

Education for European Citizenship - The school as the foundation of European Construction¹

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Abstract

This study aims to show the necessity of educating for European citizenship so that citizenship rights introduced in the Maastricht Treaty are actually benefited and experienced by citizens of Europe. It also urges to make known the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Citizens. This reality would transform formal citizenship in active citizenship, and citizens of Europe in true European citizens. This is the meaning to celebrate a European Year of the citizens (2013): to show that there is still no real participation of Europeans in the current European construction and future Europe. For this utopia to come true, the challenge lies in education. Educating for European Citizenship.

Keywords

Education, Europe, Citizenship, Charter of the Fundamental Rights, European Constructio

"You must change your soul, not your climate. (...)

Walking from side to side does not help anything,
because you always walk in your own company. "

Séneca

A Citizens' Europe?

Although the European dimension of citizenship has been registered for over 20 years in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), which reads as follows: "Citizenship of the Union is established" and "Citizens of the Union shall mean any person who has the nationality of a Member State," in reality, it is a formal mechanism for

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asserting an unacceptable right and therefore not lived by the citizens of the 28 member states. This citizenship inscribed in the treaties and the object of the most eloquent speeches of politicians, is not lived as an active citizenship, an essential objective to give it the necessary visibility. So, to the question "Are you a Portuguese citizen, a European citizen or both?" Even the younger respond: "I feel more Portuguese, I am also Danish, is not it? But I feel Portuguese and Danish, I do not feel ...so European ... I mean, of course I feel more European than African! But I do not really feel like a European citizen " (Cardona, p.9). Citizenship is, after all, the set of many things that we usually do not even relate to it. This is the case of solidarity, tolerance, cooperation, responsibility, civility, respect for the freedom of others, participation in collective life and a rigorous knowledge of the rights and duties that transform individuals into citizens. It is an eminently active citizenship. A citizenship in crisis. In fact, it also separates the successes, the constructions, the positive of a project that was supposed to be humanistic and self-loathing with its own failure.

There were promises fulfilled which gave rise to important advances both at the socio-political level and at the cultural level. Tapias emphasizes the path of parliamentary democracy, the gradual course of a compulsory public education for all, and the fundamental (and foundational) achievement of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen proclaimed by the Revolution of 1789. And with Touraine, there is the emergence of the idea of subject that, according to him, "becomes the only possible link between economic or administrative rationalization and moral consciousness." But we can not forget, on the other hand, that the entrance hall in the twentieth century was the fact that the human being was in this machine of violence and death (i.e., World War I); thus contradicting the basic idea of this project that was intended to be humanistic and emancipatory (who early affirmed the emancipatory sense of history, as guaranteed by his own internal tendencies), the idea of order and progress - the law of irreversible progress. This human hecatomb, unfortunately, was followed by other catastrophes that make the twentieth century the most violent century in the history of humanity, especially since it is a century where a surprising level of knowledge has been reached, hence the designation of information society, society cognitive or knowledge society. It is this alliance of knowledge to barbarism that intrigues us. Totalitarian, authoritarian, fascist or communist regimes, Nazi barbarism and World War II, the wars of decolonization, the Cold War, the Middle East conflict, bloody ethnic conflicts, terrorism, etc., all with their myriad victims !

That which was first announced as the century of great human conquests, the fruit of an overwhelming scientific-technological development and economic progress that seemed to have no end, turns out to be the century of great crises, leading to a serious civilizational crossroads, in the words of Tapias, which we repeat, is the crisis of the cultural and civilizational model of the West with worldwide repercussions.

Europe and Europeans

It should be noted that, although intellectual elites since the founding fathers of Europe have always included Europeans in European Construction, policies have gone quite differently, building Europe on economic foundations and a legal facade (difficult to reverse the situation), including social policies and instituting a specific chapter on citizenship of the union. However, the words about a Europe for the Europeans of the visionaries of Europe, would not be forgotten by the history that will come to them to be right. One of these men would be the outstanding figure of Jean Monnet, who in his Memoirs, in addition to his autobiography, makes an in-depth reflection on the idea of a true European union that can not emerge without a union of the European peoples. His words are the reflection of the awareness of the distance between the European ideal and the European reality in draft. In your time as in the time in which we live:

“When we consider this period, which corresponded to the middle of the century, we are struck by the extraordinary intellectual effervescence surrounding the European ideal. If we re-read the manifestoes of the parties and the militant movements, the declarations of the political leaders, and the articles in the press—the Economist and the Times of London published admirable editorials worthy of the Federalist of Jay, Hamilton, and Madison—we have the feeling that a chain of thought as rich as this could only lead to the realization of the broadest European unity. And it is true that today's vocabulary and communal dialectics were already fixed at the time, but this had nothing to do with action. In 1946, in Zurich, Churchill appealed for the emergence of the United States of Europe - but he had in mind the Council of Europe. In 1929, in Geneva, Briand advocated a federal link between the peoples of Europe - but had specified that the sovereign rights of States would not thereby be affected. Nevertheless, the opinion was convinced that the magic formulas had been pronounced and did not understand that the reality would resist so obstinately”. (MONNET, p.287).

This founder of Europe was aware that reality did not correspond to the European ideal and that people were not participating in the European project which was increasingly showing that the interests of states overlapped with the interests of citizens. And the European Union thought by the founders was increasingly a community of economic interests and a rivalry, even if disguised, between the states of this so-called union: "On the other hand, we were concerned with the real situation, which far from approaching of the European Union, progressively removed its opportunities. France opposed its allies with regard to German politics and its diplomacy plunged in the past. " Jean Monnet confessed that Robert Schuman himself was disillusioned with the unfolding of events:

“For a sensitive man who had established as the supreme goal of his political life the reconciliation between the two peoples, was the beginning of a period of great perplexity. What to do? he asked those around him. My feelings, he knew them: Peace can only be based on equality, "I said. We failed peace in 1919 because

we introduced discrimination and a spirit of superiority. We are starting the same mistakes again. ". (MONNET, p.289).

Words about the course of history and its repetition, and that the lessons of history are sometimes not well learned. Peace was only true if it were a peace between the peoples of Europe, and it was not the result of agreements of interests between states. It was something soulful and much deeper. So, as today, it was necessary to build the bastions of peace through feelings of union of values among the peoples of Europe, driven by the voice of their states: "Nothing is possible without men, nothing is lasting without institutions" Jean Monnet was a visionary of this United Europe of Peoples, but was well aware of the difficulties of the slow process of European construction, for its pioneering:

“We want to establish the relations of France and Germany on an entirely new basis ... and turn that which divides them, especially the war industries, into a common benefit which will also benefit Europe. Europe will rediscover the eminent role it played in the world and that its divisions made it lose. Their unity will not affect their diversity, quite the contrary. This diversity, which is its wealth, will be beneficial to civilization and will influence the evolution of powers like America itself.

This unity in diversity pointed the way towards respect for the identity of its citizens, with the possibility of conjugation with a common European identity before other peoples and states outside Europe. The European ideal of Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman looked good, but difficult to realize. Many challenges lay within and outside Europe itself, and the effects of successive wars and a trembling peace passed on to the citizens of Europe, who were in a state of restlessness and to whom the idea of Europe seemed a chimera and the possibility of even new conflicts” (MONNET, 359).

The role of education

Summing up, following the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, we can say that there is a set of (paradoxical) tensions that urges (re) thinking *hic et nunc*: tradition versus modernity - the importance of traditional and modern, without the loss of identity, maintaining that element that allows us to say that, despite the inexorable becoming of time, we belong to this culture, this society.

The world is becoming a diverse, interdependent and increasingly urban reality. The city undoubtedly occupies a prominent place. The technological, scientific and economic revolution that characterizes this time is ours. It runs concurrently with intense, constant and uncontrollable migratory flows, phenomena that originate in the dismantling of the former Eastern Europe, in the disintegration of the social life of the countries underdeveloped, in ethnic conflicts, etc.

People who are looking for a chance to survive in the old democratic world, associated with exits from Europe brought about by the economic and financial crisis and some internal migrations that generate, all over the planet, a sudden recomposition of the social fabric of cities and their suburbs. There, a great diversity of cultures, beliefs and ways of life coexist, which, instead of generating the construction of new shared social meanings, generate conflicts that have their deep root in intolerance: racism, xenophobia, fundamentalisms, integrisms, economicist individualism, alleviation of social causes, etc. Phenomena are presented (along with all that we have already exposed), as central to democracies and which can not be elusive, and hence there is the need to retake the Touraine question: "can we live together?" That is, can we reconcile universality with more open, complex and multicultural societies? We have already seen that the answer is, according to the majority of authors, in the defense of a dialogical and communicative reason, which is the constituent, foundational and weaverly reason for democracy. We have found that this political organization is in crisis, and that, therefore, we need a renewed democracy. This renewal depends, to a large extent, on education, which we also know reflects the general institutional crisis.

The UNESCO report on education for the twenty-first century presents four pillars that education must now take on: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Although they all have the same importance, we would like to emphasize the third: learning to live together which is a central axis to realize the need for education for values in today's multicultural and multi-ethnic societies. But this pillar requires the rest as basic elements. Learning to know continues to be an educational pillar of great relevance, especially in a time when knowledge is the central point in explaining new forms of social and economic organization. Learning to do today is transfigured into a much larger dimension than the mere learning of a profession, although this requirement comes from the world of work as well, and we can not fail to mention the intrinsic connections it has with learning to be, which was the dominant theme of the report of E. Faure, published in 1972, also under the auspices of UNESCO, whose recommendations remain extremely topical in a society in which individualism grows exponentially. Autonomy and personal responsibility appear as necessary conditions for the realization of individual and collective destiny. Learning to live together has to do with the development of knowledge about others and our interdependencies, sharing the analysis about the risks and the challenges of our future, with the possibility of building projects in common, towards a society more consonant with the dignity of all humanity. The dissociation of these pillars, which we affirm to support the educational universe, can only be carried out on a conceptual and methodological level. The educational praxis does not authorize us to unravel the friendly union that allows us to speak of a holistic education that goes to meet the integral personality of the student. An interesting aspect is that the entrepreneurial culture itself claims the need to form complete individuals, that is, citizens.

From what has been expressed, it is concluded that the child is not free to choose whether or not to have an education, but this is something good and, as such, necessary for all: to help the individual to develop the life form that is worth living and to help society by equipping citizens with skills and techniques essential to their development. In this regard, let us recall Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which speaks precisely of the right to education. The current phenomenon of the normative extension of the international ethical dimension of the right to education is real, since there is a widespread recognition of the priority of education as an essential resource for the improvement and happiness of human beings. Happiness, 'well-being' is the ideal of the 'educated man'. One of the aims of a democratic education, or liberal education, is to learn to live with oneself and with others; hence the need for education for responsible citizenship.

But this citizenship can not be that which, traditionally, is linked to the Nation-State, as it has lost, as we have already said, its socializing capacity. So citizenship linked to it presents the same symptoms of a crisis. Hence there is a need to rethink this concept in the light of a civilizational model that has adopted difference, diversity as a central category and which demands from the individual greater levels of responsibility, both individually, professionally and as a citizen of the world. The construction of identity, having as a presupposition this responsible citizenship, is one of the great challenges of the current educational systems.

Another thing we should not forget is that when we talk about democratic education and education for responsible citizenship, we have to make a necessary reference to human rights education, and therefore to the more general problem of values education, although we can never speak neutrally about education, because any education is based on values, whatever the political regime that promotes it. What then will the new reality be? When we explain the concept of education for values, we refer to an ethical education, which is a current necessity for the maturity of the democratic ethos.

Education for citizenship posits an education for human rights and for values, namely ethical and moral values. For, as Roberto Carneiro tells us, any educational act that seeks to bring about a change in the perception of reality or a modification in the stage of consciousness is an education for values.

Education for Citizenship

The great originality of Denis de Rougemont is believing that the way to create a true European union is through education. It is up to teachers to spread the various cultures of European countries as belonging to a European culture. The best way to create European citizens is through European education. True European unity does not begin with politicians, but with citizens educated to be

European. That is why it is necessary for Europe to count on children and young people to become European citizens.

Education for Citizenship is the solution presented for a deeper European construction. It urges e-ducere, that is, to lead the students to "make Europe before making Europe." The same is to say that it is less a matter of teaching the union of Europe than of educating the European in our children through the very style of education.

We live in a historical moment that chose as protagonists the change, the transition, the insecurity, the provisional, the perplexity, the uncertainty, the paradox, the criticism and the crisis. But it is also true that we are aware of this, which extends to the realization that it is the civilizational model of the West (which has been laboriously woven by reason since the Renaissance anthropocentrism) that is in crisis, dragging the crisis of all humanity with it. The West no longer has a geographical meaning, in that, through the technological revolution, it has become planetarized. This globalization entails dramatic, if not tragic, consequences, depending on how we can resolve the crisis that suffocates us, and that is why the problem of our survival is put in the right place. It is worth noting that in the Western world the crisis settled more strongly in old Europe. "The European metamorphosis is unfinished. We are neither caterpillar nor butterfly, we are still in the chrysalis. The decisive effort has yet to be made. The metamorphosis may abort, but it is ongoing. Knowing it is contributing to it." Europe will be the result of this metamorphosis. Europe will also be what European citizens want to make of this unfinished project.

Conclusion

It is urgent to take up again the life of the spirit over material life, the values of things fleeting and so fleeting that they do not give happiness to Europeans or men of this planet: "Everyone is aware of the urgency of a new principle of life. But - as always happens in identical crises - some try to save the moment with an extreme and artificial intensification, precisely, of the outdated principle. This is the sense of the nationalist eruption of the years running." All these nationalisms are dead ends. They are paths that lead nowhere. It is necessary to return to Europe, and decide to build a great nation with the European peoples who are your heart and whose pulse beats uncertain. The Europe of a balanced and happy European citizen is the solution to a Europe that lives in crisis-economic and moral crisis-solving plans for governments and mass men. The first is solved by the economy, the second, much more serious and profound, is resolved by the return to the spiritual values of the West. European citizens need to be emptied of the mass man, of a massification that has led to the worst of individualism. A man emptied of his own history. A man with no future.

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