

Abstract: Human rights and education for citizenship, society and identity: Europe and its regions

This paper discusses how Universities, who train and educate professionals who work with children and young people, might contribute to the development of a citizenry for the Europe of the future. The paper considers strategies to help young people understand Europe, identify themselves with Europe, and feel that they can help frame the future of Europe. The identity and image of Europe in the minds of young people and their teachers may be very varied. Developing a positive sense and identity with Europe raises issues, particularly around those of European identity, which is only one among many possible identities (regional, national, identities of relationships). Europe is not necessarily the most dominant, and it is unlikely to be so. For young people, the identity of youth more may be more compelling and cohesive. The paper argues that enactive learning of citizenship will naturally involve enactive aspects of citizenship. This will focus on the involvement of young people in establishing rights in their own schools and societies, and extending rights to the third generation. Teaching Citizenship is learning citizenship through active participation – and is something that is done in partnership, educational institutions with and alongside a wide range of social organisations.

Keywords: citizenship education, human rights, learning, Europe, participation

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# **Human rights and education for citizenship, society and identity: Europe and its regions**

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The Nordic countries have played a significant role in the history of Europe, and in the creation of today's Europe. This paper discusses how those in Universities who train and educate the professionals who work with children and young people can, with partners from the civic societies of our countries, contribute to the development of a citizenry for the Europe of the future. What images do young people have of Europe? What strategies are needed to help young people understand Europe, identify themselves with Europe, and feel that they can help frame the future of Europe.

This paper will argue that at the heart of the European idea are human rights, and these are key to both the identity of Europe and to engaging young people is a sense of citizenship. Rights can be seen as a defining characteristic of the Union. Young people are interested in rights, and particularly keenly interested in injustice. The establishment, extension and enforcement of rights are an important way of challenging and changing injustices. While young people should be aware of the way in which the rights that have been established in former times, and should appreciate the struggles and the sacrifices of former generations, they are much more likely to be excited by the rights yet to be achieved, and to learn their citizenship, and their identity, through the establishment of new rights.

## **Extending rights**

John Urry's (2000) has listed six new categories of rights. These suggest areas in which children, young people (and adults) might become actively involved in arguing for and establishing. It is in arguing for and achieving that enactive learning happens. Indeed, many young people are already engaged in these areas:

- Cultural citizenship, where there is wide interest in, and sympathy for, the rights of diverse cultural groups, particularly in the face of globalisation; and where there are many successful attempts to preserve cultures and languages. A rights agenda may well develop here.

- Minority citizenship, where questions of asylum, settlement and migration are not necessarily knee-jerk reactions, particularly among many young people. International conventions on refugees are under attack, and many young people are interested in actively defending and possibly extending these rights.
- Ecological citizenship is a particular potent area that resonates well with young people. The right to live in a sustainable environment seems particularly interesting to the young, and is an area of active participation and active learning.
- Cosmopolitan citizenship is again an area in which young people are active in many situations. Relationships across cultural and ethnic differences are increasing, in places very rapidly; yet in others are held back. The rights to relate to other citizens, cultures and societies without state interference are another area for activity.
- Consumer citizenship has a wide range of meanings: it is not merely about being an informed purchaser, but an active decision maker and actively demanding consumer rights and responsibilities: curtailing the power of producers to exploit consumers, and to exploit workers and natural resources.
- Finally, mobility citizenship, the rights of visitors and tourists moving through other countries and societies.

This conception of the extension of rights to new areas opens up an important new arena for citizenship education in Europe. This is not simply because these areas are important in their own right, but because the educational approach of enactive learning suggests that young people learn well when they are engaged in the activity of doing something, rather than simply studying it. The literature on this is extensive (Bruner, 1966; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990), and the author had examined this in greater detail elsewhere (Ross, 2008).

Both citizenship and identity are contested notions, and this article is within the theoretical perspective of social constructivism: it is based on the premise that concepts such as identity, citizenship, nation and Europe are inventions or constructions made by and shared with members of a particular society. As Berger and Luckman argue in their seminal volume in 1966, we socially construct reality through everyday interactions with others. This view is in direct opposition to those who argue that there is something real or essentialist about notions of identity or nation: I assume that all such ideas

only exist in our own consciousness. This is not to advocate cultural relativism: when our construction of knowledge works for us, we pragmatically accept it as a reality that we can (and must) live with. The fact that a truth may only be specific to a particular place and time does not mean that it is not a necessary truth for social life to proceed at that place, in that time. Nor am I claiming that, because there are no universal theories, that any one account of reality is as good as any other.

Identity in the contemporary or post-modern context is rather more complex than it was in the past, and that most people are now expressing multiple identities, where the reference points and boundaries to their identities are, to an extent, malleable and contingent upon the particular social setting in which they find themselves. Identities may overlap, may be nested, may be discrete. Identities are not merely constructed – non-essentialised, created in the social market – but are also hyphenated, hybridised, shifting from moment to moment, from place to place, from social setting to social setting.

To participate as a citizen in a community requires some sense of belonging: identification with the community requires, rather than implies, participation. But this participation can have various degrees or levels of activity or inactivity. Young people are most likely to be fired up and enthused by considering issues of fairness, justice and equity, and that an issues-based curriculum is best placed to provide such a forum. This paper is predicated upon the idea that we now are not just legally European citizens as well as citizens of our own countries (as the Treaty of Maastricht set out in 1993), but also citizens in a looser sense, as participants in a community of rights. However, not everyone sees the concept of Europe in the same way: I now turn to the different images that may be held of the European identity.

## **Images of Europe**

What is the identity and image of Europe in the minds of young people and their teachers? How can universities and NGOs contribute to the development of a positive sense and identity with Europe, particularly in this region of Europe? What images of Europe are held by adults? There are many images – each of us probably holds a variety of views of Europe.

Many Europeans hold an image of the European Community as bureaucratic, rule-bound, and cumbersome, not subject to democratic controls and as remote. Complaints are not uncommon about the ineffectiveness of the European parliament, or how it is too much ‘in the pocket’ of big business. But there are alternative perspectives. For example, Europe is an internal market, and the members of the Union all have significant levels of intra-EU trade. However, the view of this will vary from country to country: Swe-

den, Denmark and Finland have a relatively small proportion of the total of intra-Europe trade, compared to Belgium or the Netherlands. But comparing the volume of this trade as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product of each country shows the enormous proportion Luxembourg's economic activity that is bound up in European trade. Belgium, Ireland, the Czechs and the Slovaks are also strongly dependent on European trade, and the relative importance to the economies of the individual Nordic countries is not very high (Dutch National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development, 2007)

Europe also sees itself as a home for refugees and as a destination for migrants. In 2003, Germany was one of the principal host nations (though taking fewer than the countries circling Afghanistan and Iraq). Of the countries in the 'developed world' Europe took significantly more than the USA, Canada, Australia and Russia together. There are other measures than numbers of arrivals. The European 'Hospitality Map' developed in 2004 by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development showed that Germany, despite being a destination for many, gave citizenship to very few, particularly when compared to Austria, Belgium, Latvia, the Netherlands, Denmark (Price Claus Fund, 2004). The Nordic countries also accepted relatively small numbers. On the other hand, comparing the proportion of asylum seekers to those who are granted asylum, then Denmark is very significant – 53% of applicants are accepted. The UK, Germany, Sweden and Finland have similar rates of between 25 and 30%. Slovakia, Ireland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic have very low rates.

Yet another view of Europe, or at least of the European Commission, is that it is a drain on national resources. A comparison of the net payments to the Commission with the net payments from the Commission, country by country, shows some countries pay more than they get. Germany, the Netherlands and the UK are the major contributors, but when the net contributions are compared to the Gross National product, the Netherlands pays proportionally far more than any other state. Denmark and Sweden are net contributors – but not a high proportion of their GNP, and Finland is a very slight net contributor.

Within Europe there are overall similarities, but also differences and disparities that partly colour the views of each particular country. But from outside Europe, there may be different images. The perspectives of, for example, the United States, or developing countries across the North-South divide, or from the perspective of a particular faith, such as Islam

The view of Europe from the United States is varied. Historically, Americans saw Europe as a place of oppressive regimes and poverty-stricken populations. America threw itself free of European colonial shackles – Britain, Spain and France – and took in immigrants and refugees, liter-

ally by the boatload through the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the inscription at the foot of the Statue of Liberty proclaims,

*Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

It was Europe that produced these tired, poor, huddled masses, the unfree wretched refuse. Comparatively, Americans were richer, and saw us as poorer.

The American defence community has a poor view of Europe. 76% of NATO funding comes from America, and just 23% from Europe. As far as many Americans are concerned, Europe does not contribute to its own defence, and relies on the US. Not that Europe is that pacific and relatively non-belligerent – about one fifth of the global manufacture and trade in armaments is by France, Germany and the UK.

While some in the United States view Europe as part of Western Civilisation, in particular Samuel Huntingdon (1993) in his thesis of the ‘clash of civilisations’, others on the American right describe Europe divided into Old Europe and New Europe, based around the alliances and differences within Europe over the invasion of Iraq (Rumsfeld, 2003).

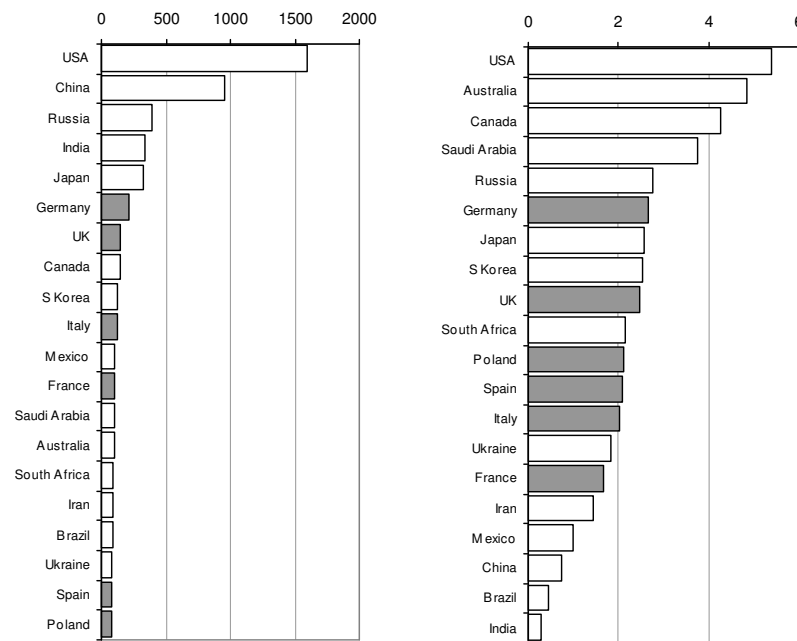
Another contrast between American and Europe is the imprisonment rate. America has the global record in the percentage of its population it imprisons – 737 per 100,000. Most European countries have a rate about one tenth of this, between 65 and 100 per 100,000 – about one tenth of the US rate, though a few eastern European states and the UK have a rate of about one fifth of the US. It is notable also that some south and south-east Asian states – Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia – have imprisonment rates of as low as 50 per 100,000. Another distinguishing feature is the application of capital punishment. Less than 15% of the world’s population live in states where the death penalty is prohibited – and 60% of these are living in the European Community.

America is not the only viewpoint. How might countries in the developing world perceive Europe? One positive way that they might perceive Europe is as a relatively generous source of aid. Although very few countries reach the target of giving 0.7% of their GDP in aid, Europe does give a much high proportion of its GDP in aid (0.37%) than do either the USA (0.16%) or Japan (0.19%). 63% of the world’s aid budget comes from Europe. Developing countries therefore see us as a rich region. Mapping Worlds have produced global maps showing progress towards eight UN Millennium Goals (Mapping Worlds, 2005). Much of the developing world

lives on less than a US dollar a day. Similar patterns are seen in terms of malnutrition, lack of schooling, infant mortality, access to clean water and the prevalence of HIV.

However, another third world perspective would be that Europe is polluted and polluting. Our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are quite disproportionate to our population. This measure of difference also shows a difference from America

### Carbon Dioxide Emissions: the twenty most polluting countries



The developing country's view of Europe would be quite distinctive similar to the United States and countries such as Australia, in being wealthy, educated, healthy and well-fed, but unlike America in being relatively generous with aid, and also being less of a contributor to global warming (though Europe could do much better in both respects).

Is there a particular Nordic perspective or image of Europe today? To an outside observer, it seems that there may have been significant changes in the way that Denmark and Sweden in particular were once major European players. Since then, the participation of the Nordic states has been at times hesitant. The basis of the European Union has not always acknowledged

Nordic concerns about social equity and security, and has seemed at times to be an overly centralising economic union.

What image to children and young people have of Europe? I would suggest two particular dimensions dominate: the historic image of national rivalries leading to almost incessant wars, with most populations relatively poor and deprived, a view perhaps ameliorated by the struggle to establish political and social rights. Against this, the contemporary dimension of a Europe in which it is easy to travel and move, whether for work, leisure or study.

Yasemin Sosyal (2006) has pointed to the way in which Europe is presented in school textbooks, in an international comparison that examined text books over a forty year period. She found that the idea of Europe as a concept is increasing to be found in school text books. But this is presented as a diffuse idea, without clear boundaries: “Its identity is a loose confection of civic ideas, such a democracy, equality, progress and human rights” (2006, p. 34). She identifies three qualities about this text mediated identity

- 1) Unlike national identities (where legitimacy is located in history, culture and territory), Europe is not past-orientated – it is future directed.
- 2) National identities thrive on ‘the other’ – and particularly on glorious defeats of the other. Europe in textbooks lacks a proper other – especially so in texts published from the 1990s. Europe is a peaceful continent, held together by civic ideas and universal principles, rather than separated off. The real “other” for Europe is the past – its war-ridden, conflict dominated, holocaust past.
- 3) Europe lacks originality, because its unifying characteristics are (potentially) universal and not specific. These ideas may have begun in Europe, but they are not monopolised by Europe.

In terms of changes in textbook construction, Sosyal notes four ways in which the national/European relationship was developing:

- 1) National narratives are normalised: their unique characteristics are downplayed, so that ancestral peoples are now shown in cultural terms, through their life styles and patterns, rather than through their heroic activities, or extraordinary characteristics.
- 2) Heroes and myths are domesticated: they are turned into “ordinary” historical characters, who had weaknesses and from whom we can learn.



- 3) National space is reorganised, and regions emerge as having an identity within Europe, rather than as part of a country. Problematic regions such as Alsace Lorraine are dissociated from national imagery.
- 4) Nations are now revised to become diverse: there is and increasing emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity (contemporary Spain is a good example of this), and an underlying theme of intercultural exchange

European identity is one among many possible identities, such as regional and national identities, and others identities of relationships and with peers. Europe is not necessarily the most dominant, and it is unlikely to be so. For young people, the identity of youth more may be more compelling and cohesive. European identity is not simply the European Union, a formal entity, but is much more diffuse: it is a civil society that also includes associations and voluntary bodies, NGOs, informal groups and movements. In particular it is concerned with establishment of various new social and community rights.

One way in which Europe is really distinct is in the area of human rights legislation. The application of the International Court of Justice is limited, to certain major international crimes, to countries that volunteer to accept its jurisdiction, and only in cases where those accused are surrendered to the court. Europe is different: the European Human Rights legislation applies to a very wide range of rights and privileges, is obligatory on all members of the Union, and has powers that over-ride national courts. This is a very distinctive and unique characteristic.

## **Education and social change**

Education has always had a particular role in the development and transmission of culture – sometimes passing on the culture and ideologies of the past, and sometimes requiring pupils and students to challenge and reconstruct cultures and beliefs.

Durkheim characterised education as “the image and reflection of society. It imitates and reproduces [society] in an abbreviated form: it does not create it” (1897, p. 372). He wrote that education was “the means by which society prepares, within the children, the essential conditions for its very existence” (1956, p. 64). This view of education – as a mirror to reproduce social structures and patterns – is also shown in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1974). He argues that a particular function of education is the transmission of cultural hierarchies, reproducing social classes and thus preserving social differences between classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, pp. 10 -11).

Our identity has been handed down to us from previous generations ... as we grow older, we modify the identity we have inherited, The identity is not intrinsic, but the scope for changing it is circumscribed by the social expectations of the group with which we are associated. By our actions, we informally reinforce our inherited group affiliation (Robbins, 1990, p. 174).

Stan Bowles and Herb Gintis (1976) considered the nature of schooling in western capitalist societies. They looked at both the reasons behind the development of state education, and the practices of schooling found in different kinds of school – elementary, secondary high and state colleges. They argued that schooling takes place in the form it does in order to effectively prepare pupils for their future role as workers in a capitalist economy. This preparation is achieved through the “Correspondence Principle.” Much of our experience at school is a preparation for our future roles as workers. Capitalist Society needs a docile, obedient, motivated workforce - school prepares us for this:

- 1) A subservient workforce: those who conform do best at school. Behaving in a compliant and dependable manner is rewarded by being labelled a success, while the child who is aggressiveness or demonstrates independence is categorised as a failure. At school we learn to obey.
- 2) Acceptance of hierarchy: those who do what they are told are described as successful learners. Workers learn to follow the boss’s orders, because as pupils, they learned to follow the teacher’s orders. We are inducted into the hierarchical structures of the workplace through the hierarchy of the school.
- 3) Motivation by external rewards: pupils are not interested in the subject knowledge they are taught at school, but are encouraged to go to school to get examination passes, an external reward. This is a preparation for the world of work where we do not work for the love of the job, but for the external reward of a wage.

What happens at school corresponds to what happens at work.

So what experience of citizenship is provided by schools in such systems? Obedience to authority; the acceptance of (possibly arbitrary) imposed rules; the division of society into ranks; the acknowledgement of hierarchy. Cultural norms are essentialised, and individual identity is sacrificed to institutional conformity.

These models of education explain continuity and social inertia, but do not allow or explain the possibility of social change. A more optimistic and more radical view of education allows education the potential of a transformative role.

Experiential learning theory suggests that people learn from their environment and experience. One of the most interesting educational theories of the past decade has been that of learning through “legitimate peripheral participation” in “learning communities.” The idea of situated learning, developed by the social anthropologist Jean Lave and the former teacher Etienne Wenger, stresses that learning is social, that it comes about through participation in everyday life, and that it is continuous through life. This has important implications for citizenship education, and the institutions we need to provide the experiences in which citizenship will develop.

Etienne Wenger argues that there is a widespread supposition that learning is an individual activity. Schools, although they are social settings, strive to develop individual’s abilities and understanding, and it is the individual who “learns.” Learning is generally supposed to have “a beginning and an end; that it is best separated from the rest of our activities; and that it is the result of teaching” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3). Lave suggests that we should reconceptualise the relationship between learning, educational institutions and learners as a social process. *Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is not about schools, but about “apprenticeship” in informal learning institutions - for example, among midwives in Central America, tailors in West Africa, US Navy quartermasters, and non-drinking alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous). Their ideas have been moved on to situations of formal schooling more recently by Barbara Rogoff (1990).

Lave and Wenger argue that communities of practice are ubiquitous, and that most people are involved in a number of them, at work, school, home, or at leisure. Human beings are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds: as we define and pursue these in social groups, we interact with each other and with the environment, and change or tune our relations with each other –

In other words, we learn. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore to call these kinds of association communities of practice. (Wenger, 1998, p. 45)

Communities of practice have varied practices, from the formal to the informal, but in each members are joined through common activities and by “what they have learned through their mutual engagement in these activi-

ties.” Wenger says that communities of practice define themselves in three ways:

- 1) By their joint nature and purpose, which is always being re-negotiated by members through their practice
- 2) By their functioning, and the way that members knit a social entity together
- 3) By their production of a shared repertoire of resources – whether these are routines, vocabularies, common understandings and beliefs (Wenger, 1998; 1999)

This is not the simple acquisition of skills and knowledge for a task, but the establishment of relationships and communities with a sense of joint enterprise and identity, with a shared set of ideas and commitments, and shared resources: it’s about ways of doing and approaching things that are shared to some significant extent among members. The relationship of this to citizenship, and to civic behaviour, is evident. Citizenship is above all a community of practice, rather than a simple set of structures and knowledge. This idea of a kind of apprenticeship is not learners acquiring a model of the world, but of learners participating in a community that has a model of the world – “being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1999, p. 4).

Education can transform, and in particular it can transform the social practices of communities. This is a powerful and inspiring message for citizenship education, and one that should give teachers a sense of empowerment, quite different from the conception of schools and teachers being doomed to merely reproduce the past. And this is particularly important in developing the conception and image of Europe.

But how do we achieve an identity such as this? Wenger and Lave proposed that the development of learning to participate, through peripheral activities, gradually building competences and involvement would be a radically different approach to learning. Attitudes to citizenship and identity are acquired, not learned – acquired through taking part in institutions, joining in, contributing. Schools are only one of the institutions to be involved. We need to incorporate a much broader range of civil institutions in the construction of civic identity, and the educational system needs to collaborate with, not direct, the ways in which associations are involved in civic learning. The role of community associations and non-governmental organisations concerned with human rights is particularly important in this, for several reasons.

My argument is, therefore, that enactive learning of citizenship will naturally involve the enactive aspects of citizenship. This will not be about the study and appreciation of rights won in the past, and the icons and concepts that relate to these, but the involvement of young people in establishing rights in their own schools and societies, and extending rights to the third generation. Teaching Citizenship is learning citizenship through active participation – and is something that is done in partnership, educational institutions with and alongside a wide range of social organisations.

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