V. THEMES

1. CITIZENSHIP

[Children] tend to be either ignored as citizens or regarded in an adult-centric fashion as citizens of the future rather than of the present.

Brian Howe

The multiple dimensions of contemporary citizenship

In a strictly legal sense, a citizen is the inhabitant of a state where laws protect people's civic and political rights and where people have reciprocal duties to that state: to obey the laws of the country, to contribute to common expenses and to defend the country if attacked. Citizenship differs from nationality or ethnic identification; in this context these two latter terms are synonymous with a grouping based on a cultural and language community. Most European states are composed of several nationalities. However, people of the same nationality may live in neighbouring states. While the state is a **political** and **geopolitical** entity, the nation is a **cultural** and/or an **ethnic** entity. Citizenship is related to a state and is not dependent on nationality.

Today **'**citizenship' goes beyond a simple legal relationship between people and the state. It is understood to have not only a legal dimension, referring to civic and political rights and duties, but also a psychological and social dimension. Being a citizen is part of one's identity. You care for your community because you are part of it, and you expect others to care for it and, with you, to seek the common good of the whole community.

In this broader sense, citizenship is not merely a process of socialisation. It involves feelings of identity, belonging, inclusion, participation and social commitment. As part of the community, the citizen can influence it, participate in its development and contribute to its well-being. Thus the citizen is both a 'receiver' of rights and duties and also an 'actor' who participates within a group of which she or he feels a part. Citizens in this sense are equal in dignity.

QUESTION: *Besides voting in elections, what forms of involvement or participation are possible for ordinary citizens? How can they be encouraged to participate?*

Historical and contemporary conceptions of citizenship

The historical development of the idea of citizenship helps to explain these multiple dimensions of citizenship.

One of the earliest concept of citizenship can be traced back to ancient Greek city-states, where 'citizens' were those who had a legal right to participate in the affairs of the state. However, only a small percentage of the population were citizens: slaves and women were mere subjects and foreigners were excluded altogether. For those free men who did have the privileged status of being citizens, 'civic virtue' or being a 'good' citizen was an important value. This tradition led to an emphasis on the *duties* that citizenship imposed on citizens.

The association of citizenship with national identity arose in nineteenth century history, when nation states were emerging all over Europe and the legal status of a 'citizen' was often tied to a nation state, even if several ethnicities lived within its territory. The link between citizenship and patriotism became stronger during this period.

The liberal view of citizenship, which originated with the French Revolution, emphasized the importance of *rights* for all citizens and a commitment to a constitution rather than an ethnicity. As more people became entitled to vote, justice and political rights also became a reality for an increasing number of people.

In the twentieth century, the supporters of '**social citizenship**' went further to recognize that citizens ought to be able to expect civil and political rights from the state. The rise of the welfare state in the last century owed a great deal to thinkers who argued that the rights of citizens ought to include their livelihood and working conditions.

Citizenship today has various meanings which are interrelated and complementary. '**Active Citizenship**' implies working towards the betterment of one's community through economic participation, public service, volunteer work and other such efforts to improve life for all members of the community.

'**European citizenship**' is understood in many different ways. The Maastricht Treaty of the European Union laid down the concept that citizens of states belonging to the European Union (EU) increasingly have some rights from and duties to the Union as a whole, as well as to their own states. Such rights granted to EU citizens include freedom of movement and the right of residence within the territory of the Member States, and the right to vote and stand as a candidate at elections for the European Parliament. However, a 'European society' cannot be said to exist today in the same way as the Greek or Czech society. European citizenship today lies somewhere between a tangible reality and a distant ideal. "The ideal understanding of European citizenship would be based on the values of Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice."[1] European citizenship provides a significant sense of belonging to multiple value systems: to human rights, to a nationality, to an ethnicity, to a local community, to a family, to an ideological group and so on. This multiple and dynamic system of belongings involved in European citizenship is not in confrontation with any national identity, but is inclusive and works on the local level.

'**Global citizenship**' is a recent concept that emerged from the idea that everyone is a citizen of the globe. In a legal sense, however, there is no such thing as a global citizen. "Global Citizenship is about understanding the need to tackle injustice and inequality, and having the desire and ability to work actively to do so. It is about valuing the Earth as precious and unique, and safeguarding the future for those coming after us. Global Citizenship lives well together with any other understanding of citizenships; it is a way of thinking and a commitment to make a difference."[2]

As the terms 'citizen' or 'citizenship' have many interpretations, and as nation-state is not necessarily a relevant concept in a multicultural Europe, the Council of Europe uses the term 'citizen' as a 'person co-existing in a society'. Instead of 'nation state', the word 'community' best describes the local, regional and international environment in which an individual lives.

QUESTION: *What is your personal understanding of citizenship? What should the criteria be for citizenship in an increasingly mobile and multicultural world? Who in your society should not be entitled to citizenship rights?*

Today, most people's notion of citizenship includes elements of all these concepts, although in different proportions. Some people will emphasize the 'duties' elements of citizenship, while others may give more importance to 'rights'. For some, patriotism has key importance and a relation to one single state, while some people hold a broader understanding of what citizenship means.

Children as citizens

The law of many countries once considered children to be their parents' property. Although the *patria potestas* that gave a father every right – including that of life and death – over his children is long gone, remnants of this traditional power remain in some countries. The traditional understanding is that children are 'non-citizens' or 'pre-citizens' in a society. While the Convention on the Right of the Child recognizes parents' rights to their children's custody, education and representation (Articles 5 and 18), it also introduces the principle of the child's best interest, which establishes limits to parental rights in the interest of their children (Article 3).

According to Brian Howe, a Canadian children's rights advocate, although children are legally citizens by birth or naturalization, they are often neither recognized nor treated as citizens. "They tend to be either ignored as citizens or regarded in an adult-centric fashion as citizens of the future rather than of the present."[3] Howe identifies two main reasons for this attitude: children's economic dependency and psychological immaturity. He points out that other economically dependent groups such as stay-at-home parents, retired people, university students or adults with disabilities are not denied their citizenship. He concludes that children have a right to citizenship as "citizenship is about inclusion, not economic independence".

QUESTION: *Are children really citizens? Or are they just 'pre-citizens' or citizens-to-be?*

Children indeed lack the cognitive development, maturity and self-control of adults. However development is an ongoing, lifelong process, and the cognitive development of children increases when they are treated with respect and provided with age-appropriate opportunities for their autonomy and participation as citizens.

According to national law and to the UDHR, children have rights and responsibilities similar to those of adults. But they also have differentiated citizenship: the CRC recognizes children's need for specific *protection* (e.g. from abuse, neglect, economic and sexual exploitation), *provision* (e.g. of basic needs such as health care, social security or to a quality standard of living, as well as the right to a name, identity and nationality) and to *participation* in all decisions affecting them. These rights are to be exercised in accordance with the **evolving capacities** of the child, as are the child's responsibilities as a citizen. Children, like adults, must respect the rights of others and obey the law, but their level of responsibility and of legal accountability is age-differentiated. For the application of this principle to the right to participate, see the discussion on *Theme 10, Participation* below, p. 262.

QUESTION: *What forms of citizen participation are possible and appropriate for children?*

Challenges for citizenship

In today's Europe there are several social phenomena that challenge the traditional model of citizenship. In some places ethnic conflicts and flourishing nationalism block the formation of new forms of citizenship. Furthermore the high levels of contemporary migration challenge prevailing notions of citizenship. The emergence of new forms of formerly suppressed collective identities by some ethnic minorities, demands for increasing personal autonomy, and new forms of equality make understanding citizenship difficult. The weakening of social cohesion and solidarity among people and growing mistrust of traditional political institutions require continuous rethinking and make education of democratic citizenship relevant.

Education for democratic citizenship

Education for democratic citizenship refers to an educational process that seeks to ensure that children and young people become active and responsible citizens who are able and ready to contribute to the well-being of the society in which they live. The three aims of education for democratic citizenship are 1) to provide political literacy: knowledge of political and civic institutions and social problems; 2) to develop needed skills such as critical thinking, cooperation and active listening; and 3) to promote values and attitudes that lead to active participation and engagement in community life. This complex approach differentiates education for democratic citizenship from the traditional civic or citizenship education, which concentrates on providing knowledge and focuses on loyalty and responsibilities.

Since 1997, the Council of Europe has been running a project on Education for Democratic Citizenship. It produces analyses and policy guidelines on the issue and collects teaching materials and examples of good practise. In 2002 The Committee of Ministers of the Council adopted a recommendation which calls upon governments to make education for democratic citizenship a priority objective of their educational policy making reforms.[4]

Particular attention is now being paid to promoting the participation of children by creating opportunities for children to participate in their own educational process. The Council of Europe has launched a programme for the promotion of children's rights and the protection of children from violence called 'Building a Europe for and with Children' for 2006-2008.

The best way to educate children in active citizenship is to provide them with practical possibilities to experience active participation in their direct environment. They can learn about their rights and responsibilities and enjoy the competency of contributing to decisions at home, at school, in children's clubs and in local organisations. In these roles they also experience multiple belonging and the complex and dynamic nature of citizenship.

Relevant human rights instruments

Council of Europe

The Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec (2002)12 on education for democratic citizenship states that "Education for democratic citizenship is fundamental to the Council of Europe's primary task of promoting a free, tolerant and just society". The Council of Europe regards Europe's rich cultural diversity as a valuable asset that is based on a common understanding of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. The Council understands citizenship in the broadest terms: "A citizen can be described as 'a person co-existing in a society'.... but as the Nation State is no longer the sole focus of authority, there has been the need to develop a more holistic view of the concept." Citizenship "involves issues relating to rights and duties, but also ideas of equality, diversity and social justice.... It must also include the range of actions exercised by an individual that impact on the life of the community (local, national, regional and international)..."[5]

Several articles of the European Convention on Human Rights guarantee rights related to the exercise of effective citizenship: rights to physical liberty and security (Article 5), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9), freedom of expression (Article 10), the freedom of peaceful assembly and association (Article 11) or the right to education (Article 2 of Protocol No1). The European Cultural Convention states in Article 1 that a member state "shall take appropriate measures to safeguard and to encourage the development of its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe".

United Nations

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** does not actually use the word 'citizen' or 'citizenship' but does refer to a person's 'nationality.' In Article 15 it states that "Everyone has the right to a nationality" and that one's nationality may not arbitrarily be taken away. It also specifies that everyone has the right to change nationality.

In Article 29 the Universal Declaration also recognizes that the right to citizenship also involves responsibilities and recognizes that citizenship is not just a legal status but also has psychological and social value:

Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** also addresses nationality, guaranteeing in Article 7 the child's right to acquire a nationality, and protection to avoid being stateless. In Article 8 it also recognizes the importance of nationality to identity, calling on governments "to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality".

The understanding of citizenship in the Children's Convention goes well beyond the strictly legal. It includes many rights guaranteed to adults in earlier human rights instruments, such as the **European Convention** and the two **Covenants**. However, the Children's Convention emphasizes that not only adults but also children have the right to participate in all aspects of the life of the community as an essential aspect of their citizenship:

- Article 9: to participate in proceedings regarding the child's guardianship or custody
- Article 12: to participate in decision making in "all matters affecting the child"
- Article 13: to express opinions and to acquire and give information
- Article 14: to hold views in matters of thought, conscience and religion
- Article 15: to associate with others
- Article 23: the right of a child with disabilities to "active participation in the community"
- Article 30: the right of minority or indigenous children to participate in the community of their own group as well as the larger society
- Article 31: to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.

See also the discussion of Theme 10., *Participation*, p. 262.

Useful resources

- *Council of Europe Actions to Promote Children's Rights to Protection from All Forms of Violence:* UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, 2005.
- *Children's and Young People's Preparation Seminar of the Launching Conference 'Building a Europe with and for Children'*, Final report: Council of Europe, 2006.
- *Declaration and Programme on Education for Democratic Citizenship, Based on the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens*, Committee of Ministers: Council of Europe, 1999.
- Gittins, Chris, *Violence reduction in Schools – How to make a difference*: Council of Europe, 2006.
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DGIV/EDU/CIT (2006) 17: Council of Europe, 2006. www.unicef-icdc.org/publications
- Howe, Brian, 'Citizenship Education for Child Citizens', *Canadian and International Education Journal*, Vol. 34, no.1: 2005, p. 42-49.
- O'Shea, Karen, Developing a shared understanding, a glossary of terms for education for democratic citizenship, DGIV/EDU/CIT (2003) 29: Strassbourg, Council of Europe, 2003: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/ Source/Pdf/Documents/2003_29_GlossaryEDC.PDF
- Ramberg, Ingrid, Citizenship Matters: the participation of young women and minorities in Euro-Med youth projects, Seminar report: Council of Europe Publishing, 2005.
- Torney-Purta, Judith et al., *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-Eight Countries: Civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen*: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, Amsterdam, 2001.
- *Under Construction: Citizenship, Youth and Europe,* T-Kit on European Citizenship: Council of Europe, 2003.
- Violence against Children in Europe, A preliminary review of research: UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, 2005.

Useful Websites

- Droits Partagés: des droits de l'homme aux droits de l'enfant: www.droitspartages.org
- Citizenship Foundation: www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk
- Oxfam Cool planet for teachers on global citizenship: www.oxfam.org.uk
- Programme 'Building a Europe for and with Children': www.coe.int/children
- UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre: www.unicef-irc.org/publications/

References

1 *Under construction, Citizenship*, *Youth and Europe,* T-kit No 7.Council of Europe, 2003. p.34.
2 *Global Citizenship*, Cool Planet for Teachers: www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/globciti/index.htm
3 Howe, Brian, *Citizenship Education for Child Citizens*, Canadian and International Education Journal, Vol. 34, no.1: 2005, p. 44.
4 *Recommendation* REC (2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship.
5 O'Shea, Karen, *Development of a shared understanding*: A glossary of terms for education for democratic citizenship: Council of Europe, GDIV/EDU/CIT (2003)29, p.8.