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Joris, M.; Agirdag, O.

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In search of good citizenship education: A normative analysis of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

Margot Joris¹ | Orhan Agirdag²

¹Laboratory for Education and Society, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

²Educational Sciences, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Correspondence

Margot Joris, Laboratory for Education and Society, KU Leuven, Andreas Vesaliusstraat 2 – box 3761, 3000 Leuven, Belgium.
Email: margot.joris@kuleuven.be

Abstract

In the last two decades, calls to place citizenship education (CE) at the top of national and European educational policy and research agendas have been gaining in prominence. Large-scale comparative studies, such as the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), are often considered the main evidence base for setting these agendas and improving CE policies and practices. This article therefore considers the ICCS study as an inherent part of the process of translating general, educational aims into curricular policies and practices of CE. However, while critical voices about comparative educational studies have become paramount, a detailed analysis of their contents, of what and how they measure and what they promote as the aims of education is often lacking. This article aims to fill this gap by analysing the main research documents, design and items of the 2009 ICCS study. To find out what ICCS promotes as the goals of citizenship education, we examined its normative assumptions in terms of qualification, socialisation and/or subjectification. Our analysis shows that the qualification and socialisation functions are dominantly validated in all aspects of the study, whilst there is only marginal attention to subjectification. This implies that ICCS misses an important potential to document and/or promote pupils becoming autonomous and critical democratic citizens, whilst this is often considered a central aim of citizenship education by policymakers, practitioners and teachers.

1 | INTRODUCTION

For over a decade, calls for citizenship education in schools have been attracting the interest of national and European policymakers and researchers. Coming from all sides of the political and societal spectrum (Brooks & Holford, 2009), they are often grounded in a “crisis” discourse, proposing active citizenship and citizenship education as universal antidotes to diverse societal issues which are seen to constitute a deepening crisis in our democracies. These issues include terrorist threats and extremism, loss of social cohesion, increasing individualism, intolerance, racism, populism, etc. Moreover, citizens, and mostly young people, are seen to be losing interest in and becoming increasingly apathetic to political and societal affairs (Brooks & Holford, 2009; Holford, 2008; Nordensvärd, 2014). Citizenship education is then promoted as an answer by equipping young people with the right set of knowledge, competencies, attitudes and values to become active democratic citizens (Council of Europe, 2010; Naval, Print, & Veldhuis, 2002; Toots, De Groof, & Kavadias, 2012). The school is often seen as the ideal place for this “revitalisation” of democratic citizenship through education because it provides a common space and time for young people to learn how to live together or form a sort of miniature society (Print, Ørnstrøm, & Nielsen, 2002). This has led to a focus on democratic school governance and the creation of a democratic climate in schools and classrooms by educational research and policy, reflecting what McCowan (2009) describes as the idea(l) of “seamless enactment”: stressing the need for harmony between ends and means in citizenship education or for the embodiment of democratic aims in the curriculum and pedagogical relations and processes in school. In other words, it aims at avoiding tensions between democratic aims and undemocratic practices throughout the stages of the creation and implementation of citizenship education curricula.

At a national or local level, policymakers have (re)introduced this central belief in citizenship education in schools as part of educational policies and curricula which, next to national or local priorities, increasingly include translations and implementations of supranational, European policy initiatives (Ioannidou, 2007; Naval et al., 2002). For instance, in 2016, the Council of Europe launched its framework of competences for democratic culture to inform educational planning and decision making and be tested and implemented in citizenship education curricula and practices throughout Europe (Council of Europe, 2016). It encompasses a model of the competences to be acquired by European learners to become “effective participatory citizens”, to learn how to live together peacefully and prepare for life as “competent democratic citizens” (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 9). These initiatives, both national and inter- or supranational, often refer to an empirical “evidence base” consisting of the measurement and comparison of international citizenship education data (Ioannidou, 2007). The main providers of these data are comparative, standardised studies that measure and compare students’ citizenship knowledge, attitudes and activities across countries. These studies often follow the design and aims of international studies in other educational fields, such as the OECD’s PISA study or the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (Olson, 2012). The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has been a main contributor to the study of citizenship education, developing measuring instruments and a rich collection of data worldwide (Torney-Purta, 2002). Its most recent study, the *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS), compared the outcomes of citizenship education of over 140,000 students in 38 countries in 2009 and was organised a second time in 2016, building on the data and framework of the 2009 edition. ICCS claims to offer reliable, comparative evidence and data that will enable participating countries and regions to evaluate the strengths of their educational policies and measure progress in achieving their set goals of citizenship education (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, & Agrusti, 2016).

Taking into account the extensive body of research that deals with comparative, international education studies in general, for instance as a political tool that influences and creates educational policy (No’voa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003) or questions the consistency of standardised methodology with democratic educational practices and principles (Mason & Delandshere, 2010) and its adequateness for making recommendations for educational practices (Hyslop-Margison, Hamalian, & Anderson, 2006) or even portraying large-scale studies as counterproductive to promoting democracy in and through education (Ydesen, 2014), this article focuses on a specific lacuna in the secondary research spurred by the 2009 ICCS study which we broadly divide here into two strands. The first focuses on a further empirical analysis of ICCS data, researching specific relations between variables or indicators and student citizenship education outcomes,

comparing results with other studies or countries, or connecting them to specific national contexts (Knowles & Di Stefano, 2015). This strand of secondary research embodies trust in the standardised collection and analysis of data to improve practices and policies. The second strand of research offers a critical approach to ICCS, scrutinising its ability to depict young people's civic engagement (Olson, 2012), or analysing its lack of a theoretical and empirical framework and its methodological and test-ethical problems (Zurstrassen, 2011). It focuses on the flaws and limits of measuring the educational aims through the comparative, standardised approach to citizenship education.

Although these critical voices question the general usefulness of ICCS for (citizenship) educational policymaking and practice, a detailed analysis of its framework and contents is often missing. Hence, what the study aims to measure and the normative assumptions beneath its assessments remain a black box. This article attempts to fill this "gap" by departing from what we believe is a more fundamental, *normative* question: what does ICCS promote and measure as the goals and aims of citizenship education? Following Olson's (2012) argument that the content and criteria that are chosen and included in an educational study point at what it characterises as educationally desirable, we look into the normative underpinnings of the ICCS research design and test items. By investigating all its steps and documents for the aims attributed to citizenship education, this article illustrates how the study (and educational research more broadly) can be considered as an additional and missing stage in what McCowan (2009) describes as the four stages of "curricular transposition" of overarching aims to curricular programmes: first, the envisioning of the ideal citizen/polity and the knowledge, skills and values that are seen to comprise them, second, the creation of curricular programmes, third, the implementation of curricula and last, their effects on students. We consider ICCS, as an example of comparative, large-scale educational research, an additional stage between the first and second stage described by McCowan, since it constructs and measures the types of knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs that are considered important to prepare young people for their roles as citizens (Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito, & Kerr, 2008) given its purpose to offer an evidence base for curricular policies and practices in the participating countries and regions. According to McCowan, this process of curricular transposition is accompanied by the idea(l) of seamless enactment mentioned earlier as a corresponding *normative framework* underlying the different stages of the citizenship education curriculum and envisioning a 'harmonious movement between ends and means and ideal and real, both in terms of underlying principles and the human agents involved' (McCowan, 2009, p. 85–86). Following the importance attached to promoting active and critical participation of students in school governance, a democratic school culture and open classroom climate by research and policies of citizenship education (Knowles & Di Stefano, 2015; Naval et al., 2002; Print et al., 2002; Schulz et al., 2008; Torney-Purta, 2002), we investigate if ICCS, whilst promoting these aims, adopts this principle of seamless enactment in its logic, set-up and methodology.

2 | AIMS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

In order to answer questions about its aims and purposes and what constitutes good (citizenship) education, Biesta (2009, 2011) argues that we should begin with what he identifies as its three functions:

- *Qualification*: providing young people with the knowledge, skills, understandings, dispositions and forms of judgement that allow someone to do/be something.
- *Socialisation*: ways of becoming a member and part of particular social, cultural and political "orders", the transmission of norms and values, bringing young people into existing ways of knowing and doing.
- *Subjectification*: becoming a (political) subject, ways of becoming autonomous and independent from the socio-political order; process through which new ways of being and doing can come into existence or the coming into being as a unique subject.

This frame is based on both classical and critical pedagogical works and views, mainly inspired by Klaus Mollenhauers' *Erziehung und Emanzipation* (Biesta, 2015), that propose that "good" upbringing and education can

never be limited to forms of learning that solely contribute to reproducing existing socio-political orders or to the adaptation or insertion of individuals into these orders (qualification and socialisation). Its purpose also includes a dimension of emancipation, of helping young people to become autonomous and independent, unique subjects (subjectification). This view on the aims of education as both reproducing and preserving the existing and making change possible is still present in current educational research and policymaking on citizenship education (Nordensvärd, 2014). For instance, the Council of Europe, one of the main European citizenship education policy-makers that ICCS aims to inspire, also refers to these three aims of good (citizenship) education:

Education has many purposes, including preparing individuals for the labour market, supporting personal development and providing a broad advanced knowledge base within society. However, in addition, education has a vital role to play in preparing individuals for life as active democratic citizens, and education is in a unique position to guide and support learners in acquiring the competences which they require to participate effectively in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue. An education system which equips people with such competences empowers them (...). It also endows them with the ability to function as autonomous social agents capable of choosing and pursuing their own goals in life. (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 16)

This article therefore departs from this distinction between qualification, socialisation and subjectification to investigate the normative underpinnings of the ICCS research. Whilst we are fully aware that the notion of subjectification is in itself not undisputed (Simons & Masschelein, 2010), we do believe it to be an interesting starting point for our normative analysis of ICCS. In order for ICCS to deliver the evidence to improve policy and practices of citizenship education that envision these purposes, we could therefore expect it to reflect this threefold description of its aims.

3 | METHODOLOGY

In what follows, the concepts of qualification, socialisation and subjectification are used to analyse the normativity of the 2009 ICCS study by applying them to some of its main documents. Since the framework and design of the study have remained largely the same in the 2016 ICCS edition, our normative analysis also applies to this second edition and thus contributes to current debates on citizenship education research and policy.

The first document in our analysis is a paper called *Concept and design of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (Fraillon & Schulz, 2008) which describes its fundamental underpinnings. The second is the ICCS *Assessment framework*, or “blueprint” for the assessment of citizenship education outcomes in the study (Schulz et al., 2008), describing the aspects to be operationalised and measured. Finally, we refer to findings from the *ICCS 2009 International Report: Civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement among lower-secondary school students in 38 countries* (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010) which summarises the results of the study and provides examples of test items from its cognitive test and student questionnaire. In analysing these documents, we explore the importance that is attributed to qualification, socialisation and subjectification in the ICCS purpose statement, theoretical framework, design, instruments and items.

4 | ANALYSIS

4.1 | Purpose statement

The ICCS Assessment Framework opens by stating the main purpose of the ICCS study, namely: to investigate the ways in which young people are prepared and consequently ready and able to play their roles as citizens in a

range of countries (Schulz et al., 2008). This consisted in measuring and reporting on their citizenship and civic knowledge, understandings, competencies, activities, dispositions and attitudes and collecting contextual data to help to explain variations in these outcome variables (Schulz et al., 2008). This purpose statement expresses a firm belief in the ability of ICCS to offer evidence for the improvement of citizenship education policy and practice. However, it does not address explicitly the question of what *good* citizenship education is/ought to be. We identify the central idea that young people have a certain (learning) trajectory to follow in order to become “ready and able” citizens, i.e., acquiring the right forms of knowledge and understanding, forming positive attitudes to being a citizen and participating in activities related to civic and citizenship learning (Schulz et al., 2010). We relate this to Biesta’s qualification function of education: providing young people with the knowledge, skills, understandings, dispositions and forms of judgement that allow someone to do/be something (Biesta, 2009), in this case a competent citizen. Digging a little deeper, we can also connect the idea of a citizenship learning trajectory to the *socialisation* function of education: it is considered a prerequisite for young people to become “ready and able” citizens, or to be introduced as members of the existing citizenship order. A more emancipating or *subjectification* function of young people becoming independent, unique and autonomous (political) subjects is not listed explicitly as an important purpose of this trajectory. The purpose statement of ICCS 2009 therefore seems to leave open the possibility of subjectification as a function of citizenship education, whilst prioritising qualification and socialisation.

4.2 | Assessment framework

The assessment framework of ICCS 2009 consisted of 3 parts: *The Civic and Citizenship Framework*, describing the aspects that were to be operationalised and measured throughout the study, the *Contextual Framework* and the *Assessment Design*. Here, we will only discuss the civic and citizenship framework and the assessment design. The civic and citizenship framework was organised around three outcome dimensions of citizenship education to be measured throughout the study: the *content* dimension or subject matter, the *affective/behavioural* dimension or types of student perceptions and activities and the *cognitive* dimension or thinking processes. The most straightforward dimension for the purpose of our analysis is the cognitive dimension. In its two domains, knowledge and cognitive skills are considered the main “outcomes” in need of measurement and they therefore seem to put *qualification* forward as the main goal of citizenship education:

- *Knowing*: students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of civic and citizenship information, or the ability to define, describe, and illustrate it with examples.
- *Reasoning and analysing*: students’ use of civic and citizenship information to reach conclusions that are broader than any single concept: to interpret, relate, justify, integrate; generalise, solve problems, hypothesise, evaluate, etc.

The second dimension, the content dimension, consisted of 4 domains, specifying subject matter related to:

Civic society and systems: mechanisms, systems and organisations that underpin societies: citizens, state institutions and civil institutions.

Civic principles: shared ethical foundations of society or support, protection, and promotion of equity, freedom and social cohesion.

Civic participation: manifestations of individuals’ actions in their communities (active citizenship): decision making, influencing and community participation.

Civic identities: personal sense of being an agent of civic action, testing individuals’ civic roles and the perceptions of these roles: civic self-image and civic connectedness.

The first content domain can be considered to focus on both qualification and socialisation as functions of citizenship education by testing students' knowledge and perceptions of civic society and its systems, or the existing "orders". The civic principles and civic participation domains align with a *socialisation* function, focusing on the degree to which students (have) become members of the established social, cultural and political orders, or support and comply with existing norms, values and ways of being, such as community participation.

The civic identities domain can be seen to hint at *subjectification* as an aim of citizenship education. It includes the attitude of *internal political efficacy*: individuals' confidence in their ability to understand politics and act politically (Schulz et al., 2008). The authors consider this as one of the two aspects of *general political efficacy*: the feeling that political change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing it about (Schulz et al., 2008). This concept seems to be related to the function of subjectification as described by Biesta (2009). The *civic participation* subdomain of decision making and influencing can also be seen to be related to subjectification as instances of autonomous thinking and acting. The content dimension therefore seems to offer a balanced view of qualification, socialisation and subjectification.

The affective-behavioural dimension consisted of the following (sub)domains:

Value beliefs: beliefs about the value of concepts, institutions, people, and ideas: democratic values, citizenship values.

Attitudes: states of mind or feelings about ideas, persons, objects, events, situations and/or relationships: self-cognitions related to civics and citizenship, attitudes towards rights and responsibilities and attitudes towards institutions.

Behavioural intentions: expectations of future action, readiness to participate in forms of civic protest, anticipated future political participation as adults and anticipated future participation in citizenship activities.

Behaviours: past or present participation in civic-related activities. At school: school councils, parliaments, student debates. In the wider community: human rights groups, religious associations, youth clubs.

The beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions and behaviours that are measured most often seem to imply an introduction to existing social and political conventions, traditions and values, or to socialisation as the main aim of citizenship education. The subdomains of behavioural intentions and behaviours of (expected) participation, however, also leave room for subjectification: taking action, participating in protest and in human rights groups, etc. can indicate new or critical ways of thinking and acting or becoming independent from the existing socio-political orders.

In general, the three dimensions of the ICCS assessment framework can be seen to encompass and propose all three functions of qualification, socialisation and subjectification, thus complying with the apparent current attention of European policy for all three aims of "good" citizenship education.

4.3 | Instruments: Design

The three dimensions of the ICCS assessment framework were translated into two instruments which were administered to all participating students: an international *cognitive test* and a *student questionnaire*. In their design, the development of knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship were seen by ICCS researchers as fundamental for effective civic participation and as a major emphasis of citizenship education programmes across countries (Schulz et al., 2010), confirming qualification as a main function. To assess this knowledge, the ICCS cognitive test was developed, measuring students' civic and citizenship knowledge, analysing, and reasoning related to the four content and two cognitive domains specified above. The test mainly consisted of multiple choice questions, each with one correct answer. Six constructed-response items were also included for which students were asked to develop their own response(s) which were evaluated and scored against a predefined number of correct categories (Schulz et al., 2010). It therefore mainly focused on qualification as an important goal of citizenship education by measuring civic and citizenship knowledge, cognitive or analytical skills and forms of reasoning (Schulz

et al., 2010). Through its use of multiple choice questions in relation to civic and citizenship topics and predefined categories of correct answers to open-ended items, we see it as leaving little or no room for students to express true critical or independent thinking (as expressions or instances of subjectification), but rather as expecting them to reason and decide on an option according to (what the IEA researchers consider) established, accepted forms of citizenship reasoning or action, or outcomes of socialisation.

The *international student questionnaire* measured the affective-behavioural dimension of the assessment framework and consisted mainly of Likert-type items, requiring students to indicate scales of frequency of certain activities, or levels of attributed importance. It can be seen to mainly address citizenship education as socialising young people into existing ways of being and doing and testing their adherence to existing citizenship values and traditions. However, it also tends to approach citizenship education as instilling forms of qualification, since it pays significant attention to the dispositions and forms of judgement (elements of qualification according to Biesta) related to citizenship that young people have acquired. Identifying items or questions relating to processes or moments of subjectification was far less clear-cut. The questionnaire, like the cognitive test, presented few opportunities for bringing new or unexpected ways of thinking or doing to the study. By offering students a limited number of responses or response categories in the design of both instruments, it therefore seems that developing one's own critical or new ways of thinking and acting is a less important aim of citizenship education than fitting in with predefined categories of desirable citizenship knowledge and behaviour.

In general, whereas the (sub)domains and concepts that were adopted in the ICCS assessment framework reflected the three functions of education as more or less equally important goals of citizenship education, these were included and translated in the study's design to be measured across all students in all countries and therefore reduced to predefined, universal categorical answers. This left very little room for something completely "new" to come to the fore, since all possible forms of civic action, participation, attitudes and thinking were reduced to forms of qualification and socialisation as the goals of citizenship education, leaving out the educational aim of subjectification.

4.4 | Instruments: Content

Here, we consider the content and some items of the ICCS 2009 research to point out how the study characterises qualification, socialisation and subjectification as goals of citizenship education through the content and response categories. Following the structure provided by the framework and design of ICCS, we also distinguished a tendency at the content level to equate "good citizenship education" outcomes with the educational purposes of qualification and socialisation and a lack of attention to potential instances and forms of subjectification.

4.4.1 | Cognitive test

Examining the coverage of the different content domains by the items on the cognitive test and linking these to the three functions of education, we found that approximately 68% of the items were related to the educational aim of qualification, going into students' knowledge, understanding and analytical skills. Some 10% were related to socialisation, testing students' knowledge and compliance with democratic norms and values and existing ways of being and doing. Some 22% can be seen as relating to both qualification and socialisation, for instance by measuring students' knowledge of or their adherence to established citizenship values or principles. Items directly or explicitly related to subjectification were not included, although some of the issues or situations presented in the items could be seen as providing potential for the recognition of instances or forms of independent, new thinking or acting. We argue, however, that inherent in the cognitive items is a reduction of these instances of subjectification to measurable forms of qualification and socialisation in what are considered good or desirable citizenship (education) outcomes. Illustrative of this are two cognitive test items, providing students with a context and an example of *ethical consumerism* defined by the IEA as the "selective purchasing of products according to ethical

beliefs about the way they were produced” and considered a form of civic action (Schulz et al., 2008, p. 20). At first glimpse, it could therefore be seen as testing students’ autonomous or critical thinking and acting, or a potential instance of subjectification. The item presents the example of a male who bought new shoes, but then learned that they were made in a factory which employed young children and paid them very little. In a first question, students were asked why the man would refuse to wear his shoes. The options they were offered were:

1. *He thinks that shoes made by children will not last very long.*
2. *He does not want to show support for the company that made them.*
3. *He does not want to support the children who made them.*
4. *He is angry that he paid more for the shoes than they were actually worth.*

The second answer is considered the only correct answer, as it relates to a “familiar example of unfair treatment of individuals in the international context” (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 65). This justification by the IEA experts presupposes that this example should indeed be familiar (qualification) to the 14-year-old students participating in all countries. Moreover, it presupposes that there is only one correct fundamental motivation leading to the one seen as the correct form of civic action: refusing to wear the shoes (socialisation). This not only reduces the immense ethical complexity of issues related to child labour (Bourdillon, Levinson, Myers, & White, 2010; Zurstrassen, 2011), but also excludes the possibility of students developing different, new arguments or forms of civic action in response to this issue (subjectification). One could also argue that it would be unethical from a sustainability point of view to decide not to wear these shoes and that it would be a waste of valuable natural resources and the labour that went into their production.

The second item asked students to “evaluate the relative effectiveness of alternative ways of encouraging others to take action in support of a cause and different methods of persuasion” (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 65) by indicating the best possible way for the man to make other people refuse to buy the shoes:

1. *Buy all the shoes so that no one else can buy them.*
2. *Return the shoes to the shop and ask for his money back.*
3. *Block the entrance to the shop so that people cannot enter it.*
4. *Inform other people about how the shoes are made.*

The only correct answer was the last option because providing others with information to persuade them to adopt one’s own point of view is seen as a familiar principle and the alternative methods of persuasion are considered “impractical” (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 65). Once again, the IEA experts presume that students are familiar with their line of thought where refusing to buy the shoes is the desirable civic action, also for others, and informing them is the one good way to achieve this.

However, one could make a case for other actions as possible ways to inform or influence others: “block the entrance”, for instance, could be seen as an instance of protest which could persuade or encourage others to take action. The correct form of civic action is, however, presented as a rational choice, only asking for the application of the correct knowledge (qualification) or conventional, established mode of conduct (socialisation), leaving out possibilities for young people to come up with new or unexpected ways of acting or thinking (subjectification).

4.4.2 | Questionnaires

In our analysis of the items of the international student questionnaire, we found that some 57% accepted or supported existing norms, values and established citizenship behaviours, or their socialisation as goals of citizenship education. 35% can be seen as testing or referring to forms of qualification: knowledge, reasoning, dispositions, etc. Some 20% potentially referred to moments or processes of subjectification, for instance students’ confidence in expressing opinions that differed from others, or believing that their own political opinions were worth listening

to. For most of these items referring to (future) citizenship behaviour or activities, however, it is difficult to determine whether they relate to socialisation, express potential instances of subjectification, or both. One set of items, for instance, asked students to rate the importance of different types of behaviours in order to be a good adult citizen (Schulz et al., 2010):

1. *Voting in every national election.*
2. *Joining a political party.*
3. *Learning about the country's history.*
4. *Following political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, on TV or on the Internet.*
5. *Showing respect for government representatives.*
6. *Engaging in political discussions.*
7. *Participating in peaceful protests against laws believed to be unjust.*
8. *Participating in activities to benefit people in the local community.*
9. *Taking part in activities promoting human rights.*
10. *Taking part in activities to protect the environment.*

These can be seen on the one hand as testing students' adherence to what are considered established, accepted activities and behaviours (socialisation). On the other hand, students' indications of finding protesting, protecting the environment and promoting human rights important could reflect their disagreeing with the current "order" of things and potential new ways of thinking and acting (subjectification). These in themselves are, however, hard to identify through the questionnaire, since it left no room for own, free responses or elaborations by students outside the predefined categories. Once again, this reflects a vision of good citizenship education as primarily qualifying and socialising young people into existing ways of being and doing.

One ICCS question on the teacher and principal questionnaire asked teachers and school principals to identify what they considered to be its three most important aims (Schulz et al., 2010) and thus offers an answer to what is valued by ICCS as possible aims and functions of citizenship education. These were:

1. *Promoting knowledge of social, political and civil institutions, of citizens' rights and responsibilities.*
2. *Promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment.*
3. *Promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view.*
4. *Developing skills and competencies in conflict resolution.*
5. *Promoting students' participation in the local community and in school life.*
6. *Promoting students' critical and independent thinking.*
7. *Supporting the development of effective strategies for the fight against racism and xenophobia.*
8. *Preparing students for future political participation.*

Aims and functions 1, 3 and 4 adhere to a qualification function of citizenship education. They focus on students' acquisition of knowledge, skills and forms of understanding to prepare them to be/become a citizen. The other aims (2,5,7,8) mainly relate to socialisation outcomes, as they all represent goals of introducing young people into existing, shared values and norms (2,7) and established social and political practices (5, 8). Only aim 6 and possibly aim 3 can explicitly be seen as promoting autonomous and "new" ways of independent thinking and doing and therefore of subjectification through citizenship education. In our view, this distribution of possible aims adequately follows the underlying normativity of the study, mainly reducing the three goals of young people's citizenship education that were present in the theoretical framework to measurable and predictable forms of qualification and socialisation without paying much attention to emancipatory, critical, subjectifying processes and goals. This conclusion is illustrated by the fact that the question of what they consider to be the most important aims of citizenship education is only posed to teachers and principals and not to the students who participated in the study.

5 | DISCUSSION

The central endeavour of this article was to analyse the normativity of the large scale, standardised ICCS study and investigate if what it proposes as the aims of good citizenship education was in accordance with the “seamless enactment” of its overarching aims that seem to be supported by policy and research. By analysing the importance attached to the three functions of education described by Gert Biesta (2009) as qualification, socialisation and subjectification in the different steps and instruments of the 2009 study, we aimed to clarify what the study, as an “evidence base” for citizenship education policies and practice, prescribed as the aims of good citizenship education.

First, in the screening of the ICCS purpose statement, qualification and socialisation are mainly put forward as the aims and functions of citizenship education. The question as to what constitutes *good* citizenship education, or what it should be, was not explicitly addressed, nor was the third educational aim of subjectification. The study's theoretical (assessment) framework, design, instruments and items did occasionally include issues, questions and response categories that created openings for subjectification as a desirable aim of citizenship education (for instance in referring to critical and independent thinking, (future) participation in protests and other “critical” activities), but the adopted items and answers narrowed these down to predictable, categorical, established forms of knowing, thinking and doing. This leads us to believe that the study, in its current form, does not adhere to the idea(l) of seamless enactment. By not recognising or promoting the aim of subjectification in its set-up and methodology, which could be said to relate the most strongly to the recognized aim of creating autonomous, active and critical citizens through citizenship education, the study's potential to act as an “evidence base” for its policy and practice in Europe can be seen as limited since, as discussed in the introduction, all three functions are seemingly emphasised in current European citizenship education policy.

While we base these findings on a careful examination of the framework, design and items of the ICCS study, it should be noted that this article has not dealt with its contextual framework and that including this framework could therefore add other elements and findings to our analysis. However, we do believe, following Olson (2012), that the content and criteria included in the study point at what it characterises as educationally desirable. This would lead us to conclude that, through its fixed-design methodology, with a lack of opportunity for active contribution, dialogue and participation by young people, and by considering “deviant” answers as wrong or by not allowing to differ from the limited options that are offered, ICCS can be said to approach them as governable (research) subjects (Graham & Neu, 2004) and as passive or not-yet citizens (Mason & Delandshere, 2010) rather than as autonomous, critical and active democratic citizens and participants (in the making). Considering educational research, and in this case ICCS, as an additional stage in the process of curricular transposition under the normative idea(l) of seamless enactment, we therefore conclude that ICCS forms a disjuncture (McCowan, 2009) by closing down potential openings for processes and moments of subjectification, and opportunities for young people to become autonomous, critical and active citizens in and through citizenship education.

We do not deny the importance and merits of the ICCS research in contributing to the improvement of citizenship education policies and practices. However, we do believe that a more fruitful approach to the issue of offering inspiration or “evidence” for citizenship education policies and practices could be to expand the existing framework and design. Insights from critical and fundamental educational inquiries can broaden the design and methodology with other, qualitative, research instruments and approaches that could be more capable of capturing and promoting young people's critical ways of thinking and acting, such as observations, surveys or interviews. In order to improve educational policies, practices and the actual citizenship of young people in line with the aims and values we accord to them, we believe it is time for this strand of research to include diverse, new and even conflicting ways of thinking and acting, beginning with those of young people themselves.

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