

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies

Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

Conference paper

Contribution to Workshop 2, Session 1: How to Become a Good (European) Citizen: Standards, Subjects and Models

“Citizenship: superseding a claustrophobic concept“
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The history of Western Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries has been dominated by territorial disputes and the drawing and re-drawing of frontiers. The initiation of the European integration process has led to the abolition of economic and to a certain extent political frontiers, but the re-organization of economic and political boundaries has overlooked linguistic and cultural boundaries that obviously cannot be dismantled or overcome at the same speed. Jean Monnet once said that if it had to be done again, he would have built Europe on culture and education. Since his time, there have been some attempts to focus more attention on the necessary educational basis for European Union¹.

These new organizational contexts have undoubtedly changed both our understanding of membership in the political community or communities as well as our perception of the 'others'. We are witnessing two idiosyncratic processes. On the one hand, globalization is changing the foundations of traditional citizenship by shifting the locus of political identities beyond the nation-state and 'displacing' citizens' loyalties at the supranational or sub-national level (Falk, 2000). On the other, the recovery of citizenship values within nation-states is seen as important for responding to the challenges posed by globalization and vital for the healthy functioning of our multicultural societies. Governments feel the urge more than ever to re-establish practices, standards and models of what it means to be 'a good citizen'. Although there might be differences among these models, the common denominator is the restoration of the integrative value of citizenship to foster 'solidarity' within the nation-state. There are problems with this approach in multicultural societies. If it is true that citizenship serves to unite members within a state, it is also true that citizens are united by the knowledge that they are members of 'an exclusive group'. Strong group solidarity will inevitably lead to 'social closure', which once again produces 'alienation and stigmatization of outsiders' (Turner, 1997: 7). If one believes that it is possible to overcome the problem of social cohesion in multicultural societies by strengthening citizenship values, then one will never supersede this impasse. It is anachronistic to talk about citizenship when referring to a multicultural, supranational and global society. Any effort to make a good (national) citizen will inevitably reinforce the distinctiveness of any national civic tradition and therefore contradict the attempt to create a

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See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union#Education_and_science

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multicultural, supranational and global framework in which subjects (rather than citizens) can identify themselves.

At the national level, the meaning of citizenship depends on the political and social context but is essentially played out in two highly related policy areas: domestic affairs and immigration. Domestic policies define who 'We/Us' are. The British case is emblematic, as new policies have been implemented to affirm identity and common values. These include the introduction of ID cards, ASBOs (Antisocial Behavior Orders) and the incorporation of citizenship lessons into schooling. Since 2002, citizenship education has become a statutory subject for children from 12 to 16 years of age and an inspected subject for those aged 5 to 11 (Heater, 2004: 370). Since January 2004, individuals who have become naturalized as British have to undergo a citizenship ceremony in which they give an oath or an affirmation of allegiances and a pledge of citizenship (IND, 2004). In an address to the Fabian Society in London in 2006, moreover, the Chancellor Gordon Brown proposed an annual day in which Britons would place the Union Jack in their gardens. He said that Britons could only respond effectively and confidently to globalization if they possessed a clear view of what being British means and how you define national identity for the modern world². It goes without saying that one of these challenges is immigration. He went on to argue that compulsory classes on core British values of democracy, freedom of speech and responsibility should be added to the national curriculum to improve the integration of immigrants (in particular Muslims) into society. He proposed that these lessons would encourage children to act in a morally responsible and community oriented manner, to become, in other words, a 'good citizen'. Such behavior would be typical of only a 'committed citizen', but how immigrants are expected to behave with loyalty when many are denied the benefits of full citizenship or indefinite leave to remain (permanent residence)? It seems therefore that they cannot become 'good citizens' until they formally gain full citizenship but to gain full citizenship they need to show that have understood very clearly the rules and the values of the community in which they want to become citizens.

Immigration policies attempt to define who 'They/Them' should be willing to become if they wish to live in a country other than their own. These policies include measures that apply to immigrants after their arrival in the host country and affect their chances of political, social and civil integration. Some of the measures relate directly to the sort of domestic policies noted above that aim to ensure that the immigrant develops strong, loyal ties to his/her new country. In Britain as in many other European countries, legal immigrants are granted some social rights and partial political rights (local). The only way to be equal to the citizens of the community in which they live is through 'naturalization'. Since 1 November 2005, those desiring to apply for citizenship must pass the 'Life in the UK test'. From 2 April 2007, this applies also to all applicants for indefinite leave to remain. The test is a series of 24 questions based on chapters 2, 3, 4 of Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to citizenship. Applicants are given 45 minutes to answer. The test questions the would-be citizens on history, law, society and manners in the UK. The aim of the test is to encourage people to take a greater interest in their community, to understand their roles, their rights and responsibilities and to help them to settle in better. All of this seems very laudable but if one looks at the content of the test, there is room for concern. In general, the content of the test has been criticized for being too difficult and as confusing for newcomers as it is for citizens born and bred in the UK. Questions include ones that ask about the order in the calendar in which the four UK national saints' days fall, the origin of Father Christmas and the year in which were all 18-year-olds were given the right to vote in the UK. When one looks at questions like these, one wonders how many people who were actually born in the UK and have gone through the education systems are able to answer them correctly. (Isn't there a gap in the knowledge of citizens within the society as well?). The 'Life in the United Kingdom' handbook also explains what to do if you spill someone's pint in the pub. According to the book, the answer is to offer to buy the person a new pint. This kind of 'trivia' is regarded as vital for the successful integration of an immigrant in the UK, but it is not exclusive to British culture. It should be understood instead as a universal value and an expression of good manners. The very assumption that British culture has an essence and that there is something called 'Britishness' is indeed problematic. Is there, after all, such an easy thing to define as 'Life in the UK'? While addressing the problem of security in January 2007, Gordon Brown again reiterated the need to build a stronger sense of national identity in order to strengthen Britain for the challenges of the future.

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4611682.stm

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Paradoxically, however, this implies not only the introduction of barriers to integration and the acceptance of immigration but also emphasizes the importance nationalist features while diminishing the value of multiculturalism.

A common rationale in domestic and immigration politics is about identity and cultural politics. In both areas, the debate is about how people perceive their nation, its culture, and themselves as part of that. The politics of immigration and domestic affairs reflect the 'constant battle' (Hing, 2004: 7) to define one's nation, who is part of it and who is not. The 'battle' is over how we define who 'We/Us' are and whom we define as potential 'We/Us'. These policies are vehicles for keeping out those who do not fit the image and welcoming those who do (Hing, 2004: 2). Restrictive policies are a form of 'nationalism'. Tichenor argues that there is an impulse amongst 'restrictionists' for 'inward looking nationalism that views a homogeneous population as the foundation of a strong state' (2002: 10), which accounts for the tendency to worry that immigrants will fragment the nation as well as dilute its culture. The restrictionists' argument can thus find an easy rescue from accusations of racism through the legitimate argument that they are defending the nation-state and its value. The focus of the debate should not be so much on the fact that the spread of economic globalization and all its consequences are 'de-territorializing' citizenship and diminishing the 'affective ties to the nation-state' (Nyers, 2004: 204) but rather on considering the inadequacy of employing citizenship as a political concept or category in this constantly mutating political space. In other words, it is not globalization that is eroding citizenship but citizenship and its intrinsic meaning that is becoming increasingly problematic because it is 'almost always realized in a highly unequal – indeed, exclusionary – fashion' (Nyers, 2004: 203), creating what Brysk and Shapir (2004) have called a 'citizenship gap'.

It seems that education either through schooling and/or handbooks is deemed fundamental for the transmission and acquisition of the civic virtues and cultural traits at the core of being a 'good citizen'. This has brought about the re-emergence of not only citizenship but also citizenship education. Many scholars have argued that citizenship is difficult to define, and this raises the question of how to teach something that eludes easy definition. According to Ichilov, several definitions have been used interchangeably 'to refer to institutionalised forms of political knowledge acquisition which take place within formal educational framework (such as schools and universities) and informal settings (such as youth movements)'. He argues that terms such as political education, civic education and citizenship education 'represent different intellectual traditions concerning the goals, nature and practices of political education, as well as adaptation to changing citizenship circumstances' (1998: 268). In Britain, the debate over citizenship in the national curriculum started in 1989 with the Education Reform Act (ERA), which aimed to transform the schools and the education administration system. Citizenship education was proposed as a non-compulsory cross-curricular theme of low status. In 1990, the National Curriculum for England and Wales agreed with the Commission on Citizenship that there is no accepted definition of citizenship (Morrell, 1990) and produced a political document entitled 'Education for Citizenship', which sought a consensus of support from politicians with different opinions on the matter. The document included a mix teaching about legal rights and duties, international declarations and charters, the importance of roles and responsibilities in family life, and the value of community activities. The concern was more about inculcating the obligations of 'good citizenship' rather than developing the knowledge, understanding, capacities and skills that would enable future citizens to enjoy the advantages of an open, participatory democratic society. Generally speaking, there was formal support for citizenship education but in practice there were (and still are) disagreements about the nature of citizenship and the model of the good citizen. For some, the good citizen was the law-abiding citizen who respected the other citizens while for others (even if only for a few) the good citizen was 'someone actively working on issues in the public domain' (Lister, 1998: 262). It is clear, however, that a citizenship education limited to the inculcation of traditional patriotism or conventional nationalist ideology is inadequate for our increasingly racially heterogeneous societies. According to Heater, the fragmentary and nihilist tendencies of the post-modern society threaten the common-ness on which the concept of citizenship is founded. A truly good citizen in the new reality 'is he who perceives this sense of multiple identity most lucidly and who strives most ardently in his public life to achieve the closest concordance possible between the policies and goals of the several civic levels of which he is a member' (1990: 326). If citizenship education is needed more than ever to provide a sense of purpose, solidarity and guidance in a fragmented and rapidly changing world (Pratte, 1988), it should promote global (rather than just European) awareness and the realization that circumstances affecting our immediate moral and physical

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well-being are located on the trans-national arena as well. Essentially, it should not just inculcate the obligations of 'good citizenship' but develop the knowledge, understanding and capacities that will enable future citizens/legal subjects to enjoy the advantages of an open and participatory democratic society. As mentioned above, since August 2002, there have been changes in the English National Curriculum for citizenship education. First, citizenship has become a compulsory subject. Second, and most important, the specific aim is to give students the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable them to participate in society as active citizens and to be informed, critical, responsible and aware of their duties and rights.

A further complication, nevertheless, is to develop these changes coherently with citizenship education at the European and global level (Byram, 1996). Education for European citizenship is certainly a growing area though at present still very fragmented. Its advocates include teachers of history and foreign language who see multilingual ability as a desirable feature of the European citizen. Others stress human rights and democracy. As for national citizenship education, however, 'good teaching practice is difficult to find' and raises its own particular difficulties (Heater, 1992: 54). During the 1970s a number of politicians in Europe showed that they had grasped Monnet's idea to build Europe also on culture and education. In 1976, the European Council adopted an action programme for education³. One of its key aims was to give school syllabuses a 'European Community' dimension. Six years later, a Community booklet expressed the link between education and European unity unequivocally (European Communities, 1982: 6). At school, the evocation of the European idea in text books, the study of contemporary European history, the learning of foreign languages and visits abroad while at the school or as a student are all factors that determine the future attitude of the adult citizen towards the Community and the European idea. The question is why European citizenship education creates further problems. First, we should try to understand what European citizenship means. The fact that it relates exclusively to the European Community could create problems for those teachers who are keen on teaching a general European awareness and therefore reluctant to limit the concept of 'Europe' to the legal boundaries of the EU. This could equally create limits in fostering a sense of European identity because Europe would be understood in the limited terms of the European Community.

Would it be inadequate and feasible to teach citizenship just as a status and as rights without reference to the issue of identity and loyalty? In an enlightening article entitled 'Education for European Citizenship', Heater (1992) suggests three main learning objectives that incorporate certain principles necessary for any definition of European citizenship: (1) knowledge, (2) self-understanding and (3) skills. Knowledge (1) should include factual information such as European geography and history and the workings of the major institutions. The appreciation of the pros and cons of tighter integration should also be part of knowledge, and pupils should know that 'the very essence of citizenship lies in the potential for individual action' (1992: 63). Young people should therefore learn about the range of civic rights and duties. Self-understanding (2), which is considered essential for the development of attitudes, should involve the issues of identity and values. First, pupils 'must learn to feel that they are both European and national citizens simultaneously' and whether 'their perceptions of Europe are tinged with feelings of apathy or curiosity, admiration or xenophobia' (1992: 63). This includes the respect for others. Moreover, he suggests 'young people must learn respect for abstract values' such as freedom and rights (1992: 63). Finally, the education for citizenship requires the same kind of skills (3) as any other form of political education. These skills should include intellect, particularly 'the ability to detect partiality and make judgments concerning alternative course of action', and communication, in that citizens must be able to communicate orally, in writing and through action. Heater goes on to say that pupils must understand the complexity of citizenship. Alongside the classical Marshallian subdivision of the civil, political and social aspects of citizenship, there are two further elements that are 'less tangible' (1992: 64). One is civic virtue, which has to do with being a 'good' citizen, and the other is political identity. In relation to these two elements, Heater adopts a rather radical approach towards citizenship by suggesting that 'no definition of citizenship can be complete without civic virtue'. This leads to a restrictive understanding of (civic) values because, for example, expressions of 'good' manners and the fulfilment of such simple moral obligations of this sort are seen only in the context of the state and fellow citizens but what about the 'others' who are not citizens? Political identity is presented as essential for civic virtue because 'social altruism, community responsibility, political loyalty cannot flourish in an identity vacuum' (Heater,

³ Official Journal C038, 19/02/1976, Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education, meeting within the Council, of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education..

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1992: 64).

Yet, is it true that I need to feel British, to behave in a way beneficial to Britain and that I must feel European if I am to be a true European citizen? Perhaps not! The process of self-identification and belonging is much more lengthy and complex than the formal acquisition of citizenship entails. Depending on specific circumstances, one can obtain citizenship in a few years, a few months or just a few weeks. This is certainly not the case for identity formation. Similarly, the learning objective of 'knowledge' to which Heater refers can be realized more quickly than that of 'self-understanding'. This is the major gap between citizenship and identity. Citizenship education, therefore, should diverge from the objective of teaching pupils how to 'feel' that they are national or European citizens. After all, to what extent is it fundamental that pupils in a multicultural Europe develop a sense of dual citizenship? Being a 'citizen' of a political community is an increasingly subjective experience, with people who share the same physical, social, educational and political space perceiving the concept in different ways. This is not so much about being a citizen but has to do more with the fact that people differ from one another because of their family background, origins, religion and so forth. For some people, for example, citizenship is interchangeable with both nationality and his/her national identity. This is usually the case for those who can claim their citizenship through both *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* (I am British because my parents are British and because I was born in Britain). There are nevertheless variations to this absolute model of citizenship that formally give citizenship the same normative strength but in practice make the relationship between citizenship and identity less interchangeable. When citizenship is formally granted, in other words, all citizens are equal in terms of their rights and duties. In practice, however, differences in self-understanding and identification can linger over longer periods of time.

Education, either through schooling or handbooks is a very powerful tool that should serve merely educational rather than political purposes. The re-formulation of citizenship education should take into consideration that citizenship and its acquisition cannot be conflated with identity or identification. Making education an active vehicle for the integration of immigrants invites accusations that the state is imposing a national and /or European culture on others that could eventually lead to assimilation. With this I do not want to underestimate the importance, for instance, of teaching European history and values but this should be extended to the teaching of world history and leave space for adaptability depending on contexts and circumstances. What sense would it make, for example, to teach exclusively Italian and European history in a school in Milan where, say, sixty per cent of the pupils are Chinese or otherwise non-European? To believe that this will enhance their sense of identification with Europe is a chimera, but to believe that this will enhance their frustration is very realistic. Citizenship education should be cross-curricular and ought to focus on the teaching of 'universal' civic virtues and values. The major effort not only for educators but also for the political 'elite' is to define the virtues and values that are at the centre of every democratic civilization not merely on the basis of Western culture and tradition but also on the basis of others. One might wonder if it is time then to start thinking beyond 'citizenship' and 'citizenship education' and to consider conceptually and normatively other models and practices that would equally manage the access of individuals to resources in society. In multicultural political communities, talking of 'subjecthood' rather than citizenship would certainly be more comprehensive (Dell'Olio, 2005). A 'good' citizen and/or subject would be after all the one who is able and willing to adapt and integrate in any community in which he or she is (or decides to be) a part of.

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