



Citizenship Education – Between Social Inequality and the Promises of Modernity

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Summary

For several reasons citizenship and democracy has moved into political and research focus. Socio-cultural tensions and inequalities created by globalisation processes boosted by neo-liberal modes of government seem to inspire a concern with “social cohesion”, and the European Community assigns a key role to education in engendering European democratic citizenship. It can be questioned whether it is within the scope of educational programmes to ensure social integration and democracy. However, to clarify the perspectives of the educational issue, the article discusses the conflicts and relationships between cultural identity and democracy within a framework of modernity before returning to the issue of education for democratic citizenship. It is shown on the basis of empirical studies that family background interacts with school factors in the reproduction of democratic inequalities. It is also indicated, however, that this must not be considered an unchangeable pedagogical fact, and the article briefly sketches a set of pedagogical and research challenges concerned with educating for democratic empowerment at different levels of school practice. Although this paper focuses on education and the educational system, the arguments and findings presented can also claim relevance for social pedagogy and social work, esp. in respect of recent developments that stress the educational dimensions of social work.

Introduction

In spring 2008, the Danish embassy in Islamabad was attacked by a suicide bomber, and a new set of guidelines for the subjects of “culture and society” in upper secondary youth education reached the national headlines: The guidelines stated that “*the teaching must develop the students’ understanding of self and the social environment and contribute to creating a qualified basis for independent judgement and active participation in a modern, multicultural and democratic society.*”¹

The prompt reaction from the nationalist *Danish People’s Party* was to be expected. However, a member of the parliament group of the leading, *Liberal* government party seconded: “*No! Denmark is not a multicultural country. Perhaps a multi-ethnic country, but as far as culture is concerned, we are a mono-cultural country – and no other development should be supported politically. Nobody ever wanted a multicultural Denmark – we see the results of such an endeavour only too clearly in English cities, where parallel communities are living side by side in ever increasing conflict.*” The minister of education retorted: “*It is difficult to deny that Denmark is a multicultural society. Therefore, I have endorsed this wording, and I do not consider changing it. I am sure that a large majority of the Parliament*

¹ <http://us.uvm.dk/gymnasie/vejl/?menuid=1540>

*and the population agrees. The guidelines are not stating whether it is good or bad that society is as it is. They are about taking a stand to society as it is.”*²

The antagonism, of course, is not only about “is” and “should be”, but also about facts and fictions of a society which has been socio-culturally heterogenous for ages. But at the same time, it can be taken as a point of departure for a discussion of the citizenship promises of modernity.

Politically, the issue of citizenship has certainly (re)asserted itself over the last decade, and not least as an issue of *education*, even if other societal parameters may be as important in shaping the conditions of citizenship. Reasons for this awakening political anxiety can be sought at many inter-related levels: September 11th, “externalities” of neo-liberal market driven globalisation processes, changes in the capacities of nation states, “ethnic” mobility and multiculturalism, lifestyle diversity and declining levels of traditional political engagement, inequality of education, urban social unrest or recruitment activities of Moslem youth organisations, which in 2004 prompted the Danish prime minister to declare himself an *aficionado* of education for democracy.

In this paper, I *first* sketch the citizenship issue as it is stated at the European political level. *Secondly*, I discuss some of the conceptual – but none the less real – conflicts involved in the attempts to define citizenship and its relationships to concepts of modernity, democracy, social integration and “cohesion”, culture and equality. *Thirdly*, and with a particular view to inequality, I present empirical results from a few studies of education for democratic citizenship. Finally, I sketch, in brief, my understanding of the main issues that education for democratic citizenship has to deal with and, by way of this, a set of suggestions for further research.

The political focus on citizenship education

Following up on the *Lisbon Declaration* and the initiatives taken by the Council of Europe³, the Council of the EU in 2001 stated that

“Part of the learning process is the promotion of active citizenship. The focus of active citizenship is on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to and have a fair say in the society in which they live. The promotion of active citizenship and employability are to be seen as complementary. Both depend upon people having adequate and up to date knowledge and skills to take part in and make a contribution to economic and social life (...)” (Council of the EU 2001, section 2.2.3.)

In the *Detailed work program* of 2002, active citizenship education is one of 13 strategic aims:

“While education and training systems need to change in view of the challenges of the knowledge society and globalisation, they pursue broader goals and have broader responsibilities to society. They play an important role in building up social cohesion, in preventing discrimination, exclusion, racism and xenophobia and hence in promoting

² <http://www.180grader.dk/nyheder/>

³ Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers (1999): *Declaration and programme on education for democratic citizenship, based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens*, Strasbourg.

tolerance and the respect for human rights. (...) the general goals attributed by society to education and training go beyond equipping Europeans for their professional life, in particular concerning their personal development for a better life and active citizenship in democratic societies respecting cultural and linguistic diversity. The Council (Education) and the Commission re-affirm that, notwithstanding their essential role in the Lisbon strategy, education and training are more than instruments for employability. Their broader mission must continue to be recognised in order to secure their full contribution to the Lisbon goals and the crucial support needed from the education and training community and from society as a whole.” (European Commission 2002, section 2.3.)

Finally, in *Learning for active citizenship: A significant challenge in building a Europe of knowledge*, the rhetoric of citizenship bursts into full bloom: Edith Cresson, in her foreword, states that

“(...) the primary aim of education is the development of human potential, of the whole person, enabling all citizens to participate as fully as possible in cultural, economic, political and social life. It should go without saying that learning for active citizenship lies at the heart of our civilisation’s aspirations in this regard.

I maintain, then, that turning a Europe of Knowledge into reality importantly includes promoting a broader idea of citizenship, which can strengthen the meaning and the experience of belonging to a shared social and cultural community. The active engagement of citizens is part of that broader concept of citizenship, and the aim is that people take the project of shaping the future into their own hands.

(...) A deeper commitment lies behind these words - the affirmation of a coherent set of democratic values and social practices which together respect both our similarities and our differences. In a time of fundamental change, we need the solid foundation which those values provide, for they underlie our recognition of the social reality of a globalised world in which the significance of active citizenship extends far beyond local communities and national frontiers.

The fostering of competencies and convictions capable of enhancing the quality of social relations rests on the natural alliance of education and training with equality and social justice. Citizenship with a European dimension is anchored in the shared creation of a voluntary community of peoples, of different cultures and of different traditions – the creation of a democratic society which has learned to embrace diversity sincerely as a positive opportunity, a society of openness and solidarity for each and every one of us.”

Subsequently, the report goes on to define its understanding of active citizenship:

“Having the right to participate in economic, political and social life is not equivalent to doing so in practice, nor indeed being equipped to do so on equal terms. (...) The practice of active citizenship is therefore a question of being empowered to handle the practice of democratic culture, and feeling that one has a stake in getting involved in the communities in which one lives, whether by choice or force of circumstance. The concept of active citizenship ultimately speaks to the extent to which individuals and groups feel a sense of attachment to the societies and communities to which they theoretically belong, and is therefore closely related to the promotion of social inclusion and cohesion as well as to matters of identity and values. These are the affective dimensions of active citizenship. At the same time, people need

a basis of information and knowledge upon which they can take action, and to do so with some confidence; this is the cognitive dimension of active citizenship. Finally, practising citizenship is about taking action of some kind, and this is above all a matter of gaining experience in doing so: the pragmatic dimension of active citizenship.” (European Commission 2005, foreword and section 2.1.)

In 2007, the EC general directorate for Education and Culture issued a *Study of Active Citizenship Education* presenting an analysis of 57 projects and 10 selected cases. Its purpose was to “provide a deeper, more qualitative insight into active citizenship education in 33 countries in Europe”. The selection and analysis was reportedly not made on a predefined concept of citizenship, but with the aim to present a diversity of themes, activities, target groups and implementation levels to inspire a broad conception of education for active citizenship. Its conclusions were not endorsed by the Commission, but it is interesting to note, that its categorization of the foci of the projects placed *democratic participation* on top of the list, followed by *empowerment*, *social cohesion/integration*, and *multiculturalism*, all of them key dimensions of the EU concept of citizenship (GHK 2007, 8 and 24f).

It appears from this brief *tour de force* of quotations, I think, that the EU conception of citizenship has evolved from a strong emphasis on its functional relationship, its *complementarity*, with employability and knowledge and skills for contributing to a *knowledge driven economy*, with due regards to a non-discrimination social *inclusion* agenda. Subsequently, an additional focus on (in)equality, diversity and cohesion is added, giving rise to attention to the importance of learning about political rights and institutions, common culture and cultural diversity, and civic attitudes. Added to this is the dimension of active participation. In 2005, a broader concept of citizenship seems to be adopted: (1) The scope of participation covers all spheres of life, (2) democratic values and cultural diversity are underscored as a basis of *respect of similarities and differences* in a fundamentally changing supranational world, (3) issues of *equality* and *justice* are linked to the role of education in fostering *competences*, *convictions* and *actions*, which (4) are capable of supporting a society of *openness* and *solidarity*. The sense of belonging to a European society is seen as an outcome rather than as a precondition of citizenship.

I want to emphasize that I do not consider the evolvement of the EU concept of democratic citizenship outlined above to be an educational reality. Rather, I find the account indicative of important conflicts in the politics of modernity, which are the topic of the following section.

First, however, a note on the concept of social integration and “social cohesion” is needed. Since E. Durkheim, social integration has been on the (educational) sociological agenda, and the idea that the social division of labour puts *social solidarity* under pressure or demands that new modes of solidarity be found has been elaborated in a number of ways; e.g., in J. Habermas’ thoughts about the social integration function of communicative resources attached to his concept of *life world*⁴. Durkheim’s structural and functional approach has recently been revived in political and research discourses on “social capital” and “social cohesion” (Green et al. 2006, 21-35; see below). However, it is not quite clear what the basic functional criterion of social integration or “social cohesion” actually is. The most radical one, of course, would be that of society falling apart or not. But this criterion itself threatens to fall apart, when deconstructed: Exactly what is falling apart? A more modest approach

⁴ Durkheim, E. (1984): *The Division of Labour*, London, Macmillan; (1956): *Education and Sociology*, Glencoe, Free Press. Habermas, J. (1984/87): *Theory of Communicative Action*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

would be to focus on various social conditions that put strain on or cause conflict about functions, relationships or perceptions of society, be it the ability of the state to govern, the economy to thrive, social intercourse to be peaceful, or cultural and personal life to be meaningful. In political communication, the problems of floating concepts need not be solved. In empirical research, they are usually solved by narrowing concepts down to dimensions and indicators with a limited scope, such as “general and institutional trust”, “civic cooperation and participation”, “unrest”, “tolerance” and other virtues, etc. (Green et al. 2006, 27ff). Such specifications obviously have an element of normativity to their descriptive potentials, and therefore seem to call for analyses based on a *political interest* rather than a *functionalist* approach. This is the line I take.

Conflicts of citizenship education in modern society

It is S. N. Eisenstadt’s contention that *modernity* as a distinct “cultural programme” entails conflicts between autonomy and domination, modernity as a vision and modernity as institutions (Eisenstadt 2004, 48ff). I take this statement as my point of departure for a discussion of conflicts in the political concerns with citizenship with particular emphasis on the relationships between citizenship, culture and democracy.

S. Moutsios interprets the political concern with citizenship education as an endeavour to ensure “social cohesion” through individuals’ accumulation of “social capital” in order to facilitate economic growth. At the same time, as a response to tensions engendered by the processes of neo-liberal globalisation, policies of democracy are replaced by policies of identity (cf. Bauman 1997, 54ff). Moutsios understands the “decline of (deliberative) democracy” in “knowledge societies” as inherent in contemporary politics. Referring to Held, he points out that globalization *de-democratizes* decision-making inasmuch as power is transferred to international organisations, supranational unions, technocratic institutions and private corporations. At the same time, the dominant neo-liberal ideology, on top of defining economic growth and competition as the key political priority, threatens to transform politics itself by moving it from the public sphere to the market. Thus the citizens’ political ground for contesting the legitimacy of political decisions is removed, leaving a consumer’s society without structural alternatives. As a further threat to democracy, Moutsios points to the use of specialized knowledge in political management, which is mirrored by the deluge of de-contextualized and fragmented knowledge or sound bites flooding mass communication making it private rather than public. Within educational politics this weakening of democracy is duplicated: Educational policies are focused on supporting economic competition, and educational governance is using the tools of measurable performance indicators in the indirect management of educational output – evaluation tools unsuited to assess the pursuit of critical reflection and equality inherent in democracy (Moutsios 2008, 503ff; cf. Held 2006, ch. 9).

Like Moutsios and Held (2006, ch. 8 and 11), M. Olssen observes the shortcomings of neo-liberal politics with its foundation in methodological individualism, its focus on individual autonomy and “*enabling*”, and its “semi-autonomous” organisation of governance as far as democratic accountability and legitimacy is concerned. However, a number of features of globalisation are posing new political problems for the neo-liberal discourse. Therefore, a second aspect of modern politics has become a “post-liberal political settlement” restating the role of the nation state. Its features are a rise in political control and surveillance, a concern with social justice and a renewed interest in the qualities of citizenship. To the focus on “negative” freedom (individual *autonomy*) is added a focus on “positive” freedom (collective *safety*). In Olssen’s view, the issue of citizenship (education) has been neglected during the 20th century, but is now – justly – returning. He holds that this may have to involve a new

emphasis on *duties* and loyalties to the common good as opposed to the liberal rights of autonomy (Olssen 2008, 261ff.).

Olssen's reflections on the transformation of state power in the wake of 9/11, remind one of Z. Bauman's discussion of the triple aspects of "Unsicherheit" – *insecurity, uncertainty* and "unsafety" – which he attributes to the neo-liberal model of globalisation and politics. Bauman contends that these aspects of the human consequences of globalisation "spill over" into each other, and that – in the absence of strong and sovereign welfare states – political power, like its electorates, is tempted to shift its attention from uncertainty and insecurity to safety, giving rise to particular sorts of identity politics or, rather, politics for threatened identities (Bauman 1999, 5 and 16ff).

A second point emerges from Olssen's discussion of the state as an agent of negative and positive freedom. Green et al. (2006, 5ff) in their comparative analysis of the relationships between education and social cohesion, demonstrate the necessity to distinguish between two (methodological and political) levels of understanding the prerequisites of citizenship: an *individual level* concerned with "social capital" as an ensemble of individual tenets and how it is acquired; and a "*structural*" level concerned with the economic, social, political and institutional *conditions* of acquiring them. Thus, for example, they found freedom of school choice to have adverse effects on equality (Green et al. 2006, 139f). Consequently, they question whether the issue of "social cohesion" should be dealt with as an issue of individual *empowerment* and affiliation with cultural communities or communal associations, or rather as an issue of *solidarity*, no value consensus implied! (Green et al. 2006, ch. 1; cf. Bauman 1997, 52ff). Hence, they discuss whether it should be treated as an issue of the distribution of welfare or as a matter of education. In their analysis they demonstrate the relevance of doing both: *a)* The structural distribution of education (and income) is clearly correlated to citizenship values measuring "social cohesion"; *b)* education is also correlated to such measures albeit in complicated ways, relationships varying according to national contexts (Green et al. 2006, ch. 2-5). There may even be a dialectic relationship between the levels: If the structural distribution of opportunities is important to citizenship values, education may be a means of engendering the solidarity to support this (Pierce and Hallgarten 2000, 6f). However, whether education is understood as dissemination of knowledge, skills and attitudes or as a "culture" of learning and participation, an examination of its role must rest on analysis of the conflicts inherent in the concept of citizenship.

If modernity is a particular cultural programme, as Eisenstadt claims, what is the programme? Besides connoting a vaguely defined historical epoch, modernity is thought of as a set of institutions as well as a vision of the relationship between individuals and their society. It seems to entail the decline (to say the least) of the idea of a divinely preordained order, an abandonment of ascriptive roles and fixed ties to static communities, an idea of emancipation from traditional and arbitrary authority, a move from particularism to universalism, a freedom of reflexivity and activity, and an ensemble of rights of expression and participation (Eisenstadt 2004, 50ff). Democracy is part of this picture. In this sense, cultures questioning these principles can be considered either pre- or anti-modern and undemocratic. Moreover, to the extent that culture denotes particularistic patterns of thought, action and affiliation, the idea of social integration through culture would seem to be dubious, at best, or even a violation of a modern, democratic society. Modern society is pluralistic. It is founded on democracy, not on common culture. To illustrate this point, I would like to quote a question asked by J. Dewey in *Democracy and Education*:

Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not to be restricted, constrained and corrupted? Internally, the question has to face the tendencies, due to present [1916!] economic conditions, which split society into classes some of which are made merely tools for the higher culture of others. Externally, the question is concerned with the reconciliations of national loyalty, of patriotism, with devotion to the things which unite men in common ends, irrespective of national and political boundaries. (Dewey 1966, 97f)

Thus, a conflict between the universalist right of pursuing autonomy and the pursuit of a particularist notion of the common good seems to prevail, unless the pursuit of autonomous life can be understood *as* the common good. However, Eisenstadt points out that, historically, modernity developed in various ways and within the protecting borders of nation states, and although the culture of modernity entailed an important element of rebellion against the state, it was also coloured by its historical rootedness in existing societies and “imagined communities”, using B. Anderson’s words⁵. Perhaps a concept of *a-modernity* would be useful to catch the importance of the religious or national transcendental narratives which Bauman (1999, 31ff) sees as humans’ remedy against mortality. If we are aware that our own flesh and blood perishes, we must feed on the substance of larger bodies. A communitarian would agree that, in the democratic family, brotherhood is the “prodigal” brother of freedom and equality. Thus, modernity, democracy or freedom cannot be treated as universals outside and prior to society, and different conditions and varieties of them must be acknowledged. Therefore, criticisms of Western democracy must sometimes be understood as modernist rebellion against its historical hegemony or its unfulfilled promises, just as modern re-inventions of culture of are sometimes reflexive, critical modern identity projects (Eisenstadt 2004, 52-63; Pierce and Hallgarten, 7f; Olssen, 265-271). However, Bauman (1997, 57) warns that even if cultural communities may empower its members, the quest for the promise of modernity demands focusing on the disruptive effects of modernisation and the conditions of individual freedom which transcend the level of cultural communities.

The distinction between *anti-modern* and *a-modern* is important: At a *sociological level*, it makes it possible to discriminate between different modes of allegiance to ethnicity, nationality, patriotism etc. Green et al. (2006, ch. 4) point out that the correlations between *teaching of patriotism* and the democratic item of *tolerance* vary markedly across nations with different recent histories. In North-Western Europe, the correlation is negative (whereas the correlation with *internationalism* is strongly positive); in post East Block countries it is almost absent, and in Southern Europe it is positive. Thus, as M. Papastephanou (2008, 182f) observes, “*patriotism as love for one’s community can be easily reconciled with a complex conception of cosmopolitanism as love for all biota, international legality and worldwide ethical responsibility. (...) patriotism and cosmopolitanism mean, at their best, the ethical-political, intellectual and emotional worthiness of immediate proximity and annihilated distance*”.

Similarly, the acknowledgement of multiculturalism as pluralistic sets of “ethnic” rights is not necessarily at variance (as long as culture is understood in a non-essentialist manner) with the principles of public reasonableness, universalism and democracy in a modern world, where we cannot choose our neighbours freely, as J. Waldron puts it (Waldron 2000, 173f; cf.

⁵ Anderson, B. (1983): *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso.

Kymlicka and Warren 2000, 8-17, 30ff). And Green et al. (2006, ch. 4) found that ethnic diversity does not predict significant variations on measures of social cohesion.

At a *didactical level*, the distinction between anti-modern and a-modern makes it possible to acknowledge and adjust to cultural differences in learning potential without dispensing from the task of preparing the learner for a universalist, democratic society.

The issue of multiculturalism can be extended to the issue of inequality. Universalism demands that citizen enjoy equal rights. The inherent dilemma is not only that liberal rights of autonomy (“negative” freedom) generates inequalities, but also that “positive” freedom very likely demands that the unequal is treated unequally (Pierce and Hallgarten 2000, 5ff). Even if the issue of social inequality has often been addressed in the context of education, because socio-cultural inheritance has been identified as a barrier against education and career mobility and economic growth, the strategies of reducing it have been a matter of ideological conflict.

However, socio-cultural inequality must also be considered as a barrier to democratic citizenship. In his extension of T. H. Marshall’s three categories of legal, political and social citizenship rights in the welfare state⁶, Janosky (1998) adds a fourth: the right of participation. For Janosky, citizenship refers to a relationship between the citizen and the state. Thus, it is not a phenomenon belonging to civil society. However, different civil societies with different histories influence the understanding of citizenship and its institutional structures – and vice versa. Janosky’s concept of citizenship seems, *on one hand*, to cover the broad definition of citizenship found in the later EU documents; *on the other hand*, it seems to cover the understanding of citizenship in a modern, democratic society sketched above. I may sum up the discussion by quoting Olssen:

The principle of democracy which we favour insists on the protection of human rights, recognises the distinctiveness of sub-cultures, ensures the principles of inclusion and openness, and ensures the universal application of the rule of law and of open dialogue (...) In an age of terrorism, democracy is the condition upon which survival can best be assured. Such a conception of democracy is universal to the extent that it is willed. (Olssen 2008, 275)

Inequalities in education for democratic citizenship – empirical evidence

Schools are important as democratic organisations (...) through their ability to empower families, and involve minority groups in participatory projects. (...) In the republican tradition, schools are instrumental in the development of civic virtue and habits of good citizenship. (Olssen 2008, 276)

In this section, my focus will be on how education (at the lower secondary level) interacts with individual family backgrounds in shaping pupils’ development towards democratic citizenship.

From the IEA civic education comparative study it can be concluded that, besides family factors, school matters to a number of dimensions of civic and democratic engagement such as *knowledge of ideals of democracy, skills in understanding political communication, anticipated voting, civic and political engagement, tolerance and institutional trust*. It should

⁶ Marshall, T. H. (1963): *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, London.

be noted, however, that with the exception of *classroom climate*, the individual school dimensions are not related to the different citizenship dimensions in a homogenous way.

J. Torney-Purta et al. conclude that in most countries pupils demonstrate knowledge of democratic ideals and processes and moderate skills in interpreting political material. But their understanding is often superficial. Among the school dimensions, *classroom climate* seems to be the consistently most important explanatory factor, but factors such as perceived *school openness to pupils' participation* and *school endorsement of citizenship norms* also seem important. Schools can be effective in promoting knowledge and engagement, but many pupils do not perceive good participatory opportunities in school. Except for voting, pupils do not consider conventional political participation very important, but prefer other types of civic activities, and the report speculates, whether this should be interpreted as a developmental stage or as a new mode of democratic citizenship.

Family background is also significantly correlated to civic engagement, however. Important indicators are *political conversations*, *books in home* and *expected education*. Whereas *classroom climate* seems, generally to yield the most powerful correlations with the citizenship indicators, D. E. Campbell points out that *political conversation in home* surpasses even this school factor on the particular citizenship indicator of anticipated political engagement.

Importantly, the IEA report demonstrates that not only do the answers vary across countries, but also several of the *relationships* found between the different citizenship dimensions (Torney-Purta et al. 2001, 176ff; Campbell 2006, 102ff and 137ff). This is one of the major gains of comparative empirical analysis, the implication being that it is necessary to include national structural or cultural factors to understand the relationships between “inputs” and “outcomes” in education for democratic citizenship (cf. Bruun 2001, 324ff). Therefore, I proceed to mention a few empirical results concerning the relationships between family background, school culture and dimensions of becoming a democratic citizen in Denmark.

The IEA civic education comparative study (8th grade) shows that the civic knowledge and skills of Danish pupils are at an average level, varying with family educational background and school. Danish pupils' conception of democracy is clearly non-elitist. Representative democracy is respected highly alongside with social and political rights of expression, association and membership, and the importance for democracy of a certain standard of living is acknowledged. Their score is relatively high on trust in institutions and on confidence in participation in school, and average on open classroom climate. However, on scales of *conventional* as well as *social movement related* citizenship they are below average. They expect to vote, but they give low priority to the importance of being members of political parties, whereas they are rather more positive towards taking part in *ad hoc* political manifestations and in social activity. Their score is relatively low on measures of patriotism such as importance of knowing national history, and on immigrants' rights, but high on respecting the law and on women's rights. Correlations with knowledge and skills are noticeable; correlations with family background are moderate with the biggest difference found on the *immigrants' rights* dimension.

Besides questioning the appropriateness of some of the scale items, the Danish report speculates, whether some of the low scores on the citizenship scales reflect a belief (combined with a high level of trust and confidence) that many problems have already been solved, and therefore, one needn't participate. Pupils are actually sensitive to global environmental and

social problems. The report also concludes, that Danish pupils' low score on immigrants rights is not an expression of national cultural chauvinism, but rather a concern with potential threats to democracy (Bruun 2001, ch. 2 and 324ff). This is hardly a surprise, bearing the Danish public debate on this issue in mind.

In a separate bi-variate study with school classes (9th grade) as methodological units, a number of relationships become clearer. It is shown a) that family educational background and perception of classroom climate are positively correlated, b) that these factors are consistently correlated with the citizenship dimensions of knowledge and skills, political participation and immigrants' rights, but not with patriotism; and c) that most of the citizenship dimensions are correlated, again with patriotism deviating in an ambiguous manner (Bruun et al. 2002, 210-236).

Danish teachers consider *institutional* as well as *participatory* democracy to be important, and they support a number of "conventional" as well as "social movement related" citizenship dimensions. Among *teachers'* top hits are: to engage in political issues in media, vote, know the history of your country, participate in human rights activity, respect laws – except those violating human rights, help others in society and protect the environment. Party membership and patriotism are not ranked very high. By international comparison, Danish teachers seem to give rather low priority to national and conventional dimensions and aims of citizenship, but this is *not* counterbalanced by a high priority to more "activist" oriented dimensions and aims. With certain exceptions, then, teachers and pupils seems to be in accordance about the values of citizenship (Bruun et al. 2002, 86-126, 144ff, 197ff and 256f; cf. Dorf ed. 2005, 15f).

In the Danish school system, education for democracy is an official aim as well as an obligation enjoying wide acknowledgement among its pupils and teachers. However, education for democracy can be conceived as having at least three separate aspects: a) the modes of school and classroom communication and interaction, b) the teaching of knowledge and skills of democracy, and c) the (organized) participation of pupils in issues of the school. For Danish teachers, the most important learning objective of education for democracy ought to be "critical thinking", followed by "values", "participation" and "knowledge", although they think that, in reality, knowledge holds a higher priority than critical thinking and values (Bruun et al. 2002, 80ff). This ranking is interesting, since it seems to confirm that Danish teachers' thinking of democracy in a pedagogical context is focused on the ability to pay respect to other persons' views and attitudes, to think critically and to master the principles of dialogue. An ideal of deliberative democracy seems to be ruling. However, it has been criticized by J. Loftager and others that the importance of knowledge and skills for competent deliberation has been neglected in the post-nineteen sixties pedagogical debate (Loftager 2004, ch. 4; Dorf ed., 17f; Cf. Held 2006, ch. 9). Secondly, as we shall see, pupils' view of democratic participation in school seems to differ from that of the teachers.

I shall now present a few results from a small explorative study (Dorf ed. 2005) carried out at Danish schools from 2002 to 2005 with the objective of mapping relationships between family, school and democracy variables and examining the widely accepted idiom of "educating for democracy through democracy". Schools were selected with the aim of obtaining diversity rather than representativity, the number of respondents being only between 100 and 200 teachers and between 200 and 300 9th grade pupils. Data sets of this limited size only allow bi-variate analysis, which should be borne in mind when inferences are made.

However, the relationships between the core variables were cross analyzed to avoid the worst pitfalls of simple correlation interpretation.

Since pupils' reports of parents' social "class" or education are often unreliable and parents could not be included in the study, our choice of family background indicators were focused on cultural resources (number of books, mass media habits, leisure time activities and educational expectations a. o.). However, the strongest significant correlations with our dependent variables were obtained using two items: *value of discussions with parents* and *frequency of discussing social issues with parents*. The two items are strongly correlated, and also with parallel items of peer discussion.

Among our measures of school variables, the items *pupil's school*, *tediousness of school topics* and *school empowers for democracy* proved to yield significant correlations with our dependent variables. Also, *school's perceived democratic responsiveness* and *perceived freedom of opinion in class* showed interesting correlations, mainly with family background.

Our *dependent variables* were a set of items concerned with pupils' perceived influence on various aspects of school life; views on the function of pupils' council; attitudes to various concepts of democracy; interest in social and political issues; and anticipated participation in social and political activity. Many of the items are interrelated. Different concepts of democracy (deliberative, direct or representative) are not generally seen as mutually exclusive, though pupils subscribing to elitist view of democracy do tend to be slightly less likely to anticipate political participation.

The following table presents a selective overview of some important relationships between the items mentioned. Other items such as tolerance of conflict, perceived influence on didactical issues and view of discussion in class are omitted, though they are clearly part of the picture of educating for democracy. Only one indicator of attitude to democracy is shown.

Overview of significant relationships between items (*gamma coefficients*)

	Value of discussion	Freq. of discussing soc.	Pupil's school	School's d. responsiveness	Freedom of opinion in class	School topics tedious	School empowers for demo.
<i>Frequency of discussing soc.</i>	0.46***	-					
<i>Pupil's school</i>	Insign.	Insign.	-				
<i>School's demo. responsiveness</i>	-0.28*	corr. not c.**	0.50***	-			
<i>Freedom of opinion in class</i>	0.22	Insign.	0.30***	corr. not c.***	-		
<i>School topics tedious</i>	0.44**	0.27**	corr. not c.**	0.32**	0.42***	-	
<i>School empowers for democracy</i>	0.48***	0.26***	corr. not c.**	Insign.	0.32**	0.23	-
<i>Interest in politics</i>	0.50***	corr. not c.**	corr. not c.**	Insign.	Insign.	0.32**	0.41***
<i>Attitude to demo. participation</i>	0.34**	corr. not c.***	0.35***	0.20*	0.28***	0.31**	0.46***
<i>Anticipated demo participation</i>	See below	See below	See below	Insign.	Insign.	See below	Insign.

*** significant at the 0.001 level; ** significant at the 0.01 level; * significant at the 0.05 level.

"corr. not c." indicates that gamma coefficient has not been calculated for this relationship.

Firstly, it can be seen from the table that the *perceived value of discussions with parents* and to some extent the *frequency of discussing social issues with parents* are important “predictors” of the pupils’ attitudes on four of the school variables, whereas there is no significant relationship with *pupil’s school*. At least *value of discussion* is hardly an effect of the school; therefore family seems to play an independent role in shaping pupils’ perceptions of the democratic climate of the school as well as the extent to which pupils feel bored in school.

Secondly, the family variables also predict a number of dimensions of democratic engagement. Of these, *anticipated democratic participation* (focusing on four areas of activity: political youth organisations, grass root organisations, social relief organisations and ad hoc political activities such as demonstrations), show the weakest relationships (no significance at the 0.05 level) with *value of discussion with parents*, whereas *frequency of discussing social issues with parents* show significant relationships ($s < 0.05$) with social relief organisations and ad hoc political activity.

Thirdly, the school variables, besides being often significantly related to each other, also show significant relationships with dimensions of democratic engagement, including anticipated democratic participation. Thus, *pupil’s school* is significantly related ($s < 0.05$) to political youth organisations, social relief organisations and ad hoc political activity. The question is to what extent these relationships are really reflections of family background factors.

In the present study, pupils from two private schools recruiting their intake from segments with educational levels above average scored higher than pupils from other schools on items such as *interest in politics*, *attitude to democratic participation*, *anticipated participation* and *disagreement with elitist concept of democracy*. These pupils were also more likely than all other pupils to report having frequent discussions of social issues with parents and to perceive their schools as democratically responsive. Similarly, the item *school topics are tedious*, shows significant relationships with interest in politics, attitude to democratic participation as well as the items of anticipated democratic participation (coefficients ranging from 0.37 ($s < 0.01$) to 0.29 ($s < 0.05$)), but is also strongly correlated with both family items. Therefore, school items may well be proxies of social background (Cf. Bruun et al. 2002, 252ff).

Even so, the strong differences predicted by *pupil’s school* on the items of democratic engagement are not explained away by our family variables. Therefore, it is difficult not to assume *a*) that even if the scores on the school items may reflect a pedagogical interplay with pupils’ family resources and favour particular family backgrounds, pupils’ diverse experiences of school life may, in turn, affect pupils’ democratic engagement; and *b*) that schools are actually not handling education for democracy equally well.

T. Gitz-Johansen, in a recent study of pupil-teacher relationships in schools with high proportions of immigrants, suggests that not only linguistic issues are at play in shaping unequal school outcomes, but also curricular content, the codes of pedagogical communication as well as teachers’ images of the “ethnic” pupil. Ironically, Kymlicka and Warren point to the risk that “respecting ethnic differences” (or cultural rights) may distort educational aims so as to hamper social integration (Gitz-Johansen 2006, ch. 4-7; Kymlicka and Warren 2000, 30ff; cf. Olssen 2008, 274ff).

With the support of a teacher surveys, interviews and observation, the present study was able to make an extended comparison between the results from two particular public schools, one

with a very high proportion of “ethnic” pupils, situated in a suburban “ghetto” (one 9th grade class), and another with a high proportion of “white” pupils, situated in a small rural town (three 9th grade classes). Even if a higher proportion of the “ethnic” pupils found discussions with parents valuable, but since they were least likely to have frequent discussions about social issues with their parents, we were surprised to find, that the “ethnic” pupils scored higher on most of the democratic attitude and engagement items and, in fact, higher than any other school’s pupils on our measures of confidence in participation and attitude to deliberative democracy. However, this appeared to be consistent with their clearly more positive views of the democratic responsiveness of their school. The teachers of the “ethnic” school also saw education for democracy as the central aim of schooling to a higher extent than their colleagues at the other school, even if our survey and interviews revealed that their attitude to pupils’ influence on educational issues were in some ways more restrictive than at the other schools in the study. However, the pupils of this school equal the pupils from the private schools in their agreement to the item *freedom of opinion in class*. As an aside, the “ethnic” school’s approach to school council activity was also deliberately being restructured to teach pupils the skills of handling their interests in school issues democratically (GHK 2007, app. A).

There may be a number of explanations for these results. And indeed, the potential of the present study is rather to raise questions than to answer them, given its size and design. However, even if family resources once again prove to be important, we may assume that schools could make a difference through the approaches they take to education for democratic citizenship. I briefly sketch a few educational and research dimensions of this.

Concluding issues

In our study, we found that only about half of the pupils anticipated personal participation in at least one of the civic activities mentioned, and a mere 2 % expected to become active in all four of them. At a conference on democracy and education in 2004, a Danish politician asked the provoking question whether just a few politically active percent of an age cohort wouldn’t be enough to recruit the necessary number of future political elites. If this elite model of democracy is accepted, the democratic task of the school would be limited, since the pupils involved would be those who seem to prosper most from the school as it is, and they may not even need the school’s contribution to their democratic competences very much (*school satisfaction* seems to be a stronger predictor of *interest in social issues* for pupils with limited family resources⁷). However, if in accordance with official policy a non-elitist conception is preferred, the pedagogical issue is different.

First of all, it seems to be empirically documented, that structural as well as cultural social inequalities must be dealt with to approach the target of equal citizenship. Concentrating on the role of school education, however, a number of issues can be identified. In doing so, I rely on a distinction made by S. Graf and J. P. Christiansen between school as an *inter-personal*, a *didactic* and a “*political*” “space” of education for democracy (GHK 2007, app. A; cf. Dorf ed. 2005, 72ff).

At an *inter-personal level*, there are solid reasons to believe that a climate of dialogue is important. Freedom of opinion, expression and deliberation is at the core of this, and teachers’ mastery, empathy and engagement may be vital. However, using the terms of B. Bernstein,

⁷ Dorf, H. (1986): *Pædagogisk sociologi*, Copenhagen, p. 176.

the codes of pedagogical communication, horizontal and vertical discourse, may play an important part in determining how different pupils can benefit from this freedom⁸. In general terms, the role of teachers' classroom management, the structures of authority and the framing of deliberation are important areas of further research. As an example, Graf and Christiansen have shown that a formal procedural approach to conflict solving at the classroom level may change the social pattern of democratic participation and include other pupils than those usually active in "open" discussions (GHK 2007, app. A; cf. Dorf ed. 2005, 82ff).

However, at the *didactic level*, not only the training of democratic procedures may enhance pupils' democratic competences and engagement. As pointed out by Loftager, democratic deliberation also rests on a basis of knowledge. The role of curriculum should be a focus of educational attention and research for two reasons: *a)* Any conception of competence development or learning progression must depart from the question: which knowledge is required to empower pupils for relevant, critical reflection and competent democratic action? Knowledge of values, institutions, procedures and core problems of local, national or global social life⁹ are probably all important, but why and how? *b)* Curriculum content may have a bearing on the issue of social inequality: How can choice of subject matter be sensitive and responsive to diverse socio-cultural experiences – without diverting learning progression from the demands and issues of society as it is and as democracy wants it to be?

In our survey, we found that teachers and pupils diverged considerably in their understanding of the function of *pupils' council*. Teachers thought of it mainly as a didactic phenomenon (a democratic training ground). Pupils considered one of its main functions to be a forum for articulation and negotiating pupils' interests in school issues (Dorf ed. 2005, 56ff and 63ff). This poses the question, whether the school can and should offer a "*political*" level of education for democracy. The "class council" project mentioned above is an example of this. Pupils' council, of course, could be another. Also, in Denmark, school boards may include pupil representatives. It is certainly worth exploring how development of (formalized) *fora* of "real" democratic participation could serve an educative function – in particular to include pupils not otherwise very engaged in democratic issues and processes. However, part of learning democracy is also to learn about its limits. Not all school issues, not even all didactic issues, are open to democratic negotiation. Representative democracy and legitimate bureaucracy decides otherwise, pedagogical wisdom of learning progression may speak against it, and democracy depends on civil structures and norms. Thus, democratic citizenship learning is by necessity a process of social integration. For these very reasons, "political" participation in school issues should be a further field of educational research.

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