Measuring and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Active Citizenship Education Programmes to Support Disadvantaged Youth

Edited by

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About the Editors

Liyuan Liu

Liyuan Liu is a Senior Assessment Researcher in the team of Efficacy and Research at Pearson Headquarters. She was a post-doctoral research fellow at Roehampton University who mainly supported the planning and development of assessment methodology and instruments for UNICEF and World Bank Life Skills and the Citizenship Education Project between 2017 and 2021. She published a relevant regional report, entitled 'Measuring Life Skills In the context of Life Skills and Citizenship Education in the Middle East and North Africa' (Co-authored with Prof. Bryony Hoskins) to deliver information about the current status of 12 life skills development within an international context, further achieving recognition within the Middle East and North Africa, as well as translated to standard Arabic by UNICEF in early 2021.

In early 2021, she worked as an individual consultant for UNICEF Headquarters to provide evidence-based advice on mapping holistic skill development for children and youth. She is particularly interested in creating learning opportunities and developing fair assessments to support youth, especially disadvantaged youth, to help them progress and succeed at different life stages.

Steven Donbavand

Steven Donbavand is a Lecturer in Sociology in the Institute of Education, Social and Life Sciences at the University of Chichester. His ongoing research interests are inclusion and inequality, which he has investigated from economic (poverty analysis), social (loneliness and isolation) and political (citizenship and inequalities in political engagement) perspectives. In addition to academic research, he has written many related policy papers on political engagement, democratizing institutions, creating connected societies, regeneration, and poverty mapping. Steven is currently developing the Sociology program at the University of Chichester, in which he specialises in social theory. He particularly encourages students at either undergraduate or postgraduate level with a passion for political engagement and social change to get in touch.

Bryony Hoskins

Professor Bryony Hoskins has a chair in Comparative Social Science at the University of Roehampton. She is an internationally renowned expert on citizenship education and political socialisation. Her latest book is entitled *Education, Democracy and Inequality: Political Engagement and Citizenship Education in Europe* and has been published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Professor Hoskins has an excellent track record regarding funding. Her recent funded research projects have been on Post-16 Educational Trajectories and Social Inequalities in Political Engagement (Funded by the Nuffield Foundation), Effective education interventions for teaching and learning European Citizenship for disadvantaged young people (funded by Robert Bosch Foundation), and Measuring Life Skills and Citizenship Education in the Middle East and North Africa (funded by UNICEF).

Professor Hoskins has 7 years of policy experience, having previously worked on the Council of Europe, leading youth research; and at the European Commission, leading the development of indicators on Active Citizenship. She has extensive experience of performing consultancies for UNICEF, UNESCO, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe.

Jan Germen Janmaat

Jan Germen Janmaat is a Professor of Political Socialization at UCL Institute of Education. He is interested in the development of civic values and political engagement across the life cycle and the role that education, broadly conceived, plays in influencing these outcomes. He has been published widely on this topic in a variety of journals broadly covering education, sociology and political science. His latest book is entitled *Education, Democracy and Inequality: Political Engagement and Citizenship Education in Europe* (Palgrave; co-authored with Bryony Hoskins). He is currently working on a project on post-16 educational tracking and social inequalities of political engagement, which is funded by the Nuffield Foundation with a Grant for Research, Development and Analysis (Grant number 44157). From October 2015 to September 2021, he was co-editor of *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*.

Dimokritos Kavadias

Dimokritos Kavadias is an Associate Professor at the Political Science Department of the Free University of Brussels (VUB). He started as a graduated researcher on topics of urban policy (1993) and the social integration of immigrants in Brussels (1995). From 1996 onwards, his research has focused on education and youth culture. He graduated with a PhD in Political Science (Brussels 2004) on the topic of the political socialization in Flanders. After graduation, he collaborated on devising a new electoral law for the Democratic REpublic of the Congo (2005), and from 2005, supervised olicy-oriented research commissioned by the National Institute for Statistics (2005), the King Baudouin Foundation (2006–2009), the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (CGKR; 2006), Community Education Flanders (GO!; 2008), the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB; 2009), and the Flemish Ministry of Education (2005, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2017, 2021). His more fundamental research focuses on the influence of schools and teachers on the shaping of political attitudes and the knowledge of adolescents (political socialisation), and more recently, on social cohesion in schools.

He teaches methodological seminars as well as courses on "Research Design", "Political Psychology" and "Citizenship and Participation" in the Bachelors and Master's programmes in Political Science at the VUB.

Editorial

Measuring and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Active Citizenship Education Programmes to Support Disadvantaged Youth

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1. Introduction

The current Special Issue has been inspired by the Seventh Annual Conference on Citizenship Education that was held in Roehampton University London, on 26–27 September 2019. This conference explored how citizenship education can promote young people's civic and political engagement, particularly those of disadvantaged backgrounds. Discussions focused on the effectiveness of diverse formal and informal educational programmes and activities across Europe. Contributions to the conference drew on various theoretical arguments, utilised a wide range of methods and techniques, and concluded with practical strategies. As editors, we prioritised the contributions of early career researchers and those that highlight helpful strategies to improve social equality and provide equitable distribution of learning resources among underprivileged groups. After two years' close collaboration among academic editors, journal editors and authors, this Special Issue is finally released in 2021 with seven papers.

This editorial aims to inform a wide range of stakeholders, including academics, early career researchers, students, educational practitioners and policymakers, of the background and contribution of the Special Issue. It is divided into four parts. In the first part, we explain why social inequalities in civic and political engagement are problematic. In the second part, we focus on a review based on the existing research to explore what has been done concerning education, particularly citizenship education, to promote the citizenship outcomes of disadvantaged youth and mitigate social inequalities in such outcomes. The third part will introduce the published Special Issue papers and emphasise how these papers contribute to the field. Finally, we highlight the following steps and future directions for the area.

2. Social Inequalities, Learning Opportunities, and Political Participation

For a democracy to function optimally, ideally, all individuals and social groups make equal use of the opportunities to influence political decision-making (Levinson 2010; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Hoskins et al. 2021; Janmaat 2020). In view of this argument, there is no justifiable reason that certain groups are participating at lower levels and are heard less within political debates. Yet, social inequalities in political participation are one of the most conspicuous and persistent features of western societies, undermining the responsiveness and representativeness of their democracies (Bartels 2008; Dalton 2017; Donbavand and Hoskins 2021; Hoskins et al. 2017, 2021; Janmaat 2020; Peters and Ensink 2015). As a rule, people of disadvantaged backgrounds do not vote, take part

in demonstrations or are otherwise politically active to the same degree as people from more privileged families (Deimel et al. 2020; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Janmaat 2020). Consequently, their needs and responsibilities are less likely to be considered by the democratically elected government, which further reinforces the formers' disappointment with democracy and alienation from the democratic process (Hoskins et al. 2021; Janmaat 2020; Verba et al. 1995).

Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) found that education systems play a crucial role in generating and sustaining these inequalities. They do so primarily by not offering equal access to learning opportunities to become politically engaged. Time and again, young people from working-class families report lower levels of involvement in school councils, political discussions and other learning strategies that previous research has found to be particularly conducive for political engagement. At the same time, existing research has shown that when disadvantaged youth do use such learning opportunities, they often benefit more from them, in terms of enhanced political engagement levels, than children from privileged families (Gainous and Martens 2012; Hoskins et al. 2017, 2021). As disadvantaged youth have lower levels of political engagement to begin with, such learning opportunities allow them to "catch up" with their privileged peers (they are thus said to have "compensatory effects"). Hence, there is every reason to reform the education system in ways that genuinely achieve equal access to civic learning opportunities. In the next section, we review several of these learning opportunities in terms of how effective they are in enhancing political engagement in general and promoting that of disadvantaged youth in particular.

2.1. Fostering Civic and Political Participation via Learning Approaches

Citizenship education (CE) has been long expected and utilised to reduce social inequality and foster civic and political participation, by providing all young people with equal access to learning resources to engage them politically, regardless of social-economic backgrounds (Deimel et al. 2020; Donbavand and Hoskins 2021; Hoskins et al. 2017; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). As noted above, the access to learning for disadvantaged youth allows them to catch up on their political learning and compensate for the negative impact of their political learning experiences at home (i.e., less chance to develop basic political understanding due to less educated and political engaged parents), which has been labelled as education's compensating effect (Campbell 2008). But on the other side of the coin, privileged students have greater opportunities to develop political competence at home, which in turn could help them take greater advantage of the learning opportunities held at schools (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). Seen in this sense, schools can also accelerate social inequalities in political engagement between disadvantaged and advantaged peers.

This paper will explore the literature that has investigated the relationship between school-based learning opportunities and political participation. The underlying reason for emphasising school is that young people in this age group may have little direct contact and experience with a democratic government and only know about it through discussions in school and at home (Torney-Purta et al. 2004). Regarding the school's role in promoting young people's civic and political participation, Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) have discussed two learning theories. Firstly, the cognitive theory highlights the significance of the transferral and acquisition of knowledge about politics through lessons about the political system for example. Secondly, the participatory approach places heavy emphasis on developing young people's engagement via democratic participation, for instance, by debating a topic in an open climate of classroom discussions or by joining a student or school council. Through the participating process, young people exchange and co-construct their political knowledge, build up an identity in the group, and learn to achieve a common target by collaborating with their peers (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). Inspired by these learning theories, Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) identified five school-based learning opportunities, including three CE related opportunities—CE as an individual subject, CE as a cross-curriculum component, teachers' preparedness and training—and

two participatory learning opportunities—open classroom climate and civic participation. In what follows, we will briefly review the existing literature regarding the diverse learning opportunities suggested by Hoskins and Janmaat (2019).

2.1.1. Citizenship Education as an Individual Subject

As mentioned previously, citizens from privileged backgrounds are more inclined to engage in democratic politics than people from disadvantaged ones. CE has been suggested to potentially play a role in boosting students' positive attitudes towards civic and political engagement (Keating et al. 2015). For instance, in 2002 the UK government introduced compulsory citizenship lessons in schools to enhance what was perceived to be lagging political engagement levels in young people (see Crick 1998). Regarding the role of CE in youth's political outcomes, many studies from a variety of national contexts show that the students who have taken formal CE are more likely to vote in the future (McDevitt and Kiousis 2006; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019), and demonstrate higher levels of civic knowledge and skills compared to those who have not experienced CE (for the UK, see Brown 2012; Kerr 2014; Pontes et al. 2019; for Australia, see Lindström 2010; for the United States, see Patterson et al. 2012, and for Israel, see Court and Abbas 2010). However, concerns about the efficiency of CE have also been expressed by a few empirical studies (Donbavand and Hoskins 2021; Goodwin et al. 2010; Green et al. 2011). One of the main critiques about the efficiency of CE is that it overly stresses individuals' formal and abstract citizenship knowledge and skills development, rather than placing students in the context beyond the classroom to develop more realistic knowledge and solve real-world problems in the local communities (Pontes et al. 2019). This is in line with the increased attention to participatory learning approaches, such as open classroom climate and civic participation at schools (Hoskins et al. 2012; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019), which will be discussed later.

2.1.2. Citizenship Education as a Cross-Curriculum

In some jurisdictions, schools have the autonomy to have CE as a stand-alone subject or run it across the curricula (Donbavand and Hoskins 2021). Is this approach a helpful strategy to foster young people's civic and political participation? The results from the empirical research are inconclusive. By drawing upon an integrated ICCS 2009 datasets based on six European countries, Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) have found that CE has a cross-curricular component, weakly but negatively related to all forms of participation outcomes (both conventional, i.e., voting, legal protest, formal participation and radical, i.e., illegal protest), which implies that this form of learning might not contribute to young people's civic and political participation. In stark contrast, the randomised control trial article reviewed by Donbavand and Hoskins in this Special Issue by Condon and Wichowsky (2018) reported different results. Drawing upon 551 grade 6–8 students in 13 American schools, Condon and Wichowsky (2018) found the intervention that combines science and civic instruction in a unit about community and family water conservation contributes to students' engagement in both science and civics, with the support of teacher professional development and technology-based tools. Nevertheless, there is a considerable difference between measuring one specific and targeted cross-curricular programme with analysis of schools that have simply ticked a box in a survey that this is the method applied in their school for citizenship education. It may be that there is very little citizenship education happening at all in these schools.

2.1.3. Citizenship Education as a Whole-School Approach

Donbavand and Hoskins (2021) review for this Special Issue demonstrated the potential of the whole-school approach. This approach is where the whole-school ethos and mission are orientated towards developing young active citizens and the curricular and extra-curricular activities all flow from this stance. The results of the randomised control trial demonstrated significant increases in the chance of future voting for those young people who attended this school (Gibb 2016).

2.1.4. Teachers' Preparedness and Training

Effective teaching approaches and learning methods are suggested to be the most important factors to bring the best civic and political learning outcomes (Crick 1998; Donbavand and Hoskins 2021). Teaching about citizenship includes leading debates on controversial issues and developing open and enlightened classroom discussions (Crick 1998). Teachers are the persons who are responsible for establishing a secure classroom climate, in which all students are open and willing to express points of view which disagree with those held either by their peers or teachers. A capable teacher is the one who is aware of the potential problems and receives professional training on seeking a balanced, fair and objective approach to engaging students to debate controversial issues (Crick 1998). In contrast, teachers who have received very little training on teaching citizenship may feel less confident to lead discussions on controversial issues. Donbavand and Hoskins (2021) reviewed two experimental studies which predict that investing in the training and preparedness of teachers makes a difference in students' civic and political outcomes (see Andersson et al. 2013; Barr et al. 2015). Similar findings and recommendations also noted in papers published within the Special Issue (see Babhoutak et al. 2020; Coopmans et al. 2020; Kunitsõn and Kalev 2021; Rinnooy Kan et al. 2021). In this sense, it is necessary to emphasise teachers' differences in the capabilities and responsibilities of delivering such programmes and their consequences on students' civic and political learning. Besides, teachers also play an essential role in monitoring and evaluating students' learning outcomes in CE. Day-to-day assessment of students' learning in citizenship education via a range of forms, such as observation, listening, and appraising students' written tasks, allows teachers to clarify learning objectives and follow up with the progress students have made in the learning outcomes (Crick 1998).

2.1.5. Open Classroom Climate

As one of the most frequently mentioned participatory methods of civic learning, an open climate of classroom discussions ensures a supportive environment for students to discuss a wide array of social and political problems with classmates and teachers. In such an environment, students are encouraged to bring forward social and political issues in which they have an interest and openly express their attitudes (i.e., agree or disagree) toward classmates and teachers. Students then build and co-construct knowledge and may feel that they are a part of the community. Numerous studies have drawn on cross-sectional and longitudinal data suggest that students who report engaging in more issues-related discussions in a safe and free classroom were more likely to participate more in politics (Hoskins et al. 2012; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Hoskins et al. 2021; Knowles et al. 2018; Torney-Purta 2002), demonstrate positive attitudes towards political engagement (Geboers et al. 2013), obtain higher levels of civic and political knowledge (McDevitt and Kiousis 2006) and skills (Finkel and Ernst 2005). Nevertheless, using regression analysis on the Citizenship Education Longitudinal (CELS) data, Hoskins et al. (2017) found that disadvantaged students have significantly less access to this learning opportunity than their peers from more privileged backgrounds. The underlying reason could be that children of low SES background have less chance of developing and exercising political knowledge, skills, and attitudes with educated parents at home, which in turn results in less political interests and lower confidence to be involved in classroom debates and discussions, compared to their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, an open classroom climate is more of a learning process than a specific activity, which means it is inevitably more challenging to ensure that all students feel engaged (Hoskins et al. 2017). Besides, students are already picking up from school, home, outside school communities some knowledge of what social and political problems affect them, and these learning experiences also have an added effect on their engagement in an open classroom climate.

2.1.6. Civic Participation at School

A school with a participatory environment usually allows students to develop citizenship practices and increase confidence in their ability to effectively engage while at school and/or even while in the broader community (Campbell 2008; Hart et al. 2007; Mayne and Hakhverdian 2017). Participation in a voluntary group involves members interacting and negotiating within the community, doing things together toward a common learning goal, negotiating new meanings, and learning from each other's experiences. Through teamwork and conflict resolution, students learn to respect others, distribute their talents, balance self-interest and the common good and develop their identity (Youniss and Yates 1997; Torney-Purta 2002). Such a participating experience entails students' feeling of belonging to the school and a sense of security; in return, they may be more inclined to participate in the future.

This form of learning has been empirically tested to be a helpful strategy to develop conventional forms of participation in most places (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019; Keating and Janmaat 2016). Additionally, the empirical evidence based on ICCS 2009 and 2016 Nordic countries data suggests the vital role of civic participation at school in compensating for missed political socialisation in the family for students of disadvantaged backgrounds (Hoskins et al. 2021).

2.2. Learning Opportunities, Political Participation, and Social Inequality

As the previous paragraphs show, school works as the primary mechanism of delivering CE and facilitating participatory activities to prepare capable young people for politics. Overall, the findings on the role of citizenship education in reducing social gaps in engagement are inconclusive. The empirical results in Hoskins and Janmaat (2019), who drew on pooled ICCS data of the six European countries (England, Switzerland, Ireland, Sweden, Italy, Poland), suggest that all these learning opportunities cannot reduce social gaps in engagement. Deimel et al. (2020), however, showed that formal citizenship education reduces the link between young people's SES status and intended electoral participation in Denmark, Germany and Netherlands, which suggests that CE has a compensation effect. In a similar vein and focusing on the Nordic countries, Hoskins et al. (2021) noted that when disadvantaged students obtained access to civic learning, they seemed to benefit as much or more from the participating experience compared to their counterparts from more advantaged backgrounds. Authors highlighted that civic participation at school is an influential factor that can be used to diminish the social gaps and develop students' future electoral participation and civic knowledge for those underprivileged students (2021). These findings tally with Janmaat et al. (2014)'s proposition that the participation gap might be smaller in comprehensive education systems.

3. Contributions in the Special Issue

This Special Issue is comprised of seven journal papers. It contributes to the field by offering more empirical evidence as to the effective ways in which education can reduce social gaps in civic and political engagement. Within the Special Issue, three papers focusing on the school's role in developing young people's citizenship competence, such as knowledge, skills, interests and attitudes towards diversity. Two articles look at exclusion/minority groups cases, indicating valuable lessons to develop tailored educational materials and/or activities for the hard-to-reach groups. As a unique contribution, two more papers emphasise experimental studies: the paper written by Steven Donbavand and Bryony Hoskins provides a comprehensive and systematic review of all the experimental designs on promoting political participation; while the one written by Sven Ivens & Monika Oberle unpacks some details on how a digital intervention operates and improves to produce satisfying outcomes. In the paragraphs that follow, these papers are briefly introduced.

The article "Exclusion and Antisystem Attitudes: The Impact of Perceived Discrimination in Attitudes towards Democracy and Willingness to Use Violence among Adolescents

in Brussels" by Elham Mansoury Babhoutak, Dimokritos Kavadias, and Nohemi Jocabeth Echeverria Vicente, explores the political consequences of social inequality and exclusion for adolescents. Drawing upon the data of 1789 Grade 10 students (average age is 16) from 24 schools in Brussels, the article uses multilevel analysis and finds that adolescents' perceived discrimination, specifically at school, is significantly related to their anti-democratic attitude and their willingness to use violence. Authors have raised the concern that the perceived discrimination and anti-system attitudes may drive young people to stay away from politics and threaten social cohesion. As school is where students spend a great deal of time, this paper recommends that future research be conducted to explore what and which school-level predictors, such as teacher–student relationship and school environment, affect adolescents' perceived discrimination.

Relevantly, Rinnooy Kan, Willemijn F., Virginie März, Monique Volman, and Anne Bert Dijkstra, in the article "Learning from, through and about Differences: A Multiple Case Study on Schools as Practice Grounds for Citizenship", moves to explore how students' relations with teachers and peers affect their citizenship development. Drawing upon data collected from multiple resources, including document analysis, observations, and semi-structured interviews in four Dutch secondary schools, this paper investigates how school functions as a practice ground for young people's learning of dealing with diversity. The authors demonstrate that the reflection on the enactment of 'dealing with differences' was mainly focused on students' individual characteristics in all surveyed schools. The difference within and between schools, for example, the difference between students and teachers, and between a school's student population and the broader societal context, were underexplored within the field. Taking these into consideration, this paper highlights the importance of preparing teachers to consider a wider array of differences to practice dealing with diversity with their students and encourage students to reflect on the societal implications of being different from others.

Then, the article "Towards a Comprehensive School Effectiveness Model of Citizenship Education: An Empirical Analysis of Secondary Schools in The Netherlands" by Coopmans et al., examines the role of a school in promoting students' citizenship competence. Using cross-sectional data from students, teachers, team and school leaders at 78 secondary schools, the article adopted multilevel structural equation models to analyse direct and indirect school-level determinants of students' citizenship competence, including knowledge, attitudes and self-reported skills. The empirical results largely confirmed the previous literature and found that schools' attention to citizenship education and open classroom climate positively affected students' citizenship competence. Interestingly, different teaching practices were found to be associated with different outcomes: when teachers frequently play the monitoring role at school, the students were found to report low levels of competence; in contrast, when teachers encouraged students to actively choose the topic to discuss at class, students demonstrated high levels of citizenship competences. In alignment with Rinnooy Rinnooy Kan et al. (2021)'s recommendations, this paper noted that teachers should be encouraged to train in more specific citizenship knowledge to function well when working with students.

As mentioned earlier in this section, this Special Issue includes two papers which specially focus on minority group cases. Nikolai Kunitsõn & Leif Kalev in their article "Citizenship Education Policy: A case of Russophone Minority in Estonia", has used content analysis and semi-structured interviews to tackle the issue of the ethnic social-economic inequality between communities in Estonia and investigated how citizenship education can be used to diminish gaps in the future. Through analysing the national CE and cross-curricular curriculums, the authors found that the general aims are clearly set up (to develop active citizens), but the implementation mainly relies on teachers' capability and willingness of delivering courses. Those teachers in the interviews reported the heavy teaching workload and expressed the concern of lacking support and training from their schools. Additionally, the CE curriculums place an over-emphasis on civic and political knowledge that leaves skills and values little addressed. Teachers confirmed this and

mentioned that the in-class activities provided students with even more knowledge but failed to engage them to practice and exercise their roles as a citizen. There are also minimum participating opportunities for students outside the classroom, as the connection to local communities, government and politics largely depends on teachers' personal contacts. Besides this, the authors also highlight the impact of a wide range of factors, such as social media, less homogeneous social environments, and teachers' differences, on students' civic learning outcomes. In response, the authors recommend: (a) promoting a common and united education system for students who speak different native languages to reduce segmentation; (b) adding practical elements when designing the CE curriculums; (c) supporting and training teachers to engage students with interactive methods.

Further, Monika Oberle and Märthe-Maria Stamer in the project report, "Reaching the Hard-To-Reach with Civic Education on the European Union: Insights from a German Model Project", present the details of a workshop designed for hard-to-reach youth and concludes with practical methods for improving civic education on the European Union (EU). The workshop adopted a learner-centred approach at each stage: on day one, participants were encouraged to bring topics to discuss, build links between themselves and the EU, and be familiarised with the basic knowledge and information-search on the EU; On day two, participants utilised the knowledge learned from day one to participate in a simulation game to examine decisions regarding plastic pollution at the European level. The effectiveness of the work was then assessed by participants' pre-/post-/follow-up questionnaires on workshop methods and materials. It must be kept in mind that this project is ongoing, and therefore is without evaluation results. Nevertheless, the detailing of this workshop contributes to learner-centred approaches that many will find useful, through the provision of concepts and materials tailored to these hard-to-reach groups.

Finally, there are two papers focusing on the experimental study. The review of the experimental studies written by Steven Donbavand and Bryony Hoskins, "Citizenship Education for Political Engagement: A Systematic Review of Controlled Trials", identified 25 studies that use controlled trials to investigate the causal relationship between Citizenship Education Programmes and young people's political engagement outcomes. The findings of the review confirmed that (a) quality teacher training is key to underpinning the school-based citizenship education, no matter if it is a stand-alone programme, a cross-curricular one, or a whole-school approach; (b) participatory approaches to teaching are the most effective and have the overwhelming advantage of connecting with young people's motivation than the traditional acquisition-based approaches. This applies to all forms of citizenship education; (c) online citizenship education learning is prevalent at the moment, although the findings of its impact on young people's offline attitudes and behaviours are mixed. The positive results yielded from the studies showed that the digital world shares similarities with the offline world, in that where the students are involved in developing their own content, the changes in attitudes and behaviours are most pronounced.

The other experimental study, "Does Scientific Evaluation Matter? Improving Digital Simulation Games by Design-Based Research", by Sven Ivens & Monika Oberle, is a timely response to the emergence of online citizenship education learning. This study used longer-term evaluation data to identify and fix problems that existed in educational interventions. After comparing the last (2019/2020) and first (2015/2016) evaluation cycle, the overall performance of the simulation game is improved in its effectiveness in transferring EU knowledge and enhancing users' overall satisfaction with the game (Ivens and Oberle 2020). This study stressed the value of the design-based research approach for designing and developing educational interventions, which provides some evaluation lessons for the future implementation of digital simulation games.

4. Conclusions and Implications

To summarise, the seven papers measured and evaluated a wide range of CE programmes and activities (formal & informal CE, digital citizenship learning), which yielded

some beneficial strategies for future research to prepare youth, especially disadvantaged students, for participation in politics:

1. All school-based papers within this Special Issue highlight the importance of providing teachers with sufficient support, such as learning resources, tools and professional training for teaching CE or CE-related courses. Teachers' preparedness and training in citizenship education are essential for boosting their confidence and quality in delivering the subject. A well-trained teacher could help students to develop a greater understanding of the subject.

2. Regardless of the forms of the learning (formal, informal, online, etc.), two things are found to promote students' participation: (a) adopting a participatory practice method to extend students' civic learning and participation beyond the classroom into the local communities. Students, especially those of disadvantaged backgrounds, will feel empowered by solving a real-world problem and enjoy their voice being heard by the public. This also helps students build up social and moral responsibility and realistic knowledge and skills to participate in real-life contexts; (b) developing a student-centred learning format brings positive civic and political learning outcomes. This does not only reflect on the teaching methodology itself but also somewhat stresses that the relationship between students, teachers, and schools is critical. A supportive, accessible, and trustworthy environment allows students to develop an identity and participate more in the activities held at schools.

3. The demands for citizenship learning and communicating online were continuously rising during the pandemic. Future research could therefore focus on supporting the development of digital citizenship and engagement on social media and perceive how other learning opportunities can boost or diminish students' digital citizenship.

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Article

Exclusion and Antisystem Attitudes: The Impact of Perceived Discrimination in Attitudes towards Democracy and the Willingness to Use Violence among Adolescents in Brussels

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Abstract: Perceived discrimination, the perception of systematic exclusion due to background characteristics, has been studied extensively in general. The political consequences of this perception remain underexplored for adolescents. Discrimination may engender a rejection of common political values such as the support for democratic politics. Using the data of 1789 pupils with an average age of 16 years (grade 10) from 24 schools in Brussels, we focus on the consequences of perceived discrimination in attitudes towards violence, as well as on a rejection of representative democracy. The outcomes of a multilevel analysis suggest that high levels of self-reported perceived discrimination are significantly associated with an anti-democratic attitude (rejection of the current form of representative democracy) and the willingness to use violence. In a context in which 75% of pupils have a non-native background, these findings reveal the challenges for future forms of civic education.

Keywords: discrimination; Brussels; adolescents; disadvantaged youth; violence; democracy; social cohesion; social polarization; citizenship; civic education

1. Introduction

A growing number of inhabitants of European cities have an immigrant background (Schaeffer 2013). OECD (2012) states that "*Today, foreign–born nationals constitute between 10 and 15 per cent of the population in Western European Countries*" (Schaeffer 2013, p. 1). As a consequence, contemporary urban school contexts in these superdiverse cities are characterized by high degrees of ethnic diversity. Most of these new citizens do not see themselves automatically as full-fledged citizens of these societies. Using the European Social Survey (ESS), André and Dronkers (2017) found that in the 27 EU member states, the mean percentage of perceived discrimination is higher for immigrants (11.2%) than for natives (1.7%). This feeling of "being discriminated against" might affect the degree of social cohesion in these societies. We might also expect political consequences of perceived discrimination.

Research on perceived discrimination conceptualizes this phenomenon as a potential factor related to the perceived illegitimacy of authorities and violent radicalization (Doosje et al. 2013). In the political domain, research has documented the impact of perceived discrimination on the level of satisfaction with democracy (Ekman and Linde 2003; Ruiz-Rufino 2013) or on levels of political trust (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010). However, research on the impact of perceived discrimination, specifically in the context of school and daily life, is scarce.

We consider violence and a rejection of representative democracy as politically relevant attitudes that provide insight into the willingness to support (or reject) the prevailing democratic political

system. Consequently, in the case of rejection, an anti-system attitude might affect the foundation of representative democracies. Therefore, measuring these two attitudes jointly might help us to better understand anti-system attitudes.

Super-diverse cities in which the majority of the population has an immigrant background form natural laboratories to investigate discrimination and its consequences. To the best of our knowledge, this paper is the first to analyze superdiverse contexts related to perceived discrimination and attitudes towards the rejection of democracy and the willingness to use violence among disadvantaged youth. Since the rate of perceived discrimination is higher among immigrants than among natives (André and Dronkers 2017) and perceived discrimination can impact political attitudes (Takyar 2019; Oskooii 2020; Sanders et al. 2014), we might expect that, within these specific superdiverse contexts, perceived discrimination will have detrimental effects on the attitudes towards and expectations of democracy and society, especially for young people from a 'non-native' background

With 62% of its inhabitants having their origins outside of Belgium, the Brussels Capital Region is, according to the World Migration Report, the second most diverse city in the world (Lee 2015). In 2017, 71.9% of the inhabitants of the Brussels Capital Region did not initially possess a Belgian nationality on the day they were born, or had at least one parent for whom the Belgian nationality was not their first nationality (Statistiek Vlaanderen 2019, p. 7). In addition, the Brussels Capital Region has two official languages (French and Dutch), but is in fact a multilingual context where English has become the second most common language in use (Janssens 2018). Furthermore, after three decades of urban flight, the Capital Region is the fastest growing and 'youngest' region of Belgium. Brussels has seen a 'youth bulge' with almost one-third of its population being younger than 25 (Sacco et al. 2016). This makes the city an interesting research site to investigate superdiverse societies (Neudt and Maly 2010).

Sacco et al. (2016) show, in one of the few summarizing articles regarding Brussels adolescents, that different scholars point out that ethnical, social and school mechanisms disadvantage this 'youth bulge'. Pupils with an immigrant background are represented disproportionally highly in non-academic (i.e., technical and vocational) pathways (Jacobs and Rea 2007). The French and Flemish school systems also disadvantage pupils from lower social strata since there is a strict segregation between "good" and "bad" schools. The former are schools with mostly pupils from elite and white backgrounds, the latter are schools with a high rate of pupils with a low socio-economic and immigrant background (Janssens et al. 2009). The current societal situation of Brussels adolescents is alarming since they "have a high percentage of school drop, low grades at school and high rates of unemployment" (Sacco et al. 2016, p. 6; Pitts and Porteous 2005; Pitts and Porteous 2006) In addition, the presence of perceived discrimination could prove to be deleterious to schools' efforts to promote social cohesion (Putnam 2007; Laurence 2011; Portes and Vickstrom 2011). To be able to support and empower disadvantaged youth in this specific context, it is necessary to investigate their attitudes—specifically, how perceived discrimination (in the context of school and daily life) influences attitudes towards the willingness to use violence and the rejection of representative democracy. These two attitudes form the fundamental basis to measure anti-system attitudes. Initially this concept was coined by Sartori in the 1960s and 1970s to analyze party systems (Capoccia 2002). Nevertheless, we want to use this concept in an empirical manner and operationalize it to measure antisystem attitudes among adolescents and to what extent they are willing to use violence and reject representative democracy.

Using data from a survey[1] of grade 10 students (N = 1789—average age 16 years) from the Brussels Capital Region, we aim to contribute to our understanding of the impact of perceived discrimination on broader attitudes. How does perceived discrimination impact the attitudes of adolescents vis-à-vis the rejection of representative democracy and the willingness to use violence?

In the following paragraphs, we review the literature regarding perceived discrimination, attitudes towards the rejection of representative democracy and the willingness to use violence, and how the

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[1] Democratic Empowerment of Brussels Education, Students and Teachers (DEBEST).

latter two are related or influenced by the former. Secondly, we analyze the impact of perceived discrimination on attitudes towards democracy and the willingness to use violence, using recent cross-sectional survey data on adolescents. We conclude with suggestions for further research and a few key limitations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perceived Discrimination

Originally the act of noting differences, discrimination now denotes differentiation between people on grounds such as "gender, color, sexuality, disability or class" (Rai 2018, p. 163). Perceived discrimination is known as one of the main early conditions of (immigrant) children's political integration since it crystalizes a context of exclusion on a "group-level" (Esser 2015). Therefore, perceived discrimination is damaging for the political empowerment of adolescents with an immigrant background and might cause alienation from representative democracy in superdiverse cities and countries.

Jacobs and Rea (2007) concluded that the perception of stigmatization among ethnic minorities is significant among adolescents of Moroccan and Turkish origin in Brussels. In addition, adolescents in Brussels experience stigmatization and racism in the form of verbal insults by different perpetuators, such as staff on public transport, bouncers, security staff, police staff and teachers (Jacobs and Rea 2007). In particular, the insults by teachers (17.7%), can be very problematic, as youngsters are subjected to compulsory schooling until the age of 18, and teachers exert a position of power and influence (Jacobs and Rea 2007).

The literature on discrimination distinguishes between perceived personal or egocentric discrimination (Pascoe and Richman 2009; Sanders et al. 2014) and group or sociotropic discrimination (Taylor et al. 1990; Sanders et al. 2014). The first is discrimination that is individually experienced by a person. The second is "*the sense that members of one's own ethnic group suffer discrimination, regardless of one's own personal experiences*" (Sanders et al. 2014, p. 125). Other authors differentiate between perceived political (institutional) discrimination and perceived societal (interpersonal) discrimination. The first refers to discrimination by institutions, whereas the latter defines discrimination between individuals and results in more problematic forms of political nonparticipation (Oskooii 2020).

Since there are several studies that show the crucial role of adolescents' perceived discrimination at school and in daily life in relation to psychological distress (Pascoe and Richman 2009; Priest et al. 2013; Sanchez et al. 2015; Schmitt et al. 2014), we chose this as an important parameter to understand the experiences of adolescents. Our aim is to enquire how perceived discrimination relates to attitudes towards the willingness to use violence and the rejection of democracy. Moreover, we are interested in perceived discrimination and are not seeking to gauge this perception via an unbiased or objective scale.

Our focus is on perceived societal discrimination and perceived institutional discrimination, mainly in the school context; we will try to empirically ascertain whether perceived discrimination enforces attitudes towards violence and alienates adolescents from representative democracy. We use the concept of Capoccia (2002), which contains the following two fundamental components:

"*More generally, the label anti-system has been used for a party or a group with non-democratic ideals*" *(Daalder 1966a, 1966b; Budge and Herman 1978; von Beyme 1985; Ferraresi 1988) or whose supporters or members engage in unconventional, illegal or violent behavior*" (Zimmermann 1989; Capoccia 2002, p. 12). The anti-system concept appears to be "stretching" (Sartori 1970; Capoccia 2002, p. 10); however, the basis of the concept is solid enough to enable its use as a parameter for adolescents' attitude towards the current form of representative democratic system and the willingness to use violence. It is important to emphasize that being prone to violence is not the same as having an antisystem attitude. We underline that an antisystem attitude can solely be measured if the two scales, antidemocracy and the willingness to use violence, are measured jointly.

2.2. Perceived Discrimination and Attitudes towards Violence

The association between perceived discrimination and violent attitudes is important to investigate in established democracies with high ethnic diversity, such as in several European cities. First, this is because these locations have become defined by ethnic diversity and ethnic minorities tend to have an unequal position in society (Alanya et al. 2015; van Bergen et al. 2015) and, second, this is also because violent attitudes as a function of perceived discrimination may reflect nonconformity with the way the democratic system is functioning. The willingness to resort to violence for achieving goals may be a signal of citizens questioning the legitimacy or effectiveness of the institutional channels or authorities in representing their interests (Doosje et al. 2013; Schwarzmantel 2010).

We argue, moreover, that the relevance of investigating people's willingness to use violence is timely in the ongoing debate about the legitimacy crisis facing consolidated democracies (van Ham et al. 2017; van Beek 2018). Accordingly, the resort to violence to resolve differences in these societies may reflect the failure of consolidated democracies to provide an inclusive political community that accommodates a plurality of beliefs and values (Schwarzmantel 2010).

In the European context, recent studies have concentrated on examining perceived discrimination as a predictor of violent preferences.

For example, a study among young Dutch Muslims assessed the relationship between perceptions of authorities as illegitimate and violent attitudes. This study is relevant because it argues that the perceived illegitimacy of authorities may be related to previous experiences of perceived discrimination. The study's results conclude that when people perceive the authorities as illegitimate, they are more likely to hold favorable attitudes towards violence from other in-group members. In turn, this attitude was a predictor of their own intentions to use violence (Doosje et al. 2013).

Studies conducted in Belgium among young people show more mixed evidence on the conditions that are relevant to the discrimination–violence nexus. A study conducted among pupils in French-speaking secondary schools revealed that perceived personal discrimination associates positively with males' "non-conventional/illegal political engagement", such as burning flags or writing graffiti with a political message. In contrast, group discrimination was found to be insignificant among all genders (Gavray et al. 2012). However, a study assessing different predictors for Flemish youth involvement in politically motivated violence towards property and persons found group discrimination to have a strong positive association with self-reported political vandalism, while perceived personal discrimination tended to be less relevant (De Waele and Pauwels 2014).

Perceptions of personal or group discrimination are relevant not only with respect to violent attitudes; the literature suggests that the frequency and settings where discrimination takes place are also relevant. Along these lines, a study of Dutch-speaking secondary schools in Belgium found that discrimination based on the grounds of politics or language rather than religion was associated with violent radicalization. In addition, young people who had experiences of discrimination while interacting with the justice system were more likely to endorse violent extremism. Reporting more reasons for being discriminated against and more settings in which discrimination was experienced was also a meaningful association (Frounfelker et al. 2019).

In accordance with previous studies, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Adolescents with more experiences of perceived discrimination are more likely to have positive attitudes towards the use of violence than adolescents with less experiences of perceived discrimination.*

Overall, previous research suggests that there may be a positive association between discrimination and violent tendencies. More research is needed to understand the conditions that foster this association and whether it can be generalized to different minorities within a society. Unfortunately, these studies tend to emphasize violent behavior but overlook how discrimination is linked to attitudes towards violence. In addition, they do not reflect on what the very act of resorting to violence may reveal about the (dys)functioning of representative democracies. Our study attempts to enquire precisely how

this association is unveiled in a superdiverse and multilingual city such as Brussels. We specifically advance, in two senses, the understanding of the nexus between discrimination and violent attitudes.

The literature highlights the importance of 'unpacking' discrimination (Frounfelker et al. 2019) to assess its consequences on the endorsement of violence. This implies the assessment not only of whether young people have experienced perceived discrimination, but also of the settings where discrimination is experienced and its frequency (Frounfelker et al. 2019; Rousseau et al. 2018; Alanya et al. 2015). It bears mentioning that those settings need to reflect the common experiences of young pupils (Pachter et al. 2010) to reveal a meaningful association with violent attitudes. Thus far, validated measures specifically designed for adolescents when evaluating this association have not been applied in the literature. This research fills that gap.

2.3. Perceived Discrimination and Attitudes towards Democracy

Empirical research regarding the relationship between perceived discrimination and attitudes towards democracy—specifically attitudes towards the rejection of democracy—is scarce in the literature. Most studies document the relationship between perceived discrimination and voting behavior or trust in official institutions. They show a negative relationship between perceived discrimination and voting (Schildkraut 2005), trust in government (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010; Maxwell 2009; Michelson 2003) or a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and non-electoral political activities (Heath et al. 2013). In 2014, the data from the European Social Survey (ESS) showed a negative relationship between perceived discrimination and the level of satisfaction with democracy among second and later generations of ethnic minority migrants (Rood 2018).

These findings show that having a low satisfaction with regard to democracy or feeling disconnected from the country in which one lives are attributable to a reduced sense of national belonging or social exclusion, and that this might enforce the rejection of democracy.

In contrast to research regarding the satisfaction with democracy, 'that measures whether democracy is functioning as it should' (Rood 2018, p. 4), our research aims to measure the impact of perceived discrimination on antidemocracy or to what extent young people are rejecting today's representative democracy (Elchardus and Tresignie 2002; Kavadias 2004).

One of the few studies that have close similarities to our research was conducted in Quebec, Canada (Bilodeau 2017). The researchers observed that foreign-born and native-born minorities have a negative relationship between perceived discrimination and a low satisfaction with democracy (Bilodeau 2017). On this basis, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Adolescents with more experiences of perceived discrimination are more likely to have a negative attitude towards democracy than adolescents with less experiences of perceived discrimination.*

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Design

With 62% of its inhabitants having an origin outside of Belgium, the Brussels Capital Region was, in 2015, the second most diverse city in the world (Lee 2015). In 2017, 71.9% of its inhabitants either had no Belgian nationality or at least one parent without Belgian nationality on the day they were born (Statistiek Vlaanderen 2019).

The high degree of diversity alongside social diversity makes Brussels a superdiverse city (Vertovec 2007). Moreover, the Brussels Capital Region has two official linguistic communities, as well as two separate educational systems (French and Flemish). As a consequence, the 'Capital of Europe' is an archetypical superdiverse metropole, but also an exceptional case because of the bilingual institutional construction.

The respondents of our survey, grade 10 pupils, are on average 16 years old. It is around this crucial age that adolescents form their civic and political attitudes (Erikson 1994). In all likelihood,

their basic personality will, in most cases, probably not change significantly during this stage of their life (Inglehart 1990; Jennings and Niemi 1981).

3.2. Sample Selection

We used survey data collected during the school year of 2018–2019, in Dutch-speaking (Flemish) and French-speaking secondary schools in the Brussels Capital Region. Education in Belgium is compulsory from the age of 6 until the age of 18. Primary schooling begins from the age of 6 and continues until the age of 12, and secondary education continues until the age of 18. Pupils are tracked according to academic capabilities into general technical/artistic or vocational tracks after the second year of secondary education (De Groof and Franck 2013).

For the survey, we selected 24 secondary schools via stratified random sampling, with language community, location, governance structure and tracks as the strata. First, we selected schools from both official language communities in the Brussels Capital Region: Dutch and French speaking. The sampling for the survey was drawn on the basis of all secondary schools of the Flemish community in the 19 municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region. For each sampled Dutch-speaking secondary school, the geographically nearest secondary schools of the French-speaking community were selected. As Brussels has a clear socio-geographic division between rich and poor areas, we also used school location as a criterion (Sacco et al. 2016). Thirdly, as Belgium has both public schools and state-sponsored private (mostly Catholic) schools, we used the type of governance as a third criterion. The fourth criterion was based on the results of educational tracking: some schools offer only a general (academic) curriculum, while others offer technical or vocational education. This design of the sampling allowed us to guarantee the presence of different profiles (state-sponsored private/public schools, educational tracks) for each language community and to select schools from the same neighborhoods. In each secondary school, the pupils in their fourth year (grade 10) were asked to fill in the questionnaires in class (after being informed and having given their consent). To correct sampling biases, we computed post-stratification weights according to gender, language, the governance structure of the school (public/private) and tracks (academic/non-academic) on the basis of population data (Little 1993).

Since we dealt with clustered school data, we used multilevel models. The data were analyzed with SPSS 26 for data description and preparation. The multilevel analysis was performed in R (using the lme4-package). We controlled for possible confounding variables. First, we measured the impact of perceived discrimination on the willingness to use violence and, subsequently, on anti-democracy attitudes. Second, we added the control variables.

3.3. Variables

Operationalizations

To measure to what extent adolescents had an antisystem attitude, we used two outcome variables. One scale measures the willingness to use violence and one scale gauges the attitude towards current (representative) democracy. The first outcome variable was made by Doosje et al. (2013) using the following Likert items: "I am prepared to use violence against other people in order to achieve something I consider very important", "I am prepared to disturb the orderliness in order to achieve something I consider very important"," I am prepared to destroy things in order to achieve something I consider very important". The answer categories were: "I totally agree", "I agree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "I do not agree", "I totally do not agree".

The second outcome variable, a measure for "anti-democracy", was created by Elchardus and Tresignie (2002). This variable measures whether the respondent rejects representative democracy, using the statements: "The so-called experts and specialists know nothing", "Democracy is just a veil for the power of the rich", "Without political parties our country would be much better off". The answer categories were once again, "I totally agree", "I agree", "Neither agree nor disagree", "I do not agree", or "I totally do not agree".

To measure perceived discrimination, we used a reduced form of a scale proposed by Pachter et al. (2010) (Table 1), using 8 of their 23 proposed items. Since adolescents spend a great deal of their time in school, we selected four items that refer specifically to situations that are related to pupils, teachers and the classroom. The other four items refer to circumstances that are strongly recognizable in the daily life of adolescents.

Pupils were asked, "Have you had the following experiences?" with the following possible responses: "Followed by security guards at stores", "Treated badly/unfairly by teacher", "Got grades you didn't deserve", "People hold bags tight when you walk by", "Someone was afraid of you", "Teachers assume you are not intelligent", "Treated unfairly by a police officer", "Accused of something you did not do at school". The answer categories were: "never" (=1), "once" (=2), "several times" (=3), "regularly" (=4).

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of the question measuring perceived discrimination (Cronbach's alpha: 0.83). Items showed that, on average, perceived discrimination in schools is more prevalent than perceived discrimination in other settings, particularly for the following experiences: "accused of something you did not do at school", "got grades you didn't deserve", "treated badly/unfairly by a teacher". Moreover, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of the independent variable "perceived discrimination" shows that there are clearly two subcomponents or subdimensions: perceived discrimination at school and perceived discrimination in a wider environment.

Lastly, pupils who identify themselves as Muslim and pupils who have a Moroccan ethnic background score highest on the perception of discrimination. Likewise, Table 2 presents the frequency of the question measuring the willingness to use violence (Cronbach's alpha: 0.83); Table 3 presents the items measuring antidemocracy (Cronbach's alpha: 0.63). For further analyses, we use standardised variables (z-scores).

Table 1. Item wordings and descriptors of "perceived discrimination".

Items	Never	Once	Several Times	Regularly	N	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loadings
1. Accused of something you did not do at school	32.6%	28.8%	31.4%	7.1%	1787	2.13	0.95	0.647
2. Got grades you did not deserve	41.9%	21.3%	29.2%	7.7%	1782	2.03	1.01	0.507
3. Treated badly or unfairly by a teacher	45.0%	27.5%	21.5%	6.1%	1775	1.89	0.95	0.627
4. You had the feeling that someone was afraid of you	54.7%	17.6%	20.9%	6.9%	1772	1.80	1.00	0.680
5. Teachers assume you're not smart or intelligent	54.7%	21.3%	18.0%	6.0%	1776	1.75	0.95	0.554
6. Being watched closely or followed around by security guards or store clerks at a store or the mall	59.4%	19.8%	15.6%	5.1%	1789	1.66	0.92	0.616
7. People hold their bags tight when you pass them	72.5%	11.8%	11.3%	4.4%	1778	1.48	0.86	0.652
8. Were treated unfairly by a police officer	73.8%	13.1%	8.5%	4.7%	1784	1.44	0.83	0.664

As control variables, we included gender, social-economic status, origin, religious identification and school track (Table 4). Gender is coded as 0 (=male) and 1 (=female). Socio economic status (SES) was operationalized as the highest attained level of education of the father and mother (or the person who has the role of the father or the mother in the household). We recoded the original variables in three categories: "low" (from no education, to lower secondary school education (15 years) at most),

"medium" (secondary school education), "high" (higher education). The third control variable is the ethnic origin of the pupil. We categorized their countries of origin into seven groups: "Belgium", "Morocco", "Turkey", "Africa", "EU15", "Europe" and "other". As perceived discrimination was also observed to be dependent on the respondent's religion, we asked youngsters to choose the religion with which they identify out of a list of eleven options (the twelfth option was "I'm not interested in anything that involves religion"). We recoded this variable into four categories, distinguishing "Muslims" from "Christians", "non-believers", and a residual category of "other". Since separating pupils in terms of tracking might affect positive attitudes towards democracy (Kavadias et al. 2017), it is important to include school track as a fifth control variable, differentiating between "general", and "technical/artistic/vocational" tracks.

Table 2. Item wordings and descriptors of attitude items "willingness to use violence".

Items	(Completely) Disagree	−/+	(Completely) Agree	N	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loadings
1. I am prepared to use violence against other people in order to achieve something I consider very important.	67.6%	17.5%	14.9%	1715	2.12	1.22	0.732
2. I am prepared to disturb the order in order to achieve something I consider very important.	41.9%	25.6%	32.5%	1714	2.79	1.32	0.706
3. I am prepared to destroy things in order to achieve something I consider very important.	56.7%	23.0%	20.3%	1715	2.40	1.25	0.942

Table 3. Item wordings and descriptors of attitude items "antidemocracy".

Items	(Completely) Disagree	−/+	(Completely) Agree	N	Mean	S.D.	Factor Loadings
1. The so-called experts and specialists know nothing.	45.8%	41.6%	12.7%	1768	2.61	0.904	0.540
2. Without political parties our country would be much better off.	33.5%	43.6%	22.8%	1769	2.88	1.03	0.605
3. Democracy is just a veil for the power of the rich.	21.2%	38.3%	40.5%	1771	3.26	1.03	0.657

Table 4. Scale descriptors of control variables: gender, parents' education, religion, origin and school track.

Control Variables	N	Percent
Gender (N: 1852)		
Girl	914	48.4%
Boy	938	49.8%
Parents' Education (N: 1883)		
Low	644	34.2%
Middle	609	32.3%
High	630	33.5%
Religion (N: 1867)		
Muslim	905	48.1%
Christian	469	25.1%
Non-believer	407	21.8%
Other	86	4.6%

Table 4. *Cont.*

Control Variables	N	Percent
Origin (N: 1862)		
Belgium	365	19.6%
Morocco	538	28.9%
Turkey	154	8.3%
Africa	218	11.7%
Europe 15	236	12.7%
Europe (other)	174	9.3%
Other countries	177	9.5%
School Track (N: 1871)		
Academic Track (General)	1253	67%
Technical/Artistic/Vocational	618	33%

4. Results

4.1. Perceived Discrimination and the Willingness to Use Violence

We estimated six multilevel regression models in order to explore and explain the dispersion of perceived discrimination and the willingness to use violence among subgroups (Table 5). In the second model, only gender is included. In the third and the fourth, we added the education background of the parents and the origin of the grandparents, respectively. The fifth model contains religion and the sixth model contains school track. This finding shows that the initial bivariate relationship between perceived discrimination and the willingness to use violence was already strong and significant after controlling for different background characteristics, and that there remained a positive and significant relationship between perceived discrimination and the willingness to use violence (Model 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). These findings are in accordance with our first hypothesis. Moreover, the impact of perceived discrimination is strong, with a beta of 0.32 after all the controls. The relationship between perceived discrimination and the willingness to use violence shows that the more that young people perceive discrimination, the more they are willing to use violence against other people, disturb the order and destroy things.

Secondly, the impact on the use of violence is significantly lower amongst girls. This is in line with the findings of Rousseau et al. (2018). Furthermore, pupils with more highly educated parents have a significantly higher tendency to use violence. Pupils of Belgian origin score lower on the use of violence than the reference group. In addition, pupils identifying themselves as Christian, atheist and pupils from other religions or philosophies score significantly higher than Muslim youngsters regarding the use of violence.

4.2. Perceived Discrimination and Anti-Democracy

We followed the same steps for our measure for "anti-democratic attitude" (Table 6). Again, we see an association between perceived discrimination and anti-democracy attitudes (beta: 0.22). Controlling for different social background characteristics does not alter this relationship, which leads us to accept the second hypothesis (Model 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). Table 6 shows that, after controlling, the beta remains stable at 0.22.

Table 5. Multilevel regression model concerning perceived discrimination and willingness to use violence among 10th graders in Brussels (N: 1653).

	Model 0		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B^2	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Intercept	0.003	0.055	−0.011	0.051	0.183	0.052	0.115	0.059	0.069	0.071	0.046	0.068	0.100	0.079
Perceived discrimination			0.351 ***	0.023	0.305 ***	0.024	0.306 ***	0.024	0.317 ***	0.024	0.327 ***	0.024	0.324 ***	0.024
Gender (0: Boy)					−0.379 ***	0.050	−0.382 ***	0.050	−0.377 ***	0.049	−0.367 ***	0.049	−0.366 ***	0.049
Parents' education														
Education middle (0: lower secondary or less)							−0.035	0.056	−0.033	0.056	−0.034	0.056	−0.032	0.056
Education high (0: lower secondary or less)							0.136 *	0.057	0.151 **	0.058	0.124 *	0.058	0.129 *	0.058
Ethnicity														
Belgium (0: Morocco)									0.005	0.071	−0.174 *	0.083	−0.173 *	0.083
Turkey									0.120	0.090	0.085	0.089	0.083	0.091
Africa									0.058	0.079	−0.068	0.090	−0.074	0.090
EU15									0.051	0.081	−0.165	0.096	−0.168	0.096
Europe									0.262 **	0.088	0.084	0.099	0.084	0.099
Other									0.027 **	0.090	0.111	0.098	0.113	0.099
Religion														
Christian (0: Muslim)											0.175 *	0.072	0.174 *	0.072
Atheist											0.371 ***	0.079	0.371 ***	0.079
Other											0.443 ***	0.128	0.449 ***	0.128
School track														
Academic (0: Technical and Vocational)													−0.097	0.069
Variance components														
N	1654		1654		1654		1654		1654		1654		1654	
school level (lev 2)	0.05		0.04		0.03		0.02		0.02		0.01		0.02	
individual level (lev 1)	1.00		0.88		0.86		0.85		0.85		0.84		0.84	
Total	1.05		0.93		0.89		0.88		0.88		0.86		0.86	
ICC	0.047		0.045		0.033		0.028		0.029		0.02		0.02	
Deviance	4963.3		4763.4		4711.8		4710.2		4712.4		4696.5		4698.1	
R school level			0.16		0.407		0.505		0.486		0.644		0.565	
R individual level			0.16		0.143		0.14		0.15		0.16		0.16	
R total			0.11		0.156		0.16		0.16		0.18		0.18	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

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2   Cell entries are unstandardised regression coefficients.

Table 6. Multilevel regression model concerning perceived discrimination and attitudes towards the rejection of representative democracy among 10th graders in Brussels.

	Model 0		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	B [3]	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
Intercept	0.045	0.066	0.036	0.058	−0.074	0.066	0.001	0.072	0.152	0.084	0.153	0.084	0.234	0.093
Perceived discrimination			0.219 ***	0.024	0.244 ***	0.024	0.245 ***	0.024	0.229 ***	0.025	0.228 ***	0.025	0.225 ***	0.025
Gender (0: Boy)					0.215 ***	0.051	0.217 ***	0.051	0.210	0.051	0.211 ***	0.051	0.205 ***	0.005
Parents' education														
Education middle (0: lower secondary or less)							−0.104	0.057	−0.103	0.059	−0.099	0.057	−0.101	0.057
Education high (0: lower secondary or less)							−0.125 *	0.057	−0.11	0.05	−0.112	0.060	−0.108	0.060
Ethnicity														
Belgium (0: Morocco)									−0.306 ***	0.073	−0.289 ***	0.085	−0.283 ***	0.085
Turkey									−0.209 *	0.094	−0.207 *	0.094	−0.207 *	0.094
Africa									−0.161 *	0.081	−0.162	0.092	−0.164	0.092
EU15									−0.216 **	0.083	−0.191	0.092	−0.191	0.099
Europe									−0.189 *	0.089	−0.186	0.101	−0.182	0.101
Other									−0.114	0.093	−0.130	0.103	−0.126	0.103
Religion														
Christian (0: Muslim)											−0.001	0.074	−0.0003	0.074
Atheist											−0.089	0.082	−0.091	0.082
Other											0.140	0.130	0.141	0.131
School track														
Academic track (0: Vocational and Technical)													−0.124	0.079
Variance components														
N	1667		1667		1667		1667		1667		1667		1667	
School level (lev 2)	0.08		0.06		0.07			0.06		0.06		0.06	0.05	
Individual level (lev1)	0.96		0.92		0.91			0.91		0.90		0.90	0.90	
Total	1.04		0.98		0.98			0.97		0.96		0.96	0.95	
ICC	0.075		0.059		0.068			0.062		0.063	0.063		0.053	
Deviance	4924.6		4850.1		4837		4839.8		4840.6		4846		4847.2	
R school level			0.26		0.15			0.23		0.23	0.23		0.36	
R individual level			0.04		0.05			0.05		0.06	0.06		0.06	
R total			0.06		0.06			0.07		0.08	0.08		0.08	

* *p* < 0.05; ** *p* < 0.01; *** *p* < 0.001.

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[3] Cell entries are unstandardised regression coefficients.

Again, we find a very strong and significant effect on antidemocracy with gender, but this time the female respondents tend, on average, to exhibit a higher degree of rejection of representative democracy than the boys. Furthermore, two ethnicities show significantly less association with anti-democracy attitudes. Pupils of Turkish origin score significantly lower for anti-democracy attitudes and pupils of Belgian origin show a significantly low association with anti-democracy attitudes. Lastly, there is no association between religious self-identification and attitude towards representative democracy in the final models.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

An important cornerstone of any democratic political regime is the expression of people's interests through institutional channels. However, our study shows that when people do not feel represented by these institutions/authorities or when they are seen as inherently biased towards the benefit of certain groups due to feelings of personal discrimination, their legitimacy (Doosje et al. 2013) and effectiveness to channel people's interests can be called into question. In this scenario, alternative channels of expression may be justified, including non-conventional forms of political participation and the use of violence. In this sense, it is not surprising that other studies have found that, for people who perceive discrimination against them, non-civic activities tend to be significantly related to other types of conventional civic participation (Gavray et al. 2012). Therefore, people with experiences of perceived discrimination are not necessarily deprived of collective action. As the previous literature has concluded, perceived discrimination can trigger collective mobilization. However, people that feel discriminated against would need a strong ethnic identity to be mobilized (Stronge et al. 2016). Moreover, given that our results show that people with perceptions of being discriminated against were found to score higher on the willingness to use violence, we would expect that this collective action would not only be expressed through conventional and legal channels but could also be expressed through a violent outlet.

In this paper, we attempted to achieve an empirical grasp on the relationship between perceived discrimination, the willingness to use violence and the rejection of representative democracy ("anti-democracy") among adolescents. In general, the higher that adolescents score for perceived discrimination, the more they reject democracy and are willing to use violence.

Seemingly, these attitudes exteriorize and can be considered as proxies for an anti-system attitude. Perceived discrimination alienates young people from representative democracy, pushing them into the margins of society where their anti-system attitude only festers.

It is worth noting that female pupils score significantly higher on anti-democratic attitudes compared to boys. Further research should clarify this difference. Furthermore, the willingness to use violence among the following pupils was remarkably significant: those from a country other than the six categories, those from a country in Europe other than the 15 core-countries, those identifying as atheists and those with another philosophy or religion (than Christian or Muslim). Further research should clarify these differences.

The implications of our findings are particularly revealing for the (dys)functioning of consolidated democracies. Our findings warn against the negative side effects of civic attitudes that perceived personal and perceived institutional discrimination may trigger in established democracies. These side effects are related to the endorsement of violent attitudes that are detrimental to the optimal functioning of a democratic regime. It is important to conduct further research to counter this perceived discrimination and its negative impact on democracy, regarding the determinants or predictors of perceived discrimination in the context of schools. Seemingly, there is a possible mismatch between the aspirations of, on the one hand, teachers, curricula, principals and school policies and, on the other hand, pupils regarding the idea of how to function as a pupil at school and which political system is acceptable. Although we cannot realistically expect civic education courses to 'fix' this mismatch, one could consider setting up a form of democratic dialogue between these pupils and their schools to bridge the disparities. This, however, necessitates more in-depth research to understand, for example,

what exactly happens at a school regarding items of perceived discrimination. How do pupils and teachers interact precisely in daily life when pupils find that they are "accused of something they did not do at school", "got grades they didn't deserve", or were "treated badly/unfairly by a teacher"? Why exactly do pupils reject representative democracy and why are they willing to use violence? In addition, we need more insights into the values of pupils and teachers concerning violence, democracy and the school system. This could clarify the complex dynamic between perceived discrimination, an antisystem attitude and the role of the educational system.

In brief, the impact of perceived discrimination on the willingness to use violence and the rejection of representative democracy should be investigated further to avoid political alienation (Durkheim 1951; Doosje et al. 2013; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019) and anti-system attitudes that could diminish social cohesion (Putnam 2007; Laurence 2011; Portes and Vickstrom 2011), which can foster social polarization (Esteban and Schneider 2008). We also see these violent attitudes as a warning regarding possible alienation from representative democracy, pushing people into the margins of society where their anti-system attitude only festers. This is something that young people who feel discriminated against may experience from the political system. These negative consequences add to the already vast evidence documenting the detrimental effects of perceived discrimination on other areas of young people's personal development such as wellbeing (Priest et al. 2013; Schmitt et al. 2014; Kauff et al. 2017; Benner et al. 2018; Giuliani et al. 2018).

The core of our study is that perceived discrimination has an important impact on the willingness to use violence and the rejection of representative democracy. These two variables manifest in parallel regarding perceived discrimination. Therefore, we conclude that perceived discrimination—specifically at school—is an important predictor.

Although we feel confident that our results offer a good starting point for further research, we are ready to acknowledge the limitations of our study. One limitation of our study is that we are not able to discern whether the attitudes towards violence are related to a political or religious motivation. We are only certain of a general willingness to use violence to reach perceived important goals in life. In contrast, we are able to bring more nuance to the different forms of discrimination by assessing different settings in which these experiences took place, namely that perceived discrimination scores highest in the educational context. Furthermore, our analysis points to a possible problematic relation between the current democratic and education context and the younger generations with superdiverse backgrounds. Our cross-sectional analysis is, however, not able to sketch out the precise dynamics of how this tension evolves. Another more technical limitation is that we used a weighting factor because of the low number of pupils in French-speaking schools with parents who had a low level of education, resulting in that cohort being underrepresented. We were also limited in our measurement of perceived discrimination as we only gauged personal perceived discrimination. The used measurement scales did not enable us to compare the difference between personal discrimination and group discrimination (Oskooii 2020; Sanders et al. 2014; Taylor et al. 1990). A last limitation is that we did not enquire as to the political "left" or "right" position of pupils. Since there is no research regarding perceived discrimination and political positioning, this should be investigated in other research. Although we did not explicitly approach other political variables, like, for example, authoritarianism, a lack of political efficacy or political cynicism, we want to highlight some preliminary findings. There are weak correlations between perceived discrimination and political knowledge and between perceived discrimination and authoritarianism. In contrast, there is a strong correlation between perceived discrimination and a lack of political efficacy.

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Article

Learning from, through and about Differences: A Multiple Case Study on Schools as Practice Grounds for Citizenship

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Abstract: Learning to relate to others that differ from you is one of the central aims of citizenship education. Schools can be understood as practice grounds for citizenship, where students' citizenship is not only influenced by the formal curriculum, but also by their experiences in the context of teacher–student and student–student relations. In this article we therefore investigate how the practice of dealing with difference is enacted in schools. Data were collected through an exploratory multiple case study in four secondary schools, combining interviews and focus groups. Despite the differences between the schools in terms of population and location, in all schools the reflection on the enactment of 'dealing with differences' was limited in scope and depth. 'Being different' was understood primarily in terms of individual characteristics. Furthermore, in all schools there was limited reflection on being different in relation to teachers and the broader community. Finally, relevant differences for citizenship were confined to the category of 'ethnic and cultural diversity'. This article calls for preparing teachers to consider a broader array of differences to practice dealing with differences with their students and to support students in reflecting on the societal implications of being different from each other.

Keywords: citizenship education; diversity; differentiation; school as practice ground

1. Introduction

Increased participation in education, migration, emancipation have made schools more diverse in their composition and have created new challenges for teachers in the recent decades. The reality of classrooms that are becoming increasingly diverse, e.g., academically and socio-culturally, is an invitation to researchers and practitioners alike to reflect on the most desirable way to deal with these changing teaching and learning environments. As a result, differences between students have been studied from an array of perspectives, often related to individuals' academic capacities, with the goal of increasing educational equality and ensuring equity of access to high-quality learning (e.g., Lindsay 2007; Steenbergen-Hu et al. 2016; Thijs and Verkuyten 2014; Tomlinson et al. 2003). Teachers are well aware of the importance of addressing differences between students; however, many teachers experience attending to those differences as a challenge (Gable et al. 2000; Subban 2006; Tomlinson 2001).

Citizenship education as an educational priority and topic has emerged explicitly in the context of increased societal diversity, especially in terms of their ethnic and cultural composition. One of its main goals is preparing students to function in societies with fellow citizens who differ from them (Banks 2007). During recent decades, an increased focus on the promotion of compulsory citizenship education programs all over the world has been particularly evident (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2017). In educational research, citizenship of adolescents has been conceptualized in different ways (e.g., Banks

2004; Rychen and Salganik 2003). In this study, following Lawy and Biesta (2006), we approach it as a continuing developmental practice concerned with negotiating the rights and responsibilities that are tied to the membership of the various communities to which people belong. Through this definition of citizenship, schools can be understood as practice grounds for citizenship (Veugelers 2011). Students not only learn about their rights and responsibilities in schools, but practice them through social interactions within the school: using their voice in a student council, solving conflicts, and debating sensitive issues (Flanagan 2013). Learning to deal with differences is at play in all of these examples. Thus, when we understand schools to be practice grounds for citizenship, the differences that students encounter within the classroom and the school as well as the way teachers deal with these differences matter as relevant experiences (Gurin et al. 2004).

In this exploratory multiple case study, our main research question is: how is the practice of dealing with differences enacted in schools? Through our analysis, we aim to make transparent what the abstract notion of learning to 'deal with differences'—as a key element of the ambitions of citizenship education—may actually entail within schools. Consequently, we provide insight into the functioning of schools as practice grounds for citizenship, where citizenship learning takes place beyond the formal citizenship curriculum. This approach allows for new insight for researchers and practitioners, in how we can best profit from the school environment to practice (for) citizenship and in particular, to practice (for) the crucial social skill of dealing with differences.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Dealing with Differences: Categorizing and Group Hierarchy

The ability to categorize ourselves and others into social groups helps us to make sense of the complexity of the social world (Jenkins 2000). There are many differences that we can use to categorize ourselves and others, for example: gender, socio-economic background, ethnic and cultural background, religion, and socio-emotional development. Schools are typically the place where at least some of these differences are consciously encountered for the first time in children's lives (Flanagan 2013). Additionally, even when these differences are not reflected in the characteristics of the school population itself, they can be introduced and reflected upon by teachers.

Children learn to categorize groups of people through a combination of similarities they observe themselves and labelling of groups by authority figures, for example, their teachers. According to the social identity approach (Tajfel 1978), our positive expectations of in-group members are connected to the human motivation to have a positive self-concept, and as a consequence to believe that 'our' group is a good group. This is not harmful in itself. Young children already categorize and attribute certain positive characteristics to fellow in-group members; however, their social categorization is not automatically negative for the out-group. It simply separates in-group from out-group (Liberman et al. 2017).

One of the main ways information about social categories is transmitted is through language, for example, through the use of generic language in which groups are addressed instead of individuals (i.e., girls always like . . . or Moroccan kids prefer . . .). Such use of language reinforces group distinctions and an essentialist understanding of groups (Liberman et al. 2017). If children learn that members of a category share important essences beyond what is observable, an essentialist understanding of groups may develop (Patterson and Bigler 2006). Meanwhile, in society, not all groups are equal, and some groups have a relatively low status in comparison to the "dominant or most valued group or groups in society" (Nesdale and Flesser 2001, p. 506). This perceived hierarchy of groups adds a layer of complexity to dealing with differences, as it suggests that practicing dealing with differences is not the same exercise for those who do and those who do not belong to a dominant group.

2.2. The School as a Practice Ground for Dealing with Differences

School is one of the social environments in which children practice dealing with differences. Practicing dealing with differences can be understood as part of citizenship education. This is in line with a developmental definition of citizenship (Lawy and Biesta 2006), in which schools are understood to be more than places where adolescents formally learn about their future as citizens. Students also informally develop their agency as citizens on a daily basis within the school, through social interactions with other students and teachers (Lawy and Biesta 2006; Torney-Purta and Amadeo 2011). Within the school students learn what being part of a community means, what the consequences and implications of their membership in that community actually are, and how they can best deal with the differences they encounter between themselves and others (Flanagan 2003). Many opportunities for citizenship learning that present themselves within schools are unintentional, not consciously linked with citizenship education (Kahne and Sporte 2009; Kissling 2018). The practice of citizenship happens in relation to others: their fellow students, their teachers, and other members of the professional community (Veugelers 2011). Consequently, insight into the functioning and characteristics of these relations is crucial for understanding how dealing with differences is enacted within the school as a practice ground.

There are different ways in which practicing dealing with differences can take place within the context of the school. One of the ways proposed in the literature is learning to take perspective; positioning oneself in the other's shoes. Research has indicated that the mere presence of others in schools (other in terms of race, social class, gender, for example) is not sufficient to support perspective taking; specific conditions are necessary, for example, equality of status, and normalization and negotiation of conflict (Gurin et al. 2004; Zirkel and Cantor 2004).

Educators act as 'proximate authority figures' who play a significant exemplary role when it comes to experiencing and practicing dealing with differences. In terms of perspective taking, they are the ones that can convey 'equality of status' and model 'the normalization and negotiation of conflict'. Teachers, intentionally and unintentionally, set the example of how students are supposed to deal with others that differ from them. However, the way educators deal with differences also gives students an impression of how authority will deal with people 'like them' (Flanagan 2013). This role as proxy for political authority, is illustrated by a recent study by Bruch and Soss (2018) on different expressions of school authority and their relation to students' civic attitudes. A stricter and more punitive expression of authority resulted in lower trust in government and less political engagement for already-disadvantaged students.

What complicates the enactment of dealing with differences in schools is that for many teachers, their position as proximate authority figure is combined with membership in a dominant group. For members of a dominant group, categorizing can be seen as an innocent act, while for those who perceive themselves as different from a dominant group, being categorized may be experienced as being 'othered' or having their 'being different' confirming their lower status (Borrero et al. 2012). As such for students dealing with differences can also be learning to deal with being different oneself, as difference is inherently relational. Diversifying the teacher population, which has been on the educational agenda for several decades, can help students in several ways in this process. Firstly, a more diverse teacher population could provide mentors and role models for minority students. Furthermore, a more diverse teacher population can provide insight into 'being different' from a dominant group and help students reflect on what that means in society (Cherng and Halpin 2016; Villegas et al. 2012).

2.3. Different Citizenship Approaches for Different Students

To complicate matters further, in light of the school as a practice ground for citizenship, it is also relevant to point at a pattern that has been revealed in the research: the lines along which society is stratified, particularly educational level and socio-economic status,

are mirrored in how citizenship education itself is interpreted for different groups (see, e.g., Nieuwelink et al. 2019; Ten Dam and Volman 2003). Research has shown that not all students have equal access to citizenship learning opportunities. A different type of citizenship may be promoted in the classroom, depending on the educational level of the students. For example, within pre-vocational education, adaptation was found to be the main theme, while pre-university students were more often offered a critical perspective (Ten Dam and Volman 2003). In line with that finding, a recent study showed that pre-vocational students are given fewer opportunities to practice their citizenship in terms of taking part in discussions or debates (Nieuwelink et al. 2019). Yet another study showed that educators in lower socio-economic status school communities had a more local understanding of citizenship, whereas in a school community with a higher socio-economic status, an international or global perspective on citizenship was more common (Goren and Yemini 2017; Sincer et al. 2019; Wood 2015). Finally, Kahne and Middaugh (2008) used the concept of the 'civic opportunity gap' as a way to convey that different students have different opportunities to develop their citizenship competences. Their study, analyzing a Californian sample (2737 students) from the IEA civic education study, showed that academically successful, white and higher socioeconomic status students were presented with more classroom-based civic learning opportunities. As such, while learning to deal with difference in a socially just way is an important goal of citizenship education, research indicates that the way citizenship education itself is enacted in schools often reproduces societies' inequalities.

2.4. The Present Study

Our conceptual framework tries to elucidate the complex socializing processes that underly dealing with differences. The school environment, as one of the arenas where these processes take place, provides different opportunities besides curricular content for students to learn how to deal with differences: on the one hand through the opportunities to practice dealing with differences themselves and on the other hand through the modelling of their teachers, as authority figures. When we combine both these aspects, the question remains: how is the practice of dealing with differences enacted in schools as practice grounds for citizenship?

To answer this research question, an exploratory multiple case study was conducted (Yin 2003). This approach allowed us to compare schools and to gain an in-depth understanding of how schools differ in their teachers' practices related to dealing with differences and students' experiences with dealing with difference.

2.5. Dutch Context

The study was conducted in four Dutch secondary schools. Schools in the Netherlands have a statutory obligation to promote citizenship, yet schools have a great deal of freedom in fulfilling this obligation (Bron and Thijs 2011). What citizenship implies in this context is very broadly defined in terms of 'promoting active citizenship and social integration' and 'learning to participate in a pluriform democratic society' (Dutch Foundation for Curriculum Development[Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling] 2018). This combination of statutory obligation and school autonomy has led to wide variation in school policies and educational practices concerning citizenship education (Dijkstra et al. 2020). In more general terms 'learning to deal with differences' is one of the fifty-eight central aims of secondary education. It is conceptualized in terms of different 'worldviews' and 'lifestyles' and understanding the importance for society to learn to deal 'respectfully with diversity'.[1]

3. Methods
3.1. Sample

For this study, we selected four schools that differed in terms of student population, tracks offered by the schools, the school's vision (mainstream versus specific pedagogical philosophies), degree of urbanization in the school's location (urban versus rural), and

school size (small versus large). This maximum variation sampling (Maxwell 2004) was intended to allow for large variation in practices related to dealing with differences. The selection of schools with different track combinations (one versus several tracks) led to variations in academic and sociocultural characteristics and the status of student groups, due to the considerable differences in tracks. All four schools offered pre-vocational education, while two of them also offered pre-university education, allowing us to compare how the schools approached the issue of the handling of the related differences (Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of the cases.

Cases	Location	Student Population[2]	Tracks[3]
Waldorf (School 1)	Urban	800 (approx. 90% native Dutch)	Pre-vocational (theory) to pre-university (3 tracks)
Rural (School 2)	Rural	300 (approx. 95% native Dutch)	Pre-vocational (job-oriented) (1 track)
Urban Pre-Vocational (School 3)	Urban	300 (approx. 5% native Dutch)	Pre-vocational (theory) (1 track)
Mixed Urban (School 4)	Urban	1600 (approx. 30% native Dutch)	Pre-vocational (job-oriented) to pre-university (4 tracks)

3.2. Data Collection

Data collection took place from September 2014 until February 2015, and included a combination of different data sources: document analysis, observations, and semi-structured interviews. A total of 24 interviews (with 16 staff members and 24 students) were conducted by two interviewers, one of whom was the first author. More specifically, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each school principal, or the team leader who assumed the role of principal ($n = 4$). Additionally, one interview was conducted with the building service workers ($n = 4$), civics teachers ($n = 4$), and mentors ($n = 4$), as well as one focus group session with six pre-vocational students per school (14- to 15-year-olds; $n = 24$). These students were selected by their mentors, based on our instruction of choosing students that represented the diversity present in the classroom. The mentors we interviewed were the mentors of the students we included, all were responsible for one class of students and all of them were also teachers in the school.

To prepare the interviews, we analyzed the school plan, focusing specifically on information related to citizenship education in general and about dealing with differences in particular. Additionally, we spent a full day in the school and conducted an initial exploratory interview with the school leader. We observed the course of events during breaks and attended at least one class were all students from the focus group were present, as well as being there at the start and end of the school day. We used all of these observations as input for our interviews, but did not include the observations themselves in the data analysis. The interviews with the teachers and building service workers, as well as the first interviews with the school principals, had the following structure: we started with some introductory questions regarding the school vision and practices related to citizenship education and the functioning of the school as community. Next, and in line with the conceptual framework, we focused on understanding how differences were dealt with within the school. More specifically, questions concerned the participants' vision with regard to differences (e.g., In your school plan you mention the diversity of the student population: how would you define diversity?), practices related to differences (e.g., What differences between students are relevant in your practice as a teacher?), and perceived student experience with differences (e.g., Do you see clear groups in your student population? Along what lines do groups exist?). We included the building service workers to gain an inside perspective on the functioning of the school beyond what happened inside the classrooms. In these interviews we did not focus on citizenship education, but we did touch upon all the other themes. The second interview with the principals was usually the last interview in the school which we used to clarify and ask for additional information.

Students were interviewed during a focus group session. The focus group session started with an open-ended conversation regarding the relations between students at the school and how differences were addressed by teachers (15 min). Next, we presented three short films to the students (≈2 min each) on groups within the student population, bullying and student teacher relations to further open up conversations about dealing with differences at school. After the first film, we asked for example: Are there groups in the student population? How do you experience these groups? What are characteristics of these groups?

Thus, in the interviews with different members of the school community, both practices and student experiences were addressed; however, the emphasis differed between the structured interviews and the focus group sessions. Through the interviews and focus groups we tried to reconstruct as complete as possible an image of how actors within the school experience and practice dealing with differences.

3.3. Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and interpretatively coded (Miles and Huberman 1994). The data analysis was performed through an iterative process of reading and re-reading of the data, by selecting and coding (data reduction), and by displaying the data in within-case and cross-case matrices (Miles and Huberman 1994). For the coding (in Atlas.ti), we used both 'a priori' and 'in vivo' codes (Bogdan and Biklen 1997). The 'a priori' codes were inspired by our conceptual framework and the 'in vivo' codes were inductive, data-driven codes that arose during analysis, either as a new main code or as a specification of a priori codes in subcodes (see Table 2). The coding and selection of quotes was carried out by the first author. The second and third author provided feedback on the coding and interpretation of the selected quotes.

Table 2. Coding scheme.[4]

Codes	Definition	Subcodes
Type of difference	Statements referring to different categories of differences	Religion Gender Cognitive Cultural background Mother tongue (native Dutch/other) Parents' Socio-Economic Status Socio-emotional development *Hometown*
Evaluation of difference	Statements describing difference as being something positive/negative/irrelevant	Difference_positive (as an asset) Difference_negative (as a problem) *Difference_blind (as irrelevant)*
Source of difference	Statements concerning the context and relation in which difference is understood	*Within School—student/student or teacher/student* *Outside school—local or national*
School policy for dealing with differences	Statements describing school policy and practices related to dealing with differences	Differentiation (early tracking) Diversifying teacher population *Diversity in classroom composition*
Teacher practices for dealing with differences	Statements describing teacher practices related to dealing with differences	Discussing being different in the class Teacher as role model/example Teacher as representing authority Essentializing language Difference understood in a hierarchical way *Difference understood as an individual characteristic* *Difference understood as a relational characteristic*
Goal of practices/policies	Statements describing the goal of practices related to dealing with difference	Interpersonal (as opportunity for students to learn from each other) Intrapersonal (as opportunity to learn for the student who is 'different') Citizenship (as an opportunity for citizenship learning)

The second step of the data analysis consisted of two phases. In the first phase—the within-case analysis—the individual school was taken as our unit of analysis. Transcript fragments with the same codes were grouped and categorized. This resulted in an individual, structured case report for each school, encompassing all of the results of the analysis as well as illustrative interview fragments. The structured case reports described school policy and teacher practices related to dealing with differences as well as the way in which dealing with difference was understood in connection to citizenship education in each school. The structural analogy across the different case reports enabled us to organize the data in a more manageable form, and facilitated comparisons between schools in the second phase. In this phase—the cross-case analysis—we looked for systematic differences, similarities, patterns and processes across the four schools. By comparing the different schools four main themes emerged that were relevant across all four schools: difference as an individual characteristic, the difference between teachers and students, a school internal understanding of difference and a focus on ethnic and cultural diversity in light of citizenship education.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. During data collection, the participants were given information about the procedure of data collection and analysis. We explained why we recorded the interviews as well as what would happen with the data (i.e., recording, transcribing, and publishing). At each data collection occasion, we asked them if they had any questions and reminded them that they were free to withdraw at any given point (which none of the participants did). In the process of data collection and data analysis, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. The interview data were anonymized and the results of this study were reported without compromising the identities of the respondents.

4. Results

Our results show that the way in which most differences were addressed in the schools limited students' citizenship learning opportunities, although schools differed in the extent to which this happened. Four underlying themes emerged from our analysis. First, differences between students were mainly understood in terms of individual characteristics. Second, the differences between teachers and students were rarely understood to be relevant in terms of students' citizenship learning. Third, the characteristics of the school's student population were taken as a reference point for differences. There was little reflection on how being different from others in society outside of the school might be relevant in terms of citizenship learning. Finally, at all schools, ethnic and cultural differences between students were the only differences that were consciously considered as relevant for practicing dealing with differences as part of citizenship learning, yet the understanding of these types of differences was superficial at all schools.

4.1. Differences as Individual Characteristics

Students differed in many ways from each other, for example, in terms of educational level, gender, socio-economic background, and socio-emotional development. These differences were mostly addressed by teachers in an individualized way; educational level, background and so forth were understood as individual characteristics, and in some cases as an obstacle for individual students that teachers could possibly help them overcome.

Regarding differences in educational level, early tracking separated students from the start of their secondary school careers. School 1 was an example of that early separation; students were assigned to different tracks in their first year and thus to different classrooms. Although early tracking is foremost a system feature in the Netherlands, in the first two or three years of secondary school (depending on the tracks), mixing of students is possible. School 1 used to mix students from different tracks, but for several reasons the principal decided to switch to separating students along educational tracks from the very beginning.

Both Schools 2 and 3 served only pre-vocational students. However, these students did differ in other ways, for example, in terms of gender. Gender was an interesting

characteristic at School 2, which is pre-vocational, because the preparation for a specific field provided the basis for different classes, and these fields are very gendered. More specifically, after the first two years of secondary school there was an all-boys class for technical jobs and an all-girls class for care-related jobs. This resulted in limited interaction between these groups. As students were separated along the lines of their different characteristics, interactions and possibilities for learning from each other and directly experiencing a different perspective were limited.

School 4 was an exception; at this school, differences between students was a key theme, was defined in a very broad sense, and was characterized by a relational approach: "Therefore, learning about differences is not only learning about cognitive differences but also about different capabilities, different cultures, gender, ethnicity, religion, language" (principal, School 4). At this school, students across different educational levels shared classrooms as long as possible, tracking was delayed, which is quite uncommon in the Netherlands, and the population itself was mixed in terms of origin, SES, cultural background, gender, and religion. The presence of diverse others was the norm, and classes were explicitly put together in a way that would ensure a diverse population as possible in each classroom in terms of student background and characteristics. Learning to deal with differences was understood to happen automatically when students encountered differences. Besides the diverse classrooms, other conditions for perspective-taking were present. Classroom practices aimed at dealing with differences mostly concerned creating an open climate, for example, by starting and ending each class in a circle to share: "In the circle we are all equal, there is no one to hide behind", as one of the teachers put it. This open climate was used not only for contact, but also to solve conflicts, as one of the mentors explained. Differences in educational level were also sometimes used within the classroom. One of the teachers remarked that it was a wonderful exercise for pre-university level students to explain a subject to a pre-vocational level student, as according to him, "it helps them to really understand the material". As illustrated by this quote, School 4 was the only school in which differences between students were understood as an explicit asset in their relationships.

At the same time, at three (Schools 1, 2 and 4) of the four schools, teachers reflected on the quality of their care for individual students' needs in terms of socio-emotional wellbeing. For example, at School 2 the principal took pride in the school for having a well-developed system of mentors and care coordinators to support individual students in their specific needs related to their socio-emotional development. Additionally, at School 1, the principal described the continual process of trying to figure out the different needs of individual students and how they could best be supported as part of the process of "becoming who you are".

When differences between students are only understood in terms of how best to meet the individual needs that might be associated with those differences, the consequence for the school as a practice ground is that students are not invited to actively practice dealing with differences themselves. They are treated in a way that addresses their individual way of 'being different' but they are rarely invited to deal with differences between themselves and others, and to reflect on the meaning and impact of differing from each other. At all schools a myriad of opportunities to practice dealing with differences, for example through the experience of different perspectives, thus remained underused.

4.2. Different from Your Teacher

Students did not just differ from each other; in general, they also shared few characteristics with their teachers. This was especially true in pre-vocational classrooms, where teachers all completed a higher education program, something the majority of their students probably never will do. Teachers in our sample were also predominantly white. At School 1 (the Waldorf school), however, students and teachers were similar on many counts: in background, in ideology, and in socio-economic status. In general, the teacher population was hardly ever understood as a significant part of the school population

when differences were reflected upon, and consequently the differences between teachers and students were ignored as an opportunity for reflection and citizenship learning for students.

At School 3, however, the analysis showed that diversity in the teacher population was considered important; the ambition was to have a teacher population that reflected the surrounding environment within which the school was located.

> *That is a considered choice [to have a diverse teacher population], also in view of our environment. But now it is no longer a considered choice, it is more the normal state of affairs. Because half of this city, 50-50 obviously, consists of . . . and it would, of course, be idiotic if in a big city in which there are different cultures, and this is true for the Netherlands as a whole, that all your teachers are still native Dutch only.* (team leader, School 3)

However, even at this school, beyond aiming at a diverse teacher population, there was no vision as to what this diversity should lead to, or what practices within the school should contribute to bringing about the desired effect. However, there seemed to be the implicit idea at this school that teachers can act as role models. Additionally, indeed, at all schools, students looked for similarities with their teachers. The teachers who were understood to be part of their in-group were treated differently by students. At School 3, one of the teachers, who wore a headscarf, talked about being confided in by students looking for advice on how to interpret some of the religious laws. At School 4, the building service worker described a similar dynamic as he explained that after students realized that he had a Surinamese background (which was not obvious at first sight), this helped him to interact with many of them in a friendly and interested manner.

Additionally, while similarities between members of the professional community seemed to be an invitation to connect, differences seemed to invite the exact opposite. For example, at School 3, a teacher who differed from most of her students in terms of ethnic background and educational level talked about how shocked she was by the level of mistrust the students had in her intentions, accusing her of "wanting them to fail".

That effect of detecting differences seemed to work both ways. Differences between teachers and students were seldom used as an invitation to collective reflection. For example, one of the civics teachers (School 4) shared his frustration regarding the garbage on the streets after a bike ride through the neighborhood where most students live, and remarked: "Additionally, then one must reach the conclusion that not everyone has the same intrinsic motivation for citizenship as you and I". In terms of citizenship learning, this illustrates the perceived difference in starting point between teacher and student, but it did not invite the teacher to use this observation to reflect on it together with his students: is this about motivation? What do the students think? What could be reason for the trash on the streets? The same teacher talked about having to lower his expectations with some of his students, and learning to accept that when a student has two or more homes the chances are a bit better for things to become lost. This observation resulted in a changed, more tolerant attitude towards students, but did not actively include the students, for example, through a discussion on the broader implications of divorce or the effects of multiple caregivers on children.

In terms of the school as a practice ground, this illustrated the importance of teacher reflexivity on their position in relation to their students as well as to the dominant group. This is a complex skill that most of them probably were not trained for as part as their teacher education. Besides the difference in position within the school, possibly the fact that teachers are representatives of the dominant group plays a role here: they may have unconsciously considered themselves 'the norm' and their students as 'different'. However, teachers' lack of reflection on their position diminished the opportunity for students to learn about the significance of hierarchies of groups in society, as well as about their own relative position and its implication. At the same time, it became clear that the students experienced relationships with their teachers, both positively and negatively, as relevant and as having an influence on their learning to deal with differences.

4.3. Being Different: Within and Outside of the School

Learning to deal with differences is also learning to deal with being different. The student population within the school seemed to serve as the only reference point for difference. We rarely encountered a broader reflection on what being part of the specific population the school serves implies in the context of the broader society.

At School 2, 'the city' was far away, not only geographically. "These students do not move far beyond the tractor", the civics teacher remarked. He was very focused on giving the students pride in their local identity, for example, by sometimes using the local dialect. Other teachers seemed less occupied with the question of identity; they were more concerned with the students obtaining their diplomas and keeping the students in school. Citizenship at this school was understood in a local sense: "Contributing to the local community" and "Making the world around you a bit better" (civics teacher 1, School 2).

The other civics teacher the rural school, School 2, explicitly aimed at making these students' world larger: "They must understand that the world is bigger than their small village" (team leader and civics teacher, School 2). This example illustrates the complexity of finding 'the right way' to deal with the perceived distance between the student population and the dominant group. At this school, two teachers used different approaches: the first civics teacher stimulated local pride, strengthening the sense of community within the school, while the other civics teacher tried to move beyond the local, trying to make the 'normal' a bit less narrow by encouraging students to take a broader perspective.

At School 3, there was the same tendency to using the students' background as a reference point for what is 'normal'. Teachers dealt with the fact that many of their students differed from the dominant group in a similar fashion: they connected this 'being different' to characteristics of the local community. Most of the students had an Islamic background; at this school, that was just "normal". This is illustrated by the fact that the school emptied out during Islamic holidays and teachers did something fun with the few non-Islamic students. Citizenship was also understood in a local way at this school; the national level was explicitly reduced to that of the city where the school was situated: "When we are talking about the Netherlands, we are actually mainly referring to [city]" (school leader, School 3). In terms of the school as a practice ground, this implied that students mostly practiced for the world they already know, a world that is nearby.

School 1, the Waldorf school, illustrated the costs, in terms of citizenship learning opportunities related to dealing with differences, of a school community where ideological characteristics are shared by students and teachers. Despite having a completely different population than the other three schools, it illustrated the presence of the implicit reference category of the dominant group in a different way. Furthermore, what was different about the population at this school was that it did not reflect the diversity of the urban context it was located within, whereas the other three schools mirrored characteristics of the members of the surrounding community. At this school, the perceived connection of the school community to the dominant, white, group was frowned upon. Throughout the professional community frustration was expressed at being reduced to working at a 'white school', a term used in the Netherlands to describe a school that has a predominantly native Dutch population. The association diminished the importance of what they themselves understood to be their shared identity; for them it was the ideology they shared, not their skin color. The consequence of the exclusive character of the school, a relatively homogeneous population, was negatively discussed within the professional community, but there was little reflection on the possible role that the shared ideology could play in maintaining that exclusive character. However, students did consciously experience its 'othering' implications and did experience how the rules worked differently for people 'like them'.

> *Student A: There was this boy (. . .), who has a foreign background, and who is not your stereotypical 'Waldorf' child but, like, he was a student here, and he was such a pain in his class, but when he did something it was regarded as ten times more serious than for someone else. If a real 'Waldorf' child did that, it was judged upon in a very mild way,*

and if he did something like that, the reaction immediately was "If this goes on, you will be suspended". So, actually, I often think that if you are not completely what they want you to be, they may still, well, how shall I put it . . .

Student C: begin to hate you.

Student A: Yes, it may be that this school will start to hate you.

(focus group students, School 1)

The openness of the within-school relations was cherished by teachers, and the distance from the outside world was accepted as part of the ambition to keep the shared ideological roots intact. The effect was comparable to that at Schools 2 and 3; the practice ground for citizenship remained narrow.

Teachers and school leaders at all three of these schools tended to use the characteristics of their student population as a reference point for difference, possibly as a means to make students feel included and connected to the school. What the examples illustrate is that to gain greater insight into how dealing with differences is enacted within schools, an important aspect to consider is the presence and effect of using the within-school student population as a reference point for what is 'normal'. While teachers might have focused on what was shared from the perspective of community, a relatively homogenous environment complicated learning to deal with differences. Despite the positive motivation behind it, this process limits the opportunities of students to practice dealing with differences and dealing with being different. It also limits the scope of their understanding of their relative position in the larger society, a missed opportunity in terms of citizenship learning. At School 4, the mere presence of a diverse student population and the fact that this diversity was understood and used as an asset created a different starting point for a shared norm. Here, diversity was normalized, instead of relative homogeneity.

4.4. Diversity, Not Difference

While principals and teachers ignored many types of difference as opportunities to practice dealing with differences, they all discussed and reflected upon ethnic and cultural differences, usually under the header of 'diversity'. This type of difference was also the only type of difference that was explicitly connected to citizenship education at all schools.

At School 1, the Waldorf school, ethnic and cultural diversity was almost entirely absent within the school population. The principal described the homogenizing effect of attending the school on an already homogenous population: "students seem to get more and more alike during their time here". There was a clear wish for increased diversity, but little reflection on how minority students could be made to feel welcome. To compensate for the lack of this type of diversity a 'World Day' was organized every year, where "people with different cultural backgrounds, for example Surinamese, Hindu and Indonesian" were invited to talk about 'their culture'. In terms of the school as a practice ground one might say that this confirms 'other' cultures as being far removed from the daily lives of students, and exoticized them rather than creating opportunities to practice taking a different perspective.

Citizenship education at this school was focused on 'becoming who you are'; supporting self-expression was the main goal, in this context. Meanwhile, "unworldly", disconnected to the reality of the 'real world', was what some students in the school called themselves:

However, I do feel that there are few people from different backgrounds at our school, and people thus more easily shy away from other cultures and such. And that is not a good thing, in my opinion, because the whole world is a mix, like, and it is also good to get to know other cultures and not be afraid of them. (. . .) And later you are simply in the real world and there will be other cultures all around you and I do feel that you should learn about this, like, earlier. (student, School 1)

While some students qualified their being 'unworldly' as somewhat problematic, they did not consider it their school's task to help them become more worldly. The principal

realized that this inward look did contribute to the strong sense of community in the school. However, at the same time, it limited students' exposure to the outside world, which is different not only in its greater diversity, but also, for example, in having stricter rules.

At School 2, the rural school, ethnic and cultural diversity were also almost entirely absent within the school population, but the principal, who also taught civics, stressed that this type of diversity was nevertheless an important theme in the school, because students were often very stigmatizing when they talked about immigrants. The principal struggled with creating an awareness that the world is larger than the small villages the students come from, and also felt that the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity within the school was a limiting factor in terms of citizenship education. During his civics classes, he used the significance of the local community to help students reflect on the experience of refugees, by discussing what had happened in the area during World War II, when many of the ancestors of the students had to flee themselves. Even though the school population provided little opportunity to practice dealing with ethnic and cultural diversity, this was an attempt to at least nurture compassion and perspective-taking in light of encountering differences.

The two schools with a population that was not predominantly native Dutch dealt with this fact in very different ways. At School 4, ethnic and cultural diversity was celebrated, as an important cornerstone of the school's identity. Diversity was mostly approached as an opportunity to learn from each other, and the school's responsibility to be an emancipating institution was emphasized. However, at this school, teachers also categorized students by their ethnic or cultural background: "All the Surinamese kids . . . ", "These kids have music in them, they are so different from the Turkish and Moroccan kids . . . ". This way of speaking could reinforce essentialist notions of cultural identity and influenced what students learnt about being ethnically and culturally different from the native Dutch population. Students themselves said they appreciated the fact that their school was so diverse, because other kids could teach you about "their culture, for example what they eat", reflecting a superficial understanding of the implications of ethnic and cultural differences.

The student population at School 3 was rather homogeneous non-native Dutch, mainly of Moroccan and Turkish descent, and the great majority of students shared an Islamic background. In terms of the school as a practice ground for citizenship, there was a strong focus on adaptation and rule obedience; for example, speaking any other language than Dutch was strictly forbidden, even in the hallways. The fact that the majority of the students in this school belonged to a minority in society, ethnically different from the dominant group, was not reflected upon or used. One of the teachers noted that students from a minority group within the school, such as those with a Hindu or atheist background, were sometimes hesitant when she asked them to speak their mind on what they believe: "They are afraid the others will find them strange" (civics teacher, School 3).

Schools 3 and 4 illustrate that the mere presence of an ethnically diverse or minoritized student population did not automatically result in more nuanced reflection on what being different implies or what being part of a minority implies. However, at the two other schools with a more homogeneous native Dutch population, the assumption did seem to be that a more ethnically diverse population would lead to more nuanced reflection.

To conclude, at all schools, despite their differences in population, the understanding of ethnic and cultural differences, usually labelled as 'diversity', was quite superficial, mentioning only surface elements. This superficial understanding was visible in the schools' practices and student experiences. This was the case even at schools that had ethnically and culturally diverse populations. In terms of the school as a practice ground, despite the importance attached to this type of difference, students seemed to learn little about its complex implications.

5. Discussion

This study explored how the practice of dealing with differences is enacted in schools as practice grounds for citizenship. Our main finding is that the reflection on the enactment

of dealing with differences was limited in scope and depth within the schools that were studied. However, schools did differ in the extent to which and the way this happened. The differences between schools were related to four underlying themes.

The first theme specifically concerns the individual, instead of relational, understanding of difference. Differences between students were mainly understood in terms of individual characteristics. Differences were addressed in a way that focused on improving students' individual learning trajectories instead of being seen as an opportunity to practice dealing with differences in relation with other students. This is in line with what other authors have pointed out concerning citizenship education in general, where a lack of 'good citizenship' has also been framed in individual terms, as an individual characteristic and problem to be solved through education instead of as a contextualized and relational practice (Biesta and Lawy 2006).

The second theme was the lack of reflection on the difference between students and teachers and, as a consequence, the missed opportunities to practice with dealing with these differences. Our study illustrated that the enactment of dealing with differences that supports citizenship learning opportunities for students asks for specific competencies of teachers. Teachers at all four schools showed little reflexivity on their own positionality as (predominantly) members of the white, native Dutch majority (Martin and Van Gunten 2002). As such, they did not make use of the opportunities to address the societal implications of differences and model possible alternatives and as such contribute to the citizenship learning of their students. Furthermore, while the few minority teachers showed interest in their role as possible role models, other teachers reflected hardly at all on their position as representing authority outside of their classrooms (Flanagan 2003). Other research confirms that there is work to be done in this realm in terms of teacher training. To promote a more relational and contextualized understanding of difference in particular, Goodman (2011) proposes that the only way to do justice to difference is to move beyond 'accepting, appreciating and understanding cultural differences' (p. 3) and to seek social justice by addressing issues of 'privilege and power'(p. 4). To do this, teachers must be taught to reflect on their own position of power as a starting point to help their students in this complex process (Paul-Binyamin and Haj-Yehia 2019). Additionally, a more inclusive approach to relevant differences instead of the narrow focus on ethnic and cultural difference could also contribute to better practices, as advantage and disadvantage, power and privilege, are at play in the context of many differences (e.g., differences in gender, ability, age and sexual identity; Knowles and Clark 2018).

Thirdly, defining difference was primarily done using the characteristics of the school's student population as a reference point. The broader societal context was hardly understood as a reference point for difference. As such, there was little reflection on how being different from others in society outside of the school might be relevant in terms of citizenship learning. The inward focus on the school and the corresponding sense of school community were (unconsciously) prioritized over the introduction of the outside world and its complex relation with difference (Sincer 2021). As such, citizenship learning was primarily focused on a world that students already knew, a world nearby. It is clear that doing justice to diversity while supporting a sense of unity is a complicated task. As a solution, Shields (2000) proposed the notion of schools as 'communities of difference', in which both a sense of (school) community and the value of diversity are combined. This is an approach to community where what is shared is built upon reflection on how best to deal with differences, in all their nuances, within the school. This can be understood as an invitation to move beyond the narrow focus on ethnic and cultural differences and to embrace a broader understanding of relevant differences, including but not limited to educational level, gender identity, religious background, socio-economic status and socio-emotional development as possible differences that are relevant in students' daily lives in the larger society. In terms of the school as a practice ground for citizenship, this approach could enable an enactment of dealing with differences that supports a much

broader array of citizenship learning opportunities than we encountered in the schools that were part of this study.

Finally, our analysis shows that 'ethnicity and/or culture as difference' is understood as the most pressing difference within schools in the context of citizenship education. This was especially true in the schools that lacked this type of difference within the student population. Despite the relevance attached to it for all schools, differences within this category were treated in a superficial way, for example, with a focus on tangible differences such as food preference or music, and essentializing language was often used to describe these differences. This limited nuanced reflection on the meaning and implications of ethnic and cultural diversity, and the way differences in this category interact with other differences. The presence of diverse others within the school community in this category was not sufficient to avoid these pitfalls, although within schools that lacked this type of difference that seemed to be the idea: their population not their practices limited the opportunity to learn to deal with ethnic and cultural diversity (Zirkel and Cantor 2004). This seems to hold true not only for citizenship education, but within the discourse on citizenship in general (Bauböck and Rundell 1998; Bloemraad et al. 2008), which is not surprising as citizenship education and citizenship learning are connected to broader societal understandings of citizenship (e.g., Banks and Diem 2008). Here, we also recognize the tension between a desire for unity and the reality of diversity. The focus on 'a shared culture', defined along the lines of the culture of the mainstream or dominant groups in society, as the cornerstone of how citizenship in general is understood is an illustration of the first aspect (Alba and Duyvendak 2019). Meanwhile, the multicultural or even 'super-diverse' character of most Western nations has become a given. The dual forces of a narrow understanding of citizenship in general and the desire by an increasingly diverse population to feel included and acknowledged as citizens, create a complex playing field for educators in the realm of citizenship education; they are expected to prepare their students for a world in which both these forces are present. As Ben-Porath (2012) described it using her framework of 'citizenship as shared fate':

> *Schools in democratic societies are charged with responding to the multiplicity of affiliations, preferences, ideologies, languages, values, and memberships. They are expected to celebrate the diversity of the student body, but also to minimize it by developing civic capacity and a host of shared dimensions, including language(s), civic knowledge, academic competency, and patriotic sentiments.* (p. 328)

The response from the perspective of citizenship education to this increasingly pluriform context differs. Some authors have proposed a more global approach to citizenship education (e.g., Veugelers 2011), one that focuses on shared human rights (e.g., Alderson 2016) or one that specifically centers on cultural rights (e.g., Banks 2004). What these approaches share is a critique of the lack of reflection on hierarchy and power between different groups in society in the context of citizenship and citizenship education, a relevant critique in light of the results of this study.

6. Conclusions

Learning to deal with differences is one of the main themes in the context of schools as practice grounds for citizenship. Despite limitations such as early tracking and school segregation, schools can make use of a broad array of opportunities for students to learn from, through and about differences, their implications and different ways to deal with them. In sum, this study showed that the way dealing with differences was enacted limited the citizenship learning opportunities of students. A broader understanding of relevant differences in schools, reflection on the fact that difference is inherently relational, as it is a characteristic of a relationship, as well as more reflection on the societal hierarchy related to differences by teachers would all contribute to increasing the quantity and quality of these opportunities.

Practicing dealing with differences can be a conscious as well as an unconscious process. In this study, we have primarily relied on interviews to gain insight into how dealing

with differences was enacted. This method allowed us to compare four different schools. However, to gain insight into the subtler processes by which dealing with differences is modeled by teachers, for example, an ethnographic approach might be a more appropriate method. Furthermore, schools are not islands; dealing with differences is also practiced by teachers and students outside of the school and their practices and understandings are thereby also influenced by peers, the media, and the community of which they are a part. In this study, we focused exclusively on the school. For future research, it would be interesting to find out how students perceive the weight of the school's influence in comparison to the influence of their peers, family, and media. Finally, we touched upon similar topics in all interviews. However, in some interviews we spoke more elaborately about some of the topics than in others. This was especially true for the focus group sessions with the students, in which some topics were difficult to discuss in some of the groups, and probing did not always result in a deeper conversation. In scientific research, more insight is needed into (different groups of) students' experiences with how differences are dealt with within their schools, in order to understand the effect of different approaches. Another important question for future studies is how different ways of dealing with differences affect civic and democratic attitudes and behaviors of students outside the classroom.

The results of this study underline the importance of teacher competencies for dealing with differences in the context of schools as practice grounds for citizenship, and serve as an invitation to teacher educators to reflect on what practices will best serve the development of these competencies. This starts with the affirmation that how dealing with differences is enacted by teachers matters for the content and quality of the citizenship learning opportunities of their students. Further research on effective teacher training in this domain is necessary, especially because what is effective might differ for different teachers and different (groups of) students, as well as within different national contexts (Leeman and Reid 2006; Wubbels et al. 2006; Seeberg 2003). Furthermore, for future research, it would be interesting to see if the notion of 'schools as communities of difference' in practice, if embraced by the professional community at a school, indeed contributes to a greater scope and depth of citizenship learning opportunities for students in the realm of dealing with differences. This interpretation of community might provide a crucial starting point to address the tension present within citizenship, and citizenship education, between craving unity and addressing diversity in a socially just way.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to the fact that at our faculty during the period of data collection (in 2016) obtaining approval from an ethical review board was not yet common practice. In the Netherlands only in 2018 a general and shared 'Code of Ethics for Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences involving Human Participants' was published and signed by the deans of all Dutch Social Sciences faculties. We have however adhered to common ethical guidelines such as consent of participants, the possibility to withdraw at any moment and entirely voluntary participation.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from the subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

1. As stated in the 'Decree Key Aims of Secondary Education' 7 June 2006 by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (nr. WJZ/2006/4655 (3805). Available online: https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0019945/2012-12-01 (accessed on 20 February 2021).
2. The percentage of native Dutch students is based on an estimation by school principals.
3. After completing primary school (age 11/12), students are placed in one of the three tracks within the Dutch school system: pre-vocational education (vmbo), general secondary education (havo) and pre-university education (vwo). Pre-vocational schools have job-oriented tracks (vmbo-b/k) and theory-oriented tracks (vmbo-tl).
4. The 'in vivo' codes and subcodes are in *italics*.

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Article

Towards a Comprehensive School Effectiveness Model of Citizenship Education: An Empirical Analysis of Secondary Schools in The Netherlands

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Abstract: We still have only a limited understanding of the effectiveness of schools in promoting citizenship, the factors explaining this effectiveness and the way in which these aspects interact. Using elaborate cross-sectional data from students, teachers, team leaders and school leaders at 78 Dutch secondary schools, this study empirically examines a school effectiveness model of citizenship education in order to achieve a more comprehensive explanation of citizenship competence acquisition. Using multilevel structural equation models, we analyze direct and indirect school-level predictors of student knowledge, attitudes and self-evaluated skills regarding citizenship. Four aspects of citizenship education are examined: the school's policies regarding citizenship education, its teaching practices, and its professional and pedagogical learning environment (i.e., teaching community and classroom climate). With respect to school policies, positive effects are found for the attention paid to citizenship education in staff meetings. The professional learning environment is related to students' citizenship competences mainly indirectly, via the average classroom climate. Effects of teaching practices vary: more emphasis on monitoring is more frequently found at schools with lower average levels of citizenship competences, whereas schools that let students choose their own topics in class have on average higher levels of citizenship competences.

Keywords: citizenship education; citizenship competences; educational effectiveness; school policies; learning environment; classroom climate; teaching practices

1. Introduction

In many Western countries, the last two decades have witnessed an upsurge in the debate about the social outcomes of education. Social outcomes include social returns, social cohesion and social capital, and social and societal competences (Dijkstra et al. 2014a). The latter, which are often referred to as citizenship competences, comprise a range of attitudes, skills and knowledge related to democratic conduct, socially responsible behavior and the ability to handle differences and conflicts (Ten Dam et al. 2011; Ten Dam and Volman 2007; Westheimer and Kahne 2004). In many countries, politicians and society at large are increasingly paying attention to citizenship and how schools can contribute to it (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2017). This development was inspired by the increasing diversification of society, declining social cohesion and the need to strengthen the foundations of the democratic society (Foa and Mounk 2016; Fukuyama 2014; Mounk, Yascha 2017. The People vs. Democracy).

It is unclear how schools contribute to the promotion of citizenship competences and what produces effective citizenship competences. Several recent large-scale studies (e.g., CELS, ICCS and COOL12-18)

suggest, however, that what schools do does matter. Various smaller datasets have also contributed to our slowly growing understanding of the relationship between education and the acquisition of citizenship competences by students (e.g., Amnå 2012; Dijkstra et al. 2015; Geboers et al. 2013; Isac et al. 2014; Keating and Janmaat 2016), an important observation being the substantial differences in citizenship outcomes between students from different social backgrounds and between academic and vocational tracks (Munniksma et al. 2017; Schulz et al. 2018).

While these studies have provided valuable insights into predictors of young people's citizenship competences, these mainly concern classroom characteristics (such as an open classroom climate) and characteristics of the school's context (such as the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of its student population). Less is known about the potential contribution of more general effectiveness-enhancing factors that are known from the extensive tradition of school effectiveness research in the social domain (e.g., Hattie 2009; Reynolds et al. 2014), such as a school's educational policies, the organization of education, the professional learning environment and the interactions between these and other previously examined aspects of citizenship education.

Several scholars have argued for a comprehensive school effectiveness model of citizenship education that combines all potential aspects of citizenship education (cf. Dijkstra et al. 2014a; Maslowski et al. 2009; Reichert and Print 2018; Sampermans et al. 2018) and includes relevant general factors from the school effectiveness research into cognitive (and to some extent, non-cognitive) outcomes. Despite earlier attempts, however, to formulate such a model, so far little effort has gone into the empirical testing of a school effectiveness model of citizenship education. Those studies that did succeed in analyzing conceptual frameworks of citizenship education effectiveness have been either exploratory (Scheerens 2011) or cover potential relevant school factors, such as the school policy level and professional learning environment, to some extent only (Isac et al. 2014).

In a critical analysis of current approaches to modelling educational effectiveness, Creemers and Kyriakides (2006) tend to agree on the need for more encompassing models, arguing that a dynamic model of educational effectiveness should at least be specific about the dimensions on which the measurement of school effectiveness is based, and should define the relations among these dimensions. Recent studies support this argument. Whereas direct effects of factors at the school level are often small, as is consistently shown for a wide range of school outcomes, including citizenship outcomes (Dijkstra et al. 2015; Isac et al. 2014), indirect effects seem to be more substantial, for instance through their influence on classroom-level factors such as the teaching practice (cf. Creemers and Kyriakides 2010; Kyriakides et al. 2010).

To sum up, although we are slowly obtaining a better understanding of factors that contribute to the acquisition of citizenship competences, the range of variables that have been investigated is still modest and comprehensive model estimations are largely absent. Moreover, few datasets with information on citizenship education contain broad and sufficiently elaborated sets of variables to empirically examine this type of model, including multiple levels, dimensions and both direct and indirect effects. Consequently, we only have a limited understanding of the effectiveness of schools in promoting citizenship competences. Building upon previously constructed theoretical models of school characteristics underlying social outcomes and citizenship competences in particular (Dijkstra et al. 2014a; Isac et al. 2014; Maslowski et al. 2009), the current study, therefore, focuses on estimating a comprehensive school effectiveness model of citizenship education. To this end, we used large-scale omnibus-like data on a broad range of aspects of citizenship education collected in 2016 at Dutch secondary schools.

In doing so, we are able to test a framework combining previously tested aspects of citizenship education—more specifically, a school's teaching practices and average classroom climate—with aspects that have less often been empirically examined with regard to citizenship education, i.e., a school's educational policies and its professional learning environment, while controlling for relevant student and school characteristics. Using multilevel structural equation models, we analyzed direct and indirect predictors of students' citizenship knowledge, attitudes and self-evaluated skills. Following these

lines, we strive to provide a better understanding of school characteristics that contribute to citizenship outcomes.

As in many other countries, Dutch schools have an obligation to improve "active citizenship and social integration" as is stipulated in legislation since 2005 (Dijkstra et al. 2014b). Schools are free, however, to organize citizenship education according to their own ideas, as long as they respect the basic values of democracy. What content they teach, how much attention they pay to promoting citizenship, and how they meet their citizenship goals (e.g., as part of other subjects, through projects, teaching it as a separate subject, etc.) is up to each school individually. Schools are also free to choose if and how to assess whether students have met their citizenship goals. As a result, schools differ greatly with respect to content, organization, and the quality of citizenship education, and most schools do not measure the effects of their teaching (Inspectorate of Education 2016). Promotion of citizenship competences might be found in curriculum elements, the school's climate and/or aspects of its pedagogical approach, but it is often unclear whether and how various activities are related. Schools also differ in the outcomes of their citizenship education. Compared to other countries, outcome differences between schools are relatively large, including differences between schools offering vocational and academic tracks (Munniksma et al. 2017; Schulz et al. 2018). As a result of the high level of school autonomy and extensive differences between schools, the Dutch case is well suited to answer the research question of the current study.

2. Theoretical Framework

The school effectiveness model of school quality and social outcomes constructed by Dijkstra and colleagues (Dijkstra et al. 2014a) builds on assumptions taken from general effective school models (e.g., Creemers and Kyriakides 2007; Reynolds et al. 2014; Scheerens 2016). For the purpose of this study, we specifically focused on the acquisition of civic or citizenship competences as social outcome, which, as mentioned earlier, refer to a range of attitudes, self-evaluated skills (also referred to as self-efficacy) and knowledge related to democratic conduct, socially responsible behavior and the ability to handle differences and conflicts (Ten Dam et al. 2011; Westheimer and Kahne 2004). According to Dijkstra and colleagues (Dijkstra et al. 2014a), the social quality of a school concerns all aspects of quality contributing to the acquisition of social competences by students, including a focused approach (e.g., clear goals and coordination), school ethos (e.g., the alignment of shared values, teacher behavior and expectations), classroom climate, and content (both the formal curriculum and opportunities to practice). At the school level, a democratic learning environment (e.g., teachers' participation and values in favor of learning) and democratic classroom climate (as visible in teacher–student and student–student interaction) are seen as substantial indicators of the quality of instruction. Additionally, the opportunity to learn about and practice democracy at school is considered an important element of effective citizenship education (cf. Dijkstra et al. 2014a; Isac et al. 2014; Maslowski et al. 2009; Scheerens 2011).

In the present study, we distinguish between four main types of school aspects related to citizenship education: (1) the school's citizenship education approach and policies as manifested in the citizenship vision and the organization of citizenship education; (2) the quality of the (professional) learning environment, focusing on teacher behaviors, expectations and school leadership; (3) citizenship-related teaching practices and opportunities to practice; and (4) the pedagogical learning environment, including students' perception of the classroom climate.

The school's citizenship education policies. Educational effectiveness researchers consider school policies as one of the main indicators of the extent to which a school pays attention to a specific topic and hence the level of educational effectiveness (for an overview, see Creemers and Kyriakides 2010; Kyriakides et al. 2010). Examples of school policies are the school's educational vision, the formulated guidelines, and the resources spent on the organization. School policies are believed to impact student outcomes both directly and indirectly, most importantly by providing guidelines and offering support to teachers and other stakeholders for the implementation of the policies in teaching practices

and the learning environment. In a meta-analysis of studies on the dynamic model of educational effectiveness, Kyriakides et al. (2010) indeed found that effective schools were able to develop policies and take concrete action in order to improve their teaching practice and learning environment. In addition, educational effectiveness research emphasize the importance of school policies that support the improvement of these factors, such as resources for the professionalization of subject teachers (Hopkins and Reynolds 2001).

The above can be expected to apply to citizenship education too. Although research on this particular aspect of school is limited, a previous study found that students at schools that had formulated clear visions on citizenship education were more positive about their citizenship skills and also reflected on citizenship themes more often. Reflection on citizenship themes was also more frequent among students from schools that emphasized the learning of social skills. No effects were, however, visible for citizenship knowledge or citizenship attitudes (Dijkstra et al. 2015). In view of relatively modest school effects on citizenship competences as shown by earlier studies (Isac et al. 2014; Schulz et al. 2018), we expect that the effects of school policies on citizenship education will be mainly indirect, by way of their impact on other processes such as the teaching practice and classroom climate. To examine this, we include in our model both school policy-related aspects (the importance attached to citizenship themes) and organizational aspects (the attention paid to citizenship education in staff meetings and the resources available for the organization of citizenship education).

Professional learning environment. The school environment intermediates between the inputs and outputs of a school by functioning as a social system (Hofman et al. 1999). Another important aspect of the school context promoting educational effectiveness is, therefore, the extent to which a positive learning environment has been created at the school (Creemers and Kyriakides 2010; Kyriakides et al. 2010). A distinction is often made between the professional and pedagogical learning environment. The former focuses on the 'professional' community of the school, such as (the relationships between) its teachers and the school's educational or administrative leadership. Various authors on citizenship education have emphasized the importance of a cohesive teacher community, with a strong sense of belonging, a shared vision, common values and practices, and committed to reconciliate potential conflicts (Dijkstra et al. 2014a; Isac et al. 2014; Maslowski et al. 2009; Scheerens 2011). Dijkstra and colleagues (Dijkstra et al. 2014a) use the term school ethos for this, referring to teacher behaviors and expectations towards each other, other staff members, as well as towards their students.

A meta-analysis of the impact of school factors on student achievement found that school leadership did not influence student outcomes directly, or only in a minor way. The authors suggest to focus instead on the impact of the 'end result' of school leadership, such as the development of teaching policy (Kyriakides et al. 2010). Important in this respect is paying attention to, for example, the conditional aspects of effective teaching through the formulation of specific citizenship learning goals or providing sufficient time for citizenship teaching. The same can be expected for the expectations of teachers towards each other, and towards their students. Not only do teachers serve as important role models towards their students—especially when it comes to the development of citizenship skill—their expectations and interactions also contribute to a positive classroom climate and the social safety that is required to establish a culture fostering professionalization and growth. Willemse and colleagues (Willemse et al. 2015), for example, found that collaborating and exchanging ideas among colleagues strengthened the relevance attached to citizenship education and its (implicit) presence in teaching practices. In addition to school policies on citizenship education as described above, the model, therefore, includes three elements of the professional learning environment: teachers' experienced support from the school leadership, their interactions with each other, and their expectations of their students.

Citizenship teaching. A third aspect argued to be crucial for educational effectiveness is the quality of the educational content or teaching and learning practices (Creemers and Kyriakides 2010; Hattie 2009; Kyriakides et al. 2010). Teaching and learning practices include, for example, the pedagogical behavior and teaching methods of teachers, their opinions about education, curriculum content, the opportunities

offered for participation in extracurricular activities, and the assessment or monitoring of that what is taught. These practices can also be expected to be important in the domain of citizenship. Opinions differ, however, on the relative impact of citizenship teaching practices. Whereas some authors claim that formal citizenship education through classroom instruction—mainly aimed at stimulating citizenship knowledge—plays an important role, others argue that this type of citizenship education is not enough to promote active, democratic citizenship (Maurissen 2018).

Many studies on citizenship education stress the importance of the *type* of teaching or learning strategy, highlighting the role of experience-based, active learning strategies (Schuitema et al. 2007; Veugelers 2009). Examples are student participation in school policies, simulations of democratic processes or roleplaying, service-learning and extracurricular activities. Results involving the effects of service-learning and extracurricular activities are, however, mixed (Geboers et al. 2013; Hoskins et al. 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016). According to recent studies, these mixed results can be explained by the extent of attention paid to in-depth reflection during these activities, and when discussing citizenship-related themes in general. (Knowles et al. 2018; Reichert and Print 2018; Schuitema et al. 2017; Van Goethem et al. 2014). Other classroom practices seen as affecting citizenship competences are those that focus on students sense of ownership and decision-making powers, for example by creating opportunities for them to give their opinion on curriculum content (Bron 2018; Torney-Purta et al. 2008). Finally, the assessment of student outcomes with regard to citizenship education has been argued to matter (Keating et al. 2010).

To be able to provide more insight on the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices and their relation to other aspects of citizenship education, as well as to different citizenship outcomes, we look at a wide variety of practices, ranging from the citizenship themes addressed in class, opportunities for students to choose their own preferred themes in class and role playing in class, to the monitoring of students' citizenship competences, extracurricular activities and outside school projects.

Classroom climate. The characteristics of the pedagogical learning environment—or more specifically, the classroom climate—is one of the most frequently studied aspects of citizenship education. Research on citizenship education has shown that an open climate in the classroom is one of the most consistent predictors of students' citizenship competences (Geboers et al. 2013; Maurissen 2018). An open classroom climate is one where students experience their classrooms as safe places to investigate social and political issues and to explore and (respectfully) discuss their opinions and those of their peers (cf. Torney-Purta et al. 2001). Such a climate was found to be a necessary requirement for citizenship education to be effective (Knowles et al. 2018; Maurissen 2018). In addition to an open discussion climate, other aspects that have been argued to be positively related to citizenship outcomes are supportive interpersonal relationships, both among students and between students and teachers (Sampermans et al. 2018; Wanders et al. 2019), and strong feelings of school belongingness (Isac et al. 2014; Maslowski et al. 2009; Scheerens 2011). The relevance of a positive classroom climate is thus related to both a safe atmosphere as a condition for learning (cf. Hattie 2009) and a setting in which people are encouraged to form opinions (cf. Geboers et al. 2013; Isac et al. 2014). We examine this by including students' experiences of the room for discussion, their view on the support from teachers, and their feelings of belongingness at school.

Research Question and Hypotheses

The goal of the current study is to give a general impression of the factors contributing to the promotion of citizenship competences by schools. To this end, we will provide a rigorous empirical test of a comprehensive school effectiveness model of citizenship education based on a broad estimation of potentially relevant school effects of factors that seem specifically relevant to the acquisition of citizenship competences, more general quality aspects that may be expected to have an indirect influence and the interplay between the pertinent variables. The research question is as follows: What school characteristics contribute either directly or indirectly to an explanation of differences in students' citizenship competences?

Based on the above overview of the available knowledge, we formulated the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Students' citizenship competences are positively related to how much attention is paid to citizenship education in the school's policies, both (H1a) directly and indirectly* via *the school's teaching practices (H1b) and* via *the classroom climate as experienced by the students (H1c).*

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Students' citizenship competences are positively related to the professional learning environment of the school, both directly (H2a) and indirectly via the teaching practices (H2b) and the classroom climate as experienced by the students (H2c).*

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Students' citizenship competences are positively related to the teaching practices of the school, both directly (H3a) and indirectly via the classroom climate as experienced by the students (H3b).*

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Students' citizenship competences are positively related to the classroom climate as experienced by the students.*

3. Methodology

Data. The model was tested using data from 78 Dutch secondary schools, 54 of which were part of a sample that was randomly drawn from a list of the full population of secondary schools that have third-grade classes. A stratified random sample of 100 schools was drawn, with a distinction being made between three school tracks: vocational, general, and mixed. For each school, two replacement schools were selected in the event that a school from the first or second sample did not want to participate. A total of 54 schools from this sample participated. In addition, 24 schools were approached via existing contacts to ensure a large enough sample size and sufficient power for the model estimations. The resulting sample proved to be representative of the Dutch secondary school population with respect to the distribution of school track, geographical location, sector (public, private-religious and private non-religious), level of urbanization of the school's location and school size.

At each school, digital questionnaires were completed by a school leader, a team leader, 15 third-grade teachers (including the mentors of the participating students) and all students in 3 third grades. During the survey, trained test leaders were present to guide the process and answer questions. Students filled out two questionnaires. The first contained questions on their background, societal trust, classroom climate, and citizenship activities at school. In the second questionnaire, students' citizenship competences were tested. Within each classroom, 14 different versions were distributed. The analyses in this paper are based on the questionnaires of 5172 students, 643 teachers, 62 team leaders and 49 school leaders in 78 schools. An overview of the main characteristics of the four respondent groups can be found in Appendix A.

Dependent Variables. Citizenship competences of students were measured using the Citizenship Competences Questionnaire (CCQ; for an extensive description, including information on its construct validity, see Ten Dam et al. 2011; for an analysis of social desirability bias, see Ten Dam et al. 2013). The CCQ distinguishes between four social tasks that are considered to be representative of citizenship practices among young people aged between 11 and 16 years: acting in a democratic manner, acting in a socially responsible manner, dealing with conflicts and dealing with differences (see Appendix B for the conceptual framework and a description of the content of the scales). The CCQ provides information on the knowledge, attitudes, and self-evaluated skills relating to these four social tasks.

As part of the present study, a new comprehensive test was developed to measure students' citizenship knowledge (for a description, see (Ten Dam et al.). This test was also based on the four social tasks. The knowledge test was comprised of multiple-choice questions with three response options. Students were asked, for example, when a country could be called undemocratic. The answer categories were (a) if political parties criticize each other, (b) if people have to pay high taxes, and (c) if people are not allowed to criticize the government. The students had to choose what they considered

the best option. Correct answers were coded as 1. After item analysis, a reliable IRT scale (thetas) was constructed based on 163 items (accuracy of measurement Macc well over 0.90)[1].

Citizenship attitudes and (self-evaluated) citizenship skills were measured with 4-point Likert scales. To measure attitudes, pupils were asked to what extent various statements applied to them (e.g., 'People should listen to each other, even if they have different opinions'). The answer categories ranged from (a) not applicable at all to (d) very applicable. To measure skills, pupils were asked how well they could do certain things such as defending their opinions in a discussion. The answer categories ranged from not good at all (a) to very good (d). The reliability of both scales was high, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.90 for attitudes (24 items) and 0.86 for skills (15 items).

Independent Variables. If multiple items were available to create citizenship education constructs, exploratory and confirmatory multilevel factor analyses were performed to examine patterns among the pertinent items and construct factor scores. The model fit indices of the constructed scales can be found in Table 1 below. A more extensive description of the items, response categories and factor loadings can be found in Appendix C. The various constructs are briefly described below.

School policies on citizenship education were measured by using information from principals. The school's citizenship vision was operationalized as the importance attached to various citizenship education themes (e.g., learning about other cultures and learning about democracy), ranging from very unimportant (1) to very important (5). The organization around citizenship education comprised items querying, for example, whether a school regularly addressed citizenship education in staff meetings, whether a continuous learning line existed and whether arrangements were made for the organization of citizenship education. The answers could range from not applicable at all (1) to very applicable (5). The attention paid to citizenship in meetings was measured for seven types of meetings, with answer categories ranging from (almost) never (1) to (almost) always (5).

The professional learning environment was operationalized as the extent to which teachers: (i) felt supported by school leadership (e.g., by taking their opinions seriously); (ii) agreed on how to treat each other, their students and their work; and (iii) trusted (the competence of) their students. The answer range was totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5).

Teaching practices related to citizenship teaching were measured using information from team leaders and teachers. In the case of the teachers, the school-level means were calculated[2]. Teacher-based factor scales comprised (i) the amount of attention paid to citizenship themes in class, such as learning about other cultures and about democracy, with answer options ranging from no attention (1) to daily attention (5); and (ii) the extent to which teachers actively monitored their students' citizenship development, with answers ranging from not applicable at all (1) to very applicable (5). Furthermore, three one-item constructs were used, measuring the extent to which teachers let students: (iii) choose the topics discussed in class; (iv) take part in roleplaying; and (v) work on projects for which they have to collect information outside the school (e.g., neighborhood interviews and small-scale research). Answer categories for these items ranged from almost never (1) to almost always (5). In addition, one one-item construct was submitted to team leaders to measure whether extracurricular citizenship activities were organized, with possible answers being no (0) and yes (1).

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[1]   The test consisted of 163 items, distributed over 14 versions with 21 of the items occurring in all versions. 77 items covered acting democratically, 23 on acting in a socially responsible manner, 23 dealing with conflicts and 39 dealing with differences.

[2]   Teacher means were only calculated if a minimum of 5 teachers had responded.

Table 1. Model fit estimates of citizenship education factor scales.

Factor	Chi2	df	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Valid *N*
School level (*N* = 78)							
School policies on citizenship							
Vision CE themes	7.557	5	0.182	0.961	0.102	0.057	49
CE organization	2.116	4	0.714	1.000	0.000	0.016	48
CE meetings	10.948	14	0.690	1.000	0.000	0.038	48
Professional environment							
Support school leadership	8.446	5	0.133	0.985	0.100	0.026	69
Agreement teachers	7.534	5	0.184	0.987	0.086	0.026	69
Teacher trust in students	5.939	5	0.312	0.992	0.052	0.036	69
Teaching practices							
CE themes in lessons	27.459	5	0.000	0.810	0.255	0.060	69
Monitoring citizenship	2.891	2	0.236	0.995	0.080	0.020	69
Student level (N = 5172)							
Experienced classroom climate [1]							
Open discussion climate	108.417	10	0.000	0.982	0.044	0.024 | 0.033	5170
Teacher support	27.296	4	0.000	0.994	0.982	0.011 | 0.038	5171
School belonging	41.039	18	0.002	0.995	0.016	0.015 | 0.033	5164

Note: [1] based on multilevel factor analyses, SRMR values are depicted for within | between.

The perceived classroom climate was operationalized as individual-level and school-level means[3] of student experiences with respect to (i) an open classroom climate when discussing societal or political topics, with answers ranging from almost never (1) to almost always (5); (ii) teacher support (e.g., 'My teachers take the time to talk about what is important for me'), with answers from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5); (iii) a sense of school belonging (e.g., 'I feel part of this school'), with answer options totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5).

Control Variables. Previous studies have shown that students of various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds vary in their citizenship competences, have unequal access to various aspects of citizenship education and that the effects of citizenship education also vary in these groups (Geboers et al. 2014; Hoskins et al. 2017; Isac et al. 2014; Janmaat et al. 2014; Knowles et al. 2018; Neundorf et al. 2016; Reichert and Print 2018).

Furthermore, classroom composition in terms of the students' social background also impacts citizenship outcomes (e.g., Deimel et al. 2019; Isac et al. 2011, 2014). We, therefore, controlled for the students' socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic background, both at the individual level (i.e., variation between students) and at the school level (i.e., variation between schools in terms of student composition). Student SES was indicated by the average number of books at home. Further, the students' level of education, distinguishing between senior general and pre-university education (HAVO/VWO) and pre-vocational education (VMBO) was used as a proxy. Regarding ethnic background, a dummy variable was included for students with a non-Western migration background[4].

In addition, we controlled for school size and the level of urbanization of the municipality which the school was part of. Descriptive statistics of dependent, independent and control variables can be found in Table 2.

Method. First, a measurement model of citizenship education was constructed at the school level. Based on exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses in Mplus7 (Muthén and Muthén 1998–2017), we selected several constructs comprised of factor scales complemented by various one-items constructs, which together measured a broad range of citizenship education elements. In addition, multilevel factor analyses were performed to examine the various constructs measuring students' citizenship experiences at the individual and school levels. In total, 11 factor scores were retained for further analyses (see Table 1 and Appendix C).

To keep the number of parameters below the number of clusters ($N = 78$), we had to build our models stepwise. Factor scores were saved and (combined with the one-item constructs and control variables) used for correlational analyses and multilevel structural equation modelling[5]. Variables measuring school policies, learning environment and teaching practices were then included in the model one by one in order to analyze both direct and indirect relationships via teaching practices and experienced classroom climate. Our outcome variables were analyzed in three separate structural equation models. To include missing values on our exogenous school-level variables, these variables were explicitly included in the model and given a distributional assumption.

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[3]   Student means were only calculated if at least 2 classes of at least 10 students at a school had completed the questionnaire.
[4]   Non-Western migration background was operationalized as having at least one parent born in Turkey or a country in Africa, Asia (excl. Indonesia and Japan), or South America (Statistics Netherlands 2018).
[5]   Revised factor score regression has been shown to produce consistent estimators (Skrondal and Laake 2001).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics (N = 78 schools; N = 5148 students).

Variable	Mean/%	s.e.	Min.	Max.	*N*
Student level (N = 5148)					
Citizenship knowledge	0.998	1.155	−2.413	4.426	5062
Citizenship attitudes	2.852	0.425	1	4	5148
Citizenship skills	2.970	0.375	1	4	5070
Number of books at home	2.331	1.259	1	5	5148
Type of education					
- Pre-vocational	0.436	-	0	1	5148
- Senior general/pre-university	0.564	-	0	1	5148
Non-Western background	0.180	-	0	1	5148
School level (N = 78) [1]					
Vision CE themes	4.298	0.493	3.2	5	49
CE organization	3.096	0.990	1	5	48
CE meetings	2.503	0.650	1	4	48
Support by school leadership	3.498	0.354	2.48	4.24	69
Agreement teachers	3.371	0.301	2.64	4	69
Teacher trust in students	3.324	0.276	2.633	3.74	69
Citizenship themes in lesson	3.273	0.327	2.44	4.44	69
Monitoring citizenship	2.587	0.358	1.563	3.341	69
Student choose topics	2.670	0.341	1.556	3.090	69
Role playing	2.865	0.439	1.400	3.167	69
Projects outside school	2.620	0.361	1.750	3.500	69
Extracurricular activities	0.741	-	0	1	58
Open discussion climate	3.303	0.159	2.924	3.629	75
Teacher support	3.367	0.180	3.207	4.022	75
School belonging	3.585	0.151	3.167	3.896	75
School size	855.359	528.229	149	2511	78
Level of urbanization	3.487	1.336	1	5	78

Note: [1] raw mean scores are depicted for the factor scales.

4. Results

4.1. Variation in Citizenship Competences across Schools

An examination of the intraclass correlations (ICC) of our three dependent variables at the school level indicated an ICC of 0.304 for citizenship knowledge, 0.052 for attitudes and 0.038 for skills. This shows that schools differ most in the average level of their students' citizenship knowledge: 30 per cent of the variation in citizenship knowledge is explained at the school level. The between-schools variation with regards to the students' mean citizenship attitudes and skills is significantly lower (5 and 4 per cent, respectively). Variance coefficients and intraclass correlations for models including control variables and independent variables can be found in Appendix D.

4.2. Relationships between Citizenship Education and Citizenship Competences

The pairwise correlations between the school-level constructs can be found in Appendix E. In addition to the expected positive correlations between the various variables corresponding to the same theoretical construct, we found that the school's citizenship education policies, and the organization of citizenship education in particular, correlated positively with various citizenship teaching practices. A professional learning environment, on the other hand, correlated positively with the experienced classroom climate. Interestingly, it also correlated negatively with the attention paid to citizenship themes in class and the monitoring of student citizenship development. The latter two concepts also correlated negatively with the experienced classroom climate.

The results of the multilevel structural equation models for citizenship knowledge, attitudes and skills can be found in Tables 3–5. Table 6 offers an overview of the conclusions, in which a plus sign indicates findings supporting the formulated hypotheses. Below, we will shortly describe the results for each aspect of citizenship education, as well as our control variables.

Table 3. Total, direct and indirect effects on citizenship knowledge (standardized betas).

	Total		Total Direct		Total Indirect	
	β	*p*	β	*p*	β	*p*
Student-level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.007	0.607				
Teacher support	0.002	0.890				
Open discussion climate	0.014	0.303				
Control variables						
Number of books at home	**0.105**	**0.000**	**0.106**	**0.000**	0.001	0.788
Senior general/pre-university (ref. pre-vocational)	**0.214**	**0.000**	**0.214**	**0.000**	0.000	0.807
Non-Western background	**−0.048**	**0.002**	**−0.048**	**0.002**	0.000	0.959
School-level variables						
Citizenship policies						
CE themes school leader	−0.153	0.220	−0.123	0.437	−0.030	0.739
CE organization	0.026	0.801	0.107	0.439	−0.081	0.410
CE in meetings	0.030	0.800	0.110	0.399	−0.080	0.383
Professional learning environment						
School leadership	0.008	0.936	0.048	0.670	−0.040	0.561
Teacher agreement	−0.051	0.556	−0.010	0.902	−0.041	0.478
Teacher trust	0.109	0.340	0.135	0.200	−0.026	0.737
Teaching practices						
CE themes in class	0.014	0.845	0.010	0.894	0.004	0.829
Monitoring citizenship	**−0.234**	**0.038**	**−0.248**	**0.023**	0.014	0.774
CE projects	***−0.165***	***0.071***	***−0.168***	***0.085***	0.003	0.918
Role playing in class	0.022	0.801	0.022	0.820	0.001	0.984
Students choosing topics	**0.195**	**0.017**	**0.199**	**0.029**	−0.004	0.905
Extracurricular CE activities	***0.186***	***0.069***	0.183	0.101	0.003	0.876
Classroom climate						
School belonging	***0.248***	***0.079***				
Teacher support	−0.199	0.109				
Open discussion climate	0.024	0.884				
Control variables						
Average books at home	**0.346**	**0.000**	0.186	0.108	0.161	0.149
Average senior general/pre-university	**0.465**	**0.000**	**0.368**	**0.001**	0.079	0.514
Average non-Western background	**−0.261**	**0.008**	−0.146	0.211	−0.115	0.247
School size	**0.187**	**0.030**	0.135	0.120	0.052	0.483
Level of urbanization	0.022	0.778	0.061	0.516	−0.039	0.616

Note: **p (2-sided) < 0.05 (bold)**; ***p (2-sided) < 0.10 (bold italics)***; model fit: χ^2 (39) = 108.060, *p* < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.019, CFI = 0.941.

Table 4. Total, direct and indirect effects on citizenship attitudes (standardized betas).

	Total		Total Direct		Total Indirect	
	β	*P*	*β*	*p*	*β*	*p*
Student-level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	−0.007	0.627				
Teacher support	0.001	0.953				
Open discussion climate	−0.010	0.516				
Control variables						
Number of books at home	**0.124**	**0.000**	**0.123**	**0.000**	0.000	0.768
Senior general/pre-university (ref. pre-vocational)	**0.065**	**0.000**	**0.064**	**0.000**	0.000	0.591
Non-Western background	**0.079**	**0.000**	**0.079**	**0.000**	0.000	0.736
School-level variables						
Citizenship policies						
CE themes school leader	−0.174	0.098	−0.190	0.099	0.016	0.824
CE organization	0.028	0.797	0.030	0.833	−0.003	0.980
CE in meetings	0.141	0.234	**0.270**	**0.022**	−0.129	0.131
Learning environment						
School leadership	0.119	0.217	0.018	0.876	0.101	0.274
Teacher agreement	0.142	0.217	*0.185*	*0.056*	−0.043	0.522
Teacher trust	0.173	0.110	−0.112	0.276	**0.286**	**0.003**
Teaching practices						
CE themes in class	0.108	0.317	0.048	0.599	0.060	0.310
Monitoring citizenship	***−0.216***	***0.083***	−0.066	0.523	−0.151	0.110
CE projects	−0.034	0.765	0.086	0.397	−0.121	0.142
Role playing in class	*0.198*	*0.079*	0.142	0.185	0.056	0.506
Students choosing topics	0.162	0.149	−0.019	0.872	**0.180**	**0.026**
Extracurricular CE activities	0.091	0.457	−0.021	0.843	*0.111*	*0.084*
Classroom climate						
School belonging	*0.304*	*0.083*				
Teacher support	0.081	0.630				
Open discussion climate	*0.320*	*0.082*				
Control variables						
Average books at home	**0.449**	**0.001**	0.044	0.690	**0.404**	**0.001**
Average senior general/pre-university	**0.317**	**0.034**	**0.396**	**0.004**	−0.079	0.674
Average non-Western background	**0.417**	**0.000**	**0.653**	**0.000**	***−0.235***	***0.074***
School size	−0.076	0.403	0.113	0.170	***−0.190***	***0.046***
Level of urbanization	0.054	0.636	0.040	0.718	0.014	0.907

Note: ***p* (2-sided) < 0.05 (bold)**; ***p (2-sided) < 0.10 (bold italics)***; model fit: χ^2 (39) = 116.007, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.020, CFI = 0.920.

Table 5. Total, direct and indirect effects on citizenship skills (standardized betas).

	Total		Total Direct		Total Indirect	
	β	*P*	β	*p*	β	*p*
Student-level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.019	0.170				
Teacher support	−0.005	0.753				
Open discussion climate	−0.004	0.765				
Control variables						
Number of books at home	**0.063**	**0.000**	**0.063**	**0.000**	0.000	0.443
Senior general/pre-university (ref. pre-vocational)	0.021	0.220	0.021	0.224	0.000	0.704
Non-Western background	*0.030*	*0.076*	*0.030*	*0.071*	0.000	0.446
School-level variables						
Citizenship policies						
CE themes school leader	**−0.453**	**0.001**	**−0.290**	**0.047**	*−0.163*	*0.088*
CE organization	−0.085	0.559	−0.202	0.303	0.117	0.385
CE in meetings	**0.352**	**0.002**	**0.597**	**0.000**	**−0.245**	**0.016**
Learning environment						
School leadership	0.185	0.098	−0.024	0.841	*0.209*	*0.055*
Teacher agreement	0.073	0.544	0.080	0.535	−0.007	0.928
Teacher trust	**0.298**	**0.018**	0.014	0.906	**0.284**	**0.004**
Teaching practices						
CE themes in class	0.077	0.453	0.012	0.901	0.065	0.332
Monitoring citizenship	−0.149	0.359	0.023	0.875	*−0.172*	*0.087*
CE projects	**−0.255**	**0.026**	−0.107	0.321	*−0.149*	*0.081*
Role playing in class	0.016	0.895	−0.032	0.787	0.048	0.483
Students choosing topics	0.083	0.505	−0.118	0.357	**0.201**	**0.013**
Extracurricular CE activities	0.020	0.885	−0.101	0.407	*0.121*	*0.082*
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.180	0.447				
Teacher support	0.284	0.273				
Open discussion climate	0.308	0.145				
Control variables						
Average books at home	**0.428**	**0.004**	−0.005	0.974	**0.434**	**0.006**
Average senior general/pre-university	0.236	0.105	0.102	0.529	0.134	0.529
Average non-Western background	−0.180	0.370	0.175	0.354	**−0.355**	**0.020**
School size	−0.245	0.016	**0.249**	**0.045**	**−0.383**	**0.004**
Level of urbanization	0.226	0.120	**0.273**	**0.050**	−0.047	0.729

Note: **p (2-sided) < 0.05 (bold)**; ***p (2-sided) < 0.10 (bold italics)***; model fit: χ^2 (39) = 109.294, p < 0.001, RMSEA = 0.019, CFI = 0.916.

Table 6. Conclusions with regard to the formulated hypotheses.

	Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
Citizenship education policies			
H1a		+	+
H1b			
H1c			
Professional learning environment			
H2a		+	
H2b			+ [1]
H2c	+	+	+ [1]
Teaching practices			
H3a	+	+	
H3b		+	+
Classroom climate			
H4	+	+	

Note: [1] since only total indirect effects were found to be significant, no conclusions can be made regarding specific indirect pathways via teaching practices or classroom climate.

4.3. Citizenship Education Policies

Examination of Table 3 shows no total (direct or indirect) effects of the school's citizenship policies on student citizenship knowledge. Further examination of the specific indirect effects did, however, reveal two indirect (borderline significant) negative effects of the amount of attention paid to citizenship themes via the monitoring of student citizenship development ($\beta = -0.100$, $p = 0.094$) and via citizenship projects outside the school ($\beta = -0.071$, $p = 0.089$). Both monitoring and outside school projects were found to be negatively associated with levels of citizenship knowledge (see paragraph 4.5 below). The amount of attention school leaders paid to citizenship themes was also negatively related to student citizenship skills (Table 5), both directly and indirectly (borderline significance).

The attention paid to citizenship education in staff meetings was positively related to both citizenship attitudes (Table 4) and skills (Table 5). Interestingly, in addition to this direct positive relationship between citizenship in staff meetings and citizenship skills, a negative indirect relationship was also found. Examination of the specific indirect effects did not reveal any individual significant indirect effect.

Based on these findings, Hypothesis 1a on the positive relationship between attention for citizenship education in school policies and students' citizenship outcomes can only partially be confirmed: more attention paid to citizenship education in staff meetings is associated with more positive citizenship attitudes and more citizenship skills, yet not with more citizenship knowledge. Hypotheses 1b and 1c on positive *indirect* relationships between school policies on citizenship education and students' citizenship outcomes—either via teaching practices (H1a) or via the classroom climate (H1b)—are not supported.

4.4. Professional Learning Environment

An examination of Table 3 revealed no significant total (direct and indirect) effects of a school's professional learning environment on student citizenship knowledge. Examination of the individual indirect effects did reveal two (borderline significant) indirect effects. A negative indirect effect was found of teacher assessment of school leadership via the frequency of letting students choose their own topics, which was in turn positively associated with citizenship knowledge ($\beta = -0.066$, $p = 0.086$)—and a positive indirect effect of teacher trust in students via students' feeling of school involvement ($\beta = 0.098$, $p = 0.080$).

A positive indirect effect of the teachers' average trust in students was also found for citizenship attitudes (Table 4)—partially explained by a (borderline significant) positive indirect effect via the students' average feeling of school involvement ($\beta = 0.122$, $p = 0.080$)—and for citizenship skills (Table 5). For the latter, none of the individual indirect pathways proved significant.

In addition, a (borderline significant) positive direct relationship was found between the extent of agreement on education between the teachers and student citizenship attitudes, and a (borderline significant) positive indirect relationship between the teachers' opinions of school leadership and student citizenship skills. Again, none of the individual indirect pathways was significant.

These findings partially support Hypothesis 2a, on the direct positive relationship between the professional learning environment and student citizenship outcomes: more agreement between teachers on the provided education is associated with more positive citizenship attitudes of students. Hypothesis 2c on indirect positive relationships between the professional learning environment at school and citizenship outcomes via the classroom climate, is supported for all three types of citizenship competences. The findings provide no support for Hypothesis 2b, on an indirect relationship via teaching practices.

4.5. Teaching Practices

When we examined the total direct and indirect effects of teaching practices, several significant relationships came to the fore. First, letting students choose their own topics had a direct positive relationship with their citizenship knowledge (Table 3) and an indirect positive effect on both citizenship attitudes (Table 4) and citizenship skills (Table 5). For both attitudes and skills, our data did not show which aspects of the perceived classroom climate explained these relationships, since none of the indirect pathways were significant by itself.

For extracurricular citizenship activities, too, positive (borderline significant) effects were found on knowledge, attitudes and skills. Again, indirect effects were visible for both attitudes and skills (however, none of the individual pathways was significant), while for knowledge only the total effect proved significant.

Roleplaying in the class had a (borderline significant) positive relationship with student citizenship attitudes but not with citizenship knowledge or skills. Interestingly, monitoring of student citizenship development was negatively related to student citizenship knowledge and (with borderline significance) to student attitudes, and—indirectly—skills. Organizing citizenship projects for which students had to collect information outside the school (e.g., through neighborhood interviews or small-scale research) was also found to have a negative (borderline significant) relationship with both citizenship knowledge and skills. Although the latter effect was mainly indirect, none of the individual indirect pathways proved significant.

These findings provide mixed evidence for Hypothesis 3 on the positive relationship between teaching practices and citizenship outcomes. In line with our expectations, letting students choose their own topics and organizing extracurricular citizenship activities is positively related to their citizenship competences: a direct relationship is visible for citizenship knowledge (Hypothesis 3a), an indirect relationship for citizenship skills (Hypothesis 3b), and both direct and indirect relationships for citizenship attitudes. The opposite is true for monitoring student citizenship development and organizing outside school citizenship projects: both practices are found to be negatively related to citizenship outcomes, either directly or indirectly.

4.6. Perceived Classroom Climate

Of our three indicators of the perceived classroom climate, the students' average feeling of school belonging was (borderline significant) positively related to their citizenship knowledge (Table 3) and attitudes (Table 4). An open discussion climate was also positively related students' citizenship attitudes. No significant effects of classroom climate were found on student citizenship skills (Table 5).

These findings support Hypothesis 4 on the positive relationship between the perceived classroom climate and student citizenship outcomes, yet only for citizenship knowledge and attitudes.

4.7. Student Characteristics and School Context

In our final, comprehensive models of citizenship education, student SES, as indicated by the number of books at home showed positive effects: students from more favorable backgrounds had more citizenship knowledge (Table 3), more positive attitudes (Table 4) and more skills (Table 5). Levels of citizenship knowledge and attitudes were also higher for students from senior general and pre-university education than for students from vocational education. Moreover, students with a non-Western background had less citizenship knowledge than students with a Western background, but more positive attitudes and more skills.

Most of these effects were also present at the school level, with a few exceptions. At schools with more students with a non-Western background, citizenship skills were found to be lower. Furthermore, in addition to a positive direct effect of the number of students with a non-Western background on citizenship attitudes, a (borderline significant) negative indirect effect was present.

School size also mattered: levels of citizenship knowledge and skills were higher at larger schools, while scores on citizenship attitudes were lower. An indirect negative association between school size and citizenship skills was, however, also present. Finally, schools located in more urbanized areas reported, on average, higher scores on citizenship skills.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

In this paper, we empirically tested a comprehensive school effectiveness model of citizenship education, including a broad range of school factors that could be expected to explain the differences in the school's citizenship outcomes either as general characteristics of effective schools or characteristics that specifically contribute to citizenship. In doing so, we followed up on calls for a more complete picture of the role of schools in the acquisition of citizenship competences, including school leaders' vision and goals, teachers' actual classroom practices, as well as the practices as perceived by students (Dijkstra et al. 2014a; Kerr et al. 2009). The citizenship outcomes examined concern both the cognitive dimension of citizenship (i.e., knowledge) and the active and affective dimensions (i.e., self-evaluated skills and attitudes). Applying multilevel structural equation modelling, we examined direct and indirect effects on student citizenship outcomes of citizenship school policies, the professional learning environment, citizenship teaching practices and the perceived classroom climate.

After controlling for student and school context characteristics, almost half of the investigated hypotheses on positive relationships between aspects of citizenship education and student citizenship knowledge, skills and particularly attitudes appeared to be supported—albeit effects were small. An examination of the magnitude of the effects furthermore indicated stronger relationships for students' citizenship knowledge than for students' citizenship attitudes and skills. The average level of citizenship knowledge also varied more between schools than it did for attitudes or skills. Even though school effects were small, various authors have emphasized that these effects are to be considered important, bearing in mind that a school is able to reach a large number of students, and that the underlying factors can be steered through the school's policies (Dijkstra et al. 2014a; Isac et al. 2014; Sampermans et al. 2018; Reichert and Print 2018). At the same time, since the examined school factors seem to explain only a modest part of the variation found in students' citizenship outcomes, we should be careful when drawing conclusions. With these reservation in mind, the following conclusions can be drawn from the results presented here.

Although the number of significant relationships is modest, we found evidence that aspects of school policies are important for students' citizenship development. First of all, the importance attached to citizenship themes in school policies correlated with several teaching practices which in turn proved relevant to citizenship outcomes. In our explanatory analyses it was also shown that the attention paid to citizenship education in staff meetings related positively to student citizenship outcomes. At the same time, several negative relationships were found, in particular with regard to citizenship skills. Even though a more explicit emphasis on citizenship education in school policy

might thus be part of the solution to effective citizenship education, it is not necessarily related to all aspects of effective citizenship education.

Our findings furthermore highlight that the importance of school climate and the characteristics of teacher–student and student–student interaction for the development of citizenship competences is not restricted to the experiences of students (often referred to as the pedagogical learning environment), but extends to the professional learning environment as well (cf. Willemse et al. 2015). Positive relationships were for instance visible for the teachers' amount of trust in their students and students' citizenship skills and attitudes. Relationships between student citizenship attitudes and the extent to which teachers agreed on the educational vision of the school (e.g., how to assess student results and interact with students) were also found, as well as between student citizenship skills and the extent to which teachers perceived support from their school leadership. Feelings of community created by and between staff members, of which the above elements can be considered examples, thus seem to be an important aspect of (effective) citizenship education. Looking at teaching practices, effects varied depending on the type of practice. The positive relationships found for letting students choose their own topics for upcoming lessons (on both knowledge, attitudes and skills) were the most robust. The positive results found for extracurricular citizenship activities also underline the potential influence of the school. Furthermore, citizenship attitudes were on average more positive at schools where roleplaying in class was more often encouraged.

Interestingly, at schools where teachers paid more attention to monitoring of the development of their students' citizenship competences, students were found to have on average less citizenship competences than at schools where teachers had less insight into their students' citizenship development. A good interpretation of these results, which seem to deviate from earlier findings (cf. Keating et al. 2010), requires more specific analyses of interpersonal interactions within the school with possible explanatory factors, such as the use of monitoring as a response to lagging results, disruptive behavior or the (more authoritarian) approach of teachers. The findings could also reflect the school's efforts to more closely tutor struggling students, rather than a negative effect of monitoring per se. This is equally true for external projects (e.g., neighborhood interviews or small-scale research), which also appeared to be negatively related to students' citizenship knowledge and skills. Both findings illustrate that further research is needed to investigate these and other aspects of citizenship education and their link to various citizenship outcomes. It would for instance be interesting to further examine whether the found relationships are typical for a certain school culture, context or school type.

Finally, in our analyses, the effects of classroom climate seem less pronounced than reported elsewhere (cf. Geboers et al. 2013). Although students' average feelings of school belongingness were positively related to their citizenship knowledge and attitudes, an open discussion climate was only positively related to students' citizenship attitudes, and no relationships were present for the experienced teacher support. As expected, supplementary analyses show that all three aspects of the perceived classroom climate relate positively to student citizenship outcomes when examined in separate univariate models (Appendix F). A notable finding (based on relevant correlations) is that classroom climate also seems to interact with the professional learning environment and with the in-class teaching. Therefore, the way in which these aspects interact is a relevant subject for further research aimed at supporting educational practice and policy.

In view of the cross-sectional nature of our data and the complexity of our model, it is too early to draw causal or final conclusions about the effectiveness of the elements of citizenship education that we examined. Although the models fit the data well and the variance explained is as could be expected, the stability of the models requires replication studies involving comparable data. It is important to consider that the relationships found, both the negative and the positive ones, are descriptions of correlations between the type of citizenship education adopted by the school (i.e., policies, learning environment, teaching practices and classroom climate) and the citizenship knowledge, attitudes and skills of their students. For causal interpretations, longitudinal research is necessary.

It should also be taken into account that we have focused on general effects, leaving group-specific effects aside. The results did, however, indicate a consistent positive relationship between socioeconomic status (measured by the number of books at home) and citizenship competences, not only at an individual level, but also at the school level. This points to a confirmation of findings from earlier studies that point out both unequal access to as well as varying effects of citizenship education with regard to students' socioeconomic background (Hoskins et al. 2017; Janmaat et al. 2014; Neundorf et al. 2016). Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of paying particular attention to social inequality and disadvantaged students in relation to citizenship education. Future research focused on mechanisms explaining the differences found between students from various socioeconomic backgrounds and between schools that vary in their socioeconomic composition can provide support in this respect.

The model presented here provides a first step to further improve the effectiveness of citizenship education. In particular for youth that already start with a disadvantage, or students or schools that are not doing too well regarding citizenship competences, the current study provides guidelines on which citizenship education elements are associated with positive student outcomes, and which elements add to this. The model estimations illustrate the importance of a comprehensive explanation of differences in school effectiveness as expressed in citizenship outcomes, with not only direct effects being investigated but also the interplay between various factors such as teacher activities, the influence of the wider school setting in which teachers make their choices and how students perceive these. The relevance of citizenship for students and society and—as our study shows—what schools can contribute through a well-considered arrangement of teaching practice, contextual factors and school policies underlines the importance of the further development of a comprehensive school effectiveness model of citizenship education.

Appendix A

Table A1. Demographics of respondent samples.

	School Leader (*N* = 49)	Team Leader (*N* = 62)	Teacher (*N* = 643)	Student (*N* = 5172)
Gender (male)	0.73	0.56	0.47	0.48
Age	56.16 (5.23)	48.66 (8.95)	42.40 (11.97)	2.73 (0.70) [1]
Type of education				
- pre-vocational				0.47
- higher general				0.29
- pre-university				0.34
- higher vocational	0.41	0.52	0.67	
- university	0.59	0.48	0.33	
Years working in education	30.57 (8.24)	20.89 (8.67)	15.30 (10.66)	
Years working at current school	12.69 (12.12)	12.91 (9.33)	10.68 (8.85)	
Non-western background				0.24

Note: [1] the variable 'age' for students is a categorical variable: (1) 13 years or younger, (2) 14 years, (3) 15 years, (4) 16 years, and (5) 17 years or older.

Appendix B

Table A2. Conceptual framework citizenship competences (components and social tasks).

Components / Social Tasks	Knowledge Knowing, Understanding, and Insight	Attitudes Thoughts, Desires, and Willingness	Skills An Estimate of what One Can	Reflection Contemplation of Topics
	A Young Person with Such Knowledge . . .	A Young Person with Such Attitudes . . .	A Young Person with Such Skills . . .	A Young Person with Such Reflection . . .
Acting democratically *Acceptance of and contribution to a democratic society*	. . . knows what democratic principles are and what acting in accordance with these principles involves.	. . . *wants to hear everyone's voice, enter into a dialogue and make an active, critical contribution.*	. . . is able to assert own opinion and listen to the opinions of others.	. . . thinks about issues of democracy and issues of power/ powerlessness, equal/unequal rights.
Acting in a socially responsible manner *Taking shared responsibility for the communities to which one belongs*	. . . knows social rules (i.e., legal or unspoken rules for social interaction).	. . . wants to uphold social justice (i.e., exclude no one), is prepared to provide care and assistance, does not want to harm another or the environment as a result of his or her behavior.	. . . can adopt a socially just position.	. . . thinks about conflicts of interest, social cohesion, social processes group processes (e.g., inclusion and exclusion), and own contribution to social justice.
Dealing with conflicts *Handling of minor situations of conflict or conflicts of interest to which the child him/herself is a party*	. . . knows methods to solve conflicts such as searching for win–win solutions, calling in help from others, admission of mistakes, prevention of escalation.	. . . is willing to explore conflicts, prepared to seriously consider the standpoint of another, jointly searches for an acceptable solution.	. . . can listen to another, put oneself in someone else's position, search for win–win solutions.	. . . thinks about how a particular conflict can arise, the role of others and oneself in such, and the possibilities to prevent or solve conflicts.
Dealing with differences *Handling of social, cultural, religious, and outward differences*	. . . is familiar with differences of a cultural nature, has knowledge of rules of behavior in different social situations, knows when one can speak of prejudice or discrimination.	. . . has a desire to familiarize him/herself with the opinions and lifestyles of others, has a positive attitude toward differences.	. . . can adequately function in unfamiliar social situations, adjust to the desires or habits of others.	. . . thinks about the nature and consequences of the differences between people and cultural backgrounds for behavior and processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Source: (Ten Dam et al. 2011).

Appendix C

Table A3. Citizenship education factor scales: descriptive statistics at the item level.

Variables	Chi2	df	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	Factor Loading [1]
1. School policies on CE						
School leader's vision on citizenship themes	7.557	5	0.182	0.961	0.102	
(1 very unimportant; 5 very important)						
(a) Learning about other cultures						0.658
(b) Learning about basic values						0.813
(c) Religious and philosophical values and knowledge						0.763
(d) Learning about democracy						0.422
(e) The school as a place to practice democracy						0.673
School leader's view on CE in organization	2.116	4	0.714	1.000	0.000	
(1 not at all applicable; 5 very applicable)						
(a) Citizenship education is regularly addressed in teacher meetings and/or the participation council.						0.679
(b) There are concrete arrangements about the organization of citizenship education.						0.952
(c) There is a continuous learning line for citizenship education.						0.875
(d) We have actively focused on the development of citizenship education at our school the past years.						0.866
(e) Citizenship education is an important topic at our school.						0.599
School leader's view on CE in meetings	10.948	14	0.690	1.000	0.000	
(1 (almost) never; 5 (almost) always)						
(a) In performance interviews with teachers						0.628
(b) In meetings with teachers/teams						0.792
(c) In meetings with school management						0.596
(d) In meetings with upper school board						0.870
(e) In meetings with the school board						0.880
(f) In meetings with other schools						0.811
(g) In meetings with municipality						0.554

Table A3. *Cont.*

Variables	Chi2	df	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	Factor Loading [1]
2. Professional learning environment						
Teacher's view on support by school leadership	8.446	5	0.133	0.985	0.100	
(1 totally disagree; 5 totally agree)*Our school management* …						
(a) Takes the opinions of employees seriously						0.909
(b) Shows appreciation when teachers take initiative to improve the curriculum						0.740
(c) Listens carefully to teachers' ideas						0.947
(d) Is alert to teachers experiencing trouble with new policies						0.912
(e) Involves teachers in discussions on personal and professional development						0.716
Agreement between teachers	7.534	5	0.184	0.987	0.086	
(1 totally not agree; 5 totally agree)						
(a) Teachers agree on what can be expected from each other						0.795
(b) Teachers agree on how we want to treat each other						0.806
(c) Teachers agree on how to judge the quality of our work						0.896
(d) Teachers agree on how to judge the students' results						0.789
(e) Teachers agree on how we want to interact with students						0.765
Teacher's trust in students	5.939	5	0.312	0.992	0.052	
(1 totally disagree; 5 totally agree)						
(a) You can count on students doing their job						0.622
(b) You can trust students						0.758
(c) You have to carefully watch students [r] [2]						0.883
(d) Students are competent						0.629
(e) Students cheat or act deceitful if they get the chance [r]						0.693
3. Teaching practices						
Citizenship themes addressed in class by teachers	27.459	5	0.000	0.810	0.255	
(1 no attention; 5 daily attention)						
(a) Learning about other cultures						0.633
(b) Learning about basic values						0.516
(c) Religious and philosophical values and knowledge						0.645
(d) Learning about democracy						0.812
(e) The school as a place to practice democracy						0.741

Table A3. *Cont.*

Variables	Chi2	df	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	Factor Loading [1]
Teacher's active monitoring of citizenship development students (1 not at all applicable; 5 very applicable)	2.891	2	0.236	0.995	0.080	
(a) I have solid insight into citizenship opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of my students.						0.924
(b) I have solid insight into the citizenship development of my students.						0.941
(c) I periodically adjust my citizenship education based on the results.						0.743
(d) I consciously deploy citizenship education to influence undesirable behaviors and opinions of students.						0.809
4. Experienced classroom climate						
Students' view on room for discussion in the classroom (1 almost never; 5 almost always)	108.417	10	0.000	0.982	0.044	
If societal or political topics are discussed in class, then . . .						
(a) Teachers try to ensure students express their own opinions.						0.628 | 0.934
(b) Students can propose their own topics to talk about.						0.613 | 0.679
(c) Students express their opinion, also when others have a different opinion.						0.512 | 0.834
(d) Teachers ensures students also talk to people with a different opinion.						0.759 | 0.951
(e) Teachers make sure to show different sides of these topics.						0.763 | 0.966
Students' view on teacher support (1 totally disagree; 5 totally agree)	27.296	4	0.000	0.994	0.982	
(a) My teachers try to answer my questions						0.614 | 0.885
(b) My teachers care about me						0.678 | 0.966
(c) My teachers compliment me when I have done something right						0.592 | 0.764
(d) My teachers listen to me when I have a problem						0.727 | 0.938
Students' feelings of school belongingness (1 totally disagree; 5 totally agree)	41.039	18	0.002	0.995	0.016	
(a) I feel like part of this school						0.538 | 0.877
(b) Other students take my opinion seriously						0.574 | 0.956
(c) Everyone at school is friendly to me						0.638 | 0.819
(d) I am treated with similar respect as other students						0.635 | 0.956
(e) People at school know I can do a good job						0.511 | 0.790
(f) Other students accept me as I am						0.682 | 0.909

Note: [1] for student-level constructs, factor loadings are shown at the *within* and *between* level (w|b); [2] [r] recoded item.

Appendix D

Table A4. Variance and intraclass correlations of citizenship competences.

Model	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Knowledge				
var_{within}	0.948 (0.034)	0.886 (0.032)	0.886 (0.032)	0.886 (0.032)
$var_{between}$	0.414 (0.051)	0.145 (0.025)	0.095 (0.016)	0.055 (0.019)
ICC	0.304	0.141	0.097	0.058
Attitudes				
var_{within}	0.171 (0.005)	0.167 (0.005)	0.167 (0.005)	0.167 (0.005)
$var_{between}$	0.009 (0.002)	0.004 (0.001)	0.003 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
ICC	0.050	0.023	0.018	0.000
Skills				
var_{within}	0.136 (0.008)	0.136 (0.008)	0.136 (0.008)	0.135 (0.008)
$var_{between}$	0.005 (0.001)	0.004 (0.001)	0.003 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
ICC	0.035	0.029	0.022	0.000

Note: Model 0 = intercept-only model; Model 1 = Model 0 + control variables at the student school level; Model 2 = Model 1 + control variables at the school level; Model 3 = Model 2 + citizenship education elements (full model).

Appendix E

Table A5. Correlations between school-level constructs (correlation coefficients and *p* values; *N* = 78).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
2.	**0.365** 0.011													
3.	*0.254* 0.081	0.240 0.101												
4.	0.088 0.567	−0.061 0.693	0.084 0.587											
5.	−0.169 0.267	−0.192 0.213	0.108 0.486	**0.321** 0.007										
6.	0.143 0.348	−0.100 0.518	0.230 0.133	−0.047 0.702	**0.259** 0.031									
7.	0.051 0.741	*0.267* 0.080	0.130 0.400	−0.027 0.824	**−0.261** 0.030	**−0.331** 0.006								
8.	0.187 0.218	*0.272* 0.074	0.229 0.134	0.181 0.137	0.088 0.470	**−0.338** 0.005	**0.495** 0.000							
9.	**0.434** 0.003	0.129 0.406	0.185 0.230	0.076 0.536	−0.077 0.531	0.044 0.720	0.027 0.829	0.185 0.127						
10.	0.132 0.387	−0.116 0.455	0.125 0.418	0.150 0.220	0.080 0.513	−0.184 0.130	0.146 0.230	**0.348** 0.003	*0.223* 0.065					
11.	0.196 0.197	−0.125 0.419	0.125 0.419	−0.079 0.519	−0.127 0.298	−0.051 0.677	0.128 0.294	**0.368** 0.002	**0.345** 0.004	**0.423** 0.000				
12.	0.075 0.646	**0.333** 0.036	0.049 0.767	0.045 0.745	0.064 0.641	−0.039 0.779	0.115 0.401	0.104 0.452	0.059 0.668	0.007 0.961	−0.005 0.969			
13.	0.034 0.819	−0.222 0.129	0.016 0.913	0.102 0.406	0.176 0.149	**0.601** 0.000	**−0.252** 0.036	**−0.356** 0.003	−0.144 0.238	−0.144 0.239	0.021 0.864	0.154 0.249		
14.	−0.065 0.660	−0.185 0.207	−0.129 0.381	**0.258** 0.032	**0.268** 0.026	**0.459** 0.000	−0.190 0.118	**−0.279** 0.020	**−0.244** 0.044	−0.132 0.278	−0.052 0.670	0.197 0.139	**0.766** 0.000	
15.	0.132 0.366	0.071 0.632	0.071 0.632	0.125 0.308	0.181 0.137	**0.559** 0.000	*−0.232* 0.055	**−0.385** 0.001	−0.134 0.274	−0.125 0.305	−0.111 0.363	0.197 0.139	**0.744** 0.000	**0.689** 0.000

Note: **_p_ (2-sided) ≤ 0.05 (bold)**; *p* (2-sided) ≤ *0.10 (italics)*; (1) CE themes school; (2) CE organization; (3) CE in meetings; (4) teachers' opinion on leadership; (5) agreement between teachers; (6) Teacher trust towards students; (7) CE themes in class; (8) monitoring of citizenship development students; (9) CE projects; (10) roleplaying in class; (11) choosing own topics; (12) extracurricular activities; (13) school belonging; (14) teacher–student relationships; (15) open discussion climate.

Appendix F

Table A6. Classroom climate effects on citizenship knowledge (standardized betas).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	*P*	*β*	*p*	*β*	*p*
Student level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.014	0.319				
Teacher support			0.002	0.888		
Open discussion climate					0.007	0.626
Control variables						
Number of books at home	0.106	0.000	0.105	0.000	0.106	0.000
Senior general/pre-university (ref. pre-vocational)	0.214	0.000	0.214	0.000	0.214	0.000
Non-Western background	−0.048	0.002	−0.048	0.002	−0.049	0.002
School level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.198	0.004				
Teacher support			0.192	0.006		
Open discussion climate					0.183	0.017
Control variables						
Average books at home	0.279	0.004	0.333	0.001	0.291	0.003
Average senior general/pre-university	0.459	0.000	0.493	0.000	0.452	0.000
Average non-Western background	−0.163	0.077	−0.145	0.122	−0.186	0.042
School size	0.209	0.010	0.220	0.008	0.214	0.010
Level of urbanization	0.016	0.841	0.009	0.903	−0.010	0.890

Table A7. Classroom climate effects on citizenship attitudes (standardized betas).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	*P*	*β*	*p*	*β*	*p*
Student level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	−0.006	0.638				
Teacher support			0.001	0.962		
Open discussion climate					−0.010	0.521
Control variables						
Number of books at home	0.124	0.000	0.124	0.000	0.124	0.000
Senior general/pre-university (ref. pre-vocational)	0.065	0.000	0.065	0.000	0.064	0.000
Non-Western background	0.079	0.000	0.079	0.000	0.079	0.000
School level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.501	0.000				
Teacher support			0.502	0.000		
Open discussion climate					0.487	0.000
Control variables						
Average books at home	0.251	0.048	0.386	0.002	0.284	0.013
Average senior general/pre-university	0.294	0.014	0.381	0.001	0.267	0.018
Average non-Western background	0.661	0.000	0.708	0.000	0.609	0.000
School size	−0.026	0.723	0.003	0.970	−0.012	0.867
Level of urbanization	0.059	0.597	0.055	0.596	−0.009	0.934

Table A8. Classroom climate effects on citizenship skills (standardized betas).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	*P*	*β*	*p*	*β*	*p*
Student level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.019	0.171				
Teacher support			−0.005	0.734		
Open discussion climate					−0.005	0.741
Control variables						
Number of books at home	0.063	0.000	0.063	0.000	0.063	0.000
Senior general/pre-university (ref. pre-vocational)	0.021	0.221	0.021	0.218	0.021	0.220
Non-Western background	0.029	0.078	0.029	0.078	0.029	0.076
School level variables						
Classroom climate						
School belonging	0.542	0.000				
Teacher support			0.618	0.000		
Open discussion climate					0.444	0.000
Control variables						
Average books at home	0.242	0.115	0.379	0.009	0.299	0.030
Average senior general/pre-university	0.201	0.162	0.303	0.032	0.177	0.178
Average non-Western background	0.096	0.648	0.191	0.340	0.003	0.988
School size	−0.076	0.502	−0.032	0.768	−0.072	0.514
Level of urbanization	0.219	0.152	0.206	0.150	0.161	0.280

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Article

Citizenship Educational Policy: A Case of Russophone Minority in Estonia

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Abstract: In the contemporary era, societies are divided, and political polarization is increasing. One of the most powerful instruments the government can use is general standard education, specifically citizenship education. We will look at the case of Estonia, because Estonia's main political cleavage is the ethnic cleavage between the Estonian and the Russophone community. Our main research question is as follows: How would it be possible to use democratic citizenship education to decrease in the future the socio-economic inequality between different communities in Estonia? We will outline the context of ethnic socio-economic inequality in Estonia and show how these differences have been at least partially influenced by the current education system in Estonia and how citizenship education can be used to reduce these inequalities in the future. We will conduct an empirical analysis of the curriculum, and this will be followed by semi-structured qualitative interviews. In the discussion, we will make suggestions to the current Estonian citizenship education policy and offer various insights into tackling this issue.

Keywords: citizenship education; inequality; minority education; democratic citizenship

1. Introduction

When Estonia regained its independence in 1991, it inherited a rather segmented society where the Russophone minorities made up more than one-third of its population. During the following decades, various policies have been implemented to improve the integration of different communities in Estonia. Although there have been some improvements (e.g., increased proficiency in the state language), the socio-economic status of the Russophone minority is still considerably lower. In addition, the Estonian de facto bilingual education system, which separates those two communities from an early age, raises the question: Can the Estonian education system offer equal opportunities for young people from different ethnic backgrounds?

On a broader scale, in the contemporary era of heterogeneous lifestyles and increasing political polarization, having a common societal culture and basic political coherence is increasingly a challenge for the whole society as political community. Citizens have grown distrustful of politicians and of the democratic institutions and process in general (e.g., Dalton 2004; Hay 2007; Papadopoulos 2013). As Hay (2007, p. 11) has noted, "Our sense of political citizenship in national democracies appears to be under threat."

One of the most powerful instruments the governments can use to balance these trends is the general standard education, through which a common societal frame of reference is developed. A democratic state needs conscious citizens with knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These are mostly generated via the education system, which usually includes some kind of civic and citizenship education, whether it be a separate course, a cross-curricular topic, or something else (e.g., Crick 1998; Stoker et al. 2012; Stoker [2006] 2016). This kind of democratic citizenship is vital for common identity in multi-cultural societies.

At the same time, these abstract ideas need to be implemented in concrete contexts, which can not ignore the realities of inequalities of different groups in society. Schools are

seen as a place wherein students from different socio-economic backgrounds could have a sense of common democratic citizenship, which is crucial for democratic citizens in the state. Empowering minorities goes beyond language skills and personal contacts; people also need competences to act as proactive societal, political, and economic citizens in a democracy. Those who lack those knowledge, skills, and values are in danger of further marginalization, including socio-economic aspects.

In this article, we will study the case of Estonia, analyze the citizenship educational policy with a special focus on democratic citizenship in the case of minorities. We focus on the civics and citizenship education course (hereafter civics) in Estonian secondary school with a key interest in selected aspects of public policy implementation and design. Estonia serves as a good case for the study: it has relatively developed framework curricula and syllabi and a separate civics subject. We study the content of civics and its reflection and implementation by the teachers.

Our main research question is, how would it be possible to use democratic citizenship education to decrease in the future the socio-economic inequality between different communities in Estonia? More specifically, we will explore, what are the suggestions of teachers to improve democratic citizenship education policy? First, we will outline the context of ethnic socio-economic inequality in Estonia by focusing on the demographic change that occurred in the 20th century, including the differences in language skills, education system, and regional differences. We will show how these differences have been at least partially influenced by the current education system in Estonia and how citizenship education can be used to reduce these inequalities in the future. More specifically, we will focus on the factors that are mentioned by the civics teachers in teaching children from minority groups.

Our approach is based on the concept of integration. We will not discuss normative proposals on arranging the Estonian society, but we will focus on democratic citizenship education based on the existing regulation with a special interest in educating minority students, based on the civics course, with the aim to understand the practical challenges and possibilities to improve the implementation of policies. We are not proposing an assimilation approach toward integration. We are broadly based on John Berry's (1997) acculturation model, which differentiates four approaches toward integration differentiated, depending on both the majority and minority group. This approach can be seen in Figure 1.

Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)

		Low	High
Maintenance of heritage culture	**High**	Separation	Integration
	Low	Marginalization	Assimilation

Figure 1. Berry (1997).

This model is based on two dimensions: whether the immigrants find it important to maintain their ethnic culture and wherever they find it important to adopt the mainstream culture. In this article, we are suggesting that some kind of common societal frame is needed, which is provided by the democratic citizenship education in a formal education system.

This is especially relevant because in Estonia, the children from the biggest minority group—Russophone minority—often have the beginning of their education in the Russian

language and they learn in separate schools. However, using education as a programming instrument is not simple. The focal point is the role of teachers, since they are in the key position as front-line bureaucrats (Lipsky [1980] 2010). Their role is crucial both in designing the real-life educational content and integrating the top–down frameworks and pupils' everyday feedback into personalized practical strategies. In addition, we use Taylor's theory of curricula and Dewey-based pragmatist education to elaborate on selected aspects of policy design and implementation. We will illustrate our discussion with examples from curricula and from interviews with civics teachers with experience in schools with the minority population students.

We will start by explaining the context of Estonia and its socio-economic inequalities, with a special focus on its school system, which are followed by relevant concepts of citizenship education and Lipsky's front-line bureaucracy theory. This is followed by Taylor's curriculum theory and Dewey's practices of learning. Then we develop the methodology and conduct an empirical analysis of the relevant parts of the national framework curricula and subject outlines, followed by interviews with civic teachers from Estonian–Russian schools, with a special focus on teacher perspectives on their agency in qualitative interviews. Then, the results are elaborated in the Discussion and Conclusion sections.

2. Contextual and Theoretical Background

2.1. Estonian Society and Education System

Estonia is a small North European state with a population of 1.3 million people, which has experienced a significant demographic change in the demographic during the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, during the Soviet occupation period, Estonia experienced a change from a mono-ethnic state, where more than 95% of the population were ethnic Estonians, to a multi-cultural society, where the share of minorities rose up to 39% in 1989 (Tammaru and Kulu 2013). This largely Russophone minority is mostly characterized by their native language, which is Russian, and they constitute roughly one-third of the population of Estonia.

The minority issue has been one of the main cleavages in Estonian society and politics (e.g., Vetik 2012, 2015; Saarts 2017). This social, economic, and political problem has been addressed by the government by different measures, including neglecting, assimilation, and integration strategies, and one cannot say that there has not been progress (for example, the obtaining of Estonian citizenship, increase in proficiency in the Estonian language, etc.), but there are still a number of unresolved challenges. For example, in the capital Tallinn, more than one-third of the population consists of the Russophone minority; also, in one of the eastern counties in Estonia, called Ida-Virumaa, the Russophone community makes up more than 80% of the population. This makes the integration policies, also the school systems reform quite challenging. Around 86,000 people have Russian citizenship, and around 78,000 have no citizenship at all. In addition, recent migration statistics from the last decade show that a significant part of immigrants have either Ukrainian or Russian citizenship, which shows that this issue will be prominent in the near future (Estonian Statistics 2021).

Even though the Russophone community is not intrinsically homogeneous, in general, they have a notable disadvantage compared to Estonians in their socio-economic status (see further Soosaar et al. 2017; Pohla et al. 2016). For example, on average, the yearly disposable income shows that Estonians with Estonian citizenship earn more than 20% more than non-Estonians. In addition, non-Estonians with Estonian citizenship earn about 10% more than non-Estonians without citizenship (see Table 1, Estonian Statistics 2021) In addition, their willingness to acquire Estonian citizenship is decreasing, and trust for state institutions is lower in comparison to Estonians (Kaldur 2017). In addition, the Russophone community is under-represented for example in the national governmental sector (Ivanov 2015). In addition, the communities are separated in media consumption, geographical location, and crucially, in the education system.

Table 1. Equalized yearly disposable income by ethnic nationality and citizenship in euros (Estonian Statistics 2021).

	2017	**2018**	**2019**
Estonians with Estonian citizenship	12,330.18	13,434.77	14,304.91
Non-Estonians total	10,300.19	11,379.71	12,212.64
Non-Estonian with Estonian citizenship	10,826.41	12,054.99	12,792.90
Non-Estonians with other citizenship	9777.56	10,704.88	11,629.19

As a legacy result of Soviet Union policies and demographic changes that occurred in Estonia, the education system has what is now called a "bilingual education system". The state-funded school system is in Estonian, but there are also state-funded schools that also use the Russian language in a significant amount, mostly for Russophone community children (Skerrett 2013). About every fifth student is studying in an Estonian–Russian comprehensive school (Põder et al. 2017). The differences in educational outcomes by PISA (OECD's programme for International Student Assessment) testing show a one-year gap between these communities in different schools (Põder et al. 2017; Täht et al. 2018). On one hand, this reflects the segregation and separation of these two communities, and on the other hand, it reinforces it (Hogan-Brun et al. 2008), having direct implications on the possibilities of integration and crucially, to the future socio-economic lower status of the Russophone community.

To be clear, Estonia has, strictly speaking, one school system with the same curricula, but there are different languages of instruction. The Estonian school system is based on four levels: pre-school, basic, secondary, and higher education. The basic compulsory education system is a nine-year comprehensive school. At this level, it is possible to study either in Estonian or in Russian. At the secondary level, it is possible either to study in Estonian or in the model 60/40, whereas 60% of the courses have to be taught in Estonian, including civics courses. These schools are mostly located in the capital Tallinn or in the northern–eastern part of Estonia, where the Russophone community is a majority in the cities such as Narva, Sillamäe, or Kohtla-Järve. Formerly, the instruction in these schools was entirely in the Russian language. The different school communities do not interact with each other during the compulsory education period, meaning that their social networks will differ significantly, which has a direct influence on the future labor market perspectives. Lindemann (2013) shows that the existing school system reproduces inequalities in the future; for example, the students from Estonian-Russian schools are less likely to continue their education in the higher education system (Lindemann and Saar 2011). In addition, data show that the results of students in Estonian–Russian schools are considerably worse than in Estonian schools. PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results show that by the age of 15, the gap between Estonian and Russian schools is 39 points, which equals approximately one year of education (Põder et al. 2017). These results are also evident in previous studies—2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015 (Täht et al. 2018, p. 5). Usually, these differences are explained by the language barrier, but the case of Estonia is exceptional in comparison to many other countries with minorities. There are two key distinctions. First, minorities in Estonia study mostly or partly in their own native language, meaning that the quality of their education is not based on the proficiency of state language, which is often the case for lower educational achievements. The second issue is related to larger socio-economic inequality. As mentioned above, the socio-economic cleavage between the minorities and Estonians exists in Estonia, but it is smaller than in other Western European countries (Lindemann 2013; Vetik and Helemäe 2011). In addition, PISA results show that there are no major differences in school background and organizational settings.

An ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study) 2009 study (Toots 2011) showed that interest in political and societal topics is higher amongst the schools with Russian language instruction, but in Estonian schools, students rate their knowledge of politics higher than their peers from Estonian–Russian schools. In addition, the same

study showed that minority students' knowledge about democracy, rule of law, civil rights, etc. is poor compared to their peers in Estonian schools (ibid, p. 35). A similar divide occurs from the perspective of teachers. The biggest difference is in teachers' approach of developing knowledge about social, political, and public institutions in the civics class. In Estonian schools, 49% of teachers thought it is important, but in Estonian–Russian schools, the figure was only 11% (ibid, p. 40). In contrast, teachers from Estonian–Russian schools seem to emphasize critical learning skills more than their Estonian peers. A more recent ICCS study (Toots and Idnurm 2018) shows that children who study in Russian schools know less about society and their civic participation is also lower and there are two main reasons for this. They claim that the Russian children are still looking for their role as citizens in Estonian society and that institutions are not so important for young people, and they conclude that value-based state identity strengthening could be an important part of active citizen participation.

In addition, as we will demonstrate later, the distinguishing of knowledge, skills, and values is crucial. In democratic citizenship education, more focus is needed on the aspect of practical skills, which is more complicated in the Estonian–Russian schools. There are three aspects to this issue. The first is related to the weaker state identity of minority students, and second is their relative lower socio-economic status, which means that their background knowledge of civics is already weaker, which means teachers have an even more salient role in this educational process. The third is that enhancing the practical skills and readiness to take an active role as a citizen needs more support and experience for the more detached students.

To sum up, the bilingual education system in Estonia fails to address the issues of minorities from two different aspects. First, students still struggle to achieve sufficient proficiency in the Estonian language, which has clear implications for their future studies and also for their future socio-economic status in general. Secondly, since the communities are separated also in terms of their media consumption, their common democratic citizenship is weaker in comparison to Estonians (Kaldur et al. 2017), which presents future problems in terms of their education and future as democratic citizens in Estonia. To be clear, it is not a problem in itself if people follow different media. The problem is if they do not follow Estonian media at all, as it is in some cases in practice (people follow the media of the Russian Federation). This means that the people even lack key information, not to mention sufficient knowledge of the host society, which in turn means that they lack the basis to act as democratic citizens in a state.

One of the solutions to the above-mentioned issue could be an institutional reform, which means implementing a "common" or "unitary school" system, where children with different native languages would study together. This could tackle the above-mentioned two problems: (1) students from minority backgrounds would achieve sufficient Estonian language skills, which would help them in the future in the labor market and therefore reduce the socio-economic inequalities; and (2) it would increase the democratic citizenship of minorities, which is a necessary component in order to be a successful citizen in Estonia. This model has not yet been implemented because of different political preferences and strategies, and there has been somewhat strong resistance from the Russian minority. However, recent studies (Kaldur et al. 2017) show that the majority of the Russian-speaking minority is now favoring this model and there is a rhetorical consensus in Estonian political parties, considering this issue.

2.2. Democratic Citizenship Education

Broadly, the good democratic citizen is a political agent who takes part regularly in politics locally and nationally, not just on primary and election day. Active citizens keep informed and speak out against public measures that they regard as unjust, unwise, or too expensive. They also openly support politics that they regard as just and prudent. Although they do not refrain from pursuing their own and their reference group's interests, they try to weigh the claims of other people impartially and listen to their arguments. They

are public meeting-goers and joiners of voluntary organizations who discuss and deliberate with others about the politics that will affect them all, and who serve their country not only as taxpayers and occasional soldiers but by having a considered notion of the public good that they genuinely take to the heart. The good citizen is a patriot (Shklar 1991, p. 5).

However, on a slightly deeper look, citizenship is a manifold concept (e.g., Heater 2004; Guillaume and Huysmans 2013; Shachar et al. 2017). This is further amplified in citizenship education where different approaches, aspects, and normative perspectives are complemented with the organizational and pedagogical considerations: whom to educate, via which structures, in which ways, with which aims, etc. (see e.g., Reid and Gill 2013).

Citizenship education can be a powerful tool for preparing and developing citizens for political and also broader societal and economic life (e.g., Crick 1998; Stoker et al. 2012; Westheimer 2015; Stoker [2006] 2016). Thus, it is potentially one of the key areas of education for empowering minority students.

Citizenship education can be studied as a focused course of civics or as the outcome of various courses that support some social and political competencies. An even broader perspective would follow a Dewey (1910) understanding of all education as integrating citizens and society through an approach based on democratic values and practices. In this paper, we focus on citizenship education as regulated by the government and conducted in general schools, i.e., civics. This allows studying how the public authorities seek to steer the preparation of citizens, and how it is implemented and experienced in practice.

From this perspective, citizenship education can be analyzed as policy design and implementation, combining top–down and bottom–up perspectives and emphasizing meaning-making (e.g., Jennings 1996; Spillane 2004; Lester et al. 2017). We start from the national framework curriculum for secondary school (Estonian Government 2011b) that establishes the general aims, objectives, competencies, and other items every school is expected to follow. Then, we study how these are further developed in the national curriculum of social studies and the implementation practices of civics teachers. Then, we move to the experiences and reflections of educational practice by teachers who teach at schools with minorities.

Teachers can be seen as street-level or front-line bureaucrats who engage people directly and shape the practice of implementation. The policy-making roles of street-level bureaucrats are based on two interrelated aspects in their positions: relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organizational authority. The position of street-level bureaucrats regularly permits them to make policy with respect to significant aspects of their interactions with citizens (Lipsky [1980] 2010, p. 13).

Street-level bureaucrats exercise wide discretion in decisions about citizens with whom they interact. This is also the case in teachers' decisions on the content of teaching. The individual actions of street-level bureaucrats are an important part of agency behavior. The discretion arises of the character of their professional activity that calls for human judgment that cannot be fully programmed and for what machines cannot substitute (Lipsky [1980] 2010, p. 161). Here, sensemaking is important in understanding how educators think about the implementation of policy and more broadly understand their work (Spillane 2004; Hogan et al. 2018; Tan 2017), including one's own role and strategy and how it relates to both the top–down and bottom–up contexts.

Partly opposite to this, Scott and Lawson (2002) express reservations about the efficiency of schools and teachers. They claim that a curriculum is not a neutral document. Any statement of what is to be learned is permeated with objectives and intentions. If learning outcomes are closely defined, it is both possible and likely that the achievement of those outcomes will be assessed and quantified. Manifest and palpable assessment goals—learning by objectives—inevitably lead to learning and teaching patterns that are dominated by the requirement to meet the defined and measurable objectives, leaving aside the ones that are difficult to measure. This is more powerfully expressed by Westheimer (2015, p. 19): due to standardization, "no teacher is left teaching".

We will not approach teaching as entirely top–down, mechanical, and performance measured, nor as developed entirely bottom–up by the street-level bureaucrats. This also means a middle way in terms of implementation studies. Traditional implementation studies have typically looked at whether bureaucrats' practices align with formulated policy goals (Hupe et al. 2015), or how lower-order bureaucrats carry out orders of higher-order principals (e.g., Brehm and Gates 1997). In the newer studies, researchers have turned their attention toward the practices influenced by policy as well as the ways in which these practices influence policy development (Raaphorst 2019). Our key focus will be on teachers, their understanding, and contexts, but we will discuss this in the broader picture of civics as a national policy resource.

The key aspects in citizenship education are knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Heater 2004, p. 343). Knowledge is related to facts, interpretation, and personal roles. Attitudes are related to self-understanding, respect for others, and values. Skills are related to intellect and judgment, communication, and action. This distinction is salient: a democratic citizenship policy should contain all three elements because only then do they complement each other.

2.3. The Practices of Curricula and Learning

In analyzing the Estonian civic education system, it is important to see how the curriculum is developed and how the learning process is happening. We will use an approach for curriculum analysis broadly based on Tyler (1949) and the perspective on the learning process broadly based on Dewey (1910). We see these as mutually complementing, not opposite.

Tyler (1949) provides a linear rationale for viewing, analyzing, and interpreting the curriculum, which is one of the most widespread ways to view curriculum as an instrument of education. His model consists of four basic principles: (1) defining the learning objectives, (2) establishing useful learning experiences, followed by (3) organizing learning experiences, and (4) evaluating the curriculum. The first step is considered to be the most important one, or as Tyler (1949, p. 3) has put it, "If we are to study an educational program systematically and intelligently, we must first be sure as to the educational objectives aimed at." Tyler sees education as experience; he approaches this from the perspective of the problem-solving process and sees assessments as evaluations rather than measurements.

Similarly, Dewey (1910) discusses education as the process of changing the habits of people. Dewey has stressed that when teachers teach—no matter if it is "good" or "bad"—students are still developing habits. The habits that children have acquired from their previous experiences work fine until they are encountered with problem-situations, something where their previous habits do not work anymore. This is where the learning takes place—when students encounter problem-situations, they reflect upon these, identify different possible solutions, and ideally find a contextual resolution to the case.

The aim of a problem-situation is to "generalize", but generalization should not be an end, rather as a means to better deal with future problems. The key idea of the Deweyan model of education is that the role of the teacher should be creating a problem-solving mindset in students.

We use the model of Taylor to elaborate on the Estonian curricula and civics course outline and Dewey educational practices in explaining the role of skills in democratic citizenship education.

3. Methods

The empirical research consisted of two parts. In the first part, the text of the high school framework curriculum and social subjects outline was analyzed via content analysis. In the second, semi-structured qualitative interviews with teachers from Estonians and Estonian–Russian schools were conducted, and they were analyzed also via content analysis. Our results are presented in three categories: curriculum analysis, teacher inter-

pretation, and discussion following democratic citizenship education in Estonian–Russian schools.

As stated above, our main research question is as follows: how would it be possible to use democratic citizenship education to decrease in the future the socio-economic inequality between different communities in Estonia? We have shown how inequality in socio-economic spheres is connected in the case of Estonia at least partly with democratic citizenship education and identify the challenges brought on a separated education system. Our empirical analysis research questions are the following:

1. What are the main findings in Estonian high school curricula and civics course subject outline? Are they comprehensible?
2. How is civic education presented in Estonian high school curricula and a civics course subject outline?
3. How do the civics teachers transform the regulations in high school curricula into the content of their subject? What is the role of the teacher agency in this process?
4. What are the specific challenges of teachers in relation to the students from the Russian minority in Estonia?

In Estonia, the core document for the content of education in general schools is the national framework curriculum that states both general aims, values, cross-curricular topics, etc. as well as the subject-related objectives, topics, etc. There is one national curriculum for basic schools (Estonian Government 2011a) (grades 1–9) and another for secondary school (grades 10–12); we focus on the latter. We study the curriculum on two levels. First, we analyze the general values, competencies, and cross-curricular themes that are in principle binding for all the subjects. Second, we will take a closer look at how this is elaborated in the civics subject outline.

As a next step, the semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with the civics teachers in secondary school who teach in Estonian–Russian schools or in schools with a majority of Russian background students. First, a draft framework for the interview was developed. This was based on our previous analysis of the national framework curriculum and civics subject outline. We had an interview frame, which was used based on the context (available in Estonian) and if needed, we added some question to discuss issues in-depth.

Then, the interview was piloted in an interview with a civics teacher and further developed based on the reflection of this experience. This was done via the Internet due to the COVID-19 situation. We followed the frame and elaborated upon the aspects in case of shallow answers but also encouraged the teachers to discuss the aspects they recognized as important to understand teachers' subjective perspectives and rationalization strategies as well as to further enhance our understanding of the practical educational context. We proceeded with the interviews up to the saturation of the sample, in a total of 10 interviews. We chose the people based on a set of predefined values: they had to have an experience in teaching civics class in Estonian–Russian language schools. We contacted teachers via various sources and used a snowball method to find other participants.

Saturation was assessed based on the new perspectives the interviewees presented on the teacher's role and teaching strategy. Before the interview, all the teachers received outlines of high school curricula and of civics subject themes. The use of the materials during the interviews was voluntary and teachers used them in different amounts. As the autonomy of teachers is significant, we approached them as experts.

We used content analysis, based on our research interests. Both authors analyzed the interviews separately, and later, we discussed the findings and then deliberated and synchronized the main findings, similarly to the curricula analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Curriculum Analysis

The framework curriculum starts with the underlying values, which are differentiated into two groups—humanistic (honesty, justice, etc.) and societal (freedom, democracy, etc.).

The curriculum goes on to outline the "culture and value competencies" (the title of the subsection) that consist of general humanistic and moral claims. The competencies also stress active citizenship.

The general objective of social studies is stated as "developing students' social competence", with the emphasis on "understanding the causes and effects of the social changes". This is followed by "knowing and respecting human rights and democracy" and other similar objectives that point to the obligations and rights of the citizen but are not treating the citizen as an active agent in society. The first mention of active citizens is in the aims of civics. From four area topics and 14 topics that are most emphasized, only two are directly related to the role of citizen. Most topics are connected to the level of knowledge, and in particular, they tackle the issues of society, politics, economy, and international relations. This means that on the level of citizenship, the citizens are mostly portrayed as rather "consumers" or passive subjects, not carriers of active democratic citizenship. To conclude, it can be said that the general aims of social studies relate vaguely to democratic citizenship.

The learning outcomes of social subjects are more specific. For example, it is written that the student must "know and value the principle of democracy", and it is essential that he identifies himself in society, taking into consideration his possibilities, ability to manage in a market economy, etc. Most of the topics are addressing the system level, ranging from national and local political and legal systems to societal stratification, consumer behavior, domestic and global economy, international political system, and the operation of the European Union. However, as in the general framework curriculum, also here the role of the citizen is in the background.

The framework syllabus (subject outline) of civics subject consists of two courses—"Governance of democratic society and citizen participation" and "Economy and world politics". The first one is of key interest here, as it covers the political, social, and legal topics.

The subject outline mostly focuses on introducing different institutions but lacks the connections of citizens to institutions. There is a significant mismatch between the course description and the learning outcomes that emphasized personal development as a citizen. In the subject outline, the focus is on knowledge. Skills and attitudes are mentioned only briefly. There is a missing link to the citizen being an agent, having an active role. The second "civics" course is not directly focused on the role of the citizen, encompassing the general operation of the economy and the international system.

In sum, the national documents contain elements of democratic citizenship but do not present a balanced and systematic strategy remaining eclectic and partly controversial. For example, if we take the well-known divide of normative perspective to citizenship (liberal democratic, civic republican, and national communitarian) (see Delanty 2000; Lister and Pia 2008), then all the citizenship normatives are represented, but the active citizen, which is mostly related to civic republican normative, is the least mentioned one. Our result show that it does not present a balanced a systematic strategy from the state, meaning it is eclectic and partly controversial.

The emphasis on knowledge leaves skills and values little addressed. We interpret it as a problematic point. This shows that on the declarative level, the democratic citizenship is addressed, but it is unclear what kind of "good citizens" the formal education system should shape. Thus, the role of the teacher as the practical designer and implementer of the course becomes substantive. However, the current teacher training curricula provide at best a limited basis for this (Jakobson et al. 2019). In addition, as we have shown previously, the students in Estonian–Russian schools are already lagging behind in this field, which means that without a clear aim and implementation policy, they might be even more marginalized in the future.

4.2. Teachers' Perspective

In this subsection, we first examine the understanding of teachers about citizenship education and therefore the role of the citizen. We also address the issue of national curricula. This is followed by the peculiarities of the Estonian–Russian school system in Estonia. The outlines from interviews are translated by the authors.

The interviewed civics teachers are broadly familiar with the secondary school curricula as could be expected. They have a general knowledge of curriculum aims, knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The curriculum is considered to be a fundamental and basic part of the teaching framework but is not taken as a strict guideline, rather as a broad guidance and a large pool of objectives and topics, which is used by teachers to "cherry-pick" the knowledge, values, and skills they wish to address. They did not find that any of the curriculum aspects are irrelevant and mostly agreed with these, but some added further humanistic values there (e.g., honesty, creativity, personal integrity).

> **Respondent:** They are like, fantasy, in some ways, fantasy, maybe, it is like this idealistic approach.

> **Respondent:** In high school, they are very abstract, that the student is a responsible citizen, who knows the main principles of how the society works and this is what I have formulated the most for myself.

Teachers stressed that their job is to influence and prepare the students for adult life in society. This emphasis fits well with the idea of street-level bureaucracy, where the self-aware bureaucrats see themselves as confident and influential actors, e.g., as "activist teachers" (Leonard and Roberts 2016).

> **Respondent:** If we talk about competencies, then you need to stress that the student would be aware of what democracy is and why we need it.

> **Respondent:** Well, hmm, I think, it is important that the students know how the state is operating. And another thing, that all citizens should know, is their basic rights and responsibilities.

> **Respondent:** I personally educate a simple person, who feels himself needed in the society, who feels that he can achieve a change in society, who knows his rights, and well, that he is a fully valued member of society.

Teachers reflected on their active role in the civics course. They saw that it was a two-sided role—on one hand, they had the freedom to design the course, but at the same time, it was time-consuming and therefore also depends a lot on the teacher's agency.

> **Respondent:** And every teacher like, he swims in the sea, he doesn't have a boat, he needs to build it himself, and I tell you, I tell you honestly, this is very hard, that I, as a teacher, have to develop all these materials, first of all, it is tiresome, second, well, maybe I'm not competent enough for this.

> **Respondent:** Estonian teachers are actually very happy, she is very free in her decisions, she chooses her own method and the way she does things, but there is the thing that for active learning methods, the curriculum is too much.

Teachers mostly discussed knowledge, while the attitudes and practices were not reflected in the same depth. As a result, democratic citizenship is largely unattained, or to be more precise, it is mostly addressed on the level of knowledge. However, to an extent, this is balanced by the personalized design of the course. As mentioned before, teachers' agency plays a key role in the teaching process. All the interviewees stressed their role of the "banking model" education, where they are the holders of information and transfer it to students. For this, they used their personal experience and practical examples to engage students meaningfully. Teachers did not believe that they had a significant influence on students' values and skills; rather, they hoped that by focusing on knowledge, the values and skills will follow.

> **Respondent:** Oh, that state tries to achieve via curriculum, I'll tell you honestly, that this curriculum doesn't do anything without a teacher, teachers always can shape the student like he wants and curriculum doesn't stop it...

> **Respondent:** Hmm, I think, they are enough to achieve, but at the same time, my experience as a teacher shows that they can't be always achieved. They are in some ways, like fantasy, it is this kind of idealistic approach.

While teachers are familiar with the curriculum, their personal reflection of their role and personalized teaching strategy (consciously or unconsciously) influenced the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they aimed to "transfer" to students. This reflects Dewey's idea of the role of the teachers' habits in the process of education and aligns our study with previous findings that teacher agency plays a salient role (Hogan et al. 2018; Tan 2017).

The teachers emphasized in-class interactive methods, such as group work, debates, and other practical exercises. Those methods were used to keep the students interested, to make the class more interesting. Most of them did not address methods as a possibility to influence the values and skills of students. So, in general, the practical assignments provided students with even more knowledge but no real practice in being a "citizen". Teachers were not overly optimistic about the perspective of students obtaining practical experience outside the classroom. For example, the connection to local government, politics, and communities seemed much to depend on the personal connection of teachers with these institutions.

> **Respondent:** By using these active teaching methods, you actually can develop and bring forward those values and skills.

> **Respondent:** If Narva wouldn't be that far, from the center, where all these meetings take place. No, we don't do these kinds of simulations.

> **Respondent:** Yes, I have heard about these methods, but I don't use them. Well, yes, I know, that people use them.

Teachers also discussed the overload of the curriculum. The course has a vast number of topics but not nearly enough time to cover all of them. The topics range from the basic knowledge about the state and institutions up to the economy, European Union, and international politics. Teachers reflected on the need to make optimizing choices.

> **Respondent:** But the question is at the expense of what? I know that 20 min is not enough for discussion, there are different questions and then a question arises—should I deal with the structure of parliament or I forget about it and do it next time? Okay, that is possible, but in the next class, there is another topical issue, for example, the closing of EU borders? And again, the question arises, how?

> **Respondent:** And yes, if you want to do something practical, or some active learning method, it takes time and because of that, you can not introduce some basic principles of European social welfare.

4.3. Challenges with Democratic Citizenship Education in Estonian–Russian Schools

In comparison to Estonian students, teachers who taught Russian students mentioned several key issues that differentiate them from the teachers in Estonian schools. One of the key issues was the different media sphere where students and their families live, which is often the one of the Russian Federation. This is problematic from to aspects: first of all, teachers need to put in extra work to provide the basics contextual information and knowledge on Estonian society to the Estonian–Russian-school students in comparison to the students who study in Estonian schools, meaning that this leaves less time and possibilities to develop other aspects of democratic citizenship. Secondly, Russian state-sponsored media propaganda is often promoting anti-democratic tendencies, which also undermines principles of democratic citizenship.

Respondent: Oh yes, Estonian news—they do not read it. And of course, it depends, if the students are more focused on learning, they follow Estonian news. But if I look at the typical high school, then I need to force them to follow Estonian news.

Respondent: Teachers can't influence a lot; well, the children come from home, then the role of the teachers is to guide them and to offer alternatives to what is taught to them from home.

Respondent: Just recently was this simulation, but unfortunately, I didn't invite my students, my students are in that sense more passive, but maybe they wouldn't be so passive if Narva would not be so far from the center, where all these meetings are happening. So no, we don't do these simulation activities.

Respondent: Well, we have to fight very viciously with this Russian propaganda machine, and refute a lot of myths like this.

Respondent: It is largely the question of the information sphere and in what country they think they live. Well, if they need to draw a president, then some of them draw Lukashenka.

A related feature is the underlying cultural differences that influence not only attitudes but also self-esteem and learning habits. In case a student is less interested in society and politics and less disposed to work with skills and attitudes, it will be harder for the teacher to develop him or her toward more agency and engagement.

Respondent: I think it influences because my students are used to just memorizing things.

Respondent: Since I have a lot of students from Russian families, then, well, very often they try to explain to me that look, for Russians, everything is different from Estonians, we value totally different things.

Respondent: It also depends on the home environment, well, if the family is with lesser culture and societal interests...

Another main issue that teachers brought up was the separation of skills, knowledge, and practices. The majority of the teachers agreed with our finding in curriculum analysis, that while the role of active citizens was emphasized in general, the curriculum does not elaborate the practical objectives, strategies, examples, and possibilities to implement it.

Respondent: One thing is theory and another thing is practice. They can be full of theories, but if they don't know how does it exactly work, then the theory is not very useful.

Respondent: Well, basically, I think you might be correct, but another thing is how to implement this practical learning, because the school here is quite conservative, and if you have, like, this, outside school activities, then, to be honest, it is very difficult. It is easier in Estonian schools.

Respondent: But yes, in that sense, doing it yourself, there is not clear enough of this in schools. Everybody is in classes, and they do a small PowerPoint presentation.

On the positive side, it is worth mentioning that all the students who reach the 12th grade in Estonia usually speak already fluent state language, so the issue of language is not so salient. The larger question is that the students with weaker language skills do not enter high school.

Respondent: But still, sometimes, you don't explain some things, don't discuss some things, because of my language skills and because of their inability to express their feelings in a foreign language.

Respondent: Those people, who get more forward, there are so few of them, the Russian-speaking ones.

Several teachers supported the institutional reform of the education system, to reduce segmentation. However, this is not enough. For developing democratic citizenship, we need to focus more on aspects such as enhancing personal and civic competences and agency, balancing the influence of the Russian media sphere and the home environment. In addition, more emphasis is needed upon the methodology and language skills of teachers. This will be further elaborated in the discussion part.

Respondent: We need a common education system. It is as easy as that.

Respondent: Yes, earlier language teaching, and I would like it to be two-sided.

5. Discussion

Our discussion is divided among two main lines: first, we will discuss the findings from the analysis of curriculum and teachers' interviews. Second, we will examine these results in a more general overview of the Estonian civics education sphere.

Estonia has clearly structured and elaborated national high school general curriculum and civics course subject outline. One of its main aims is to develop active citizens, but unfortunately, it does not provide comprehensive logic on how to achieve it. This is a classic example of policy design with an open implementation—the general aim is clearly stated, but the implementation of it is left largely to the street-level bureaucrats, in this case, the teachers. However, it is not clear that this is entirely planned, as there is a relative mismatch between the objectives and subject outline and there is little training for the teachers in terms of the content of civics. High school teachers in Estonia have a relatively large autonomy, which on one hand, allows them to individually design the course, but at the same time, it can be very time-consuming and challenging.

Based on research, by implementing the Taylor curricula analysis, even though the general curriculum has stated its goals and aims, the curriculum is still mostly knowledge-based, leaving the aspect of skill and values in the background. This is not sufficient to teach democratic citizenship to the students. In addition, following the Deweyan pragmatic education model, more focus is needed to develop the curriculum and teaching toward more practical examples, such as group work, role-play exercises, etc. and practice in the community, in order to learn via practice, not just on a theoretical basis, because democratic citizenship is not only theoretical but also it consists of practices—acts of citizenship.

Our interviews with teachers showed that there are few main points that need to be clarified and addressed. We address the issue from two perspectives: general and Estonian–Russian school specific. From the general perspective, the curriculum is overloaded with different topics and themes, and while it seems they might be covered with the length of 2×35 h in high school, in order to truly grasp the active citizen concepts, it is not sufficient. In addition, the curricula and teachers stress the importance of knowledge, which is crucial, but the levels of skills and values are therefore left in the background. The teacher's agency, from the Lipsky street-line bureaucratic theory, is two-sided: it provides teachers with autonomy but requires a tremendous effort from teachers.

The analysis of the interviews with Estonian–Russian school teachers revealed that they have some specific issues that require further attention. Therefore, teachers need to make an extra effort with the Estonian–Russian school students in order to increase their democratic citizenship. We see the emancipatory power of democratic citizenship in the next aspects: First of all, because of the lower language skill, a home influence that comes from a lower socio-economic status, and the Russian state media influence, students have lower knowledge of Estonian society and democratic practices, which means that teachers need to emphasize the basic elements of the society even more. Secondly, teachers need more time and to put in extra effort in order to enhance the possibilities, knowledge, skills, and values in order for these students to participate in society as democratic citizens.

Our results show that even when teachers' autonomy is large, this alone is not sufficient to reach the aims of citizenship education in Estonia. Some additional tools and resources are needed, especially with regard to time and solutions for interaction and practicing. The current situation has its benefits, but it also can further increase the inequal-

ity in education, based on teachers' capacities and willingness to put in the extra work. More emphasis is needed toward methodological issues, such as how to develop practices of democratic citizenship, not only the knowledge. This could be achieved not only by changes in curricula and civics course subject outline but also in teacher training.

6. Conclusions

From a broader perspective, the Estonian separated school system reproduces the inequality not only in socio-economic or labor market aspects but also in terms of common democratic citizenship. The current solution in citizenship education remains rather thin, and thus, pre-existing differences in civic competences are not sufficiently mediated. Furthermore, it is doubtful as to whether it reaches its aims and objectives in Estonian–Russian schools or in Estonian schools, which means that not only democratic citizenship is not reached on the same level, but this also has negative effects in the future considering the larger socio-economic cleavage.

This study, among others, shows the potential solution to this issue by proposing the idea of the common or united education system in Estonia. However, the development of citizenship education is not only a matter of institutional reform. More emphasis is needed upon the critical skills to balance the Russian media influence and sometimes also the home environment. This is necessary in order to reduce marginalization and to develop democratic citizens, not just subjects. There are different options for this, for example on the institutional level of the curriculum design, but also on a more practical level, the methodology of teaching, such as interactive methods, for example, group work, discussion, simulations, etc.

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Reaching the Hard-To-Reach with Civic Education on the European Union: Insights from a German Model Project

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Abstract: So-called "hard-to-reach" learners with a lower level of formal education have been identified as a "challenge" for civic education and have been neglected with regard to civic education in the past. However, these young people do deal with political processes that relate to their everyday lives; they simply do not perceive these processes as political. The same holds true for the topic of the European Union. To date, hardly any teaching concepts and learning materials for civic education on the European Union that are specially designed for hard-to-reach youth have been available. This paper discusses the relevance, challenges, and promising approaches used to address this severe deficit in the research and practice of civic education regarding the EU. It focuses on the situation in Germany and presents the Jean Monnet project "*Junge Menschen erreichbar machen mit politischer Europabildung*" (JUMPER). Here, workshops with a focus on the European Union are developed—specifically tailored to the needs of the target group, carried out with pupils in the vocational transition system, and accompanied by systematic evaluation. Finally, conclusions are drawn for civic education and research regarding hard-to-reach youth.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the European Union (EU) plays a vital role in the lives of people living in the EU. Ongoing European integration has led to an increasing number of decisions being made at the European level that have a direct impact on people's everyday lives. However, an alienation of people from the EU is noticeable, Brexit being the most prominent result. Wilhelm Knelangen (2015) described a "trust crisis" that could eventually become threatening for the European project. It is evident that people, especially those with a low level of formal education, are becoming disentangled from the political system and are not adequately represented on the political stage (Brinkmann 2009; Vester 2009; Sloam 2013a, 2013b; Carpenter and Taru 2016). This could threaten the political stability of a country (Detjen 2007) or of the European Union (Leruth et al. 2017). Research shows that people who directly experience the advantages of the EU tend to have a more positive attitude toward the EU compared to people who do not experience these advantages—and such a lack of positive experiences often goes along with a lower socio-economic status (Grimm et al. 2017; Hix 2009). Eurosceptical attitudes and a low level of willingness to participate often go hand in hand with a distinct lack of knowledge about the European Union (Westle 2015). These results call for a European citizenship education that specifically addresses people who are persuaded that they cannot influence European politics (Eis 2013).

This contribution focuses on civic education regarding the European Union for young hard-to-reach learners. It sheds light on the relevance and challenges of civic education on the EU, specifically

regarding young, hard-to-reach learners and presents promising approaches to providing learning opportunities on the European Union tailored to the needs of this specific and often neglected target group. Looking at the situation in Germany, the vocational transition system is described as a suitable, but largely neglected, context for reaching so-called "hard-to-reach" youth with civic education on the EU. Finally, the Jean Monnet project "*Junge Menschen erreichbar machen mit politischer Europabildung*" (JUMPER) is presented, which has designed civic education measures based on existing research as well as on feedback from the target group that was involved in the development of the materials. Moreover, the design and challenges of the systematic empirical research accompanying the JUMPER workshops will be presented and discussed.

The paper is structured as follows: After this introduction, an overview is given regarding the relevance and main goals of civic education on the EU, with a special focus on the situation in Germany. Next, the relevance and specific challenges of civic education for young hard-to-reach learners, as well as promising didactic approaches, are pointed out. These outlines are followed by a presentation of the JUMPER project, highlighting the characteristics of the German vocational transition system, which serves as the project's starting point for successfully connecting hard-to-reach youth with EU education, and presenting the workshops and design of the accompanying empirical research. A final outlook will draw conclusions for civic education and research regarding hard-to-reach youth in Germany and beyond.

2. Civic Education on the European Union in Germany

The European Union (EU) is the most closely interconnected transnational political union worldwide, and its political decisions have significant effects on policies and on the lives of the people who live within its borders. Estimates vary, but research suggests that at least one third of the legislation passed at the federal level in Germany in recent years can be traced back to a 'European impetus' (Töller 2008, 2014; König and Mäder 2008). The politics of its member states can no longer be sufficiently understood without including the European level, but at the same time, European Union policies cannot be influenced solely via participation at the national level. Besides extending its competencies to more policy fields, the EU's deepening dynamics also mean a change in the methods of political decision-making that foresees more majority decisions in the Council of Ministers, awards more participation rights to the directly elected European Parliament, and makes it possible for the population to participate in the European legislative process, not with referendums, but with a European Citizens' Initiative. In the European multi-level system, EU-related political knowledge and competencies thus have increased in importance for the Union's citizens over the last few decades (cf., (Oberle 2015)). The ongoing European integration requires civic education on the EU in order to facilitate (young) people's understanding of these processes, their ability to judge, and their capacity to participate politically on the European level.

Because only civic education given at school has the potential to reach all young citizens, it carries a particular responsibility for European civic education that also opens up great opportunities. Kris Grimonprez (2020) argues in favor of the integration of an EU dimension into national civic education curricula. The promotion of teaching and learning about Europe and the European Union at school is furthermore on the agenda of different European actors, such as the European European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education (2016).

In Germany, the European Union was a rather neglected topic of civic education in schools and extracurricular activities in the past and not much focused upon by civic education research either. However, increasing cooperation on the European level has led to a re-examination of this topic in civic education in Germany (Rappenglück 2014, p. 392). Already in 1978, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany KMK) emphasized the teaching of Europe-oriented competencies as an important task of schools, including the subject civics, in order to enable pupils to live a successful life in Europe. It was

updated in 1990 and 2008 and is currently, during the German Council presidency, 2020, again under revision, underlining the continuing significance of teaching about Europe and the European Union at school in the face of current challenges. These demands are mirrored by the school curricula of all 16 German *Länder*, which require dealing with the European Union in secondary level civic education at general schools (Geyr et al. 2007).

Drawing on empirical research that underlines a lack of knowledge and understanding of the European Union in the general public as well as among European and German youth, Monika Oberle and Johanna Forstmann emphasize that "a knowledgeable approach to the complex entity 'EU' cannot be acquired incidentally; instead, it requires intentional civic education" (Oberle and Forstmann 2015, p. 82). The overarching goal of civic education remains the "development of political maturity (*Mündigkeit*)" (Society for Civic Education Didactics and Civic Youth and Adult Education 2004, p. 9). Based on the model of political competency by Detjen et al. (2012), they propose a catalogue of competencies with which pupils should be provided in civic education classes at school. This catalogue includes conceptual understanding of the EU; interest in the EU; a positive, EU-related internal efficacy (trust in one's own political abilities with regard to the EU) as well as fundamental trust in the EU, its institutions, and its responsiveness; and EU-related abilities to judge political questions and take political action (Oberle and Forstmann 2015, p. 82). Taking a closer look at EU-related political knowledge, the following aspects can be identified as basic knowledge about the EU: general orientational knowledge, knowledge regarding the European institutions and legislative procedures, the competences of the EU as well as modes of citizen participation (Oberle 2012).

It can be concluded that civic education on the EU is of high relevance for people living in the European Union to gain at least orientational knowledge on this unique political entity as well as a feeling of political self-efficacy and fundamental political competencies in order to enable people living in the EU to participate in the (European) political sphere. National politics can no longer be approached without a greater view on the European level. This need for a European perspective with regard to political knowledge and skills applies to all societal groups. However, some groups are disadvantaged when it comes to civic education. A target group often neglected in civic education is focused in the following chapter: hard-to-reach youth.

3. Civic Education for Young Hard-To-Reach Learners: Relevance, Challenges, and Promising Approaches

The international network "Networking European Citizenship Education" (NECE) defines hard-to-reach learners as "educationally and socially disadvantaged people who are often 'forgotten' by the mainstream of citizenship education or left behind in schools or other educational facilities". (Kakos et al. 2016, p. 10) This target group is viewed as a "challenge" for civic education (Detjen 2009, p. 101). Research shows a connection between a low level of formal education and a low level of political interest (Schneekloth and Albert 2019, pp. 51–52). Helmut Bremer opens up another perspective by explaining a putative low political interest with mechanisms of exclusion: individuals with a low level of formal education tend to abstain from political participation because they do not feel entitled to participate (Bremer 2012, pp. 30–33). This assumption is backed by a study from 2012 which concludes that young people from "underprivileged" milieus are in fact interested politically—their lack of interest in "institutionalized politics" stems from ignorance of political processes as well as a missing link to their everyday lives (Kohl and Calmbach 2012, pp. 21–22). However, these young people deal with political processes that relate to their everyday lives; they simply do not perceive these processes as political. Therefore, the authors conclude that these young people's political agenda is "invisible" because the scope to assess their political interest is too narrow (Kohl and Calmbach 2012, p. 23). Furthermore, Heinz-Ulrich Brinkmann points out a shifting of political representation of these groups: the low level of political participation of "underprivileged" groups leads to a lack of political representation of their concerns and needs (Brinkmann 2009, p. 69).

Putting an emphasis on addressing young people with civic education appears to be especially worthwhile because they are in the course of becoming a "political generation": their patterns of political activity are in the process of development and their political attitudes are still subject to change (Baumert et al. 2016; Brinkmann 2009). Civic education in schools is of utmost importance as is lays the basis for the acquisition of knowledge and competencies in later years: the political knowledge one possesses as an adolescent is a decisive predictor for the level of political information one possesses in adult life. In addition, political attitudes and behavioral patterns of the adolescence tend to persevere throughout adult life (Oberle 2012).

In recent years, civic education opportunities for young hard-to-reach learners have been increasingly discussed among experts (for instance, see the following edited volumes: (Drews 2009; Widmaier and Nonnenmacher 2012)). While "classical" education opportunities usually do not seem to work well for this target group, there are some promising approaches that will be presented in the following paragraphs.

It has become evident that schools play a central role in civic education. As individuals with a lower level of formal education do not often frequent extracurricular civic education opportunities, schools of basic secondary education and vocational education are often the only place where these pupils come into contact with civic education (Brinkmann 2009, p. 90). An analysis of data of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016 strongly suggests the need for high quality civic education in schools—especially for pupils originating from disadvantaged households (Deimel et al. 2020). Based on their study on the invisible political agenda of young people, Wiebke Kohl and Marc Calmbach conclude that civic education needs to engage in "translation" in order to make political content accessible for hard-to-reach youth (Kohl and Seibring 2012, p. 25). Friedrun Erben, Heike Schlottau, and Klaus Waldmann edited a volume on civic education for hard-to-reach groups in 2011 in which principles for the design of civic education opportunities for this target group were identified. These are (a) subject orientation (participants are seen as individuals capable of judging and acting, not just as objects of teaching), (b) recognition and respect (participants are perceived as equal interlocutors), (c) participation (participants have the opportunity to participate), and (d) action orientation (development of real opportunities to act) (Erben et al. 2013, pp. 27–45). These principles are very similar to the didactic principles applied to civic education in general: targeting the addressees, learning from examples, controversy orientation, action-orientation, and science orientation (see, for instance, (Sander 2014)).

As a central success factor for civic education efforts targeting hard-to-reach youth, Heinz-Ulrich Brinkmann identifies closeness to everyday life and the living environment, e.g., through using social media and including locations or events frequented by youth ((Brinkmann 2009, pp. 81–82); see also, (Hradil 2012, p. 24)). Furthermore, he names "Edutainment"—teaching formats that do not put an emphasis on political learning but on learners' entertainment and on pointing out links to their everyday life—as a useful method for civic education. Conveying political content in the course of youth work may be successful (Brinkmann 2009, p. 80); this is backed by Benedikt Sturzenhecker, who also believes that civic education in youth centers is a promising approach (Sturzenhecker 2013). Arne Busse et al., summarizing successful approaches applied by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, add computer games and participative approaches, leading to immediate feelings of success to the list of learning opportunities that have proven to be successful (Busse et al. 2012). Another promising approach is the concept of essential reduction (*Elementarisierung*), a procedure to reduce the complexity of political content. This concept was initially proposed by Siegfried Schiele and has since been discussed by many scholars (Detjen 2011; Kohl and Seibring 2012, p. 8; Schiele 2012).

Christian Ernst and Claudia Nickel published a piece on principles for successful civic education on the European Union, especially for hard-to-reach target groups, and identified the following factors: start out from existing competencies of the participants, create open and informal learning situations (e.g., artistic and creative approaches), choose tangible topics, show how to critically deal with information, and provide distinctive pedagogical companionship, intensive supervision, and support

when it comes to mobility opportunities (Ernst and Nickel 2008, pp. 35–37). These can be used for orientation when designing target group specific learning opportunities on the EU.

A specific promising method for civic education with hard-to-reach groups is the use of simulation games (cf., (Petrik and Rappenglück 2017; Bursens et al. 2018; Guasti et al. 2015)). There is empirical evidence showing that political simulation games can facilitate access to politics and the European Union—even for participants who initially show only little or no interest in the matter. Playing the role of an EU politician (e.g., member of the European Parliament, Council member) and actively taking part in political negotiations and decision-making during the game can exercise an ice-breaking effect and can help overcome prejudices with regard to politics and the European Union (Oberle et al. 2018, 2020; Oberle and Leunig 2016).

There is empirical evidence that a low level of knowledge about the European Union correlates positively with eurosceptic attitudes (Westle 2015; Oberle 2012). Those experiencing the advantages of the European Union in everyday life, e.g., by participating in mobility programs, manifest more positive attitudes towards the EU as compared to those not directly experiencing these advantages (Grimm et al. 2017, p. 225; Hix 2009, pp. 59–64). Although civic education on the European Union is of special relevance for disconnected youth with a lower level of formal education, hardly any teaching concepts and learning material are available that are especially designed for hard-to-reach learners. One of the few exceptions is the publication "EUropa—Was geht für dich?", a brochure published by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, specifically produced for this target group (Oberle and Stamer 2019). So far, how to successfully convey EU-related competencies to hard-to-reach youth remains basically unexplored. The JUMPER project specifically addresses these desiderata: both its didactic approaches and the design of its accompanying empirical study will be presented in the following section.

4. Civic Education on the EU for Hard-To-Reach Learners: The Jean Monnet Project JUMPER

The Jean Monnet Project "Reaching the hard-to-reach with political education on the European Union" ("*Junge Menschen erreichbar machen mit politischer Europabildung*" (JUMPER)) aims at facilitating civic education on the European Union that is specifically tailored to the needs of young hard-to-reach individuals. In the course of the project, a workshop focusing on the EU will be carried out ten times with a total of 150 young, hard-to-reach participants. Following the participants' feedback and the accompanying evaluation, the workshop concept will be further optimized. The final concept, including all material, will be disseminated through training seminars for multipliers (e.g., teachers, social workers) and a closing conference, which, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, has been rescheduled for spring 2021.

JUMPER's target group are 15 to 27 year-olds who are attempting to acquire the competencies required for vocational education and training or integration into the labor market. In Germany, about 5.9% of every cohort drop out of school without obtaining a school leaving certificate—this amounts to about 50,000 young people every year (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018, p. 121; Deutscher Caritasverband 2019). In recent years, it is observable that the number of young people leaving school without a certificate is increasing. Many of these individuals with a low level of formal education then enroll in the vocational transition system—which therefore seems to be a promising starting point for providing civic education to hard-to-reach youth who do not often voluntarily attend extracurricular civic education measures.

4.1. The German Vocational Transition System

The so-called vocational transition system as a part of the German education system is located on the border between formal education at school and the labor market. This system consists of various measures, which can be divided into two strands: (a) measures of the Federal Employment Agency, characterized by close cooperation with companies and (b) school-based measures. These school-based measures lie within the area of responsibility of the 16 different *Länder*; therefore, their exact arrangement

varies throughout Germany. However, there are several similarities, and this second strand of measures comprises education and training measures that are inferior to a qualified vocational training measure and do not lead to a recognized qualification. The focus of these measures is rather the identification and promotion of the individual's competencies, and is aimed at integrating them into the labor market. The goal is the start of vocational training leading to a recognized qualification or taking an employment opportunity. In some cases, the belated obtainment of a school leaving certificate through participation in measures of the vocational transition system is possible (Konsortium Bildungsberichterstattung 2006, p. 79).

An overview of the different compositions of the vocational transition system in Germany was arranged by Tobias Brändle, who calls the entire vocational transition system a "storage system": the pupils are provided with an opportunity to acquire competencies they are missing for a successful integration into the labor market. The vocational transition system, therefore, can be viewed as a compensation system (Brändle 2012, p. 128) for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies that were not obtained through regular education at school.

In 2016, about 303,000 young people were newly enrolled in the vocational transition system (for a comprehensive overview of the German education system, including a location of the vocational transition system, see (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training 2019)). About 14.5% of them took part in measures of the Federal Employment Agency (first strand of the vocational education system). About 35.8% of the pupils are instructed in *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr/einjährige Berufseinstiegsklassen* (a part of the second strand of the vocational education system) and the largest faction (37.8%) visit *Berufsfachschulen*, which is pre-vocational training that can be credited in later vocational training phases. The latter belongs to the second strand as well and lies within the area of responsibility of the *Länder*. The remaining 12% of the pupils are enrolled in other measures of the vocational transition system that will not be further discussed in this paper (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018, p. 138).

Over the last few years, it has become evident that the share of pupils with foreign nationalities in the vocational transition system is rising. In 2018, 36% of these pupils did not have German citizenship. Also notable is that 41% of the pupils with foreign citizenship enrolled in the German vocational transition system have not obtained any school leaving certificate, as opposed to 25% of pupils with German citizenship not having obtained one. Most common is a basic school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*, 46.5%), followed by a general school leaving certificate (*Realschulabschluss*, 26.5%). A small number of pupils in the vocational transition system (2.8%) scored a qualification for university entrance (*Abitur*) (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018, p. 139).

The JUMPER project focuses on pupils attending the so-called *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr/ Berufseinstiegsklassen* (BVJ/BEK) (for a detailed overview, see (Brändle 2012, pp. 100, 109)); therefore, the following paragraphs provide a more detailed insight into these specific measures. The distinct characteristics of the measures BVJ/BEK can be described as follows: they are pre-vocational measures aimed at providing pupils with competencies and skills allowing them to start vocational training or take up employment. Pupils are usually educated in two areas of the labor market in order to gain orientation with regard to their occupational choices and opportunities. The time spent in these measures is not credited to reduce the time spent in vocational training programs. It is, however, usually possible to obtain a basic school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) at the end of the measure, which lasts one or two school years, depending on the *Länder*. Due to the federalized structure of the vocational transition system in Germany, these two measures cannot be separated accurately and they carry different denominations throughout Germany. In the following, the term *Berufsvorbereitungsjahr/Berufseinstiegsklasse* (BVJ/BEK) is used to describe those measures that share the characteristics outlined above. Brändle (2012) assembled a detailed itemization of the different measures.

To be eligible for participation in the BVJ/BEK, pupils usually have to prove completion of mandatory full-time education. The BVJ/BEK usually lasts one school year, and it is possible to

hereby obtain a school leaving certificate. The aim of this measure is passage into vocational training, and some *Länder* also aim for direct integration into the labor market without prior vocational training or specific qualifications (Brändle 2012, pp. 98–99). Apart from occupational orientation, participants usually receive socio-pedagogical support to address individual deficits during the BVJ/BEK (for instance, see Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium 2011, which provides details on the federal state of Lower-Saxony).

Anja Besand closely examined the situation of civic education in vocational schools and concludes that it is a marginalized subject. Through interviews with teachers, she identifies a variety of challenges that are associated with the teaching of civic education in vocational schools, namely a lack of recognition regarding the importance and relevance of the subject (and, consequently, out-of-field teaching), the pupils' (assumed) lack of interest in politics, and the heterogeneity of the student body, as well as the myriad of different pathways at vocational schools. Pupils enrolled in the BVJ/BEK are identified as a particularly challenging group when it comes to civic education teaching (Besand 2014, pp. 121–50).

About 108,500 individuals started the measure BVJ/BEK in 2016 (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018, p. 138). Taking a closer look at this group based on a study carried out by the *Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung* (BIBB) in 2011 shows that one quarter of the pupils taking part in BVJ/BEK had either not graduated from school or had graduated from a special needs school. Fifty-eight percent of the pupils had completed secondary education with a basic school leaving certificate. A second finding from this study is the low formal education level of the pupils' parents. While 23% of the parents did not complete vocational education and training and reached a general school leaving certificate (*Realschulabschluss*), at maximum, 32% of the parents have reached a basic school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) and completed vocational education and training (Beicht and Eberhard 2013, pp. 15–16). Forty percent of the pupils in the BVJ/BEK had a migration background (Beicht and Eberhard 2013, pp. 15–16). While the gender ratio seems well-balanced in the 2011 study, newer data from 2018 show a larger share of male pupils in the vocational transition system: 65.5% male, 34.5% female (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2018, p. 315; calculations by the authors).

4.2. The Workshops: Didactic Concept and Evaluation

During the JUMPER project, a total of 10 workshops, with about 150 pupils overall of the BVJ/BEK, will be conducted by two trainers of the University of Goettingen. They will each last two full school days (usually from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.). The advantage of carrying out the workshops in a school setting is that it gives a certain level of continuity among the participants. Additionally, for the evaluation of the workshops, it is vital that a majority of the participants participates throughout the two days of the workshop. As some of the pupils work in the afternoons or have other obligations—or their attention span is limited—the duration of the workshop is aligned with the duration of a regular school day. Because classes in the vocational transition system are usually small (about 8–10 pupils), two or more classes will be combined for the workshops.

Most of the participants will take a closer look at the European Union for the first time during the workshop. During the development of the workshop elements, it was assumed that the young people only have little knowledge about the European Union and that they are unaware of the EU's relevance for their everyday lives. Research shows that text-based approaches are not suitable for young, hard-to-reach youth. Therefore, JUMPER focuses on activity-oriented, playful approaches, because they appear most promising for the work with young, hard-to-reach youth: the two-day workshops are designed as "special events". The JUMPER project is aimed at rousing the participants' curiosity regarding the European Union. Throughout the workshop, the pupils will be familiarized with basic knowledge on the EU (e.g., history, institutions, functioning of the EU) and they will learn where and how to find information on the EU and what opportunities they have to make their voices heard on the European level.

The workshops, scheduled for autumn 2020, will begin with interactive icebreakers, allowing the participants to get to know the workshop facilitators as well as each other, if they have not met before. In the next step, links between the European Union and the pupils' everyday lives are highlighted. The participants have the opportunity to reveal previous knowledge about the EU and add topics they are particularly interested in to the workshop. Thereafter, the history of the European Union is briefly presented in an interactive format. A focus of the workshop's first day is the functioning of the EU, with a special view to the institutions, in order to prepare the pupils for the second day of the workshop. At the end of the day, the participants examine decisions regarding plastic pollution on the European level. The central element of the JUMPER workshops is a simulation game that takes place on day 2. It was specifically designed for the target group. The Berlin-based company Planpolitik (www.planpolitik.de) was contracted to develop this simulation game. The participants take on the roles of members of the European Parliament from different countries and different political backgrounds who have to decide on future rules regarding packaging material made from plastic in the EU. The simulation game's topic was chosen because of its tangibility: Plastic packaging of fruit and vegetables is a topic that young people can relate to, the different lines of conflict around this topic are easily traceable, and the plastic pollution is not as emotionally charged as other topics, such as, e.g., migration, which helps create a fact-based discussion. For this reason, pupils have little difficulty representing an opinion that is not their own during the discussion.

At the end of every workshop, a person who is involved in activities on the European level is scheduled to visit. These guests are either members of the European Parliament (MEP), local politicians with a focus on EU politics, or young activists who are involved in pan-European youth groups, such as the Young European Federalists, for instance. The workshop participants prepare the visit, questions are collected throughout the workshops, and the pupils can present the results of their simulation game to their guest in order to receive an idea of how this issue could be decided in real life at the European level. If members of the European Parliament visit the workshop, pupils have a chance to profit from first-hand experience from the European Parliament. However, due to the European Parliament's schedule, MEPs are not always available. The workshop organizers prepare the guests for their visit, making sure they are able to make a connection between the workshop participants and the European Union.

All workshops are to be evaluated. The evaluation design includes a survey at three measuring points: participants are asked to fill out a questionnaire before the workshop (pre), after the workshop (post), and a few weeks after the workshop (follow-up). The questionnaire is aimed at assessing the effects of the workshop (short-term and in a longer perspective) as well as eliciting feedback on the methods and materials from the participants. In addition, EU-related orientations of the participants (knowledge, attitudes, motivations, and readiness to act) as well as success factors for political education on the EU for this specific target group are investigated. The evaluation follows a mixed-methods design: the questionnaire survey is complemented by guideline-based interviews with selected participants ($n = 20$) at all three measuring points in order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors mentioned above.

The evaluation's setup caters to the specific needs of the target group: the questionnaires are kept as short as possible with a strictly limited number of open-ended questions. Furthermore, the questionnaires are filled out online with the support of the two workshop facilitators. This approach has two central advantages: Every participant can fill out the questionnaire at their own pace, anonymously, and, in case of questions, the workshop facilitators can offer assistance. In addition, the participants, who are often not used to and are intrigued by larger amounts of reading material, enjoy filling out the questionnaire on the computer. The reduced reading requirement, with one question per page, helps the participants to complete the questionnaire successfully.

5. Outlook

Research on civic education as well as on civic education practice have not taken hard-to-reach groups into account (enough) in the past. This is despite the fact that individuals who can be classified as "hard-to-reach" for civic education make up a considerable part of society. Approaches to successful civic education on the European Union specifically for hard-to-reach youth are widely unexplored. Practical methods and ready-to-use materials for such an endeavor hardly exist. However, national and European politics are entangled to such a large extent nowadays that individuals require knowledge and competencies related to the EU in order to reach the ultimate goals of civic education: political maturity, ability to judge, and ability to act. The JUMPER project is aimed at closing this gap in civic education research and practice through developing and evaluating methods and material specifically designed for civic education on the EU for hard-to-reach youth. Choosing the German vocational transition system as a starting point seems promising as it is a formal educational context attended by the target group. These youth usually do not participate in extracurricular activities dealing with civic education; therefore, it is necessary to meet them where they are. Usually, the vocational transition system provides few learning opportunities with regard to civic education: this subject is marginalized in lower secondary and vocational schools and is often taught by teachers without subject-specific training.

Targeting this specific group in the rather formalized setting of BVJ/BEK also provides the opportunity for systematic evaluation of the intervention and optimization of the workshop concept and materials. Providing ready-to-use workshop concepts and materials with proven target group adequacy to teachers can help alleviate the reservations against teaching civic education to hard-to-reach youth. Evaluating the effectiveness of civic education interventions and collecting participants' feedback is important for the further development of such measures. Finding a practicable evaluation design to collect data on civic education measures for hard-to-reach youth is a central goal of the JUMPER project. Combined with the evaluation's results, the workshop concept focusing on Europe/the European Union as well as the material can be transferred to improve civic education to hard-to-reach youth in other countries. Moreover, the evaluation results identifying good practices with regard to the design of civic education measures specifically tailored to the needs of hard-to-reach youth could be the basis for the development of civic education measures focusing on different topics, in Germany and beyond.

Ethics Statement: The pupils participate voluntarily in the workshop and the accompanying evaluation. All data is anonymized, and written consent from participants and their parents was sought before the intervention. The intervention and research were permitted by the respective State Boards of Education (*Landesschulbehörden*).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

Citizenship Education for Political Engagement; A Systematic Review of Controlled Trials

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Abstract: Citizenship Education could play a pivotal role in creating a fairer society in which all groups participate equally in the political progress. But strong causal evidence of which educational techniques work best to create political engagement is lacking. This paper presents the results of a systematic review of controlled trials within the field based on transparent search protocols. It finds 25 studies which use controlled trials to test causal claims between Citizenship Education programs and political engagement outcomes. The studies identified largely confirm accepted ideas, such as the importance of participatory methods, whole school approaches, teacher training, and doubts over whether knowledge alone or online engagement necessarily translate into behavioral change. But the paucity of identified studies also points both to the difficulties of attracting funding for controlled trials which investigate Citizenship Education as a tool for political engagement and real epistemological tensions within the discipline itself.

1. Introduction

Despite the critical democratic role Citizenship Education could and should play in encouraging and enabling political engagement, there remains a dearth of robust evidence as to "what works" (Geboers et al. 2013). Whilst academic interest in approaching the issue through robust methodologies is growing, as this Special Issue is testament to, the field lacks a sense of how many of the multitude of available evaluations can truly be considered reliable members of the evidence base. This paper is therefore the beginning of an attempt to consolidate controlled trial evidence of the causal efficacy of Citizenship Education to produce politically active citizens. This review focuses exclusively on controlled trials (ideally randomized) as a robust method for measuring cause and effect. This is not to suggest that other methods have no value in understanding citizenship education, for controlled trials are certainly limited in their explanatory power, scope, and scalability, but controlled trials represent a frequent omission in the current evidence base which is difficult to compensate through other methods. Campbell (2019) points precisely to this in a recent literature review entitled "What Social Scientists Have Learned About Citizenship Education", and similar reviews by Bramwell (2020) and Manning and Edwards (2014) are also suggestive of a lack of controlled trials. As no systematic review of controlled trials within this area has yet been undertaken, we do so here for explorative purposes, to see how many studies of this kind exist and what aspects of Citizenship Education they address. The aims of this review are therefore two-fold: scoping and mapping, as described by Grant and Booth (2009) in their typology of reviews. These translate into two simple research questions:

1. What is the size and scope of the available research literature documenting control trials of Citizenship Education for political engagement?
2. What type of education initiatives have been described in the literature identified in (1) and what do their findings show?

Whilst we offer some discussion of pedagogical approaches, program delivery methods, and the political outcomes realized, we do not attempt a meta-analysis or grand conclusions in response to the narrower question of what exactly the causal relationship between Citizenship Education and political engagement is, as this would require us to go well beyond the capacity of the evidence we found.

2. Citizenship Education for Political Engagement

As far back as Addams ([1902] 2002), Dewey (1923), and Marshall (1950), thinkers have recognized that social justice is not guaranteed by mere legal rights but requires active and informed participation in decision making. In other words, social justice must be asserted through the ballot box and an active civil society. A strong participatory democracy (Barber 2003) grounded in equality in political engagement (Dahl 2008; Verba et al. 1995) is therefore a prerequisite for a truly inclusive society. In such a democracy, individuals from all parts of society vote and express their views within their communities to promote the kind of society they wish to see. Crucially, the health of democracies relies on political engagement from citizens of all social backgrounds. Yet in western democracies, in particular in the UK and the US, we see a recurring pattern in which the most privileged social groups are also the most politically active, and consequently able to direct political decision making toward their own interests and priorities (Dalton 2017; Verba et al. 1995). Conversely, disadvantaged groups, which should have the most to gain from asserting their democratic power, have become alienated from a political realm which is not seen as addressing their concerns or speaking their language (Bovens and Wille 2017). One hope of disrupting this vicious circle of political socialization, which reproduces and exacerbates inequalities, is to use education to politically engage all young people, regardless of social backgrounds, during their formative years (Hoskins et al. 2017; Hoskins and Janmaat 2019).

In principle, the subject in which to address young people's political engagement at school is Citizenship Education (alternatively known as Civic Education or Civics, in the US). However, not every conception of citizenship promoted by national education systems encourages active political engagement. In some cases, the co-option by nationalistic agendas (Starkey 2018) might stress compliance, quiet obedience, or intolerance, whilst in others the subject is simply deprioritized (Burton et al. 2015) or depoliticized (from the students' point of view, at least) through the use of a thin liberal conception of citizenship which protects the status quo. As an example of the latter, government policy on Citizenship Education in England has departed in more recent years from an agenda of political participation toward character education and moral responsibilities (Weinberg 2020). Despite this, many teachers and third-sector Citizenship Education organizations have tried to keep the original political focus alive, and it is this interpretation of the concept of Citizenship Education as a tool for encouraging political engagement which is of interest to us in this paper.

3. Why Control Trials?

Empirical research on Citizenship Education for political engagement has advanced rapidly in recent years, particularly in relation to the analysis of large international datasets such as the IEA International Citizenship and Civic Study (cross-sectional and comparative data) and even some longitudinal datasets at the national level, such as the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Survey (England). This allows for the analysis of varying degrees of exposure to diverse forms of learning citizenship across educational pathways and different education systems. For example, Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) find an association between exposure to Citizenship Education in schools in England and voting intentions at age 16 and, particularly encouragingly, some indication that disadvantaged students appear to benefit the most (Hoskins and Janmaat 2019). However, Hoskins et al. (2012) also warn that Citizenship Education does not always have this positive effect, and it is in establishing exactly "what works" that the picture become far less clear, not least

because modes of delivery, program design, and implementation can vary considerably within the same education system. One attempt to parse apart different pedagogical approaches to Citizenship Education has been through the conceptual distinction between acquisition and participatory models of learning (Sfard 1998), with some within the field suggesting that the evidence weighs more heavily on the success of the participatory approaches (Hoskins et al. 2021). For example, there is very strong evidence that an open classroom method of learning, which would be considered an inherently participatory approach, is associated with political engagement (Torney-Purta 2002; Campbell 2008; Hoskins et al. 2012; Quintelier and Hooghe 2012; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Knowles et al. 2018), positive attitudes towards political engagement (Hoskins et al. 2021; Geboers et al. 2013, p. 164), critical thinking (Ten Dam and Volman 2004), citizenship skills (Finkel and Ernst 2005), political knowledge (Hoskins et al. 2021; McDevitt and Kiousis 2006), and political efficacy (Hoskins et al. 2021). Such evidence is certainly highly suggestive, but does it demonstrate causation?

In reality, convincingly establishing causation between different types of Citizen Education programs and political engagement outcomes is something that can only be approached by degree. There is no panacea, and the notion of unequivocal demonstrable causality falls apart on metaphysical as well as methodological grounds. Nevertheless, there are pragmatic criteria (such as Bradford Hill (Hill 2015)) which can be turned to when making a case for or against the existence of a causal relationship. Different methodological approaches allow for different elements of such criteria to be invoked. For example, theory-led approaches may allow for plausible causative mechanisms to be revealed, whilst longitudinal data may allow one to show that the suspected cause temporally precedes the implied outcome. Away from the analysis of secondary data, many small-scale evaluations of specific Citizenship Education initiatives combine these two principles by explaining the theoretical basis of the program and then administering surveys to participants before and after the program. A successful example of this is Oberle and Leunig (2016), who used this approach to suggest that using simulation games in Citizenship Education classes can lead to improved knowledge about the European Union's political processes and increasing levels of trust, in particular for more socioeconomically deprived groups.

But controlled trials can add unique value to this mix of methods, as they have a characteristic not available to other methods (we should note here that Oberle and Leunig themselves acknowledge that control groups would have strengthened their study). For whilst statistical techniques applied to data may attempt to retrospectively estimate the effect of both observed and omitted variables (i.e., unobserved heterogeneity), they cannot be expected to satisfactorily reconstruct the counterfactual. In other words, what would have happened if the participants did not receive the educational treatment? By comparison, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) comes as close as is possible outside of laboratory experiments to reconstructing the counterfactual by introducing a control group whose members are subject to the same measurements (normally pre- and post-intervention) as the treatment group but are not exposed to the treatments itself. Given sufficient numbers, the statistical expectation is that the random allocation of individuals to the control or treatment group reduces any other difference between the groups other than their exposure to the treatment, with the highest level of confidence requiring multiple trials carried out by independent research terms, each with large numbers of participants. In this review we also include studies in which the allocation of participants or participant-groups is not strictly random, as Citizenship Education initiatives are frequently compelled to make use of existing organizational structures, such as classes within schools. This clearly weakens the method to some extent but can still be a useful step toward making a causal argument if the groups have comparable baseline characteristics and are in the same environment.

As Connolly et al. (2017, p. 14) put it, "What RCT's offer, therefore, is not just the opportunity to provide robust evidence relating to whether a particular program is effective or not, but also—and over time—the creation of a wider evidence base that allows for not only the comparison of the effectiveness of one program or educational approach

over another but also for how well any particular program works in specific contexts and for differing subgroups of learners". Yet control trials have also been contested within education research. Connolly et al. (2018a) identify four underlying criticisms: (1) that RCTs are not possible, on a practical level, to undertake; (2) that they ignore context; (3) that they seek to generate universal laws of cause and effect; and (4) that they are inherently descriptive and do not advance theoretical understanding. But the subsequent analysis by these authors of over 1000 RCTs of educational initiatives casts doubt over each of these criticisms, demonstrating that controlled trials can be undertaken, can acknowledge context by including process evaluation and differentiating effects on subgroups, can discuss the limitations of the generalizability of findings, and can be both rooted in theory and make arguments for the future development of theory. Though Connolly et al. (2018a) also note that the extent to which particular studies address these concerns can vary, and the debate within educational research continues. Each of these points of contestation are as applicable to Citizenship Education research as they are to educational research in general, to which might be further added the particularly acute influence of Paolo Freire's critical pedagogy (Freire 1996) on Citizenship Education for political engagement (Crawford 2010) and by association his scrutiny of research power dynamics and wariness of techniques associated with positivism and the reinforcement of structures of control (Freire 1982; Brydon-Miller 2001). We do not resolve these debates in this paper, but simply note them as an important context prior to presenting the results of the systematic review.

4. Method

4.1. Search Protocols

Our approach is similar to that of Sant (2019), who recently undertook an exploratory systematic review within a related field, though focusing on conceptualizations rather than controlled trials. The systematic review begins with searches for standardized terms (known as protocols) in all appropriate academic databases before the articles were screened manually. We operationalized our focus on controlled trials within the search protocol through the inclusion of the term "controlled trial" as well as the common variant "control trial". The abbreviation for randomized controlled trials, "RCT", was found to be largely redundant given the previous terms and was left out, as it leads to the inclusion of studies on Rational Choice Theory. We also include the terms "citizenship" or "civic" along with "education", capturing what we believe to be the most common signifiers within the field. Admittedly, there is now a proliferation of different terminology used for Citizenship Education, both in schools and also non-formal learning within the youth and third sectors, so our coverage cannot be considered complete. Variants such as Global Citizenship Education, Education for European Citizenship, and Education for Democratic Citizenship each have slightly different meanings and associations, but by including the words "education" and "citizenship/civic" as free floating search terms rather than joining them into a phrase (i.e., "citizenship education" or "civic education"), our searches should at least include studies which use alternative phrasings of this type.

The word "political" is also included to narrow the results to those studies concerned with education as a route to political engagement rather than the nationalistic or liberal (depoliticized) conceptions of Citizenship Education described previously. As with all the qualifier terms, and no more so than with the word "political", the mere use within a search protocol does not guarantee that the resulting articles reflect the meaning of the words in the way we would wish them to. The false inclusion of articles by the protocol, whereby studies do not, for example, measure what we consider to be political outcomes, is dealt with during the manual screening process explained in next section and is only problematic in so much that it necessitates subjectivity and injects some inefficiency into the review process. Of far more concern were false exclusions, whereby the protocol, when applied to a database, does not return articles which actually do describe control trials of Citizenship Education for political engagement.

Indeed, it soon became apparent that searching conventional academic databases and indexes was producing sparse results. To give one example, the Web of Science produced only three results which fulfilled the criteria, two of which passed the manual screening. This trend was widely repeated with 40 other relevant databases, yielding just 125 results, with only four of these passing the manual screening. This appears to be due to the inability of most databases to perform full text searches on many of the articles and our requirement of four search terms to properly specify what we were looking for. We therefore turned to Google Scholar, whereby the same protocol produced results of an entirely different scale of magnitude (>13,000) and included all the studies from the conventional academic databases previously searched that had successfully passed the manual screening stage. Although Google Scholar is far more restrained in the sources it draws from than a conventional Google search, its coverage is much wider than curated academic databases, is inherently multidisciplinary, and makes use of semantic search algorithms which attempt to return results corresponding to the meaning of the search terms rather than only literal matches. All of this contributes to a liberal return of results, but with a trade-off in accuracy and reproducibility, and makes Google Scholar rather less systematic than is ideal for a systematic review, as documented as well by Gusenbauer and Haddaway (2020). But these same authors note the popularity of semantic search engines for exploratory research. Moreover, despite the shortcomings, this study is illustrative of their undoubted appeal in this regard, as it was only Google Scholar that allowed for the studies we eventually selected, albeit combined with considerable manual screening. Researchers will find that an immediate problem which arises when taking this more inclusive route is that the number of results can exceed the capacity for manually screening. In our case, the inspection of the results showed them to be dominated by medical studies of little relevance, RCTs being far more prevalent within medical research. Therefore after some experimentation, we found that by using some medical terms as disqualifiers we were able to reduce the search results back to a manageable number of 2620 articles which progressed to the manual screening stage.

4.1.1. Search Protocol

"education" AND "political" AND ("citizenship" OR "civic")
AND ("control trial" OR "controlled trial"))

4.1.2. List of Academic Databases Searched

ACM Digital Library, Annual Reviews, Bloomsbury Collections, BMJ Journals, Brill Journals, Cambridge Companions Online, Cambridge University Press Journals, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCO Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Index Retrospective: 1929–1983, Education Research Complete, Educational Administration Abstracts, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Emerald Social Sciences eBook Series Collection, ERIC (Educational Research Information Centre), Google Scholar Ingenta Connect, JSTOR Arts & Sciences I Collection, JSTOR Arts & Sciences II Collection, JSTOR Arts & Sciences III Collection, JSTOR Arts & Sciences IV Collection, JSTOR Arts & Sciences V Collection, JSTOR Arts & Sciences VI Collection, JSTOR Arts & Sciences VII Collection, JSTOR Current Scholarship Journals, JSTOR Life Sciences Collection, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA),Oxford Journals, Project Muse, ProQuest Ebook Centra, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycTESTS, SAGE Research Methods (SRM), ScienceDirect, Social Theory: First Edition, SpringerLink, Taylor and Francis Journals, Wiley Online Library, WorldCatOCLC, WorldCat.org

4.1.3. Amended Search Protocol for Google Scholar

("citizenship" OR "civic") AND "political"

AND ("control trial" OR "controlled trial") AND —"HIV" AND —"illness" AND —"nursing" AND —"medical"

4.2. Manual Screening

All 2620 articles identified by the amended search protocol were then screened manually, first by title, then by abstract, and then by full text where necessary. The process through which a decision was made as to whether to include an article in the final list can be conceived of as a set of criteria, some of which are objective in nature and therefore simple to apply, and some of which unavoidably require more subjective judgments. We briefly list the criteria below and provide some examples of the more subjective judgments which were made in implementing the final two criteria.

1. Article returned by search protocol. Results were not filtered by date, though the oldest study identified as fulfilling all of the subsequent criteria below was published in 2006.
2. Article provides sufficient detail in English (or has an accessible English translation available) on which to make assessments for all other criteria. A certain amount of detail of the study is required in order to make an informed judgment. If a study was briefly outlined in an article with references to a more adequate description elsewhere, then it was included on the basis of the secondary source. It should be noted that the search itself biases results toward English language articles, as the search terms entered were in English.
3. Article is not a representation of a study which has already be identified. Although Google Scholar is efficient in nesting multiple versions of the same article within a single result item, occasionally multiple accounts of the same evaluation were found (e.g., a policy paper and academic article), in which case the most complete account was selected.
4. Study uses control groups to produce quantitative data to which statistical testing is applied. Studies which do not use control groups, use comparison groups only for qualitative purposes, or do not deploy statistical testing on results were excluded. However, no stipulations were made on sample size, and allocation to control groups did not need to be random.
5. Study evaluates an education scheme. Whilst the interdisciplinary nature of Google Scholar allows for studies to be included which have not been published in education journals, it creates a slight issue during screening in having to decide what represents an educational program. In the case of Citizenship Education, it is not appropriate to limit a review to initiatives which take place within formal learning environments such as a school. Rather, we must make a wider but more subjective judgment as to whether the scheme involved a process of systematic formative instruction rooted in pedagogy. In practice, this meant the exclusion of short-term positive reinforcement or suggestive "nudge" mechanisms such as those studied by Aker et al. (2011); Bond et al. (2012) and Costa et al. (2018). Similarly, real-life exposure to political events outside of a learning framework was also excluded, though some studies of this type may nevertheless be instructive for the design of future educational programs. For example, Wong and Wong (2020) undertook an interesting RCT involving exchange students during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, but the experience was not situated within an educational framework, and to include such studies would imply the review should also look at the effect of other life experiences on politicization and begin to broaden the topic away from our core concern.
6. Study measures political outcomes. Given that one of the gaps in the evidence base is an accepted theory of change for instigating political participation, we take a broad approach to political engagement, that includes both political actions (protesting in all the diversity of ways this occurs, including both online and offline voting in elections at different levels and contacting and volunteering for political parties) and the competences (attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills) that enhance the quality of the engagement and enable competent political behavior. The list of possible knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that this could encompass are vast, but a useful delineation which resonates with our own understanding is the Council of

Council of Europe (2018) reference framework for democratic culture. In practice, this amounted to the exclusion of initiatives aimed at developing teamwork or individual character traits featured prominently in the search results, but for the most part had little direct relevance to political engagement (e.g., Siddiqui et al. 2019; Connolly et al. 2018b; Silverthorn et al. 2017; Siddiqui et al. 2017; Kang 2019). We also found several studies dealing with conflict resolution, community cohesion, and reducing violent behavior, but these were again screened out, as their concern was generally restricted to harmonious societal relations rather than active political behavior (e.g., Niens et al. 2013; Chaux et al. 2017; Enos 2013), though we acknowledge that counter-arguments could be made here.

5. Results

5.1. What Types of Programs Have Been Tested by Control Trials?

In total, 25 controlled trials which test political outcomes deriving from educational initiatives have been identified (Table 1). To structure the discussion of these studies we group the RCT articles based on different approaches that have been considered, within the international practitioner field of citizenship educators, to be successful in teaching Citizenship Education (UNESCO 2015). The first three categories describe different strategies to delivering Citizenship Education within schools. School-based Citizenship Education can either be delivered as a stand-alone program, as a cross-curricular approach, or as a holistic whole school approach which influences multiple aspects of school life under a guiding ethos. Underpinning each of these three is teaching training, which can itself be the focus of initiatives and therefore represents our fourth category. However, Citizenship Education does not only happen within schools, and any initiative outside of the education system (e.g., by NGOs or community groups) is referred to as "non-formal", and the articles on such programs comprise our fifth category. Our final two categories could occur both in non-formal programs and in the various aspects of school life. These two themes describe initiatives with a clear participatory learner-centered approach (category six) and those looking to unlock the potential of digital techniques, generally within online environments (category seven). Our categories should not be considered mutually exclusive parts of a comprehensive typology, but rather as useful ways to present the results which reflect common practitioners' vocabulary. To avoid repetition in the discussion below, we focus upon the most illustrative studies for each category, with Table 1 representing a more thorough categorization, in which some articles are tagged as belonging to more than one category.

5.1.1. School-Based Program (Stand-Alone)

The classroom is the theatre in which specific teaching practices play out, and it is the specific activities within the classroom which most immediately come to mind when thinking of Citizenship Education. Representative of this is the Student Voice program (Syvertsen et al. 2009), in which students practice civic skills, debate political issues, and connect their own community interests to the platforms of candidates before simulating the process through mock elections. Teachers invite local candidates and journalists into the schools for question-and-answer sessions with students. The RCT was of 1670 high school students in 80 social studies classrooms and found significant effects of the program on various self-reported political measures, such as the ability to cast an informed vote, knowledge of the voter registration process, belief that their vote matters, communication with others at school about politics, sense of civic obligation, and media use and analysis. This alone is quite persuasive evidence that the type of basic participatory good practices long spoken about in the field (Hoskins et al. 2012) can show signs of causal efficacy under control trial conditions.

Yet some programs have gone beyond this standard good practice and produced intriguing results in doing so. Notably, the study by McDevitt and Kiousis (2006) of the Kids Voting program appears to show that incorporating the students' home environments as part of the learning environment may bring an added effect. The Kids Voting program included experiential learning based on group-problem solving, peer discussion, and cooperative activities, and in many ways is somewhat analogous to the previously described Student Voice Program. However, what seems to be unique to this program is that it includes activities for the children to complete with their families, such as creating a family election album, roleplaying in which students act as political reporters interviewing family members, and a children's ballot where students can cast a vote at the same polling stations as their parents. The analysis of 491 students aged 16–18 years old suggests that the interplay of influences from school and family magnified the effects of the election-based curriculum and sustained them in the long term, resulting in an increased probability of voting for students when they reached voting age.

However, not all school-based activities will be as successful as hoped, and given the publication bias toward positive results, it is extremely useful to have control trial evidence of the possible limits of some approaches. For example, a promising interactive environmental program which, as in the previous study, involved activities for children to complete with their own families, was ran in the UK. Yet Goodwin et al. (2010) found in their study of 448 primary school students in 27 primary schools that there were no effects compared with the control group on behavior, and an extended version of the program did not yield positive results. There is no clear reason why the program did not produce better results, though the vagaries of context and implementation can be difficult to appreciate from a distance. The authors themselves note that the awareness of the control group also rose during this period, which would seem to suggest contextual complications.

Continuing on a cautionary note is the study by Green et al. (2011), who strongly question the assumption that knowledge alone leads to attitudinal or behavioral change. They undertook an RCT of an enhanced civics curriculum of 1000 15 to 16 year-old students in 59 high schools. The curriculum looked to increase their awareness and understanding of constitutional rights and civil liberties, and although the students displayed significantly more knowledge, no corresponding changes in their support for civil liberties were found. The association between knowledge and behavior change has been critiqued before, not least from the stance of critical pedagogy, which suggests that the assimilation of knowledge can lead to a passive acceptance of the status quo, but to have such clear control trial evidence of the inability of knowledge alone to lead to political behaviors is of real value.

5.1.2. Cross-Curricular Approach

Whilst the efficacy of the acquisition of knowledge alone is widely doubted, the significance of skills development is a much more contested area, and one study provides evidence that learning environments which consistently encourage social skills can encourage political engagement. Holbein (2017) addresses this by testing the hypothesis that the targeted development of social and emotional skills can in itself lead to behavioral changes in political engagement. The study looks at the impact of a wide program of interventions to develop social and emotional skills including parent training, peers training, stories, films, games, roleplays, and joint reading activities. The study involving 812 students across 55 schools seems to point toward the importance of the quality of social interaction within the learning environment for the development of these skills rather than the valorizing of a single activity. The finding is quite striking, as it seems to indicate that the early development of psychosocial skills leads to a noticeable increase in long-term voter turnout.

In some jurisdictions, schools can decide to run Citizenship Education itself across the curricula, traversing traditional subject areas. One successful example of this was the science and civics instruction used to promote sustainable development in the article by Condon and Wichowsky (2018), who studied the program for 11–14 year-olds aimed to develop citizen-scientists in the US. The program was based on a real-world, community improvement, and problem-based inquiry that focused on reducing the unnecessary use of resources. It gets students to monitor the use of gas, electricity, and water in their home and in their school and to conduct experiments to identify if they can reduce consumption. The clustered RCT included 551 students across 13 schools and found that integrating science and civics into a unit about community water conversation improved engagement in both areas.

5.1.3. Whole School Approach

The ultimate elevation of school-based Citizen Education from a single subject, and even beyond a cross-curricular approach, is the whole school approach (Gibb 2016). Given that the practice itself is less common, we are fortunate to have the experiment by Gill et al. (2018) involving a U.S. charter school which uses control trial principles to evaluate the effects of a whole school approach driven by the unique mission and strategy of the organization. One of the more unique features of these types of schools in the U.S. context is that they are publicly funded schools but independent from officials and yet still have a core civic mission. The specific school studied, "Democracy Prep", has educated more than 5000 students across multiple campuses in New York, and its mission statement is "to educate responsible citizen scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship". This school facilitates the learning of citizenship throughout its curricula, including experiential learning (visiting legislators, attending public meetings, testifying before legislative bodies, and running get out and vote campaigns during elections) and more traditional knowledge-based activities like writing essays on civic and governance. To give just one specific example, during the final year students develop a "change the world" project that investigates a real-world social problem, then design a method for addressing the issue, and then implement their plan. By taking advantage of the random allocation of 1060 students (due to oversubscription) into the charter school, Gill et al. (2018) found that those who were admitted to the school went on to have an increased probability of future voting. This is very important evidence that a school, by adopting a civic mission and civic ethos, which then allows citizenship to flow into all aspects of school life, can motivate tangible differences in political behaviors.

5.1.4. Teacher Training

Any Citizenship Education scheme is only as good as its implementation, and it can be easy to overlook the differences in the capabilities and enthusiasm of teachers to deliver programs. Indeed, there are two studies which provide some indication that investing in the development of teachers really can make a difference. For example, Andersson et al. (2013) showed that an initial teacher training on education for sustainable development (ESD) led to positive effects regarding the attitudes, perceptions, felt personal responsibility, and desire to contribute toward sustainable development among the student-teachers. This comes from an analysis of parallel-panel data surveys of 404 student-teachers which included a control group but was not randomized.

Whether or not well-intentioned teachers are then able to pass this on to their own students is of course another question. But the Facing History program studied by Barr et al. (2015) suggests that arming teachers with conceptual tools and teaching materials can result in observable changes in the students. The program was evaluated in the US through an RCT amongst 14–16 year-olds (n = 1371) and found that when teachers that had received this training and given the materials brought the program into the classroom, it promoted respect and tolerance for the rights of others among the students, an increased awareness of prejudice and discrimination, and a sense of civic efficacy. Whilst untangling

the training of the teachers from the classroom methods they then implement is difficult, these examples provide some evidence that quality teacher training should at least be a component of introducing effective political Citizenship Education into the classroom.

5.1.5. Non-Formal Education

Stepping momentarily away from schools, we now consider some control trials which looked at interventions outside of the formal education system and are therefore referred to as "non-formal". Some of these non-formal programs look at the effect of community or group-level initiatives on the political engagement of the individual. For example, Blattman et al. (2011) used a clustered RCT to evaluate a community empowerment program in Liberia across over 230 communities. Their study measured the respect for human rights, equality, civic participation, and community cohesion, and the findings showed modest increases in the first two but little change in the latter two. The authors also stress that the observed impacts were not always in expected ways, which perhaps highlights the complexity of operating in the community and the relative lack of control organizers have over such socially dynamic environments when compared to a school setting.

More encouragingly, in the UK, a Cabinet-Office-funded evaluation of the National Citizen Service program by Booth et al. (2014) yielded some positive results. The National Citizen Service runs over five phases, from residential inductions to community-based action projects. Though initially restricted to self-reported attitudes the quasi-experimental study goes on to measure overall increases in community engagement, volunteering, and intention to vote amongst 7379 of the 15 to 17 year-olds in the study.

Other non-formal initiatives looked at the effect of providing basic information to adults. For example, Pang et al. (2013) investigated the effects of training women in China on their voting rights for village committee elections. Involving 700 adults, the RCT demonstrated that the women who had received the training not only had a greater knowledge of their rights but were also more likely to exercise these rights. The authors are clear that the study shows that the lack of basic knowledge in rural villages is a barrier to voting in village committee elections. Barros (2017) also looked at the effect of providing basic information on the importance of voting, concluding that the participants studied in Portugal could be encouraged to vote if this led to their valuing the act itself, a phenomenon the author terms warm glow voting. These results appear to nuance the previous observation that knowledge does not lead to action, by showing that, in specific contexts, and in applied settings rather than in the classroom, basic timely information can make a difference. However, as acknowledged in the latter experiment, it is the value placed on the act as a result of a greater understanding, rather than merely the knowledge itself, which is ultimately responsible for motivating the action.

An interesting project that operated as a hybrid between formal and non-formal education and combined knowledge acquisition with participatory approaches was conducted in Peru (Agurto and Torres 2020). This project combined knowledge acquisition on financial literacy and life skills training on leadership, public speaking, and team-work with sending students as ambassadors into the community as change makers to support the provision of basic bank accounts and financial inclusion for disadvantaged communities. The project involved 131 students from a university scholarship program and led to an increased level of self-efficacy, empowerment, and community engagement for female students.

Finally, Bowen and Kisida (2018) looked at different perceptions of civil rights after Holocaust museum visits. They report a positive impact on students' desires to protect civil rights and liberties across 865 students participating in an RCT in 15 middle and high schools. However, the effects are limited and seem to stop short of behavioral change, with no significant evidence that the intervention affected students' sense of civic obligation, empathy, willingness to take on roles as upstanders, or inclinations toward civil disobedience. This study is therefore more consistent with the notion that knowledge alone, even when affecting students, has its limits in triggering political mobilization. There are also notable interactions with gender, ethnicity, and social class which should

serve as a warning of the danger of drawing universal conclusions from controlled trials and the benefit of obtaining large sample sizes, so that these finer grain analyses can be investigated.

5.1.6. Participatory Approaches

Many of the initiatives described by the articles identified in this review have made some use of participatory techniques to a greater or lesser extent, among which we can include regular discussions, debates, and simulation exercises (such as mock elections and trials) (Hoskins et al. 2012). For example, Kawashima-Ginsberg (2013) found evidence for the efficacy of exactly these practices in a control trial analysis of 10 to 16 year-old pupil scores on the national civics assessment test. For brevity, we will not repeat the description of other studies with common participatory elements described under different headings, but would encourage readers interested in this theme to look at the studies by Syvertsen et al. (2009); McDevitt and Kiousis (2006); Gill et al. (2018); Condon and Wichowsky (2018).

That said, special attention under this heading is given to a couple of articles which are particularly instructive. Firstly, a very thorough participatory approach was studied by Ozer and Douglas (2013). This program in the U.S. tested the difference that participating in youth-led research has for the young people involved. The approach is learner-centered at every stage, with the research topics selected by the students themselves, and consequently included a diverse range of topics, such as: prevention of school drop-out; stress related to family, academics, or peers; improving the school lunch; cyber-bullying; improving teaching practices to engage diverse students; and improving inter-ethnic friendships at the school. The RCT study involved 401 students at five high schools and found that attending these participatory research elective classes during the school day was associated with increases in the students' sociopolitical skills and motivation to influence their schools and communities. The indication that learner-led approaches such as this may circumvent the previously discussed disconnect between knowledge and motivation to act is a primary attraction of participatory methods over more acquisition-based approaches.

Secondly, the study by Feldman et al. (2007) is quite unique, as it was able to isolate the effects of various elements of a Student Voice program. The program as a whole was quite participatory in that teachers were given a framework of election-based activities but could deviate significantly based on student interests. Overall, the program produced increased interest, knowledge, and efficacy in regards to politics, as measured across 22 U.S. high schools, each of which had a control group. But they were also able to show that it was political discussion within classrooms which was the primary driver of this change, more so than other eye-catching activities within the program, such as actually meeting the election candidates.

5.1.7. Digital

Perhaps the timeliest studies are those which evaluate the emergence of online learning environments. The findings across this section suggest that the digital world is similar to the offline world and that it is high engagement actions, in this case the student-led creation of content, that lead to changes in attitudes and behavior.

A study by Smith et al. (2009) stresses the importance of active participation in online environments. They conducted a novel RCT of online discussions on moderated chatrooms using a large mixed age market research panel in the UK ($n = 6009$) and found that only those who posted content showed evidence of developing their opinions through discussion. This is contrasted with those who spent time reading the message boards but did not actively post themselves, and subsequently showed no discernible change in opinions. Strandberg (2015) carried out a similar online RCT deliberation across 70 adults in Finland, finding that some alleviation of the polarization of opinion as well as the participants' feelings of efficacy.

The importance of social support within online environments is taken up by Levy et al. (2015), who studied a sample of 309 US high school students, out of which one class was instructed to keep political blogs to document their thoughts on the unfolding election. The authors find that the "bloggers" developed greater political interest and confidence in their political skills and knowledge, even when compared to their peers in other government courses. However, the authors also note that some students got frustrated at the lack of responses to their blog posts, pointing toward the importance of a receptive audience within a community of learning if this technique is to be further developed. On this same point, Margetts et al. (2009) showed that a mechanism can be built into online environments which simulates the social support and pressure of collective action. Their controlled trial found that among 668 adults, it was those who had received positive feedback from supportive participants who were more likely to go on to sign more online petitions. But a note of caution is sounded by Vissers et al. (2012) to those who assume that online political activity necessarily translates into offline action. Their RCT study on Belgian university students found that learning activities run online on climate change only influenced online behavior and did not change offline behavior.

Yet the evidence that an online environment can develop core political skills is stronger. A study from Hong Kong, China (Chan 2019), looked specifically at the use of a digital storytelling program run through the online platform Facebook for the development of civic identity and skills. Though not explicitly political, we include this RCT, involving 87 16 to 24 year-olds outside the formal education system, as it showed evidence of improvements in relevant skills and dispositions, namely enhanced critical thinking, along with an accompanying decline in ethnocentric views. The article by Kawashima-Ginsberg (2012) also demonstrates how online methods can stimulate political skill development. Using assessment scores to evaluate an iCivics computer-based teaching module, they showed through a clustered RCT of 1526 students in 42 schools in the US, of students aged 12 to 15 years-old, that the program was effective in improving the grades students received from writing a persuasive letter to a newspaper.

Table 1. Identified control trials of citizenship education for political engagement.

Education Program	Political Outcome	Authors	Country	Type
Student as ambassadors supporting the provision of basic bank accounts in the community	Treated female students show positive effects regarding attitudes of empowerment, self-efficacy, motivation, and community engagement.	Agurto and Torres (2020)	Peru	Non-formal, Participatory
Teacher training on Education for Sustainable Development	Positive attitudes, personal responsibility, and willingness to contribute to sustainable development.	Andersson et al. (2013)	Sweden	Teacher training
Facing History	Respect and tolerance for the rights of others with differing views, awareness of the danger of prejudice and discrimination and increased sense of civic efficacy.	Barr et al. (2015)	US	Teacher training, School-based program
Providing information about the importance of voting	Increased voter turnout.	Barros (2017)	Portugal	Non-formal

Table 1. *Cont.*

Education Program	Political Outcome	Authors	Country	Type
Community empowerment program	Little impact on specific measures of civic participation and community cohesion; modest increases in respect for human rights and equality; and large impacts on conflict and conflict resolution, though not always in expected ways.	Blattman et al. (2011)	Liberia	Non-formal
National Citizen Service	Improved attitude toward social mixing in local area, community engagement, & intention to vote.	Booth et al. (2014)	UK	Non-formal
Holocaust Museum visits	Positive impact on students' desires to protect civil rights and liberties	Bowen and Kisida (2018)	US	Non-formal
Digital storytelling	Increased self-esteem and critical thinking disposition. Ethnocentric views declined.	Chan (2019)	China	Digital
Intervention integrates science and civics instruction in a unit about community and family water conservation	Engagement (including self-effiacy) in both areas was positively affected.	Condon and Wichowsky (2018)	US	Cross-curricular, Participatory, School-based program
Student Voices Program	Class deliberative discussions, community projects, and informational use of the Internet increased political participation.	Feldman et al. (2007)	US	Participatory
Charter school	Increased probability of future voting.	Gill et al. (2018)	US	Whole school approach, Participatory
Two types of class-based instruction on environmental issues, one long and the other short, which were designed to increase environmental awareness.	The results show no statistically significant differences on awareness of behavior between schools in the intervention groups compared to the control group schools.	Goodwin et al. (2010)	UK	School-based program
Enhanced civics curriculum designed to promote awareness and understanding of constitutional rights and civil liberties	More knowledge in this domain than students in conventional civics classes. However, no corresponding change in the treatment group's support for civil liberties.	Green et al. (2011)	US	School-based program
Psychosocial skills	Noticeable long-run impact voter turnout.	Holbein (2017)	US	Cross-curricular
Participants were exposed to climate change information either by way of face-to-face interaction or by website	Web-based mobilization only has a significant effect on online participation.	Vissers et al. (2012)	Belgium	Digital

Education Program	Political Outcome	Authors	Country	Type
iCivics computer-based teaching module	Higher grades on writing a persuasive letter to a school newspaper.	Kawashima-Ginsberg (2012)	US	Digital
Regular discussions, debates and simulations.	Higher National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics test scores.	Kawashima-Ginsberg (2013)	US	Participatory
The creation of political blogs during an election	Students in the blog-focused class had more gains in political interest, self-efficacy, and confidence. But a lack of online interactions could limit gains.	Levy et al. (2015)	US	Digital
Social pressure/critical mass of support	People who received positive feedback from small numbers of supportive participants signed more petitions.	Margetts et al. (2009)	UK	Digital
An interactive, election-based curriculum	Political communication in the home increased the probability of voting for students when they reached voting age.	McDevitt and Kiousis (2006)	US	Participatory
Youth-led participatory research class	Increases in sociopolitical skills, motivation to influence schools and communities, and participatory behavior.	Ozer and Douglas (2013)	US	Participatory
Voting training for women	Scores on a test of voting knowledge increased and more fully exercised their voting rights.	Pang et al. (2013)	China	Non formal
Online moderated asynchronous discussion	Actively contributing to deliberation in the form of posting has the most significant impact on opinion change. Lurking has little effect.	Smith et al. (2009)	UK	Digital
Online forums designed according to deliberative principles produce better 'democratic outcomes	The effects of designing for deliberation were generally positive, albeit not for all of the democratic outcomes.	Strandberg (2015)	Finland	Digital
Election-based civics program	Increased self-reported ability to cast an informed vote, knowledge of the voter registration process, belief that their vote matters, communication with others at school about politics, sense of civic obligation, and media use and analysis.	Syvertsen et al. (2009)	US	Participatory, School based program

6. Why Aren't There More Control Trials?

During the course of our searches, we also came across several papers which help to explain why there have not been more RCTs in Citizenship Education. These largely reflect the more general concerns of applying RCTs to the education research discussed previously, but with specific reference to Citizenship Education. Some of these underline the valid, practical concerns that the demands of running a satisfactory RCT are too exacting and expensive. Bakker and Denters (2012) point out that the ideal of a classical experiment is generally unachievable, as the number of subjects in each of the treatment and control groups really has to be quite large to even out the variance in all relevant characteristics, and this is without considering whether the true unit of analysis should be the collective rather than the individual (the clustering of students within classes and schools should at

least be taken into account). In a similar vein, Shek et al. (2012) note that it is very expensive to conduct randomized group trials in an adequate variety of settings to demonstrate the generalizability of a program outside a specific set of conditions. Yet there is more fundamental epistemological and ontological resistance. Mathison (2009) questions whether certain assumptions might be part of a neoliberal ideology of efficiency and commoditization within education, including the notion that accountability is necessarily good if linked to competitive marketplace practices or narrow econometric thinking. Postcolonial critiques, such as that given by Singh et al. (2018), point out that the relationship of the researcher-researched has been compared to that of the colonizer-colonized, particularly when reliant on the types of standardized measures which are a feature of all RCTs. For such reasons, decoloniality has tended to favor the transparency and inclusiveness of qualitative or participatory research praxis. Yet we also found the argument that RCTs can be a part of progressive post-positivism. Shek et al. (2012) suggest in their evaluation of a youth development course in Hong Kong that post-positivism can be understood as embracing the multiplicity of available methods, rather than valorizing certain qualitative approaches, whilst Singh et al. (2018) go on to reject that quantitative paradigms are impermeable to reflexivity and decoloniality and begin to demonstrate how the methodological principles of controlled trials can be more reflectively administered so as to properly acknowledge oppression. Bakker and Denters (2012) note the parallels between experiments and action research as a reason for optimism, in that both actively interfere in reality. This points to a possible path toward rehabilitation for controlled trials if they follow action research tenets to place the disadvantaged group as the primary stakeholder and client, which may involve minimizing the influence of preconceived policy and academic agendas. Bakker and Denters (2012) go on to suggest the design experiment methodology represents a way forward (the term "design" referring to the blueprint of a new instrument that is to be developed during the research process). Stoker and John (2009) similarly indicate that if experimentation is stripped of its black box dogmatism and researchers try to directly observe and understand apparent change, then comparison groups can still play an important role in providing policy makers with the type of evidence they respond to.

7. Conclusions

The number of control trials which truly address Citizenship Education for political engagement is unsurprisingly small. Not only does the field have a history of institutional abandonment and co-option, but there is some reluctance within the research community to fully embrace controlled trials. This concern is based on a desire to promote the interests of powerless and unrepresented groups, but those who champion controlled trials also share that same goal and see those groups as poorly served by a lack of understanding as to which educational methods really do work to break the cycle of political socialization which reproduces and exacerbates inequalities. Reconciling these epistemological tensions within the field will doubtless be an ongoing theme over the coming years.

It would be premature to draw too concrete conclusions, given the very limited evidence base, but the general picture is one which appears to broadly confirm the existing knowledge in the field rather than revealing new findings, underlining the role of control trials in ensuring that an existing educational method is effective. The starkest gap in the evidence base is geographical, with 17 out of the 25 studies being from the US or UK and only four studies evaluating projects from the global south, with two of these from China. This is particularly important, given that there can be no safe assumptions that findings in one cultural context will stand in another.

The studies identified are quite evenly split between those which aim to improve knowledge and skills and those which seek to change attitudes or behaviors. These two domains do not necessarily cross-pollinate, and many of the studies which showed enhanced cognitive learning did not show alterations to behavioral change, a point made most explicitly by Green et al. (2011). However, the studies do suggest some nuance is necessary with this view, as it seems that the provision of basic knowledge on civic

duties, such as how to vote and why it is important, may initiate changes in attitudes and behaviors in circumstances in which this base awareness is lacking (Pang et al. 2013; Syvertsen et al. 2009). Likewise, the teaching of psychosocial or noncognitive skills, even when separated from political education, appears to yield promising results (Holbein 2017). But most of the studies which led to changes in attitudes or behaviors were essentially participatory. The clearest examples of this participatory approach is perhaps Ozer and Douglas (2013) study of a participatory research class and McDevitt and Kiousis (2006) study of simulated political discussions within families. There are also signs that the participatory approach to attitudinal and behavioral change is also applicable to online interventions, with the evidence being that active engagement (as opposed to passively viewing) and peer feedback mechanisms play a similarly critical role online, as they do offline (Smith et al. 2009; Strandberg 2015; Margetts et al. 2009), though whether online engagement translates into offline action remains in doubt (Vissers et al. 2012). The evidence also supports the effectiveness of a whole school approach (Gill et al. 2018) and of the necessity of quality teacher training (Barr et al. 2015).

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Article

Does Scientific Evaluation Matter? Improving Digital Simulation Games by Design-Based Research

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Abstract: Grounded in a design-based research approach, the aim of this article is to determine whether scientific evaluations help to (a) identify and fix problems in educational interventions and (b) eventually foster a more effective and positive evaluated intervention. Therefore, data from a longer-term evaluation of short digital simulation games about the European Parliament for civic education in schools were used. The data included three cycles of interventions with pre- and post-evaluations starting with the first prototype in 2015/2016 ($n = 209$), the second cycle in 2017/18 ($n = 97$), and the last one in 2019/20 ($n = 222$). After each evaluation, major problems and critiques regarding the simulation game were discussed with the developers, and changes were implemented in the game design. The four most important problems, the processes by which they were improved and the reactions of the participants in the following evaluations are pointed out in the article. A comparison of the last and first evaluation cycle showed an overall improvement of the simulation game regarding its effectiveness in transferring EU knowledge and the participants' general satisfaction with the simulation game. This study underlines the value of the design-based research approach for developing educational interventions and can be useful for further work on civic education measures and the implementation of digital simulation games.

Keywords: digital simulation game; design-based research; empirical research; civic education; European Union

1. Introduction

The effectiveness of active citizenship education programs, tools, and interventions are often measured and evaluated by scientists in many different ways, reaching from qualitative interviews or self-reflections to (quasi-) experimental studies and large n survey studies. But what happens after the evaluation is done and the article is published? Is measuring and evaluating civic education programs and teaching tools an end in itself, or does doing so help to actually increase the effectiveness of these programs? This article investigates the usefulness of scientific evaluation in civic education according to the design-based research approach. This quite new research approach goes a step further, as it focuses not only on evaluating educational interventions but also on enhancing them according to the collected evaluation data and then evaluating them again to see if the changes were effective until the educational intervention leads to a satisfactory result (Anderson and Shattuck 2012). It has recently been used for research on subject didactics in school (Peters and Roviró 2017), on higher education (Ford et al. 2017), blended learning (Ustun and Tracey 2020), and simulation games (Koivisto et al. 2018) but has not yet been used for improving digital simulation games in civic education.

To break new ground, the design-based research approach presented here uses data from an ongoing evaluation study about short digital simulation games in civic education (Oberle et al. 2017). Analog simulation games are a widely used method in civic education (Massing 1997), and simulation

game producers are trying to digitalize them in order to use the positive effects of digitalization for their products (Kaiser et al. 2017). Since 2015, a research team at the chair of Political Science/Didactics of Politics of Göttingen University has been evaluating the usage of a newly developed short digital simulation game about the European Parliament in school classes, developed and implemented by the Berlin-based German company planpolitik (www.planpolitik.de). Three evaluation cycles were conducted in 2015/2016, 2017/2018, and 2019/2020 (for results of the first cycle of evaluated game implementation, see Oberle et al. 2017). Between the iterations, the results were presented to the game developers, and possible dysfunctional elements were pointed out. Based on these data and on the overarching question "Does Scientific Evaluation Matter?" this article will investigate the following research questions:

(1)   Did the developers fix the problems that the evaluations revealed, and if so, how did they fix it?
(2)   Did the changes made by the game developers lead to a more effective and more positively assessed intervention?

The questions will be answered using data from all three evaluation cycles, mainly focussing on the first and last evaluation as they are similar in their sample composition and are showing a direct contrast between the first prototype and the final product. Additionally, an interview with planpolitik's head developer was made to identify and explain the improvements.

The article is structured as follows: after this introduction the use and literature of digital simulation games in civic education as well as the design-based research approach will be elucidated, followed by a detailed description of the research design. In the results section, the shortcomings of the simulation game, the improvements needed to address them and the effectiveness of the improvements will be explained one after another, ending with a direct comparison of the first and last evaluations of the game. A conclusion will sum up the most important findings and place them in context with the overarching question of the article.

2. Digital Simulation Games in Civic Education

Face-to-face simulation games are a widely used method in civic education (Massing 2010), and their value for civic education in schools (Oberle et al. 2018; Oberle et al. 2020) as well as in political science education in universities (Fink 2015; Duchatelet 2019; Lohmann 2019) has been extensively discussed. On the contrary, there is hardly any research, let alone empirical research, about digital simulation games in civic education (Bachen et al. 2015; Oberle et al. 2017). Empirical studies about simulation-based learning in education, in general, show that simulations have a more positive effect when used in combination with modern technology, like VR or digitalization (Chernikova et al. 2020).

There are many expectations and theoretical considerations regarding the benefits of digital simulation games: e.g., they are supposed to improve intrinsic motivation (Le et al. 2013) and strengthen negotiation skills, teamwork, and empathy (Gabriel 2012). The digitalization of simulation games also has the potential to multiply the reach of the didactical method of simulation games, as they can be played online in a fully prepared gaming environment. Thus, the presence of a professional instructor to administer them in the classroom is no longer needed (Kaiser et al. 2017). Furthermore, they can be played independently from location and time. This can make them accessible for a broader range of pupils and, given the technical equipment, relatively easy to implement into regular teaching.

Alongside theoretical articles, most studies regarding the use of digital simulation games are case studies reported by teachers in practitioner journals (DiCamillo and Gradwell 2012), qualitative studies taking a student's perspective (Schnurr et al. 2013), or are based on computer/video games (López and Cáceres 2010; Motyka 2018). Overall, the results of these qualitative studies show that participants are rather satisfied with the digital simulation games but also voice criticism, especially regarding a lack of face-to-face communication and a high workload. However, there is a scarcity of quantitative, quasi-experimental studies regarding the effects of digital simulation games in civic education as well as their development over time. An example of a good quasi-experimental study has been conducted

by Bachen and colleagues (Bachen et al. 2015) who used a pretest-posttest design to analyze the effect of a digital simulation game on 301 American high school students. Their results showed an increase in political interest, especially by uninformed and "low-performing" students. They also criticized the lack of studies of digital simulations in civic and social science education.

Lastly, there was a pilot study by Oberle and colleagues (Oberle et al. 2017), which analyzed the effects of a short digital simulation game from the German company planpolitik about decision-making in the European Parliament. This research will be elaborated upon further in the research design portion as the study presented here is based on the continuing evaluation of this digital simulation game. The pilot study suggested that there is not enough research on the topic and that the theoretical expectations in digital simulation games might be exaggerated as the study shows that an analog simulation game worked better in comparison. Furthermore, the digital simulation game had hardly any effect on any of the student dispositions measured; it even had a negative effect on objective EU knowledge. Additionally, the students assessed the analog simulation game more positively than the digital one. However, the authors also note that the digital simulation game was in an early stage, and digital simulation games in civic education, in general, are a very new development, which has not yet been studied sufficiently (Kaiser et al. 2017). To tackle this research deficit, the Göttingen research team continued to evaluate the digital simulation, shared the research with the developers, and used a design-based research approach to further improve the digital simulation game as a useful educational measure for teaching about the European Union (EU).

3. Design-Based Research in Educational Science

Design-based research is an increasingly popular practical research method that helps to bring research and practice together in order to generate effective educational interventions and methods (Van den Akker et al. 2006). Educational researchers started using it at the beginning of the 21st century to "increase the impact, transfer and translation of education research into improved practice" (Anderson and Shattuck 2012, p. 2) and simultaneously develop their theories further. It is mainly used to study innovative learning environments, especially those using new technologies and/or complex interventions in a classroom setting (Sandoval and Bell 2004) and should be used in new fields where pedagogical content knowledge, e.g., regarding instructional strategies, is poor (Ford et al. 2017). Thus, it is a promising method to study digital simulation games about (European) politics.

Design-based research can complement experimental and quasi-experimental research but differs from it in some important aspects (Hoadley 2004; Jen et al. 2015). However, it goes further than just evaluating the intervention and its effects: the method at hand also focuses on optimizing the interventions. Therefore, the improvement of the intervention itself is an outcome (Hoadley 2004; Design-Based Research Collective 2003). To accomplish this, the research methodology is quite open, and researchers can "select and use differing methods, selecting them as they see need" (Maxcy 2003, p. 59), which includes but is not limited to (quasi-) experimental pre-/post designs, developmental evaluations (Patton 2011), interviews, observations, and questionnaires.

Design-based research also needs more than one evaluation cycle and often multiple iterations of testing, evaluating, and improving the interventions until the educational intervention is suitable for its purpose (Lewis et al. 2020), which makes it "difficult to know when (or if ever) the research program is completed" (Anderson and Shattuck 2012, p. 2). On that score, design-based researchers argue that the implementation and evaluation of the intervention have to be taken out of the laboratory and have to be studied in a real-world setting (Barab and Squire 2004).

Lastly, design-based research builds on close cooperation between practitioners/developers and the researchers themselves (Kuhn and Quigley 1997; Štemberger and Cencic 2016), as the practitioners usually lack the necessary skills for scientific research, and researchers lack the technical knowledge and practical skills to develop and implement the intervention.

This close relationship between practitioners and researchers as well as the in-depth involvement of researchers in the development process of the intervention are two main points of criticism against

design-based research (Barab and Squire 2004). Similar to many qualitative methods, there is a "narrow line between objectivity and bias" (Anderson and Shattuck 2012, p. 5) for researchers using the method, and similar to qualitative methods, there are different ways to minimize this bias (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007). One would be to triangulate the data drawn from the evaluations with a researcher who is not involved in the project.

Another problem of design-based research is the long duration of design-based research projects, as they usually require at least two iterations, often more, to be complete (Anderson and Shattuck 2012). To tackle this, Herrington and colleagues (Herrington et al. 2007) recommend using design-based research in doctoral dissertations over a four-year period or in multi-year research agendas.

Many examples of the use of design-based research have been published in edited volumes in recent years (see, for example, Kay and Luckin 2018). One Ph.D. thesis, in particular, was focused on the study and development of analog simulation games for civic education, the cumulative dissertation of Knogler (2014). In his dissertation, he developed a school course over three weeks, including an analog simulation game about the future of a community's energy supply (Knogler and Lewalter 2014). Following the design-based research approach, he tested the prototype with 112 pupils in German high schools, evaluated the test with a pretest-posttest design, and used the results to further develop the intervention. The re-developed intervention was used on another sample of 156 German pupils and tested again with the same pretest-posttest design. With that design, he could show that only the re-designed intervention had a positive effect on the pupils' appreciation of the value of science. All in all, the prototype had hardly any effect, whereas the re-design intervention affected all measured dimensions (Knogler and Lewalter 2014). The research design in the article is similar to the design by Knogler but with multiple cycles of testing, evaluation, developing, and testing again, and will be described in detail in the next chapter.

4. Research Design

Following the design-based research approach, the design of this research was focused on an intervention, a 90-min-long synchronous digital simulation game. The simulation game was designed for secondary level high school students in Germany and is about the European Parliament and its political decision-making process regarding the topics of asylum and data protection policy. The game was developed by the Berlin-based company planpolitik and implemented with an accompanying scientific evaluation by the chair of political science/civic education at the University of Göttingen in 2015/2016. The results of the scientific evaluation were then discussed with the developers from planpolitik, and changes were made accordingly. A second iteration with a smaller sample (see Table 1) followed in 2017/2018, and a third iteration with a larger sample in 2019/2020. For this article, we mainly focus on the differences between the first and the last evaluation cycles as both samples are quite similar, and the sample of the second iteration is quite small (see Table 1).

Table 1. Pretest-Posttest Sample Description for All Three Evaluation Cycles.

	Sample 2015/2016 $n = 209$	Sample 2017/2018 $n = 97$	Sample 2019/2020 $n = 222$
Sex Female	54.1%	57.3%	61.1%
Grammar School	71.3%	100%	79.8%
Age	15.89 (SD 0.72) Range 15–18 Years	15.59 (SD 4.57) Range 15–18 Years	16.86 (SD 2.52) Range 14–29 Years
Migration Background *	not enquired	36.2%	23%
Cultural Capital **	4.73 (SD 1.29)	4.57 (SD 1.25)	4.74 (SD 1.35)
Classes	13	6	13

* = measured by place of birth and parents' place of birth; ** = measured by amount of books in parents' household (Sieben and Lechner 2019).

The main defaults of the simulation game, which the first evaluation pointed out, will be presented. The changes planpolitik made according to this evaluation will be disclosed using an interview with Konstantin Kaiser from planpolitik, who is in charge of digital simulation games and their development. The results of the last evaluation will clarify whether the changes had a positive effect on the result and evaluation of the simulation game in 2019/2020. The results and evaluation of the 2015/2016 and 2019/2020 iterations will be compared in the crucial points to determine whether the designed-based research approach has led to more effective evaluation.

4.1. Sample Description

All classes that played the simulation game were from schools in the German state of Lower Saxony since the European Information Center of Lower Saxony is funding the implementation of the games at school. The European Information Center is also in charge of promoting the simulation game and recruiting classes to play it. Therefore, the sample selection was not random; teachers signed in with their classes voluntarily. That also led to the different sizes of the respective samples (see Table 1), as there were fewer classes signing in for the game in 2017/2018, as well as fewer teachers willing to facilitate the scientific evaluation. The samples not only differ in size, but also in school type, as in 2015/2016 pupils from grammar schools and comprehensive schools participated, in 2017/2018 only pupils from grammar schools, and lastly, in 2019/2020 classes from grammar schools and vocational schools signed up to take part in the simulation game. This resulted in an age difference between the last and the first sample, which is a critical point of this study and will be further addressed in the discussion of the limitations of this article.

Nevertheless, the focus of this article is on the first and third evaluation cycles, as these samples are quite similar in size, cultural capital, and the percentage of pupils attending grammar schools. A possible migration background was not assessed in the first study. All three samples consist of pupils who participated both in the pretest and in the posttest.

4.2. Research Instruments

The accompanying scientific evaluations were made in a pre-, post-, and follow-up design including mainly closed yet some open questions as well as an EU knowledge test in the first and third samples, modeled based on the EU knowledge test by Monika Oberle (Oberle 2012). The survey measures different concepts including subjective EU knowledge, internal efficacy, attitudes towards the EU, and political interest (derived from Deutsche 2010; Gille et al. 2006; Kerr et al. 2010; Oberle and Forstmann 2015; Vetter 2013; Westle 2006). The evaluation of the simulation game is carried out in the posttest with 19 four-scaled Likert items with 1 for "not at all" to 4 for "fully agree" which measure the simulation game in the dimensions of general satisfaction, subjective learning effect, and motivational effect (see Table 2). All statistical analyses conducted for this paper were completed with SPSS 25. The posttest survey also includes open questions regarding what participants liked, disliked, and would improve in the simulation game, which were analyzed and categorized with the qualitative content analysis after (Mayring 2010) using MAXQDA 2018 (VERBI GmbH, Berlin Germany).

Table 2. Measurement Model of Simulation Game Assessment.

Dimensions Simulation Game Assessment	Number of Items	Sample 2015/2016 *n*209 Alpha Value	Sample 2017/2018 *n*97 Alpha Value	Sample 2019/2020 *n*222 Alpha Value	Item Examples
General Satisfaction	9	0.80	0.81	0.85	"Altogether, how satisfied are you with the simulation game?"
Subjective Learning Effect	6	0.84	0.83	0.81	"Through the simulation game... I all in all better understand how the EU works."
Motivational Effect	4	0.90	0.82	0.91	"The simulation game has motivated me to further occupy myself with the EU."

Lastly, a guided expert interview was conducted with Konstantin Kaiser from planpolitik to document the improvements made in the simulation game and to find out whether the implemented improvements followed the suggestions from the scientific evaluation.

5. Results

To answer the research questions properly, the result section is structured as follows. First, the main dysfunctions of the simulation game, which were revealed in the first evaluation, will be displayed one after another. The improvements planpolitik made will be displayed, and the third evaluation will be checked for changes in the evaluation regarding the dysfunctional area. After all dysfunctions have been explained, discussed, and the effects of the improvements have been verified, the effectiveness and assessment of the 2019/2020 implementations will be compared to the first one to answer the second research question.

5.1. The Chat Function

One of the most criticized functions in the first application of the simulation game was the chat function. The chat function was on an extra page in the simulation and participants had to actively click on the page to see if they had new messages as opposed to modern social media pages, where you get a notification that you have new messages. Therefore 29.4% of the participants in 2015/2016 rated the technical features of the chat system as rather bad and 11.8% as very bad, similar to the rates of the communication via chat in general with 25.6% as rather bad and 15.9% as very bad. In the open questions, 26.5% of all comments complained about technical problems with the chat system, and only 8.2% of comments mentioned the chat system in a positive way (see Appendix A).

Since this was a major dysfunction of the simulation game made clear by the evaluation, changes in this area were recommended, which planpolitik also took seriously, as can be seen from this interview quote:

Interviewer: "It can be seen from the results of 2015/2016 both in the open questions and in the evaluation of the simulation game that the chat and the chat function were seen very critically by the participants. Did you (planpolitik) react to this result of the evaluation?"

Planpolitik: "Yes, for sure! That was a little bit like a slap in the face for us. In technical developments, especially in this phase, there are always problems. The implementations that we made there at the beginning with the schools that you also evaluated 2015, 2016 were simply super important for us to find all these problems and to see them as well, and of course we responded to that and then made improvements in many ways."

The mentioned improvements include a notification for new messages so that participants can react swiftly to messages, and the flow of the game could be enhanced. Furthermore, a like and dislike function for contributions in debates and in the group forum was added. The positive effect of the changes can already be seen in the 2017/2018 evaluation and are still present in the 2019/2020 evaluation (see Table 3). The average ratings for the technical features of the chat and the general communication by chat are initially increasing between the first and second cycles towards a more positive view and remain that way in the later evaluation (see Table 3). Therefore, participants are more satisfied with the improved chat in the later versions.

A similar development can be seen in the open questions: in 2019/2020, 13.3% of all comments actually mention the chat system as something they explicitly liked about the game. The negative comments about the chat systems decrease to 8.4% in the 2017/2018 evaluation and to 12.4% in the 2019/2020 evaluation, which is a decrease by more than half compared to 26.5% in 2015/2016.

Table 3. Mean Value Comparison of Chat Function Assessment Using Cohen's d (Cohen 1988).

Category	Mean Values (SD)			Cohen's d Values		
	2015/2016	2017/2018	2019/2020	Cohen's d 2015/2016 to 2017/2018	Cohen's 2015/2016 to 2019/2020	Cohen's d 2017/2018 to 2019/2020
Technical features of the chat	2.75 (0.89)	3.02 (0.70)	2.95 (0.76)	0.31	0.23	−0.10
Communication by chat	2.67 (0.99)	3.06 (0.72)	3.03 (0.81)	0.45	0.39	−0.04

Cohen's d: No effect >0.2, small effect 0.2–0.5, medium effect 0.5–0.8, large effect <0.8; mean values: 4 high approval, 1 disapproval.

5.2. The Final Vote/The End of the Game

The simulation game ends with a final vote on the legislation draft the students were required to produce during the simulation of the European Parliament. In 2015/2016, the draft was a text written by the participants themselves. It took some time to agree on single formulations, leading to many votes on the draft in the parliament to end the game, and the draft was not satisfying for many participants. This already was a problem in the 2015/2016 evaluation, as the result of the simulation was that the category rated the worst in the evaluation with 49% of the participants having assessed it as rather bad or very bad. In the small 2017/2018 evaluation, after fixing the chat problem, the discontent was even bigger, with nearly 58% of the participants ticking rather bad or very bad in the evaluation. Furthermore, 16.9% of the complaints in the open questions focused on the issue of the result of the game and the final voting process (see Appendix A). The two evaluations led to a change in planpolitik's voting system, as you can see in this part of the interview:

Interviewer: "In 2017/2018, the end of the simulation game specifically the final vote was especially criticized. Did you change or customize the voting regarding the final vote of the game after the critical results of the evaluation?"

Planpolitik: "No, we did not. That is also confusing for me. No idea. We did not change anything."

Interviewer: "So absolutely nothing? Since 2015 is was always the same?"

Planpolitik: "Although no, yes. Right. In 2015 it was still free text. And so everyone could formulate each word individually [. . .] we changed it so that we use prewritten sentence building blocks as drop-downs, that's what you call them, so you can select them by clicking on such a field."

The 2017/2018 implementation was still with the old version of the game, and the evaluation of this cycle made the dysfunction of the final voting system even more evident. The improvement towards a drag and drop version was made by planpolitik, and the participants can now build their legislation draft by choosing out of different text blocks going in one political direction or another, which can be changed in order to achieve a majority approval for the draft. The positive effect of this change is clearly visible in the newest evaluation. Compared to the average assessment of the end result of the simulation game in 2017/2018 (M = 2.33; SD = 0.98), the 2019/2020 evaluation had a medium positive increase of the assessment with a Cohen's d value of 0.67 (M = 2.93; SD = 0.81), thus moving the end result and the final vote from the worst-assessed category to a rather highly assessed category in the newest evaluation. Furthermore, there was only one complaint in the open questions about the final voting system (see Appendix A).

5.3. Role Description/Role Identification

A smaller but noteworthy change in the simulation game is the role description. In the first evaluation, the participants were quite satisfied with their role description, but the evaluation indicated a lack of role identification, and as for the open questions, only 8.2% of the comments were mentioning positive role identification. Planpolitik reacted and changed the role description after 2015/2016:

Interviewer: "Since 2015/2016 role identification is increasing; in 2015/2016 it was relatively low with 9% and nearly doubled after that. Did you do something with the role description over time?"

Planpolitik: "Yes, we have revised the role description. The page used to be just statistical information, like a book, just plain text. We have divided these (pages) into three modules, let's say. And then small questions in between. So we have included several interactive elements."

The role description changed from a predetermined role description to an interactive role design process that should increase the role identification as the participants have a greater influence on their own role. The later evaluations can support this claim: in 2017/2018, 17.1% of all comments on the game mention a positive role identification, similar to 2019/2020 with 19%, doubling the percentage of positive comments compared to 2015/2016 (see Appendix A).

5.4. The Learning Effect

The last, yet very important factor that the design-based research impacted is the effect of the simulation game on objective EU knowledge measured by the knowledge test. In the first evaluation of the simulation game, the results of the knowledge test showed a small decrease of EU knowledge; thus, the participation in the simulation game had a negative effect on the objective EU Knowledge of the participants (Cohen's d −0.21). This was, of course, not intended and the opposite effect of what the game should actually do. The evaluation pointed this out, and planpolitik reacted and changed the setting of the digital simulation game:

Planpolitik: "We changed nothing in the game itself but we added a presentation for the teachers, so in the introduction before the game starts, there is now a presentation for the teacher which the teacher will show the pupils. Now we are doing an online simulation game. This and that will happen and that helps to structure the expectations of the pupils and then they know better what is coming for them and what they will be learning about and that there is a committee and they are simulating a law-making process and just the classification where they are and what they are doing right now. Before that we just threw them into cold water. Thereby, I think, it is clearer to the people what they are doing and then they can better learn and save the information."

In educational science, there are clear indicators that combining and structure in educational interventions help the learner to better understand and receive knowledge (Jang et al. 2010; Sierens et al. 2009). The positive impact of the restructuring can also be seen in the 2019/2020 evaluation as the game now has a positive effect on objective knowledge (see Table 4).

Table 4. Mean Value Comparison of Objective Knowledge Using Cohen's d and *t*-test.

	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Cohen's d	*t*-test
Objective Knowledge 2015/2016	11.11 (2.64)	10.41 (3.84)	−0.21	−2.59 **
Objective Knowledge 2019/2020	12.18 (2.16)	13.25 (3.34)	0.34	8.06 **

Cohen's d: No effect >0.2, small effect 0.2–0.5, medium effect 0.5–0.8, large effect <0.8; *t*-test Significance Level: ** = *p* < 0.01.

So the effect on objective knowledge turned from a small significant decrease to a small significant increase, which can be expected for a 90-minute intervention.

5.5. General Comparison

For the second research question about the passage to a more effective and appreciated digital simulation game through the use of design-based research and scientific evaluation, in this section, a comparison between the first and the most recent evaluation will be done. Therefore, the participants' evaluations of the games and the effect on the participants will be highlighted and compared, the

first one being the general assessment of the three dimensions of the simulation game assessment (see Table 5).

Table 5. Mean Value Comparison of All Three Dimensions of Simulation Game Assessment in the First and Last Evaluation Cycles.

Dimensions Simulation Game Assessment	Sample 2015/2016 *n*209 M (SD)	Sample 2019/2020 *n*222 M (SD)	Cohen's d 2015/2016 to 2019/2020
General Satisfaction	2.87 (0.52)	3.02 (0.43)	0.31
Subjective Learning Effect	2.67 (0.59)	2.77 (0.49)	0.18
Motivational Effect	2.22 (0.64)	2.30 (0.68)	0.12

The last evaluation was the most positive one in all dimensions, especially in the dimension of general satisfaction Not only does the general assessment of the simulation games show positive development, but the direct comparison of the adjectives the participants associate with the games also makes the advancements of the latest version clearer (see Figure 1).
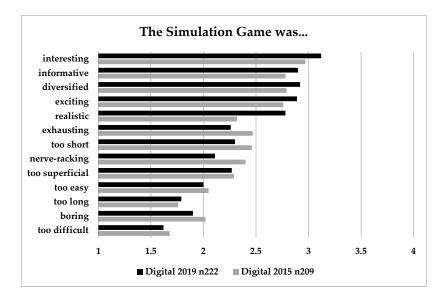

Figure 1. Comparison Simulation Game Adjectives Assessed by Participants in 2015/2016 and 2019/2020; 1 Indicates Strong Rejection and 4 Strong Agreement.

Overall, the participants rate the 2019/2020 simulation game, on the one hand, in all positive aspects higher, like the diversification of the game, find it is more interesting and exciting, and especially perceive it as more realistic, and on the other hand, in all negative aspects rate lower, particularly the nerve-racking and exhausting part, than the first version.

Looking at the effects of the simulation games, the 2015/2016 version had nearly no effect on all measured constructs (attitudes towards the EU, willingness of political participation, political interests, internal efficacy) except a negative effect on EU knowledge and a small positive effect on the willingness to engage in illegal political participation (Cohen's d 0.24), like political vandalism and civil disobedience. The newest version of the simulation game had a positive effect on objective EU knowledge and still had a small positive effect on the willingness to participate in politics illegally (Cohen's d 0.20). Additionally, there is a significant positive effect on internal efficacy (*t*-test 3.69 ***) that has only a very small effect size according to the Cohen's d value (0.17). Lastly, in the third evaluation cycle, pupils' general attitudes towards the European Union became slightly less positive (−0.21) after having played the game, but the general attitudes towards the EU were very positive in this sample from the beginning. Comparing the mean values of general EU attitudes in the posttests, the values of the third cycle are still higher than those of the first cycle.

In conclusion, the new version is now expanding the knowledge of its participants and slightly enhancing their internal political efficacy, which is what the educational intervention was meant to do. It still inspires them a bit towards illegal political participation and decreases the initially very high level of positive attitudes towards the EU. On the other EU-related political dispositions captured in the evaluation, the simulation game has no effect; given that it only takes 90 min, strong effects on attitudes were not expected.

6. Discussion

The results support certain aspects of the design-based approach, for instance, the importance of multiple iterations and evaluation cycles (Lewis et al. 2020; Anderson and Shattuck 2012; Herrington et al. 2007). The participants in the first iteration were very focused on the problems with the chat, drawing attention to this point of criticism. Therefore, problems regarding the "final vote/the end of the game", which were already present but not the main point of criticism in the first iteration, were neglected but became more visible during the second iteration. The results also underline the usefulness of mixed-method approaches in design-based research (Maxcy 2003). For example, while statistical analysis uncovered the problem with the chat system, it was the qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010) of the open questions that showed what the problem actually was, thus making it easier for the developers to fix it.

So did scientific evaluation matter in the presented case? In the example of these short digital simulation games, a design-based research approach designed after Anderson's and Shattuck's (Anderson and Shattuck 2012) was implemented. The implementation followed the recommendations of design-based research literature and was leaning on the work of (Knogler and Lewalter 2014), including a close cooperation between researchers and developers (Kuhn and Quigley 1997), as well as multiple iterations over time. This led to a more effective and positively rated version of the educational intervention that is now expanding the knowledge of its participants and slightly enhancing their internal political efficacy, which is what the digital simulation game was meant to do (Kaiser et al. 2017; Oberle et al. 2017). Even though the effects of the short simulation games are still small, they now do help students to learn about the European Parliament; indeed, the size of the effects is considerable in view of the limited length of the intervention (90 min). Therefore, the scientific evaluation did matter in developing a better-functioning education measure, which is, according to the design-based research approach, a goal in itself (Hoadley 2004; Design-Based Research Collective 2003). The positive results are also in line with similar studies from the fields of blended-learning (Ustun and Tracey 2020) and face-to-face simulation games (Knogler and Lewalter 2014; Koivisto et al. 2018), showing the design-based-research approach as a suitable way to enhance digital simulation games in civic education, too.

Of course, limitations of the study need to be taken into account for an appropriate interpretation of its results. The main limitation of the study is its quasi-experimental setting; as opposed to purely experimental studies, it is not guaranteed that the shifts in the effects and assessments between the three evaluations are coming from the improvements planpolitik made or from other influences. In experimental settings, other potential factors of influence can be controlled, whereas in quasi-experimental settings this can only be done to a limited extent as there is no control of the Wi-Fi connection and technical equipment of the school, the behavior of the pupils, or other possible influences. Another important limitation is the sample composition and size: the 2017/2018 sample is very small and all samples having different compositions of school types leading to differences in age and other potentially influencing factors. As already underlined in the description of the sample, another point of limitation is that the sample selection was not random as the classes were signed up for participation by their teachers on a voluntary basis. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with care. Overall, the sample size is still too small and arbitrary for general assumptions but the results can point in a direction for further large n studies in this field.

7. Conclusions

Four major flaws of the first version of the digital simulation game—respectively, the dysfunctional chat, the end result/final vote of the game, the role description, and the negative learning effect—were pointed out in an attempt to answer the first research question. Following the design-based research approach (Anderson and Shattuck 2012), dysfunctions were processed and could be improved, leading to a more positive assessment by the participants in the later evaluations. Thus, the final evaluation of the simulation game was more positive than the evaluation before, and the game's effects regarding participants' objective EU knowledge and internal political efficacy were enhanced as compared to the earlier evaluations (Oberle et al. 2017).

Similar to the research of (Knogler and Lewalter 2014), the simulation game was enhanced through design-based research and is now more useful for practical applications. The study has limitations and its results cannot be generalized, but they do support the request that educational interventions like simulation games, digital and analog ones, should be accompanied by empirical evaluations to enhance their potential and to point out possible design/application failures. Close cooperation between evaluators and developers can lead to a more effective intervention (Štemberger and Cencic 2016); new ideas and prototypes should be tested and investigated closely, and this effort should not stop after one cycle of evaluation.

Scientific evaluation matters and can improve programs, tools, and methods in the important field of civic education. Further long term studies, including large n studies as well as qualitative studies, should accompany new civic education programs inspired by the design-based research approach to critically analyze the effectiveness of such measures and to make sure learners can benefit from the best civic education possible.

Appendix A

Table A1. Extract of the Results of the Qualitative Content Analysis Focusing on the Problems Discussed in the Article.

What Did You Like about the Simulation Game?					
	2015/16		2017/18		2019/20	
Category	**Mention**	**Percent**	**Mention**	**Percent**	**Mention**	**Percent**
Role identification	12	8.2%	14	17.1%	43	19%
Chat functions	12	8.2%	–	–	30	13.3%
(End-)Voting in the game	3	2.1%	–	–	5	2.2%
Overall	146	100%	82	100%	226	100%
What Did You <u>Not</u> Like about the Simulation Game?					
	2015/16		2017/18		2019/20	
Category	**Mention**	**Percent**	**Mention**	**Percent**	**Mention**	**Percent**
End of the game/final vote	23	14.2%	14	16.9%	1	0.5%
Technical problems with chat system	43	26.5%	7	8.4%	25	12.4%
Overall	162	100%	83	100%	202	100%

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