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Active Citizenship in University Education: Lessons Learnt in Times of Crisis

Despite the fact that historically the university has been the par excellence locus for the discussion of public issues and the formation of citizens, current European Union education policies promote and foster citizenship in secondary education, while the civic dimension of higher education is less prominent. This paper presents the case study of a small peripheral Greek university, which provides for the teaching of citizenship, through a dedicated taught module. According to the analysis a strategy of exposure to current problems, heightened due to the crisis in Greece, has affected students' behaviour and their understanding of the concept of "active citizenship" as promoted by European Union policy. Finally implications are drawn for the prospect of promoting active citizenship through university education.

Keywords:

Citizenship, active citizenship, Higher Education, EU policy

1 Introduction

Since the adoption of the Lisbon strategy in 2000, active citizenship is regarded as a means for fostering participatory democracy and strengthening social cohesion across the European Union. The current Education and Training programme (ET 2020) emphasizes inclusive growth built on solidarity and presupposes the stronger involvement of citizens in discussions on matters of European Union policy.

The issue that this paper explores is whether the university could play a special role concerning the formation of the "active" citizen and whether there are specific practices that could contribute towards this end. As McLaughlin and Annette (2005) point out, it is important to distinguish between the general effect of universities on the civic sphere, and the direct effect they may have on "the formation of citizens". The former relates to the development of critical traditions of thought, the promotion of relevant disciplines, such as political philosophy and sociology, and the maintenance of culture. This article, however, addresses the direct effects of university studies and the ways in which students' and graduates' behaviour develops as a result of specific interventions.

The theoretical part of this paper discusses the concept of "active" citizenship. It is followed by a part that focuses on the policy discussion and the role of the University in the relevant European Union discourse. The final part assesses the case of a small, peripheral Greek university which offers dedicated provision for citizenship learning through a module on "Citizenship

and education in times of globalisation", and describes the way it has affected graduates' behaviour and their understanding of the notion of citizenship. It should be noted that the module was intentionally introduced with a view to foster students' competences for active citizenship. This final part discusses the relationship between the design of the curriculum, its implementation in practice and the impact on graduates' behaviour, assessing the prospects of university programmes in promoting 'active citizenship' and democratic participation.

2 The citizenship discourse: "civic competence" and "active" citizenship

A full review of the literature on the concept of citizenship is clearly far beyond the scope of an article. However one should point out the broad and well-known distinction between traditional more politicized notions of citizenship and the concept of active citizenship. This seems to be helpful, since, despite its wide use, the content and meaning of "active" citizenship remains unclear, as various actors understand it differently. As Lawson suggests, the concept of active citizenship is characterised by its diffuse usage; "the fact that there does not exist one, universally held, definition of citizenship means that beliefs about what active citizenship entails differ greatly" (Lawson 2001, 166). Abowitz and Harnish (2006, 654-675), also point out that multiple discourses of citizenship may be operating within given contexts at any one time. In summary one may distinguish between a liberal and a communitarian or civic republican approach to citizenship (For a relevant discussion see Jochum, Pratten, Wilding 2005; Abowitz and Harnish 2006; Nelson and Kerr 2006).

The liberal approach regards citizenship as a 'legal status', tied to the idea of citizens' rights, as expressed in the tradition of T.H. Marshall, and framed in a discourse stressing its civil, political and social dimensions. This is

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because the nation-state has always been the guarantor of citizenship rights. Traditionally the meaning of citizenship was directly linked to the allegiance of the citizen to the nation-state and the political rights and duties resulting from nationality; these duties, and the related responsibilities, presuppose the prominence of a nation-state that functions as the main building-block of the international relations system, operates within a geographical territory demarcated by borders and is inhabited by a broadly homogenous population, defined culturally by a common language, history and sense of national identity.

The communitarian and civic-republican approach, regards citizenship as a practice of the members of a political community. From such a perspective, to be a full citizen necessarily entails active participation in the political community (Crick 2002, 98). Such a distinction is useful to the extent that the communitarian tradition of citizenship appears to be related to agency and is regarded as a right that a citizen may choose to exercise (or not).

An argument can be made that the communitarian approach presents an eclectic affinity to the concept of active citizenship, which refers not only to the nature of citizenship, but also to a process of learning that leads to the development of a relative competence. Competences refer to “a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world in a particular domain” (Hoskins and Crick 2010, p. 122).

From this perspective, active citizenship is seen as a key-competence that can be developed and learned through specific teaching and learning practices; through the dissemination of specifiable stocks of knowledge, skills and capabilities that an education system should produce to enable citizens to contribute in ‘substantive’, rather than simply formal, ways of governance, public policy and national debate. The following points remain unclear (a) the exact type of activities that an education system should incorporate in order to assist students to develop civic competence and (b) the types of knowledge, skills and values that promote “active citizenship”. Furthermore, significant confusion exists with regards to the relation between “citizenship”, “democratic participation” and “volunteerism” and the linkages between them.

Crick (2002), Annette (2003), Nelson and Kerr (2006) define active citizenship in terms of its relationship with political literacy and reject its relation to volunteering. Others however claim a broader understanding of active citizenship, which includes altruistic acts of volunteering and philanthropy alongside more politically based civic engagement (United Nations 2004; Russell 2005). Here one should also note that discussions on active citizenship have drawn on literature on service learning which is rather prominent in the US. A survey of directors of service learning programmes conducted by Hinck and Brandel (2000:874) found a number of

activities to consider as examples of service learning related to active citizenship, including ‘experience gained in the non-profit or government sector’, ‘specialized internship courses’ and ‘community volunteer placements in an approved site’.

However, it has been pointed out by Everett that “simply “doing” is not sufficient for learning to occur” and that the benefits of such activities depend on the critical examination of social norms and values and the structural causes that seem to facilitate the existence of such services. According to Hoskins and Crick empirical studies suggest that, the quality of dialogue and discourse in the auditorium is essential to citizenship education. Discourse is connected with learning about shared values, human rights and issues of justice and equality. They show that a facilitative, student-centred pedagogy, based on trust and respect and integral values education, is crucial in developing civic competence. Central too are problem-based thinking, and context-based, real life learning. The development of civic competence enhances students’ ability to make connections between their personal stories and society; improves their higher order creative and critical thinking skills, their communication skills and their overall academic achievement. (Hoskins and Crick 2012, 132)

The theoretical framework developed by Hoskins and Crick urges us to understand civic competence as a set of individual learning outcomes required for active citizenship. Active citizenship is seen as referring to the social outcomes of civic competence. Therefore the development of civic competence is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for active citizenship and ...“the ideal relationship between learning, civic competence and active citizenship” is one “where the learning develops certain civic competences that drive active citizenship”. However in the ‘real’ (as opposed to an ‘ideal’) world there may be “barriers that prevent young people who have the capacity for active citizenship from participating” (Hoskins et al. 2006, 13).

Here a major gap may be noted between the “individual outcome” and the “social outcome” of citizenship education. This can be seen as an innate characteristic of the idea of active citizenship, which appears to be extremely individualistic, defined by the tendency to emphasise the ability and willingness of individuals to participate actively in civil society, social and community and political life, rather than to focus on collective action or the responsibilities of the state. This is acknowledged by Hoskins & Mascherini who admit that active citizenship indicates a “shift towards the examination of individual action” (2009, p. 461).

While it is definitely useful to acknowledge the importance of individual participation, the individualisation of citizenship becomes problematic when it is considered as the sole foundation for effective political action. Following Biesta (2009, 150-151) we draw attention to Bauman’s (1999) analysis. Bauman argues that our post-modern societies seem to have lost areas, spaces, places



and opportunities where ‘private worries’ can be translated into ‘public issues’; spaces where problems will not be considered ‘private’ but will be resolved through collectively managed levers, powerful enough to lift individuals from their privately suffered misery. (Bauman 1999, p. 2-3). The issue posed by Bauman is whether active citizenship is based on private motivations, a ‘consumerist’ form of citizenship (Bauman 1999, p. 4), or whether it is motivated by a concern for the common good, even if this were to require ‘self-limitation’. In other words, the issue highlighted here is, whether citizenship is understood as a political process, where participation involves the translation of private worries into collective issues, or whether it is understood in consumerist terms, (in which case, collective action can be regarded as solely the aggregation of individual preferences).

We shall argue in the second part of this paper that individualism is extremely prominent in the notion of active citizenship as promoted within the EU policy context and while importance is assigned to representative democracy and democratic values, little is said about the content of such processes. Therefore the responsibility and motivation for democratic participation originates first and foremost with the individual and lacks social context. This relates to a question of the resourcing of civic action. Civic action does not depend solely on what individuals decide to do or not to do; it also depends on the opportunities individuals have for “active” and democratic participation, and this can be seen as dependent on the existence or not of ‘public spaces’ where such action can take place. To return to Bauman’s analysis, the fundamental issue here is whether societies, and in our case the EU, see it as their responsibility to make resources available for active citizenship or whether it is the individual initiative that guides participation. The individualist tendencies within the idea of active citizenship locate “active citizenship” towards the social not towards the political end of the citizenship spectrum. In relation to this, analysts such as Biesta (2009) and Faulks (1998), point to the specific political history of the idea of active citizenship, which emerged in the wake of Thatcherism and Reaganism as the ‘answer’ to the vacuum created when welfare state provisions were curtailed. The active citizen was the person who, through involvement in the local community, would provide ‘services’ no longer available through the state services. Such analyses indicate that active citizenship is not just about the legitimacy of democratic governance, but linked to a neo-liberal view of the society, where individual action provides a ‘solution’ to collective problems.

3 A Lisbon story: policy, active citizenship and the modernisation agenda for the university

The very noticeable concern in the European Union discourse with active citizenship and democratic participation signifies a problem in the political and social

life of the European Union; a problem that appears to be related to the democratic deficit in the European Union, the erosion of the civil society or the lack of democratic participation and governance; this, in turn, can be seen as related to the fact that European Union citizens still frame their perceptions of citizenship and participatory democracy, and the values and attitudes associated with them, in a national context, shaped by local culture.

In the context of Europeanization nation-states are characterized by ethnical, religious and cultural diversity, while increased communication and mobility flows have rendered the notion of borders obsolete. As LoBianco (2006) notes, many countries provide dual and multiple citizenship, even in the formal sense, so that paying taxes, voting and residence are dispersed beyond one state for a growing number of European Union citizens. European integration seems to be intricately related to mobility, as it is a right of all citizens of EU member-states to seek employment, education and residential opportunities across the Union.

The challenges posed by Europeanization have had significant implications for the meaning of citizenship. European citizenship for example has predominantly developed along economic lines, where the influence of the European Union is most strongly experienced. According to Biesta (2009) the influence of the European Union appears to be experienced in relation to employment, economic legislation, the single currency and regional development. In contrast, the social, cultural and political dimensions of European citizenship and the extent to which citizens experience the European Union, as a unit of democratic governance are far less developed. One may discern four types of rights that citizens of EU member-states now claim. These are legal, political, social and participation rights. Europeans expect and demand participatory citizenship practices.

In such a context active citizenship seems to have become a frame of reference to face the challenges posed by Europeanization and to address issues, tensions and imbalances at different levels: citizenship on global/European and local/national scales; the economic and the political, the cultural and the social dimensions of citizenship; democratic participation in view of new forms of local and global governance.

In this context active citizenship is regarded as a lifelong learning process, a competence that can and should be learned. This is the approach that is prominent in the current EU discourse, where active citizenship relates to a particular view of civic learning and political education. The development of civic competence is considered a key-competence, i.e. as widely important. In other words, if students are to become active citizens, education systems must assist them in developing their “civic competence” and provide opportunities for them to learn through participatory activities. In Education for the 21st century, active citizenship is regarded as a competence that has ethical implications and is expressed by individual agents in real life contexts. The



idea of competences emerged in EU policy in the aftermath of the launch of the Lisbon strategy. Subsequently, work produced by various working groups led to the formulation of the European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, a version of which was adopted by the European Parliament in 2006 (European Council 2006).

Here one should point to a paradox: although historically the university has existed as a public space, where “private worries” could be expressed as “public issues”, and although it is the par excellence institution that fostered citizenship, in the current EU discourse there is no specific mission for the university in relation to the development of active citizenship. EU policy does not focus on the specificity of university education. Universities, similar to other learning sites, are approached as just another form of educational organisation that has to fulfil a double role:

(a) To promote norms, values, attitudes and (most importantly) behaviours that foster active citizenship and shape a European identity.

(b) To promote civic engagement and participatory democracy through the development of civic competence.

It is true that higher education is rapidly evolving into a social sector that transcends national borders and agendas. The main impetus for the ‘Europeanization’ of higher education, and especially of the university, has come from a series of EU policy initiatives aiming to shape the European Higher Education Area, the European Research Area and the European Area of Lifelong Learning.

The Lisbon agenda has been again a major driver behind these initiatives. The economic imperative was always central in this strategy, and became even more so since 2005, i.e. in the aftermath of the re-launch of the Lisbon strategy with its explicit focus on ‘growth and jobs’. However policy makers were and still are aware that the education system may play a role in relation to questions of social cohesion and European citizenship (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, 2005, 2006).

Still, the particular potential of the higher education sector has been emphasised by academics and representatives from European higher education institutions, who have stressed that their role encompasses more than only the creation of the next generation of workers for the knowledge economy, and that it includes a responsibility for cultural, social and civic development at the national and the European level as well (European University Association 2005). Universities are in a unique position to play a significant role in civic development due to their history, mission, traditional values and the fact that they have not as yet been completely replaced (or eroded one may say) by the values promoted by the modernisation agenda of the European Union.

The ‘idea’ of the European university, exemplified in the discourses on the von Humboldt and Newman, is closely related to the development of the nation state and the consensus between academic and state interests. In the Humboldtian tradition, through cultivation (*Bildung*-liberal education) based on reason and scientific inquiry (*Wissenschaft*) the university was regarded as the clearest articulation of historical self-understanding and as the self-proclaimed gatekeeper of the idea of progress and emancipation. “Through *Bildung*, the nation-state could achieve scientifically the cultural unity that the Greeks once possessed naturally” (Readings 1996, 65). The idea of a unified national and reasonable culture, to be achieved through *Wissenschaft*, legitimised the autonomy of the university and grounded its public role (Simons, 2006, 2007a). Therefore the “public” role of the university is that of an institution that steers society and culture towards progress and emancipation; it claims the authority and autonomy to guide state and society towards cultivation through academic research. Academics are supposed to orient citizens and assume a public role as “intellectuals”. Their academic authority however is grounded on their ability to guide society through knowledge based on scientific research, through the discussion of “matters of fact”.

During the past decades, references to the crisis of the university in an era of globalisation and the need for its modernisation have appeared frequently. But facing the challenges of the knowledge society, the role of the university appears to be continuously shifting, to the point that it is debatable whether it has a “public” role at all anymore. In order to picture the role of the university nowadays, the position of the university in the European knowledge society is taken as a point of departure. The modernisation agenda for the university stresses the importance of the attractiveness and excellence of European universities, and foresees institutional differentiation on the basis of their strengths; new modes of internal governance of universities are promoted based on the development of strategic goals and professional human resource management; increased funding, is dependent on student or research output rather than input (Commission of the European Communities 2006; European University Association, 2005).

However such initiatives are indications of a more radical transformation: namely the birth of the so-called ‘entrepreneurial’ university, which, in the current context of competition appears to be connected with globalisation and regionalization (in this instance Europeanisation) pressures. In contrast to the historical university, the new entrepreneurial university embraces an understanding of itself that frames ‘space’ as ‘environment’ and ‘time’ as ‘opportunities here and now’. It shifts from a concern with orientation towards a concern with positioning; from progress to innovation; from revealing matters of fact to meeting matters of need/performance.



As far as European citizenship and democratic participation are concerned, the role of the university in the formation of “active citizenship” is framed as development of curriculum and of extracurricular activities and participation structures that offer students opportunities to develop civic competencies, while university performance at this level is monitored and controlled through the development of input and output indicators (Hoskins 2006). Taking into account the individualistic approach innate in the notion of “active citizenship”, a critique is developed concerning the restriction of the public role of the university. It is argued that there is a strong tendency to turn the development of citizenship into a ‘private affair’ – that is, an individual appropriation and accumulation of civic competencies that could be ‘employed’ (or not) based on individual preferences and needs.

4 Research: fostering citizenship in times of crisis

This small scale research focuses on the way a taught module on citizenship and education influenced the values and the behaviour of 20 graduates who attended a postgraduate programme of studies on “Citizenship, Migration and Social Discrimination” in a small Greek peripheral university in 2012. Research was carried out between October 2013 and January 2014 and was based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with the 20 graduates and the two tutors of the module.

The tutors informed that it was a collective decision of the faculty of the department to add a module on “Citizenship and Education in times of Globalisation” in the postgraduate programme of studies. The module was added in the winter semester of 2012 with a view to assist students to reflect on the nature of citizenship and compare it with the concept of active citizenship. This decision came as a result of extensive discussions among the faculty during the summer of 2011 regarding the “third mission” of the university (i.e. the social role of the university and its relation to the local community). The intensity of the economic and social problems in the town where the university is located, was the reason why the faculty decided that it would be useful to devise some form of intervention in the local community. Besides the introduction of the module and relevant research on the impact of crisis in the local society the faculty of the department also decided to organise a series of events and lectures on the causes and consequences of the crisis open to the local community. They also played an active part in the organisation of a local “free health centre” for unemployed citizens with no insurance.

Regarding the module, the idea was to see whether it was possible to promote the development of citizenship via dedicated teaching provision, a usual practice in the framework of politics courses. Both tutors were aware of the fact that many modules concentrate on teaching about citizenship, rather than for it, transmitting knowledge about political institutions and constitutional

processes, without necessarily assisting the students to develop the skills and values required for active citizenship. They were also aware that they were reaching students that opted for an explicitly political course. Their teaching strategy was designed to actively engage students in the learning process through critical reflection, and with wider civic/social issues, in a specific context of particular interest to them. They presented to their students a specific “image” of the university ... “as a public sphere that prepares them for their role as responsible citizens; a space where civic and democratic skills are learnt and practiced and where students are introduced into political and civic socialization”. In their view the “public life” in the university is shaped by the teaching and research activities themselves and relates to the empowerment of students to engage with social issues that are framed as social problems.

They have tried to put to practice the view of Simons and Masschelein (2009, 212) that, students are transformed into “a public” when confronted with issues that are not being taken care by the existing institutions and experts. According to this view “a public” is a group of people exposed to an issue that cannot be appropriated by the available expertise and official (governance) agencies. And an issue becomes a matter of public concern when it cannot be dealt within the given societal order. In this way it is possible, to reshape important issues as matters of concern, and create a public of concerned people. Citizenship, is such an example of an issue that can ‘spark a public into being’ through the development of a “strategy of exposure”. Strategies of exposure address students with a view to making them more attached and involved in societal debates and issues. As one of the tutors put it... “being exposed to things means to share or take part in social problems, to question how it is possible to live and act in the face of an issue that is a matter of public concern”.

The tutors designed a curriculum that comprised the following aspects: (a) in depth discussion with the students of the concepts of citizenship and “active” citizenship; (b) encouragement of students to reflect on their personal practice as citizens – via classroom activities and written assignments (including a reflection log); (c) activities designed to aid students to develop particular skills for active citizenship (practicum or research carried out in an organisation, NGO or other appropriate setting of particular interest to the student). As one of the module tutors explained “The first two aims of the module reflect a customary university emphasis on understanding and reflection.... However during discussions we encourage students to reflect on their personal behaviour in matters other than voting ... their tolerance towards wholly unacceptable things that are going on in universities and the Greek society at large and their readiness to actually do something about them, especially now, in a time of intense crisis, when social solidarity is needed more than ever. We also encourage them to reflect upon the ways the current crisis has



affected their lives and eroded rights that they were in the past years taken for granted”.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with the 20 graduates that attended the module in 2012. Of the twenty graduates 14 had participated and carried out research in NGOs that focused on community action (environmental protection for example) and actions of “philanthropic character” (organisations that provide health care for single mothers, “aid at home” for the elderly etc.) and 6 students have been involved with NGO’s were action centred on more political issues (Amnesty International, women’s rights organisations and organisations that defend migrants’ rights in Greece).

All graduates (20/20) stated that their experience in the programme was interesting and valuable. Regarding the modification of their political behaviour results were mixed. A good part of the graduates (15/20) consider themselves more ready to protest and express their views on political issues. However the majority of the graduates (17/20) acknowledge that they are not as ‘active’ citizens as they could be and that occasional participation in strikes and demonstrations were they only forms of political activity in which they were involved during the past year. They all declared their intention to vote in the upcoming elections (municipal elections and elections for the European Parliament).

Only four graduates exhibit a definite change of behaviour, through participation in volunteer organisations and political activism. One volunteers in a local “social supermarket” that coordinates collection and distribution of food supplies for families in need. A teacher participates in a volunteer organisation that offers educational support to children with special educational needs. Two other graduates are still in contact with the organisations in which they carried out research during their studies. One works for Amnesty International and the other volunteers at an “Aid at Home” project that offers help to elderly citizens in need. All four of them acknowledge explicitly that participation in the module has altered their perspective. However two of them have also remarked that it was the perceived impact of the crisis on the Greek society that motivated them to “act as truly active citizens”.

Almost all graduates (18/20) admitted that their ‘value system’ has changed, that they are now more sensitive to social problems and have stronger personal opinions on social issues. It was clear that reflection and discussions in the classroom have made them consider the effects of the crisis on their lives and on the lives of others. In this respect the role of the tutors appears to have been extremely significant in presenting social issues, initiating discussions, engaging the students and guiding research.

All graduates admitted that they are very aware of the rights that are now “at risk” and of the way the crisis has affected their personal lives. They are especially aware of (and concerned for) the risks regarding employment and

the risk regarding their rights to health insurance and social security benefits (20/20). One of them stated: “Upon graduation, I had to accept a variety of low paid jobs not directly related to my field of studies. Presently I am temporarily employed a 5-month stage and I “consider myself lucky” because that type of employment offers at least social security benefits”. Three more graduates have temporary part-time jobs in stages. Not all of them cover social insurance. As a part-time not tenured teacher pointed out, although she is employed she has to cover in full the cost of social insurance herself out of a meager salary. Another graduate is a lawyer that has just begun her practice. Professionally she experiences uncertainty and insecurity in her working conditions. Clients that request her legal advice rarely follow suit, either because they cannot afford the cost of a legal procedures or because they do not believe in the effectiveness of the judicial system. She is self-employed and therefore not afraid that she will be fired but she has noticed that an increasing number of clients ask for legal advice concerning their working rights and complaining that they are harassed at work, forced to work overtime without remuneration and threatened that they will be fired.

All employed graduates (even the ones that are employed in the relatively secure public sector) state that they experience anxiety, expect further pay cuts and consider their “jobs at risk”. They feel uncertain, ambivalent and pessimistic about the future. One of them, a civil servant, commented: “one of the worst effects of the crisis was the fact that the policies employed turned the Greeks against each other. Suddenly I felt that I was ashamed to be a civil servant. People employed in the private sector, the ones that were hit most from the economic crisis and lost their jobs, started considering us civil servants ‘lazy’. Those employed in the private sector turned against those employed in public sector”

However only one of the graduates of the programme admitted that she was ready and willing to migrate to another European country to escape the consequences of the crisis. Most of them consider that they have to “stick with their families” or that they have to “support as best they can their elderly parents”. Many of the unemployed graduates state that migration is neither desirable nor an option and that they have returned to their parental homes in order to survive the crisis.

Almost all graduates express their deep mistrust for politics, political parties and the European Union (16/20). They do not consider involvement with political parties (as party members) and they held politicians responsible for the present situation in Greece. As one of them stated, “...upon graduation I realised that my dreams are crushed mostly due to the “political games” in which the politicians of our country are involved”. One of them interestingly stated: “as an active citizen, I have made up my mind to never resort to clientelism in order to find a suitable job or solve a problem. I will not enable



politicians to play games anymore". Three graduates explicitly stated that their mistrust of the political system leads them towards political disengagement and inactivity and one of them specifically mentioned that, in his view, political behaviour would not change if trust in the political system were not restored. Another one commented: "I recognise the merits of being an active citizen. However this crisis has shattered whatever trust I had in political action. How can I find the courage to act when politicians only care to secure their positions of power? Nobody cares for our problems really, it is "everybody for himself" and all we care is to survive this crisis".

4 Discussion

So, in conclusion, are universities in a position to play a special role regarding the formation of the "active citizens"? If we consider the learning outcomes of a the module we examined the answer has to be positive. Certainly universities are very well placed to develop critical thinking and reflection, drawing on traditions of academic freedom and independent thought. Higher education study is a means of gaining essential knowledge relating to politics, political ideas and institutions. Instruction may foster citizenship competences to be employed elsewhere at a later point in time. In the case study presented here, there was apparent success in encouraging reflection, critical thinking, and consideration of different viewpoints. In this respect the role of the tutors appears to be significant.

Does instruction in citizenship issues leads to a modification of the behaviour of students? Are there practices that seem to be better suited to this end? Here one should point out that only those students that were involved in some form of research activity demonstrated altered behaviour. It could be argued students who combined that active engagement in research, practicums or in service-learning (of a political rather than a charity-based nature) and participated in all classroom activities (lectures and discussions) were sensitised to citizenship issues and modified their behaviour significantly. In such cases one could claim that participation in the module actually fostered active citizenship competences. Therefore it may well be that practicums and research, i.e. practices that involve "learning by doing" seem to relate to the development of citizenship competences.

However, one should not forget that the tutors also experienced significant challenges in enabling active citizenship. As many of the interviewees repeatedly stated, to act in a certain way one has to believe that change is possible and that protests are taken into account. Therefore the trust in democratic institutions and the effectiveness of political action seems to be paramount for the formation of an active citizen.

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