



A cross-national comparison of teachers' beliefs about the aims of civic education in 12 countries: A person-centered analysis

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H I G H L I G H T S

- We identified three profiles of teacher beliefs about the aims of civic education.
- The smallest group, dominant in Korea, emphasized dutiful school participation.
- Emphasis on knowledge transmission was strong in Western Europe and Hong Kong.
- Teachers in the Nordic countries emphasized independent thinking and tolerance.
- Independent thinking was endorsed in more developed and democratic countries.

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A B S T R A C T

This article examines teachers' beliefs about the aims of citizenship education in 12 countries from Europe and Asia. A latent class analysis of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of 2009 identified three distinct profiles of teachers' beliefs about the goals of citizenship education. These profiles are associated with teachers' characteristics and with national indicators of democratic development. Profiles can be more useful than single beliefs in understanding how teaching contributes to students' civic development. Teachers across countries thought it far more important to foster students' participation in the school or local community than to foster future political participation.

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1. Introduction

Democratic societies need citizens who are politically engaged and knowledgeable about their governments. Adolescence is a key period for preparing democratic citizens, and schools are

Abbreviations: AIC, Akaike information criterion; AIC3, AIC with 3 as penalizing factor; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; CAIC, consistent AIC; CCE, civic and citizenship education; CivEd, Civic Education Study; CPI, (Lack of) Corruption Perception Index; ICCS, International Civic and Citizenship Education Study; EIU, Economist Intelligence Unit; GDP, Gross Domestic Product; IEA, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement; LCA, latent class analysis; LL, Log-Likelihood; OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; SABIC, sample-size adjusted BIC.

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expected to foster knowledge, skills and dispositions supporting future engagement and participation (Hahn, 1998). School-based civic and citizenship education (CCE) – either as a cross-disciplinary area or as a designated subject – has been recognized as an important factor in this process (Galston, 2001; Niemi & Junn, 1998).

In schools young people learn about how to contribute to society through formal and informal learning experiences (Parker, 2001; Reichert & Print, 2018). Teachers across subject areas play a role, with those who specialize in civics or in history and social science having particular responsibilities (Losito & Mintrop, 2001). However, few researchers have considered how teachers in both categories see their roles. What priorities do they place and what goals animate their teaching? To what extent is students' later participation a goal? What differences exist across countries in teachers' civic education aims?

Thornton (2005) has characterized teachers as “curricular-instructional gatekeepers” implementing the curriculum according to their own epistemological and ideological beliefs about learning. In a review, Fives and Buehl (2012) distinguished between teachers' beliefs about self, context, content, specific teaching practices, teaching approach, and students. Park and Oliver (2008) characterized teachers' beliefs about the purposes and goals for teaching as an aspect of pedagogical content knowledge guiding instructional decisions. For example, Manzel, Hahn-Laudenberg, and Zischke (2017) argue that topics specified in the curriculum are more likely to be taught when they align with a teacher's beliefs about civic education. More generally, teachers' beliefs can act as filters in selecting topics and classroom activities (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Consequently, this study makes the assumption that what teachers believe about CCE goals matters to their teaching and the quality of students' learning (Martens & Gainous, 2013; Torney-Purta, Richardson, & Barber, 2005); teachers' beliefs directly and indirectly affect teaching-related decisions (Patterson, Doppin, & Misco, 2012; Thornberg, 2008).

Although the curriculum often defines goals for CCE, teachers must be selective; there is variation in how closely they adhere to either localized expectations or pronouncements from the state or national levels. Illustrating this, Kerr (2002) examined case study materials describing CCE in twenty-four countries (compiled by Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999) and concluded that teachers' values and beliefs have more influence in countries where the curriculum is less explicit. Teachers' decisions are also influenced by students' needs and school context (Thornton, 2005). Civic education considers the individual's role in a society with particular cultural values (Alexander, 2000). Unsurprisingly, these values influence the extent to which teachers aim to help students adopt a role in the existing social order or be prepared to change society (Thornton, 2005). Historical, political, economic and social contexts as well as the availability of educational resources are influential. An Israeli study found that teachers reported discussing global poverty differently in schools with high and low levels of socio-economic status and diversity (Goren & Yemini, 2017). When the school or community is experiencing tensions, education related to conflict resolution may assume enhanced importance.

These are important reasons for taking a comparative perspective to understand the beliefs of those who organize students' civic learning experiences. However, little research has described profiles of teachers' beliefs about CCE. The present analysis focuses on the content beliefs about the aims of CCE that teachers endorse, which constitute their subjective perceptions of its goals. Understanding cross-national differences in teachers' approaches can lead to insights about educational improvement. These insights may differ in regions with different histories of democracy. Therefore, the beliefs of teachers from four regions were examined (Asia, Eastern Europe, the Nordic area, and Western Europe), guided by four inter-related research questions: (1) What is the relative frequency among teachers of specific beliefs about the goals of CCE, particularly in relation to dimensions of knowledge, thinking or interaction skills and participation of various kinds? (2) Are there distinct groups of teachers characterized by distinct patterns or profiles in their beliefs about the goals of CCE? (3) How can these distinct groups be described with respect to characteristics of teachers? (4) How are these distinct groups distributed in countries from four regions, and what associations exist between distributions of group membership and indices of democratic and economic development? Our analyses provide a research basis for educational personnel and curriculum designers to identify effective approaches to civic and citizenship education in particular contexts.

2. Literature review

There is considerable agreement that teachers' beliefs influence classroom practices (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Patterson et al., 2012; Sim, 2011). However, relatively little is known about differences among teachers in beliefs about CCE. A well-supported finding from student data is that classroom climates that are open for discussion and allow respectful questioning of ideas are effective in promoting positive civic development (Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal, & Dam, 2013; Knowles, Torney-Purta, & Barber, 2018; Reichert, Chen, & Torney-Purta, 2018). However, the overall cross-national evidence about teachers' beliefs or practices is sparse. Studies can be categorized by the type of data – qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. First, we consider studies that derived typologies of teaching from qualitative methods using small samples. Then we consider studies with moderate-sized samples that used factor analysis of quantitative survey data to develop several scales representing different beliefs about teaching. The researchers then compared groups of teachers who were high and low on these scales. A few studies combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. Review of these variable-centered analyses and the “typologies” of teachers identified led to our research plan employing person-centered analysis of large-scale quantitative data from twelve countries to examine profiles or typologies of teachers in depth.

2.1. Qualitative and mixed methods studies

An example of qualitative research is a study of citizenship pedagogy with eight teachers in Singapore that identified three distinct approaches towards instruction linked to teachers' concepts of citizenship. One group conceptualized CCE as promoting good, moral persons; a second group believed that students should take social responsibility and become active in their communities; the third group of nationalistic teachers was concerned about transmitting knowledge and values to support the nation (Sim & Print, 2009). Sim, Chua, and Krishnasamy (2017) in another small study in Singapore identified character-driven teachers, socially participatory teachers, and critically-reflexive teachers. Kenyon (2017) used narrative inquiry with three US social studies teachers, concluding that personal experiences formed their ideas about authority, which in turn shaped three teaching approaches: for personally responsible citizenship, for a social justice orientation, or for reflective inquiry. An interview study with teachers of civics-related subjects in the UK and in Denmark about their citizenship concepts confirms that cultural and educational contexts need to be considered; the British teachers' emphasized knowledge and citizens' action while the Danish teachers stressed the experience of democratic decision-making and participation in a community (Hahn, 2015). Finally, a qualitative study in the Netherlands by Willemse, Dam, Geijsel, van Wessum, and Volman (2015) concluded that teachers are often unaware of how their beliefs influence their teaching practice, but involvement in curriculum development can increase this awareness.

Using a sorting technique together with interview and survey data from several US samples, Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, and Sullivan (1997) explored social studies teachers' perspectives. Despite common beliefs about the goals of citizenship education, such as encouraging tolerance and addressing controversial issues, these researchers also found differences. Social studies teachers could be classified as cultural pluralists, communitarians, legalists, critical thinkers, and assimilationists, though not all types were found in all samples. Importantly, the authors identified significant correlates of group membership. A focus on cultural pluralism was more common among teachers working in schools with students

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