

## INDOCTRINATION AND THE AIMS OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND ANSWERS

Antti Moilanen

University of Kassel

Rauno Huttunen

University of Turku

**ABSTRACT.** In this theoretical article, we analyze indoctrination in relation to the aims of democratic political education using a theory of indoctrination which is based on the work of Jürgen Habermas. In particular, we examine how the challenge of indoctrination is connected to the goals of democratic political education and how this issue can be avoided. We reconstruct a Habermasian concept of indoctrination and criteria for this type of teaching. Moreover, we describe central controversies in German didactic theories of political education and elucidate the theoretical premises of these theories. Lastly, we construct an account of the challenges facing democratic political education and provide solutions to these hurdles by conceptualizing how the aims of political education can be pursued as indoctrination, as well as critically of indoctrination. We find that democratic political education involves the challenges of indoctrination, but these can be avoided by teaching in a self-reflective, controversial, and dialogic manner.

**KEY WORDS.** Political education; citizenship education; indoctrination; Beutelsbach consensus; Frankfurt declaration

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of political education includes several meanings. In particular, it can mean political socialization, civic education (*Staatbürgerliche Erziehung*), political education in a narrow sense, and social education.<sup>1</sup> In other words, political education is (1) socialization regarding a political form of life, (2) education concerning appropriate political behavior in relation to rights and obligations established by the state, (3) education about political participation, and (4) social learning that fosters politically relevant social competencies. In the narrow sense, the concept of political education can further be defined as “all consciously planned and organized, continuous and targeted measures by educational institutions to equip young people and adults with the conditions necessary for participation in political and social life.”<sup>2,3</sup> This article conceptualizes political education in this sense.

In German educational and political science, the didactics of political education (*Didaktik der politischen Bildung*) is an educational discipline that studies questions related to political teaching. Theorists have developed a variety

1. Joachim Detjen, *Politische Bildung: Geschichte und Gegenwart in Deutschland* [Political Education: History and the Present Moment in Germany] (De Gruyter, 2013), 3–4.

2. Peter Massing, “Politische Bildung” [Political education], in *Handwörterbuch des Politischen Systems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Concise Dictionary of the Political System of the Federal Republic of Germany], ed. Uwe Andersen and Wichard Woyke (Springer, 2021), 736.

3. All quotations in this paper were translated from the original German by the authors.

of approaches as tools for planning and analyzing political education. While a theory of political didactics models aims, methods, and contents of political education on the basis of alternative theoretical premises, approaches to political didactics describe methodical guidelines for studying various aspects of politics.<sup>4</sup> In this article, we define political education mainly by analyzing and explicating theories of political education. Nevertheless, we refer to the approaches of political education when we discuss political knowledge in political education.

German theories of political education usually are classified as either classic or contemporary. For example, the theories of Kurt Fischer, Hermann Giesecke, Wolfgang Hilligen, Bernhard Sutor, and Rolf Schmiederer, which were developed from the 1960s to the 1980s, are classic theories of political didactics.<sup>5</sup> The communicative model of Tilman Grammes, along with the competence-oriented models of Detjen and colleagues, *Gesellschaft für Politikdidaktik und politische Jugend- und Erwachsenenbildung* (GPJE), Georg Weißeno and colleagues, and Wolfgang Sander are contemporary subject didactic models of political education.<sup>6</sup> In addition, other theoretical conceptualizations are not presented as comprehensive didactic models, but as perspectives on political education. These include, in particular, ideas on both critical and competence-oriented political education.<sup>7</sup>

Theories of political education are controversial. In other words, they present different conceptions of the citizenship ideal — which political education should

4. Carl Deichmann and Christian, K. Tischner, “Zur Einführung” [Introduction], in *Handbuch Dimensionen und Ansätze in der Politischen Bildung* [Handbook of Dimensions and Approaches in Political Education], ed. Carl Deichmann and Christian K. Tischner (Wochenschau, 2013), 7–15.

5. Walter Gagel, *Politik, Didaktik, Unterricht: Eine Einführung in didaktische Konzeptionen* [Politics, Didactics, Teaching: An introduction to Didactic Conceptions] (Kohlhammer, 1979); and Michael May and Jessica Schattschneider, eds., *Klassiker der Politikdidaktik Neu Gelesen: Originale und Kommentare* [Classics of Politics Didactics Read Anew] (Wochenschau, 2011).

6. Michael May and Kerstin Pohl, “Politikdidaktische Konzeptionen,” [Didactic Concepts in Political Education] in *Handbuch Politische Bildung*, ed. Wolfgang Sander and Kerstin Pohl (Wochenschau, 2022), 29–39.

7. Anja Besand, Tilman Grammes, Reinhold Hedtke, Peter Henkenborg, Dirk Lange, Andreas Petrik, Sibylle Reinhardt, and Wolfgang Sander, eds., *Konzepte der Politischen Bildung: Eine Streitschrift* [Concepts of Political Education: A Pamphlet] (Wochenschau, 2011); Anja Besand, Tilman Grammes, Reinhold Hedtke, Peter Henkenborg, Dirk Lange, Andreas Petrik, Sibylle Reinhardt, and Wolfgang Sander, *Was ist Gute Politische Bildung? Leitfaden für den Sozialwissenschaftlichen Unterricht* [What is Good Political Education: A Manual for Social Science Teaching] (Wochenschau, 2018); Yasmine Chehata, Andreas Eis, Bettina Lösch, Stefan Schäfer, Sophie Schmitt, Thimmel Andreas, Jana Trumann, and Alexander Wohnig, eds., *Handbuch Kritische Politische Bildung* [Handbook of Critical Political Education] (Wochenschau, 2023); Bettina Lösch and Andreas Thimmel, eds., *Kritische Politische Bildung: Ein Handbuch* [Critical Political Education: A Handbook] (Wochenschau, 2011); and Benedikt Widmaier and Bernd Overwien, *Was heißt Heute Kritische Politische Bildung?* [What is Critical Political Education Today?] (Wochenschau, 2013).

ANTTI MOILANEN is Postdoctoral Fellow at University of Kassel; email moilanen.antti.j@gmail.com. His primary areas of scholarship are theory of Bildung, didactics, and political education.

RAUNO HUTTUNEN is University Lecturer at University of Turku; email rakahu@utu.fi. His primary area of scholarship is philosophy of education.

foster — and the educational aims connected to this ideal. This controversy results from the fact that theories of political education are based on various epistemological paradigms, social scientific theories, concepts of politics, democracy theories, and theories of learning.<sup>8</sup> These controversies are especially relevant for the problem of indoctrination, since students could be indoctrinated if political education is unreflective and uncontroversial.

German theories of political education and Anglo-American theories of citizenship education share several ideas and principles. First, according to both traditions, the aim of education is to foster student autonomy.<sup>9</sup> Second, learning political knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes is seen as a task of political education and citizenship education.<sup>10</sup> This knowledge includes, in particular, an understanding of the political system, its norms, and current political issues in addition to the skills of critical political thinking and political participation.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, other theories of political education see the aims and means of education in a different way. For example, Hannah Arendt and Gert Biesta have criticized theories of political education and presented alternative views on the topic.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of indoctrination refers to teaching that does not support student autonomy but that leads to immaturity instead. An indoctrination style of teaching is based on infiltration and inculcation of beliefs and attitudes, an uncritical and non-evidential style of learning, simplistic and unidirectional influencing, and the disregard of development of student cognitive competencies.<sup>13</sup> Theories of indoctrination determine criteria for indoctrination and typically identify the contents, consequences, methods, and intentions of this style of teaching.<sup>14</sup> Habermasian

8. Gagel, *Politik, Didaktik, Unterricht*.

9. See David Bridges, ed., *Education, Autonomy, and Citizenship: Philosophy in A Changing World* (Routledge, 1997).

10. See Ahmet Doğanay, "A Curriculum Framework for Active Democratic Citizenship Education," in *Schools, Curriculum and Civic Education for Building Democratic Citizens*, ed. Murray Print and Dirk Lange (Sense Publishers, 2012), 19–39.

11. Ibid.

12. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (Viking Press, 1961), 185–193; and Gert Biesta, "How to Exist Politically and Learn from It: Hannah Arendt and the Problem of Democratic Education," *Teachers College Record* 112, no. 2 (2010): 556–575, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811011200207>.

13. Eamonn Callan and Dylan Arena, "Indoctrination," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. Harvey Siegel (Oxford University Press, 2009); Rauno Huttunen, "Habermas and the Problem of Indoctrination," in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael A. Peters (Springer, 2017); Tapio Puolimatka, *Opetusta Vai Indoktrinaatiota? Valta ja Manipulaatio Opetuksessa [Teaching or Indoctrination? Power and Manipulation in Education]* (Kirjayhtymä, 1997); Harvey Siegel, "Indoctrination and Education," in *Freedom and Indoctrination in Education: International Perspectives*, ed. Ben Spiecker and Roger Straughan (Cassell, 1991), 30–41; and Ivan A. Snook, *Concepts of Indoctrination: Philosophical Essays* (Routledge, 1972).

14. Tatyana Kloubert, *Civic Education und das Problem der Indoktrination: Eine Fallstudie in den USA [Civic Education and the Problem of Indoctrination: A Case Study in the USA]* (Wochenschau, 2019).

theories of indoctrination constitute an approach in the literature.<sup>15</sup> Although there are other approaches, the criteria for indoctrination are, for the most part, similar in the different theories.<sup>16</sup> In this article, we conceptualize indoctrination as a Habermasian concept.

The challenges regarding indoctrination in political education and citizenship education have been examined in a few studies using the criteria of indoctrination. Theorists have analyzed curricula,<sup>17</sup> citizenship ideals,<sup>18</sup> teachers' views,<sup>19</sup> and materials of teaching.<sup>20</sup> The researchers in these studies have examined whether certain historical or contemporary practices of political education comprise indoctrination,<sup>21</sup> the criteria for indoctrination in political education,<sup>22</sup> and how the challenge of indoctrination can be avoided.<sup>23</sup> According to these studies, nationalistic political education often includes indoctrination,<sup>24</sup> but democratic political education can lead to indoctrination as well if it suppresses student rationality.<sup>25</sup> However, a deficit of several studies is that challenges of indoctrination in democratic political education have been described with formal criteria. For example, Tatyana Kloubert defines such criteria, but these are not specific to political education and, thus, can be used in analyzing every school subject.<sup>26</sup> Here, we aim to fill this knowledge gap.

This article is theoretical; we reconstruct theories of indoctrination and political education, construct a theory of the challenges regarding indoctrination

15. Huttunen, "Habermas and the Problem of Indoctrination"; and Robert Young, *A Critical Theory of Education: Habermas and Our Children's Future* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).

16. Callan and Arena, "Indoctrination"; Puolimatka, *Opetusta Vai Indoktrinaatiota?*; and Siegel, "Indoctrination and Education."

17. Walter Humes, "Learning From the Past: An Historical Perspective on Indoctrination and Citizenship," *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education* 22, no. 1 (2023): 18–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14788047231156090>.

18. Bill Marsden, "Citizenship Education: Permeation or Pervasion? Some Historical Pointers," in *Citizenship Through Secondary Geography*, ed. David Lambert and Paul Machon (Routledge, 2001), 35–54.

19. Kloubert, *Civic Education und das Problem der Indoktrination*; and Yan Wing Leung, "Nationalistic Education and Indoctrination," *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education* 6, no. 2 (2004): 116–130, <https://doi.org/10.2304/csee.2004.6.2.116>.

20. Derrin Pinto, "Indoctrinating the Youth of Post-War Spain: A Discourse Analysis of a Fascist Civics Textbook," *Discourse & Society* 15, no. 5 (2004): 649–667 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926504045036>.

21. Humes, "Learning from the Past"; Leung, "Nationalistic Education and Indoctrination"; Marsden, "Citizenship Education"; and Pinto, "Indoctrinating the Youth of Post-War Spain."

22. Kloubert, *Civic Education und das Problem der Indoktrination*.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Pinto, "Indoctrinating the Youth of Post-War Spain"; and Leung, "Nationalistic Education and Indoctrination."

25. Kloubert, *Civic Education und das Problem der Indoktrination*.

26. *Ibid.*

in democratic political education, and provide solutions to these impediments. The research questions of this article are the following: (1) What are the challenges of indoctrination when its aims are conceptualized using the German theories of political education?, and (2) How can these challenges be avoided? We answer the first question by analyzing theoretical accounts of the aims of political education using the criteria of indoctrination. Put differently, we define how the aims of political education could be pursued in a manner consistent with indoctrination. We answer the second question by analyzing the aims of political education from an opposite viewpoint. Thus, we define how these goals could be pursued in such a way that fosters student autonomy.

First, we will define the Habermasian concept of indoctrination and the criteria for this type of teaching. Second, we will discuss Arendt's and Biesta's criticisms of political education, and position the German tradition in relation to these critiques. Third, we will explicate central controversies in the German theories of political education, and elucidate theoretical presuppositions of these theories. In this chapter, we also refer to Anglo-American literature on political education, since there are few publications in English on the German theories. Fourth, we will define the challenges regarding indoctrination in democratic political education and presents solutions to these issues. Fifth, we will draw conclusions from the theoretical analysis.

#### THE NOTION OF INDOCTRINATION

In the philosophy of education, the concept of indoctrination refers to the exercise of unethical influence in teaching situations. Referring to the ideal of maturity, it can be claimed that indoctrination is morally wrong and that teachers, parents, and educational institutions should not practice it. Thus, it is easy to reject indoctrination. Nevertheless, the moral maxim of avoiding this style of teaching is a challenge.

The challenge of non-indoctrination relates to the fact that children must simultaneously learn the essential content of a tradition and develop the capabilities required for critical reflection on this content. If this goal is not achieved, the teaching of this subject is actually indoctrination. The critical hermeneutics of Jürgen Habermas provide hints on how to overcome this dilemma. Although Habermas does not directly address the theory of indoctrination, two versions of a theory of indoctrination have been developed using his ideas: in particular, Robert Young's Habermasian concept of indoctrination and Rauno Huttunen's communicative theory of indoctrination.<sup>27</sup>

The starting point of Young's theory of indoctrination focuses on the general rules of rational argumentation or the so-called Robert Alexy rules.<sup>28</sup> For

27. Robert Young, *A Critical Theory of Education: Habermas and Our Children's Future* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989).

28. Robert Alexy, *A Theory of Legal Argumentation: The Theory of Rational Discourse as Theory of Legal Justification* (Clarendon, 1989).

Habermas, these rules are a prerequisite for communicative action, and he formulates them as follows:

- A person who disputes a proposition or norm under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so.
- Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
- Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatsoever. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into the discourse. Everyone is allowed to express their attitudes, desires, and needs.
- No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in previous claims.<sup>29</sup>

Habermas defines “communicative action,” which follows Alexy’s rules, as linguistic interaction in which another person is regarded as genuine, and in which the goals of action are chosen in an equal and free discussion. Habermas contrasts this type of interaction with “strategic action,” in which other people are treated as natural objects or as mere instruments.<sup>30</sup> For example, when a teacher indoctrinates their own political opinions into students’ minds, this teacher is practicing strategic action in a Habermasian sense. According to Huttunen, in communicative teaching, as an antidote to indoctrination, the teacher both commits themselves to the general rules of argumentation and acts according to these rules to the best of their ability. Following Klaus Mollenhauer, these maxims can be referred to as the teacher’s “normative minimum.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Huttunen sets two parallel criteria for indoctrination: (1) the communicative method and intention criterion, and (2) the empowering content and consequence criterion.<sup>32</sup>

Concerning the communicative method and intention criterion, Huttunen claims that teaching is clearly indoctrination if the instructor in a teaching situation is oriented toward strategic action in a Habermasian sense. In this case, the teacher is trying to imprint the teaching content on the consciousness of the students, treating them mainly as passive objects rather than active co-subjects of learning.<sup>33</sup> Huttunen contrasts strategic teaching with communicative teaching. In the latter, teaching is understood as “*Bildung* (education) with human dignity.”<sup>34</sup> Such teaching is “communicative action,” which aims to educate students in

29. Jürgen Habermas, “Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification,” in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, ed. Jürgen Habermas (Polity Press, 1990), 88–89.

30. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action: Part I* (Heinemann, 1984), 285.

31. Klaus Mollenhauer, *Theorien zum Erziehungsprozess* [Theories on the Educational Process] (München, 1972), 42.

32. Rauno Huttunen, *Indoctrination, Communicative Teaching and Recognition: Studies in Critical Theory and Democracy in Education* (University of Joensuu, 2009), 37–38.

33. *Ibid.*, 38–40.

34. Karl-Hermann Schäfer and Klaus Schaller, *Kritische Erziehungswissenschaft und kommunikative Didaktik* [Critical Educational Science and Communicative Didactics] (Quelle & Meyer, 1976), 57.

communicatively competent subjects of the learning process. The further away an actual teaching situation is from this ideal type of communicative teaching, the greater the risk of indoctrination. What Huttunen conceptualizes as communicative teaching corresponds with Biesta's notion of "practical intersubjectivity in teaching." Biesta does not understand education "as a one-way process in which culture is transferred from one (already acculturated) organism to another (not yet acculturated), but as a co-constructive process, i.e., a process in which both participating subjects play an active role and in which meaning is not transferred but generated."<sup>35</sup>

However, even Huttunen's revised version of the method and intention criterion does not recognize unintentionally or structurally caused indoctrination. What is also needed to identify indoctrination is an analysis of the content and consequences of teaching. In this regard, Huttunen refers to the criterion of indoctrination as the empowering content and consequence criterion. Teaching cannot be based on the notion that a group of objective facts exists that is deposited into students' minds like money is deposited in a bank.<sup>36</sup> Knowledge is constructed through individual and social processes, and it does not imitate outer reality; rather, the system of knowledge is a construction of reality. Therefore, the contents of teaching should provide students with opportunities to creatively construct their own multi-dimensional view of reality. The contents should also encourage students to engage in critical self-reflection. Thus, if one wants the contents of teaching to be non-indoctrination, one should contribute to students' reflectivity not only regarding the meanings they have already constructed, but also regarding those that are being taught. In this way, teaching contributes to students' epistemic vigilance. Then, students become vigilant against any attempts at indoctrination and manipulation.

According to Huttunen, the content of teaching that limits students' perspectives on meaning and that minimizes their own power of judgment is indoctrination. In this case, the content of teaching tends to keep students in an immature and epistemically unvigilant stage. Respectively, non-indoctrination content not only provides students the freedom and the faculty to determine their own differentiated identity, political worldview, and conduct of life, but also contributes to epistemic vigilance.

Based on the Habermasian theory of indoctrination described above, the following criteria for indoctrination can be determined:

- The content and consequence criterion: The themes of teaching are one-dimensional and controversies are not noticed, the themes do not develop self-reflection and critical thinking, students remain in an immature state, and students do not learn to critically reflect on the tradition.

35. Gert Biesta, "Education as Practical Intersubjectivity: Towards a Critical-Pragmatic Understanding of Education," *Educational Theory* 44 (1994): 312, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1994.00299.x>.

36. Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Herder and Herder, 1970).

- The method and intention criterion: The knowledge taught is not critically discussed with students, teachers try to imprint the contents on the minds of the students, the intention of the teacher is to inculcate students with doctrines, and a tradition is transmitted unproblematized.

#### EXCURSION: THE LEGITIMACY OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

Before discussing German theories of political education, we address the question of whether general education should aim to foster political participation of students. In particular, we examine Arendt's and Biesta's critiques of political education.

Arendt is a well-known political philosopher who, in many of her works, has addressed the freedom of the citizen and the accompanying preconditions and who has much to contribute to the discussion of political and democratic education.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it is curious that her explicit view of the goal of political education is rather conservative. In her essay, *Crisis of Education*, she asserts that school is a mediating "safety zone" between the family and the public sphere of society and that its task is to introduce students to the world.<sup>38</sup> In this context, Arendt clearly distinguishes childhood and adulthood as different phases of life; the task of childhood is education, and only educated adults should participate in politics. What is important for Arendt is that schooling should protect the natality, that is, the newness and indeterminateness, of children so that they can engage in new beginnings in political activity as adults.<sup>39</sup> Arendt does not present an account of political education, but she condemns attempts to produce new social conditions through education.<sup>40</sup> Thus, proper political education could mean for Arendt that politics are introduced to students without inculcating them with political ideologies. The German models of political education, which are discussed in this article, avoid Arendt's critiques, since they address the challenge of indoctrination and present solutions to it. Moreover, critical theories of political education question the legitimacy of Arendt's criticisms by demonstrating that political participation in political education is not necessarily indoctrination.<sup>41</sup>

37. Hannah Arendt, "Freedom and Politics: A Lecture," *Chicago Review* 14, no. 1 (1960): 28–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25293600>.

38. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 185–193.

39. *Ibid.*, 196.

40. *Ibid.*, 176–177.

41. Frank Nonnenmacher and Alexander Wahnig, "Politische Aktion und Politische Bildung: Widersprüche in der Fachdiskussion und Bildungspotentiale" [Political Action and Political Education: Controversies in the Subject Discussion and Educational Potential], in *Handbuch Kritische Politische Bildung* [Handbook Critical Political Education], ed. Chehata et al., 285–293.

In an article on Arendt and political education, Biesta accepts the idea that education and politics are relatively autonomous spheres of human action.<sup>42</sup> However, he criticizes Arendt's developmentalist thinking, which dichotomically distinguishes childhood and adulthood — and which defines education as a task of children and political action as a task of adults. Consequently, Biesta states that children should be seen as capable of political action, and he demands that students should be able to act in schools and learn *from* political existence.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, he argues that political education should not be conceptualized as preparation *for* democracy.<sup>44</sup>

In another article on political education, Biesta deepens his critique of theories of citizenship education, and he further explicates what learning from political existence means.<sup>45</sup> In particular, Biesta argues that the so-called psychological theories of citizenship education are problematic. These theories assert that the task of education is to equip incompetent growing individuals with democratic knowledge, skills, and attitudes to advance the functioning of the democracy. Such theories are problematic, Biesta claims, for three reasons: (1) they place overly demanding expectations on education, (2) they disregard social relations along with social and political conditions, and (3) they emphasize sameness and identity at the cost of plurality.<sup>46</sup> As an alternative to psychological approaches, Biesta constructs an Arendtian account of citizenship education that emphasizes action in the context of school. Achieving this task requires that students be allowed to take creative initiative when curricular areas are studied, that teachers have an interest in student initiatives, and that initiatives of individuals are collectively received in a manner that respects plurality and difference.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, obstacles to action should be studied and constraints to democracy in the society should be examined.<sup>48</sup>

We agree with Biesta that children should be treated as capable of action. However, his understanding and critique of psychological theories of political education is problematic in part. This is based on the fact that political education can be practiced *for* democracy without being instrumentalist and individualistic. In other words, it is not necessary to assume that political education guarantees

---

42. Gert Biesta, "How to Exist Politically and Learn from It: Hannah Arendt and the Problem of Democratic Education," *Teachers College Record* 112, no. 2 (2010): 556–575, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811011200207>.

43. *Ibid.*, 571–572.

44. *Ibid.*, 571–572.

45. Gert Biesta, "Education and the Democratic Person: Towards a Political Conception of Democratic Education," *Teachers College Record* 109, no. 3 (2007): 740–769, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810710900302>.

46. *Ibid.*, 742.

47. *Ibid.*, 769–762.

48. *Ibid.*, 763–764.

democracy in the society, that social relations along with social and political conditions are unimportant, or that political education should produce similar identities. Moreover, Biesta's own understanding of political education is based to a great extent on a formal concept of politics in view of the fact that he dismisses the study of topics that are currently discussed in politics. For example, the analysis of contemporary crises or problems is not emphasized in Biesta's theory. Moreover, Biesta's conception of political education is largely idealistic, since it does not require that students learn to understand political institutions, processes, and programs in the historical, social, and political reality. Instead, he requires only a discussion of social constraints to democratic action. Therefore, his model of political education does not sufficiently foster political knowledge, critical political thinking, or action-capability.

As an alternative to Biesta's conception, we next describe German theories of political education. These theories assert that political education should be practiced at the same time *for democracy* and *for students*. In other words, political education should aim to strengthen the quality of democracy and foster student political autonomy. Thus, political education seeks to assist students in securing their own and others' political interests. What also is important here is that the German theories avoid Biesta's criticism of psychological theories of political education, since they are not committed to the problematic assumptions that Biesta has identified. Specifically, in the German theories, education cannot guarantee democracy in the society, social and political conditions are noticed, and students are encouraged to independently determine their relationship to politics.

### THE AIMS OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

#### POLITICAL MATURITY AND EMANCIPATION

Generally, the ability and motivation for independent, critical, and responsible political thinking and action is the aim of democratic political education in the German theories of political education. Theorists most frequently refer to this ideal with the concepts of *political maturity* and *emancipation*,<sup>49</sup> and while they may use other concepts, the terms feature the same meaning.<sup>50</sup> What the educational goals of maturity and emancipation share is the idea that students should grow as autonomous, critical, responsible, and active citizens. Nevertheless, these concepts are based on various conceptions of the relationship between individual and society.

The concepts of political maturity and emancipation are inherent in the *Bildung* theoretical discourse, in which ideal humanity is constituted by

49. Gagel, *Politik, Didaktik, Unterricht*; and Christian Meyer-Heidemann, "Mündigkeit" [Maturity], in *Wörterbuch Politikunterricht* [Dictionary of Politics Teaching], ed. Sabine Achour, Matthias Busch, Peter Massing, and Christian Meyer-Heidemann (Wochenschau, 2020), 156–158.

50. Kurt G. Fischer, *Einführung in die Politische Bildung* [Introduction to Political Education] (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1971), 60, 111–113; and Bernhard Sutor, *Didaktik des Politischen Unterrichts* [Didactics of Political Education] (Ferdinand Schöningh, 1971), 271.

autonomy, morality, individuality, the versatile development of interests and abilities, and political engagement.<sup>51</sup> The theories of *Bildung* are committed to moral universalism in the sense that the practice of one's own freedom should not constrain the freedom of others and that self-determination should always be accompanied by moral responsibility toward other people and society.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the goals of political maturity and emancipation correspond to the order of a democratic society, which is based on the values of human dignity, freedom, equality, justice, and peace.<sup>53</sup>

Christian Meyer-Heidemann distinguishes two ideals of political maturity: one that is formal and legal and one that is oriented to the public interest.<sup>54</sup> The first is based on the liberal tradition and the second on the republican tradition.<sup>55</sup> However, several theorists refer to the concept of emancipation and emphasize the role of social criticism as a presupposition of autonomy. Therefore, we propose that the aims of political education could be classified by conceptualizing republican, liberal, and emancipatory ideal types of political autonomy. A republican ideal emphasizes political virtues and a strong commitment to public interest as characteristics of political autonomy.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, liberal theorists stress the importance of political rights, and they claim that the responsible promotion of private interests is legitimate.<sup>57</sup> Finally, an emancipatory ideal is based on the idea that individuals can live freely only in a social and democratic society, which is why illegitimate power and structural domination should be criticized in political education.<sup>58</sup>

#### POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Teaching knowledge about politics is a central aim of political education. However, the theories of political education are based on alternative research

51. Antti Moilanen, *Sivistys ja Emansipaatio: Sivistävä ja Yhteiskuntakriittinen Opetus Kriittis-konstruktivisessa Didaktiikassa* [Self-Formation and Emancipation: Formative Teaching and Social Criticism in Critical-Constructive Didactics] (University of Oulu, 2022), 53–85.

52. Thomas Rucker, *Komplexität der Bildung: Beobachtungen zur Grundstruktur Bildungstheoretischen Denkens in der (Spät-)Moderne* [Complexity of Education: Observations on the Basic Structure of Educational Theoretical Thinking in (Late) Modern Times] (Klinkhardt, 2014), 95–96.

53. Detjen, *Politische Bildung*, 5–6; and Fritz Reheis, *Politische Bildung: Eine Kritische Einführung* [Political Education: A Critical Introduction] (Springer, 2016), 29–31.

54. Meyer-Heidemann, "Mündigkeit," 157.

55. Ibid.

56. Knud Haakonssen, "Republicanism," in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. Robert Goodin, Philipp Pettit, and Thomas Pogge (Blackwell, 2007), 729–735; and Suzanna Sherry, "Responsible Republicanism: Educating for Citizenship," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 62, no. 1 (1995): 131–208, <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclrev/vol62/iss1/2>.

57. Alan Ryan, "Liberalism," in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ed. Robert E. Goodin, Phillip Pettit, and Thomas Pogge, 360–382.

58. Henry Giroux, *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life: Democracy's Promise and Education's Challenge* (Paradigm, 2005).

paradigms, social scientific theories, concepts of politics and society, and theories of learning. Thus, teaching political knowledge has been understood in multiple ways. Despite this, a commonly shared idea is that students should be taught general social scientific data, concepts, categories, models, and theories along with knowledge about particular aspects of the historical, social, and political reality.

Social scientific research paradigms, theories of social sciences, and concepts of politics are controversial.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the aims and methods of political scientific research, theoretical accounts of the social and political reality, and the characteristics of politics can be defined in alternative ways. What is important here is that theories of political education address the pluralism inherent in social sciences differently. First, theories of political education are mainly based either on political science or on a plurality of social sciences: sociology, economics, and law in addition to political science. For instance, the *Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik*<sup>60</sup> criticizes Weißeno and colleagues<sup>61</sup> for relying too strongly on political science and for dismissing other social sciences. Second, theories of political education either define and describe concepts or categories that should be taught to students, or the theories assert that these should be controversially taught. For example, whereas Weißeno and colleagues<sup>62</sup> define basic and key concepts of politics, the *Autorengruppe Fachdidaktik*<sup>63</sup> keeps them open for controversial study. Third, theories of political education either emphasize certain political and social scientific research paradigms or the controversiality of these. In the former case, philosophers ground their theories by referring, for instance, to the normative–ontological political science<sup>64</sup> or critical research paradigm.<sup>65</sup> In the latter case, theorists assert that political education should cover all relevant social scientific research paradigms.<sup>66</sup> Fourth, theories of political education emphasize various aspects of politics, since they are based on alternative concepts. There are (1) government-centered versus emancipatory concepts, (2) normative versus descriptive concepts, and (3)

59. Reinhold Hedtke, “Die Politische Domäne im Sozialwissenschaftlichen Feld” [The Political Domain in the Social Scientific Field], in *Konzepte der Politischen Bildung*, ed. Besand et al., 51–68.

60. Besand et al., eds., *Konzepte der Politischen Bildung*, 164–165.

61. Georg Weißeno, Joachim Detjen, Ingo Juchler, Peter Massing, and Dagmar Richter, *Konzepte der Politik – ein Kompetenzmodell* [Concepts of Politics – A Competence Model] (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2010).

62. Ibid.

63. Besand et al., eds., *Konzepte der Politischen Bildung*.

64. Sutor, *Didaktik des Politischen Unterrichts*.

65. Chehata et al., eds., *Handbuch Kritische Politische Bildung*; and Rolf Schmiederer, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Bildung* [For Critique of Political Education] (Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1971).

66. Besand et al., eds., *Konzepte der Politischen Bildung*; and Wolfgang Sander, *Politik Entdecken – Freiheit Leben* [Discover Politics — Live Freedom] (Wochenschau, 2008).

conflict-oriented versus consensus-centered concepts of politics.<sup>67</sup> The theories of political education either stress certain aspects of politics or a plurality of these.

When particular aspects of the historical, social, and political reality are studied and analyzed in political education, the aim of teaching is not only to assist students in understanding these characteristics, but also to foster their political skills and competencies. Thus, students should learn to analyze, judge, and shape politics. For instance, when climate change is examined, students should learn to understand both this particular political problem and analyze political issues on a general level. The literature on the approaches of political education can be used in explicating the aspects of reality that are studied in teaching. In particular, the approaches of political education emphasize political institutions, systems, problems, conflicts, crises, historical developments, ideals, values, orders, and cultures.<sup>68</sup> The final aspect, political culture, refers to political and cultural history, along with political medial representations, symbols, pictures, narratives, persons, and biographies.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, according to the critical theories of political education, power and domination in the society should be recognized, analyzed, and criticized.<sup>70</sup>

#### POLITICAL JUDGMENT AND UNIVERSAL MORALITY

Theories of political education demand teaching critical political thinking to students, and this goal is usually defined as *political judgment*. The development of political judgment has been conceptualized as categorical *Bildung*,<sup>71</sup> competence-based learning,<sup>72</sup> and development of a skill that is acquired when social criticism is practiced in political education.<sup>73</sup> In other words, a person learns

67. Siegfried Frech and Peter Massing, "Politik/Politikbegriffe" [Politics/Concepts of Politics], in *Wörterbuch Politikunterricht* [Dictionary of Politics Teaching], eds. Sabine Achour, Matthias Busch, Peter Massing, and Christian Meyer-Heidemann (Wochenschau, 2020), 161–164.

68. Carl Deichmann and Christian, K. Tischner, eds., *Handbuch Dimensionen und Ansätze in der Politischen Bildung* [Handbook of Dimensions and Approaches in Political Education] (Wochenschau, 2013); and Sibylle Reinhardt, *Teaching Civics: A Manual for Secondary Education Teachers* (Barbara Budrich, 2015).

69. Deichmann and Tischner, *Handbuch Dimensionen und Ansätze in der Politischen Bildung*.

70. Bettina Lösch and Andreas Eis, "Herrschaftskritik und Machtanalyse als Begründung und Aufgabe Politischer Bildung" [Critique of Domination and Analysis of Power as Justification and Task of Critical Political Education], in *Handbuch Kritische Politische Bildung*, ed. Chehata et al., 40–49.

71. Fischer, *Einführung in die Politischen Bildung*; Hermann Giesecke, *Didaktik der Politischen Bildung* [Didactics of Political Education] (Juventa, 1976); and Sutor, *Didaktik des Politischen Unterrichts*.

72. Joachim Detjen, Peter Massing, Dagmar Richter, and Georg Weißeno, *Politikkompetenz – ein Modell* [Political Competence – A Model] (Springer, 2012), 48–49; and Sander, *Politik Entdecken – Freiheit Leben*.

73. Christian Zimmermann, "Kritische Politische Urteilsbildung und die Planung Kritischer Politischer Bildungsprozesse" [Critical Political Education of Judgment and the Planning of Critical Political Educational Processes], in *Handbuch Kritische Politische Bildung* [Handbook Critical Political Education], ed. Chehata et al., 267–275; and Schmiederer, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Bildung*.

to think critically about politics when they acquire political categories, develop the competence of political judgment, or critically analyze social reality.

Several theories of political education distinguish, on the one hand, factual judgments that descriptively analyze politics and, on the other hand, value judgments that examine the legitimacy of politics. Political factual judgment is usually defined as an ability to analyze politics, that is, to describe it, categorize it, and draw conclusions from it.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, political factual judgment includes, in some theories, an ability to identify impacts of political decisions, critically use political media, and relate everyday political issues to global key problems.<sup>75</sup> On the contrary, political value judgment is often understood as an ability to rationally examine politics from a general normative standpoint. Such a standpoint is defined as public interest,<sup>76</sup> norms of the constitution,<sup>77</sup> universal values,<sup>78</sup> or universalist political morality.<sup>79</sup> Thus, a politically mature citizen refers to the ideal of common good, norms of democratic constitutions, or values of human dignity, freedom, equality, justice, and peace when they critically examine politics. According to a more formal interpretation, political maturity includes an ability to critically reflect whether the norms of political judgments could be universalized.

Emancipatory theories of political education conceive of critical political thinking as social criticism, that is, the rational evaluation of social practices that argues that these should be transformed.<sup>80</sup> In other words, social criticism aims at demonstrating that a social practice is deficient based on certain normative criteria. However, social critique is controversially understood in the theories of emancipatory political education. In particular, theorists rely on the models of internal and immanent critique.<sup>81</sup> Thus, social criticism is understood as the examination of the deficits between the social reality and the ideals and values of

74. Besand et al., *Was ist Gute Politische Bildung?*, 145–146; Detjen et al., *Politikkompetenz – ein Modell*, 55–56; Joachim Detjen, Hans-Werner Kuhn, Peter Massing, Dagmar Richter, Wolfgang Sander, and Georg Weißeno, *Anforderungen an Nationale Bildungsstandards für den Fachunterricht in der Politischen Bildung an Schulen* [Requirements for National Educational Standards for Subject Teaching in Political Education in Schools] (Wochenschau, 2004), 15; Tilman Grammes, *Kommunikative Fachdidaktik* [Communicative Subject Didactics] (Springer, 1998), 230; and Sander, *Politik Entdecken – Freiheit Leben*, 87–91.

75. *Ibid.* 87–91.

76. Sutor, *Didaktik des Politischen Unterrichts*, 56–62.

77. Bernhard Sutor, *Grundgesetz und Politische Bildung: Ein Beitrag zur Wiedergewinnung eines Minimumkonsenses im Streit um den Politikunterricht* [Constitution and Political Education: A Contribution to Retrieval of a Minimal Consensus in the Dispute About Political Education] (Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz, 1976).

78. Detjen et al., *Politikkompetenz – ein Modell*, 48–49.

79. Sander, *Politik Entdecken – Freiheit Leben*, 78.

80. Titus Stahl, *Immanent critique* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 9–14.

81. *Ibid.*, 20–23.

the constitution<sup>82</sup> and the analysis of immanent contradictions that necessarily result from norms of social practices.<sup>83</sup>

#### POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THEORIES OF DEMOCRACY

Advancing political participation is a goal of political education. In particular, theories assert that students should acquire communicative and social capabilities required for political participation and that they should gain knowledge of the means of political participation. Moreover, students should democratically participate at school. However, theories are based on alternative approaches to democracy. Thus, the exact nature of political participation as an aim of education is interpreted controversially.

Views of democracy, which are emphasized in theories of political education, include, in particular, liberal, complex, participatory, deliberative, social, and radical democracy. Theories of liberal and complex democracy stress representational democracy and suspect the ideal of maximal participation. Liberal theories of democracy are critical of the judgment of the lay people and the tyranny of the majority, and theories of complex democracy consider the efficacy of democratic politics in addition to its legitimacy. On the contrary, theories of participatory, deliberative, social, and radical democracy demand either the expansion of democracy or the democratization of various institutions of the society. Whereas theories of deliberative democracy highly consider rational and consensus-oriented communication, theories of radical democracy reject this starting point and conceive of democracy as a contingent and conflictual practice. Moreover, theories of social democracy stand in opposition to theories of liberal democracy, since the economy is not seen in these theories as a sphere that should be free of state intervention. Instead, the democratization of economic relations is an aim of social democracy. Additionally, theories of participatory democracy are critical of liberal democracy. More specifically, these theories assert that liberal democracy emphasizes political representation too strongly, which results in a deficit of the participation of citizens.<sup>84</sup>

Theories of political education are based either on particular theories of democracy or on a plurality of these. Thus, they offer controversial perspectives on how students should be educated to ensure that they become democratic citizens. Several theorists criticize the emancipatory idea that political education should support the expansion of democracy in society. This critique has been

82. Giesecke, *Didaktik der Politischen Bildung*.

83. Mathias Lotz, "Gemeinsame Arbeit an Gesellschaftlichen Widersprüchen: Ideen zu einem Kritikbegriff für die Politische Bildung" [Common Work on Social Contradictions: Ideas of a Concept of Critique in Political Education], in *Was heißt heute Kritische Politische Bildung?* [What Is Critical Political Education Today?], ed. Benedikt Widmaier and Bernd Overwien (Wochenschau, 2013), 180–187.

84. Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, 2002); and Manfred Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien: Eine Einführung* [Democracy Theories: An Introduction] (VS Verlag, 2008).

formulated by committing to both liberal and complex theories of democracy and democracy-theoretical pluralism. In the former case, the expansion of democracy is not desirable, since it is seen that a well-functioning democracy is a representational one and should aim for the efficiency of politics.<sup>85</sup> In the latter case, political education should study questions related to democracy in a controversial manner.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, students should not be taught to expand democracy in the society. However, critical theories of political education emphasize the importance of democratization, and these theories conceptualize democracy by referring to the theories of participatory, social, and radical democracy.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, political participation at school is seen as legitimate.<sup>88</sup>

#### POLITICAL MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES

Theories of political education define motivations and attitudes that students should acquire in political education. These include, in particular, values, virtues, dispositions, and interests relevant for political maturity and emancipation. Thus, political education aims not only at the transmission of knowledge and skills but also at the development of the students' character. Nevertheless, the theories controversially define which motivations and attitudes students should acquire. This controversy can be traced back to the various conceptions of citizenship in the theories.

When discussing theoretical accounts of political motivations and attitudes, it is useful to recall the classification of republican, liberal, and emancipatory political education. Most of the German accounts of political education are either liberal or emancipatory. However, there are differences in both types of theories. Liberal accounts are controversial when deciding whether equality and solidarity or freedom of the individual is accentuated. For instance, Weißeno and colleagues<sup>89</sup> criticize Sander<sup>90</sup> for placing too much emphasis on freedom at the cost of equality and solidarity. Moreover, not every liberal theory demands teaching political virtues or trust in the political system.<sup>91</sup> In a similar manner, emancipatory theories controversially conceive of ideal political motivations and attitudes. Whereas some theories assert that students should acquire motivations and attitudes that are necessary to abolish illegitimate power and structural

85. Sutor, *Didaktik des Politischen Unterrichts*, 46.

86. Sander, *Politik Entdecken — Freiheit Leben*, 48.

87. Giesecke, *Didaktik der Politischen Bildung*; David Salomon and Sam Schneider, "Demokratiethoretische Grundlagen" [Democracy Theoretical Foundations], in *Handbuch Kritische Politische Bildung* [Handbook Critical Political Education], ed. Chehata et al., 69–76; and Schmiederer, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Bildung*.

88. Nonnenmacher and Wohnig, "Politische Aktion und Politische Bildung."

89. Weißeno et al., *Konzepte der Politik*, 43.

90. Sander, *Politik Entdecken — Freiheit Leben*.

91. *Ibid.*

domination,<sup>92</sup> other theories do not include motivations and attitudes as an aim of political education.<sup>93</sup>

#### ELEMENTS CRITICAL OF INDOCTRINATION

Theories of political education include several didactic ideas that aim to prevent indoctrination and foster student self-determination. Whereas classic theories conceptualize such principles individually, contemporary theories refer to shared declarations that determine ethical starting points of political education.

Several classic models of political education emphasize dialogic political education, that is, teaching in which students are encouraged to examine the taught knowledge in an open-ended, critical, and argumentative manner.<sup>94</sup> In particular, the prescriptive norms of democratic politics should be dialogically discussed with students. On the contrary, classic emancipatory theories of political education demand the ideology-critical analysis of norms of different social classes.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, students should participate in planning their political education.<sup>96</sup> These principles, which are found in classic theories of political education, are critical of indoctrination because they guide teachers to practice communicative and controversial political education instead of indoctrinating students toward some partisan political opinion.<sup>97</sup>

Several contemporary models of political education are committed to the Beutelsbach consensus (*Beutelsbacher Konsens*).<sup>98</sup> According to this declaration, political maturity should be the aim of education, subjects controversial in intellectual and political affairs should be taught as controversial, and students should be able to analyze political issues on the basis of their own interests. In other words, political education should be dialogic, controversial, and student-centered. As an alternative to the Beutelsbach consensus, contemporary theorists of critical political education present the Frankfurt declaration of critical–emancipatory political education (*Frankfurter Erklärung für eine kritisch-emanzipatorische Politische*

92. Andreas Eis, "Vom Beutelsbacher Konsens zur 'Frankfurter Erklärung: Für eine Kritisch-emanzipatorische Politische Bildung?'" [From Beutelsbach Consensus to 'Frankfurt declaration: For a Critical-Emancipatory Political Education?'], in *Brauchen wir den Beutelsbacher Konsens? Eine Debatte der Politischen Bildung* [Is the Beutelsbach Consensus Necessary? A Debate in Political Education], ed. Benedikt Widmaier and Peter Zorn (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2016), 131–139; and Schmiederer, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Bildung*, 41–44.

93. Giesecke, *Didaktik der Politischen Bildung*, 144–158.

94. Fischer, *Einführung in die Politische Bildung*, 125; and Sutor, *Didaktik des Politischen Unterrichts*, 261–262.

95. Schmiederer, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Bildung*, 71–82.

96. *Ibid.*, 134.

97. Kilpatrick, "Indoctrination and Respect for Persons," in *Concepts of Indoctrination*, ed. Ivan, A. Snook (Routledge, 1992), 37–42.

98. Besand et al., *Was ist gute Politische Bildung?*, 24–25; Detjen et al., *Anforderungen an Nationale Bildungsstandards*, 12; Grammes, *Kommunikative Fachdidaktik*, 242–248; and Sander, *Politik Entdecken — Freiheit Leben*, 28–29.

*Bildung*). The Frankfurt declaration demands, in particular, the analysis of power, the critique of domination, the study of controversies, and the self-reflectivity of political teaching.<sup>99</sup> Thus, students should learn to critically examine interpretational power, self-government, and hegemony, along with criticizing structural domination. In addition, political education should study political conflicts and underlying dissent, and it should be conscious of its social embeddedness and make its commitments transparent and open to criticism.

### POLITICS DIDACTICS AND INDOCTRINATION

#### INDOCTRINATION AND THE AIMS OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

Political education aims to foster student autonomy in the context of politics by teaching political knowledge, judgment, and participation, as well as motivations and attitudes. This idea is shared in the didactic theories that we have explicated and analyzed. Therefore, general challenges of indoctrination pertaining to the aims of democratic political education can be recognized by examining and defining how teaching the aforementioned skills and attitudes for the purpose of fostering student autonomy can be considered indoctrination. This is possible by conceptualizing ways of teaching that fulfill the criteria of indoctrination.

In view of the fact that the concepts of political maturity and emancipation refer to autonomy, one is tempted to conclude that these educational aims are, on their own, critical of indoctrination. However, the issue at hand is more complicated. Specifically, two different challenges of indoctrination, which are related to the educational aims of democratic political education, can be identified. The first challenge results from the fact that students could be educated to political autonomy in an irrational way. Based on the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination, political education is indoctrination if alternatives to the ideal of political autonomy are not explicated and if students internalize this ideal dogmatically. Moreover, according to the method and intention criterion of indoctrination, political education is indoctrination if the ideal of political autonomy is not dialogically discussed and if the intention is to inculcate students with it. The second challenge of indoctrination follows from the possibility that a certain interpretation of political autonomy — for instance, a republican, liberal, or emancipatory one — is uncritically presupposed in political education. It follows from the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination that political education is indoctrination if controversial interpretations of political autonomy are not explicated and if students learn to pursue a fixed interpretation of political autonomy dogmatically. Moreover, education could be indoctrination on the basis of the method and intention criterion if controversial interpretations of political autonomy are not discussed, and if the intention of the teacher is to inculcate students with a fixed interpretation.

99. Andreas Eis, Bettina Lösch, Achim Schröder, and Gerd Steffens, "Frankfurt Declaration: for a Critical Emancipatory Political Education," *Journal of Social Science Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 74–75, <https://doi.org/10.4119/jsse-776>.

For instance, a teacher who has internalized republican political ideas dogmatically inculcates students with a republican citizenship ideal. The teacher continuously describes good citizens as unselfish moral subjects who virtuously advance the public interests. Moreover, they do not address the critique of political republicanism or explicate liberal and emancipatory citizenship ideals. Lastly, they argue in opposition to students or change the topic when these students oppose political republicanism or articulate liberal or emancipatory ideas. If the teacher was efficient in their teaching, students could be indoctrinated.

As in the case of the ideal of political autonomy, it could be hastily concluded that teaching political judgment is, in itself, an antidote against indoctrination. Nevertheless, this is a one-sided presupposition, since political judgment can be taught in an indoctrination-type way. More specifically, three problems of indoctrination, which are faced when political judgment is taught, can be recognized. First, it is possible that universal political morality is assumed dogmatically as a premise of critical political thinking. Based on the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination, political education is indoctrination if alternatives to moral universalism are not explicated and if students dogmatically internalize an inclination to universally judge politics. Moreover, it can be concluded from the method and intention criterion of indoctrination that indoctrination-type political education does not dialogically discuss universal political morality and that it aims to inculcate students with it. A second challenge of indoctrination results from the possibility that students are inculcated with a particular conceptions of universal political morality. According to the content and consequence criterion, political education is indoctrination if alternative universal models of political judgment are not thematized and if students dogmatically internalize a fixed conception of universal political judgment. Furthermore, if critical discussion on the nature of political judgments is constrained and the aim of education is to inculcate students with an inclination to judge politics in a predetermined way, political education is indoctrination. In this case, the method and intention criterion of indoctrination is fulfilled. A third challenge is that teaching critical political thinking could indoctrinate students by interpreting norms of political judgments dogmatically in a fixed way. If the norms are conceptualized uncontroversially on the basis of a particular political ideology, and if students uncritically acquire these norms as such, the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination is fulfilled. Moreover, the method and intention criterion is met if the norms are not discussed critically and if the aim of teaching is to inculcate students with a particular interpretation of these norms.

For example, a liberal political educator dogmatically teaches a liberal interpretation of universalist values to students. The teacher explains that liberty means freedom from interference by other people and the state, and, in doing so, ensures that students learn to associate equality with equal opportunities and rights. Other interpretations of freedom and equality are not thematized. Moreover, criticism of a liberal account of freedom and equality is not addressed. Lastly, the teacher criticizes students who argue against political liberalism and does not arrange possibilities of critical examination of the interpretation of universalist norms. If the

teacher was efficient in this approach, students could be inculcated with a liberal account of universal norms, and they would learn to criticize social practices on the basis of this account.

Political knowledge is a necessary precondition of political autonomy, because politics cannot be adequately analyzed and judged without such knowledge. However, political knowledge can be taught in an indoctrination-type manner. In particular, two challenges of indoctrination can be recognized. The first is faced when general social scientific knowledge is taught. According to the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination, political education is indoctrination if the controversy of general social scientific data, categories, concepts, models, and theories is not considered and if students acquire one-sided interpretations of these dogmatically. Moreover, based on the method and intention criterion, indoctrination-type political education constrains critical discussion of the general social scientific data, concepts, models, and theories and aims to inculcate students with one-sided interpretations of this knowledge. The second challenge of indoctrination is faced when particular aspects of historical, social, and political reality are analyzed. It follows from the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination that education is indoctrination if controversial interpretations of, for instance, political cases, problems, conflicts, and crises are not noticed and if students are inculcated with one-sided views. Moreover, it can be argued that, based on the method and intention criterion, political education is indoctrination if critical discussion is constrained and if the intention of the teacher is to dogmatically transmit one-sided knowledge.

For example, a political educator has dogmatically interpreted political basic concepts based on particular social scientific theories. Moreover, this instructor has rigid views about particular aspects of the historical, social, and political reality that are thematized in teaching. Thus, when political concepts are introduced, the teacher interprets these in a one-sided manner and does not articulate controversies. When students criticize these interpretations, the educator suppresses the critique. Moreover, when political cases, conflicts, and problems are studied, the teacher presents their own position as legitimate, and they do not assist students in understanding how different political actors see the cases, problems, and conflicts. Critical discussion is not allowed. Therefore, students could be inculcated with one-sided political knowledge in this type of teaching.

Political education aims to foster student political participation. However, democracy is a controversial topic in the theories of political education, and a challenge of indoctrination can be identified. Based on the content and consequence criterion, political education is indoctrination if it inculcates students with an account of certain purposes and styles of political participation and if students learn to participate politically in a fixed manner. Moreover, according to the method and intention criterion of indoctrination, political education indoctrinates students if purposes and styles of political participation are not discussed critically and if the aim of education is to inculcate students with a predefined model of political participation.

For instance, a political educator who has dogmatically adopted an emancipatory position inculcates students with an understanding of the aim of political participation that is based on social and radical theories of democracy. Thus, when the possibilities of political action are discussed, this teacher encourages students to envision ways of democratizing economic relations and expanding democracy in the society. However, the aim of democratization is not examined critically and the teacher constrains attempts to do so. In addition, students are not taught to understand alternative theories of democracy and how these theories differently conceive of ideal forms of political participation. Therefore, students could be indoctrinated.

Political education seeks to foster political motivations and attitudes. As in the case of teaching political knowledge, judgment, and participation, a challenge of indoctrination can be identified. Based on the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination, political education is indoctrination if alternative conceptions of ideal political motivations and attitudes are not explicated and if students dogmatically internalize these and remain incapable of self-reflection. In addition, according to the method and intention criterion of indoctrination, constraining critical discussion on political motivations and attitudes in addition to aiming to dogmatically inculcate students with predefined political motivation and attitudes could lead to indoctrination.

For instance, a political educator who dogmatically favors political republicanism irrationally educates students to republican virtues, dispositions, and interests. Thus, this teacher emphasizes a commitment to public interest and stresses the learning of political virtues. This attitude characterizes discussions in the classroom and the ways in which the instructor responds to the ideas that students articulate. In particular, when students vocalize the advance of private interests, the teacher judges this and demands self-criticism. Moreover, when the students do not exhibit virtuousness, the teacher criticizes them. Consequently, there is a danger of indoctrination in this style of teaching.

#### SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES

The challenges of indoctrination in democratic political education can be solved. Next, we describe how student political autonomy can be supported by teaching political knowledge, judgment, and participation alongside political attitudes and motivations without indoctrinating students.

Conceptually, political autonomy entails a self-consciousness of its own normative starting points. Therefore, a politically autonomous person is aware of conflicting educational ideals and the ways in which the ideals of political autonomy can be legitimized. Fostering this cognitive understanding requires that the historical, social, and political background of the ideal of political autonomy is explicated. In this way, political education is self-reflective. Moreover, teachers should assist students in understanding conflicting interpretations of political autonomy and how these have been legitimized. For example, republican, liberal, and emancipatory conceptions of political autonomy could be thematized. The legitimacy of the ideals should be dialogically discussed, and teachers should

articulate the ideal that forms the starting point of political education. If political education is practiced in this way, it is not indoctrination. The content and consequence criterion of indoctrination is not fulfilled because controversies are noticed and critical thinking is encouraged. In addition, the method and intention criterion of indoctrination is not met, owing to the fact that the taught knowledge is dialogically discussed and that the intention is to educate students to self-reflective political autonomy.

Avoiding the challenge of indoctrination when political judgment is taught requires that it is done in a self-reflective, controversial, and dialogic manner. Thus, the historical, social, and political background of universal political morality and its relationship to political judgments should be explicated and discussed. Moreover, controversial accounts of political judgment should be articulated and disputed. Lastly, controversial interpretations of norms that are based on alternative political ideologies should be thematized and examined. If these three tasks are performed adequately, teaching critical political thinking is not indoctrination. The content and consequence criterion of indoctrination is not fulfilled because controversies are noticed and because teaching fosters self-reflectivity. In addition, the method and intention criterion is not met based on the fact that conceptions of political judgments and norms are discussed dialogically and because the intention of teaching is to foster student autonomy. Consequently, teaching is committed to certain democratic conceptions of political judgment or a plurality of these, but students are not inculcated with a particular account.

Solving the challenge of indoctrination in relation to teaching political knowledge requires the study of controversies and the critical discussion of these matters. When this is done, the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination is not fulfilled because controversial interpretations of political knowledge are taught, and political education assists students in developing political autonomy. In addition, the method and intention criterion of indoctrination is not met since controversial interpretations of political knowledge are discussed dialogically, and the aim of teaching is to foster student autonomy. However, the studied positions must differ sufficiently from each other; if the positions are too similar, it could be said that students are covertly inculcated with a conception that the analyzed positions share.

Avoiding the challenge of indoctrination in the context of teaching political participation requires self-reflective and controversial study of democratic political participation. In particular, controversial democracy theories should be explicated to students, and students should be educated to participate in a self-determined manner. Furthermore, theories of democracy should be discussed dialogically, and the aim of the teaching should be to assist students in participating politically based on their own judgment. In this case, the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination is not met because political education is controversial and because it fosters student political autonomy. Likewise, the method and intention criterion is not fulfilled because political education is dialogical and it aims to develop independent judgment. Thus, students are not inculcated with a style of political participation.

It is possible to avoid the challenge of having students inculcated with political attitudes and motivations. This requires that political attitudes and motivations are studied controversially, discussed thoroughly, and examined critically. For example, republican, liberal, and emancipatory accounts of political attitudes of motivations could be thematized. Moreover, the normative starting points of political education should be explained self-reflectively to students. In this case, the content and consequence criterion of indoctrination is not fulfilled because the contents of teaching are controversial and because teaching fosters student autonomy. Furthermore, the method and intention criterion is not met because critical discussions are emphasized and because the aim of education is to educate autonomous citizens.

### DISCUSSION

German theories of political education introduce several elements that contribute to scientific discussions about the possibilities of non-indoctrination democratic political education:

- The citizenship ideal should be conceptualized as self-reflective political autonomy, which includes consciousness of non-democratic citizenship ideals in addition to different interpretations of political autonomy.
- Political judgment should be taught in such a way that students learn to recognize the assumptions of universal political morality, controversial accounts of political judgment, and alternative interpretations of universalist norms.
- Universal political morality should be critically examined in political education.
- Controversial interpretations of general social scientific knowledge and particular aspects of the historical, social, and political reality should be articulated when political knowledge is taught.
- The theoretical premises of democratic political education and the controversial theories of democracy should be explicated.
- The controversial interpretations of political attitudes and motivations should be highlighted.
- Education should be dialogic and emphasize critical and open-ended discussions about social scientific knowledge and political issues.

Democratic political education that is critical of indoctrination can be practiced in two fundamental ways. The first strategy can be conceptualized by referring to the Beutelsbach consensus and the pluralist theories of political education. These demand that political education should not be based on certain political positions when it comes to how citizenship roles, political judgment, political knowledge, and democracy are understood. Thus, controversial positions should be accorded the same amount of attention during teaching. For example, when knowledge about democracy is learned, the theories of complex, liberal, participatory,

deliberative, social, and radical democracy should be studied to the same extent, and political education should not emphasize any of these. Moreover, if the state of democracy is criticized in the manner of internal criticism, conflicting interpretations of the constitution and the state of democracy should be learned equally thoroughly, and students should be asked to examine whether the society is democratic enough.

The second strategy of avoiding the problem of indoctrination in political education can be applied on the basis of the Frankfurt declaration and critical theories of political education. These openly admit that emancipatory political education is based on epistemological and social premises. This is not a problem if the premises are clearly explicated and political controversies are noticed in political education. For example, when the concepts of social and radical democracy are studied thoroughly, the differences between complex, liberal, deliberative, participatory, social, and radical democracy should be delineated at the beginning of the teaching unit. If the state of democracy in society is criticized internally, students should understand that such a critique is based on a critical interpretation of the constitution and that the norms of the constitution can be interpreted in another way, as well.

The developmental stage and competencies of students should be considered when controversial, dialogic, and self-reflective political education is planned. It is probable that the normative premises of political education can be explicated sophisticatedly to adult learners, but this is an unlikely option with young children. Therefore, elementary political education should be controversial, dialogic, and self-reflective, but in a simpler form than in adult education. Moreover, it is necessary to teach young students in such a way that they develop their ability to understand politics and political education. Thus, students should acquire social scientific knowledge that improves their ability to understand social scientific and political controversies in addition to the premises of democratic political education.

Although we have conceptualized political education in this article on the basis of German didactic theories, the challenges of indoctrination and the solutions we have formulated are also relevant outside Germany. According to Anglo-American theories of citizenship education, the task of education is to support the autonomy of students, and education should not be indoctrination. In addition, citizenship education is conceptualized as a democratic one. Thus, it is not neutral. Lastly, citizenship education not only transmits knowledge of the aspects of politics but also aims to foster critical thinking, encourage political participation, and develop attitudes and motivations. Therefore, the challenges and solutions we have identified in this article can be applied when Anglo-American theories of political education are examined critically or when new theories are developed.<sup>100</sup>

---

100. Bridges, ed., *Education, Autonomy, and Citizenship*; Doğanay, "A Curriculum Framework for Active Democratic Citizenship Education"; and Parker, "Citizenship Education in the United States."

In this article, we have demonstrated that democratic political education can be practiced in such a way that supports student autonomy and is not indoctrination, despite its normative premises. However, it is a different task to teach according to these guidelines. Based on our theoretical analysis, it is possible to construct educational policy ideas that support self-reflective, dialogic, and controversial political education. First, teachers should be trained in social sciences and the didactics of political education to improve their understanding of political education, politics, and society. Second, teacher education programs should foster political self-reflection and discuss how teachers' political orientations could affect their teaching. Third, high-quality teaching materials that consider the didactic principles of political education and the current state of social scientific research are required. Fourth, political education does not take place in a vacuum, which is why social and political conditions affect the ability of both students and teachers to be open to self-reflective, dialogic, and controversial teaching and learning. Therefore, social and educational policy is relevant for the challenge of indoctrination. Fifth, curricula should emphasize political education and include didactic principles that are critical of indoctrination. Sixth, critical analyses of symbolic and discursive power are required in political education, as these foster students' ability to examine their own processes of political socialization. Thus, self-government, interpretational power, ideology, and hegemony should be discussed in political education.

---

The research was funded by Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation. Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.