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BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS

Can you apply international education rights law to citizenship education in divided societies?

Hanna, H. (2019). *Young People's Rights in the Citizenship Education Classroom*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 267 pp., GBPE69.99 (Hardback) ISBN: 978-3-030-21146-2; GBP39.99 (eBook) ISBN: 978-3-030-21147-9

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BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS**Can you apply international education rights law to citizenship education in divided societies?**DOI: <http://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.4279>

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Comparative studies of education in divided societies have a long history, particularly those that compare countries such as Israel and Northern Ireland. Helen Hanna's contribution is to set research from this field within a framework of international education rights law as it applies to citizenship education. This has led her to the development of a framework of the '2As' to scrutinise a curriculum – is it 'acceptable' and is it 'adaptable'? There are three key themes that emerge from this qualitative research on citizenship/civic education in the two countries: minority group representation, dealing with difference, and preparation for life (even though Hanna finds that they can not always be located precisely within the 2As structure and an interpretative framework of rights). Questions immediately arise: 'Acceptable' and 'relevant' to whom? And should everyone in a divided society learn the same curriculum? These are perhaps age-old questions, but Hanna provides some interesting glosses on them. One key warning is that we should avoid essentialising seemingly homogenous groups (such as 'Arabs'). But an equally key concept is 'finding oneself in the story' – going beyond the story of one's own ethno-national community to the story of two, sometimes conflicting communities. This raises the issues of how curriculum is determined, and the representation of different groups and identities in policy development.

This will be a valuable text for students of citizenship education and education rights. It is not about the teaching of human rights within the citizenship education curriculum, but about applying rights obligations to decisions about the content and pedagogy of learning about one's society. This is useful work. It still reads like the PhD thesis it once was. Nothing wrong with that, and we've all done it. The benefits are very detailed and careful literature reviews and rigorous research. The obvious downside is that the qualitative research was conducted in 2010/11 and much of the literature is from around that period or well before. There have been strenuous attempts to update, but we find slippages that talk about 'recent' studies from 2010. The 'most recent' IEA study of civic education was not made in 2001. Saying that English language studies on citizenship education have been largely confined to the 'Global North' ignores recent work in countries such as Hong Kong, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. But there are useful updates on the political

situation in Israel and Northern Ireland and mentions of current international concerns, such as decolonising curriculum.

And the crucial debate does not date. In a divided society is a school an 'oasis' in the middle of a conflict-affected context (as in the Northern Ireland school?) or an 'anti-oasis' where the civics class is the one place where (some) young people can discuss difference openly (as in the Israeli school)? Questions of free speech, safe spaces for discussion, dealing with the past, and teacher 'non-bias' remain central concerns for our time. Is 'preparing for life' about passing the citizenship exams or participating in future political spheres? Hanna does not always answer these questions but the book provides some viable frameworks for interrogating the impact on young people of a political arena such as citizenship education.