

Children's rights education in Switzerland: between curricular prescriptions and teachers' practices

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General description on research questions, objectives and theoretical framework

Children's rights education, citizen practice and exercise of democracy are since 2010 part of the compulsory school curriculum in Western Switzerland (Plan d'études romand, 2010). The Latin cantons education ministers' 2003 Declaration also recognizes children's rights as one of the basic principles of public schools (Conférence Intercantonale de l'Instruction Publique (CIIP) Declaration, 2003). This new focus is fundamental. Indeed, practice citizenship by working on, by and for the rights of the child is an essential lever for democratic and participatory classroom management. To guarantee and to promote the rights of the child in schools is a possibility for each student to become a genuine subject of rights, a full social actor and an autonomous individual (Gollob & Kraft, 2009; Howe & Covell, 2010).

However, discrepancy between prescribed curricula and teachers' practices is well documented in the field of education. Also, the introduction of new subjects without training teachers or providing them with adequate educational material and methodologies can be problematic. What are the practices of teachers in Western Switzerland five years after the introduction of children's rights in the school curriculum? Have they remained unchanged or have they on the contrary progressively evolved towards better account taken of children's rights in the classroom and a finer understanding of their pedagogical implications? What educational material/methodologies do the teachers use and do they feel the need to be trained in order to make full use of it? How appropriate do they find the ready made and very formalised activities produced by non-governmental organisations? Do they feel competent to adapt them? Since the Eastern part of Switzerland has no curricular prescriptions regarding children's rights education in schools how and to what extent do teachers practices differ from those of teachers working in Western Switzerland?

On the basis of interviews, a wide-ranging survey in Switzerland and educational material assessment, this paper will address these issues. By doing so, it will explore the gap between curricular prescriptions and teachers' practices in the field of children's rights education.

Methods/methodology

1. Qualitative interviews with teachers trained in children's rights
2. Wide-ranging online survey (N=not yet known, launched in February 2015)
3. Educational material assessment by didacticians/teachers specialised in children's rights

Expected outcomes/results

This paper will first present the results of the wide-ranging online survey. The similarities and differences between individuals, cycles or disciplines of specialisation, cantons and ultimately regions (Eastern versus Western Switzerland) will be analysed. Secondly, we will evaluate the degree of appropriation of one free and widely diffused in Switzerland teaching means by teachers. The results of its specific assessment by didacticians and teachers specialised in children's rights will be mobilised to this end. Finally, we will attempt to measure the gap between curricular prescriptions in Western Switzerland and teachers' practices in the field of children's rights education.

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