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An analysis of how citizenship education is implemented

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This paper presents a research project comparing different schools to study the differences in the implementation of citizenship education. The conception of citizenship education and the guidelines often change according to the country in which one is and according to the schools. Our focus is to select various schools in Great Britain and in France with contrasting approaches to citizenship education. In the UK, the national curriculum provides guidance, at the different levels, to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of their roles, rights and responsibilities in relation to their local, national and international communities and it states that the schemes of work should reflect the flexible nature of the curriculum, allowing schools to be innovative and develop their own approaches to citizenship. In contrast, in the French system of education, the curriculum does not mention the terms 'citizen' or 'citizenship'; nevertheless, it is required to provide civic education, focusing on the structure of the government, constitution, elections and the general legal structures of the country. The conception of citizenship education in these two countries is therefore extremely different.

What is citizenship?

Before talking about citizenship education, the notion of citizenship itself should be questioned. The word citizenship finds its roots in the Latin word *civitas*: the citizen acknowledges the rules and customs of the city, which allows him to have rights, prerogatives and duties providing him with a 'city right'.

Thus, citizenship can be organised around three essential dimensions. It is a set of prerogatives given to citizens. Citizenship also includes a group of both individual and social rights. These rights are individual (e.g. civil liberties, freedom of thought, of speech etc.), as well as public rights (e.g. constitutional rights, rights to organise meetings, associations, protests etc.), but also social and economic rights (e.g. human rights, rights linked to the human being). These rights go hand-in-hand with a set of various obligations and duties, which is the reason why research on citizenship cannot be done without looking at values. Finally, citizenship is a dynamic concept: in fact, it has greatly evolved since the 'city-states' of Ancient Greece, which enabled adult men to be citizens of a city, thus making them free and all equal by law; however women, juveniles, slaves and foreigners were not recognised as citizens. Republican Rome introduced the recognition of the citizen and applied the notion of the safety of its citizens. After the French Revolution, the Human and Citizen's Rights Declaration (1789), together with the introduction of the French Constitution (1793) stated that 'French citizens constitute a community, which possesses absolute power'. This dynamic evolution still goes on; in 1992 the idea of the European citizen was created, and we are now in the process of creating a shared European Constitution for all European citizens. This evolving notion deserves to be studied in terms of its representational content.

From its inception, citizenship distinguished itself from civility as well as from patriotism (which it however includes). Thus it does not only contain rules of decent social behaviour, nor just a variety of the rights and duties of the citizen, but it also implies the existence of controversial values which are now part of the point of reference for the

community of citizens. Will this understanding of 'citizenship' be the same in a different country?

Citizenship education

Today, the revival of interest in citizenship education is strongly marked by a crisis in society; it seems that citizenship education could be an answer to this crisis. Indeed, considering the magnitude with which the developing inequalities and phenomena of exclusion hit society, one can only wonder what the meaning of citizenship is really for a precarious worker, an unemployed person, a homeless person, especially since inequalities in the work domain, living conditions, security, illness or even over-indebtedness all add up in creating unequal lifestyles in a society which seems to become more and more unfriendly and uncivil. Nevertheless, the policy of schooling accessible to everyone should play an important role in providing a true status to social citizenship (cf. UNSA-Education, 2001). However, school is also the place where uncivil behaviour takes place, with children breaking away from school policies (Dubet, 1994).

Elements influencing adolescents' behaviour can be grouped in four levels of determinism: (i) intrapersonal, (ii) interpersonal, (iii) community, and (iv) societal (Story *et al.*, 2002). School, as an educating system and a shared daily living environment, contributes to each of these four levels. In fact, in pedagogy as well as in the general population, the notion of citizenship seems to be seriously influenced, on the one hand by the historical period it is referred to, and on the other by the context: i.e. social environment plays an important role in the acceptance of the meaning of the word itself. In France citizenship education is replaced in the curriculum by 'civic instruction', which includes mainly subject matter with a content focusing on the structure of the government, constitution, elections and the general legal structures of the country, all of which pupils need to gain knowledge of. On the contrary, elsewhere in Europe, and especially in Great Britain, citizenship education refers to teaching and transmitting values, morals and ethics, linked to what is expected from a 'good citizen' in terms of suitable social behaviour.

Social representations of citizens, citizenship and citizenship education

The study of social representations of citizenship, shared by a social group, seems to help comprehend people's perceptions of themselves and others, as well as of citizenship, society and the feeling of belonging to a group and/or to society.

Our focus is on representations, elaborated throughout childhood and adolescence, and transmitted through one's social groups, starting with the study of the official discourses (e.g. curricula) a comparative analysis of (i) official texts, both at the national level and at the level of the institutions themselves (schools' local directives), (ii) the discourse of adults in charge of pupils in these schools, and (iii) the pupils' discourses. Our aim is to use these representations to create a synthesis of all three views on the topic to help inform about the teaching of citizenship education, the latter guiding young people towards more citizen-like behaviours. One could also wonder whether or not the feeling of belonging to a group influences social representations and if representations of citizenship can help trigger citizen-like behaviour.

These representations and values, just like the various applications of citizenship, change from one nation to another and evolve through time. This diversity and dynamic must be taken into account in citizenship education. Social representations seem to be the

masterpiece of our theoretical approach. The concept's definition and principal functions can be summed up in Moscovici's words:

social representations are nearly tangible entities. They're constantly embedded, circulating and mixing thanks to a word, a gesture, a meeting in our everyday universe. Most tied social relations, produced or purchased objects and exchanged communications are strongly impregnated by them. As we know, they correspond, on the one hand, to the symbolic substance that participates in the elaboration, and on the other to the applying that produces that said substance, just like science or myths correspond to a scientific and mythical applying (Moscovici, 1961, 1976 edition, p39)

Cognitive aspect: Our interest will focus on the content of the social representations of citizenship that adults in charge of pupils and pupils might have according to their national and academic environment. What are their meeting points (shared categories), their opposition points (mutual exclusion categories) and their specifications at the key moment of an adolescent's social thinking construction?

Social aspect: Representations are social because they contribute to forming group identity: people sharing the same conception of the word feel as if they belong to a same group. Do adults and adolescents feel as if they belong to the same 'city' (building, neighbourhood, nation, Europe)?

Language aspect: Representations help group cohesion and communication thanks to shared language. Do teachers consider the official discourse on citizenship as common language? Are the content and presenting of citizenship education seen by young people as an understandable language?

These representations are transported via collective memory (difficulty in integrating new targets in a pedagogic tradition), education (meant to promote knowledge through history and civic instruction lectures, and behaviour through examples), and the mass media's discourse that reproduces and simplifies the scientific lecture on what is educational, and the political lecture on citizenship.

Adolescents' individual differences

Since the issue of achieving citizen-like behaviour is what is being discussed here, it would be interesting to study the link between the environment and this behaviour at present and in regard to the future. Does projecting one's self into the future, and being able to see the link between the present moment and the effects on future social life, help in changing un-citizen-like behaviour?

Some previous researches, based on theories of time perspectives, more precisely on the concept of time competence (Shostrom, 1963, 1968, cited by Nuttin, 1980), show that some individuals perceive the continuity and integration of events through time and thus can be more motivated and stimulated in their everyday actions (practices). It has been found that those who link their present studies to their future professional life have better results and are more responsive to their teachers' advice (Van Calster, Lens & Nuttin, 1987). A hypothesis can then be formed about a higher level of responsiveness towards advice on good citizenship from young people who make this present and future life link. According to the same authors, it is useful to look for the origin of these particular young people's locus of control. The fact that some consider the future as fate and luck, whereas

others see it as resulting from their personal actions (meaning that they more or less control their actions), has a role in their perception of a link between present and future.

Conception and methodology

Our problematic mainly focuses on linking representations of citizenship and its ways of being transmitted, in which circumstances these ways arise and what favours their efficiency. The aim is to focus (i) on what is recommended in the different countries and different schools, (ii) on how the adults in charge of pupils as well as pupils themselves perceive 'citizenship', and (iii) to study the various ways in which citizenship education is put into practice in secondary schools with pupils aged 11-14. A comparison between statements of teaching staff and pupils will be carried out, as well as with official texts concerning the topic and specific to the schools chosen. Finally a national-international comparison will be made, meant to possibly display a difference in guidelines, methods of teaching and discourses.

Our first variable will be the comparison of three categories of schools which differ and have contrasted approaches to citizenship education:

- Schools in Great Britain will be studied, knowing that new programs/curricula on citizenship has been mandatory for the past six years. These are followed by specific teacher training on citizenship education (Group 1).
- Schools in different regions of France that have chosen to dedicate a part of their school policies to citizenship education by putting the latter at the centre of their preoccupations and teaching methods will be studied (Group 2).
- Schools in France that have not included any specific focus on citizenship in their school policies (Group 3).

After conducting a content analysis of the official documents (curricula) concerning citizenship education, the selected schools in both countries will be analysed and compared. A content analysis of the official documents of each institution will be conducted. Interviews with adults and pupils (11-14 year olds) will be conducted with a main focus on various social representations such as that of citizenship, competition vs. cooperation, violence vs. tolerance, and attitudes towards all of them, without omitting to pinpoint the feeling of belonging. A synthesis of both adults' and pupils' discourses could help improve citizenship education. Observation of life in the schools will provide interesting elements related to how it is put into practice in the different schools.

The sample studied will be of 500 students (boys and girls) aged from 11 to 14, as well as 60 to 80 adults: teachers and other adults in charge of pupils.

Country \ Schools	Great-Britain (group 1)		France (group 2)		France (group 3)	
	3-4		3-4		3-4	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Adolescents	60-80	60-80	60-80	60-80	60-80	60-80
2 orders						
Adults	15-20		15-20		15-20	

Data collection

A questionnaire for the students and interviews with the teaching staff, based on exploratory interviews of adults in charge of pupils and of pupils. The questionnaires will help measure the social representation of citizenship, using free associations on the following words: citizen, competition and violence versus citizen, cooperation and tolerance. Attitude scales concerning citizenship, violence vs. tolerance and competition vs. cooperation will be used. In order to study the link between citizen-like behaviour at present and their effects on the future, a description of activities technique would allow a study of the group of processes used by adolescents in the context of their present social life and that to come. Using a list of citizen-like behaviour examples, each adolescent will be asked to make three ratings in order to (a) measure the importance of interests and preoccupations the subject has in citizenship at the present moment; (b) measure the level of perceived control over the present situation, according to whether the adolescent thinks the citizen-like behaviour s/he is interested in only depends on his/her everyday personal efforts, or on external factors (others, or even fate and luck). This rating will thus help evaluate in what sense s/he feels like a participant and full citizen; and (c) measure the link between present and future, according to whether the adolescent thinks that the chosen citizen-like behaviours of his/her first ratings can, or not, have repercussions on his/her future life and that of his/her fellow citizens (perception of a link). Finally data collection will include a series of items concerning the feeling of belonging.

Dependent variables specially studied for these three categories of schools will be:

1. Practical modules of citizenship education: (a) as they are described in official texts, and (b) as they are described in school policies. Amongst the different aspects that will be questioned, it will be particularly interesting to study the various abilities that are part of the learning of citizenship, such as group work, collaboration, cooperation, pedagogy on the one hand, and democracy, freedom of speech, participation in decision making, listening and tolerance on the other.
2. Social representations of citizenship and its various components (cooperation vs. competition, violence vs. tolerance); the content of these representations will be discussed (a) during interviews with adults in charge of pupils (b) using questionnaires with pupils (attitude scales, free association tasks...)
3. Comparison of texts/documents concerning methods of teaching citizenship education and discourses on citizenship (students' and adults'); this comparison will be done (a) site by site, (b) by grouping schools within the same group and by (c) comparing the three groups.

Expected results

All the results will first be analysed in terms of social representations according to different variables (national context – France and Great Britain – pedagogic context and gender). These results will then be crossed according to whether the associated terms (citizen, competition and violence vs. citizen, cooperation and tolerance) are positively or negatively oriented. Finally these results will also be analysed according to the different types of attitudes, temporal dimension, locus of control and feeling of belonging.

The detailed analysis, founded on examples of citizenship education methods amongst the three types of schools, will in itself produce very interesting results useful to the

elaboration of concrete propositions. We will see whether the systematic introduction of citizenship education in curricula, as it is done in Great Britain and many other European countries, can have the same outcome in France or not.

The discourse analysis of teaching staff will produce precious indicators concerning modalities meant to be used for pedagogic recommendation.

The analysis of students' representations and attitudes will help, more than a simple description, in knowing how to better adapt citizenship education to their language and modes of understanding and apprehending citizenship. The comparison between adults in charge of pupils and pupils, of measures of social representations associated with citizenship (citizen), violence, tolerance, competition and cooperation, will give us precise data on their content as well as on the possible links they would have. Finally the comparison of contents of social representations of citizenship in two countries as dissimilar as France and Great Britain will permit a first approach to a 'European citizenship'.

We hope to introduce a concrete propositions of how to improve citizenship education (e.g. adapting the vocabulary used) and to provide some recommendations for teachers' training in citizenship education.

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