



Reflections about citizenships, and for citizenship

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Summary

- Taking into account the diversity of the audience and the symposium's theme, I will examine two conceptions of citizenship. One is the legal, that I consider a minimalist conception of citizenship. The second conception is broader. It is a political conception of citizenship. I will relate the political conception to current events, to education, and to political life in a democracy.



On citizenships

- Why conceptions and not definitions of citizenship?
- Why it is important to our lives?
- What is the role of education, in particular political education, on citizenship?



The legal conception of citizenship

- Defined in terms of the rights and duties of a person before the state, as well as the allegiance that the person owes in relation to other states
- It can be called a legal conception of citizenship.



The legal conception of citizenship

- In many cases, citizenship represents the acceptance of a “national identity” that overcomes national origin, cultural diversity, and social condition.
- Thus, it is expected to be a source and a result of the uniformity of behavior and compliance within a territory.



Limitations of the legal conception of citizenship

- Tends to clash with social and institutional change within countries, and with economic and migratory dynamics among them.
- Frames the events and issues related to immigration.
- Citizen as a passive subject



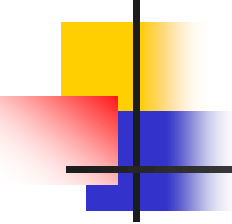
Limitations of the legal conception of citizenship

- It applies to all political systems.
- Living in totalitarian or authoritarian systems requires compliance from its citizens.
- As experience shows, compliance might be attainable.



The political conception of citizenship and democracy

- But the real difficulty is in democracy, **because democracy requires responsibility from its citizens, both individual and collective responsibility.**
- It is the quality of democracy what citizens should care about.



The political conception of citizenship vs. the legal

- It is imperative to overcome the legal conception of citizenship in a democratic context.
- The legal conception is important, but it is one element of political citizenship.
- The political tradition in the United States is fundamentally legal.

One recent example



<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/inauguration-2017/trump-signs-executive-action-obamacare-inauguration-day-n710116>

- Executive orders are legal, but...
- Importance of political education, to distinguish the legal from the political



The political conception of citizenship and democracy

- Democracy requires responsible deliberation and participation; citizen is an active subject.
- Participation is not only to demand action from the government or from others.
- Education, including political education, leads to deliberation and participation.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- These are not “idealistic views”: they have been elements of citizens’ education and activity elsewhere.
- Voting is important and necessary, but it is not sufficient.
- There are other forms of political participation.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- There are alternative forms of social, political and economic organization to those in the US and PR.
 - alternative forms in pluralism
 - integration and representation of marginalized groups of society (e.g. cases in Latin America)
 - social corporatism and concertation



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Those alternative forms make other countries we visit, so “interesting”... (e.g. social democratic countries in Europe).
- The social context is prominent, not the legal.
- Political parties coexist with civil society.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Experience tells me students from all disciplines want to know about them.
- They wonder about the ideals and the classic works of politics, about alternative ways of doing politics, and express candidly they wished had learned about these topics earlier.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Citizens' deliberation should not be reduced to social media; memes are not enough.
- Politics in democracy is still about identifying social needs, explaining issues, providing alternatives (not solutions) to be evaluated and deliberated, and about persuasion.

An old candidate with different ideas in recent times



http://www.ktnv.com/news/political/elections-national/bernie-sanders-campaign-hires-a-nevada-state-director_90125402

- These are some of reasons why Bernie Sanders was so attractive to young voters.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Significant threats to democracy nowadays are the unfounded opinion, and nationalist populism (President Trump & company embodies both).
- A political conception of citizenship based on understanding what politics is about, deliberation based on informed arguments, and participation are essential to democracy.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Elective and governmental officials should know and understand what their duties are prerogatives are (both written and non-written).
- Citizens should know and understand them as well, and ask for their responsibility fulfillment.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Accountability (in Spanish *ser responsable y responsivo*) is essential to governance.
- Responsibility for what was done, and what was not
- No consequences or penalties, no accountability



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Build consciousness that “the public things” belong to everyone, not to anyone.
- This is necessary to diminish the misuse of the public things, and prevent corruption.



Political education and citizenship: ideas to share

- Many people state they “stay away” from politics... most of the time they are thinking about partisan politics, which is different from politics in the broader sense.
- The phrase “that’s political” means in most cases, “it is party politics” or “partisan politics”.

Finally, but not the least...

- **Political issues are very important, and political decisions have consequences.**





Conclusion

- Citizenship is more than the acknowledgement of rights, duties, and allegiance to a state.
- Democracy requires a broader conception of citizenship that emerges from education, including political education.



Conclusion

- Education leads to responsible deliberation and participation that may include, but is not limited to voting.
- I have proposed some ideas to share, that I believe can contribute to political education, and thus to an understanding of what the political conception of citizenship is about.



Conclusion

- Politics is too important to leave it in the hands of the others.



References and acknowledgements

- References are available: from the classical works of politics to recent studies in different fields within political science.
- These reflections emerge from discussions about citizenship in several courses, but specially in a course for students that are not political science majors.



References and acknowledgements

- Thanks to these students for the challenge of nurturing their interest in politics.
- Thanks to you all for the opportunity to share these reflections about citizenship.