Seminar on "Promoting citizenship and common values through education"
Lisbon, 1-2 March 2018

Citizenship education in the EU - policies and practices *from* and *for* the *life* of schools

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the death of *politics* and the disengaged citizen: *crisis, what crisis?*

disengaged citizens?

- research, since the 1990s, has been showing signs of **political disinterest and disaffection** in both young people and adults
- strong concerns with how to stimulate the political engagement of young people as it seems to be a good **predictor of political engagement during adulthood**

powerful *rhetoric* about **promoting youth citizenship and civic and political participation** that has resulted in major **educational reforms** (in Europe) and the intensification of **research**

and yet …

Berlim, 2010, Michael Sohn/AP

this "crisis" is not new …

"**participation refers to the processes through which citizens influence or control the decisions that affect them (…) and is in <u>acute crisis</u> because three matters are being raised at the same time: <u>new people</u> want to participate, in relation to <u>new issues</u> and in <u>new ways</u>**" (Verba, <u>1967</u>, p. 54)

- to vote or to sign a petition on the web?
- to talk and be informed about politics or to volunteer?
- to become a member of a political party or to become involved in a NGO?
- to become a member of a union or to refuse to buy certain products?
- to demonstrate or to attend a music festival/wear a T-shirt?

(e.g., Ekman & Amnå, 2012)

is it *APATHY* or a *PARTICIPATORY REVOLUTION*?

even if in line with the current "utopian individualism" (Lipovetsky, 1986) of our "cool", hyper-flexible, and liquid, risk societies (Bauman, 2000; Beck, 1992; Deleuze, 1990; Žižek, 2002)

so, even if different …

"politics insists in (re)emerging in the *space between different people*, as a *relationship between equals* in their (inevitable) diversity" (Hannah Arendt, 1950 [1995])

Barcelona, 2011, Drew Gilbert

Estonia, 2016, Andres Putting

the role of *schools* in democracies - *citizenship education* in the EU

EU policy initiatives on *Citizenship Education (CE)*

- from the mid-1990s: CE as an educational priority involving *knowledge, values and competencies* and a *diversity of curricular approaches* (e.g., specific subject/ cross-curricular; mandatory/optional)

- EDUCIPART (FCT, 2010-13) : **127 NGOs** from 41 European countries
  - CE mainly deals with promoting "**good**" and "**well informed**" citizen, **respecting** dominant rules and values, a **responsible and competent individual**
    - emphasis on **knowledge about …** (institutions and conventional politics)
    - emphasis on **conformism**: **citizen as a consumer, a claimant and a spectator**
  - what is lacking? CE as a **political priority; teacher training;** articulation with **whole-school** and **out-of-school** experiences; a **collective** and **social transformative** vision of citizenship; **active and critical** skills
    - the recognition of "**daily life democracy**"

a *renewed vision* in EU policy & guidelines for practice

- DECLARATION OF PARIS, 2015 – "support of fundamental values that lie at the heart of the European Union: respect for human dignity, freedom (including freedom of expression), democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a European society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

"Children and young people represent our future and must have the opportunity to shape that future."

- COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2016 – "both competences and democratic institutions are essential to sustain a culture of democracy. In addition, the democratic participation of all citizens within society requires measures to tackle social inequalities and structural disadvantages" that will allow for "living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies"

- COMMUNICATION on the prevention of radicalization, 2016 – "promoting inclusive education and EU common values [AND] promoting an inclusive, open and resilient society and reaching out to young people."

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keeping in mind the **contested** **nature of** *citizenship*

- *illusion of consensus* and fixed-meaning (e.g., Beiner, 1995; Haste, 2004; Pais, 2005; Santos, 1998; Torres, 2001)

- *exclusionary* category ("us" *vs.* "them") (e.g., Benhabib, 1999; Ignatieff, 1995)

- pressure for equality and universality that risks *denying diversity and pluralism* (e.g., Young, 1995)

- passive and active rights, normative (*formal*) and sociological (*lived*) dimensions (e.g., Benhabib, 1999)

"I have never let my schooling interfere with my education."

Mark Twain

Roma, 2014, CTS Notizie (Compagnia Televisiva Siciliana)

school discourses on the EU and youth active citizenship at EU, national and regional level

textbook analysis – History, EFL and Social Sciences/Citizenship

teachers and **students'** perspectives – **26 schools, 101 interviews with teachers and 51 focus groups with 387 youths**

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key findings - textbooks

- **THEMES * active citizenship** (generally *not* related to *young people*), **living and relating with others/intercultural awareness, youth issues** and the **construction of the EU in a historical perspective**

- *informative* and *uncritical* with an *instrumental vision* **of the EU,** **irrelevant** *for active citizenship*

- **inequalities** are not an issue

- youth **political anomy & disengagement** are *not* approached

- **PEDAGOGY *** no discussion of **non-consensual perspectives** – *limited potential* for generating **a vivid debate**

- **most textbooks do not connect with the** **daily lives** of young - focus on **in-class activities**

key findings - teachers

- **schools as locus for civic/political learning** through **knowledge and competencies** and **initiatives** (e.g., school councils, interaction with NGO and political parties) BUT **lack of time, curricula and training** – *it depends on the (individual) teacher*
- **absent and superficial** approach of textbooks
- **EU as far, far away ...** no obvious connection to students' daily lives BUT also **taken for granted**
- **ambivalence:** youth as the **least political generation** vs. **capacity for engagement** → **dual vision:** *value crisis* (individualistic generation) vs. *political/institutional crisis* (lack of trust)
- closing the **"abyss between the school and life"** - a *compensatory role*
- **more active, practical and critical-thinking tasks** – *discussion about the future of the EU*

key findings - students

- **schools as a KEY locus for civic/political learning** - *where else?* - BUT **school culture** should be more **democratic,** linked to **students' lives** and with **time and opportunity for other experiences,** including civic and political
- current approach is **merely informative** and **textbooks are outdated** – **"teachers are not interested in debating"**
- **the EU as a source of both recognition** (beyond instrumentality) **and critique** (power imbalances: North vs. South)
- **internalization of ambivalence towards youth:** "not interested in politics" – an **individual responsibility** - BUT also **counter discourses** and **lack of recognition** → dissatisfaction and distrust towards politicians; inequalities

what *needs to change*?

- a more intentional **focus on citizenship/political education at schools** - *bottom-up* approach, *from early years,* involving *out-of-classroom activities*

- students should play **a leading role** (as opposed to tokenism) in schools, **linking real life and institutions** (including political)

  bridging the gap between the political class and youth

- change in the **educational paradigm and school ethos:** *less academic pressure,* inclusion of *youths' opinions in decision-making processes,* and valuing of *independent thinking -* **grades in national exams cannot regulate the school life**

concluding ...

- in spite of diversity across countries, **similarities regarding the textbooks and the views of both teachers and students**
- need to **stress the role of school in citizenship/political education**
    - opportunities to *discuss, debate, confront real life issues*
    - *action-oriented focus* within schools and beyond (interaction with the community)
    - **critique** of the *performance/standardized/ assessment-oriented culture* that **makes school life determined by exams and grades**
- *closing the gap* between *schools and "real life"* but also *between political institutions – EU included - and youth*

there is no way to deal with politics leaving the political outside

Marseille, 2016, Jean-Paul Pelissier/Reuters

politics necessarily implies *confronting power and discrimination*

David Lagerlof/TT News Agency/Australscope

denying children and youth a *political existence* is excluding them from *our common world*

Sutton, 2015, @thomasbrake

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Obrigada!

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