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Editorial: Citizenship and Education in Latin America

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Despite the geographical and ethnic diversity of the region, Latin American countries share a number of common features of relevance to the development of citizenship. In particular, the region is characterised by a history of colonisation and struggles for regional and national autonomy, authoritarian governments, a continuing context of violence and insecurity, clientelism, impunity of the privileged and extreme socio-economic inequalities. Yet at the same time, for many elsewhere in the world, Latin America has represented a beacon of hope for democratic alternatives, displaying a range of vibrant social movements, progressive governments, new forms of participatory politics and innovative responses to social challenges.

These two faces are perceived with a different emphasis in the specific histories of Latin American countries. Likewise, there are particular distinctions in the historical transitions through forms and styles of government, but identifiable communalities at least within different parts of the region. Currently, most states in the region could be formally regarded as democratic under a minimum understanding of democracy as a way of electing people in government. According to the United Nations, all the countries acknowledge the right to vote, and, although with specific important problems, from 1990 most national elections have been relatively free and fair in the region (PNUD 2004). Also, after a period of military dictatorships in different countries, there is an important retreat of the military from political processes and power (PNUD 2004). But this course of

democratisation has not been effective in constructing representational systems that open equitable political opportunities to the wide population compared to the strong influence of powerful elites; in contending sedimented practices in the formal political arena like clientelism and corruption; and in developing the necessary confidence among its citizens that a legitimate democratic regime demands¹. Furthermore, the transition to democracy overlaps with the implementation of a series of neoliberal economic reforms that, while opening certain opportunities to economic growth in some countries, have not been successful in reducing the scandalous socio-economic inequalities of the region and its high levels of poverty (CEPAL 2010; Cortés 2011).

Certainly, there are enthusiastic supporters of a modern democracy functional to a liberal economic paradigm, but others remain sceptical of such rhetoric and its assumed benefits. Far from being passive, this incredulity and discontent has been channelled through relevant social movements, powerful street demonstrations, a growing body of local, civil and non-governmental organisations, and also in the formal political sphere. Thus, the development of citizenship in Latin America is not only about the realisation of a consensual pre-established model (Taylor & Wilson 2004), but a contested process about what citizenship means within a context of different struggles searching for political and economic alternatives.

This special issue of the Journal of Social Science Education explores different ways in which education promotes and responds to this context of citizenship. It presents a series of contributions of different forms – articles, interviews and a book review – that address these issues in five countries in the region: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico. They draw on a range of (mainly qualitative) methodologies, from case studies to national level research, historical analysis and assessment of current initiatives, to explore the diverse interactions between citizenship and education.

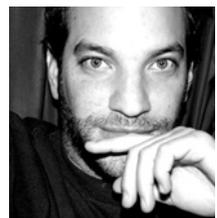
Curriculum and the formal education system

In the formal education system, many Latin American countries historically have had civic education programmes aligned with the political priorities of the government, while the broader curriculum and structure of the system have also been instrumental in fostering or stifling citizenship. An in-depth illustration of the role of formal citizenship education in official political projects is Oliart's article which opens this special issue. Based on a careful analysis of the truncated education reform of the revolutionary and military regime of



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Juan Velasco Alvarado in Peru (1968-1975), Oliart shows the influence of progressive ideas about education and social change developed by different thinkers (e.g. Freire 2002 [1970]) and movements from Peru and other Latin American countries relevant for the political scenario of the region since the end of the 1950s (e.g. the Cuban revolution). These were fundamental in structuring a project which, among other features, conceived the actual education system as "elitist, dependent, alienating and inefficient". Conversely, at the heart of Velasco's education reform lay a radical democratic project, based on the formation of a new citizen decisively engaged with social change, inclusion and equality.

Such a transformation was initiated within the education system, understood as a space for "straightening of consciences", with a particular nationalist ideology that, while rejecting "cultural imperialism", aimed to include the intra-national cultural diversity represented by the significant Peruvian indigenous cultures and their languages. After examining how this reform was truncated, the author argues about its legacy within a process of implementation of neoliberal policies initiated in the 1980s. It is shown how important figures from the Velasco regime found a place in academia, NGOs, civil society organisations and social movements, from which they remained active and were able to articulate a strong critique of the neoliberal approach to education. Now that most of these measures are seriously questioned in Peru, Oliart's article recovers the legacy of Velasco's reform to stress the importance of education projects in which an integral perspective of the citizen to be formed is essential, in contrast to the narrow focus on basic skills typical from the *neo-liberal imaginary* in education (Ball 2012).

The case presented by Oliart exemplifies an official curriculum aligned with governmental priorities of social change. However, until 1990 different Latin American countries based their civic education programmes on the formation of habits required for the proper functioning of society, knowledge of the law and the country's institutions, and the promotion of a unified national identity. Yet since the beginning of the 1990s, relevant transformations in curricular content in the region have been clearly identified in accordance with certain international trends (Bascopé, Bonhomme, Cox, Castillo, Miranda 2013; Cristián Cox 2010; Cristián Cox, Jaramillo, Reimers 2005; Pérez Expósito 2013). In countries like Guatemala, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico, significant changes include: a shift from a national perspective to the inclusion of a globalised and cosmopolitan approach to citizenship, a strong commitment with democracy beyond the formal political sphere (at least at the rhetorical level), a balance between direct forms of participation and representation, recognition of cultural diversity within and beyond the limits of the nation-state, and gender equity. In contrast with previous pedagogical approaches based on memorisation and abstract knowledge, the more recent curricular designs emphasise the development of skills and compe-

tences oriented to the formation of an active citizen (Levinson 2004; McCowan 2009). They are aimed to be developed from early childhood to, at least, late adolescence. In spite of the specific differences according to the country, the expected learning outcomes are not circumscribed to a specific subject in classroom, but conceived as transversal contents to be covered in courses like Spanish, History or Geography, and through practical experiences within and outside the school. Another important characteristic is how citizenship education overlaps in the curriculum with education in sexuality, intercultural, human rights, moral, peace, and environmental education, among other related areas with different emphasis depending on the country.

The article of Beltrán, Galvis, and Vargas is focused on the analysis of one of these new curricular designs, the Programme of Education in Sexuality and Construction of Citizenship in Colombia (PESCC). After analysing the main characteristics of the programme in relation to the principal curricular transformations in citizenship education in Latin America, the authors focus on one important stage of its implementation: the development of a planning tool called 'pedagogical matrix' that enables teachers to design and develop teaching strategies and reflect on their practice. These matrices allow schools to relate different competencies and their standards with a group of thematic axes from the programme, learning outcomes and teaching strategies, according to their own priorities and interests.

Based on the content analysis of 20 different matrices (one per school) developed in the city of Bucaramanga, Colombia, and records from a technical group that supported the implementation of the PESCC, the article compares the matrices in regard to the programmes' conceptual and operational components. It also analyses the conditions in the schools that enable a better design of the matrices and those that constitute an obstacle. Drawing on literature related to change and innovation in educational institutions, the authors argue that the different levels of achievement in the implementation of the pedagogical matrices are largely explained by "subjective changes", which refer to "implicit theories and representations of the actors, from which innovations are interpreted and adapted." (Vogliotti & Macchiarola 2003). Based on this element and the analysis of other factors that clarify the disparities in the results of the schools studied, the article ends by listing some recommendations for education policy implementation.

As presented by Beltrán, Galvis, and Vargas, some of the problems in the realisation of the programmes of citizenship education have to do with different processes of appropriation, interpretation, translation, selection, negotiation and resistance, carried out by different school actors. Analysing these interpenetrated processes is vital for understanding 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' education policies and initiatives (Ball, Maguire, Braun 2012). The multiple divergences between the curriculum of citizenship education as a document and its practice

in the schools also reveal the contested meanings of citizenship, and the lack of neutrality of some expected learning outcomes, especially in a region like Latin America characterised by a wide cultural diversity and strong socio-economic disparities. The article of León explores one dimension of this problem. Through a qualitative discourse analysis of a group of teachers in the Araucanía Region in Chile, León deals with teachers' perceptions of the implications of teaching citizenship in an indigenous area characterised as a "zone of conflict". The paper shows how teachers appropriate new trends in teaching history and citizenship, as well as the changes and cautions they have integrated in their practice in order to comply with the curriculum and to respond to the cultural diversity of the region and its particular history of resistance and conflict.

Teachers, then, face some dilemmas in their practice. Firstly, how to manage their own political standpoint in relation to the programme's content, but also to the cultural, political and socio-economic location of their students. Secondly, teachers' awareness about how the model of history to be taught excludes the narrative of the indigenous and the poor. Thirdly, teaching citizenship in a context of democratisation after being educators during Pinochet's dictatorship, "a period of political repression in which many issues were simply eradicated from the classrooms and in many cases omitted in their own training as teachers" (León, this issue). Fourthly, how demanding teaching citizenship and its overlapping thematic areas (human rights, gender or cultural and ethnical diversity) can be for history teachers in terms of knowledge and previous training. Lastly, how teachers need to employ an inter-cultural pedagogy, when they were not trained within that framework.

This special issue, then, comprises three articles that exemplify some of the challenges that citizenship education faces in Latin American countries in regard to the trends in the curriculum and its practice in the schools.

Citizenship education beyond the school

In spite of the important role of curriculum development and formal education, this issue presents a broad approach to citizenship education concurrent with a growing body of research that emphasises how citizenship education transcends the school, and investigates the educational potential of a wide range of experiences beyond, or inter-related with this setting (e.g. Eyerman & Jamison 1991; Foley 1999; McCowan 2009; Pérez Expósito, Ortiz Tirado, González, Gordillo 2012; Pinnington & Schugurensky 2010; Schugurensky 2004, 2006).

This perspective seems particularly relevant in a region characterised by a range of vibrant social movements and a diverse repertoire of political participation. On the one hand, Latin American countries reveal a rich array of educational experiences associated with indigenous groups, community organisations, religious organisations, social movements, workers' unions and even governmental initiatives,

oriented towards the development of citizenship and political participation amongst marginalised populations. On the other hand, the region is also characterised by less organised, and more ephemeral forms of participation which, however, provide opportunities for an experiential learning related to abilities, knowledge and attitudes that are valuable for the development of a more competent citizenry². Either through more or less organised experiences, within them diverse educational practices take place according to different "elements of formality and informality" (Pérez Expósito et al. 2012, 280). This idea helps us to understand differences between teaching and learning processes within and outside the school, but also to see communalities and imbrications across the traditional distinctions between formal, non-formal and informal education.

A vivid example of such imbrication is *RightsNow!*, an eight-month long programme for youth in São Paulo to learn about the right to education. It takes place in schools, but is run by an NGO, and funded by the Municipal Secretariat of Work and Entrepreneurship. "The program describes the learning process as including class, debate, and actions in public schools, mobilising other youth and creating materials to help other students think about education." It is directed at students "between 16-20 years of age, resided in the Eastern periphery and either attended or recently finished secondary school" (Tsolakis, this issue). *RightsNow!* is analysed in the article of Tsolakis, which aims to examine the role of survey questionnaires within the programme as "a Freirean pedagogical tool in transformative human rights and citizenship education." (Tsolakis in this issue)

The author recognises the view about surveys as a "bourgeois statistical instrument" that reinforces systems of power, but based on the work of Carr-Hill (1984) it is argued how it can be used within a liberating pedagogy as a dispositive that helps students to unlock unjust asymmetrical power relationships in their daily contexts. After clarifying the main principles of Freire's pedagogical theory, border pedagogy (Giroux 2005), and transformative human rights (Tibbitts 2005), Tsolakis presents empirical evidence from her fieldwork in São Paulo to show how the design and administration of survey questionnaires, as well as the analysis of the information collected, are used within a wider framework of citizenship and human rights education (the program *RightsNow!*) where such principles are enacted.

In contrast with the imbricated character of the educational experience analysed by Tsolakis, an opportunity for citizenship education with prevailing elements of informality is explored in the article of Queiroz and Menezes, which examines obstacles to and possibilities of young people's participation in the development and implementation of youth policies in the State of Acre, Brazil. The authors review the expansion of youth policies in Brazil in recent years, in which the influence of the "'vogue of youth participation' (Bessant 2003, 401) in public policy across the world' (Queiroz, Menezes in this issue) is perceptible. However, the article points out that such apparent inclusion frequently turns into a

very limited participation in regard to young people's degree of autonomy, authenticity and efficacy. Drawing on empirical qualitative data, the article reveals a series of ambivalences and contradictions crossing the various actors involved in youth policy as obstacles to a genuine participation of the young in its elaboration and implementation. This situation undermines the educational potential that such participatory experiences could have in terms of developing an active young citizenship through its involvement in public policy-making.

Citizenship education: the participants' voices

One of the common characteristics in the contributions to this special issue is a qualitative methodological approach. Among other things, this perspective is identifiable in how the authors prioritize the comprehension and analysis of participants' views, over *a priori* theoretical conjectures or hypotheses to be tested. Either through documentary analysis, observations or interviews, the reader will have access to the perspectives and testimonies of educators, activists, policy makers, teachers, students, leaders of regional districts and outstanding members of youth organisations. Following these trends and acknowledging the importance of documenting the participants' voices, the issue includes two interviews, one with Francisco Figueroa, the Vice-President of the Student Federation from University of Chile between 2010 and 2011, and another with Vera Maria Ferrão Candau, a renowned Brazilian scholar and activist in the field of human rights and education.

Ivette Hernandez – whose own research focuses on the Chilean student movement (Hernandez 2008) – presents through her interview with Figueroa a first-hand account of the historical development, contemporary experiences and broader implications of youth activism in the country. Protesting against student fees, inequitable access to quality provision, unscrupulous profiteering, and the commercialisation of the education system in general, the student movement in Chile has been unrivalled in recent years in terms of its creativity, persistence and impact. Developing from the 'Penguins Revolution' of secondary students in 2006 to the university student movement in 2011, this wave of protests succeeded in raising the profile of issues of educational justice, garnering widespread support from society in general and forcing the government into action. The idea of the *prefigurative* is key to the student movement (McCowan 2010). The task has been not only to achieve changes in policy – the *outcome* of the student mobilisation – but also to embody the principles of participatory democracy and horizontal relations in its *process*: through assemblies, occupations and so forth. In a context of distrust of formal politics and educational institutions, new spaces for the development of citizenship are forged. Importantly, this interview shows us not only a broad sweep analysis of the movement, and its internal challenges, but also the personal biography of a student leader, allowing us to trace back through his life the key moments of learning and significant influences.

Human rights education is a critical area of contemporary debates on the curriculum, given concerns over its political underpinnings from both the left and the right, and its widespread incorporation in rhetoric, but simultaneous lack of effective implementation in practice (cf. JSSE 1-2006 "International Perspectives of Human Rights Education" <http://jsse.uni-bielefeld.de/index.php/jsse/issue/view/110>). Ralph Bannell's interview with Vera Candau highlights some of the complexities of the debates, in terms of conceptualisation of human rights, and accompanying pedagogical processes. Education about human rights is seen to have a particularly important place in Latin America, given the history of abuses in the period of the dictatorships and continuing severe inequalities. In Brazil specifically, it gained impetus from the 1980s onwards, achieving increasing space within public policies through the 1990s, and involving a range of interactions between civil society organisations and government. Candau provides a cogent response to some of the thornier issues of the relationship between human rights and universalist liberalism, forging a new emancipatory vision centred on the articulation of diversity and equality.

Finally, this special issue on citizenship education in Latin America presents a review of the book: Ciudadanos Inesperados. *Espacios de formación de la ciudadanía ayer y hoy* (Unexpected Citizens. The Making of Citizenship in Mexico). While it is focused on the Mexican case, the book develops an important argument to be considered in the study of citizenship education in Latin America. It has to do with acknowledging the presence of normative models of citizenship, but shifting our analysis to the multiple ways in which citizenship is actually enacted in a variety of practices across Latin American countries, through which a distinctive meaning is conferred to the otherwise abstract notion of citizenship. An emphasis on the descriptive level expands our scope of possibilities in regard to the array of educational processes which intervene in the formation of Latin American citizens.

Through all these contributions the aim is to provide an overview of the different challenges and developments in the complex and bi-directional relationship between education and citizenship in Latin America. In this way, citizenship makes demands on education – claiming equality of access, and of representation within the curriculum – but education in its turn (either formal or non-formal) enhances citizens' understanding and capacity for action. Beyond this two-way relationship, the studies gathered together in the special issue also show how citizenship is in itself a key site of learning.

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Endnotes:

¹ See Valenzuela (2007) and Latinobarómetro (2011) for a quantitative overview in regard to Latin American citizens' trust in democracy in their countries

² See Acevedo Rodrigo, López Caballero (2012) for an explanation of the idea of a competent citizenry, and Annette (2004; 2009) for the relationship between experiential learning and citizenship education.