

Active Citizenship: a task for European Higher Education (?)

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I. Introduction

Meeting of Directors General for HE in Malta, March 2017. Statement of the ESU (European Student Union):

Higher education shall educate for active citizenship, as outlined in the „Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training“ and in the „New Skills Agenda“.

Why?

*In the current situation [which is characterized by] **lack of participation** of youth in political processes, exclusion and **lack of societal engagement**, especially on the European level, **higher education institutes and students are key stakeholders** and can play an active role to enable increase involvement and understanding.*

Violent attitudes, radicalism, terrorism increase. Society is getting more and more unequal. Economy and politics are challenged to act.

In a nutshell:

- We see a crisis of democracy
- We see the importance of multidimensional forms of agency and empowerment
- We have to stabilize society on the basis of human rights within the triangle of economic, political and educational sphere

For more: John Gaventa, Innovation Series No 5, Can participation `fix `inequality? Unpacking the relationship between the economic and political citizenship, The Coady International Institute, Canada, April 2016

- **Liberal thought:** citizenship as a status
- **Communitarian thought:** prioritisation of the common good over individual interest
- **Republican thought:** tries to incorporate the liberal notion within the communitarian framework

At the centre of contemporary thinking there is the need to conceptualize citizenship as both: a status which entails a range of rights and obligations and an active practice.

For more: Emma Jones and John Gaventa: Concept of citizenship: a review. Institute of Development studies, Brighton, England. February 2002

Civil society

aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens. Civil society includes the family and the private sphere, referred to as the "third sector" of society, distinct from government and business (Wikipedia, 30.3.2017)

Civic participation

Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. (Wikipedia, 29.3.2017)

Active citizenship

can be seen as an articulation of the debate over rights versus responsibilities. If a body gives rights to the people under its remit, then those same people might have certain responsibilities to uphold. ... The implication is that an active citizen is one who fulfills both their rights and responsibilities in a balanced way." (Wikipedia, 29.3.2017)

Active citizenship can be seen in a broad way. In a sense of...

Feedback: citizens participate through “being asked” in a way of “feedback culture”. Many policy papers or legal acts pass a procedure where institutions and public is being asked about their opinion.

Participation: individuals and institutions are involved from the very beginning from planning process up to implementation.

Political engagement: voting, membership in political parties, advocate for or against something of superordinate interest.

*"The Term `Active Citizenship´ was first used in a European-level context developing the proposals for the European Commission Lisbon 2010 Strategy.... In this context **Active Citizenship** was described as way of **empowering citizens** to have their voices heard within their communities, to have a sense of belonging and a stake in the society in which they live..."*

Source: Does Formal Education Have an Impact on Active Citizenship Behaviour? Bryony Hoskins & Béatrice D´hombres, Joann Campbell, in European Educational Research Journal, Volume 7 Number 3/2008

The **Declaration on Promoting Citizenship** and the Common Values of Freedom, Tolerance and Non-discrimination through Education, adopted in Paris, March 2015,

pinpoints areas for EU level which have to do with democratic values, active citizenship, critical thinking, media literacy, promoting intercultural dialogue, fostering education of disadvantaged children and young people.

The BFUG in the Meeting in Brastislava in December 2016 had "*fundamental values*" on the agenda and discussed about the paper "*Academic Freedom and institutional autonomy- what role in and for the EHEA?*" in four parallel sessions. The discussion is going to be continued about which values are at the core of the EHEA.

for more, please read: Sur Bergan, "Democratic Citizenship – a Task for European Higher Education?", in: Journal of the European Higher Education Area, DUZ Academic Publishers, Berlin, 4/2016

Within the ERASMUS + Program a call for proposals focusing on the role of volunteering and prevention of violent radicalisation is open till 22nd May, 2017.

To summarize:

Active citizenship becomes a more prominent role in the Declarations and Papers on EHEA and EU – Level.

This will require a sustainable debate about the kind of Europe we want/should have.

II. Higher Education Institutions

It was found that education is positively and significantly correlated with active citizenship behavior.

But it was observed: Education levels have been increasing in European countries but not the levels of engagement at a country level.

Source: Does Formal Education Have an Impact on Active Citizenship Behavior? Bryony Hoskins & Béatrice D'hombres, Joann Campbell, in European Educational Research Journal, Volume 7 Number 3/2008

"...many of our understandings of citizenship in modern-day welfare states in the west are based on the concepts of T. H. Marshall (1950), who argued strongly that the realization of political citizenship was based on the ability of the state to provide a minimal economic and social floor upon which citizens could stand in the assertion of their civic and political rights..."

Source: John Gaventa, Innovation Series No 5, Can participation `fix `inequality? Unpacking the relationship between the economic and political citizenship, The Coady International Institute, Canada, April 2016

To summarize:

1. We face increasing radicalization and violence
2. We need to address those, who challenge inequalities.
(see Discussion to “social Dimension” WG 3 Meeting in Paris, June 2016)
3. We need to focus on political, economical and educational efforts to be sustainable
4. We know that it is necessary but not sufficient:
education has big implication on active citizenship

Which leads to our question: What can HEIs do about active citizenship?

Possible fields of action for HEIs:

1. Development of study programmes:
should regard additional benefit from other disciplines such as ethics in digital programming; should bring students out of the role as consumers
2. accompanying research: about the impact of fostering active citizenship
3. Support creative/innovative HE teaching

On the following slides the point „Support creative/innovative HE teaching“ will be explained.

The examples given, contain elements respected being essential to support the attitude needed for active citizenship. These elements are highlighted in bold letters.

Thanks to Ruth Mateus-Berr (Prof. for Design, Architecture and Environment for Art Education, University of Applied Arts Vienna) for teaching examples and useful hints.

make learning comprehensible: incorporate real life projects with multi-disciplinary approaches in curricula

Integrate the logic of public participation, as for example used in environmental impact procedures, in courses. Important would be a multidisciplinary method, to look at a problem with different perspectives as technical, anthropological, environmental, psychological aspects.

Example: Moot Court:

students run through a real scenario as for example a construction project. They go through it in a simulated situation, in groups. Each group represents a role (attorney, judge, opposing party/ public party, expert/consultant etc), starting with the planning phase, negotiating stage, final judgment) also included a site visit.

For more: <http://www.mcur.at/>

support the ability of empathy

Example: 10 Million people are living in dementia. Students and teacher created way 's where public could experience, how it feels having a very restricted perception. The findings and results of these various workshops will provide the basis for further research, artistic concepts and works.

For more: *D.A.S. Dementia. Arts. Society.* <https://www.dementiaartsociety.com/>

Example of the University of Applied Arts Vienna:

Students are guided to design a research-project involving public to an actual topic and publish their findings. They created a scenario in public space that attracts attention: a table decorated with fruits surrounded by a fence or a tent with carpets and oriental symbols: students invite passers-by to sit down, they are interviewed about their fears, their hopes. Results are going to be analyzed, conclusions drawn and published.

support creativity by building mixed teams

(especially, when they are mixed in matters of culture and discipline)

Example of the University of Applied Arts Vienna:

students from different technical studies of Serbia – all of them had a focus on mathematics - and art students from Austria developed together new learning material for maths-lessons in school.

Example – still in development:

On the basis of comparison of drawings a self-learning medical-algorithm is created. It shall indicate the medical practitioner the progression of the disease. With that, stressing tests with dementia-patients won't be necessary anymore. This project with technicians was set of by arts students.

young scientist/students experience their work having an impact: let research being implemented

Example: Cooperation of University of Vienna (Faculty of Psychology and Faculty of Computer Science), Childrens Cancer Research Institute, University of Applied Arts Vienna, T-Systems Austria (telecommunication company).

researcher, clinicians and students developed an application for cell-phones for childrens with cancer to detect very fast the worsening of the patients condition.

Details: The stem cell transplantation is a lifesaving procedure for children and adults with cancer or blood diseases. In this context, high quality aftercare is an essential part of the therapy, and in particular prompt information is warranted to enhance early diagnosis and to deliver appropriate treatment. Data collection will only include information as requested in the patient handbook like eating and drinking behavior, bowel movement, observation of pain etc.). The child gets points for the - via cell phone - answered questions which he/she can invest in the following computer game.

For more: <http://interacct.at/project/english.aspx>

Empower self-respect and abilities

Empower self-determination and accountability

Example: Cooperation of the Burgtheater Vienna, University of Applied Arts Vienna and NGO 's (youth clubs, schools, welcome guides, social services, welfare institutions, senior clubs).

Marginalized people or people at the edge of it are invited to redefine a classical stage play, develop content and shape of the redefined play that will be presented at an "open house" day of the theatre. Not only actors but also students of arts within their courses do support this creative work.

For more:

https://www.burgtheater.at/Content.Node2/home/offene_burg/Offene_Burg_Stadt_Recherchen16-17.at.php

Example – to be developed:

Systematically interim dedication of vacant buildings for creative projects; in cooperation between city government and university (concepts developed by multidisciplinary groups of students).

To summarize:

Criteria supporting the attitude of active citizenship of students

- make learning comprehensible: incorporate real life projects with multi-disciplinary approaches in curricula
- support the ability of empathy
- support creativity by building mixed teams
- young scientist/students experience their work having an impact: let research being implemented
- Empower self-respect and abilities
- Empower self-determination and accountability

III. Conclusions

Suggetions, to be taken in consideration for WG 3 findings/
recommendations:

1. Establish criteria or guidelines whose basic points show what is to be considered by creating a study program which is appropriate to facilitate active citizenship
2. Create a self-evaluating tool, running about the question "is our study program fit to foster active citizenship"?
3. Set incentives for good projects fostering active citizenship (maybe via a slot within the Erasmus + Program)

In the working groups tomorrow we should discuss

- Definition: what do WG 3 participants understand as active citizenship?
- Complete the mentioned criteria (and examples)
- Make terms about recommendations to be made to the BFUG

"Literacy through Science: Students shall acquire that attitude, which ensures factual handling, ability to judge clearly, intellectual honesty and tolerance and a high responsibility ... to a human, democratic society. They furthermore shall learn to understand the meaning of their discipline within Science in a holistic way as well as the meaning of Science in the aggregate of human culture."

Source: Translation out of the Austrian University-Study-Act 1966, § 1 (2) c, expired

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