Civics Education and European Identity

Is civics education preparing students for an increasingly borderless world?

An inquiry into the opinions and attitudes of students to civics education and its role in fostering European identity.

Samhällskunskapsundervisning och Europeisk Identitet

Bidrar samhällskunskapsundervisning till att förberedde eleverna för en gränslös värld?

En undersökning av elevernas åsikter och attityder till samhällskunskapsundervisning och hur detta påverkar anammandet av ett europeiskt identitet.

Michael McCartney
Abstract

There is much debate over whether a common European identity or genuine citizenship can be created. A number of researchers claim that education can play a vital role in this area. The Swedish school curriculums also state that schools have a responsibility in this area. The purpose of my research was to find out if this was occurring in schools. I carried out an inquiry into the opinions and attitudes of students to civics education and European identity. I used a quantitative method of research which also allowed for expanded comments. The students I chose were not randomly selected and the survey questions allowed for in-depth responses. I chose civics education as my research area as it is best placed to educate students in this area. The perceptions of students to civics education and its relevance to the development of European citizenship and identity was compared to and analyzed with previous research. I also included two questions that were not specifically directed at civics but considered the school as a whole. My conclusion is that the majority of students perceive civics as being helpful in developing a sense of European identity. However, their understanding of European identity and citizenship is limited to a right to work and study elsewhere in Europe. There is a general lack of school projects that allow for students to learn with students from other European Union countries. Students have also not experienced being involved in community organizations and school projects that could further develop active citizenship. Their schooling is developing identification with a political community or sense of citizenship but not of a European social community.
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1. Introduction

Technology and globalization have meant that now more than ever school students function globally. This can range from playing games online with students from other countries, doing projects together through E twinning, accessing instant information and ideas from all over the globe to student exchanges and visits. The term global citizenship is often used. The European Union also supports projects which develop a sense of European citizenship.

However, what do these ideas of citizenship which go beyond the national mean? There have been many studies in this area. In a multicultural school, how do the students feel about this? Do students identify as Swedish citizens, global, European or citizens of their homeland?

As Swedish citizens we are also European citizens. We have the right to move, work and live freely through the European Union countries. There are many opportunities, but for many students the idea of European citizenship and belonging to a wider community is alien to them. Do students first have to identify as Swedish before being able to feel European? Do they consider it something important for their future? As Matiniello (1995: 47) has questioned, will they have all the rights of a citizen but have no sense of belonging because of a perceived non-Europeanness? Or will Swedish students with multiple identities be influenced by Sweden’s sense of being on the periphery of Europe and scepticism of EU membership as discussed by Möller (Möller 2011, 264:265).

Is a common or collective sense of European identity based on community possible or is identity based on a legal construct more realistic? Thomassen and Bäck (2008) tested the hypothesis that formal citizenship breeds both a sense of European citizenship and European community and their analysis could not support the hypothesis in either case.

Is the education for cultural citizenship discussed by Bouakaz (2012) one of those factors which could lead to what Matiniello(1995:47) calls the redefinition of “Europeanness” through the political mobilization of minorities that make up a multi-ethnic, multicultural Europe.

Laid Bouakaz has researched the area of Multiculturalism, identity and education extensively and his report “Att behålla mitt och lära mig något nytt” identifies clearly the problem many
students have in feeling that they do not fully belong in Swedish society and therefore can feel they cannot or have nothing to contribute. In his report, Bouakaz discusses the role of ethnic complimentary schools in the development of multicultural citizens and concludes that ordinary council schools themselves are unable to develop the identities of these students as the role of these schools is to promote the culture of the majority. As a result, students are not developing civic consciousness and not reaching their potential. Civic consciousness, participation and a desire to contribute are essential for a sustainable society. This is central to the teaching of Civics according to the Swedish school curriculum.

“People have always been dependent on their ability to cooperate when creating and developing society. Today, people in different parts of the world are facing both opportunities and problems linked to globalization, intercultural relations and sustainable development. Knowledge of society gives us tools allowing us to orient ourselves and take responsibility for our actions in a complex world. Teaching in civics should aim at helping the pupils to develop knowledge about how the individual and society influence each other. Through teaching the pupils are given the opportunity to develop an overall view of societal questions and social structures. In such an overall view, the social, economic, environmental, legal, media and political aspects are fundamental” (Swedish Curriculum 2011: 189)

The Swedish Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the recreation centre is clear in this area. A fundamental value and task of the school concerns understanding and compassion for others. This is particularly important in the international context.

“The internationalization of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity. Awareness of one’s own cultural origins and sharing in a common cultural heritage provides a secure identity which it is important to develop, together with the ability to understand and empathize with the values and conditions of others. The school is a social and cultural meeting place with both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen this ability among all who work there.” (Ibid: 193)
The core content to be taught in Civics 7-9 includes knowledge essential for understanding the opportunities and problems linked to globalisation, intercultural relations and sustainable development.

- European and Nordic Cooperation, its background and content.
- Sweden’s political system with the European Union, the Swedish Riksdag, government, county councils and municipalities. Where different decisions are made and how these affect individuals, groups and society as a whole.
- How the economies of countries and regions are interlinked and how different regions’ economies are changing in a globalized world.
- Changes in conditions on the labor market and working life, such as the working environment and labor legislation. Education routes, choice of occupation and entrepreneurship in a global society. Some factors influencing individual choice of occupation and salary differences. (Ibid: 193)

The Curriculum for the upper secondary school states that:

“Schools must help students to develop an identity that can be related to and encompass not only what is specifically Swedish, but also that which is Nordic, European, and ultimately global. International links and education exchange with other countries should be supported.”(Swedish Curriculum for the upper secondary school 2013: 4)
1.1 Aim and question at issue

The purpose of my research was to find out if students felt that they were being prepared for a globalized world and what role civics education was playing in this. In doing so I could improve my own teaching practice in this area. As Sweden is a member of the European Union and all of its citizens have the right to work, live and study in the other member states, I limited my study to the EU and the development of a European identity.

I focused entirely on the question of European Citizenship and Identity and the role of Civics education in this area. I surveyed students about their understanding of the European Union, their thoughts on European identity, a future in Europe and what role civics education played in developing a sense of European identity. Answers to some key questions were being sought through the survey. Were the students developing a civic consciousness and was this extending to a sense of European citizenship? When were students most engaged in civics lessons?
Literature study

1.2 Civics Education and Democracy

The question of education’s role, in particular civics education’s role, in fostering identity and citizenship in these times of globalization and multiculturalism has been discussed by a number of researchers. Dahl (2006) identifies civic education as one of four major challenges for democracy in the future. Will the complexity end up excluding people from the democratic processes thereby removing the fifth democratic standard, inclusion? There is a chance that this complexity can erode democracy. Dahl argues that if the institutions for civic education are weak, they must be strengthened.

“If you believe in democratic goals you are obliged to search for ways by which citizens can acquire the competence they need.” (Ibid: 80)

Dahl gives the example of the European Union to illustrate the problems internationalization poses for democracy.

“If democratic institutions are largely ineffective in governing the European Union, the prospects for democratizing other international systems seem even more remote.” (Ibid: 115)

According to Thomassen and Bäck (2008), if we are to accept the view that the establishment of a legitimate democracy requires a pre-existing collective identity, a legitimate European democracy cannot be established. It is bound to fail. (Thomassen and Bäck (Ibid: 2).

However, if we take the other view that citizenship can be a legal construct that precedes the development of a nation, as has happened throughout history, then we can accept that education has a vital role to play. If people constitute the ultimate source of political authority in a democracy, according to Thomassen and Bäck, who constitutes the people is one of the fundamental aspects of legitimacy. (Ibid: 1)
1.3 Civics Education and the European Union

Hinderliter Ortloff (2005) argues that the advent of the European Union has further underscored the need to the goals of citizenship education in order to expand its purpose to include a European level of identity. (Ibid: 35) Educational systems need to develop policies and practices that foster the development of “global citizenship” and “cosmopolitan morality.” If the European integration process is to transcend economic cooperation it needs citizens who are comfortable with a European identity. Citizens need to be able to embrace diversity without sacrificing regional pride or identity. This, according to Hinderliter Ortloff, means a corresponding complexity in civics education. (Ibid: 36) Ollikainen (2000) states that education should revitalize the European awareness of Europeans and that education is one of the primary instruments with which people can be socialized to think and feel as Europeans. Education is one area in which young people may feel they have a "stake" in European integration (Brine 1995: 152) from (Ibid: 8)

"An instrument through which a European identity or feeling of European citizenship could be nurtured in them. “ (Ibid, p13)

Banus (2007) argues that in order to keep the European project alive, a new philosophy is needed. He states that a communication project containing convincing messages about the need for the European project is needed. Schools are vital to this because they not only transmit knowledge but also values and attitudes. This educational project is not about substituting identities. It is about education with a less national perspective. This could help with the understanding of different perspectives. He argues that education not only transmits knowledge but transmits it from within a story. This story is the nation’s perspective. Transmission of knowledge from within other stories or national perspectives is therefore a way for greater understanding of each other. Education has a socializing effect. Transmitting values and stories help to classify one in society and give them a place in the world. According to Banus;

“Collective identities are presented or created and consolidated in this way with the values and attitudes that are inherent in them.”(Ibid: 58)

Banus argues here that if education plays a vital role in creating a national identity through a national perspective, a European identity can be created by having a less national perspective in education.
1.4 Educational perspectives and construction of identity.

Hinderliter Ortloff’s study into how well European schools were incorporating a European dimension into their Civics program gave mixed results. She found that Denmark’s conception of civics education was national. In Germany, more so than in the other two countries, European values are both implicitly and explicitly endorsed and contribute to a more unique European citizen frame. The curricula are clearly aimed at presenting a singular view of European integration as an important project.

“The European social model, European values and ability to cooperate, generally cast being European as a distinct and desirable goal. However, in contrast to the Danish curriculum, the concept of a European citizen clearly emerges as a distinct, desired, and necessary identity development. Being European is framed normatively as an extension of being an international citizen first; it is not just a means of understanding a national role.” (Hinderliter Ortloff 2005: 45)

If we consider these findings in light of the national perspective argument of Banus and the conclusions of Ross that “identity, citizenship, nation and Europe are inventions or constructions made by and shared with members of a particular society.” (Ross 2008: 100) We can also conclude that schools have an important and quite possibly a decisive role in the future of the European project.
1.5 Multiple identities, social settings and community

Ross (2007) explores the area of multi-identity, national identity and citizenship. He argues that the identity of 'national' may be dominant in certain contexts (and in certain periods), but at other times local identities (of city or region) may become more significant, and supranational identities - such as that of being European, being Muslim, or part of a globalized youth culture - may have greater significance for the individual.

“Citizenship implies working towards the betterment of the community one lives in through participation, volunteer work and efforts to improve life for all citizens. This is not therefore simply the same as the old-fashioned legal definition of citizenship, which was narrower, territorial and specifically related to allegiance to the government of a state (and probably related to nationality). In the context of citizenship education, these new dimensions and comprehensions of citizenship seem useful: to educate about legal national citizenship only would be a narrow description of the methods of acquiring citizenship - jus sanguinis versus jus solis - and a listing of formal rights and duties. But the broader definition requires some consideration of community - or communities - and of the notion of belonging.” (Ibid: 291)

Banks (2008) shares this viewpoint and argues that citizenship education should be reformed so that it reflects the home cultures and languages of students from diverse groups. Worldwide immigration and the struggle for rights by minority groups have made liberal assimilationist concepts of citizenship education questionable. Citizenship education should also help students to develop an identity and attachment to the global community and a human connection to people around the world. Students need to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will enable them to function in a global society. Globalization affects every aspect of communities, including beliefs, norms, values, and behaviors, as well as business and trade. (Ibid: 132)
1.6 Teaching and learning approaches in schools and classrooms

Ross (2008) argues that human rights are at the heart of the European idea. According to Ross young people are interested in rights and injustice.

“To participate as a citizen in a community requires some sense of belonging; identification with the community requires, rather than implies, participation. But this participation can have various degrees or levels of activity or inactivity. Young people are most likely to be fired up and enthused by considering issues of fairness, justice and equity, and that issues based curriculum is best placed to provide such a forum.” (Ross 2008: 101)

While it is important for youth to learn about how rights have been established in former times and the struggles of the previous generations, they are more likely to be excited by rights yet to be achieved. It is here they can learn their identity and citizenship through the establishment of new rights. The article presents six new categories of rights where children and young people might become actively involved in arguing for and establishing. According to Ross (Ibid: 99-100), It is in the arguing and achieving that enactive learning happens. The six areas are;

• Cultural citizenship, where there is wide interest in, and sympathy for, the rights of diverse cultural groups, particularly in the face of globalization; and where there are many successful attempts to preserve cultures and languages. A rights agenda may well develop here.

• Minority citizenship, where questions of asylum, settlement and migration are not necessarily knee-jerk reactions, particularly among many young people. International conventions on refugees are under attack, and many young people are interested in actively defending and possibly extending these rights.

• Ecological citizenship is a particular potent area that resonates well with young people. The right to live in a sustainable environment seems particularly interesting to the young, and is an area of active participation and active learning.
• Cosmopolitan citizenship is again an area in which young people are active in many situations. Relationships across cultural and ethnic differences are increasing, in places very rapidly; yet in others are held back. The rights to relate to other citizens, cultures and societies without state interference are another area for activity.

• Consumer citizenship has a wide range of meanings: it is not merely about being an informed purchaser, but an active decision maker and actively demanding consumer rights and responsibilities: curtailing the power of producers to exploit consumers, and to exploit workers and natural resources.

• Finally, mobility citizenship, the rights of visitors and tourists moving through other countries and societies.

“This conception of the extension of rights to new areas opens up an important new arena for citizenship education in Europe. This is not simply because these areas are important in their own right, but because the educational approach of enactive learning suggests that young people learn well when they are engaged in the activity of doing something, rather than simply studying it.” (Ibid: 100)

According to Ross, the transformative quality of education and its ability to transform the social practices of communities should give schools and teachers a sense of empowerment and not be doomed to reproduce the past. This is important for the development of the conception and image of Europe. Ross argues that attitudes to citizenship and identity are acquired not learned. They are acquired by taking part in institutions, joining in contributing. Learning to participate, through peripheral activities is proposed. The construction of civic identity needs schools to collaborate with civil institutions particularly non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights.

“My argument is, therefore, that enactive learning of citizenship will naturally involve the enactive aspects of citizenship. This will not be about the study and appreciation of rights won in the past, and the icons and concepts that relate to these, but the involvement of young people in establishing rights in their own schools and societies, and extending rights to the third generation. Teaching Citizenship is learning citizenship through active participation – and is
something that is done in partnership, educational institutions with and alongside a wide range of social organizations.” (Ibid: 110)

Davies, Evans and Reid (2005) have done extensive research into what might best be done to develop education for global citizenship. They believe that national citizenship is weakening and a new form of education is necessary. They suggest that it would be useful to look beyond old barriers that have separated citizenship education and global education and to form a new global citizenship education.

“Their separation has in the past only perpetuated the old understandings of citizenship and constructed a constrained view of global education.” (Ibid: 65)

They also share the viewpoint on Ross in regards to approaches to teaching involving the exploration of issues. Issues and action are vitally important. This leads to particular approaches to teaching. UNESCO has suggested that topics are taught in a particular way: The Second World War could be introduced with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizing the relationship between the rights that are violated by war, and whose violation often causes war. (Ibid: 71)

Print (2007) states that if citizenship education is to play a major role in addressing the concerns of youth disenchantment and disengagement in democracy it will need to review the impact it is it is making on young people in schools. His paper reviewed a national project on youth participation in democracy in Australia. He found that citizenship education in Australia has been at best, marginally successful. While this would appear to be pessimistic he does emphasize that schools can make a difference. Print cites research which backs up a participatory approach as being most successful. The research showed that that participatory pedagogy was weak in schools and mostly characterized by rote learning, non-participatory, non – critical strategies and textbooks, as well as inadequate teacher preparation. (Ibid: 336) Substantial research from the United States and internationally showed that participatory approaches, such as class voting, group inquiry, simulations, fieldwork and co-operative learning were more likely to engage learners in experiential learning and aspects of democratic values and practice. (Ibid: 338)
1.7 Case study: European School of Culham

In a case study of the European School of Culham, Saviddes (2006) looked at the development of a European identity. Encouraging pupils to develop a sense of European identity is one of the implicit aims of the 'European Schools'. Above all else, the research found that the development of a sense of European identity was indirectly encouraged through the many opportunities the school provides for these children from diverse European backgrounds to integrate and interact with one another. The teachers believed it was through these interactions in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities that the students were able to develop this sense of European identity. These European schools are quite unique in this regard. They even have the words of one of the founders of the European project, Jean Monnet, sealed into a foundation stone of each of the schools. These words declare that while all pupils will learn their own language and about their own literature and history, they will also learn to speak other languages and learn about other European cultures. Furthermore, by mixing with children of all different nationalities, they will learn to respect each other, live together in harmony and understand that they belong together.

One of the reasons behind this research was not only to examine how European identity was being created in this “European School” but also if successful strategies could be replicated in regular schools. Although it is part of school curriculums across Europe, introducing a European dimension has been a failure according to Saviddes. One reason being the unclear nature of the “European Dimension”

"There is generally little guidance and few examples of how a European identity might be developed through incorporating a European Dimension in education"

(Saviddes, 2006: 115)

The teachers were clear in that while the mixing of different cultures was vital in the development of a European identity, it had to be supported in the syllabus. One way the teachers try to do this is by incorporating a number of different viewpoints in their lessons. This is particularly so in the social science area. However they also said it was extremely time consuming and was not always possible. They also said it was not always possible to escape from their own national points of view. Teachers come with their own “baggage” is how the different philosophies and teacher education that the teachers bring with them to their
lessons, is described. The learning of languages was very important in fostering a sense of European identity and togetherness.

“Languages are considered an important aspect of giving a European Dimension to education. They are the 'tools of communication' as one teacher put it. One senior member of staff commented that language is a door open to 'the other.' When you learn languages you become aware of the common history, sometimes even the common linguistic background of the different nations. This reveals the importance of learning languages to foster a common European identity.” (Saviddes, 2006: 116)

Saviddes conclusions are that all of these things play a role in developing a sense of European identity, but it is the mixing of cultures and languages that play the largest role.
2 Method and implementation

2.1 Choice of method

In choosing my method and implementation I consulted Johansson and Svedner (2006, 2010) and Ejvergård (2002). I chose a survey method as I was targeting a specific student population group (mother tongue students) and I was after general attitudes and opinions. (Ejvergård 2002:44) I also considered Ejvergård (Ibid: 50-51) and the comparison between interviews and surveys when making my choice. The fact that I had to reach respondents over a widespread area was important factor in making my choice. The respondents could also take their time to respond and have any questions clarified by their teachers at the time. The survey was constructed for statistical analysis (quantitative), however it gave the respondents room to further explain their answers. While not a complete substitute for the data an interview could provide, common themes and ideas could be identified in their written responses.

2.2 Survey

My reasons for choosing a survey method have been explained above. However, surveys are not without their risks. Johansson and Svedner have described them as perhaps the most difficult of all the four methods. They are overused and are often used when an interview and observation would have been more appropriate. (Johnsson and Svedner, 2010: 21) When developing my survey questions, I kept my focus on finding out answers to two main questions. Were the students developing a civic consciousness and was this extending to a sense of European citizenship? When were students most engaged in civics lessons? Answers to the survey questions would provide me with an understanding of how students were being prepared for a globalized world and what role civics education was playing in this.

In constructing my questions I followed the advice given by Johansson and Svedner. The questions were in everyday language and were to the point. I constructed my survey in two parts. The first part was designed to establish cultural identities. In this way I could see if there was a connection between this background factor and the purpose of the research. (Ibid: 23)

Questions were also constructed in order to identify common themes and ideas and for the purpose of correlation analysis. (Ibid: 26)
2.3 Sample

In carrying out my research I did not randomly select the student subjects. I chose 18 students from 10 of Malmö’s secondary and upper secondary schools. Their ages ranged from 12 to 19, from first year in secondary school to final year in senior high school. There were students who had lived here all their lives while others who had been here a very short time. There was one important criterion for their selection. I wanted students with backgrounds that would almost definitely put them in the category of most likely having an experience of multiple cultural influences. I chose students who were enrolled in mother tongue language classes across Malmö schools. The reason for this was to be as effective as possible in obtaining a sample of a population reflective of world immigration trends and globalization.

2.4 Procedure

The surveys were carried out during an eighty minute mother tongue lesson under the supervision of their teachers. The surveys were carried out during week 5 of 2014. I had the cooperation of their mother tongue teachers at the different locations in order to carry out the survey. I was able to discuss suitable survey students with their teachers. Their teachers, through explanation and support, could also maximize the chance of 100% involvement.

2.5 Analysis of collected data

Correlation analysis of the collected data was enabled through the construction of the survey. I followed Johansson and Svedner’s advice on correlation analysis in this regard. (Ibid:24-26) By the construction of tables and diagrams from the results I was able to compare answers to different questions and comments. This enabled me to analyze the data with a focus on the main questions in this research.

2.6 Ethical Issues

Following ethical guidelines, the respondents, their parents and their teachers were fully informed of the survey’s purpose and anonymity was assured. As researcher I consulted the ethical guidelines provided by Malmö University.
1. Information requirement. The researcher must inform the research subject about the purpose of the research.

2. Consent Requirement. Participants in the study have the right to determine their involvement.

3. Confidentiality obligations. Details of all people involved shall be given the utmost confidentiality and personal data shall be stored in such a way as to prevent unauthorized access to it.

4. Use requirement. Information collected about individuals can only be used for research purposes.

Guide till Examensarbetet Höstterminen 2012 Lärande och samhälle, Malmö högskola (p11) English translation

3. Results

3.1 Questions 1-4 Establishing cultural identities

Questions one to four were designed to establish the range of cultural identities in the research group. I surveyed eighteen students aged 12 – 19. All students study mother tongue English. This means they have at least one parent who has English as their first language. Ten students were born in Sweden and have lived all their lives here. Five students were born outside of Europe and three were born elsewhere in Europe. Of the ten students born in Sweden, eight identified as Swedish (in terms of citizenship) while one identified as European and one non-Swedish. All ten students felt that they had more than one cultural identity. They usually identified strongly with the culture of their parent’s homeland. Of the five students who were born outside of Europe, two identified as Swedish. One had lived here most of her life, while one had lived in Sweden for more than five years but less than ten. The other three had lived in Sweden for less than five years. Of these three, one answered yes to having more than one cultural or national identity. The other two identified strongly with their homeland and felt neither Swedish nor European. Three students were born elsewhere in Europe. Two have been here less than five years and had a Swedish parent. They identified as Swedish and one of them felt like they had more than one cultural identity. The other, more
than five but less than ten, did not have European or Swedish parents. However, she was born in another European country and she identified as a European citizen.

3.2 Table 1. Questions 5 - 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 5 - 11</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Citation ( example)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you have contact with other teenagers around Europe?</td>
<td>9 yes, 9 No</td>
<td>“Cousins and friends in London”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“If it isn’t on social network, you have family and friend around Europe”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I spend a lot of time on the internet playing games and travelled with my dance group”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I have a pen pal from France”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Have you been involved in any school projects that enabled you to work with students from other European countries?</td>
<td>6 yes, 12 no</td>
<td>“In our class we usually work in groups”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We got pen pals from France who we have contact with”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We had to debate in English with students from other countries”</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Have you learned much about the European Union in school?</td>
<td>12 yes, 6 no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you know that being a Swedish citizen also means you are a European citizen?</td>
<td>16 yes, 2 no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you think being a European citizen is going to be important for your future?</td>
<td>14 yes, 3 no, 1 void</td>
<td>“It allows students to study in another European country without paying tuition or fees”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Of course it offers a lot of opportunities”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It makes it easier to travel or study abroad”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t know but I think being any citizen is important for my future”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It can be useful in the future if I get a job in a country in the EU.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Life over here is a bit easier to live in”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“If I decide to move abroad it will be quite easy to settle there.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“If I want to work in Europe but not in Sweden, than it’s good to be a citizen.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t think it will be important because I never even knew I was a European citizen.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you think school is helping you develop a European identity?</td>
<td>12 yes, 4 no, 2 void</td>
<td>“We learn about European countries”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We don’t have much involvement with Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We never heard the word European identity”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We learn about the society and laws and that’s good to know”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t think it makes me more European, but I do learn more about rights and societies that don’t exist in Ghana”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I didn’t know so much about Europe until I came here”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning about your culture is very important to help you define your identity as a person”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It teaches the history behind everything, how it has developed and how we can be a part of the future developments.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Most of the teaching is from Europe, especially when it comes to history.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do you learn about what life is like in other European countries?</td>
<td>12 yes, 6 no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23
3.3 Diagram results questions 5 – 8

5. Do you have contact with other teenagers around Europe?
6. Have you been involved in any school projects that enabled you to work with students from other European countries?
7. Have you learned much about the European Union in school?
8. Do you know that being a Swedish citizen also means you are a European citizen?

3.4 Diagram results questions 9-11

9. Do you think being a European citizen is going to be important for your future?
10. Do you think school is helping you develop a European identity?
11. Do you learn about what life is like in other European countries?
### 3.5 Table 2: Questions 12-16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions 12-16</th>
<th>Responses and citations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think it means to have a European Identity?</td>
<td>“That you live in Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You are from England”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/18 answered</td>
<td>“To be part of Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“That I’m a European citizen and it will stand on my ID that I’m from Europe.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Because it makes you to be a citizen in Sweden”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“That you are born and raised in Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To define yourself as a European among other things”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I define myself as human”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To feel you are part of a great civilization and help bring it forward.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Having rights that other countries may not have”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“You belong to the EU”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To travel freely”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“To be treated with respect”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What three issues do you think are most important to learn about in civics?</td>
<td>The main issue the students identified was human rights while law, culture, law and order, justice were very high responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/18 answered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What three issues would you most like to learn about in civics?</td>
<td>The top three issues were crime and the law, other cultures and lifestyles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religion, development, politics, poverty, rights, globalization, international economy, Integration issues,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>importance of being a European citizen and about the EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is learning about civics most interesting for you?</td>
<td>“when you really dig into different areas of issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/18</td>
<td>“When I learn more about how other people and I can better the world, such as poverty etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When we talk about Sweden’s society”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When we get to discuss different issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When we compare stuff between countries”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When we raise the discussion about immigrant integration”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When there is an election”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“FN”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your class been involved with any other types of community organizations as</td>
<td>All student responses were in the negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part of your learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4: Analysis

The first part of the analysis concerns the cultural and family backgrounds of the students and if this determined a sense of European identity or citizenship. One student of the 18 answered that she identified as a European citizen. Interestingly enough, neither of her parents was born in Europe. However, she was born in another European country. I will take this up in the discussion and further research sections. However, what is clear from the responses is that identity is a complex area. The results do provide a further understanding into what Ross (2007) means when he states that the identity of 'national' may be dominant in certain contexts (and in certain periods), but at other times local identities (of city or region) may become more significant. It also illustrates what Bouakaz has identified as many students having a feeling that they do not fully belong in Swedish society. However, if we compare these responses to the student’s understanding that Swedish citizenship automatically gives them European citizenship and this is something good for their futures we can go some way in answering Matiniello’s question (1995:47) about having all the rights of a citizen but having no sense of belonging because of a perceived non-Europeanness? The students who felt neither Swedish nor European did not see European citizenship as being important for their futures.

Overall we can see from the survey that the students have an understanding of how the EU works regarding free movement and the opportunities it presents to them. They also believe school is helping them develop a European identity. However, we can see from the responses that the idea of citizenship is limited to being able to study and work within the European Union. The respondent’s idea of what it means to have a European identity is interesting as the responses relate identity to a sense of belonging based on having rights. This also is connected to the issues they find to be most engaging in school.

These responses can be compared to the responses to questions seven and eight (Table 1). 88% of respondents knew that being a Swedish citizen automatically made them an EU citizen and 50% responded that they had learned a lot about the European Union. This again backs up this narrow legal approach to learning about European citizenship discussed in the literature. All respondents had not had experience with other community organizations as part of their learning. This lack of a practical participatory approach involving community is evident in its absence as any recurring theme or idea among the respondents. When it comes to developing a European identity, only one student makes reference to participation.
However, we can see from Diagram 3.4 that the students believe that school is helping them develop a European identity.

One student answered that learning about your culture is important in establishing your identity. However, there is no reference to a shared European culture. In regards to understanding the idea of a shared European identity, the students in general seem to be unaware of the concept. As Ross states, to participate as a citizen in a community requires some sense of belonging: identification with the community requires, rather than implies, participation. (Ross, 2008:121) However, I do not regard this as particularly negative as we can look at the student’s awareness of European citizenship and the opportunities it presents as a foundation for later participation in the form of study or work. The development of a European identity through shared experiences can happen later. The development of a shared European identity is something that cannot happen overnight.

It is positive to see that most students answered yes to learning about European countries but it is unclear if they are learning through what Banus (2007:58 ) describes as the transmission of knowledge from within a story. That the students are not involved in projects that enable them to learn and interact with other European schools, students and stories could mean they are not developing an understanding of different perspectives and are therefore not involved in the transmission of values and stories that help to classify one in society and give them a place in the world . As Banus argues, education plays a vital role in creating national identities. It would appear from this group that school education and socialization has been successful in developing a sense of Swedish identity among the students but has not been active in going beyond what Ross (2007:291) describes as the narrow legal definition of citizenship when it comes to European citizenship.

It was clear from the survey that the respondents rated human rights the most important issue to learn in civics. It also rated highly, but not the highest, when it came to what they would most like to learn about. They feel that it is most interesting to learn when they are actively discussing contentious issues. The issues the respondents chose were almost identical to those presented by Ross (2008) as being a way for students to learn their identity through the establishment of new rights. It also backs up the conclusions of Print (2007), that the participatory approach is the most successful way to engage students in civics.

My research shows that students are developing a sense of belonging to a wider Europe through their education. The sense of citizenship they are developing through their schooling,
and civics education in particular, is what Thomassen and Bäck (2008) describe in terms as a legal construct of citizenship. They are identifying with a political community, not a social community. Students want to be actively engaged in issues such as human rights that would further develop their sense of Europe as a social community. To successfully develop types of identity and citizenship in students would even require more interaction with students in other European Union schools. With the technology and support available through EU funding, this is possible.

5 Discussion

The most important results of this research have been that most students see being a European citizen as being important part of their future. They can see the rights of being a citizen of Sweden being extended to the EU. Culturally, they do not identify as European citizens, more so politically. They see school as helping to develop a European identity but are not really sure what this means beyond being able to work and study in the EU.

The results have shown a strong correlation between what the students thought was most important to learn in Civics education, what they liked to learn about and how they liked to learn. An issue based curriculum where students have plenty of opportunity to work with human rights and the law is what engages them the most.

The lack of community involvement in their education and school based experiences with other European students is an area of concern.

The results of this research have given me a greater understanding of the complexities of identity. The first part of my survey dealing with the student’s backgrounds is worth discussing for a number of reasons. Not least for how it can be looked at against the background of the current situation in Europe with the rise of nationalism and anti EU sentiment.

For those students who had one Swedish parent, there appeared to be no explicit dominating culture. It was their parents who influenced them most when it came to their cultural identities.
The most interesting result in this area was that there were three students who had similar backgrounds. They did not have Swedish parents and had been here less than five years. Two of them felt neither Swedish nor European and while they understood that being a Swedish citizen gave those rights in Europe, they did not see it as being something important for their futures. However, one of the students felt both European and saw being a European citizen as being important for the future. This student did not have European parents but was born elsewhere in Europe. Can this experience be a determining factor? It would be interesting to follow this up.

From a reliability and sustainability viewpoint, I think the choice of method and sample hold up quite well. The questions were clear and they covered the main questions I wanted answers to. More reliable results would have been achieved if I had also chosen a group of students who had two Swedish parents and had lived all their lives here as part of the correlation analysis. If I had extended my sample this way, generalizability would have been stronger.

I have deepened my understanding of the teaching profession through this dissertation. Students want to be active learners. They want to be actively involved in issues. Issues dealing with their own rights and of others around the world. There are also students who understand they have rights but do not have a sense of belonging. These are the challenges for schools and teachers.

6 Further research

There are many opportunities for further research into the area of citizenship, identity and education. Below you find some recommended reading on the subject.


The University of Edinburgh also has an excellent website entitled ‘Youth and European Identity’ containing research and seminar presentations.  
[http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/youth/index.html](http://www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/youth/index.html)
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Möller, Tommy,(2011) Svensk politisk historia: Studentlitteratur, Lund


Ross, Alistair (2007), Multiple Identities and Education for Active Citizenship: British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Sep., 2007), pp. 286-303


Thomassen, J and Bäck, H (2008), European citizenship and identity after enlargement: European University Institute, Department of Political and Social Sciences, Italy
Appendix: Student Survey

Civics Education (samhällskunskap) and European identity

Student survey

This survey is an important part of a research assignment I am working on as part of my studies at Malmö University. The purpose of my research is to find out if students feel they are being prepared for a globalized world and what role civics education is playing in this. Your responses are very much appreciated and you will remain anonymous.

Kind regards,

Michael McCartney
Year Group (årskurs): ____________________________

Age:___________________________________

Q.1

Where were you born?

(a) Sweden

(b) Europe

(c) Outside of Europe

Q.2

How long have you lived in Sweden?

(a) More than five years but less than 10

(b) Less than five years

(c) All my life

Q.3

How do you identify yourself as?

(a) Swedish

(b) European

(c) Non-Swedish

(d) Non: European
Q.4

Do you feel that you have more than one national or cultural identity?

(a) Yes

(b) No

Please write a little bit about your national or cultural identity.

Q.5

Do you have contact with other teenagers around Europe?

(a) Yes

(b) No

If you answered yes please write a little bit about it.

Q.6

Have you been involved in any school projects that enabled you to work with students from other European countries?

(a) Yes

(b) No

If you answered yes, please write a little bit about it.
Q.7
Have you learned much about the European Union in school?
(a) Yes
(b) No

Q.8
Do you know that being a Swedish citizen also means you are a European citizen?
(a) Yes
(b) No

Q.9
Do you think being a European citizen is going to be important for your future?
(a) Yes
(b) No

Please write a little bit about your answer.

Q.10
Do you think school (Samhällskunskap) is helping you develop a European identity?
(a) Yes
(b) No

Please write a little bit about your answer.
Q.11
Do you learn about what life is like in other European countries?
(a) Yes
(b) No

Q.12
What do you think it means to have a European identity?

Q.13
What three issues do you think are the most important to learn about in Civics (samhällskunskap)?

Q.14
What three issues would you most like to learn about in Civics (samhällskunskap)?

Q.15
When is learning about civics most interesting for you?

Q.16
Has your class been involved with any other types of community organisations as part of your learning? Please write about it.