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Bryony Hoskins, Jan Germen Janmaat (2019): Education, Democracy and Inequality - Political Engagement and Citizenship Education in Europe, London: Palgrave Macmillan. 242 pages. €114,39 (hardcover), €89,99 (e-book).
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The democratic ideal would like each citizen to be able to participate equally in the decision-making process that affects community life. Beyond the elitism inherent in the principle of representation, highlighted by Bernard Manin among others, the existence of inequalities in political participation between the representatives themselves has been largely demonstrated by numerous studies - such as those of Robert Dahl and Daniel Gaxie, pioneers. It is now well established that the level of education and social origin strongly influence the probability of voting, joining a political party, standing for election, but also taking part in so-called unconventional forms of participation. But the precise mechanisms of this correlation still need to be explored, even if much work has been done, as they involve many different and interrelated variables. Like the inequalities in school success, notably highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron as well as Basil Bernstein, the question of the respective roles of family and school and their articulation in the process of political socialization is particularly acute. Nevertheless, on this particular subject, researchers focused more on the first institution than on the second. It is this bias that Bryony Hoskins and Jan Germen Janmaat, respectively Professor of Comparative Social Science at the University of Roehampton (United Kingdom) and Reader in Comparative Social Science at the UCL Institute of Education, attempt to correct in this book by using quantitative analyses on an European scale.

Such work is all the more crucial in a context marked by the refocusing of educational system on the sole objective of preparing students for the labour market, the focusing of researchers as well as public debate about inequalities on the very issue of social mobility and of a general decline in voter turnout, particularly among the youngest and the most disadvantaged citizen. Three general trends that are certainly not unrelated to each other. First observation: the correlation between age and voting (or the intention to vote for those who are not yet of age) does not have the same force in all European countries, far from it. That makes it immediately relevant to question the role of institutions, and of the school in particular, especially since this force is constantly growing between the ages of 12 and 20 years old.

Basing their demonstration on the processing of data collected through three major surveys, above all the English Citizenship Educational Longitudinal Study (CELS) - which consisted in administering a questionnaire every two years between 2003 and 2014 on their lessons and intentions in terms of political commitment to a representative panel of British teenagers initially aged 11 or 12 -, completed by the 2009 Wave of the

International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) including representative samples of Grade 8 students (that is to say aged 13-14) from 25 European countries and the European Social Survey (ESS) in order to conduct an international comparison, the authors not only highlight the proper role of the school in strengthening the reproduction of social inequalities in political engagement, but they also manage to show some of its mechanisms by opening the black box of the school institution. As its authors put it, this book is "*in part a response to recent economic and political science research that has cast doubt on the relevance of education in increasing political engagement*" (p. 15), as they consider it as a mere proxy of the individual's social background and assert that political engagement is essentially influenced by early socialisation experiences at home. The authors thus attempt to show how much this new would-be doxa is actually wrong.

The book begins with two theoretical chapters that traditionally clarify the meaning of the concepts involved, as well as the theoretical controversies and the authors' own positioning in relation to them. The authors then propose a distinction between researchers who consider education level as a measure of social class, the promoters of the "positional thesis", which emphasizes an indirect effect of education on political engagement, as it enhances the "social network centrality" of individuals while endowing them with a stronger political influence associated to higher social status, and the theoretical frames which assert a direct effect of school education on dispositions towards political commitment. However, they point out that there is also a strong opposition among this position, between on the one hand the *acquisitive* approach, and on the other hand the theories of *learning as participation* stemming from a critical pedagogical perspective. The former consider that education promotes the understanding of political issues through intellectual tools and the capacity for abstraction it confers - the longer the studies, the greater the effect - even if some concede that certain disciplines, in particular the social sciences and citizenship education (CE), may have a greater effect than others in this field. On the contrary, the latter argue that traditional education has a negative influence on politicization because of its vertical nature as a transmission of knowledge, and that only school practices that promote students' investment in the educational community and the construction of their learning can help prepare them for their role as citizens.

The authors themselves try to separate these two perspectives on the basis of the data at their disposal and partially agree with each. They indeed review in the next chapter the work on the relationship between social origin, school experience and adult inequality, while taking into account the agency of students in these contexts in order to express their own theoretical frame. They sum it up through three core assertions that will be translated into hypothesis and empirically tested in the rest of the book: first, they say that "*young people learn political engagement through a combination of participatory activities and knowledge transmission processes in school, notably through an open classroom climate, political activities at school and citizenship education",* secondly that "*education can contribute to social reproduction by introducing barriers that inhibit equal access to these learning opportunities. These*

barriers can be applied by school principals, teachers, parents/carers and the students themselves through choices and availability of participatory activities, curricular contents offered in schools, subject choices and education pathways followed"; and finally that "*inequalities can be further exacerbated by the provision of learning opportunities from which middle-class children benefit more than working-class ones"* (p. 61). As they justify at length, the authors adopt a narrow definition of political engagement that is reflected in four indicators: voting, membership of a political party, engaging in legal demonstrations and taking part in illegal protest activities. Given the youth of most of the survey population, they often consider the intention to do so in the future, more than the past or present activities themselves. Such approach is obviously open to criticism but nevertheless proves justifiable for lack of better available indicators

Chapter 4 is focused on lower secondary education in United Kingdom. Processing CELS data, through regression and multilevel analysis, the authors unsurprisingly confirm the existence of inequalities in political engagement intentions related to the socio-economic status of the respondents and the fact that political activities in school as well as an open classroom climate foster political engagement, but also that these methods do not reduce social inequalities in this concern, as disadvantaged youths have less access to these opportunities than other students. Conversely, as for CE, even though working-class students also report a lower level of access to such classes, this is nevertheless higher in lower status schools – that is to say schools serving deprived neighbourhoods, when one distinguishes *within* and *between* schools effects. The authors conclude that compulsory CE is essential to reduce the social gap in political engagement and suggest that to extend this obligation in England to the age of 18, including vocational tracks and training periods.

They then test these findings in the following chapter, using ICCS data. They thus select five other countries – namely Ireland, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and Sweden – and firstly notice conspicuous differences between them as regards the different forms of political participation among youngsters, which may of course reflect different political cultures, but also the role of educational institutions. They then subdivide citizenship learning into different variables respectively related to the participatory and acquisition approaches and then remark different relations with these variables and political engagement according to the country. As for inequalities in learning opportunities and political participation, the authors find the same correlation between socio-economic status and political engagement (positive concerning voting, formal participation and legal protest, negative with illegal protest), but its strength differs nevertheless from one country to another. The same observation is repeated with regard to access to the different modalities of citizenship learning considered according to socio-economic status: the relationship works in the same direction everywhere, but with a very different intensity- and sometimes even observed gaps turning out to be statistically insignificant.

The authors then examine the role of the education system structure, and – more precisely – of early selection systems compared to comprehensive ones, as well as the degree of education governance centralization, on inequalities of political engagement, as these features are prone to foster a certain level of socio-economic segregation among students. They thus notice that differences in the relation between socio-economic status on the one hand and learning opportunities and political engagement on the other cannot be summarized by these institutional characteristics, but are also influenced by the democratic culture in each country, as the example of Poland, where all these correlations are quite weak despite a decentralized system, particularly illustrates. Beyond these national differences, however, the authors observe that two forms of support for citizenship are found to play a positive role everywhere in the stated intention to engage politically: civic participation in schools and an open discussion climate in the classroom. Nevertheless, both also reinforce social inequalities insofar as disadvantaged students also less benefit from these opportunities. Moreover, if early selection systems confirm to let socio-economic background play a stronger influence over political engagement. Nonetheless, a surprising result lies in the observation that access to learning opportunities, especially to an open discussion climate in classroom, is less socially skewed in early selection systems, although this could be explained by a bias in student perception in these different contexts. Zooming on four early selection states in order to identify the very mechanisms by which tracking has a negative effect on intended political engagement, Bryony Hoskins and Jan Germen Janmaat find that the role of peer influence and lack of self-confidence have a lesser access to civic participation than their counterparts in other tracks. Such an observation eventually leads the authors to recommend an end in order to early selection to reduce inequalities in politicization.

After having focused on lower secondary education, that is to say to students aged 11 to 16, the chapter 6 is about upper secondary and higher education, which involves students aged 16 to 23. The authors thus aim to go beyond the majority of research on the subject, which sums up to analysing the effect of an additional year of study on political commitment. Thanks to the longitudinal scope provided by CELS data, enabling the authors to include control for respondents' intentions towards political engagement in their models before they enter the different tracks considered, they are able to isolate the effect of educational pathway on political engagement in the United Kingdom and confirm its autonomous influence, both in upper secondary and in higher education, thus refuting researchers who claim that everything is at stake from the very beginning of early socialization. While providing here a detailed analysis of these effects, track by track, their findings, in their own words, also "add weight to the literature demonstrating the limited economic returns of low-level vocational qualifications by showing that these qualifications are also failing to support young people's political voice" (p. 184). Chapter 7 consists once again in broadening this perspective to a European scale, using ICCS and ESS data. After noting the same bias of literature on the role of post-16 education on political engagement than in the British case, the authors use multilevel analysis with different regression model to

demonstrate that everywhere, social gaps in political engagement at ages between 18 and 31 are weakly correlated to those observed at ages 13-14. This confirms that education conditions between early adolescence and young adulthood considerably influence political dispositions. Furthermore, comparing different variables describing these conditions, the authors notice that the use of ability grouping in lower secondary plays a particular influence on social inequalities of political engagement later on, which again pleads for undifferentiated systems with mixed ability grouping.

The book concludes with a number of policy recommendations based on its different findings: make the different learning opportunities detailed (civic participation, open discussion and citizenship education) compulsory and even provide more of them in schools which concentrate students with low socio-economic status, while avoiding early selection and ability grouping. The authors are of course aware of the resistances to such suggestions, and assert that the first task consists in addressing the "belief that schools are primarily about employability and to challenge the pretence that schools provide a value-neutral system" (p. 227). Although their work leaves room for discussion – for instance on the choice of variables used to objectify the phenomena under study, particularly with regard to politicization, which presents an undeniable legalistic bias –, and especially for extensions based on qualitative methods, in order to open the black boxes that represents each of the variable (what does an open discussion climate exactly means depending the countries and the local contexts and how does it exactly play to strengthen or weaken one's political engagement for example), one can only be very impressed by the analyses carried out in this book and the important gaps it fills in the literature on this important subject. The reader is often comforted, but also sometimes jostled, in his sociological intuitions and can be in line with the public policy implications they suggest. Unfortunately, it can also only note the strength of the obstacles facing them, as they run counter to current trends in terms of the organization of the education system and the missions assigned to it. Above all, he cannot help but think that if, as the authors clearly show, education matters, it cannot by itself fill the gaps in access to democratic participation. Not strengthening or even mitigating them would already be a desirable horizon, but it cannot dispense with tackling the socio-economic inequalities that are at stake beyond that and that are again tending to widen.