



technology, children, schools and families

The civil society project

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Abstract

In this paper I examine the CRELL-Network research reports on active citizenship and civic competence. I argue that the specific institution promotes a particular view for citizenship aiming at a citizenship identity which cannot enable individuals to see themselves as initiators within democracy but as followers within the so-called civil society. In the same vein lies the idea of the virtual civil society while civic e-communication resulting from e-citizenship seems to become a key skill in the citizenship agenda of Europe in the future. I claim that both actual and virtual civil society cannot bring about any changes as they promise but they seem to contribute to the preservation of the status quo. My suggestion is that learners should be encouraged to exert criticism using a different discourse aiming at the evolution of democracy. I have named the specific approach as "radical citizenship" in opposition to the active citizenship term which seems to have dominated the citizenship (education) discourse.

Keywords: citizenship, society, europe, neo-liberalism

Introduction

The 2000 Lisbon strategy¹ is a European goal which has essential implications for the educational and training systems of the member states; a set of specific objectives (European Commission, 2001) which among others involve the content of education according to a lifelong learning perspective for the construction of the so-called Knowledge-based economy has been adopted throughout Europe. Nevertheless, it seems that there have been 'shortcomings and obvious delays'² in implementing the Lisbon strategy. Within this frame, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has been initiated to promote good practice and achieve greater convergence towards the main EU goals through the use and development of indicators and benchmarks. The indicators and benchmarks have a dual role; they reveal disparities in performance levels between or within states and stimulate exchange of expertise and policy approaches, and they are also used as instruments for the monitoring of progress towards common objectives where these have been adopted (European Commission, 2005a). The second role denotes a qualitative function which is also apparent in the second and third points of the OMC outline³.

In conclusion, we could say that the EU has intensified the convergence effort which does not seem to become real within the following two years; the first point of the OMC outline which 'sets targets in the long term' (see footnote 4, point 1) and the OMC itself imply that the Lisbon strategy will remain a pending target beyond the 'benchmark' year 2010.

1. The CRELL-Network

The CRELL-Network (Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning), which has been established in the vein of the OMC, is an institute conducting research on the basis of indicators and benchmarks according to the Lisbon strategy targets, on economics, econometrics, education, social sciences and statistics in an interdisciplinary approach to research. So far, there are 5 benchmarks⁴ and 29 indicators within 8 broad domains⁵ for the monitoring of progress towards the common objectives. One of the CRELL-Network projects is 'Active Citizenship in a Learning Context' which addresses the question of

¹ The Lisbon strategy comprises a strategic goal for the European Union: to become, by 2010, 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'.

² Presidency Conclusions European Council (2005), point 4 quoted in Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (2006) 'The road to the European knowledge-based society- the contribution of organised civil society to the Lisbon Strategy', Brussels: European Council

1. fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set, in the short, medium and long term;
2. **establishing**, where appropriate, quantitative and **qualitative indicators** and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors **as a means of comparing** best practice;
3. **translating these European guidelines** into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;
4. periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review, organised as mutual learning processes (Bolds added, European Commission, 2005: 22)

⁴ Early school leavers, Key competencies, Completion of upper-secondary education, Mathematics, science and technology graduates and Lifelong learning http://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/list_indicators.htm (accessed on 26/09)

⁵ Improving the quality of teachers and trainers, Developing skills for the Knowledge Society, Increasing recruitment to mathematics, science and technology, Making best use of resources, Open Learning Environment, Making Learning more Attractive, Improving foreign language learning, Mobility and Co-operation http://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu/list_indicators.htm (accessed on 26/09)

'what are the individual learning outcomes (civic competence) in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills required to generate an active citizen, and how can this competence be measured using composite indicators based on existing data'. In the frame of this project, the Civic Competence Composite Indicator (CCCI)⁶ (Hoskins et al, 2008) has been developed following the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (ACCI)⁷ (Hoskins et al, 2006). According to Hoskins et al (2008, p13) 'civic competence is understood as the ability required for enabling individuals to become active citizens' while active citizenship is defined as 'participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy' (Hoskins, 2006). Education and training for an active citizenship pertain to 'learning opportunities (formal, non-formal and informal) that occur at any stage of the life cycle that facilitate or encourage active citizenship' (ibid.).

From the discussion above, there are two points that merit focus; the content of the ACCI and CCCI, that is, the qualitative traits of active citizenship and civic competence and also the theoretical background of the whole project, trying to foresee any future implications for the development of citizenship identity from the perspective of the EU.

The active citizenship composite indicator

Departing from the main question of the project '*how a concept such as active citizenship can be measured*' (Hoskins et al, 2006, p6) many might claim that the specific question seems rather problematic as it raises ontological questions regarding the essence of a 'concept' and its susceptibility to measurement. Nevertheless, the specific research question gives an exploratory and experimental connotation to the project in terms of rendering a concept into a measurable object which is the core objective of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and the CRELL-Network and thus it should be perceived as such.

Active citizenship definition

'Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy.' (Hoskins, 2006)

Active citizenship understood as '*participation*' encompasses Putnam's (2000) concept of 'civic engagement'⁸ and the theory of social capital⁹ (Hoskins et al, 2006), both purported to raise shared values and objectives leading to social cohesion and economic success.

Although the authors state that active citizenship 'has evolved as a specific strand within research on social capital' (ibid.) they nevertheless do not make clear whether 'active citizenship' is a decree or a finding of the so-called social capital research, verified in practice or a hypothesis made in the frame of social capital theory aiming at some kind of 'citizenship' modality. The definition of active citizenship presented as a CRELL 'production' (ibid. p10) implies the second case as active citizenship definitions vary and

⁶ The indicators used for the construction of the CCCI involve data from the IEA 1999 CivEd survey covering 22 European countries and focusing upon the 14 years old. The main aim of the survey was to understand 'how young people are prepared to undertake their role as citizens'.

⁷ The 63 indicators used for the construction of the ACCI involve data from the European Social Survey (2002) covering 19 European Countries.

⁸ Putnam (2000) states that 'active citizenship' is strongly related to 'civic engagement' and that it plays a crucial role in building social capital

⁹ The definition used in this paper is the following: 'the institutions, relationships, attitudes and values that govern interactions among people and contribute to the economic and social development' (Grootaert and Van Bastelaer, 2001)

thus the specific definition is one among many. Following the specific rationale we could say that the Active Citizenship Composite Indicator is a measuring tool for a specific 'kind' of active citizenship with *finite* traits.

Active citizenship traits

The following sentence could be considered as the quintessence of the CRELL perception of active citizenship. More specifically 'Active citizenship is an essential element of the (Lisbon) Strategy, putting the spotlight on values, representative democracy and civil society.' (Hoskins et al, 2006:6)

The sentence above, apart from the fact that it presents the actual basis of the specific definition development, that is to say the Lisbon Strategy, also implies a theoretical affinity between the Lisbon strategy and the social capital theory and research. Active citizenship is 'participation' in the political life, civil society, community life and the values needed for active citizenship (recognition of the importance of human rights, democracy and understanding) (p11). These 'dimensions of active citizenship' comprise the measurable and distinctive elements for the composite indicator development. In the indicators lists (see Appendix 1) one may see that the frame of active citizenship involves specific sites (ie political parties for the political life, HR-TU¹⁰ organisations for the civil life, religious, business, sports, cultural, social and teacher organisations for community life) and is viewed in terms of membership, participation, money donation, voluntary work and voting.

For instance, in the political life¹¹ dimension and the National Parliament in particular, active citizenship does not include 'standing for elections' which is an entrenched right even in the conventional representative democracy, and is limited in 'voting turnout'. Similarly, in terms of political parties, initiative-taking for the creation of political configurations is not mentioned; on the contrary active citizenship in this domain concerns membership, participation, money donation and voluntary work.

Moreover, in the civil society¹² dimension referring to political non-governmental action, active citizenship similarly involves membership, participation, money donation and voluntary work in organisations while protesting is about working in an organisation/association, petition signing, taking part in lawful demonstrations, boycotting products, ethical consumption and contacting a politician. The community dimension is distinguished from the civil society dimension as the activities involved 'are more oriented towards community support mechanisms and less towards political action and accountability of governments' (Hoskins et al, 2006, p13). From the statement above, we can assume that community is perceived as an independent locus while participation, say, in a bowling club is considered to be a dimension of active citizenship.

The values dimension concerns a combination of indicators on democracy and human rights, thus a specific definition for democracy is implied including the importance of voting, obeying laws, independent opinion development, voluntary and political action. Moreover, as far as human rights and intercultural understanding are concerned, they mostly involve immigrants (ie immigrants should have the same rights; immigrants make the country worse/better). More specifically, in the first indicator cited above, a fallacy occurs regarding human rights and citizenship rights identifying the first with the latter. The vexed question is whether the 'same rights' refer to human rights as it is

¹⁰ The acronyms stand for Human Rights and Trade Unions organisations

¹¹ According to Hoskins et al (2006: 12) 'Political life refers to the sphere of the state and conventional representative democracy such as participation in voting, representation of women in the national parliament and regular party work'

¹² According to Hoskins (2006) 'civil society refers to the political non governmental action.' It refers to the 'arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values'.

initially stated (Appendix 1, Table 4) or to the rights attached to citizenship as a legal institution. It seems that the second case is most probable as the use of the adjective 'same' implies a comparative dimension (ie 'as us/you') and at the same time it entails a sense of completeness of rights for 'us/you'. Moreover, any reference to human rights is exhausted on issues of racial discrimination and racism.

In general, we could say that *the indicators delineate an activity confined in mere participation where initiative taking is excluded*. Hence, active citizenship is restricted in a pre-established set of loci within which 'participation' and not initiative taking is the status quo option. Moreover, democracy is represented as equalling loyalism while there is a vagueness concerning the content of (human) rights which only concern immigrants and not all.

What active citizenship *is not* involves limits set by 'ethical boundaries' excluding extremist groups that promote intolerance and violence against the principles of human rights and the rule of law (p11). In addition to the previous paragraph we could conclude that 'extremism' could be considered any action moving beyond the aforementioned active citizenship frame.

The civil competence composite indicator

The concept of 'key competences' is prevalent in the Lisbon Strategy as the basic infrastructure for effective engagement in the lifelong learning process¹³ and it is linked with the 'fundamental change in the way which education and knowledge are understood in the context of globalisation and a rapidly changing work environment' where emphasis is placed upon the '*output and individual competences*' rather than input and the process of knowledge transfer from one generation to the next (Hoskins et al, 2008, p15). Civic competence is considered to be one of the key competences¹⁴ linked with active citizenship and comprises one of the eight competences leading to economic success. According to Hoskins et al (p19) civic competence covers both affective and cognitive dimensions and highlights the factors that will facilitate a broad dimension of life including multiculturalism and labour market participation. The CCCI represents the 'civic competence' measuring tool for a specific age population (14 years old) and it refers to the learning inputs¹⁵ and learning outcomes that are needed to facilitate active citizenship¹⁶. The theoretical model upon which the CCCI was constructed 'is an attempt to create an operational measurement of civic competence and constitutes a hypothesis on the measurement of civic competence, it does not intend to describe how civic competence function in practice' (p.38). Nevertheless, the theoretical framework of the CRELL (civic) competence concept is highly based on relevant work on behalf of the OECD (Rychen and Salganic, 2003; DeSeCo, 2005; Mainguet and Baye, 2006), UNESCO (Rychen and Tiana, 2004), the European Commission (1998) and the Council of Europe (Veldhuis, 1997; Audigier, 2000) drawing from the human and social capital theory and Putnam (2000) in particular.

¹³ See European Commission (2005)

¹⁴ Competence is conceived as a holistic concept encompassing cognitive skills, attitudes and non-cognitive components such as values (Rychen, 2004: 21-22) which are referred as the affective dimension of competence.

¹⁵ Learning inputs are considered to be learning opportunities (formal, non-formal and informal) that occur at any stage of the life cycles that facilitate or encourage active citizenship (Hoskins 2006b).

¹⁶ The association between learning and active citizenship in the report, is attributed to Putnam (2000) who states that overall levels of education have been associated with higher levels of civic participation.

The civic competence traits

As mentioned earlier, the CCCI consists of a set of indicators which refer to the following two broad areas; the affective dimension (values, attitudes and intended behaviour) and the cognitive dimension (knowledge and skills). Commenting upon the indicators content (see Appendix 2) defining the output facilitating active citizenship, we could make a general remark; input is similarly related to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for the preservation of the current order of things and the encouragement of participation in pre-established sites opposed to initiative taking and the further development of institutions and democracy.

More specifically, in the values indicators we can see that 'acceptance' is required only for the rule of law, while 'a belief' is required for social justice, importance of democracy, the preservation of the environment. This is an oxymoron since laws do not always protect but on the contrary, impinge upon social justice, democracy and the preservation of environment. Moreover, in the same list we have 'respect for human rights (equality, dignity and freedom)' and 'a belief in social justice and the equality and equal treatment of citizens'. Comparing the two values exhibiting similarities, we can see that the second one which refers to 'citizens' has a more commanding tone to the first one which refers to human rights in general; we could thus presume that the case of discrimination between citizens and non-citizens (immigrants) is rather possible.

Moreover, in the *intended behaviour* indicators we have 'intention to participate in the political community', 'intention to be active in the community', 'intention to participate in civil society'. Moreover, in the *knowledge* indicators, and the 'key elements of the political and legal system' we have 'the importance of voting' solely, while 'standing for elections' is not mentioned. Similarly, in the *Skills* indicators we have 'to be able to monitor and influence policies and decisions including through voting'. In the indicators above engagement is represented as participation either in community, civil society or voting.

Additionally, in the attitudes indicators, we have 'to trust in and have loyalty toward democratic principles and institutions'. The use of trust in the CCCI framework is quite vague since according to Hoskins et al (2008, p32) 'it is not clear if it is preferable to trust the political institutions all of the time or never'.

On the other hand, protest activities (PROTE) are excluded¹⁷ 'from the overall index of civic competence since it might identify support for extremist actions, such as spraying graffiti or blocking the roads' (p33) similarly to 'political rights for anti-democratic groups' (ADGR) on the grounds that such indicators could pick up a distinction between liberal and communitarian democracy 'rather than accepting both forms of democracy as equally valid' (ibid.). Moreover, the 'positive attitude towards immigrants' (IMMIG) is also excluded because the questions 'cannot be related to a normative criterion for civic competence; they relate more to political left or right position on immigration and as such can be highly sensitive' (Hoskins et al, 2008, p33).

From the indicators above, it seems that civic competence is considered to function within the sphere of the established order and is purported to be neutral without any ideological inclinations. As far as the role of the CCCI is concerned, the extraction of specific indicators of the original database which might either 'identify support' or 'pick up distinction' does not seem to operate in terms of measurement of civic competence

¹⁷ In Hoskins and Mascherini (2008) protest activities are stated to have been included in terms of lawful demonstrations, signing a petition, boycotting products, and deliberately buying certain products for political, ethical and environmental reasons (ethical consumption).

as initially stated; on the contrary it does have a descriptive disposition regarding the content and practical dimension of civic competence.

Additional indicators for the future

According to Hoskins et al (2008, p25) 'the new context of political realities faced in today's world with increased globalisation and in light of awareness of global terrorism' constitute additional parameters to the civic competence concept. They are included in the future International Citizenship and Civic Education Study (2009) which seems to provide an updated database for the CRELL-Network. Moreover, although the use of ICT is considered to be a new form of (civic) participation (Hoskins et al. 2008, p11) it does not comprise part of the Civic Competence Composite Indicator framework as it is covered in other key competence indicators of the EU (p73). Nevertheless, in Hoskins and Mascherini (2008) this interest is highlighted as ICT use is linked with the civil society and NGOs regarding the development of informal networks implying an additional factor for civic competence development which remains unexplored.

2. Theoretical framework of active citizenship

According to Hoskins and Mascherini (2008) Marshall's (1950) view for citizenship is quite limited and focused upon the rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to the state and contemporary research on citizenship focuses upon the citizens' participation in political processes with the 'intent to influence' (Verba and Nie, 1972) and to be involved in the decision making and deliberative democracy for policy development (Mutz, 2006). Moreover, active citizenship is thought to have important links with education including both formal and non-formal education (Holford and van der Veen, 2003) and vocational education and training (Preston and Green, 2003). Within this context, the European mandates of developing a competitive 'knowledge society' and greater 'social cohesion' have highlighted active citizenship as a rather promising concept for the fulfilment of the aforementioned aims and as a means of 'empowering citizens to have their voice heard within their communities, a sense of belonging and a stake in the society in which they live, the value of democracy, equality and understanding different cultures and different opinions (European Commission, 1998). According to Hoskins and Mascherini (2008) the key concepts attached to the E.U. perception of active citizenship involve Social Capital drawing mostly from Putnam (1993, 2000) and the role of networking and 'civil community' and Social Cohesion which refers to a broad range of dimensions of society including employment, housing, health and well being, collaboration, and marginalisation of social groups. More specifically

'Social cohesion is society's ability to secure the long-term well-being of all its members, including equitable access to available resources, respect for human dignity with due regard for diversity, personal and collective autonomy and responsible participation.' Council of Europe, 2005)

Commenting upon the CRELL theoretical framework, we could say that the social capital theory, along with the 'civil community' or 'civil society' concept, has concerns for many neo-liberal practices disguised into community theories¹⁸. From the perspective of *political economy*, the resurgence of interest in community stems from Neo-liberalism

¹⁸ There are two terms describing the specific theories; 'neocommunitarianism' (Jessop, 2002) and 'Neo-liberal communitarianism' (DeFilippis, 2004)

entailing 're-articulation of the roles and goals of the state; a withdrawal from social service provision mixed with reassertion of the state's roles in repression and social control and a concomitant reconstruction of the non-profit 'third' sector' (Gilmore, 1998; Lake and Newman, 2002) within which 'community' plays a central role. According to DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2006: 676) the supposition of the 'social capital' concept is that 'the set of resources that inhere in relationships of trust and cooperation between people... may be the most promising starting point for new directions in combating poverty. Additionally to this, this perception situates the local community as the site and solution to social problems skirting the role of capitalism and the state (ibid.). *Simply put, the effort for social change is purported to occur without challenging both the economic and political status quo.* According to Parazelli and Tardif (1998) the community sector becomes linked to the technocratic apparatus of the state and as a consequence, social problems become fragmented and local organisations subcontractors of the state. Another kind of critique refers to the 'cultural' side of community as promoting conformity and homogeneity and excluding the 'non members' of the community (Young, 1990: 235). DeFilippis, Fisher and Shragge (2006: 681) argue that such critiques can bring us dangerously close to political disempowerment by delegitimising collective action. Nevertheless, it seems that collective action is qualitatively different to community action.

To recap, critique about communitarian theories basically refers to two points; the first is the *erroneous* decontextualisation of community as an independent site of economic-social-political action pertaining to structural fragmentation of society and is viewed as a transformation of capitalism so as to transcend its crises. The second point is about 'cultural/ideological' fragmentation between the members and outsiders of the community who have not espoused the values and aims of the community.

For instance, in terms of the EU perception of active citizenship the community dimension is represented as an independent locus (see section 2.1.2). Moreover, in terms of the 'cultural/ideological' fragmentation refusal of the rule of law, belief in direct democracy and involvement in the law making process could be considered as *deviation* from community's basic values and 'ethical boundaries'.

3. The European Union citizenship identity

With reference to this last point above concerning 'community', the concept of identity is rather useful for the specific conversation. According to Haste (2004) identity is about

"group membership and self-definition in terms of social categories, including nationhood, community, sense of place, and ethnic and religious identity, where these are salient. It defines who shall be deemed ingroup and outgroup, and therefore, what shall be the basis for sharing symbols and metaphors with others. It also includes self-identity, in which adherence to particular values or beliefs becomes part of the self: "I am the kind of person who believes such and such."

Additionally, a conceptual overlapping occurs between citizenship and identity as the construction of the citizen is in part the construction of an identity (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998). From the EU perspective, the construction of *active citizenship identity* is not related to nationhood, ethnic and religious identity. Nevertheless, it does refer to community, sense of place, in-grouping and symbols/metaphors sharing. The Lisbon Strategy holds a prominent position within the EU discourse and is represented as a shared objective or even a binding obligation among the European member-states and

their people, not only politicians. Hence, the Lisbon strategy seems to play the role of a European ideal, a metaphor implying future prosperity for all Europeans.

Furthermore, the specific citizenship identity seems to involve in-groups and out-groups. On a first analysis, this distinction could refer to citizens and immigrants. As we saw earlier, the lack of human rights is linked exclusively with immigrants and is limited to racism and discrimination (see 2.1.2). One might claim that 'immigrants' fulfil the positioning (Haste, 2004) towards the 'other' affirming the European citizenship identity. Nevertheless, it could be equally argued that the 'others' are those who do not espouse the values of the European community as described above.

Moreover, the measurement of either active citizenship or civic competence is about European countries solely and thus a spatial dimension is added in the citizenship identity.

Finally, apart from the fact that the CRELL-Network per se has been created for the facilitation of the Lisbon strategy fulfilment, the conducted secondary research on active citizenship is based on a specific theoretical framework regarding specific values and objectives in accordance with the strategy. As we saw in the case of the CCCI, some indicators have been extracted such as IMMIG and ADGR on the grounds of ideological neutrality for left or right wing positioning for immigration, and liberal and communitarian positioning regarding political rights of anti-democratic groups. From the above, it seems that the CRELL-Network forges a specific citizenship identity participating in meaning making and negotiation of the concept attributing qualitative traits to citizenship.

3.1 Some conclusions

The EU perception of active citizenship attached to the Lisbon strategy implies a morally-charged agenda which involves competitiveness and economic success on the one hand and social cohesion on the other. It could be argued that the deeper meaning of the specific objectives involves an equilibrium effort between the personal and collective spheres of life, which translated into political theory terms is a merging attempt of liberal and communitarian stances. As cited earlier, for Hoskins et al (2008) both forms of democracy are equally valid and this perception might indeed reveal that the dispute between communitarians and liberals devoid of the economy dimension is a superficial contention and part of a specific narrative limited within pseudo-dilemmas without challenging the actual political and economic status quo. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) give us a really useful distinction between three kinds of 'good' citizenship; the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen. On their argumentation about the three views of active citizenship they state that character or volunteering oriented programmes belonging to the first and second view of 'good' citizenship respectively, embrace a vision of citizenship either devoid of politics or inadequate for the deeper examination of the workings and processes of politics and society. They then assert that justice-oriented citizenship addressing a macro-level critique of society can ideally enhance critical analysis of root causes of injustice with opportunities to develop capacities for participation. Subjecting the EU perception for active citizenship to the distinction above we could say that the social capital concept viewed as enhancing levels of trust and cooperation along with the objective of participation matches the two first categories referring to character development and volunteerism. *Social cohesion which refers to the social sphere of life is not about social justice.* In addition to this, the 'acceptance' of the rule of law does not seem to encourage the critical assessment of social, political and economic structures and practices leading to identification of the root causes of problems as Westheimer and Kahne (2004) suggest. Similarly, the concept of 'extremism' (ie extremist protest

activities) within the specific discourse sets limits and frames of 'illegitimacy' for actions and perhaps aims. Moreover, the 'human rights' reduced to issues of discrimination and racism and identified with citizenship rights obscure the institutional character of (citizenship) rights materialised as practices and access to resources, a highly economical issue.

Hence it seems that the EU perception of citizenship is about a citizenship modality which does not aim at radical social changes but it intends to perpetuate the current order of things without staking the political and economic status quo. Hence, this moulded citizenship culture promotes a somewhat superficial or depoliticised thinking which fails to evolve into dialectical, critical and creative thinking enabling learners to rationalise the root causes of problems, imagine an alternative and just society and work toward this direction. Nevertheless, youth generation needs to be perceived as a generation that *make history* (Flacks, 1988; Toren, 1993), which entails making sense of the world around them and working toward a meaningful future drawing from useful information and ideological inspiration (Youniss and Yates, 1999).

4. Implications for the future

The specific citizenship modality as analysed and presented in the preceding discussion needs to be viewed in relation to the Lisbon strategy and policy suggestions enabling us to foresee any future educational implications. Moreover, the OECD work on 'active citizenship' could also give us useful insights about the future EU citizenship education agenda as, according to the review conducted, the CRELL-Network follows the specific organisation on both a theoretical (see 2.2) and research level as the use of indicators has been initiated by the OECD in the frame of the INES project since 1988¹⁹.

4.1 ICT and active citizenship: the Lisbon Strategy

The interest exhibited on behalf of the CRELL-Network for the use of ICT and civil society/NGO's concerns the development of informal networks implying an additional factor for civic competence. Although in the CCCI research report (Hoskins et al, 2008, p73) ICT is stated to be the object of another key competence indicator of the EU, in Hoskins and Mascherini (2008) there is an interest anew in the specific area denoting the emergence of an essential variable for the future of citizenship both as a concept and as an educational practice. There are two points that merit our focus; the EU educational policy and future objectives, and also the new possibilities arising for the initiation of e-citizenship.

As far as the first point is concerned, in the *Concrete Future Objectives* (European Commission, 2001:8) there is a clear emphasis on the perspective of lifelong learning and the development of the knowledge-based economy within which ICT has a dual role; 'it requires us to keep the definition of basic skills under review and to adapt to it those changes on a regular basis'. Hence, it seems that ICT is both a variable of conceptual development of skills and a tool for the skills application. In general we could say that in the European Union discourse ICT is represented as a *sine qua non* of the fulfilment of the Lisbon strategy.

¹⁹ See Bottani (1996)

Therefore, ICT mastery could be perceived as an element of the European citizenship identity, giving the identity definition an additional and perhaps unprecedented component. So, following Haste (2004), we could say that the self-identity viewed from the perspective of the EU also includes the mastery of specific skills named as competences, which schematically could be described as follows: "I am the kind of person who *can do* such and such".

In *Building the Knowledge Society: Social and Human Capital Interactions* (European Commission, 2003, p40) ICT is considered to be important in people's ability to make use of it to *engage in meaningful social practices*. Moreover, the internet is regarded to have created a space for civil society escaping all conventional jurisdictions, being incipiently de-nationalised and offering the possibility for interested citizens to act in concert across the globe while it provides new opportunities for governments to interact with individual citizens without the mediation of elected representatives or civil society organisations (pp43-44). It seems that ICT and internet are viewed as the medium and arena of social action respectively enabling active citizenship to exert influence even in the political domain by ie contacting a member of the government.

4.2 E-citizenship

Participation in Informal e-networks²⁰ could be seen as the following locus for active citizenship while *civic e-communication* could be considered as the future additional parameter of civic competence generating a category of sub-skills updating with this way the skills definition within the new challenge of civic participation in the public space of internet. The 'third sector' and civil society, materialised as NGOs exhibit an increase in their importance in the last decades (Santiso, 2000), and thus NGOs could play an important role in citizenship education as educational agents integrated into formal education. This scenario is highly possible as the emergent new category of sub-skills attached to this dimension of active citizenship should be *a priori* developed within formal education. Moreover, the technology of information and communication gives the opportunity for interaction between the two sectors. This means that we could have the amalgamation of formal and non-formal learning opportunities where the first can become modulated so as to contribute positively to the new locus of citizenship. Consequently, if formal education provides knowledge regarding the political institutions for future participation in the political domain, it should similarly prepare them for participation in the new locus of citizenship action, expanding with this way learners' civic competence.

*E-citizenship*²¹ could become a very popular educational aim all over Europe in the following twenty years as it combines important elements of the European citizenship identity; active citizenship, ICT use, networking engagement. Moreover it contributes to the 'deterritorialisation of (European) space' (Delanty, 2000: 81, brackets added) facilitating the apperception of the European Union as a substantial organization legitimized in the consciousness of e-citizens.

The interaction between the two sectors of formal education and NGOs for the cultivation of e-citizenship could provide new learning experiences. Following Benett's (2008: 21) question 'what kind of democratic experiences would we choose for future generations', the answer is simple but complicated at the same time; it depends on the kind of

²⁰ 'Networks can be seen as formal and informal organisations that facilitate the exchange of information and technology and foster various kinds of co-ordination and collaboration in the economic arena' (European Commission 2003: 30).

²¹ E-citizenship has been welcomed by the British government; 'ICT provides a means by which public participation can be increased, and we hope that with an active government policy the potential benefits can be maximised' (HM Government, 2002)

democracy we want to cultivate to them, a highly political issue. Without any doubt, the 'European' perception of e-citizenship could not escape the theoretical framework of active citizenship seen as mere participation aiming at the preservation of the political and economic status quo. Similarly, *e-communication could be based on the dissemination of a relevant shared discourse consisting of meanings, values and aims non-threatening to the system.*

Coleman (2008, p191), making a distinction between autonomous and managed e-citizenship, argues that 'managed e-citizenship starts from the assumption that the internet as an anarchic realm in which unknown nodes perpetually collide, is an unsafe place for young people, not only because their social innocence might be exploited by predators but also because *they are politically vulnerable to misinformation and misdirection*' (italics added). In the same vein, Luke (2002) raises concerns regarding the 'hidden pedagogies of citizenship'; technological infrastructures could mould citizenship into a narrow, quiescent and consumerist model of civic action. A very illustrative example is the OECD e-Democracy²² project; OECD E-engagement pertains to the following three objectives:

- 1) Information: a **one-way relation in which government produces and delivers information for use by citizens**. It covers both 'passive' access to information upon demand by citizens and 'active' measures by governments to disseminate information to citizens.
- 2) Consultation: a two-way relation in which citizens provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition by government of the issue on which citizens' views are being sought and **requires the provision of information**.
- 3) **Active participation: a relation based on partnership with government**, in which citizens actively engage in the policy-making process. It acknowledges a role for citizens in proposing policy options and shaping the policy-dialogue although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with government.
(OECD, 2003: 32, italics and bolds added)

In the objectives above, we can see a specific view for e-democracy exclusively operated by the government in terms of information dissemination and decision making. The specific framework excludes all the other agents of the political system such as the parties of the opposition, organisations of citizens or non citizens, trade unions, individuals etc. Consequently, the information upon which the so-called policy dialogue is built upon could be of doubtful quality as there is no provision for accountability and verification. As a result, the policy dialogue is contingent upon the information given by the government and 'active citizenship' is confined within the specific set of information and its concomitant options for voting. It could thus be argued that the specific e-democracy could be better characterised as 'e-oligarchy' since pluralism and the participation of other political agents are excluded.

The OECD report also raises some issues concerning the effective engagement of people in e-democracy. Among others, the design of a technology supportive of active participation providing the means for the facilitation of the pursuit of networks is

²² The OECD research report (2003) *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of on-line citizen engagement* considers if, how and what information and communication technologies (ICT) can achieve extend enhanced citizen engagement in the policy-making process. The research was based on collaborative research projects in 12 OECD member states (Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovak Republic, Sweden and U.K.) and the European Commission. The project was based on an earlier OECD report *Citizens as Partners (2001)* setting the conceptual platform and the objectives of e-democracy. According to the 2001 report, '*democratic political participation must involve the means to be informed, the mechanisms to take part in the decision-making and the ability to contribute and influence the political agenda*' (OECD, 2003: 32).

suggested while the active citizenship capacity refers to the development of deliberation skills entailing listening to, and engaging in, argument and counter arguments (2008: 20-21)²³.

We could conclude that e-democracy according to the OECD pertains to the development of a specific software supporting the development of networking and virtual communities participating in fora organised by the government who is the exclusive provider of information regarding the political agenda. The deliberation process could thus be organised in a specific framework and arguments/counter arguments could be based on the specific set of information probably yielding to specific voting options.

According to the example above, it seems that the so-called involvement of citizens in the law making process is a fictive one while it creates the illusion of grass-roots democracy. The possibility of information assessment, political speech articulation and formation of alternative suggestions for voting is excluded and thus a consumerist model of citizenship of ready-made propositions is the case indeed.

5. Epilogue

From the preceding analysis we could say that a citizenship modality is aimed on behalf of the EU aspired to safeguard the dissemination of Neo-liberalism through the theorem of active citizenship. The secondary research conducted by the CRELL-Network has produced two measuring tools for active citizenship and civic competence according to the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) for the creation of indicators and benchmarks. The theoretical framework which draws from the social capital theory and the use of primary data showed that the aim is not solely the quantitative description of active citizenship and civic competence but also their conceptual crafting. As claimed earlier, the use of ICT in active citizenship seems to be a very important future tool for the development of citizenship e-networks. The construction of a virtual civil society entails the cultivation of *civic e-communication* for the engagement in managed e-space, networks participation, e-deliberation and e-voting. Such perspectives could create the development of relevant educational software for primary education students or actual participation in e-spaces for the students of the following educational levels. Although the CRELL-Network has not dealt yet with this issue, it can be asserted that it could be included in the future agenda for active citizenship as it combines important elements of the European citizenship identity; active citizenship, ICT use, networking engagement. However, both e-citizenship and the construction of the virtual civil society must not be viewed outside the social, economic, and political milieu within which 'active citizenship' and the actual civil society have been identified. Simply put, e-democracy does not necessarily imply direct democracy but, on the contrary, it can operate as sham democracy giving the impression of equal participation in decision making like 'active citizenship'.

As stated earlier, citizenship learning is always in accordance with the kind of democracy we want to cultivate in learners, either we are aware of that or not. Having always in mind the two basic principles²⁴ of democracy we should try to encourage learners to

²³ In OECD (2008)

²⁴ There are two fundamental principles of democracy; the principle of individual autonomy (no one should be subjected to rules that have been imposed by others) and the principle of equality (everyone should have the same opportunity for participation in the formation of the rules).

question their own identity within democracy making the following questions: 'What is my position within the polity, who am I within democracy? Who should I be?' in order to be able to critique the quality of democracy they experience (in terms of institutions, practices and rights) and pursue the kind of democracy they want. Hence, instead of active citizenship equalling mere participation in pre-established sites we should better suggest the term *radical citizenship*²⁵ equalling initiative taking and attached to alternative concepts such as social justice instead of social cohesion, society instead of community and deciding that instead of 'influencing' decision making enabling them to develop a different citizenship identity, and realise that the effort for social change cannot occur without challenging both the economic and political status quo.

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²⁵ Radical citizenship refers to radical democracy, a concept attributed to Laclau and Mouffe (1985) challenging liberal and Neo liberal concepts of democracy.

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