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# 'Citizenship': What does it mean to Trainee Teachers in England, Hungary and Spain?

*Márta Fülöp[1], Ian Davies[2] and Alejandra Navarro Sada[3]*
*[1]Institute for Psychology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest (Hungary), [2]University of York (UK), [3]Universidad Autonoma de Madrid (Spain)*

## Abstract

*This paper presents a comparative work in the area of citizenship. We compared English, Hungarian and Spanish trainee teachers's representation of citizenship. We found important to investigate the perceptions of trainee teachers of different European countries whose thinking is, simultaneously, reflective of the ways in which citizenship is currently perceived in their society and also illustrative of what will happen to the nature of citizenship and citizenship education once it is engaged with in educational and other contexts by key opinion formers such as teachers. We suggest that the members of our sample are both mirrors of what citizenship is, and, actors in its future development.*

## Introduction

This article focuses on the meaning ascribed by trainee teachers in Hungary, England and Spain to the word 'citizenship'. It is important to investigate the perceptions of trainee teachers whose thinking is, simultaneously, reflective of the ways in which citizenship is currently perceived and also illustrative of what will happen to the nature of citizenship and citizenship education once it is engaged within educational and other contexts by key opinion formers such as teachers.

We suggest that trainee teachers in England have an expansive notion of citizenship referring to more ideas and issues than the Hungarians and Spanish. The Hungarians tend to emphasise institutional and national matters in their characterisation of citizenship. English trainees refer more readily to the significance of community, to education and school and ethics, norms and democratic values than the Hungarians. For the Spanish respondents notions related to society and community and ethics norms and democratic values are the most salient and only they connect citizenship to city and city life. Respondents give relatively little attention to a variety of other ways of characterising citizenship and mention only infrequently issues to do with diversity and economic and financial matters. In the final section of this article we suggest some priorities for researchers, policy makers and teachers.

**Context**

*England*

The National Curriculum for Citizenship in England was developed following the Crick report (DfEE/QCA 1998). That report characterised citizenship education as consisting of social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. The National Curriculum Order for citizenship became compulsory for secondary schools in England in September 2002. The latest version may be seen at http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/subjects/citizenship/index.aspx_accessed_14_March_2008). The assessment of citizenship education is compulsory and recently target levels have been declared as in other subjects. The process of implementing the citizenship education programme is assisted by some governmental and NGO support.

*Hungary*

In Hungary the political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s were very significant for prompting support for citizenship education. The framework for curricular work is rather looser than that in England or Spain. The most recent version of the National Core Curriculum (NAT) published by the government in 2007 (http://www.okm.gov.hu/letolt/kozokt/nat_070926.pdf). It lists among the key competencies the 'Social and Civic Competencies', which include interpersonal and intercultural matters and conflict resolution as well as knowledge of democratic institutions and practices, knowledge of citizen's rights and duties, interest in local and wider community, solidarity, sustainable development, respect towards other's values etc. The previous framework curricula published by the Minister of Education in 2003 (http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=390&articleID=2290&ctag= articlelist&iid=1) had already introduced a separate subject in grade 7 called 'Studies of Man and Society'. A small part of this subject should be devoted to civic studies (values of democratic citizenship, public good, rights and responsibilities, social justice, majority/minority).   However, teachers are reluctant to teach contemporary issues and normally use the suggested number of lessons to teach history, claiming that the material to teach is so huge that there is no time to deal with other matters, and also that they are not educated to teach  citizenship issues (Knausz, 2003).

*Spain*

Citizenship education in Spain has been introduced as a compulsory element of schooling relatively recently. The Education Act of Education, LOE, 2/2006, May 3 requires that in Primary and High School students should be prepared for the active practice of citizenship and to show respect for human rights. These objectives are to be met by including a specific subject titled *Citizenship Education and Human Rights*. The extract shown below from the relevant Education Act makes clear the nature of schools' responsibilities:

> Towards this subject all students must achieve a space of reflection, analysis and study of democratic systems, and the principles and rights established in the Spanish Constitution, and in the universal declarations of the human rights, the

same as the shared values that constitute the substrate of the democratic citizenship in a global context. This subject, whose contents cannot be considered in any case an alternative of religious education, it does not enter in contradiction with the democratic practice that must inspire the scholar life and that has to be developed like part of the cross-sectional education in values in all school activities (p. 17163)

The subjects of the National Curriculum are detailed in a specific act developed by the central government which develops the law, objectives, contents and assessment criteria (RD 1631/2006, December 29th). This Act outlines the 'minimum contents' of the subject. These contents are concerned broadly with conflict and cooperation among groups (e.g. family, school, friends, community) and the rights and duties of each person within each group, identifying the diversity and rejecting discrimination that is necessary for the promotion of a democratic society. The minimum contents for primary schools are divided into 3 main parts: individuals and interpersonal relationships; life in the community; and, living in society. The minimum contents for secondary education are divided into 5 main parts: diversity; interpersonal relations and participation; the duties and rights of citizens; democratic schools in the 21st century; and, citizenship in a global world.

The development of citizenship education is at an early stage with, currently in 2008, only seven Autonomous Communities, from seventeen, having put into practice Citizenship Education into their schools.

**Methods**

Our sample consisted of 300 trainee teachers with an equal number of males and females in the three national samples. See Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Trainee teachers supplying data**

|        | *English* | *Hungarian* | *Spanish* |
|--------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| Male   | 42        | 42          | 42        |
| Female | 58        | 58          | 58        |
| All    | 100       | 100         | 100       |

We employed the Associative Group Analysis technique (AGA). This was developed by Lorand Szalay in the late 1960s. The basic procedure in using AGA is to obtain free word associations and compare the results between different groups of respondents. A stimulus word is given (a 'theme'), and respondents independently write as many free associations as they can in one minute. Analysis of the associations is achieved by scoring the responses indicating the weighted order of their occurrence. Earlier responses are seen as more closely associated with the stimulus word and to carry more meaning, therefore they get higher scores. The weightings assigned to responses beginning with the first in the sequence are: 6 (first), 5 (second), 4 (third), 3 (fourth), 3 (fifth), 3 (sixth), 3 (seventh), 2 (eighth), 2 (ninth), 1 (tenth and others).

When all the lists were scored, and the Hungarian and Spanish associations were translated into English the three researchers compared what had been gathered.

**Findings**

Our findings are shown below.

**Table 2.  Number of associations, average number of associations and overall weights**

|  | Eng m | Eng f | Eng all | Hun m | Hun f | Hun all | Span m | Span f | Span all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of respondents | 42 | 58 | 100 | 42 | 58 | 100 | 42 | 58 | 100 |
| Number of associations | 206 | 356 | 562 | 288 | 372 | 660 | 249 | 334 | 583 |
| Average number of associations | 4.9 | 6.14 | 5.62 | 6.86 | 6.41 | 6.6 | 5.92 | 5.8 | 5.83 |
| Weights of associations | 859 | 1373 | 2232 | 1052 | 1397 | 2449 | 891 | 1288 | 2269 |

**Table 3. Description of the semantic categories for the concept of citizenship with their most frequent associations**

| Category | Associations |
|---|---|
| Democratic Institutions | Politics, law, citizen, government, voting, state |
| Society and Community | Society, community, community awareness, environmental protection,   religion, social responsibility , team work, cooperation |
| National  and National Symbols | Nation/national, Hungarian, British, homeland, national flag |
| Rights and Duties | Duties, rights, responsibilities, obligations |
| Ethics, Norms and Democratic Values | Democracy, respect, morals, ethics, loyalty, equality, freedom |
| Diversity/ Global | Culture, global, tolerance, foreigners, immigrants, multiculturalism |
| Education and School | PSE, PHSE, education |
| Personal Development and Skills | Skills (social, life etc.), development, growing up, self-improvement |
| Work/Economics | Careers, work and work experience, money, economics |
| City Life | City, town, buildings, urban zone |
| Other | Words that were not categorisable e.g. lawn-mowing, yellow, warm etc. |

**Table 4. Categories of associations, number of associations, weights of associations, percentages of associations in the English, Hungarian and Spanish groups**
(N=number, Wt=weighted score)

| Categories | ENGLISH | | | HUNGARIAN | | | SPANISH | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Wt | % | N | Wt | % | N | Wt | % |
| Democratic Institutions | 112 | 433 | 19.4 | 235 | 862 | 35.2 | 62 | 259 | 11 |
| Society and Community | 150 | 605 | 27.1 | 65 | 239 | 9.7 | 227 | 915 | 40 |
| National and National Symbols | 23 | 97 | 4.3 | 179 | 695 | 28.4 | 6 | 13 | 0.6 |
| *National, Patriotic* | *22* | *91* | *4.1* | *149* | *589* | *24.0* | *6* | *13* | *0.6* |
| *National Symbols* | *1* | *6* | *0.3* | *30* | *106* | *4.3* | *0* | *0* | *0* |
| Rights and Duties | 64 | 253 | 11.3 | 67 | 254 | 10.3 | 18 | 52 | 2.3 |
| Ethics, Norms, Democratic Values | 76 | 308 | 13.8 | 35 | 129 | 5.3 | 110 | 435 | 19 |
| Diversity and Global | 27 | 92 | 4.1 | 41 | 131 | 5.3 | 39 | 129 | 6 |
| Education and School | 45 | 189 | 8.5 | 5 | 17 | 0.7 | 38 | 142 | 6 |
| Personal Develop-ment and Skills | 31 | 128 | 5.7 | 2 | 11 | 0.4 | 7 | 34 | 1.5 |
| Work and Economics | 21 | 80 | 3.6 | 2 | 8 | 0.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| City Life | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 62 | 259 | 11 |
| Other | 13 | 47 | 2.1 | 29 | 103 | 4.2 | 14 | 45 | 2 |
| *Totals* | **562** | **2232** | **100** | **660** | **2449** | **100** | **583** | **2269** | **100** |
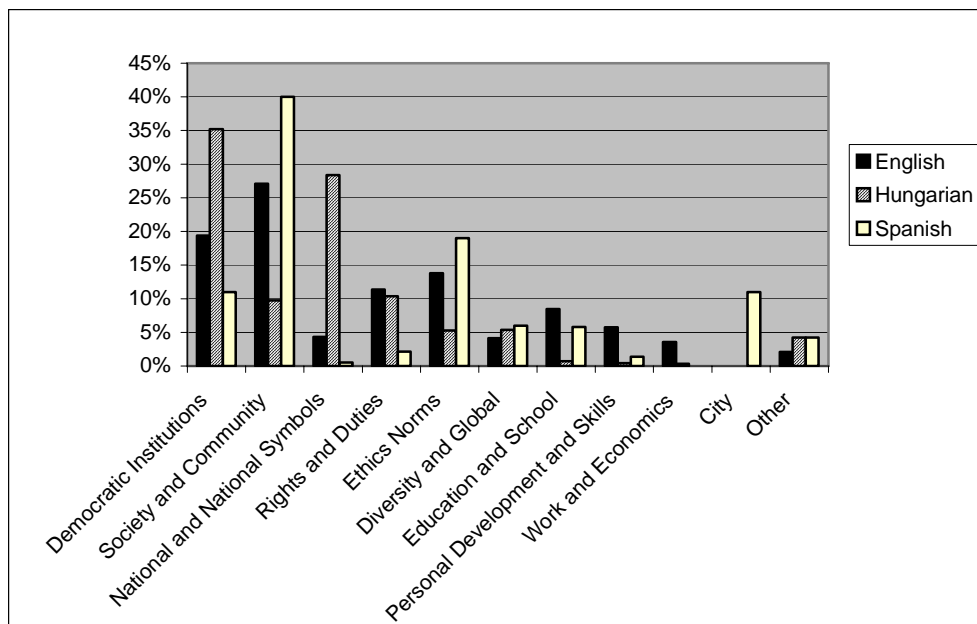


**Figure 1. Distribution of associations in the English, Hungarian and Spanish groups**

**Discussion**

*Citizenship: focussed or expansive?*

English respondents include a broader range of categories than those from Hungary and Spain. The words 'focussed' and 'expansive' in the above sub title have been deliberately chosen for their positive connotations. It would, however, have been equally possible to have referred to 'narrowly exclusive' and 'vague'. Democratically conducted debates about citizenship need to be inclusive and wide ranging but the point at which those debates become incoherent is currently uncertain. As such we are dealing with 2 related issues when we analyse our data: the extent to which citizenship has achieved international consensus (beyond an acceptance of the word itself), and the achievement of a conception of citizenship that is appropriate for a democratic society. We would not wish to suggest that lack of consensus is necessarily a good thing; nor would we want to argue that there is no possibility of identifying a better conception of citizenship than others.

It is also important to note that gender may play an important role in these considerations. It is noticeable that English females have a higher average of number of responses; Hungarian males have a higher average than females; whilst the Spanish males and females are roughly equal in the number of responses. The burgeoning debates about the role of gender in citizenship (e.g. Arnot and Dillabough 2000) need to be considered further.

*The Significance of Institutional Politics*

The Hungarians seem to associate more readily than the English or Spanish to a conception of citizenship that is based around institutional politics. There have been consistent research findings from English samples about the reluctance to engage with institutional politics. Crick's emphasis on community involvement and social and moral responsibility as well as political literacy seems reflected in the English and Spanish responses. And yet, the English and Spanish samples may be missing what Hungarians may know: that the rights and duties that are associated with formal membership of a polity may only be achieved if that status is accepted and recognised.

Hungarians who have experienced suppression by the Soviet Union and the relatively recent emergence of a more democratic society are perhaps more likely than others to focus on a re-emerging national identity expressed through national institutions. The reference to nationality and national symbols can have two different meanings in Hungary: an unwelcome nationalism and an emphasis on the nation as an independent entity.

English and Spanish hardly use the category "National and national symbols". In light of our results we suggest that in case of the English recent attempts to promote 'Britishness' by, in part, providing opportunities for young people to swear allegiance to the crown (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7287984.stm accessed 20 March 2008) are unlikely to succeed. In the case of the Spanish national symbols generally have a

connection with dictatorship (http://lacomunidad.elpais.com/juanragrm /2008/3/18/los-simbolos-nacionales accessed 28 April 2008)

Community and social cohesion is now often emphasised in the UK as part of the drive that might help reduce the threat of terrorist attacks. 'Society and Community' was regarded as being associated with citizenship primarily by the English and Spanish. This could mean that the notion of citizenship has a strong connotation of belonging to a community and that, for the English and Spanish, citizenship has a socially cohesive aspect. In contrast to this, Hungarian respondents refer less to society and community and more to the nation. Of course, simple involvement in the community may not be unproblematic. Communitarianism is not necessarily a benign force. Its potential to confirm inequalities by emphasising the capacity of elites with leisure time and financial security to become more active is not necessarily the democratic inclusive involvement that is imagined by some.

The Spanish and English refer also more frequently to ethics and norms (which we interpret, broadly, as a commitment to norm and value related appropriate thinking and action) than do the Hungarians. Behavioural ethics and norms refer here to the community as a group and the ways in which social behaviour are regulated within this context. Because citizenship is regarded by the Hungarians as being more institutionally based and less to do with belonging to a community norms that regulate group life are less salient for them.

The Hungarian and the English samples both refer positively to rights and duties but may see the meaning of those concepts and practices differently. The Hungarians, favouring a more focused institutionally based and nationally enacted view, compared with the more expansive and community based outlook of the English and Spanish may actually be referring to the need to promote the nation state. Very few (2%) of the Spanish respondents refer to duties and rights.

There may be different notions of individualism in evidence across the samples. Hungary is a post-socialist country characterized by rapid structural changes that are perceived to require adaptation. A supposedly 'commonsense' expectation could be that English and Spanish are liberal individualistic citizens while Hungarians are likely to be more readily committed to civic republican collectivism. However, such simplicities are unlikely to be meaningful in relation to the complexities of the perceptions of individuals and groups. There is a rich vein of attachment to a sense of associational activity in England and Spain. In Hungary the socialist tradition was only of relatively short duration and may have had limited impact. During the socialist era, in research work undertaken in the 1970s (Hunyady 1998), clear expressions of individuality were revealed.

The Spanish mentioned a separate category that connects citizenship to city life. This may have a semantic connotation connected to the derivation of the words 'ciudad', 'ciudadano', 'ciudadanía' or perhaps with notions of what it means to live in a big city rather than a smaller town.

*What is not mentioned?*

We were very surprised that diversity did not come up more frequently. The publication of a major report on diversity and citizenship in the UK (Dfes 2006) appeared just after our respondents had supplied us with data and as such similar research might now lead to different results. Economic conceptions were not mentioned very often with nobody in Spain and very few others raising issues about money or work. Of course, it is possible that our samples imagined that these things would be subsumed in other matters. For example, a society that pays due attention to rights and duties will ensure that they are enacted in all contexts. Notions of social class, gender, multiculturalism, perhaps, need not be mentioned if one has focussed on an overarching conception of justice. And yet, given comments in the media, government reports and international issues raised about diversity and economics we were surprised.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

We wish to suggest that teachers can, broadly, be characterised by reference to notions of instruction and education. If a teacher is conceptualized as an instructor then he/she has to deal with his/her particular subject and will not perceive that the task of a teacher to socialize young people in the name of a particular concept of 'man' in a normative way. However, if a teacher is conceived as an educator then she/he can promote the socialization of active citizens who contribute to their community and society. Crockett and Silbereisen (2000) suggest that under Socialist regimes, schools were supposed to be responsible for socialising children to be 'good citizens', and were required to instil values reflecting a "socialist personality". Following the political changes, however, personality development became the almost exclusive province of the family, and the role of schools was rather limited to teaching cognitive skills. Therefore schools in the post-socialist countries are reluctant to 'impose' their own views on students, as this is not considered to be democratic. There is, therefore, no compulsory citizenship education connected to a specific subject in the Hungarian school and no discourse on its introduction as a separate school subject. This lack of explicit civic or citizenship education has consequences. Van Hoorn et al (2000) showed in a study carried out with secondary school students in Hungary between 1992-1994 that students had no clear concept about citizenship, they were not interested in citizenship and they did not think that school has any role to play in citizenship education.

Using a broader notion of citizenship and a commitment to community, citizenship education in England and Spain has become a National Curriculum subject. We do not wish to suggest that the implementation of citizenship education in England and Spain was motivated solely by democratic considerations. We do not suggest that it has necessarily been characterized appropriately for a diverse pluralist society. We are not prepared to argue that it is achieving positive outcomes. But in England and Spain, although controversial, citizenship education is a formal part of the governments' agenda and we regard that positively.

We need to find out more about what teachers actually do in their different contexts. What connection, if any, is there between policy statements and what is taught and learned? Does the Hungarian teacher with real experience of political change know more

than others about how to act to build democracy? Is the rhetoric associated with international surveys of educational action for citizenship (e.g. Torney-Purta 2007) of what works (collaborative school ethos, active discussion in classrooms, engagement with communities within and beyond the school) convincing? Perhaps the most obvious challenge is to explore what happens when different notions of citizenship are promoted in educational contexts that may not be conducive to the achievement of the ends that are explicitly declared.

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