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Citizenship of young people

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Citizenship has recently received an increased attention in an effort to promote democratic ideas and a shared, communal perspective on citizenship within Dutch society. This increased attention stems from political and social tensions in the Netherlands, including increasing individualism, Dutch policy in the areas of adaptation and social integration of immigrants and violence (Geijsel, Ledoux, Reumerman, & Ten Dam, 2012; Veugelers, 2011). In particular, the citizenship of young people has become a topic of increased discussion due to an observed lack of citizenship knowledge among young people along with a reduced interest in and attention to societal issues (i.e. Coleman, 1993; Niemi, Sanders, & Wittington, 2005). To enhance the engagement and the functioning of young people in their community, it is thought that they should acquire at least the following: knowledge about social behaviour and democracy; an ability to critically reflect upon societal issues and to formulate opinions; the skills for effective societal participation and communication; and a willingness to take responsibility in society, adjust to other people and to behave respectfully (Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Arthur, Davies, & Hahn, 2008; Oser & Veugelers, 2008; Schuitema, Ten Dam, & Veugelers, 2008; Torney-Purta, 2002; Westheimer, 2008). Pluriform Western society requires such competences because they contribute to the development and the adequate functioning of individuals within such a heterogeneous society; citizenship competences also contribute to social cohesion and a shared perspective on citizenship among the citizens in a society (Dijkstra, 2012; Oser & Veugelers, 2008; Peschar, Hooghoff, Dijkstra, & Ten Dam, 2010). The school is seen as a place where the willingness and ability of young people to critically participate in a community should be promoted (Barber, 1998; Campbell, Levinson, & Hess, 2012; Dijkstra, 2012; Euridyce, 2012; Schuitema et al., 2008; Torney-Purta, 2004). Accordingly, in almost all European countries, the US, Canada and Australia, the development of citizenship has recently been identified to be an essential task of schools (Euridyce, 2005; 2012). In 2006, citizenship education became an obligatory part of the education of young people in the Netherlands (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005). This obligatory nature of the citizenship task is expected to lead to the development of explicit and systematic approaches to citizenship education for schools to call upon (Inspectorate of Education, 2006; Council of Education, 2003; 2012).

Given the many views on what citizenship should be about and the differing educational strategies and practices adopted to promote its development, the question of whether all schools have achieved the goal of effective citizenship education arises. In order to assess this, however, we first need insight into the citizenship competences of students, the development of these competences and the potential effects of education on students' development. The research in this thesis aims to help establish this knowledge base – knowledge of the citizenship competences of young people in the Netherlands and the development of these competences.

1 THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP

In the literature on citizenship, a democratic political orientation towards the concept of citizenship has recently been expanded to include a social orientation towards citizenship (Oser & Veugelers, 2008). In this broadened view of citizenship, the democratic political orientation with trust in the government, democratic knowledge and political participation as key aspects is augmented with attention to the relationships between citizens, shared values, cultural symbols, engagement in society and social interactions.

In both the political and social orientations towards citizenship, both the adaptive and critical character of citizenship are emphasized. On the one hand, the internalization of shared political norms by young people is emphasized. Acceptance of values and societal rules are viewed as important goals for learning to live in a democratic society with behaviour that is prosocial (Leenders, Veugelers, & De Kat, 2008; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Westheimer & Kahn, 2004). On the other hand, the individual development of autonomy also stands central (Veugelers, 2011). From this perspective, the critical evaluation of social, political and economic structures within society and the formulation of one's own opinion together with a capacity to support one's opinion are seen as key goals for citizenship education. The broader conception of citizenship encompasses both of the foregoing orientations, and citizenship is therefore not limited to political activities but also concerned with such aspects of functioning in society as volunteer work, respectful social behaviour and informal care for family and neighbours.

With regard to the development of the citizenship of young people, we can distinguish the following components: knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflection (Billing & Waterman, 2003; Cogan & Morris, 2001; Grant, 1996; Rychen & Salganik, 2003; Ten Dam & Volman, 2007). Citizenship knowledge concerns the organization and functioning of a democratic society - for example, knowledge of government, the rights of citizens, different cultures and the rules of social behaviour. Citizenship attitudes concern a willingness to engage in and contribute to society - for example, showing respect for others, tolerance, appreciation of differences, responsibility and attention to societal issues. Citizenship skills concern the ability to adequately participate in society - for example, social efficacy and sufficient communication capacity. Citizenship reflection concerns critical thinking about societal issues - for example, differences between people and (in)equalities within a society. In the research presented in this thesis, the focus is on a broad conceptualization of citizenship in the context of the daily lives of young people in which their citizenship is situated. From this perspective, insight can be provided into the actual citizenship competences of young people in primary and secondary education.

2 CITIZENSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Adopting a situated perspective on the citizenship of young people, students can be viewed as 'active agents' in the learning process of citizenship competences (Biesta, 2011; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Kioussis & McDevitt, 2008; Lawy & Biesta, 2006). The period in which people become acquainted with the norms and values of the society in which they live but also the culture and different perspectives within that society is seen as an essential period in the development of a social-democratic identity (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Erikson, 1968; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2003). During adolescence, the knowledge of one's own society but also the global society increases via media exposure, family discussions and school. Furthermore, via participation in everyday situations, young people develop a picture of themselves as citizens and this identity development influences the development of their citizenship competences (Haste, 2004; Veugelers, 2011).

The citizenship development of students concerns mostly democratic and social practices as opposed to future political citizenship. Young people interact; they make use of social media; and they have acquire a place within their family, peer group, school, work, sport club and community (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Biesta, 2007; Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009). In other words, young people become citizens at an early age - with many options for social and political activities.

We have little further empirical knowledge of the development of the citizenship competences of young people. Only a few studies, such as the Citizenship Educational Longitudinal Study (CELS; Cleaver, Ireland, Kerr, & Lopes, 2005; Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy, & Lopez, 2010) have investigated

the development of citizenship over time. We therefore draw upon the little information which is available and, in this thesis, examine the development of the citizenship competences of students over time together with the possible differences between groups of students in this development.

3 CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Since the rise of the Western knowledge society during the past century, there has been a focus in education on cognitive learning results (e.g. math, language learning, geography). With the turn of the century, however, attention shifted to the socialization function of the school (Euridyce, 2005; 2012). The socialization function of schools within democratic society can be traditionally seen as twofold. On the one hand, education is expected to enhance societal cohesion and the social integration of citizens via the establishment of shared values and respect for rules. On the other hand, education is expected to promote individual autonomy and critical citizenship via discussion and dialogue about the differences between people and the (in)equalities within society (Leenders et al., 2008; Schuitema et al., 2008; Veugelers, 2011; Westheimer, 2008). From a sociological perspective, schools can be seen as places where citizenship at the level of society and citizenship at the level of the individual ideally meets.

Given the pedagogical task of education, acquisition of the knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflective capacity which are needed for citizenship stands central. This acquisition occurs directly via the learning of content but also indirectly via the general teaching and school climate. That is, the everyday social interactions between students at school but also between teachers and students in addition to the particular religious and moral values fostered by the school are also all part of the promotion of citizenship development (Schuitema et al., 2008). The everyday experiences of students outside the school – including those with the family, peers, media and sport clubs – cannot be isolated from either the direct or indirect roles of the school in the citizenship education of young people.

The formulation of clear and measurable learning goals for the citizenship education of students is therefore not an easy task. To fulfil the task of citizenship education, schools must take a stance on what constitutes 'good citizenship'. Furthermore, they must define the goals of citizenship education and identify the pedagogical approaches which they want to adopt for these goals. And in order to do this schools must also know about the citizenship competences required of students.

However, linking pedagogical theory to clear and specific but also relevant learning goals is difficult. And furthermore, the connection of empirical knowledge of the citizenship competences of students to the goals and practices of citizenship education is not always easy. That is, the aim to provide insight into the actual citizenship competences of young people must have not only a solid empirical foundation but also significance and relevance for educational practice and thus the daily lives of students.

In the present thesis a foundation is therefore laid to understand the citizenship competences and citizenship development of students in such a way that schools can align their educational goals and strategies with the knowledge acquired of the citizenship competences of students.

4 THE DUTCH CONTEXT

Research on the citizenship competences of students in the Netherlands has shown Dutch students to have only limited knowledge of cultural, political and economic citizenship issues (Wagenaar, Van der Schoot, & Hemker, 2011). The results of international research also show Dutch students to score below the international mean with regard to citizenship attitudes and knowledge in the realm of politics (Hoskins, Villalba, & Saisana, 2012; Maslowski, Naayer, Isac, Oonk, & Van der Werf, 2010). The citizenship of students in Dutch primary and secondary education thus appears to lag behind that of

students in other countries (Peschar et al., 2010). The evidence in these studies is insufficient, however, to determine to what extent the citizenship education goals of the Dutch schools were reached.

The ways in which Dutch schools can fulfil their citizenship education obligation has not been dictated by the government. The Dutch Ministry of Education only requires schools to 'actively promote citizenship and social integration' (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005). Schools can thus define citizenship education as they see fit, and schools and teachers can identify their own priorities for citizenship education. This has resulted in widely differing perspectives, goals and approaches for citizenship education both across and within schools (Peschar et al., 2010). There is no well-defined framework for citizenship education accompanying teaching methods and materials as a result. And only a few schools use standardized instruments to assess the citizenship competences of their students and monitor their development (Inspectorate of Education, 2013). Educators in the Netherlands thus have very little knowledge of the citizenship competences of their student populations. This situation can be seen to present an obstacle for the provision of high-quality citizenship education in the Netherlands (Dijkstra, 2012; Peschar et al., 2010).

5 THE CITIZENSHIP ALLIANCE

In 2007, a consortium with two universities, two educational organisations and the Dutch Inspectorate of Education was formed to gain empirical insight into the citizenship competences of students and their development; factors which play a role in the citizenship competences of students and their development; and the role of different forms of citizenship education in the citizenship competences of students and their development. The empirical data in this thesis were collected in schools that were part of this Citizenship Alliance (Alliantie Burgerschap). Data was collected during three school years (2007/2008, 2008/2009 and 2009/2010) from 38 participating schools at three levels of education (primary education, prevocational education and general secondary education).

The most important criteria for the participation of the schools were: active implementation of citizenship education or an intention to start with this, dispersion across the country, school size, school denomination and composition of the student population. The universities in the consortium were responsible for the data collection and documentation of the results. The educational organizations in the consortium provided support for the development of the citizenship education efforts in the participating schools. The Dutch Inspectorate of Education monitored the research development and evaluation process.

6 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The aim of this thesis was to gain insight into the citizenship of young people and the potential effects of citizenship education in the Netherlands. To understand the concept of citizenship for young people, we situated citizenship in their daily lives. A broad orientation towards citizenship was adopted, in which the actual citizenship competences of students in primary and secondary education stood central. It was assumed that such an understanding is essential for schools to align their goals and strategies for citizenship education with the competences of students. In this regard, the outcomes of the present studies can help improve citizenship education efforts in the Netherlands. In order to do this, four research questions were formulated.

1. *What are the effects of citizenship education on students' citizenship?*
2. *What are the citizenship orientations and knowledge of students in primary and secondary education and which student characteristics can explain the differences between students?*
3. *Which types of citizenship can be distinguished in primary and secondary education and do these types relate to individual characteristics of students and school levels?*
4. *How do citizenship competences of students in secondary education develop over time and which characteristics of the students or schools can explain the observed similarities and differences in the citizenship development of secondary education students?*

7 ORGANIZATION OF THIS THESIS

In this Chapter One, the perspective on citizenship adopted in this thesis is present together with the research aims and questions to be answered. In Chapter Two the possible role of citizenship education is considered on the basis of a review of the relevant research literature. The results of empirical research on the effects of citizenship education on the citizenship competences of students in secondary education are examined and a framework to assess, analyze and monitor the citizenship competences and behaviour is formulated.

The next three chapters concern the citizenship competences of students and those factors which appear to play a role in their development and variation. In the study reported in Chapter Three, the citizenship competences of students between 11 and 16 years of age were first measured. The self-estimated citizenship competences and tested citizenship knowledge of the students were then combined into an overarching framework to understand citizenship orientations and domains of knowledge needed to understand the citizenship competences of the students in this age range. Specific background characteristics (e.g. gender, SES, ethnicity) were then examined in relation to the citizenship orientations and domains of knowledge of the students as well.

In Chapter Four, a typology of student citizenship is presented with the aim of identifying clearly interpretable types of student citizenship. With this knowledge, teachers can be helped to recognize different forms of citizenship within their classrooms and during daily classroom practice. They can then align their educational goals and strategies to the identified citizenship competences and different groups of students. In addition, just how the different types of citizenship relate to the specific characteristics of the students and the different levels of school was analyzed.

Chapter Five reports on the results of a longitudinal analysis of the citizenship development of students in secondary education. Once again, the citizenship development of the students is analysed in relation to the background characteristics of the students and the school levels.

Finally, in Chapter Six, the results of the four studies are summarized and interpreted as a whole. The main results are discussed and conclusions with regard to the overall aim of the present research – namely, to gain insight into the citizenship of young people and the potential effects of citizenship education in the Netherlands – are presented. The major strengths and some possible weaknesses of the present research are considered. And to close, the relevance of the present findings for Dutch citizenship education in primary and secondary education schools is presented.