

Educating Tomorrow's Citizens: What Role Can Schools Play?

Educar a los ciudadanos del mañana: ¿qué rol pueden jugar las escuelas?

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Abstract: Both citizenship and citizenship education have been transformed over the past 20 years as policymakers, academics and citizens have sought to grapple with the implications of globalisation, increased migration, and new information and communication technologies. Education has been central to this response, and this article outlines why schools play such an important role in preparing children and young people to become citizens. The article then describes some of the latest trends in Europe towards teaching the next generation about citizenship, and concludes by highlighting some of the issues that will require leadership from head teachers in the coming years.

Keywords: citizenship; citizenship education; equality.

Resumen: Tanto la ciudadanía como la educación para la ciudadanía se han visto transformadas en los últimos 20 años como resultado de la respuesta de legisladores, académicos y ciudadanos a las consecuencias de la globalización, el aumento de las migraciones y las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. La educación ha sido central en esta respuesta y este artículo describe por qué las escuelas juegan un papel tan importante en la preparación de los niños y jóvenes para convertirse en ciudadanos. A continuación el artículo describe algunas de las últimas tendencias en Europa hacia la enseñanza de la próxima generación de ciudadanos y concluye poniendo de relieve algunas de las cuestiones que requerirán el liderazgo de los directores escolares en los próximos años.

Palabras clave: ciudadanía; educación para la ciudadanía; igualdad.

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Both citizenship and citizenship education have been transformed over the past 20 years. Whereas schools used to prepare students for living and working in a nation-state, the physical and educational borders of nation-states have been blurred by globalisation, European integration, new information and communication technologies (ICT), and the huge increase in opportunities for travel and migration. These still-evolving phenomena present many exciting new opportunities, but they also present some challenges for schools in their efforts to prepare children and young people for their roles as citizens. In light of this, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, this article provides an overview of the ways in which schools shape the civic behaviours, identities, skills and values of young people. Second, having established the importance of schools in citizenship-formation, the paper then describes some of the latest policy trends towards teaching young people about citizenship. To conclude, the article points to some of the issues that will require leadership from head teachers in the coming years.

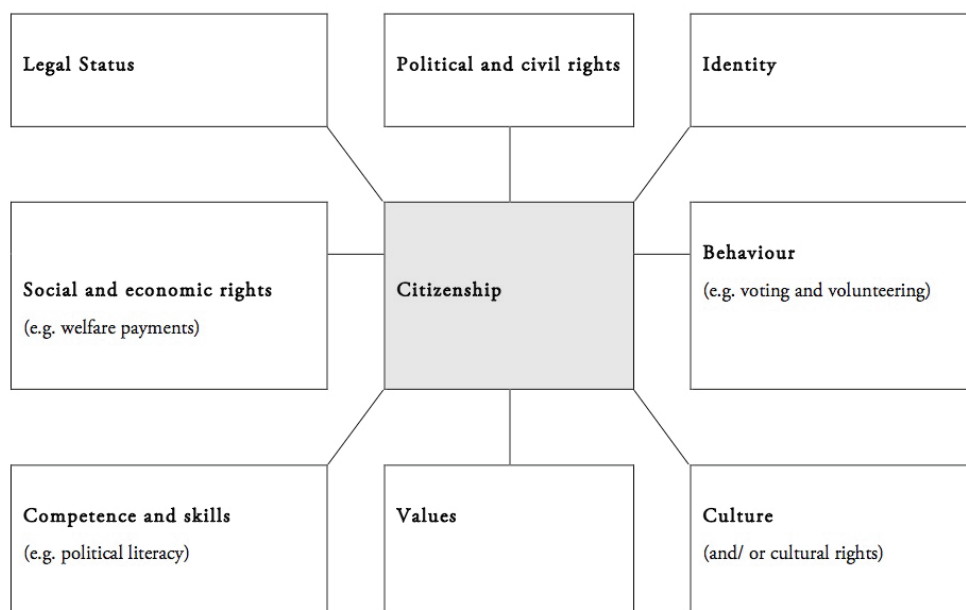
1. What is citizenship and what role do schools have in citizenship-formation?

Although the notion of citizenship has been traced back to Ancient Greece (see Heater, 2004), the concept of citizenship is still difficult to pin down as «citizenship is many things to many people» (Joppke, 2007, p. 37). At its core, citizenship can be thought of as «a set of social practices which define the nature of social membership» (Turner, 1993, p. 4). In other words, it is a set of agreed conventions that are used to indicate who is allowed to become a member of the socio-political community (and, by extension, who is *not* allowed to). These social practices are defined not just in laws and through rights (although this is a crucial element), but also through the development of civic norms, political identities, and expected behavioural practices. Citizenship thus has multiple dimensions, and it can encompass everything from a legal status (e.g. rights and/or a passport) to a set of behaviours (e.g. voting and/or volunteering), entitlements (e.g. social welfare payments), and expectations (e.g. civic norms about paying taxes) (see Figure 1).

It is important to note that the rules and conventions of citizenship are not universal or set in stone. Instead, the conventions that are used to decide citizenship change over time, across countries, and sometimes even within countries. Furthermore, citizens' values, attitudes and behaviours are *learned* not inherited, and schools play an important role in informing children and young people about the formal and informal rules of citizenship, and in preparing them for their role as citizens. This civic role was first granted to schools in the 18th and 19th centuries, when newly-emerging nation-states realised that they could use schools to imbue the younger generations with a sense of common identity and

shared future, at the same time as providing training for civic life and economic productivity (Green, 1990; Heater, 2004). Since then, citizenship and schooling have been closely intertwined and schools have been viewed as a vehicle for fixing the problems that have been identified in the local community or society as a whole (Gorard, 2010).

Figure 1: Mapping the different dimensions of Citizenship



2. All education = a lesson in citizenship

Achieving these goals is a whole school process, and not something that can be ascribed to one specific curriculum intervention or educational activity. Indeed, one could argue that *all* education contributes to the construction of citizenship and that schools play a vital role in promoting citizenship simply by providing quality education to their students. Research has repeatedly shown that there is a strong relationship between education and civic engagement, and that citizens with higher levels of education are more likely to vote, to volunteer, and to support important civic values such as tolerance and respect for democracy. According to cognitive engagement theory, the underlying reason for this is that the education process provides children and young people with the literacy and cognitive skills to process social and political information, to make informed choices, and to exercise these choices in an effective manner (for example, by deciding to vote or volunteer) (Niemi, Junn, 2005; Whiteley, 2005).

The importance of education also extends beyond its impact on individual citizens and has a wider social impact. In particular, schools can potentially help to mediate the impact of income and other social inequalities by providing high quality education to all, and helping to ensure that all children and young people have the knowledge and skills that they require to become informed and effective citizens. By the same token, schools (and the structure of school systems more broadly) can also *exacerbate* citizenship inequalities if they privilege certain groups over others and provide some students with more educational resources than others. For example, ethnographic studies of classrooms in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s showed that students were offered different educational opportunities depending on their race, and that this differential treatment contributed to the low academic achievement rates of students of black origin (African, Caribbean, or mixed race) (Gilborn, 1997). (In recent years, attention has shifted to the under-achievement of white working class boys in England, who, it is feared, are now being «left behind» by current policy and practice (Ofsted, 2013, p. 24). In other words, because educational qualifications are such a strong predictor of civic engagement during adulthood, inequalities in education access and outcomes can have lifelong implications for citizens' behaviours, and attitudes and can help to perpetuate social structures and divisions.

3. Citizenship learning and the curriculum

In addition to providing lifelong civic resources through general education, schools play a more direct or explicit role when citizenship is taught as part of the curriculum. There are lots of different names given to the subject area(s) that are most explicitly linked to learning about citizenship, including Citizenship, Civics, Social Studies, or Political education. However, citizenship education can also be integrated with other subjects (such as history, geography, religious education, or philosophy) and/ or viewed as a cross-curricular theme rather than a discrete subject in the timetable (see Eurydice, 2012). Through these different curriculum areas, schools impart information and cultivate skills that can be more explicitly linked to citizenship activities. For example, students may learn about the current electoral system in a Citizenship Education class, while their history classes might tell them about how the political system came into being. But regardless of what it is called, or how it is delivered in the curriculum, formal learning about citizenship has a positive impact on civic efficacy, participation and knowledge (Niemi, Junn, 2005; Keating *et al.*, 2010; Kahne *et al.*, 2013).

4. Citizenship learning through the hidden curriculum

That said, it is not just the formal curriculum that is important; the informal or hidden curriculum also help to teach students what civic norms, values, and behaviours are expected of them. For example, students who experience an open climate at school are more likely to report trust, tolerance, and to demonstrate critical thinking. An open school climate is one in which students feel able to openly investigate issues and to discuss controversial issues with their teachers and peers (Flanagan *et al.*, 2007). Debating issues in a safe and open environment can thus help students to develop key skills and dispositions that have been associated with citizenship and democracy.

In addition, teachers and school leaders act as role models, leading by example not just through their teaching of subject matter, but also in the ways in which they moderate student discussions in classrooms, and/ or allow students to participate in school decision-making. These actions «convey messages about social inclusion, about who belongs and whose opinions count, and how members of society should treat one another» (Flanagan, 2013, p. 83). On the flip side, schools also provide implicit but powerful lessons about (in)equality and institutional trust when they fail to enforce school rules equally, or when student views are ignored or excluded from school decision-making.

5. Helping students put citizenship in to practice

Finally, schools offer children and young people some of their first opportunities to participate in their communities and to put their citizenship skills into practice. These opportunities take many forms, such as:

- voluntary extra-curricular activities such as Model United Nations
- raising money for charities
- community projects that allow students to resolve local issues, or
- Student Councils and other opportunities for students to take part in school decision-making (see Keating *et al.*, 2009; Audsley *et al.*, 2013).

These types of activities provide students with a different type of experiential learning, and an opportunity to acquire new skills and new social and civic networks. Moreover, practical learning can be just as important as formal learning in the classroom. A study by Hart *et al.* (2007) in the United States found that civic participation in adolescence is a strong predictor of volunteering and voting in adulthood, regardless of whether the activities are voluntary or compulsory. (While there is a widespread belief that putting citizenship into practice during adolescence is beneficial, there is an on-going debate about whether participation

in these types of activities should be mandatory or voluntary for secondary school students).

6. New policies and practices in citizenship education – a Pan-European perspective

In short, schools can play a vital role in preparing the next generation for citizenship. Awareness of its importance has prompted an explosion of interest in citizenship teaching over the past 20 years. As policymakers and academics have tried to grapple with the social and political changes taking place across the globe, a wide range of new theories, policies and educational initiatives have been introduced across Europe, and there have been lots of curricular reforms, textbook changes, and opportunities for teacher development. These policy initiatives are not just taking place at the national level (see Eurydice, 2012), but also at the European level. The Council of Europe has a long-running and multi-strand programme to promote and support education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDCHR; see <http://tinyurl.com/COEresources>). Within the EU, recent policy initiatives have focused in particular on defining the relationship between education and citizenship (CoM of Education, 2004), developing measures and indicators of active citizenship and civic competence (Hoskins, 2009; Hoskins, Mascherini, 2009), and defining the core competences of civic education (as part of the *European Framework for Key Competences*; see European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2006).

These various academic and policy activities have transformed how we think citizenship should (ideally) be taught in schools. Until relatively recently, education policies and school practices usually reflected the *civic education model*. This approach tended to be content-heavy, reliant on didactic pedagogic methods, and focused on increasing civic knowledge rather than on encouraging active participation or political literacy skills (Kerr, 1999). The knowledge that students were expected to acquire was largely related to national institutions, and national myths and heroes (Keating, 2014). The nation-centric simultaneously promoted patriotism and loyalty to the nation, often at the expense of citizens of other countries (and indeed, minorities within the country).

The recent debates have, however, meant this model has now been replaced by the notion of *citizenship education* or what is referred to in some circles as *education for democratic citizenship*. This is not just a change of terminology; it is quite a different way of teaching about citizenship and thinking about how young citizens are prepared for civic life. In this new educational model, there is typically:

- Less emphasis on rote learning, and more emphasis on active learning and critical thinking
- More emphasis on active participation by individual citizens (through voting, volunteering, in school and local policy decisions (e.g. in school councils)), and
- Less emphasis on testing knowledge, and more emphasis on cultivating skills and competences.

The skills or competences that this approach seeks to promote have also been revised, and policies in this vein often suggest that schools should aim to develop student competences such as political literacy, critical thinking, and conflict-free problem solving (see Table 1). More recently, it has been suggested that students also need to develop skills in financial literacy and digital citizenship. These additions to the policy agenda emerged in response to the global financial crisis after 2008 and the rapid development of information and communication technologies. As recent additions to the policy agenda, these ideas have yet been incorporated into policy and practice in all countries.

The core values have also changed. Instead of loyalty to the nation-state, for example, contemporary citizenship education policies tend to emphasise the importance of values such as tolerance, equality, and respect for democracy and human rights (see Table 1 and Keating, 2014). These are, for the most part, universal and civic values that transcend the nation-state and that reflect the increasingly global nature of political and economic systems, as well as the increasing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of communities.

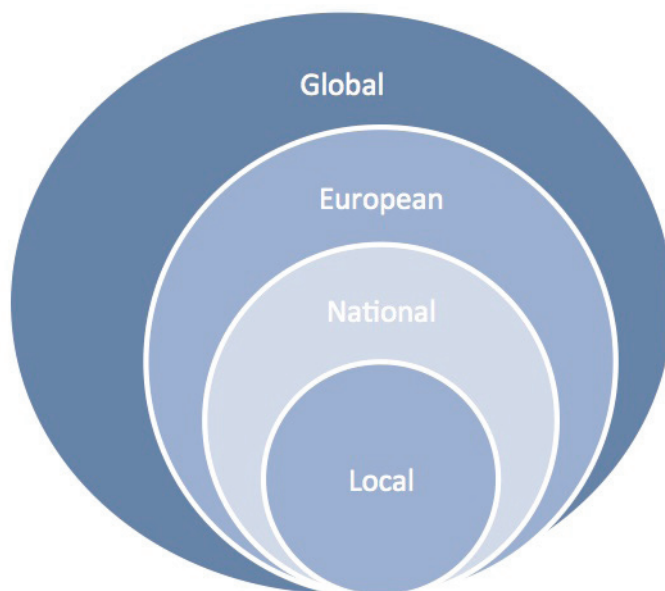
Table 1: The core dimensions of the contemporary citizenship education model – current trends in policy and practice

Key Competences/ Skills	Key Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political literacy • Critical thinking • Conflict-free problem solving • Public discourse and communication • Intercultural communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for democracy and human rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance and equality • Solidarity and interdependence • Belief in the importance of participating in one's community/ communities

Finally, and relatedly, the citizenship education model emphasises that schools are no longer simply producing *national* citizens, they should also be preparing students for global, regional, and local citizenship and for citizenship in a diverse world. As such, contemporary citizenship education policies tend to emphasise that citizens have multiple identities and that citizenship can be enacted at local, national, European and global levels. These different levels of

citizenship are not mutually exclusive, but rather are nested – over-lapping with one another and (ideally) complementing one another (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Nested citizenship



This does not mean, however, that contemporary policies no longer try to cultivate a sense of national identity among children and young people. In fact, in many ways, promoting national identity is still seen to be an important element of citizenship education. However, patriotism and national identity have been redefined for the global context, and these concepts are now more inclusive than they were. For example, citizenship education policies now promote tolerance, respect for diversity, and open-ness to other cultures; as noted above, these values and dispositions reflect the contemporary demands of citizenship in a world with increasingly fuzzy borders and increasingly diverse societies. Furthermore, these skills are also in demand in the new global economy, and thus promoting these skills and dispositions can also have the additional benefit of helping countries to strengthen the *national* economy. As a result, one could argue that becoming more global and/ or European is a patriotic act, as by developing these dispositions young people can help their country compete in the global market place.

This is one of the many contradictions of contemporary citizenship, and one which has not yet been fully addressed by academics or policymakers. Moreover, I do not wish to give the impression that nationalism has entirely disappeared from curricula and textbooks in all countries, and/ or that all countries have fully

adopted an inclusive model of citizenship and citizenship education. The ideal model of citizenship education described above is still a relatively recent development, and many countries are still reforming their policies and trying to find ways to adapt to the new demands of citizenship and the new citizenship education policies that are emerging. Moreover, even though national policies across Europe are becoming more accepting of multiple identities and of different types of diversity, nation-states are still finding ways to exclude certain groups. Philipou (2009), for example, illustrates how textbooks in the Republic of Cyprus have embraced European citizenship and have simultaneously used the concept to accept multiple citizenships and to reinforce the social, political and cultural divisions between them and their Turkish neighbours.

7. Final comments and future challenges

This article has summarised some of the key policy developments that have taken place in citizenship teaching over the past 20 years, but citizenship is a concept that is not only highly complex, it is also something that continues to evolve. The challenges that schools and young citizens face will thus continue to change, and policies and teacher practice will have to continue to adapt. In the next few years, some of the issues that are likely to be most pressing in European states are:

- Promoting political participation, especially voting
- Ensuring equality and inclusion
- Raising awareness of digital citizenship and security, and
- Increasing financial (and economic) literacy.

First, the decline in youth voting continues to cause concern. The decline is not universal, and it has been suggested in some quarters that young people are replacing traditional forms of political participation (such as voting) with alternative forms of political engagement (such as online political activities). However, for many Western developed countries, increasing youth turnout in elections is going to remain a priority, as the health of democratic and electoral institutions is dependent on the participation of all those they seek to represent and not just older generations (Sloam, 2012, p. 12). Education about the mechanisms and importance of voting is one strategy that may help increase turnout, and citizenship education in schools has a clear role to play here.

Second, equality and inclusion are going to remain high on the political agenda across Europe, particularly while unemployment remains so high. Schools also have a vital role to play here, and it will be particularly important for schools to ensure that all young people have equal access to high quality education (and citizenship education in particular) and thus provide young people

with the knowledge and skills that they require to make informed choices about their citizenship.

Third, the rapid pace of developments in ICT is likely to continue apace, and with that, the importance of digital citizenship and security will increase. Digital citizenship provides new opportunities for civic and political engagement, particularly through social media and other interactive technologies. However, these developments also create new risks, particularly about privacy and security. Children and young people often adapt to these technologies more rapidly than their parents or their teachers, but schools can help their students to critically assess issues such as the implications of privacy in an online world or the norms of behavior in online debates and forums.

Finally, the importance of increasing financial literacy among young people is going to remain on the European policy agenda as long as countries are dealing with the fall out of the 2008 global banking crisis and the subsequent the Euro crisis. Thus far, some countries have focused on teaching children and young people about the implications of personal debt and how to manage their money. Hopefully, however, the scope of these policies will expand to include education about how financial institutions work and how economies and markets function. Understanding the political economy is just as important for effective citizenship as understanding one's personal economic situation.

Of course, schools are not the only site in which children and young people learn civic values and attitudes – families, the media, and government institutions must also play their part. However, this article has sought to show that citizenship and schooling are closely intertwined, and that the actions of schools have implications not just for individual students but also for the wider society. Without due care, the impact can be negative rather than positive. To avoid this, careful attention to the school curriculum and the school culture is required, as citizenship learning is a whole school activity, and not just the responsibility of individual teachers. In this task, support from senior leaders is crucial, as recent experience from schools in England has shown that without this support, citizenship education can become marginalised in the school curriculum and from young people's learning experiences (see Keating *et al.*, 2009). By contrast, when head teachers provide leadership and support, they help to ensure that citizenship learning is at the heart of school policy and practice, and by extension, that students are adequately prepared for the current and future demands of citizenship, whatever they may be.

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