



Crucial Topics in Foundations of Education: International Perspectives

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Citizenship education, Nationhood and Identity. Object lessons from post-Cold War Finland and Russia.

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Modern citizenship entails a profound dilemma that emanates from the complex relationship between citizenship as a status and involvement in democratic institutions and citizenship as belonging to and affiliation with a national polity. On the one hand, citizenship constitutes a package of liberal rights and responsibilities and on the other hand, citizenship is defined in national terms and is bound by the national state and its institutions. The identity aspect of citizenship is thus confined to the nation – a cultural community premised on the imaginary horizontal bond between its members.

In the lecture, I will use these theoretical tenets to understand the dual and often controversial task of formal education as preparing students for participation in the political life of the state (citizenship) and rooting a feeling of common national identity (nationality). I will look at how two very different societies – Russia and Finland – balance between the two tasks, particularly showing that citizenship education curriculum reflects how citizenship and nationality, and their mutual relationship, are defined in a specific geopolitical context at a given historical moment.

The selection of Russia and Finland as the two national cases is justified by their embeddedness in qualitatively different state models and therefore carrying different sociopolitical, cultural and historical legacies. However, both have had to find solutions to the task of forging stability, peace and legitimacy amidst internal heterogeneity, and reverted to citizenship education as a means to legitimize and maintain state power unsettled in periods of political changes.