CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TO COUNTER "THE SCANDAL OF INEQUALITY"

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▶ RENEWED INTEREST IN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

For several years now, teachers and those in charge of national education in several democratic countries have shown a growing interest in citizenship education[1]. Many reasons explain this renewed interest: difficulty in maintaining a favourable climate for learning due to the rise of incivility at schools in underprivileged environments (Costa-Lascoux, 2000); negative side effects of multicultural policies that do not grant sufficient importance to basic social cohesion that allows for an opening onto true diversity (Ouellet, 1992, 2002a); concerns about major transformations in society and a feeling of impending crisis. Galichet claims that these thoughts return periodically "whenever society begins to doubt its inner core and is subject to disorder and dissension that threaten its very existence or question its legitimacy" (Galichet, 1998, p. l).

I will try to illustrate how specific conditions in the post-modern world or hypermodernity bring new challenges to citizenship education and how the pedagogical model of citizenship education is able to meet these challenges

▶ CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IS A VAGUE CONCEPT

The first problem which emerges when trying to define what citizenship education means is that citizenship is an ambiguous concept. Pagé (2001) identifies four concepts of citizenship as defined by theorists that describe the citizenship experienced by actual citizens in today's democracies:

1. The *liberal* concept focuses on *rights that protect the freedom of citizens* to invest in their personal, family and professional growth, does not worry too much about civil participation, except when these rights are threatened;

2. The *pluralist deliberative* concept insists on *participation in the political deliberation of a community*, a guarantee that decisions taken for the common good are compromises acceptable to the entire diversity of citizens;

3. The *differentiated civil citizen* concept stresses participation on a civil scale only, where citizens contribute to the creation of the common good and help satisfy the hopes of communities and limited groups to which they belong;

4. The *national unitarian* concept favours the *development of a strong collective identity* which is the foundation of a cohesive society that respects civil rights.

According to Pagé, a researcher cannot favour any one of these four theoretical citizenship concepts because each one is "legitimate" relative to the fundamental standard of equality that belongs to all citizens in a democratic society (p. 50). There is a "diversity of citizenship formulas that should be studied within citizenship education as legitimate ways of living our citizenship" (p. 10). With empirical research we can determine which one receives greater support from its citizens.

The development of a citizenship education program presupposes that we acknowledge the diversity of legitimate citizenship concepts that co-exist within society. However, this very diversity can make it difficult to agree on the goals of this program.

The difficulty is magnified by the great number of initiatives introduced under the label of citizenship education. The proceedings of the conference *Vers une pédagogie de l'éducation à la citoyenneté*, held at the UQAM faculty of education on November 20 and 21, 2001 (Otero, Cournoyer, Laroque and Marleau, 2002) give us a multiplicity of initiatives whose link to citizenship education is sometimes difficult to see. To get a clearer picture, it can be useful to distinguish four key distinctive components of citizenship education in schools:

- An initiation to a democratic approach within school and as regards classroom management;

- An involvement in community projects on a local, regional, national and global scale;

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[1] This text contains an excerpt of proposals taken from the conference given at the AQPC symposium held on June 8, 2005.

- A study of topics on citizenship in various programs within the curriculum;
- The implementation of a citizenship education program within the curriculum (Ouellet, 2002b, p. 159).

These components help clarify the many initiatives currently generated by the keen interest in citizenship education. The analysis grid on the next page can help us form a judgment on the value of these initiatives. It lists five concerns and values that should be present in all projects dealing with citizenship education. It also underlines the danger of insisting more exclusively on one value over another.

Three concerns and values should be present in any initiative on citizenship education, just as they are at the heart of any intercultural education project. They are **openness to diversity, social cohesion and equality**. Social cohesion, critical involvement in life and democratic deliberation will undoubtedly be more central concerns in citizenship education than in projects on intercultural education.

[…] in a context of globalization and the biodiversity crisis our planet is experiencing, a program of citizenship education can no longer be confined to the borders of a nation or a continent.

However, no citizenship education program or initiative can remain blind to the need for democracies to be more open to diversity than ever before. Moreover, citizenship education must give high priority to equality and equity. Finally, in a context of globalization and the biodiversity crisis of our planet, a program of citizenship education cannot be confined to the borders of a nation or a continent. Ecological concerns must be a part of all citizenship education projects.

▶ **CHALLENGES TO CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE POST-MODERN WORLD**

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POST-MODERN WORLD OR HYPERMODERNITY

The idea of citizenship is a modern concept. The emancipation of individuals from the traditional hierarchies of divine right and their assuming an autonomous responsibility for their collective destiny lie at the heart of the project (Gauchet, 1998; Schnapper, 2000). In an enlightning analysis of the transformation of American society, Manfred Bishoff (1999, 2004) shows that the assumption of responsibility by citizens for their collective destiny has less and less meaning in a contemporary context of work-related rights. In the current "post-modern" [2] context, collective decisions are taken further and further away from citizens. Citizenship has been gradually dissolved into a two-fold process: *the politicisation of economics and the economicisation of politics.*

As soon as the State began to intervene in the economy, it was swallowed up by the economic lobbying of companies. The incorporation of the State into the organizational system practically guaranteed its subordination to a capitalist economy. The

fragmentation and dispersion of the sovereign power of the State as well as the blurring of the lines between the modern State and civil society had serious consequences for the well-being of democracy. The State has lost its ability to serve as a source of reference, arbitration and representation for the many specific and contradictory interests of citizens, guarantor of the "common interest". The voice of citizens carries less and less weight. Only associations and lobby groups speaking on their behalf are now listened to, or firms which are still curiously referred to as "moral entities".

In this context, the State is confined to a simple role of mediator and guarantor of contracts drafted by various organizations that function as autonomous social subsystems that are self-referenced; the integration of society is no longer achieved, as in modernity on a *political-institutional* mode but rather on a *decisional-organizational* mode (Freitag, 1994, 2004a). These sub-systems form what Bischoff calls "the social system of the post-modern world":

The dissolution of citizenship closely follows that of political power. Post modernity has replaced them with a myriad of boards/authorities and fields of organizational participation that creates a system wherein the individual exists socially and "politically" insofar as he is part of the membership and participates in the organizations that have replaced him and the State as *social subject* (Bischoff, 1999, p. 420).

This post-modern system has little protection against totalitarian drifts that make humans superfluous, as occurred in the 20th century with Nazism and totalitarianism (Arendt, 1972).

2 Several authors (Aubert, 2004; Willaime, 2004; De Gaujelac, 2005) prefer to speak of "hypermodernity" to describe the specific conditions of contemporary societies and to show how they differ from modern societies.

According to several analysts, the invasion of all aspects of human existence by "management" is the key danger threatening humanity at the onset of the 21ˢᵗ century[3] (Dagenais, 2004). In light of these analyses, the crisis generating the current interest in citizenship education appears even more profound than the one spoken of by Galichet in his story on citizenship education in France. It is the very concept of citizenship and politics — where citizens take control of their collective destiny — that is being questioned in the recent evolution of democracies.

## THE NEED FOR EDUCATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICTS

These major transformations of "post-modern" democracies obviously have consequences on the way in which citizenship education is perceived today. Galichet provides interesting clues in defining what citizenship education should be in this new situation. In a context of "contradictory and concurrent legitimacy", citizenship education "can now only revolve around learning to manage these contradictory legitimacies that tear apart the fabric of societies and individuals": Citizenship education could not therefore exist without education on conflict and the management of this conflict. This is not a simple conflict of opinion or interests, but truly a conflict of legitimacies, i.e. of normativity (Galichet, 1998, p. 142-143).

Society is no longer a "cohesive whole with well defined values but is torn apart by multiple and exclusive normalcies" (Galichet, 1998, p. 143). There is no longer total correspondence between the values of teachers and those of the various citizen groups. Nor can we request that they expound a kind of common morality proper to the group.

CONCERNS AND VALUES OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION	
Concerns and values	**Dangers of an overly exclusive insistence on one of the concerns/values**
Preservation of cultural diversity and adaptation of institutions to this diversity	- The confinement of individuals within a permanent and immutable cultural identity depriving them of their freedom to choose their "cultural formula". - The strengthening of borders between groups and the increase in intolerance (racism, "communalism"). - The difficulties in accessing equal benefits under the law for immigrants and members of minority groups. - The perplexity of the relativist teacher who no longer knows what he may or may not teach in order to respect the culture of minorities in his classroom. - The stigmatization and marginalization of student minorities that carry a socially devalued identity. - The reification and folklorisation of culture that is no longer a living reality reflecting the changing conditions in society. - The fragmentation of the curriculum under the impact of particularistic demands.
Social cohesion (search for a principle of collective membership / sense of belonging)	- Narrow ethnocentrism. - Chauvinistic nationalism. - Jacobean assimilationism.
Equity and equality	- The tyranny of the majority. - The strengthening of a right wing political movement as a reaction to the "threat" of liberation movements of the oppressed. - The homogenization of cultural and religious differences in left wing ideologies.
Critical participation in democratic life and deliberations	- Elitism. - Abandonment of those who refuse to participate.
Preservation of the biological diversity	- Insufficient attention to the human and cultural dimensions of long-term development.

[3] For a stimulating analysis of the pressures that management logic imposes on individuals, refer to De Gaujelac (2005).
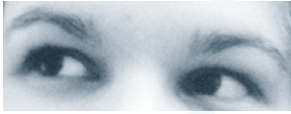
Yet, the relativist and individualist affirmation[4] of "each individual according to his own values" would not prove satisfactory because such an "affirmation negates any kind of education and any kind of thought" (Galichet,1998, p.144).

Galichet recommends a "pedagogy of conflict" as a solution to the crisis of legitimacy of values in contemporary societies. This pedagogy falls under the concept of citizenship education and focuses on controversial issues (Crick, 1998; Lorcerie, 2002). Such an approach to citizenship education seems particularly well adapted to the tension that exists between legitimate concepts regarding citizenship (Pagé, 2001).

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It also makes it possible not to overshadow the inevitable tension between concepts of citizenship education and the underlying concerns/values of initiatives in the field. It is in tune with recent philosophical discussions on deliberative democracy and the achievement of a working arrangement on controversial issues for which there can be no consensus (Duhamel et Weinstock, 2001; Gutmann et Thompson, 1996; Pourtois, 1993; Weinstock, 2000, 2001; Milot, 2005).

A PEDAGOGICAL MODEL TO FURTHER COOPERATION AND SHAKE UP "IDENTITY CONCEITEDNESS"

According to Galichet, "contemporary neoliberalism society has a destructuring effect on most forms of traditional socialization. It corrupts and dissolves structures that 'supported' individuals and integrated them into small societies within the whole: Churches, trade unions, village and district communities, etc."(Galichet, 2003, p. 12). Modern societies that Hirschmann (1970) refers to as "agonistic", largely correspond to industrial democracies: "They thrive on conflict, disputes, fights [...]. In these societies, it is conflict that engenders institutions [...] and thus, paradoxically, guarantees the cohesion of society" (Galichet, 2001, pg 31).

In post-modern societies where competition has replaced conflict, a new type of society radically distinct from modern society is emerging: According to Hirschmann, what is emerging today is "a defective society not characterized by free speech but rather by silent desertion and sporadic revolt" (Galichet, 2001, p. 31).

Post-modern societies today face a new type of contestation that weakens social bonds. Galichet gives a good description of the form it takes in French society:

> This defective attitude is evident today in suburbs filled with "hatred" [and] who invent languages not intended to communicate with others but to ensure those who do not belong to the tribe or to the territory will not understand them. In well-to-do environments, it appears as consumerism that replaces the proselytizing of middle class values of old concerned with the "civilization" of people and the propagation of its ethics of progress to all. In both cases, [...] it is one indifference

[4] For a critical analysis of the complex issue of relativism, refer to Ouellet, 2000 and Boudon, 2000.

coexisting alongside another, that is, a minimalist concept of social bonds, reduced to a simple coexistence that is vaguely wary and suspicious (Galichet, 2005, p. 23-24).

Confronted with this type of contestation, teachers cannot call on a citizenship education based on a discussion model, because this model implies a will to speak that no longer exists. Nor can they use a liberal model based on the respect of rights. In the current context, it is not enough to teach recognition and respect for others. It is also necessary to learn how to shake up "identity conceitedness" and become interested in others beyond divergence and value conflicts.

The first three models of citizenship education identified by Galichet, the models of family, work, and discussion are insufficient to meet the challenges of a "defective" post-modern society. Only the fourth one, a "pedagogical model" could rise to meet these challenges:

> We must find a model that, contrary to work, establishes citizenship as a voluntary movement towards others, in particular and towards the community in general; that grows out of the individual as a personal need and not a law that is imposed from without and internalized after the factl; that, contrary to discussion, defines it as a radical will of equality, with no prerequisites or possible hierarchy; and which, as opposed to the family, is not dependent on affective or cultural contingencies (Galichet, 2005, p. 46).

> *It is also necessary to learn how to shake up "identify conceitedness" and to become interested in others beyond divergence and value conflicts.*

Galichet also provides some indications on the way each individual could feel responsible for his fellow-citizens in a "pedagogical society" where citizenship education would feature prominently:

To be responsible for my fellow-citizens is to care about their distress, their opinions, and judgments even when I consider them unreasonable. It is a willingness to discuss with them and a desire to have an influence on them while respecting their freedom. [...] this attentiveness translates into interest; it creates an "imaginative" relationship with others, insofar as it brings about the use of other approaches and endeavours, given the failure of the first attempts, other pathways however diverted they may be, but susceptible to succeed where direct instruction has failed (p. 47).

In "defective" post-modern societies, educators face a "social illiteracy" that schools can combat only by recreating an "educational environment" that no longer exists (Galichet, 2003, p. 15-16). To effectively fight against this social illiteracy and counter these new types of contestation, citizenship education must definitely choose a "pedagogical" model.

According to Galichet, there is another reason to clearly articulate the other models of citizenship education to a pedagogical model: the powerlessness of these models vis-à-vis the "scandal of inequality". According to him, the concept of equality constitutes the core of republican and liberal concepts of democracy. This is not merely a theoretical equality, but an equality that implies an "effective ability to take part in the republican debate".

In a contemporary context, academic success or failure has become the "increasingly essential and exclusive principle of differentiation and therefore social inequality". This calls into question the validity of the distinction between political equality and empirical inequality. Indeed, the principle of competition that should influence "subsequent" instruction tends to "prevail now even at the elementary level and interfere with any attempt at altruistic citizenship education" (Galichet, 1998, p. 154).

What students face is this original indignation, this incomprehensible enigma of inequality and individuals who ask "Why do I, a simple student, find it so difficult to resolve problems, to write without any spelling errors, to draft a paper that is original and well-written whereas my neighbour does so effortlessly?" To date, no pedagogy, whether "traditional" or "innovative", whether interested in good students, or determined to develop support and remedial work for students in difficulty, has yet to face the question (Galichet, 1998, p. 156).

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From this point of view, citizenship education is only democratic if it leads students to reflect on this inequality and causes them to consider the problem of academic failure as their own and not only the concern of teachers: "Education in altruism and citizenship can only be authentic and democratic when it puts students in situations of mutual teaching or, more exactly, when it acknowledges the pedagogical necessity as a valid requirement for everyone and not just for teachers" (Galichet, 1998, p. 163).

◗ CONCLUSION

Pedagogical [5] approaches that stress cooperation between individuals seem a more adequate response to the prevalence of competition in schools than what is generally heard in discourses on teaching. Cooperative competencies inevitably become assets for individual promotion in a competitive society where one cannot escape the law of competition. Citizenship education must inevitably position itself against the principle of competition and anchor itself resolutely in a collaborative approach. It is a challenge that the citizenship crisis in our post-modern society obliges us to meet. ◖

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[5] An article in the Proceedings of the AQPC conference in June 2005 introduces two examples of pedagogical strategies that fall under this approach.

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