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The Cosmopolitan Challenge in Citizenship Education

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Abstract

An increasingly number of educators think that global interconnectedness introduces the very idea that citizenship education should be understood partly in cosmopolitan terms. One cosmopolitan challenge, then, is to make school leaders, teachers and pupils formed through communication in their local community aware of their obligations and responsibilities to global others. In this paper I discuss how and why dialogical communication is crucial for schools caring for learning and democracy with respect for global others. First, I discuss the characteristics of a qualified concept of dialogue for school practises. Second, I discuss interview data from Swedish school leaders and teachers about citizenship education. Finally, I suggest that a communicative leadership is crucial to schools taking reflective learning, democracy and global responsibility seriously.

In the tradition of citizenship education one can find ideals and practises aiming at sameness; the formation of one people with one voice with their nation as the centre for self identification and moral obligation. Voices poorly attuned to a harmonious national order were not treated as equals, and moreover, they had to be attuned to the voice of the many. However, today different voices within nations are often interpreted as diverse or plural rather than dissonant, and claims for cultural recognition and acknowledgement of difference has set a new agenda for citizenship education. Earlier efforts to create common identities in common schools are now largely substituted with the moral demand to acknowledge and respect uncommon identities in common schools. Moreover, our co-existing in a global risk society where people anywhere can affect people everywhere give raise to discussions about whether or not citizenship education should be cosmopolitan, that is, taking seriously our responsibilities and obligations to global others living near or distant in our educational institutions and practices.

National citizenship education is put under pressure from different directions; groups from within nations are demanding equal recognition for their lifestyle and culture; we have moral responsibilities to outsiders that we used to think of as not one of us, but with whom we co-exist in a world risk society. The aim of this paper is to discuss a real challenge for present and future citizenship education that traditionally has been closely connected to national concerns, that is, the cosmopolitan challenge.

Citizenship education in the name of the nation

The idea that public education should prepare for citizenship is globally widespread and connected to the roots of modern public education. Citizenship education is and has been an essential and constitutive part of public education in nations all over the world. The scope, meaning and actual practices of citizenship education differ and must differ between nations, but to some extent also between particular regions and schools within a nation. However, one uniting strand has run through different national public school systems since their birth: citizenship education has served as a vehicle for shifting people's loyalties from bonds and practices established mainly in their local communities, to a wider and more abstract context of self-identification and moral obligation: the nation.

The shift from a local to a national context has usually meant efforts to create national bonds and loyalties in different dimensions of citizenship: *moral bonds* in terms of national norms, values and virtues; *cultural bonds* in terms of national languages, common world views and knowledge, but also shared national religions; *political bonds* in terms of passing on the roles, rights, duties and competencies of citizenship in relation to the state and the civil society to the next generation; and, finally, *historical bonds* in terms of teaching a common history crucial for the formation of a national identity and a sense of continuity in and belongingness to the nation. Stuart Hall's (1996/2004) analysis of national cultures reveals that "however different its members may be in terms of class, gender, or race, a national culture seeks to unify them into one cultural identity, to represent them all as belonging to the same great national family" (p. 605). Therefore, below their homogeneous surface nation states can be understood as cultural

hybrids politically declared as units; units typically woven together by means of lengthy processes of more or less violent and suppressive conquest.

Nation states have become taken for granted as socio-political givens rather than highly contingent features of the human life world. It is easy to perceive the nation state as a natural kind for self-identification, societal demarcation and moral obligation. James Tully's (1995) discussion of how nation states came to be reminds us of their accidental nature and moral problematic. The constitution of modern states developed mainly in relation to two kinds of struggle for recognition: "the equality of independent, self-governing nation states and the equality of individual citizens." (p.15). In Europe, nation states first developed in opposition to the outside force of imperia (the Papacy and the Roman Empire) but also to the feudal society within the evolving nations. However, this did not end the imperial tradition. It continued when the new born independent nations entered the non-European world, and to a certain extent within the nation states towards groups poorly attuned to their political majority cultures. When the struggle against outside forces was stabilized through power balance by means of strategic negotiations and the threat or use of sanctions, the nation states made efforts to create national identities in a domestic imperial fashion. The different voices of the nation's social body were to be attuned to the voice of one people loyal to a father country demarcated and defined by the state.

Seyla Benhabib (2002) describes nationalistic movements as rejecting the plural voices and the always present otherness that make up cultures and social life. Nationalists are typically busy erasing impure elements in their narrative of a unified socio-cultural body: they "attempt to create forced unity out of diversity, coherence out of inconsistencies, and homogeneity out of narrative dissonance" (p. 8). Soon, the tuning process for socio-cultural unity and political loyalty met resistance from within. Groups within different nation states reacted against domestic imperialism and claimed their right to cultural recognition, and the right to a life of their own choice and tradition. The domestic groups did not seek to build new nations, rather; they wanted rights and recognition within existing nation states. James Tully interprets the first outside struggle for the constitution of equal and independent nation states, and the later inside struggle for cultural recognition as a final blow to imperialism: "in this light, the politics of cultural recognition is a continuation of the anti-imperialism of modern constitutionalism, and thus the expression of a genuinely post-imperial age" (Tully, 1995, p. 17).

Educational institutions came to play crucial roles in the formation of nation states. All over the world schools have been thought of as the appropriate and primary institution for citizenship education, despite disagreement on the detailed character of and strategies for education in the name of the nation. Dave Mathews' (1996) categorization of different strategies for citizenship education in the liberal west show striking and interesting similarities in comparison with Tully's work. At first, citizenship education was domestic imperialistic and mainly aiming at instilling essential values and practises in the (future) citizens. After the Second World War it became important to educate citizens to think for themselves, appreciate scientific rationality and to grasp and accept the reality and value of democratic governance. This can be seen as a mild form of domestic imperialism in its aspiration to create rational citizens informed by the primary language of science and loyal to meritocratic democracy fuelled by the "value neutral" intellectual landscape of logical positivism. During the seventies, the consensus (or harmony) view of the nation was challenged, and conflicts within nations were now recognized without given solutions. By the end of the last century, understanding, respect and tolerance in relation to differences and plurality became important to embrace in citizenship education.

There are striking similarities between the anti-imperialism concluded by Tully and the movement towards the recognition of difference in citizenship education. Maybe the movement is reflecting without fulfilling essential aspects of citizenship education in a truly post-imperial age: an age where the inclusion and not the exclusion of the other set the agenda for citizenship and citizenship education. Against this background the cultural and moral problems built into the very formation of nation states, but also into the tradition of citizenship education becomes clear. First, moral responsibility and obligation has become too closely tied to ones (attuned) fellow members of the nation and its political majority culture. In the worst cases, outsiders or deviators could be acted upon without moral constraint. Second, minorities and individuals poorly attuned to the political majority culture were not recognized as equal valuable members of society. They were dissonant voices in the national narratives, and their inclusion was dependent on their attunement with others rather than their recognition by others.

It is against this background I would like to begin my framing of the cosmopolitan challenge in citizenship education, and particularly citizenship education with nationalistic aims and nationalistic understanding of social demarcation and moral obligation.

The Cosmopolitan Challenge in Citizenship Education

Today national citizenship education is not only put under post-imperialistic pressure for recognition, it is also clearly challenged by the forces of globalization. Recent claims for the *social reality of and the moral demand for cosmopolitanism* can be understood as a response to globalization and post-imperialism in a world risk society. Ulrich Beck (2004, 2005) claims that 'risk' captures the dynamics of the limited controllability of the dangers and problems we have created for ourselves. *Spatially*, we are concerned with risks and problems that show no respect for national boundaries; *temporally*, we can not foresee consequences of practises that affect people globally, such as global warming, nuclear waste, genetically modified food and an increased consumer lifestyle on global markets; *culturally*, we can acknowledge the plural voice of our cultures, and learn from and shape ourselves in relation to different cultural traditions and expressions; *socially*, we are increasingly becoming individualized members of a world consumer society affected by global capital, culture and communication; *politically*, the sovereign and independent nation state has become a social fiction rather than a social fact, and many Europeans actually are dual citizens in the transnational European Union; and *morally* one can hardly defend moral responsibility defined in strictly nationalistic terms in a post-imperial age where the intellectual landscape is no longer drawn by positivist architects and where human rights is a part of the moral political landscape.

The demand for cross-cultural communication, learning and problem solving has become a social reality since people almost anywhere can and do affect people almost everywhere. Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) stresses the need for ideas and institutions that can help us to live together as the global tribe we have become, and one can ask: are educational institutions proper institutions for such a cosmopolitan task in a post-imperial age where nationalistic domestic imperialism should be replaced with cultural recognition and the inclusion of the other? Our global interconnectedness introduces the very idea that society should be understood as a world risk society, and that social and moral responsibility but also citizenship education should be understood, at least partly, in cosmopolitan terms. However, to make a claim for cosmopolitan citizenship and education is to break with citizenship tradition where one has obligations to fellow citizens within a nation. National citizenship is connected to concrete rights against and duties to a sovereign state rather than to abstract moral obligations to the rest of humanity. (Linklater, 1998) Moreover, the idea of a cosmopolitan citizenship education can seem meaningless without a global state. A citizen of the world is a citizen of a very well intended but wrongheaded abstraction (Waldron, 2003). These objections to cosmopolitanism are common but they can be understood as framed exclusively from a nationalistic outlook keeping us from making new important moves in citizenship education.

The concept of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' can challenge the unfinished moral business of the nation state. Cosmopolitan citizenship is an expression of a truly post-imperial age aiming at more inclusive institutions, schools and moral habits yet to be recognized within the nation state. It makes us aware that the interests of ones fellow citizens cannot automatically take priority over our duties to others (Linklater, 1998). The absence of a global state and a global legal status as world citizen does not make the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship empty because citizens are actually held responsible for their social actions in a global civil society. It is rather the opposite: the absence of a global state makes us more dependent on cosmopolitan citizens with inclusive moral dispositions. Melissa Williams (2007) argues that we should not reduce citizenship to its legal status. Historically, the concept of citizenship signifies a role and a status. One might act in the role without having the status, and one might have the status without ever acting in the role. Cosmopolitan citizenship can refer to new activities or roles of political engagement without reduction to the legal use of the term. New roles consistent with important changes in the conditions for identity formation in the world risk society.

Our social life has been transformed by globalisation and people often have multi vocally shaped identities and wide loyalties transcending the nation state. Today nationalistic citizenship education fails to take young peoples experiences seriously in that they are likely to have shifting and multi vocally shaped identities, and a sense of belonging that is not expressed primarily in nationalistic terms. Osler and Starkey (2003) point to the fact that increased migration and demographic changes means new conditions

for identity formation, not to mention the impact of different global communication media and increased social diversification within nations. In urban areas in particular, school populations display increased cultural diversity, but also the presence of refugees and asylum seekers. From a sociological standpoint, the term 'cosmopolitanism' can capture changed conditions for identity formation and it differs from 'multiculturalism' in an important matter in that it presupposes and affirms a trait typical for late modern societies, that is, individualization (Beck, 2005).

Each person is a member of different communities at the same time, and our personal identities are shaped and created in numerous interactions with several people in various contexts with different meanings. In a single lifetime one might live quite different but continuous lives affected by different voices. Ulrich Beck (2005, p. 284) makes a distinction between cosmopolitanism that affirms individualization, and multiculturalism that mainly presupposes collective categories on behalf of the individual. Multiculturalism often refers to quite homogeneous groups which are conceived of as being either different or the same, but mainly separated off from one another. In this sense, multiculturalism downplays the individual who merely becomes a cultural dope, but also the narrative and dialogical, perhaps multi-logical, character of identity formation. This means that cosmopolitanism is not only an unfinished moral business from a normative standpoint, but also a social reality in terms of how children, young people and their teachers can shape their identities. Moreover, the concept of cosmopolitanism is not only reflecting the social reality of a global elite moving in the backwater of global capital and power, rather; it is the social reality of many groups with radically different possibilities of moving in the global world risk society which we all are a part of.

Cosmopolitanism means acknowledgement of and respect for differences and the affirmation of near and distant others as both different and equal members of society (Beck, 2005). In a moral sense, cosmopolitanism is essentially the awareness that we all have responsibilities and obligations to others that stretch beyond those we are related to as family, neighbours or fellow citizens. It stresses the importance of taking seriously the value not merely of human life in general but of particular human beings. Local or national loyalty can never justify neglecting that each human being has responsibilities to every other one. Cosmopolitans need not to be totally impartial because we cannot expect ourselves to have the same feelings and sympathies for the strangers we meet as we have for our friends and loved ones (Appiah, 2006 and Calhoun, 2007), rather; differences between people mean reasons and possibilities to listen to and learn from equal others and, of course, moral responsibilities. The social reality of and the moral demand for cosmopolitanism, has now entered the landscape of education as an important continuation of post-imperial citizenship education not to be neglected. Jeremy Waldron (2003) is one educator who proposes that the moral outlook we should teach our children is equal concern for all humans in the world, and encourage and support an inclusive moral identity formation that involves to recognize humanity in others and to respond humane to humans of every cultural form.

In a world risk society where we increasingly are becoming individualized members of a world consumer society, it might be tempting to reduce cosmopolitan citizenship education to global consumer power. The workings of free flowing capital on a global market are just one example of how changed social conditions open up new possibilities for citizenship action. The counter power of the global civil society to the global market can certainly be politically informed consumers who can choose to reject or accept products available on the global market (Beck, 2003, p. 7), but citizenship education cannot and should not be reduced to consumer behaviour on a global market.

Political scientist Jon Elster (1986/1997) claims that market behaviour is quite different from citizenship behaviour. Typically, the consumer chooses between actions that differ only in the way they affect her, but the active citizen is often asked to choose between states that also differ in the way in which they affect other people. Elster suggests that as long as moral dimensions of justice enter into citizenship we cannot equate the consumer practise on the market with citizenship practise in the forum or the public space. Moreover, individual choice is only one aspect of citizenship. In the civil society social interaction and communication are action types that presuppose that the actions of one person are interwoven with the actions of another. Therefore, the very heart of active citizenship and citizenship education can be understood as a cooperative communicative and interactive activity. Citizens must be able to create spaces for communication. In these spaces, the participants can deliberate whatever concerns them and establish sustainable relationships, which implies participation in inclusive mutual non-coercive dialogical communication, learning and opinion- and will formation (Habermas, 1996 and McAfee, 2000).

Cosmopolitan obligations and responsibilities are often connected with communication (Rönnsström, 2009). This is hardly surprising because much of human co-operation, co-existence, learning and development depend on communication. Many educators connect cosmopolitan education to forms of dialogical communication, and the creation of spaces for such communication within schools. Citizenship educator Audrey Osler (2008) thinks of citizenship as a genuine space for collaborative dialogue to which different people can bring their experiences, values and perspectives. She also thinks of the educated cosmopolitan citizen as a reflective, personally responsible, peaceful partner in dialogue, respectful to diversity and cultural heritage and a promoter of equity and solidarity (Osler and Starkey, 2003). Educational philosopher Klas Roth's (2007) suggestions for cosmopolitan learning involves rights and opportunities to engage in non-coercive deliberative communication upon whatever concerns the affected, recognition of both sameness and difference in human encounters and a holistic view of learning including subjective (beliefs, values, feelings, needs), intersubjective (relational, interactional, communicative) as well as objective knowledge.

The cosmopolitan challenge in citizenship education can, therefore, be understood as how to educate people: (a) whose moral responsibilities and obligations transcend their local and national contexts to include all individual and groups of human beings in the world risk society; (b) who can dialogically communicate with and are willing to learn from others, near or distant, and recognize others in terms of being same, different, equal but not necessarily right, no matter what cultural background they come from; (c) whose understanding of citizenship is active, responsible and inclusive and not exclusively connected to national interests, its legal status and the right to vote; and, (d) who acknowledge the plural source of ones culture, understand relations of interdependence and independence in the world risk society and who can critically identify moral problematic aspects of nationally formed habits, institutions and education.

That last critical aspect is not be neglected because many of our theoretical and everyday social concepts are closely connected to nationalistic agendas easily taken for granted. Sociologist Ulrich Beck (2005, p. 18) claims that the present and globally widespread neo-liberal agenda includes a moral promise: what is good for capital is good for all. The promise is that globally moving capital can be expected to be a fair and equal means for justice. However, increasing global injustice does fly in the face of that promise. Between 1960 and 2000 the global income enjoyed by the richest 20 per cent of the world's population increased from 70 to 90 per cent, while the small part of the income distributed to the poorest 20 per cent fell from 2.3 to 1 per cent (Beck, 2005). From the perspective of cosmopolitan citizenship education, this is a social fact that might be neglected if society and moral responsibility is equated with the nation state rather than the globally interconnected world risk society. Therefore, the cosmopolitan challenge also involves critical, widened and inclusive application of many concepts aiming at capturing social and political affairs, such as 'nation', 'society', 'justice', 'the market', 'democracy', 'responsibility' etc.

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