge zur Global Education Week 2025 sowie weitere Informationen zur Kampagne sind auf der Website www.globaleducationweek.de nachzulesen. Wer in diesem Jahr dabei sein möchte, kann Beiträge gern an die Informationsstelle Bildungsauftrag Nord-Süd unter globaleducationweek@wusgermany.de senden.

Die Informationsstelle Bildungsauftrag Nord-Süd ist seit 1991 beim World University Service (WUS) angesiedelt und ist eine Schnittstelle zwischen Bund, Ländern, der Europäischen Union und der Zivilgesellschaft mit dem Ziel, die entwicklungspolitische Informationsarbeit zu stärken.

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Platz machen für Veränderung: feministische Ansätze für BNE 2030

Anlässlich der Halbzeit des UNESCO-Programms „Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE) 2030“ und in einem politischen und gesellschaftlichen Umfeld, in dem feministische Anliegen zunehmend unter Druck geraten, gewinnt die Frage an Dringlichkeit: Wie kann Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung gelingen und welchen Beitrag leisten dabei feministische Ansätze?

Dieser Fragestellung widmete sich der VENRO-Fachtag mit dem Titel: „Feministische Ansätze für die entwicklungspolitische Bildung – neue Impulse zur Halbzeit von BNE 2030“. Die Veranstaltung fand im Herbst 2025 in Berlin statt und bot Raum für Impulsvorträge, Workshops und Dialogformate.

Machtverhältnisse und Repräsentation

Sandra Altenberger (Universität Innsbruck) analysierte kritisch das UNESCO-Framing von Global Citizenship Education (GCE). Sie zeigte auf, wie bestehende Machtverhältnisse selbst in emanzipatorisch ausgerichteten Texten verfestigt werden können. Eine Perspektive, die sie intersektional und postkolonial einordnete.

Xue Ling Zhou (youPan) plädierte in ihrem Vortrag „Ich glaube ich spinne“ dafür, marginalisierten Gruppen mehr Raum und Gehör zu verschaffen. Junge Menschen, von Rassismus Betroffene, queere Personen oder Menschen mit Behinderung seien in vielen Veranstaltungen und Organisationen nach wie vor unterrepräsentiert.

Handlungsstrategien im Umgang mit Anti-Feminismus und Aktionskunst

Im Workshop von Pauline Seuß (Institut für Inklusive Vielfalt) stand das Erkennen von Anti-Feminismus und die Entwicklung von Handlungsstrategien im Fokus. Deutlich wurde, dass Anti-Feminismus eng mit anderen anti-demokratischen Ideologien verknüpft ist – insbesondere junge Männer seien anfällig für solche Einflüsse. Bildungspraktiker/-innen müssten daher über Akteure und Strategien informiert bleiben, um handlungsfähig zu sein. Isabel Gahren (Radikale Töchter) leitete einen Workshop zu Methoden der Aktionskunst, der kreative Ansätze für feministische Bildungsarbeit aufzeigte. Der „Mut & Wut- Workshop“ öffnete einen Raum, der darin bestärkte, Wut als produktive Kraft zu nutzen, um sich gegen Diskriminierung und strukturelle Ungerechtigkeiten zu wehren, die eigene Stimme zu erheben und kollektiv Handlungsmöglichkeiten zu entwickeln.

Ein zentrales Element des Fachtags waren zwei einstündige Dialogformate, die den Austausch, die Vernetzung und die gemeinsame Ideenentwicklung förderten. Der Wunsch nach Vernetzung über die eigene „Blase“ hinaus wurde bereits im Vorfeld geäußert und während der Veranstaltung aktiv aufgegriffen. Die Teilnahme von Mitglieder/-innen der VENRO-Arbeitsgruppen Bildung lokal/global und Gender sowie von Akteur/-innen aus der politischen Bildung und Migrant/-innenorganisationen war ein wichtiger Schritt in diese Richtung.

Ein nachgelagerter digitaler Workshop bot Interessierten die Möglichkeit, die Impulse des Fachtags zu vertiefen, sich auszutauschen und Kontakte zu intensivieren. Dies sollte der Kurzlebigkeit von Projektlogiken entgegenwirken und nachhaltigere Verbindungen schaffen.

Feministische Ansätze als Transformationsmotor

Feministische Ansätze sind unverzichtbar für eine transformative Bildungsarbeit. Diese Erkenntnis wurde während des Fachtags von vielen Teilnehmenden bestätigt. Intersektionaler und machtkritischer Feminismus bietet sowohl analytische als auch methodische Werkzeuge, die für eine gerechte und nachhaltige Welt wegweisend sind.

Ein zentraler Aspekt für gelingende Transformation ist auch wie die Gestaltung von Bildungsformaten, Projekten und Allianzen umgesetzt ist: Im Kleinen kann die Gesellschaft vorgelebt werden, die im Großen angestrebt wird. Um dies zu erreichen, müssen feministische Ansätze in Strukturen verankert werden – durch die Stärkung marginalisierter Stimmen, das Hinterfragen von Machtverhältnissen und eine diskriminierungskritische Perspektive in Forderungen und Handeln.

Selvi Pabst & Karla-Felicitas Braun
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Friedensnobelpreis für die japanische Organisation Nihon Hidankyo und 80. Jahrestag der Atombombenabwürfe auf Hiroshima und Nagasaki

Am 11. Oktober 2024 erreichte Japan eine überraschende Nachricht: Das norwegische Nobelkomitee hat beschlossen, den Friedensnobelpreis 2024 der japanischen Organisation Nihon Hidankyo zu verleihen. Nihon Hidankyo steht für den „Japanischen Verband der Organisationen der Opfer von Atom- und Wasserstoffbomben“. Dieser Friedensnobelpreis würdigt insbesondere die generationenübergreifende Graswurzelbewegung der Hibakusha – der Überlebenden der Atombombenabwürfe, insbesondere in Hiroshima und Nagasaki – für ihren intensiven Einsatz für eine atomwaffenfreie Welt. Gerade die Hibakusha stehen heute symbolisch dafür, wie wichtig es ist, über die verheerenden Folgen von Atomwaffen aufzuklären und zu mahnen, damit sie nie wieder eingesetzt werden.

Die Überraschung über die Verleihung des Friedensnobelpreises an Nihon Hidankyo war jedoch in zweierlei Hinsicht groß. Zum einen war die Preisvergabe an sich unerwartet. Zum anderen wirkte sie auf Nihon Hidankyo selbst ungewöhnlich, da – so Toshiyuki Mimaki, Co-Direktor von Nihon Hidankyo – die Frage aufkam, ob nicht auch jene Menschen, die verletzte Kinder in Gaza retteten, Kandidaten für den Friedensnobelpreis hätten sein sollen. Für ihn ähnele die Situation der Kinder in Gaza jener in Japan am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Wenn er die blutüberströmten Kinder in Gaza sehe, fühle er sich an Japan vor fast 80 Jahren erinnert.

Im Jahr 2025 jährt sich das Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs – kurz nach den Atombombenabwürfen auf Hiroshima und Nagasaki – zum 80. Mal. Die Überlebenden sind heute im Durchschnitt 86 Jahre alt. Je älter sie werden, desto schwieriger wird es, ihre unmittelbaren Erlebnisse an die nachfolgenden Generationen weiterzugeben. Damit verbunden ist ein zentrales Problem: Bald wird es nicht mehr möglich sein, durch traditionelle friedenspädagogische Zeugenaussagen die grausame Realität von Atombombenkatastrophen zu vermitteln.

Im Rahmen der Friedenspädagogik wird in Hiroshima und Nagasaki vor allem mithilfe von Zeugenaussagen vermittelt, was sich durch die Atombombenabwürfe tatsächlich ereignet hat. Ziel der Friedenserziehung ist es meist, durch die empathische Vermittlung dieser Aussagen ein gemeinsames Bewusstsein für die Tragödie zu schaffen und die Notwendigkeit der Abschaffung von Atomwaffen zu verdeutlichen – damit sich eine solche Katastrophe nie wiederholt.

Dabei treten zwei Probleme auf: Einerseits haben Kinder in Hiroshima und Nagasaki bereits in ihrer frühesten Kindheit viele tragische Geschichten aus Familie

und Schule gehört und möchten keine weiteren mehr hören, da angesichts der nuklearen Abschreckung durch Atommächte individuell kaum Handlungsmöglichkeiten bestehen. Andererseits möchten viele Opfer nicht über ihre Erlebnisse sprechen, da sie ihr eigenes Überleben gegenüber verstorbenen Familienmitgliedern und Freunden bedauern und möglicherweise befürchten, als Atombombenopfer diskriminiert zu werden. Auch mein verstorbener Großvater wollte nie über die Katastrophe in Hiroshima sprechen, obwohl er wenige Tage später als Helfer in die Stadt fuhr und die katastrophale Realität hautnah miterlebte.

Da sich immer weniger Kinder ernsthaft mit den Erlebnissen rund um die Atombombe auseinandersetzen wollen, besteht die Sorge, dass diese Erfahrungen in Vergessenheit geraten könnten. Vor diesem Hintergrund hat die Stadt Hiroshima seit dem Jahr 2013 ein neues Konzept für Friedenserziehung entwickelt. Dieses konzentriert sich auf den Wiederaufbau nach dem Krieg. Vorbilder sind dabei Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die trotz ihrer Verzweiflung die Hoffnung nicht aufgaben und sich aktiv für den Wiederaufbau einsetzten. So wurden beispielsweise drei Tage nach dem Abwurf der Atombombe die Straßenbahnen wieder in Betrieb genommen – ein Zeichen der Hoffnung für das weitere Leben inmitten der Verzweiflung. Die Geschichte des Wiederaufbaus in Hiroshima und Nagasaki dient als Beispiel für die Gestaltung einer nachhaltigen Gesellschaft nach einer Katastrophe.

Als Bürger von Hiroshima empfinde ich die Verleihung des Friedensnobelpreises an Nihon Hidankyo als äußerst interessant und historisch bedeutsam. Denn darin zeigt sich die wiederkehrende Idee der Hoffnung inmitten der Verzweiflung. Die Zukunftsaussichten der Friedenspädagogik in Hiroshima und Nagasaki – wonach die Überlebenden „auch in ihrer Verzweiflung die Hoffnung nicht aufgegeben haben“ – decken sich mit dem Bild der Hibakusha, die sich trotz geringer Hoffnung bis heute unermüdlich für die Abschaffung von Atomwaffen einsetzen. Es ist die Ehrfurcht vor der Hoffnung, die als Zeichen des Respekts gegenüber den hoffnungsvollen Hibakusha mit dem Nobelpreis in die Welt hinausgetragen wurde. Diese friedenspädagogische Zukunftsperspektive des Wiederaufbaus nach einer Katastrophe, die mitten in der Verzweiflung die Hoffnung nicht aufgibt, besitzt enormes Potenzial für zukunftsfähige Friedenserziehung und globales Lernen weltweit.

Prof. Dr. Masashi Urabe (Hiroshima City University)

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Rezensionen

Bourn, D., & Tarozzi, M. (Hrsg.) (2024). *Pedagogy of hope for global justice. Sustainable Futures for people and the planet.* London u.a.: Bloomsbury. 124,12 € (gebunden) / 29,51€ (Taschenbuch)

Das neueste Buch aus der Londoner Ideenschmiede zu globalen Bildungsfragen hat es in sich. Als erstem Band der neu etablierten Reihe ‚Advances in Education for Sustainable Development and Global Education‘ werden neben Einleitung (Tarozzi) und Zusammenfassung (Bourn) 14 Beiträge von 32 Autor/-innen angeboten, die in einer ernsthaften globalen Perspektive angelegt sind – sowohl bezüglich der Schreibenden als auch thematischen Zugänge und Kontexte. Ausgangspunkt der Publikation sind Vorträge auf der Konferenz des ANGEL (Academic Network for Global Education and Learning) aus dem Jahr 2021 mit Unterstützung von GENE (Global Education Network Europe).

Um der Vielfalt des Themenfeldes ‚Global Citizenship Education und Sustainable Development‘ einen roten Faden an die Seite zu stellen, ist der Bezug zur hoffnungsvoll-visionär angelegten dialogischen Pädagogik von Paulo Freire hilfreich, der in den multiperspektivischen und -methodisch angelegten Beiträgen an vielen Stellen explizit und teilweise implizit gelingt. Entstanden sei ein „coherent mosaic“ (S. 8). Lesedidaktisch hilfreich ist das umfassende Register.

Drei große thematische Abschnitte gliedern den Band: Hoffnung und globale soziale Gerechtigkeit konzeptualisieren, globale Perspektiven globaler sozialer Gerechtigkeit und globale soziale Gerechtigkeit umsetzen. In der Einleitung wird der Versuch unternommen, die Trias aus Hoffnung, Utopie (jenseits eines abstrakten Idealismus) und Optimismus im Sinne Freires – mit Bezug zu Ernst Bloch (‚Prinzip Hoffnung‘) und anderen Ideengeber/-innen – systematisch für die Vielfalt der Beiträge zu kontextualisieren. Dabei gilt, dass eine andere Welt möglich ist und bleibt (S. 2) und dass die erwähnte Trias als „trigger [eines] social change“ (S. 6) begriffen werden kann und muss. Damit sind hohe Ansprüche an Bildung und Lernen gestellt, um das von Freire kritisierte ‚Bankiersmodell‘ dialogisch-gerecht-planetarisch zu überwinden. Diese implizite Hoffnung schwingt im ganzen Buch mit und erzeugt rückversichernde Motivationen für Aktive im Feld globaler Bildungsarbeit, die sich in den Beiträgen auf sehr verschiedene Aspekte der Bildungsarbeit und -politik im Sinne des SDG 4.7 bezieht.

Hilfreich für das Kontextverständnis ist der metatheoretisch angelegte Beitrag (Wallerstein, Ricoeur, Dale, Bourdieu, Rosa u.a.) zu Realität und Utopien (Torres), in dem Fragen von global citizenship und sustainability als Aspekte der „Weltanschauung“ (S. 13) begriffen werden. Des Weiteren wird das große Themenfeld mit der Covid-Pandemie und daraus erwachsenden Transformationsoptionen (Mesa), utopisch-ökopädagogischen Fragen der planetarischen (Welt-)Bürgerlichkeit im spannungsreichen Horizont unterdrückerischer

(Development) und befreiender (development) Entwicklung mit einer Explikation am Beispiel Kolumbien (Misi-aszek & Oróstegui Gonzalez) oder Fragen universaler – und bedauerlicherweise sehr geringer Ausprägung globaler – Werte in Schulcurricula auf der Basis quantitativer Inhaltsanalyse am Beispiel Bayern bearbeitet (Scheunpflug, Osterrieder, Banze & Abele-Brehm).

Dieser letzte Beitrag im ersten Abschnitt baut durch seine theoriegeleitete Empirie zugleich eine Brücke in den zweiten großen Abschnitt mit empirischen Bezügen: Nichtwestliche Perspektiven mit einem Fokus auf Afrika südlich der Sahara (Smith, Simons, Wagener, Andipatin & Frantz), Vernetzungen im Themenfeld mit einem Fokus auf Europa und Nordamerika (Tarozzi & Shultz), Transformationsoptionen einer Agenda globaler Kompetenz am Beispiel Australien (Menzie-Ballantyne & Ham), philosophisch-historische Aspekte weltbürgerlicher Bildung und Erziehung aus chinesischer Perspektive (Jun & Gong), Dekolonialisierung mit planetarischen Bezügen und hilfreichen historisch-systematischen Kontextualisierungen brasilianischer Pädagogik- und Bildungsverständnisse (Moraes, Albuquerque, Nara da Silva Oliveira).

Konkrete Umsetzungsoptionen im dritten Abschnitt werden für den Zusammenhang sozial-emotionalen und digitalen Lernens (Mochizuki), grunderneuerte Development Education als Pedagogy of Hope an der Universität Ghana (Boateng, Osei-Tutu & Kwapong), ein online gestütztes Trainingsprogramm zur Professionalisierung in globaler Bildung (Hunt & Blum), Gender-Gleichwürdigkeit aus portugiesischer Perspektive (Ferro & Saúde) sowie kontinuierliche Professionalisierung der Lehrkräfte in Südafrika (Raanhuis).

In der vor allem gesellschafts-/bildungspolitischen Zusammenfassung wird noch einmal deutlich, wie vielfältig und vielschichtig das gesamte Themenfeld ist und welche Herausforderungen damit verbunden sind. Zugleich wird damit auch unterstrichen, wie weit fortgeschritten und differenziert sich der gesamte Diskurs mittlerweile darstellt. Das ist eine Aufforderung, weiterzumachen und die hier angebotene Fundgrube für neue Ideen kontinuierlich weltweit vernetzt zu nutzen! Möglicherweise gelingt es dann auch, die angemahnte Spannung von Utopie(n) zwischen Reproduktion und Befreiung (S. 25) im Sinne Freires neu aushalten zu lernen – also Hoffnung, Utopie, Optimismus und Handlungsoptionen immer wieder neu auf die Beine zu stellen.

Gregor Lang-Wojtasik
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Schlaglichter

Berner Konsens 2025 – Ein Leitdokument zur Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE) (red.): In Anlehnung an den Beutelsbacher Konsens in den 1970er Jahren ergänzt der Berner Konsens im Jahr 2025 pädagogische Leitsätze, wie Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung im Schulalltag stattfinden kann. Robert Unteregger ist Mitautor des Konsenses und betont, wie wichtig es sei, BNE nicht nur als einmaliges Projekt im Unterricht zu integrieren. Vielmehr geht es darum, BNE als ganze Schule zu gestalten und fächerübergreifend zu handeln. Der Berner Konsens dient als Minimalkonsens, der für Lehrer/-innen und für Interessierte formuliert wurde. Weitere Informationen unter: <https://www.bildungbern.ch/uploads/Engagement/Services/Berner-Konsens/Berner-Konsens-2025.pdf>

„Her mit der Erdbeere!“ Ein inklusives Bildungsmaterial für nachhaltige Entwicklung in der Grundschule (red.): Viele Lebensmittel sind aufgrund der Globalisierung ganzjährig im Supermarkt verfügbar. Kenntnisse über deren Herkunft und Produktion haben dabei immer weniger Konsumenten. Das inklusive Bildungsmaterial „Her mit der Erdbeere!“ knüpft an diesem Informationsdefizit an und trägt damit zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung in der Grundschule bei. Ziel des Materials ist es, Schüler/-innen der 3. und 4. Jahrgangsstufe am Beispiel der Erdbeere mit der Herkunft von Lebensmitteln sowie der Saisonalität und Regionalität der Produkte vertraut zu machen. Die Bandbreite an verschiedenen Zugängen, Arbeitsmaterialien sowie Unterrichtsideen bietet für Lehrende umfassende Möglichkeiten Schüler/-innen mit verschiedenen Förderbedarfen zu unterrichten. Die Handreichung sowie weitere Informationen sind unter dem folgenden Link abrufbar: <https://www.globaleslernen.de/de/kmkbmz-orientierungsrahmen/bildungsmaterialien-zum-orientierungsrahmen/her-mit-der-erdbeere-ein-inklusive-bildungsmaterial-fuer-nachhaltige-entwicklung-der-grundschule>

Dialogische Erziehung – Zeitschrift zur Paulo Freire Pädagogik (red.): Die Zeitschrift „Dialogische Erziehung“ erscheint halbjährlich und ist im 28. Jahrgang dem Thema „Widerstand und Ziviler Ungehorsam“ gewidmet, im 29. Jahrgang „Heterotopie“. Sie ist Forum zur Auseinandersetzung mit der Pädagogik Paulo Freires. Im Vordergrund stehen dabei Rezeption und Adaption seines Werkes. Ergänzend erscheinen in unregelmäßigen Abständen Berichte von sozialen Brennpunkten in aller Welt. Die Ausgaben sind analog wie digital verfügbar. Weitere Informationen unter: <https://paulo-freire-kooperation.de/zeitschrift/>

Multimediale Ausstellung: Erlebnisraum Globale Nachhaltigkeit (red.): Tägliche Nachrichten und aktuelle Forschungsergebnisse weltweit machen deutlich: Unser Lebensstil und unsere Art zu produzieren haben besorgniserregende soziale und ökologische Folgen. Trotzdem fällt es uns oft schwer, echte Veränderungen herbeizuführen. Warum ist das so? Und vor allem: Wie können wir gemeinsam eine Welt gestalten, in der alle Menschen ein gutes Leben führen können, ohne die Natur zu belasten? Diese Fragen stehen im Mittelpunkt des Erlebnisraums Globale Nachhaltigkeit, einer interaktiven und multimedialen Ausstellung des Welthaus Bielefeld e. V. in der Wissenswerkstadt Bielefeld. Der Besuch ist während der Öffnungszeiten kostenlos und kann eigenständig erfolgen. Das Welthaus bietet außerdem ein vielfältiges Begleitprogramm mit Führungen, Workshops für Schulklassen und Gruppen sowie Fortbildungen für Lehrkräfte, um das Thema noch greifbarer zu machen. Weitere Informationen unter: <https://www.welthaus.de/erlebnisraum/start/>

Digitale Ausstellung „RE-EXISTIR“ (red.): Das Eine Welt Forum Freiburg bietet die digitale Ausstellung „RE-EXISTIR“ an. Sie zeigt Fotos von Freiwilligen aus Mexiko, Chile und Peru, die zwischen 2014 und 2024 in Deutschland waren. Die Bilder entstanden während eines Wochenendes, bei dem sie ihre Alltagserfahrungen zu Rassismus und Dekolonisierung reflektierten. Das Projekt wurde von Luis Castillo aus Peru entwickelt und in Freiburg umgesetzt. Ziel ist es, das Bewusstsein für neokoloniale Machtstrukturen zu schärfen. Die Ausstellung ist in Spanisch und Deutsch verfügbar. Weitere Informationen unter: <https://ewf-freiburg.de/materialien/ausstellungen/>

Aktuelle Unterrichtsmodule zum Thema „Welternährung neu denken“ (red.): Laut einem aktuellen Bericht der Bundesregierung für das High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025, welches ein Forum zur Überprüfung der Agenda 2030 darstellt, scheint die Hungerproblematik in Deutschland größtenteils überwunden zu sein. Allerdings bleiben einige Herausforderungen bestehen, wie etwa die steigenden Lebensmittelpreise oder die Tatsache, dass sich viele Kinder ungesund ernähren. Um sich intensiv mit den Problemen der Welternährung auseinanderzusetzen, bietet die Datenbank „Globales-Lernen-Schule-NRW“ nun eine Vielzahl an aktuellen Unterrichtseinheiten zur Verfügung. Der Konsum von Fleisch oder anderen tierischen Produkten sowie die veränderte Nutzung von Landflächen und die durch Tierproduktion entstehenden Treibhausgase stellen dabei nur einige der Themen dar, welche Lehrkräfte mithilfe der bereitgestellten Materialien in den Unterricht einbauen können. Weitere Informationen unter: <https://www.globales-lernen-schule-nrw.de/>