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Citizenship education and the crisis of democracy today: the McLaughlin model of continuity

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Abstract:
Background*: It is well known that democracy is established and developed when the views and needs of all are respected and taken into account in political decisions and policy development so that it is truly representative and responsive to all citizens. Nevertheless, it seems that much of modern societies are going through a period of self-doubt about their relationship with democracy. It is now common for the media to report that citizens are losing faith in democracy in greater numbers than ever before. This apparent decline in democratic loyalty, which is particularly evident among younger generations, is a global phenomenon that needs to be investigated and addressed immediately. The critical issues facing democracy today such as social inequalities, political apathy, fluidity of identities, cultural pluralism, violence and poverty have been weakening political participation for some time and the evidence shows that this gap is widening in the increasingly unequal and globalised world in which we live. If we add to these problems the need to protect the human rights of vulnerable social groups and the natural environment, it becomes clear that the modern and democratic citizen must be aware of them and, above all, be able to deal with them in an effective way. Citizenship education, through the development of appropriate educational models, can promote the learning of citizenship engagement, removing the feeling of political alienation and creating appropriate conditions for a more active civil society.*
Materials and Methods*: This paper attempts, through a literature review, to highlight how citizenship education, through the application of McLaughlin's model, fosters and promotes democratic lifestyles. On this basis, the concept of citizenship will first be analysed, then the relationship between democracy and citizenship education will be analysed, and finally, the models of citizenship education will be discussed. More specifically, a brief presentation of McLaughlin's continuum will be made.*
Conclusion: *Relevant conclusions will be presented and discussed.*
Key Word*: Democracy; Citizenship; Citizenship education; McLaughlin's continuum model.*

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I. Introduction

In many liberal countries around the world, there is growing concern about the state of democracy. In Australia, for example, there has been a long debate about the ignorance and apathy of citizens, especially young people. In other countries, such as the US, there is growing concern that young people do not value democracy as a form of government, with surprisingly high numbers supporting governance by a technocratic or military government[11]. In addition, there are concerns about the rise of increasingly violent movements on the far right[3] and the left[25].

There is also concern about the growing prominence of authoritarian political parties and, in some cases, their election to power in countries that are nominally democracies - for example, the rise of Viktor Orban to power in Hungary[2] or the rise of AfD in Germany[20]. Indeed, the popularity of these parties is often linked to a move away from global perspectives in favour of adopting more 'national' (insular) foreign and domestic policies. For example, the EU refuses to accept migrants or asylum seekers[35], the UK has deliberately cut itself off from the rest of Europe through Brexit[34] and, in the US, a key part of Donald Trump's popularity lies in his continued promises to build a wall between the US and Mexico[33,36].

Still, issues and problems such as the environmental crisis as a consequence of consumerism and uncontrolled growth, the failure of ecological policies based on voluntary citizen cooperation, the testing of democratic values and the increase in social inequalities combined with the fiscal crisis make democracy vulnerable[1,14].

The bleak picture of the state of democracy and civil society that prevails today as reflected in the examples mentioned above, has resulted once again in the issue of citizenship and the need to redefine its content in a direction that responds to the new needs of citizens in democratic societies[16,15].

Traditionally, citizenship has meant membership of a political community with its attendant rights and obligations. However, the growing dissatisfaction expressed by citizens with the state of democracy today, citizenship is emerging in new forms. These new forms of citizenship favour direct action and participation over representation and are more global in their outlook than limited to nationalist concerns[12]. They are also characterized as active, consumerist or justice-oriented and are attempts to classify approaches that are often organized around relevant issues through social networking platforms rather than through groups of members or organizations[17]. On the other hand, traditional bastions of civil society, for example membership organisations, pressure groups, political parties and trade unions, are struggling to maintain their membership density as young people reconsider the effectiveness of their participation in such social and political organisations[30].

Therefore, the stability and development of democracy depends not only on the existence of democratic institutions, but also on the attitudes of citizens. That is, on their willingness to promote the public good, on their ability to tolerate those who are different from them - in terms of religious or political beliefs, lifestyle, etc. and to cooperate with other citizens. Democratic institutions have no value and cannot function in practice if citizens do not truly respect and accept them[1].

II. The concept of citizenship

The fact is that states in recent decades have been faced with a wide range of ongoing challenges, many of which extend beyond their borders and their control. For example, climate change, mass migration, ubiquitous mobile technology and its impact on industries, especially manufacturing, growing inequality between classes and so on are all problems that are global in nature. What these new conditions show is that democracy is becoming increasingly fragile. In this context, and taking into account the rise of extremism, as highlighted above, the role of citizenship education and training is becoming increasingly important. The nature of citizenship education and training and what it entails is necessarily influenced by the definition of citizenship in a particular context[29].

In ancient Athens, a citizen was understood to be a free man, as opposed to slaves, women and children who participated in their government[38]. This classical conception of citizenship is often described as the democratic model and is embodied in the idea of citizen self-government as described by both Aristotle and Rousseau[14]. This model has features of voting, office rotation and co-authoring of laws. In the classical conception of citizenship, as opposed to merely representative forms, the emphasis is more on a participatory citizenship where each individual is able, and indeed, obliged to participate in governance. Here, the political community has an ontological priority over the individual and active participation in the political life of the *polis* is a fundamental condition for the moral development of the individual[1].

On the other hand, the liberal model of citizenship, where citizenship takes on legal rather than political significance. In this case, citizenship is about being subject to and protected by the laws of the state. It does not imply any participation in the shaping of those laws. At the heart of the liberal model, however, is the concept of individual freedom. It is freedom exercised in the private sphere of the individual. This form of citizenship emerged from the rise of nation states during the Enlightenment and recognised that within these nations there was always a tension between the rights of citizens to act as autonomous individuals and the requirement of the state to ensure equal treatment of all citizens[37].

This conception of citizenship led to the development of representative democratic government, at least a form that is still recognizable today, where the responsibilities of the citizen are limited to participation in elections rather than the actual shaping of laws and policies. The liberal conception of citizenship differs from the classical one on the question of freedom. While the classical one cultivates the interests of the *polis* as the supreme moral principle, the liberal version promotes individual freedom as the supreme principle as well as the fundamental moral purpose of the political community[29,26].

In addition, the advent of globalization and multiculturalism meant that there is no longer a single identity of citizenship in relation to the status of a particular ethnic group. What was once a characteristic of a particular ethnic group, for the most part, has become, in the global and multicultural world, available to a range of different ethnic, racial or religious groups. This has weakened the long-standing links between nation-states and the sense of ethnic homogeneity. However, the reaction of some sections of society has been to reject these approaches and calls for pluralism, and instead to identify the notion of citizenship with a kind of ethnic nationalism[13].

On the other hand, the concept of democratic participation is increasingly being challenged by a number of actors in different sectors. This marks an important departure from previous arguments about the future of democratic states. Rather than arguing, for example, for liberal or conservative approaches to democracy and rights, this debate is about the very nature of what democracy is and how citizens, particularly young people who are largely at the heart of this debate, can best participate in it[6].

III. Democracy and citizenship education

Scholars of political science have traditionally identified Ancient Greece as the starting point for any discussion of democratic thinking. In particular, ancient Athenian philosophers and citizens further contributed to the development of democracy, although Plato and Aristotle were at best ambivalent about the value of a democratic state. Indeed, Plato argued that "tyranny follows naturally from democracy, and the most aggravated form of tyranny and slavery from the most extreme form of freedom"[17]. In order to ensure democracy, the Athenians believed that the education of citizens was vital. The role of free men *in the polis* was to ensure that such citizenship education took place. This kind of citizenship education, according to *Aristotle*, had two basic principles: citizens had to be literate and participate in the governance of the *polis.* That is, for a democratic society to function effectively, its citizens must be able to read and write, with literacy being the first step towards empowerment, since according to Freire[40], it provides access to the mechanisms of power and oppression, and with this access comes the opportunity to change society[15].

On the other hand, Aristotle's second principle, namely that citizens should participate in the governance of the *polis*, is particularly relevant to this discussion on how an individual learns to be an active citizen. Speaking of this, Heggart[17] notes that Aristotle, in talking about the relationship between learning and participation, identified some of the contradictions that still exist in contemporary citizenship and citizenship education. That is, it is necessary for young people not only to have the experience of acting as citizens, but also to learn to act as citizens[29].

John Dewey then drew on the work of earlier thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill and used the development of the public education system and universal elementary education to explore the ways in which education and citizenship intersect. The concept of active citizenship within the community was central to Dewey's conception of democracy[32]. For Dewey, the idea of democracy was inextricably linked to education. Dewey argued that citizenship is more than the mere exercise of one's rights as a member of a particular nation-state. It is both a state of being and a mode of action. Indeed, in his book Education and Democracy, Dewey[7] emphasized that: "democracy is more than a form of government. It is primarily a mode of connected life, a common communicable experience" (p. 83), and argued that democracy is marked not only by freedom of action, but also by "the liberation of intelligence for independent efficiency" (p. 193).

Democracy, Dewey[8] wrote, rests on the principle of moral, self-directed individuality, where behavior is modified by internal rather than external authority. This means that it is important that education is more than developing skills or learning how to do something. Instead, it is about learning how to be something, and for Dewey, what students should be is active citizens.

However, education does not cultivate such intelligence. Dewey[7] emphasized that "the reform of education in the direction of greater play for the individuality of the child means the securing of conditions which will give outlet, and therefore direction, to a growing intelligence" (p. 199). The role of education, then, is to prepare young people to act in accordance with the ideals of democracy. For Dewey, the best way to do this was to ensure that education remained as relevant to the young person as any other part of their existence, such as home life, the neighborhood, or the playground. Dewey established a pragmatic educational approach based on this idea and, echoing Aristotle, emphasized that students learn best by doing[8].

Thus, if young people are to learn to participate in democracy, they must from the outset participate in a school community that reflects this approach, which means that schools must be fundamentally restructured to better reflect a democratic society, as opposed to the authoritarian model on which most of them are currently based.

IV. Education for citizenship

As the twentieth century drew to a close, interest in citizenship and citizenship education, suddenly increased in many countries around the world. This sudden interest led to the adoption of a number of different approaches to citizenship education and training[32].

One of the foremost policy analysts on citizenship education and training is English researcher David Kerr, who conducted a comprehensive review of citizenship education in 16 countries as part of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks. He found that in the 1980s and 1990s there was a renewed interest among governments in citizenship and citizenship education and suggested that this was partly due to concerns about how democracies might be viewed in the new millennium. Kerr[22] concluded that while most countries acknowledged that their purpose was 'to prepare young people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens' (p. 2), there was no real distinction or clarity between the countries studied. Classification was difficult because of the breadth and complexity of the various programmes available. It identified, however, that most citizenship education programmes could be classified according to the clarity of the values expressed in each programme. For example, citizenship education in the UK had little reference to values, while in Australia national values were expressed in general terms. Further along this continuum was South Korea, where there is explicit, detailed reference in citizenship education to national values[17].

Citizenship in many countries at the school level is taught as a separate subject, while in others it is integrated into a wide variety of courses[28]. This subject is based on concepts considered essential to democratic practices, including democracy itself, justice, rights and responsibilities, along with the skills required for full participation in a democracy, such as critical thinking, advocacy and informed and responsible action. The purpose of such a curriculum is to encourage young people to become active citizens, i.e. as young people to be able to work together to achieve a more just and equitable society[24].

One of the most enduring themes of citizenship education is the notion of the existence of a 'citizenship education deficit'[9,26]. This term is supposed to describe the lack of knowledge that most citizens of a country, and particularly young people, have about the governance of their country. From an educational perspective, the concept of citizenship education deficit is a limited tool for understanding young people's perceptions of citizenship. It comes from an educational model where the purpose of an education system is simply to 'fill' a student with the required knowledge or skills before allowing them to enter the workforce. It is a reference to Freire's banking model of education[39]. Such an approach implies that understanding citizenship is simply a 'thing' that can be applied to everyone equally. Any understanding of citizenship is much more complex with nuanced explanations of it that focus on performativity. That is, citizenship is not merely known, but is enacted. Something that educational approaches should take this into account. Another problem with the deficit model of citizenships education is that it implies that young people are a homogeneous group that does not understand all kinds of citizenship[14].

In fact, young people are more heterogeneous than any other segment of society, since they exhibit great differences both in terms of the social class, race, and culture to which they belong and in terms of the wealth they possess, the experiences they have had, and the opportunities they have "seized." Therefore, it is not surprising that these differences make teaching citizenship a particular challenge, as students have different starting points for learning about these topics[17].

Given that the majority of evidence suggests that learning about citizenship participation takes place through participatory learning processes, it may be a surprise that there is a specific subject and curriculum for citizenship learning, as the study of a subject in a classroom could well be very unconventional (not situated) and limited in its interactivity. However, as Haste indicated, citizenship education can be understood in different ways. First, using the acquisition metaphor and cognitive theories of learning, we can make the claim that teaching citizenship knowledge will lead to higher levels of citizenship participation and reduce the cost/effort towards citizenship participation in the future. Second, through the organisation of classroom political engagement activities (simulation activities, mock elections and student-led debates) that are embedded in relevant and current issues affecting young people's lives[16]. This allows students to actively build the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed for future political engagement. Using a participatory approach to learning political knowledge is more likely to lead to political action later on[19].

Research on citizenship education has identified both null and positive effects on citizenship engagement, with different implementation methods likely to produce different results[17]. Experimental design research has shown us that participatory learning within citizenship education classes is effective. For example, the Students Voice project in the US targeting disadvantaged urban schools found that framing discussions in local politics and using interactive methodologies were effective in enhancing political knowledge, political efficacy and political engagement[10]. In Germany, research by Oberle and Leunig, who also used experimental design, found that the use of simulation games within citizenship education lessons was effective in teaching knowledge about the EU and increasing confidence levels, particularly for more socioeconomically disadvantaged groups[31].

In the UK, citizenship education has been a compulsory part of the national curriculum from the age of 11 to 16 in England since 2002. Schools are free to decide on the content, delivery and volume of citizenship education, and schools have begun to vary significantly on these issues accordingly[23]. Some schools have taken the route of offering citizenship education as a specific subject, some as an interdisciplinary approach, while others have preferred to take a more overtly participatory route, introducing citizenship activities throughout the school[21]. The way in which citizenship education is implemented may well have implications for its effectiveness.

V. Models of citizenship education: McLaughlin's continuum (minimum and maximum)

One of the criticisms of many models of citizenship education is that they do not address the values that a citizen may need on a personal or private level. Whether this is a valid point depends on the definition of citizenship; if a citizen can only be constructed socially, then it is only fair for the curriculum to deal only with public and social values, attitudes and knowledge. Conversely, if a citizen is perceived in his or her private sphere, then there is a need to address more private, personal values. This critique is linked to another issue related to definitions of 'public'; traditionally, men have dominated the 'public' role of citizenship, and this suggests that the qualities desired by citizens are only those that men possess. These debates among those who

support either public or private models of citizenship have played out in educational settings regarding what should be taught in the citizenship curriculum[5]. In making this point, Schugurensky and Myers argue that new understandings of citizenship should embrace both the private and public sectors.

The most important explorations of civics and citizenship education, among a lot of experts, is the work of the British scholar, philosopher and moral educator Terence McLaughlin. He recognized that all notions of citizenship can be mapped onto a continuum extending from minimal forms to maximal forms. The same is true for citizenship education. McLaughlin identified four main features of this citizenship continuum[27].

The first feature concerns the different interpretations of the identity of the individual citizen in relation to the state. At the "minimum", citizenship is defined in very limited ways: formal, legal and judicial (this in a little more detail). In contrast, at the 'maximum', the citizen is defined more broadly, taking into account the social, psychological and cultural meanings of citizenship. The second characteristic relates to the virtues that a citizen ought to possess. At a minimum level, these are limited and focused on formal obligations and rights such as voting, obeying laws and paying taxes. At a maximum level, a citizen can be expected to act in a much more empowered way, including the responsibility to challenge and protest against the government. The third characteristic relates to an individual's expected political participation. At the minimum level, there is a suspicion of excessive participation with political participation being limited to voting during elections. In contrast, at the maximum level, there is a greater emphasis on participatory democracy. Finally, the fourth characteristic relates to the social conditions expected from citizens. A minimal interpretation would be limited to a legal understanding of citizens and citizenship, while a maximal interpretation would be one where citizens are able to recognize and challenge specific social disadvantages[17]. Figure 1, illustrates the four features of MCLaughlin's continuum as presented previously.

Figure 1: McLaughlin's continuum regarding citizenship[17]

Identity	Virtues	Political involvement	Social Prerequisites
Minimal: Formal, legal, juridicial	***Minimal:*** Limited, localised	***Minimal:*** Voting	***Minimal:*** Legal understanding of citizens
Maximal: Social, psychological, cultural	***Maximal:*** Challenge, question, Protest	***Maximal:*** Fully participatory democracy	***Maximal:*** Recognizing and challenging specific social disadvantages

According to him, most perceptions of citizenship could be placed at some point on the axis between the minimum and maximum and would not be likely to exist at only one of its two ends. The notion of continuity between the minimum and maximum also applies to citizenship education (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Minimums vs. maximums of McLaughlin's continuum in citizenship education[17]

Minimal	Maximal
• Exclusive	• Inclusive
• Elitist	• Activist
• Civics-based	• Citizenship based
• Formal	• Participatory
• Content driven	• Process driven
• Knowledge based	• Values based
• Didactic	• Interactive
• Easier	• More challenging

The main criticism of McLaughlin, according to Heggart[17] is that in the minimal forms of citizenship education, we may be led to a *non-reflective socialization to the political and social status quo*[27] because its main goal is to provide information and develop skills. In interpretations of this kind there is nothing that requires the development in students of broad critical reflection and understanding. Nor is there any concern for mitigating social disadvantages that may prevent students from developing into citizens in an important sense. Instead a maximal approach to citizenship and citizenship education is far more egalitarian. That is, it actively seeks to develop in young people both the knowledge and skills needed to be citizens in a more comprehensive sense, which includes a critical awareness of the ways in which political ideologies can shape their lives[21].

Citizenship education, for the most part, is linked to the notion of 'public virtues', such as, for example, respect for the institutions of the state, creating a climate of mutual trust, etc., which depend on the context of particular societies. These shared public virtues can be difficult to identify and even more difficult to develop in a society based on liberalism and tolerance of diversity, practice and values. The tension facing maximum citizenship educators is finding a balance between the critical thinking and independent judgment required of citizens and the shared values, loyalty, and commitments necessary in a cohesive society[22,23].

VI. Conclusion

The problems facing democracy today are endemic to liberal societies. The political participation gap can have all sorts of undesirable consequences. It leads to citizens having a weaker voice in political life, which can make government less responsive to their needs, interests and demands. This, in turn, can fuel feelings of alienation and erode public support for democracy or, conversely, push citizens to support populist parties that destabilize the democratic system[19].

Although future generations of citizens are spending more and more of their lives in the education system, this has not helped to reduce this gap. Put differently, while educational expansion has been to some extent beneficial for social mobility in terms of offering access to a wider range of employment and careers[4], it does not appear to have led to greater social mobility in citizenship engagement. Of course, one school of thought argues that we cannot expect education to have much influence, as the disposition to participate is supposedly formed at the pre-educational stage, in early childhood through parental parenting practices. Another stresses that education merely widens inequalities and reproduces social divisions[18].

Our position is that the situation is more complex than the two positions above would suggest and that education plays an additional, more complex and sometimes contradictory role in the cultivation and development of active citizenship promotion. In particular, through McLaughlin's continuum model, all forms of citizenship can be identified where the minimum citizenship education can be described as exclusive, elitist, citizenships-based, formal, content-driven knowledge-based, didactic, and more easily attainable. In contrast, maximum forms of citizenship education are inclusive, activist, active citizenship-based, participatory, process-driven, values-based, interactive and much more difficult for teachers to implement[22].

Cogan and Morris[6], at the school level, interpret McLaughlin's terms 'minimum' and 'maximum' in terms of content and knowledge. They consider that the minimum approach focuses on formal education programmes whose main purpose is to impart to students knowledge of a country's history and geography, the structure and procedures of its governmental system and its constitution. On the other hand, the maximal approach is very different: since the outcomes of maximal approaches are broad and include the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, the development of values and dispositions, as well as skills and attitudes, it is much more difficult to measure how successfully these outcomes have been achieved.

On this basis, the state, through the development of effective educational policies, must make young people aware of and sensitise them to issues of democracy through a form of education that focuses on respect for institutions, social justice and the assertion of individual rights and freedoms. Promoting active citizenship through citizenship education can help citizens, especially young people, to cultivate a sense of responsibility, to pursue social justice and to participate actively in tackling inequalities[32]. For this to happen, citizens need to develop certain virtues and, above all, develop responsibility and reflect critically and positively on public affairs. As Robert Putnam notes, for democracy to work best, the development of social capital is essential. That is, the ability of citizens to create a climate of mutual trust, a willingness to participate and a sense of fairness. The ultimate goal of citizenship education should be to build critically thinking active citizens who have acquired the relevant skills and the disposition to contribute to and reflect critically on the common good, applying democratic principles and values[14].

What is needed, therefore, is a clearer and more active attitude of citizens as a whole against the phenomena of irrationality and the attempt to deny politics as a collective act of social solidarity, as an act that concerns civil society.

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