

Citizenship and Social Pedagogy

Elina Nivala

Introduction

The concept of citizenship has become very topical during the last few years. To begin with, there has been a lot of discussion on how to promote active participation of the citizens in the decision-making of the western democracies. Active citizenship has been seen as a prerequisite for true democracy, and that is why the decrease of the participation percentages in elections in many countries has awoken a growing concern for the survival of democratic societies, which has given rise to many strategies and programs directed towards the activation of citizens. Secondly, the enlargement of the European Union and the increase of its political role have elicited discourse about the citizenship of Europe that has its connections with the older conversation about cosmopolitan or international citizenship. It has brought forth challenges to the legal definition of citizenship as a national status that guarantees certain rights for some and at the same time excludes others out of the reach of these rights. In addition, the increase of immigration and the number of refugees has encouraged this debate. There are many civic organizations as well as political and social scientists that are calling for a wider definition of citizenship as a global membership of the

human kind that would guarantee each and everyone the same human rights. Furthermore, citizenship has become a concept linked with questions about identity, culture, sexuality, the rights of different minority groups et cetera. (See Giddens 1996, 68; Hewitt 1996, 253–254; Isin & Turner 2002, 1–2; Smith 2002, 112.)

This article is a brief introduction to the concept of citizenship. My intention is to build up a simple frame of reference that could help us social pedagogues to puzzle over the interrelationship between citizenship and social pedagogy. Citizenship is, apart from being a legal and political concept, essentially an educational concept. This article is related to my doctoral thesis that will consider the ideals of citizenship education.

Citizenship – about the concept and education

Citizenship is a historical phenomenon which has its roots in the ancient city state, polis, of Athens. As a philosophical and political concept it dates back to the writings of Aristotle. During its 2,500 years of history, citizenship as a phenomenon has had many different forms. As a concept it has been given different meanings depending on the context where it has been used and on the intentions of the definer. One of the most popular definitions of the concept on a very general level is that citizenship refers to membership in a political community. However, if one tries to fit all the theoretical, ideological, political etc. discussion about citizenship under this definition, one has to determine the term "political community" very broadly. In this definition, something is political when it has to do with dealing with things in common to a certain group of people, and this group of people – however tiny or colossal it is – forms the community. From this definition and the different ways of using the term citizenship in scientific literature I have

formed a four-parted frame that can help one to specify in what meaning the term is used in certain contexts and what kind of educational implications it has.

Membership of a Nation

Most clearly the concept of citizenship is linked with the idea of nation-state. In this context citizenship is understood as membership of a nation, in which case the term "political community" refers to a sovereign state. This definition makes citizenship a legal concept that most simply refers to one's status as a citizen of a certain state. Citizen-status guarantees the plenipotentiary membership of a nation, and there are certain statutory rights and responsibilities pertaining to this membership.

In the Declaration of Human Rights there is a paragraph that says that every human being has a right to citizenship. According to international agreements every state has the right to determine their own terms for granting the status of citizenship: who can be accepted to become a full member of the nation. The legislation of each state, however, has to follow the international regulations when determining the relationship of the nation to its members: what can be exacted from the citizens, what kind of responsibilities can be expected and especially what kind of rights must be guaranteed. (Kuusma 2003, 211–212.)

Citizenship understood as membership of a nation is a formal definition. In this sense of the concept it is not possible to talk about good or bad citizens. One can either have or not have the legal status of a citizen of a certain state, there are no specific categories of citizenship for those who handle their responsibilities well and for those who do not. Those who do it worse are not legally less citizens than those who do it well. The only segregation made with the concept is citizens and non-citizens, that means those who have the status of citizen of a certain

state and those who do not have it. In this sense citizenship is a concept of national inclusion and exclusion. It sorts people to those who are inside and entitled to the rights of the citizens and those who are outside and debarred from these same rights. (See Roche 2002, 71–72; Sassen 2002, 277–278.)

This purely legal definition of citizenship is interesting from the social pedagogical point of view when there is a question about immigration and those social problems connected to the exclusion of immigrants from different workings of the society based on their non-citizen status in a certain state. However, as a legal concept citizenship has nothing to do with education – except with learning the language in order to be able to apply for the status of the citizen – and so pedagogically it is quite uninteresting. For a social pedagogue other understandings of the ”political community” in the definition of citizenship are more interesting.

Membership of a People

When linked with the idea of nation-state, citizenship has also been tightly connected to nationality. In this context citizenship is understood as membership of a people, an ethnic group that shares the same history and culture. This understanding has nothing to do with the legal definitions of the terms or the contents of citizen-status; on the contrary, it is an emotional category. According to the legal definition, there are citizens of Finland with different ethnic backgrounds: Finns, Swedes, Russian, Somali and so on who have through different procedures been granted the citizenship of Finland. When understood as a cultural and emotional concept, the Finnish citizenship excludes those other groups and includes only the Finns, true Finnish citizens from their bloodline. Only they can be members of the people of Finland who have the same forefathers, who have fought for the freedom of this coun-

try, and it is for this legacy that they have to keep on working for their country and fulfil their responsibilities as citizens. Citizenship is not a status but a shared national identity. (See Miller 2002; Stenius 2003.)

As a member of a people a citizen shares the habits, rituals, ways of speaking and acting with others of the same origin. Becoming a citizen in this sense is a question of socialization and identity forming. This makes citizenship a pedagogical concept: how to transfer the values and norms, the way of life and the traditions to the next generation of citizens of our people, how to create a sense of togetherness and of national pride, how to encourage willingness to work for the own people and nation. Traditionally citizenship education in schools has been aimed at these objectives; it has been first and foremost national education. (See Arola 2003; Osler 1995, 4–6, 13.) From the social pedagogical point of view, however, this is but one dimension of education. Socialization to the habits, values and norms and the process where one forms his or her personal identity can be seen as the basis for citizenship education, a necessary but not sufficient part of education for membership in a community not restricted only to one nationality, to one's own people, but membership of a society, of a union of people with different origins and backgrounds.

Membership of a Society

The talk about good and bad citizens seems to refer to an understanding of citizenship that is wider than just a legal definition of citizen-status or a citizen-identity based on the ethnical origin. Citizenship is understood as membership of a society, not thinking of a certain nation-society but of society as a community of people living in a same area and having built organizations that take care of things in common. Acting in this community is acting as a citizen. When taking part in the decision-making of the community the citizen is acting as a political

actor and holding a political position in the society. But citizenship of a society has other faces, too, than just the political one. Citizens are also social actors communicating with each other, seeing for their own and other's well-being. They are cultural actors consuming cultural products but more importantly renewing and creating culture with their own lives. Citizenship understood as membership of a society is not a formal status and not just an identity but political, social and cultural action.

Different ideals of citizenship have to do especially with the definition of citizenship as membership of a society because the ideals deal with proper behaviour and desirable action as a citizen. Aristotle talked about virtues, virtuous life that was only possible for the citizens, and by virtue he meant living a good life and seeing for the common good of the whole society which was the aim of the citizenship (Sihvola 1994). Participation in the political and social life of the community has been a central ideal of the citizenship through centuries, although there are also more passive ideals of citizenship, which see that the role of the citizen is to live a prosperous life and in that way participate also in the increase of the common good.

To accomplish the ideals of citizenship, to promote proper behaviour and to encourage desirable action are by their nature educational aims. Citizenship education has usually aimed at fostering good citizens, and the talk about good citizens has been connected to political contexts. Educating children to become good citizens has thereby meant teaching them the necessary amount of knowledge, the required skills and the right attitudes to be able and willing to perform their role as responsible voters in national elections and as obedient populace between the elections. Today the ideal of a good citizen seems to include also elements of activeness and criticalness – whatever it then means in different contexts. (Harinen 2000, 34–40; Ahonen 2000.)

From social pedagogical point of view education always has its connections to the society, and education to the membership or of the

members of the society are essential working areas of social pedagogy. This means that citizenship education is by its essence social pedagogical; it is education in and by the community where the citizens live, act and work. Social pedagogy opens up a wider perspective to the citizenship education than just the preparing of good citizens. Citizenship education is learning ways to participate in the life of the society and adopting values that promote the common good by taking part in the life of the community. It is growing up as a citizen at the same time as becoming a person and a member of the community and the society.

Membership of the Humanity

Since the times of Aristotle, there has also been a wider perspective to the concept of citizenship: citizenship has been understood as membership of the humanity. In addition to being a member in the body politic in the concrete, every human being should also feel being part of the human kind. This sense of belonging would bring with it a morally deeper responsibility for one's own actions towards others – not just of own blood or people or race but towards everybody everywhere. In this sense citizenship is first and foremost a moral and global concept.

Especially after the Second World War, there has been a remarkable increase in the discussion about cosmopolitan citizenship. With this concept – and others alike – the attention is directed towards the pluralistic world of peoples that needs global solidarity in order to survive. Citizenship should not be a nationally exclusive status that differentiates people to different categories but it should be inclusive action that is building up a world-wide community. In this discussion the concept of citizenship is tightly connected with human rights, although there is disagreement about the possibilities to guarantee these rights equally to everybody because the legal system today rests on national

states and the role of world-wide human rights institutions is very limited. (Isin & Turner 2002, 7–8; Linklater 2002, 317–329.)

In this understanding of citizenship the legal definitions of civic rights and responsibilities give way to ethical consideration of own choices in the everyday life: how do my decisions in a shopping mall affect the lives of people on the other side of the world. The way of life becomes political – ”personal is political” as stated the civil movements of the sixties. (Farrell 1997, 5–6, 10; Ilmonen 1998, 28–30.) Citizenship education comes close to moral education. Children do not become citizens that magic day of their lives when they reach the age of majority but they grow up as citizens learning to think of themselves as members of a nation, a people, a society and – most importantly – of the humanity. In order to raise consciousness of all these dimensions of citizenship, citizenship education needs to be broadminded and based on values of human worth and of community. Education needs to be able to reflect its own value basis and its aims.

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