

Citizenship education and curriculum policy in Brazil: facing challenges and prefiguring changes

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First words

The relationship between education, curriculum policy and citizenship reveals itself throughout a historical set of discussions and much theoretical debate within the Brazilian academic field. With the end of the military dictatorship period in the 80s, however, the articulation of those categories has become even more present in the academic debate. In fact, in the Constitution of 1988 – the Citizen Constitution – citizenship is ratified as one of the cornerstones of the Brazilian Republic and we notice an amplification of civil, political, social and cultural rights.

It is true that in the Brazilian historical development, if we consider as Milton Santos that a citizen “is the person who has the capacity of understanding the world, his or her location in the world, who is capable of understanding his or her rights in order to be able to vindicate them” (1993, p.133, own translation), the exercise of citizenship has never been comprehensively achieved. Although they appear in the text of the 1988 Constitution, the rights of democratic citizenship are far from being a reality for the majority of the Brazilian population, considering that great part of our people still live in poverty, and are economically, socially, culturally and politically excluded.

In view of that context, we propose a discussion on the topic of citizenship education and we locate our discussion within the context of curriculum policies in the country. More precisely, we take as a reference the complementary guidelines of the national curriculum resources for Sociology in Brazilian High school (PCN+) of 2002, as we think this document conveys important meanings on the topic of citizenship education for youth within the scope of formal education and more precisely within the scope of curricular discourses in secondary education.

Our aim is to observe which meanings of citizenship emerge from the document and what implications such meanings bear for the construction of an educational process that might contribute with the strengthening of a democratic society. Here we would like to clarify that we defend a perspective of plural and radical democracy, following the view proposed by Chantal Mouffe (2009), for whom difference and conflict are constitutive dimensions of social life.

Based on the findings of the document analysis, we propose, as an alternative for some current approaches to citizenship in the curriculum, a view of citizenship as an everyday practice (Biesta, 2011). Our aim is to highlight some aspects of the category that we



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regard as productive in order to redefine what citizenship education looks like and what it might focus on these days.

Citizenship: an overview

Nowadays, in a variety of contexts, the term citizenship appears as a signifier suffused with myriad meanings. In order to understand the historical development of that term and the meanings attributed to it throughout time, we find it necessary to establish a brief timeline, showing some historical milestones and social logics that, in some way, have played a role in building the conceptions of citizenship we currently find in our societies.

It has long been stated that the first references to citizenship date back to the Greek-Roman societies. According to Alvarenga (2010), in Western Antiquity, “participation in political life and the exercise of public roles in the *polis* was made possible through the idea that everybody had equal citizenship rights” (p.99, own translation). Indeed, the extension of that equality was limited to a few male individuals who had been born in the city territory. Thus, the majority of the population consisted of non-citizens (women, children, foreigners, slaves and artists), whose only choice was to obey and submit themselves to the authority of the state (Alvarenga, 2010). As for the content of citizenship at that time, its main focus was the exercise of politics. As Brazilian philosopher Chauí (1995) explains, politics

...are the public affairs managed by citizens: customs, laws, public funds, organization of defense and war, management of public services [...] and of the city economic activities (currency, taxes, commercial agreements, etc) (p.371, apud Alvarenga, 2010, p.100, own translation)³.

In this way, it is evident the strong relationship between citizenship and the *res publica*, in the origins of the term, when it referred to legal, cultural, defense, and particularly economic activities that had an effect on the public life. In addition to that, it is noticeable that citizenship had a regulatory and controlling character with an authoritarian and exclusionary aspect, what contrasts with current views of citizenship, directed to the guarantee of different kinds of rights for the totality of human beings. Such exclusionary and authoritarian notion of citizenship continued along the feudal system in the Middle Ages and it was only challenged with the burgeoning of the capitalist system and the emergence of a new social, economical and cultural movement: liberalism.

The emergence and rise of the mode of capitalist production against the former feudal mode of production, based on land ownership, brought about considerable changes in social relations and in the world views that guided life in society. Free market prevails over land ownership, the bourgeoisie class triumphs against the class of the landowners and the ideological views of the bourgeoisie adds a new dimension to citizenship, bringing it closer to liberal ideals, which emphasized the individual and the ownership of material goods. At the same time, there comes into life the view of citizen as a public subject of rights, in contrast to the feudal system subject and to the subject of the absolutist regimes, who mainly had obligations and duties towards his sovereign.

The principles that support citizenship in the context of liberalism and that became dominant after the bourgeoisie revolutions in the 17th and 18th centuries (the Glorious Revolution in 1689 and the French Revolution in 1789) are, according to Bobbio (1992) the right to freedom and the right to own property. However, those two kinds of rights, although



forming the foundations of citizenship defended by the liberal State from a formal perspective, in fact serve to mask a contradiction that soon the consolidation of the capitalist society will make evident. Once the ownership of property is not collective, but individual, there are individuals who own a number of goods while other individuals do not own anything, and a situation of social inequality is then established. Such inequality interferes with the freedom of those who do not own property and who are forced to sell their workforce in order to survive. Thus, citizenship, as proposed by the liberal State, in fact defends the human rights of the bourgeoisie class, and at the same time, it curtails the rights of those who do not have the same status of that class in terms of freedom and ownership. That underprivileged class, at the time, was formed by the employees. This contradiction is described by Etienne Balibar as “the contradiction between the formal autonomy and the actual subjection of the worker-proletarian” (1988, p.725).

Criticism to the liberal view of citizenship is further developed in Marxist theory when it analyses and challenges the bourgeoisie State. Actual citizenship, from a Marxist point of view, refers to a process of confrontations and struggles for rights historically denied to the majority of the population, mainly social and economical rights (Alvarenga, 2010). According to Marshall, who is considered a major researcher on the field of citizenship, the concept evolves from the 18th to the 19th centuries and subsequently and progressively covers civil rights (18th century), political rights and finally economical, social, cultural rights (20th century) (Santos, 1997). It is interesting to observe that if at first citizenship rights are compatible with the bourgeoisie society, the eventual emergence of citizenship social rights will challenge the principles of competition, the accumulation of capital, and the conditions of inequality perpetuated by the capitalist society.

What we can conclude from the multiple transformations that have marked the development of the concept of citizenship is that this category has been an object of discussion in different regimes, and the partial meanings attached to it along history reflect a temporary and contingent situation and a specific relation of forces and interests (Balibar, 1988).

As Adela Cortina (2005) states, the notion of social citizenship proposed by Marshall is threatened by the difficulties faced by the State nowadays. This State is increasingly retreating from acting as an institution which guarantees rights, and that indicates the need to consider other dimensions and spaces of citizenship that ought to be taken in consideration and catered for so as to achieve more social justice. That view is supported by Balibar when he writes that,

when the dismantling of social rights, or welfare, however limited, reaches the level of generalized “social insecurity,” many individuals find themselves in a double bind situation where they are at the same time interpellated as political subjects and internally excluded from the possibility of active political participation (Balibar, 2008, p. 536)

To these days, it is clear that the relationship between the rights covered by citizenship, civil society and the State becomes even more complex. Boaventura Sousa Santos (1997) highlights three basic tensions that mark the relation between those three elements. The first tension refers to the processes of regulation and emancipation. When analyzing the issue of human rights, Santos emphasizes that, in spite of the fact that in the past, emancipation presented itself as the “Other” of regulation, that is, a revolutionary



process that might lead to the overcoming of social injustice in terms of access to rights, today, the so-called emancipatory policies are actually in crisis. Such crisis also involves citizenship, which is compressed between regulatory and emancipatory principles, with the regulatory processes prevailing in a strong way and encompassing (usually by means of neutralization) all the initiatives directed to emancipation.

The second tension mentioned by Santos is related to the conflict between the State and civil society. The sociologist states that although civil and political rights (dominant in the first versions of citizenship and to these days still important) have been established through a series of struggles between civil society and the State, the so-called rights of the second and third generations require the presence of the State as the actor who enables and provides the conditions of existence and support to those rights. In this way, how should we understand the current limits between civil society and the State? What defines in fact the role of each of these actors in the field of citizenship?

Santos still refers to a third tension, of great relevance in our context. Citizenship, especially in its legal-political dimension, has been interwoven with the constitution of the nation-states of the world ever since its emergence. In other words, citizen rights were defined in a national scale; the rights and duties of a citizen were established with reference to his belonging (or not) to a specific nation. The question is that, with the intensification of globalization and the “selective erosion of the nation-state” (Santos, 1997, p.106, own translation), we wonder what conception of citizenship might respond to the challenges of transnational citizens and contexts, without disregarding the cultural particularities of each local/national community.

As for that last tension, Alvarenga (2010) also highlights that the generalist dimension of citizenship has often been challenged. Some criticism points out that because the subject of citizenship in the past was mainly the white, male worker, the concept tended to ignore the specific life conditions of other subjects of rights in society, and still nowadays that has a great impact on current conceptions of what a citizen should be like. Other criticisms to the generalist view of citizenship refer to the fact that it tends to focus on economic rights, neglecting other kinds of rights (as the ones related to race and gender, for example). Finally, there is the challenging of citizenship rights because of their western orientation and therefore their underestimation of the actual condition of citizenship of non-western populations. We understand the criticisms described above are all consistent, especially when we consider that citizenship has long been connected to the geopolitical and economical interests of hegemonic capitalist states, but we also believe that it is possible to add some possibilities of interpretation to the concept that might prove useful to enable its use within the complex framework of demands and rights to be catered for in our world. In the next section, we are going to discuss some of those possibilities.

Bringing together citizenship and culture, universal and particular, global and local, equality and difference

As we have been discussing before, investigating citizenship requires going beyond a perspective of cultural homogenization, beyond a totalizing generalization of demands and beyond an attitude of unrestricted globalism. Alternatively, citizenship ought to be conceived a complex process of articulation of ambivalent categories, which acquire specific value according to the times and spaces where they emerge.



In this way, we propose a view of citizenship that is oriented towards the defense of multicultural human rights, taking as a reference the perspective suggested by Santos (1997). For that author, such kind of multiculturalism

...is a pre-condition of a balanced and mutually enhancing relationship between global competence and local legitimacy, which currently constitute the two attributes of a counter-hegemonic policy of human rights (Santos, 1997, p.97, own translation).⁴

It is clear that Santos' ideas about multiculturalism emphasize epistemologies that move away from the long-standing view of culture "as a set of all the best things that human beings have produced" (Veiga-Neto, 2003, p.7, own translation). In fact, such traditional view reflects an understanding of culture as something universal and unitary, and at the same time, it ignores the fact the culture which is considered legitimate is actually a set of cultural practices of a specific social group that was homogenized and acquired the status of universal.

For Hall (2009), the liberal conception of citizenship which prevails up to these days is based on the hegemonic universalism of the West and on an attitude of cultural neutrality. In practice, however, those two principles (universalism and cultural neutrality) could never be fully achieved or applied in an uncontested way, as Hall discussed in the following passage:

It is clear that the rights of citizenship have never been universally applied – neither to African Americans by the hands of the founding fathers of the USA nor to colonial subjects by the imperial government. This gap between ideal and reality, between formal equality and real equality, between positive and negative freedom, has haunted the liberal conception of citizenship since the beginning. As regards the liberal State's cultural neutrality, their advances should not be lightly discarded. Religious tolerance, freedom of expression, the rule of law, formal equality and procedural law, universal suffrage – although challenged – are positive achievements. However, the neutrality of the State works only when it assumes a broad cultural homogeneity among the governed. This presumption was the basis of Western liberal democracies until recently. Under the new multicultural conditions, however, that premise seems increasingly less valid (Hall, 2009, p. 74, own translation)⁵.

In line with the notion of multiculturalism proposed by Santos, the multicultural conditions highlighted by Hall indicate the plurality of cultures that exist in society and their struggles to conquer their political space and their right to legitimacy.

Multiculturalism, on the other hand, is a complex category, in the sense that the term has historically been used to refer to processes that have very different implications for society. Using the terminology of Candau (2008), multiculturalism can present itself in three formats: assimilationist multiculturalism, differentialist multiculturalism and interactive multiculturalism or interculturality. The first type seeks to integrate marginalised and discriminated groups into cultural hegemonic values, delegitimizing the specific knowledge of these groups as inferior. The second multiculturalism advocates the recognition of difference and the formation of homogeneous socio-cultural groups that co-exist without mixing with each other. Interactive multiculturalism, in turn, is what Candau regards as the



most suitable mode for the building of democratic societies, insofar as it deliberately promotes the "interrelationship between different cultural groups present in society", it "breaks with an essentialist view of cultures and cultural identities", it promotes cultural hybridization processes, it reveals the mechanisms of power that pervade the cultural relations and it does not unlink "issues of difference and inequality emerging today in particularly conflicting ways both at world level and in each society "(Candau, 2008, p. 22-23, own translation).

For our study on citizenship in the contemporary world, it is interesting to consider the three visions of multiculturalism presented above. Firstly, we believe that, for a long period, citizenship has been aligned with an assimilationist type of multiculturalism. The cultures of the various groups that made up a country's society are recognized, provided there is an integration of those individuals to the hegemonic culture that defines what the duties and rights of citizens of each nation are.

The existence of the second type of multiculturalism in certain Nations of the globe produced and still produces oppressive social processes (such as apartheid in South Africa), where cultural groups coexist in a segregated and contentious way, producing in fact citizens of first and second class, or even citizens and non-citizens.

The approach of citizenship that we emphasize along that work and which has already been suggested above in the words of Santos articulates an interactive multicultural view of citizenship, in an attempt to connect the competence of a global citizenship to the legitimation of citizenship rights defined in local terms.

With regard to the positioning of citizenship in face of issues of equality and difference, it may be affirmed that in its historical development and even under the present liberal-democratic perspective, citizenship has been committed to the equalization of differences, once it takes as a basic assumption the fact that all individuals are free or should be. The identity of each individual, however, greatly depends on the recognition of difference, as a basic prerequisite for reaching a parity of participation in society in cultural terms. This process is what Fraser (1996) called justice of recognition. The clash of demands for recognition rights with the demands related to the rights of citizenship, which minimize the differences between groups and individuals on behalf of universal rights, often lead to a dilemma.

In other words, in order to arrive at an understanding of citizenship which covers differential aspects of a person's identity, it is necessary to integrate equality and difference within the same paradigm. As Arnot (2006) warns us,

Citizenship, from an egalitarian perspective, would have to accommodate all social divisions, such as those of religion, social class, ethnicity, race and sexuality, and be inclusive of "other" social categories, such as refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, travellers, etc. (Arnot, 2006, p. 133).

Arnot still mentions that the recognition of differences (class, gender or race) "could mean that the concept of citizenship will lose its universalistic elements and the configuration of a community of interests" (p. 133).

The discussion of this dilemma can be expanded in light of the theory of justice proposed by Nancy Fraser (1995, 1996). This author suggests that there are two fundamental types of injustice in the world: one related to the bad distribution of material resources (including natural resources, health, education) and another type related to disrespect or non-



recognition of the cultural resources (identities, races, genders, sexualities, and others). She argues that the two types of injustice are usually interwoven and thus should be faced with the same intensity (Fraser, 1996).

According to Fraser, citizenship would involve not only the struggle for rights within the scope of redistribution, ensuring that equitable living conditions are offered to all members of a society, but also it must secure rights within the field of recognition, ensuring respect for oppressed cultural groups. In latest texts, Fraser adds a third type of rights to be included in the establishment of social justice: the right to representation, which implies the right to be heard and considered with regard to political decisions, whether in connection with local, national or global issues (Fraser, 2005).

Another important aspect to consider is that citizenship, by overcoming the boundaries of nation-states and covering a globalised arena, puts in check and at the same time demands a reconfiguration of who has the right to be considered a citizen and according to what criteria. In this context, one must resize the demands related to citizenship, so that this category includes not only the demands of citizens belonging to certain nations, but the citizens in a global scenario (Fraser, 2005).

In the preceding parts of this article, we have discussed citizenship, focusing on the historical development of the concept, highlighting how today this category relates to cultural aspects and what the implications of these relationships for a re-articulation of existing conceptions of citizenship are. Now, we turn our attention to a Brazilian curriculum policy document, in order to understand what meanings of citizenship are emphasized in the field of citizenship education, particularly in the Brazilian scenario, and evaluating to what extent the meanings associated to citizenship in the document contribute to the strengthening of a democratic society through an educational process that is meaningful and culturally relevant to the subjects involved. By doing so, we seek to establish a connection between the general academic discussion on citizenship and the way this concept is dealt with in the field of education, taking as a reference a national curricular document that stands as a sample of the national official educational discourse concerning that topic. We expect that such analysis will shed light on how citizenship has been re-contextualized within certain social spheres so as to attend to interests and intentions of specific social groups and social logics.

Citizenship and culture in curriculum policy: advances and setbacks

We propose an analysis of discursive constructions of citizenship present in the Complementary Document to the National Guidelines for the teaching of Sociology in secondary school (Brasil/MEC, PCN+, 2002), emphasizing the meanings that are dominant. Our intention is to point out what worldviews are behind the more emphasized meanings and to evaluate to what extent these meanings contribute to the strengthening of a democratic society that values the rights of citizens. At the same time, we strive to clarify the contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguities between multiple renditions of citizenship, not in order to overcome them, but to show that they are in fact constitutive of a network of speeches that reflect different political interests and thus, cannot be homogenized or unified.

At the beginning of the document, there is a representation of citizenship as "... one of the defining concepts of current Sociology ..." (Brasil, 2002, p. 88, own translation), which, as a school discipline, would have the commitment to providing a better understanding of "... the real possibilities of social transformation, in the search for a more just and caring society" (Brasil, 2002, p. 88, own translation). Within the assumptions that support the document, then, citizenship is a concept that relates to possibilities of social change.



On the other hand, the term social change does not have further specification throughout the text, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the possible senses of the word from other cues or elements in the speech. Among these, we highlight the principles that guide the definition of the concept of citizenship:

"... the relationships between the individual and society; social institutions and the socialization process; the definition of social systems; the importance of political participation of individuals and groups; the systems of power and political regimes, the forms of the State; democracy; citizens' rights; social movements "(Brasil, 2002, p. 88, own translation)⁶.

The speech above leaves undefined the notion of citizenship advocated in regard both to the knowledge to be worked within the principles mentioned and to the conception of man, society, and democracy that underpins such principles. It would fit it here to raise questions such as: how should it be the relationship between the individual and society to achieve a situation of more social justice? What are social institutions? What is meant by political participation of individuals and groups? What is the role of the citizen in face of power regimes and of different forms of State? What kind of democracy is aimed for and what is the role of social movements in the democratic regime?

We are not here arguing that the curriculum document had to provide any kind of response to the issues raised, but we identified that there is a lack of direction with regard to subjects and themes that are important in the field of citizenship and that need to be part of the universe of high-school students.

In sequence, the document associates citizenship to the notions of work and culture. One of the arguments to justify the connection between these three elements is that "... the pedagogical work with those concepts will allow a reasonable understanding of student's surroundings, which can generate transformative actions in society" (Brasil, 2002, p. 89, own translation). That statement points out to the association between citizenship and certain cultural patterns, as well as specific understandings about what the world of work should be like.

A more clear perception of the association between citizenship and work suggested in the document can be achieved by bringing to the discussion some common themes in the context of Brazilian educational policy contemporarily: the emergence of the view of education as an object of the market and the managerial representation of school knowledge in terms of competence, a term that derives from the human resources field and that means the presentation of a remarkable performance in a specific area (Raven & Stephenson, 2001).

Although our focus is not to go into a detailed discussion of the market view of education, we would like to briefly mention five major goals of this logic and then reflect on their relation with the concept of citizenship. Thus, we refer to the words of Stephen Ball (2006):

Improving the national economy, making strong connection between education, employment, productivity and trade; improving the results of students in job-related skills and competencies; achieving a more direct control over the content and curriculum evaluation; reducing the cost of education for the Government; and

increasing the community's contribution to education through more direct involvement in decision-making at school and pressure of market choice (p. 70)

If we then consider that in a market view of education, employment and productivity have primacy over ethical values and political issues at school, we can understand why, in the document, citizenship is linked to work. In this sense, a liberal view of citizenship prevails, with the logics of work exploitation and capitalist accumulation being legitimized. As it might be expected, the document does not emphasize socio-political aspects of the concept, for example, what values should guide the discussion of citizenship, what perspectives of democracy and society exist and could be aimed for, and the very fact that young students are already citizens ever since they are born. In this regard, it is interesting to realize that citizenship is actually represented as a competence that young people lack and that could only be developed or acquired through schooling.

On the other hand, the document does not highlight the fact that citizenship has a close relationship with social equality and that, therefore, it should be an area of contestation and challenge of all processes that hurt equality in a strong way, such as unemployment, the accumulation of capital and increasing poverty. The document discourse, then, masks the tension between democratic citizenship and the logic of the market, as if it was possible to have the two logics present without any conflict.

By articulating citizenship as a competence, the document gathers ambivalent points of view about the role of a citizen, with a dimension of citizenship committed to the questioning of unjust power relationships being little emphasized in favor of the appreciation of work, without the disclosure of the fact that most of the inequalities in society, both economic and cultural, cannot be addressed just by inserting the subjects in the labour market.

In our view, the attempt to hide the tension market/citizenship in the document is far from being unintentional or naive and results from the very fact that educational policy is a space of power struggles to make certain meanings hegemonic, as explains Taylor (1997) explains:

From the perspective of discourse theory, the production of policy is seen as an arena of struggles over meaning, or as "politics of discourse" (Yeatman, 1990). Emphasis is placed on political processes and politics is seen as "a struggle between opponents by competing goals, where language – or more specifically, discourse – is used tactically (Fulcher, 1989, p. 7) (Taylor, 1997, p. 26).

Considering Taylor's comment, we realize that in the curriculum document in question there are divergent and contradictory views on citizenship. There are speeches that defend the goals and projects of competing or even opponent political groups in society. The policy reflects this conflict, because it is a partial snapshot of meanings negotiated between social groups at the time of its construction.

We shall now proceed to investigate the other element related to citizenship in the document: the category culture. To start our analysis, we present two excerpts of the text. One of them highlights a specific meaning of culture. The other passage of the document points out some competencies to be developed by the discipline. In both parts, it is possible to identify important assumptions involving the relationship culture/citizenship:



Culture is cultural diversity, cultural identity, cultural industry, media and propaganda, alienation and awareness etc. (Brasil, 2002, p. 92, own translation).

... understanding and appreciating the different cultural manifestations of ethnic and social segments, acting in such a way as to preserve the right to diversity, as an aesthetic, political and ethical principle that surpasses current world tensions and conflicts (Brasil, 2002, p. 90, own translation)⁷.

In the definition of culture suggested in document, the first remarkable aspect is the idea of diversity, which according to Macedo (2006), tends to mask the difference and hide power relations between different cultural identification processes. In addition, the second sentence reveals an explicit intention to defend a concept of culture of "diversity" which seeks to overcome conflicts and tensions, as if the clashes between subjects were not constitutive of democratic social processes.

Together with the conception of culture mentioned above, the document frames citizenship as conducive to a political positioning of conciliating cultural difference through an attitude of understanding and appreciation of the different cultures, which somehow hides the possible cultural conflict that informs the construction of competing political perspectives of citizenship.

In the end, we underline that the document presents a conception of culture as a territory that can be demarcated and 'essentialized', ignoring the fact that cultures are in a constant flow and get hybridized, not only in terms of ethnic differences, but also in terms of age, gender, and other differences that influence the process of subjectivity construction.

In this sense, citizenship should not be represented as a cultural process likely to be generalized, that is, as a category that can be experienced in the same way by the different cultural subjects involved in its enactment. This is because citizenship covers a multiplicity of cultural aspects, which acquire distinct values in accordance with the subject, the contexts and the times when/where they are articulated.

From this perspective, we realize that the document aims at, precariously and inappropriately, representing citizenship as a set of guidelines (actually derived from specific cultural identification processes of hegemonic groups) that are organized, homogenized and to use the notion of discourse theory as articulated by Laclau and Mouffe (1987) – raised to the status of a universal discourse.

In search of alternatives: citizenship as an everyday practice

In the curriculum document investigated, we can find most of the tensions highlighted by Santos when referring to the human rights' context. And if we understand these rights also as citizenship rights, we can say that the document reveals ambiguities, paradoxes and contradictions in assigning senses to such rights.

Thus, for example, the tension (no longer so obvious) between emancipation/regulation translates into the presentation of citizenship as a universal category, capable of promoting cultural homogenization, or at least, a peaceful coexistence of cultures, without challenging the issues of power that establish a hierarchy of cultures within the social context.



In addition, from the point of view of the relationship between culture and citizenship, the document attests a dominant tendency towards an assimilationist type of multiculturalism, insofar as the concept of diversity leaves untouched the problem of *what* particular culture is made universal through the principles of citizenship and does not question who holds the power to establish what would be the concept of a good citizen.

This patent flaw in the document with regard to an approach to citizenship in the curriculum in a way which might make education a tool for the strengthening of a democratic society, where the various cultures have legitimacy and space to speak and be heard, leads us to consider alternatives to address citizenship within the curriculum and in the educational context as a whole.

Following the theoretical line of Biesta (2011), we propose an approach to citizenship which could be more inclusive and focused on the day-to-day experiences of the learners. From this point of view, emphasis is placed on how each person assigns meanings to experiences of citizenship of everyday life, engaging in various ways in social practices and reflecting his/her very own understandings of what it means to be a citizen/citizen. The students continuously have opportunities to assign meanings to what it means to be a citizen in global and local scopes, adopting an attitude of contestation and challenging unfair socio-political and cultural contexts (Smith, Lister, Middleton, & Cox, 2005; Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Biesta, 2011).

Biesta (2011) argues that this perspective tends to be inclusive, especially if compared to visions of citizenship that value, for example, the individual's socioeconomic insertion or his dedication to social causes as conditions of citizen identification. By establishing conditions that would leave aside a large amount of people, these visions of citizenship are a movement of exclusion and do not value the ability of every human being to respond to what he perceives to be "calls" in the field of citizenship.

Recognizing and enhancing the perception of each individual in the action of assigning senses to citizenship, in our conception, has much more value than just investigating what requirements are set by the system to define who can be on the inside of the border or who is relegated to the exclusion zone as a citizen. After all, citizenship is not a status to be won by whoever assimilates and incorporates into his practice certain patterns of behavior, but a way of being in the world which has "always already" been part of the existence of subjects.

One of the advantages of viewing citizenship as an everyday practice is the flexibility that such an approach allows. First, there is flexibility in terms of who can be considered a citizen, as it has been mentioned earlier. Secondly, there is flexibility with regard to the object of the citizenship practice. In other words, citizenship as an everyday practice is able to accommodate both universal (or almost) demands or practices and demands articulated by specific groups, including experiences and meanings built individually by each practitioner. This flexibility becomes important because it accords to subject practitioners a space to negotiate their representations of rights, duties and justice through a discursive articulatory process around shared meanings or at least meanings which strategically acceptable by the various groups in the debate.

Within this perspective, Biesta, Lawy & Kelly (2009) propose a classification of the various contexts where citizenship learning can occur. There are the unavoidable contexts, the compulsory contexts, the voluntary contexts and the ambiguous ones. An example of an unavoidable context provided by the authors is the family or a family arrangement that supports children in the first years of life. This example should be questioned in view of the

Brazilian reality, where that context is just not present in the lives of thousands of children. A compulsory context for citizenship learning pointed out by the authors is the school, because it is a space which requires a mandatory frequency, where students cannot choose whether or not to participate. Again, such classification should be challenged in the Brazilian situation, because there is not a tight control of the permanence of students in the school, not to mention the many students who do not have access to the educational system. Voluntary learning contexts for citizenship are those "where young people have a degree of choice in respect of their commitment and participation" in the learning process (Biesta, Lawy and Kelly, 2009, p. 18, own translation). In ambiguous contexts, such as work, there is a variation in the condition of participation of young people. For some young people, for example, working may be a personal choice, a voluntary act, or an undeniable need.

In our view, what the above categorization enables us to see is that there is not a restriction of citizenship learning to spaces previously established and designed for that purpose. In fact, this learning pervades the most varied spaces of young people's life experiences, whether those experiences are deliberately chosen or imposed by laws, obligations, or cultural schemas. A perception highlighted by the authors mentioned above is that in optional contexts, young people would have a larger space to express their ideas and construct specific understandings about citizenship. In the unavoidable and compulsory contexts, however, this ability would be constrained by institutional norms and cultural patterns of behaviour.

Another fundamental aspect in citizenship learning is the relational component. Biesta et. al. (2009) point out that in addition to the interference of contexts with conceptions of citizenship crafted by students, relationships also play an important role. In fact, we also advocate that, even though there are restrictions on citizen attitudes within certain institutional contexts, the establishment of relations of friendship, cooperation, dialogue between subjects inside and outside the institutional context allows the development of readings of reality and of citizen action possibilities that differ, and even go beyond those valued by institutional discourses.

Individual dispositions are another important factor in the construction of meanings of citizenship by students, once we identify that each student has a peculiar way of positioning himself/herself in the context where he belongs and approaching people he/she relates to. This can be explained by the baggage of experience that these students accumulate throughout their lives and by the impact of relationships they have experienced. Those two aspects originate feelings, perceptions and conceptions that will serve as a reference in the construction of new experiences. With Biesta et. al. (2009), we argue that it is at the confluence of contexts, relationships and rules that students have the possibility to build directions for citizenship on an everyday scale, and in situations that are beyond the school environment. This is an important aspect to be considered in citizenship education, although it is not the only one which should be catered for. We need to understand that the focus of research into education for citizenship cannot be only the way citizenship is taught in educational contexts, but also the ways through which the meanings of citizenship are constituted or learned by young people in the classroom and in the multiple situations related to civic aspects that students experience in their daily lives.

The shift from teaching conditions to learning contexts leads to a repositioning of students as subjects of the educational process, able to manage the knowledge of public life facts as well as to translate private issues in terms of collective demands (Biesta, 2011), within or beyond the school context. In other words, the task is not only optimizing the



curricula, improving teacher training, resources and methods to ensure the formation of a citizen who can play a significant role in a democratic society. More than that, it is necessary to invest in conditions that make accessible to students the informed and autonomous practice of democratic values and ensure that these learning spaces provide options and instruments of action for students to act in building a fairer society, even if it means going against the culturally established social standards. Such conditions, as Biesta (2011) highlights, cover “both the basic material conditions of people's lives and the wider material, social and symbolic resources needed for democratic participation and action” (p. 85).

It is reasonable, in that perspective, that the change in the curricula to foster better citizenship practice should be accompanied by an increasing openness to social policy intervention led by young people, either through the appreciation of what they have to argue, protest, and question in public spaces, or by ensuring specific representation spaces for young people in the institutions of debate and decision of the Government and of civil society.

As for the role that practices related to citizenship play in producing subjective identifications of young people in their everyday experiences, it must be mentioned that, in certain contexts, for example, citizenship can be experienced a lack of status, to the extent that the individual cannot fit into predefined patterns than is expected from a “good” citizen. In other contexts or situations, the subject has space to deconstruct and reconstruct the meanings of citizenship which are imposed by the system and bring them closer to personal and social identificatory processes, what can provoke changes in an individual's perceptions of the conditions of belonging to social groups. One can add that citizenship, in this same line of thought, is not an identity that someone can “have”. In the words of Biesta (2011), citizenship is “mainly and primarily a practice of identification, specifically a practice of identification with public issues, i.e. issues that are in the public interest” (p. 13). But, in addition to identification, Biesta (2011) also suggests the important concept of subjectification, going beyond the existing order of things. Subjectification would lead to emergence of agency and political subjectivity of individuals and would have much to contribute to the establishment of a truly democratic society

Identification is about taking up an existing identity, that is, a way of being and speaking and of being identifiable and visible that is already possible within the existing order ... Subjectification, on the other hand, is always “disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place” (Ranci re, 1995, p. 36; see also Ruitenberg, 2010). Subjectification “inscribes a subject name as being different from any identified part of the community” (ibid., p. 37) (Biesta, 2011, p. 95)

Based on the above ideas, we argue that identification processes related to citizenship that happen on a daily basis occur both in terms of socialization of the subject, or in other words, leading them to move closer to practices and values considered desirable by the system, and also in terms of subjectification, i.e. the emergence of spaces where these subjects can dare to be different and create, through tactics and strategies, experiences of citizenship that are in disagreement with given or expected standards.

In a more recent text, Biesta proposes that civic learning within the perspective of everyday practice and process acquires a non-linear, recursive and cumulative character (Biesta, 2011, p. 86). We understand the nonlinear character of civic learning as the fact that learning involves multiple dimensions and spaces at the same time and it covers both positive and negative experiences, i.e. those events that restrict or promote citizen action over time, in



a movement that develops through advances and setbacks. This leads to the second characteristic mentioned by the author, recursion, which consists in understanding that the meanings assigned to citizenship are not merely a result of civic or democratic experiences of everyday life, but also have an impact on these experiences and are permanently re-elaborated by the young subjects. Finally, the cumulative character of civic learning implies that any experience faced by the subject in the field of citizenship is forever registered in the memory and will certainly influence learning situations in the future. In light of those features, some of the pedagogical resources that civic education could use in order to develop students' socio-political awareness and provoke their involvement in public issues are suggested by Ruitenberg (2010) in the text below:

it is important for students to see a range of concrete ways in which citizens and those who were denied the status of citizen have worked to bring the societies in which they lived closer to what they perceived to be a just social order. It is important for them to see that this political work, different as its context and specifics may have been in each case, has involved the naming and articulation of political demands in some form. In addition, there should be room for students to claim the voice to name and articulate a social demand, and thus to become political subjects rather than remaining objects of the existing social order. (p.379).

This has a strong connection with a view of radical democracy, in which citizens always have the chance to disagree with certain rules and propose alternatives. The experience of democracy, after all, is something more than a rational experience, it goes beyond cognitive experience. So, when it comes to education for citizenship, we need to place more emphasis on the ways citizenship is experienced by young people in its most varied aspects of daily life and think about how to optimize the conditions for the exercise of citizenship to have an increasingly more democratic society (Biesta, 2011).

Final comments

In this paper, we discussed the issues of citizenship and citizenship education by focusing on Brazilian policy to exemplify current meanings of citizenship in the curriculum of secondary school in that country. Our findings suggested the existence of many challenges to be faced in the articulation of citizenship in the national curricula and we regarded as appropriate to point out some possible ways in which citizenship education could be approached in order to lead our students to more relevant and dynamic learning experiences in that area.

The emergence of some ambivalent meanings of citizenship in the Brazilian curriculum guidelines investigated reveals that, far from being a homogenous and harmonic set of ideas, the curriculum policy document conveys distinct interests which are linked to opposing and sometimes antagonistic political projects. Considering the discourse elements that we have highlighted, however, the meanings that seem to prevail are those which evoke a perspective of political neutrality, strengthening of the market logic, political conservatism and cultural and social life control.

Of course, all these perspectives are subtly merged or hybridized with expressions that relate to more critical and progressive discursive fields, which show some appreciation of difference. Such hybrid feature of a discursive formation would attend to the need to



amalgamate the largest number of groups around certain demands without generating political ruptures. Macedo (2006) approaches the culturally hybrid aspect of the curriculum, when she explains her understanding of school curricula, "as a space-time in which the discourses of science, the nation, the market, the 'common knowledge', beliefs and many others are merged, all also hybrid in their own constitutions" (p. 289, own translation). In this context, it is always difficult to predict or even to specify what vision of citizenship will prevail in the several instances in which the guidelines are redefined.

Under those circumstances, the school environment appears as an important place (though not exclusive), where the subject has a chance to silence conservative discourses, deconstruct top- bottom political bias and suggest the meanings related to citizenship that are more representative of their experiences, their needs and their political demands.

But the fact is that, in terms of citizenship education, the above-mentioned aims may be achieved only by means of pedagogical practices which make space for the subject to speak of themselves, of their experiences, their conflicts, expectations and frustrations, and especially of how they make sense of their political existence in the world, without being coerced into just assimilating senses of citizenship that are imposed on them as indisputable.

Such a statement implies two consequences: the first one concerns the need for making traditional dynamics of knowledge development more flexible, with the inclusion of learning processes based on readings of reality as a starting point and pedagogical methodologies that indeed motivate students to self-reflection, to debate, to participation in socio-political spaces. The second one concerns the role of the educator, who should commit himself/herself to a more integrated view of knowledge, establishing the bridge between the knowledge students bring, the knowledge from other fields, and use that knowledge to motivate active involvement with public issues from the part of students.

It is also necessary that the pedagogical practice is open to possible situations of disagreement between different meanings of citizenship that arise in the educational environment, always valuing the legitimacy of any subject to articulate his or her demand and claim that it is considered a valid one. As Pereira (2010) states, "the political is constituted of antagonisms (conflicts), seen as healthy and important in the process of political organization (space where institutionalized practices reveal power relations)" (p. 169, own translation). In our view, if school opens itself to that kind of political debate, then it could become a space of construction of citizen subjectivities, with its achievements being significantly reflected on other social spaces in which citizenship practices are enacted.

As a final remark, we hope that the theoretical intervention we have presented here can be understood as "another" view on citizenship; at the same time we recognize the partiality of the ideas we discussed. Therefore, we share our thoughts, with the intention that they find resonance in other contexts, in other modes of perceiving, doing, choosing. Thus, the ideas here discussed are meant to raise questions, encourage debate and provoke other readings on the subject which would facilitate a constant movement of re-signification within the field of citizenship education in the curriculum, toward the emergence of a more creative, participative and open to difference citizen.

Notes

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3 Original text: “são os negócios públicos dirigidos pelos cidadãos: costumes, leis, erário público, organização da defesa e da guerra, administração dos serviços públicos [...] e das atividades econômicas da cidade (moedas, impostos e tributos, tratados comerciais, etc.)” (p.371, apud Alvarenga, 2010, p.100)

4 Original text: “é pré-condição de uma relação equilibrada e mutuamente potenciadora entre a competência global e a legitimidade local, que constituem os dois atributos de uma política contra-hegemônica de direitos humanos no nosso tempo” (Santos, 1997, p.97).

5 Translated text used as a reference: “É claro que os direitos de cidadania nunca foram universalmente aplicados – nem aos afro-americanos pelas mãos dos Pais Fundadores dos EUA nem aos sujeitos coloniais pelo governo imperial. Esse vazio entre ideal e prática, entre igualdade formal e igualdade concreta, entre liberdade negativa e positiva, tem assombrado a concepção liberal de cidadania desde o início. Quanto à neutralidade cultural do estado liberal, seus avanços não devem ser levemente descartados. A tolerância religiosa, a liberdade de expressão, o estado de direito, a igualdade formal e a legalidade processual, o sufrágio universal – embora contestados – são realizações positivas. Entretanto, a neutralidade do Estado funciona apenas quando se pressupõe uma homogeneidade cultural ampla entre os governados. Essa presunção fundamentou as democracias liberais ocidentais até recentemente. Sob as novas condições multiculturais, entretanto, essa premissa parece cada vez menos válida” (Hall, 2009, p.74).

6 Original text: “... as relações entre indivíduo e sociedade; as instituições sociais e o processo de socialização; a definição de sistemas sociais; a importância da participação política de indivíduos e de grupos; os sistemas de poder e os regimes políticos, as formas do Estado; a democracia; os direitos dos cidadãos; os movimentos sociais” (Brasil, 2002, p.88).

7 Original text: “Cultura é diversidade cultural, identidade cultural, indústria cultural, mídia e propaganda, alienação e conscientização etc.” (Brasil, 2002, p.92).

“Compreender e valorizar as diferentes manifestações culturais de etnias e segmentos sociais, agindo de modo a preservar o direito à diversidade, enquanto princípio estético, político e ético que supera conflitos e tensões do mundo atual” (Brasil, 2002, p.90).

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