

Pons-Altés, J. M. (coord.) (2021). *Ciudadania compromesa i educació. Propostes per al foment de la memòria democràtica [Engaged citizenship and education. Proposals for fostering democratic memory]*. Publicacions URV.

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REBUT: 17/07/2023 | ACCEPTAT: 24/07/2023

Engaged citizenship and education. Proposals for fostering democratic memory

The study, coordinated by professor Josep Maria Pons-Altés, is based on four key concepts: education, citizenship, cooperation and democracy. These concepts form the basis of the studies collated in this book, which aims to promote democratic memory through the teachings of the social sciences and explore the role that space, text and associations play in contemporary political management. The book also highlights the use of democratic participation in the classroom and addresses the importance of shifting the hegemonic paradigm in economics education towards a more critical approach. Other topics include heritage education, the Spanish Civil War and anti-Franco memorial associations. In essence, the book presents a reflection on and didactic proposals for exploring historical memory, critical thinking, citizenship and heritage through democratic participation in the classroom.

The three chapters on democratic participation and its introduction into the classroom are by Irigoyen, Castellví and Grau, and discuss methodologies that may help bring about these processes of thematic change and introduce critical thinking in order to foster social change in new generations, basing these guidelines on the acquisition of strategies, knowledge, skills and values.

Irigoyen defends the shaping of democratic memory policies as necessary for laying the foundations for coexistence in a democratic society. It would involve preventing the trivialisation of memory and striving for the

reparation and construction of a more just and democratic social framework. The author believes that education is fundamental for promoting peace, social cohesion, democratic values and a culture of human rights. In this regard, cooperative work in the classroom is a crucial tool for fostering democratic coexistence and participatory responsibility. Cooperation in education goes beyond pedagogical methodology and seeks to create a more inclusive, supportive and critical social and political framework. The author also presents the difference between cooperation and collaboration by underlining the importance of positive interdependence and individual responsibility involved in cooperation. What's more, he

Figure 1. Cover book coordinated by Pons-Altés



Source: Publicacions URV.

highlights the need to change the educational model in order to stimulate teaching based on coexistence, responsibility and democratic life. In conclusion, cooperative projects based on cooperative values can help cultivate a more democratic future and foster responsible participation in society.

Castellví discusses the importance of critical literacy for achieving democratic and engaged citizens. He provides an optimistic view on technology, but also warns about the dangers of sensationalism and fake news in the digital age. He highlights the need to teach students how to judge the information they read online and help them develop the skills to ascertain who is behind the information they consume.

The text emphasises the importance of educating citizens in a changing world and the need for critical literacies that can help shape social representations and the values of future citizens. It also discusses several educational approaches, including moral and citizenship education, financial education, democratic participation and critical and transformative citizenship. The proposal is an education conducive to critical, participatory and transformative citizenship, which takes current social challenges into consideration and seeks solutions through critical thinking.

The text refers to various critical literacies, such as critical media literacy, critical informational literacy and critical digital literacy, as well as exploring the relationship between the media, digital technologies and the development of critical thinking. It also points out how values and emotions are important factors in citizens' decision-making and highlights the need to incorporate them into citizen education.

In short, the text argues that critical literacy is essential in order to achieve a democratic and engaged society and explores its relationship with the media, digital technologies, values and emotions, insisting on the importance of integrating this kind of literacy into citizen education.

In his chapter, Grau underlines the importance of teaching history from a social, civic, ethical and democratic perspective and encouraging the analysis of social issues by improving civic and ethical awareness and encouraging students to actively engage in society.

The text notes that history education should not be limited to the repetition or accumulation of information, but that it should instead be based on strategies that help students become active citizens and members of a complex and humane society. It highlights how social analysis can be used as an exercise to understand the flaws of societies through-out history and stresses the importance of ethical and civic reflection when studying history.

It also touches upon the need to teach history from a democratic angle and help students understand human rights and the culture of coexistence.

The chapter written by Claverol i Polo addresses a paradigm shift in the hitherto hegemonic teaching of economics, which, they argue, needs to take a more critical stance if it is to incorporate the concept of citizenship. This leads on to the following two chapters, in which Pons-Altés presents the guidelines for understanding society's power relations, which form the basis for reflecting on a vision of the future based on a democratic society.

The text talks about economics education and argues that it has become an ideological struggle driven by neoliberalism. It also states that neoliberals have sought to control the discourse and mentalities through economic education, especially in schools and universities.

It names neoliberal economists and thinkers such as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, George Stigler and Milton Friedman, who advocated the dissemination of their own ideas and the teaching of economics based on the free market and private property. These authors also developed the theory of ideological struggle, arguing that the masses cannot think for themselves and that intellectuals must combat the progressive ideas and social reforms they deem to be the seeds of totalitarianism.

The chapter criticises the lack of plurality and critical reflection in economics education, claiming that a monolithic and orthodox neoliberal vision still prevails. It cites student movements and critical groups that have spoken out against the current model, such as the Post-Autistic Economics Movement, where students at Cambridge and Harvard dropped out of their economics classes in a disagreement over the content, or

several critical economics associations that promote alternative views and heterodox perspectives.

It argues that economics education should include different critical and alternative approaches, such as ecological, feminist, Marxist, institutionalist and post-Keynesian economics, as well as explore social and economic experiences and projects that seek post-capitalist and democratic models.

In summary, the text argues that economics education has been used as an ideological tool for neoliberalism, and criticises the discipline's lack of plurality and critical reflection. It proposes including alternative visions and fostering citizen participation in order to transform society and challenge the dominant economic system.

González points us towards the connection between heritage education and citizenship that has emerged from their evolution and the need to examine the concepts and roles we have assigned them in this process. She discusses how we imagine the future based on how content is selected, how narratives are built, the work on citizen participation and heritage education that offer guidelines on how to analyse the evolution of ideas and objects, cultures and people and the significance we place on them, which either highlights or hides social and cultural aspects of society.

González argues that these problems should not be avoided, but instead seen as opportunities to educate through dialogue, debate, recognition of different perspectives and interests, and to encourage critical and engaged citizenship alongside social action for a fairer world.

She also discusses how heritage education can help facilitate our understanding of a more interconnected world, one that goes beyond what we can see to uncover what might be hidden or missed upon first glance. She suggests that this more interconnected vision could help lead to more critical, global and radically democratic citizens.

This chapter also underlines the importance of providing and sharing learning opportunities in order to discover and value the multitude of cultures, ideologies and values that enrich humanity. It proposes heritage as a resource to help instil the idea of a global world with plural and

diverse perspectives, and the challenge of uniting people, societies and cultures of different origins so they may coexist in culturally diverse contexts.

This chapter thus advocates using heritage education as a strategy to address relevant social issues, encourage citizens to be more critical and promote a more interconnected and global world view.

This society, from which we can extract historical knowledge if we base our work on democratic memory and citizen participation, is the seed for Arnabat-Mata's proposal to transform a town into an open and educational museum.

The main thrust of the text is a proposal for the “Vilafranca Open Museum”, a project that would transform the town of Vilafranca del Penedès into a space for education and knowledge. The proposal aims to improve the signposts and information about the town's history and heritage and create a coherent historical narrative by introducing walking tours and spaces with historical and memorial significance. The aim is to shed light on Vilafranca's past and present and highlight the different spaces, buildings and historical events that have shaped this town, while emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting the town's heritage and democratic memory.

Hernández, Feliu-Torruella and Jiménez's didactic proposal takes us back to the Spanish Civil War as an instrument for citizenship education.

History education, as a scientific discipline, aims to present and help its students understand knowledge on people, facts, places, processes, concepts, conceptual systems and research methods generated by the scientific and technological disciplines that study the past, namely history, archaeology and art history. Any approach to teaching about the Spanish Civil War must take into account the knowledge these disciplines have generated. History education impacts all fields that deal with knowledge of the past, including formal teaching and learning systems, especially in primary and secondary schools, but also in pre-primary education, vocational training and university education. But it also plays an important role in “non-formal teaching and learning environments”, whereby history is used and consumed in informative, educational and

recreational settings, such as cultural activities and proposals, museums, monuments, cultural tourism, historicised landscapes, games, videography, literature, leisure, etc., and by broad sectors of the population. In this sense, history education on the Spanish Civil War aims to make the most diverse aspects of the conflict easier to comprehend in both formal and non-formal settings, in view of the knowledge generated mainly by historical and archaeological research. This knowledge, in turn, will have an impact on a solid critical education based on scientific values, on the basis that scientific thought and practice are the highest expression of humanism.

However, it is important to bear in mind that factors such as proximity in time (an event to which there are still direct witnesses) and the social and political circumstances of the 1936-1939 conflict, its global repercussions and the nature of the events themselves, make the Spanish Civil War particularly relevant for addressing issues related to human rights, governance and democratic culture. We should therefore observe that the humanist logic of scientific knowledge and of democratic culture stem from the same source: a hope for rationality. As such, studying the Spanish Civil War in the classroom, as well as in non-formal teaching and learning environments, is interesting, useful and essential, especially when the consequences of the conflict still affect, condition and determine our present. Some conflicts are long-lasting and their consequences span generations. The lingering shadow of the Spanish Civil War still hangs over the day-to-day life of Spanish society, which is precisely why knowledge and analysis of any conflict that is still “alive” is a relevant contribution to help shape critical and engaged citizens.

As this chapter draws to an end, it leads into the final chapter by Conesa, segueing from the outcome of the War into the emergence of anti-Francoist memorial associations, and from there, to working on citizens’ historical memory.

It also discusses the idea of national reconciliation and how it has lost its original meaning. Conesa notes how the lack of concrete measures taken by institutions to address historical memory has borne negative consequences, such as placing the responsibility of Francoist and

Republican forces on an equal footing, the lack of institutional recognition for those who fought against Francoism, and the perpetuation of historical mistruths spread during Franco's dictatorship.

In response, memorial associations took action, designating spaces of memory, installing memorials and giving a new meaning to existing spaces. This chapter also highlights the importance of the collaborative work undertaken by these associations and their international contacts, which has contributed to the erection of prominent monuments, such as the one dedicated to international brigades on Barcelona's Rambla del Carmel.

In short, the text addresses the work of memorial associations in Catalonia, their struggle to defend historical memory and the dignity of the victims of Franco's regime, as well as the difficulties and achievements they faced during the war.

In conclusion, this book reflects on and provides educational material to help introduce historical memory, critical thinking, citizen participation and both tangible and intangible heritage, by fostering dialogue and democratic participation in the classroom.