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Sant Obiols, Edda , Gonzalez-Valencia, Gustavo, Shaikh, Ghazal, Santisteban, Antoni, da Costa, Marta, Hanley, Chris  and Davies, Ian (2024) Characterising citizenship education in terms of its emancipatory potential: reflections from Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan. *Compare: a journal of comparative and international education*, 54 (4). pp. 608-627. ISSN 0305-7925

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2110840>

Publisher: Taylor & Francis (Routledge)

Version: Published Version

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Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccom20>

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To cite this article: Edda Sant, Gustavo González-Valencia, Ghazal Shaikh, Antoni Santisteban, Marta da Costa, Chris Hanley & Ian Davies (2022): Characterising citizenship education in terms of its emancipatory potential: reflections from Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan, Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, DOI: [10.1080/03057925.2022.2110840](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2110840)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2110840>



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Characterising citizenship education in terms of its emancipatory potential: reflections from Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a theoretical contribution to discussions about the emancipatory potential of citizenship education across four sites (i.e. Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan). By reflecting on policy and empirical data from our four contexts of study, we discuss whether citizenship education manifests different conditions of emancipatory education (modern, postmodern, and post-humous). We argue that citizenship education offers possibilities for emancipation, but these are constrained by capitalist and Enlightenment barriers. We conclude that if an emancipatory form of citizenship education is to be possible, there is a need to make room for politics in school classrooms and further politicise epistemological and anthropological assumptions. We recommend a form of citizenship education that conceptualises emancipation as our ability to respond ethically to situated challenges by thinking by ourselves with others.


KEYWORDS

Citizenship education;
political education;
emancipation; Garcés; crises
of modernity

We conceptualise citizenship education as both a purpose of schooling that can be enacted through all curricula areas, and a transnational assemblage of ideologies, policies and practices amassing stories about the foundations of schooling. As a purpose of education, citizenship education encapsulates two competing prospects: the functionalist desire of inserting new generations into existing economic, cultural, and political orders, and the possibility for enacting the modern dream of emancipating young people from such orders (Biesta 2009). At a time when modernity is troubled (e.g. Stein et al. Durham 2022), our aim is to examine citizenship education to discuss what potential exists for this emancipatory dream and how that might be achieved.

This article is a theoretical contribution conducted across four sites (i.e. Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan¹) and over time with stimuli from theory, policy, and student-teachers' views about education from these sites. We argue that by 'plugging in'

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 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2110840>.

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(Jackson and Mazzei 2013, 261) theory, data, and our distinctive positionalities as beings/researchers, we can generate alternative ways of understanding and re-thinking citizenship education in our times of uncertainty.

We begin the article by characterising citizenship and then theorising emancipation, relying, principally, on the work of the philosopher Marina Garcés. We then move to conceptualise how citizenship education as a modern institution has unfolded in our examined contexts. An account of the empirical data used as a prompt is presented before examining our citizenship education assemblage. We argue that future emancipatory-orientated citizenship education can only be possible if we reconceptualise both citizenship education and emancipation.

Characterising citizenship education: focus and purpose

We use the term ‘citizenship education’ to refer to a purpose of schooling directly connected with the knowledge, skills, values, and practices deemed to be necessary for citizens to act as members of their societies. The nature of citizenship education is complex. Some have suggested that citizenship education tends to reproduce existing economic, cultural, and political power relations (e.g. Merry 2020). For others, citizenship education can facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills so that new generations can free themselves from such power relations (e.g. Gomez Rodríguez 2008). Citizenship education can take different forms and orientations, many of which simultaneously address these two competing prospects (Biesta 2009).

However, even if we assume that citizenship education encapsulates some emancipatory potential, there is disagreement about how this could be achieved. If emancipation is about freedom from power relations, what forms of power should be considered? For some, citizenship education needs to overcome a traditional, long-established focus on political institutions, and instead simultaneously examine civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural domains (Hébert and Sears 2001). For others, only by focusing on cultural or economic power relations, emancipatory education will be possible (e.g. Osler 2015; Pagès 2005; Rangel Vera 2019). For a third group, the focus of citizenship education should stay on politics – understood not in terms of institutional arrangements, but in terms of critical examinations of notions of power. By pulling ‘their weight with regards to the common good’, multidimensional models tend to downgrade references to ‘the political’ and eclipse the same controversial and unsettled nature of any notion of ‘good’ (Frazer 2007, 257–258).

At the core of these discussions, we find the question of whether citizenship education can/should disentangle itself from its modern foundations that assume the primacy of political autonomy and its enactment via education (Sant 2021). Should emancipatory citizenship education maintain, abandon, or reconceptualise its focus on political autonomy? At a time when our ability to respond to current challenges with our existing modern tools and practices is put into question (Santos 2018; Stein et al. 2022), we interrogate contemporary discourses on citizenship education to reassess the feasibility and desirability of this modern dream of educational-driven political emancipation.

Theoretical framework

Acknowledging that our *locus of enunciation* is primarily within the modern Global North, we theorise our interrogation drawing upon the work of Garcés (2019, 2020a, 2020b), a philosopher from Barcelona. Borrowing the term from Lyotard (1984) and Garcés (2020a) identifies three ‘conditions’ of emancipation: modern, postmodern and posthumous conditions. The term ‘condition’ is not to be read as synonymous with a progressive sequence of historically discrete periods but as a way of understanding emancipation from ‘inside modernity’.

The modern condition

Garcés (2019, 2020a, 2020b) tracks the foundations of emancipation to Modernity, a linear and universal understanding of history, that placed Europe (and then the West) as the origin of all knowledge and ethics, theory and reality, and created a ‘*one world*’ world (Law 2015). Modernity was erected by three structures: the nation-state, capitalism, and the Enlightenment (Stein et al. 2017), the latest of which was underpinned by reason, productivity, universality, hierarchies, and a linear way of thinking (Santos 2018). Emancipation operated as a target for the future (Sant and Brown 2021). Hobbes’ legacy helped frame nation-states as enclosed sites of sovereignty (Brown 2010), whilst Kant provided a normative horizon for perpetual peace between states (Garcés 2020a). Meanwhile, on the other side of the abyssal line, modernity’s shadow (Mignolo 2011) was experienced through violent systems of colonial oppression (Santos 2018).

Schools, and their citizenship education purpose, were created as modern institutions that simultaneously contained a demand of compliance from the three given structures (nation-state, capitalism, and Enlightenment), and a promise of political emancipation (Garcés 2020b). In many places, children and young people were ‘socialised’ as loyal citizens of the nation or the Empire (e.g. Chong, Sant, and Davies 2020), contributing to the annihilation of many forms of being/knowing (e.g. Odora Hoppers 2015). As processes of political decolonisation began, the new postcolonial states tended to mirror the metropolitan contradiction. Citizenship education came to be a tool for nation-building, as well as an instrument to favour a range of accounts related to a particular constructed form of autonomous thinking (e.g. Chingombe and Divala 2018).

The postmodern condition

Postmodernity theoretically challenged the modern ideal of full emancipation from ignorance and control. The interlinks between the three structures of power (the nation-state, capitalism, and Enlightenment) were called into question. Knowledge became entangled with power (Foucault 1982), a constitutive element of the modern/colonial capitalist patriarchal system (Grosfoguel 2007). Garcés (2019) explains,

[we] began to experiment with a present of hyperconsumption, unlimited production and political unification of the world. Globalisation, the other face of postmodernity, celebrated an eternal present ‘loaded with’ possibilities, simulations and makeable promises here and now (2019).²

Power began to be seen as something repressive but also productive that allowed for the possibility of acting differently (Foucault 1982). The notion of ‘power structure’ itself was challenged and the myth of collective emancipation was replaced by multiple, diverse, and incomplete ‘emancipation(s)’ to be lived in the present. Laclau (2007) explained, ‘human beings can recognise themselves as the true creators and no longer as the passive recipients of a predetermined structure’ (16).

This changing landscape provoked three major shifts in citizenship education discourses (e.g. Veugelers 2021). Firstly, range of different domains (e.g. cultural, economic, environmental, gender) were embraced in ways that overcame the traditional focus on political institutions (Hébert and Sears 2001; Frazer 2007). Secondly, there was an increasing emphasis on globalised discourses which further exaggerated the complexity of the citizenship education polycscape (e.g. Sant, Davies, and Santisteban 2016). Whilst many ‘global citizenship academics’ targeted the complicity of citizenship education with the three structures of power (e.g. Stein et al. 2017), in many settings, young people were educated as citizens of the nation-state, as well as global citizens who appreciate cultural diversity (United Nations 2016). Thirdly, citizenship education came to be increasingly economised (Maire 2021). Under the premise of human capital theory, political knowledge, skills and dispositions (or citizenship competencies) became instruments to facilitate a particular form of life success (e.g. Guerrero Farías 2021).

The posthumous condition

The posthumous condition signalled the end of adherence to the ideal of emancipation, the entrance to a time without future (Garcés 2019). The bodies in the Mediterranean Sea or the non-declared war along the Mexican borders preceded a more generalised encounter with our mortality that has accompanied the global pandemic. There is evidence that capitalism is condemning humanity to scarcity (Stengers 2014) and that nation-state institutions are old and tired (Runciman 2018). Enlightened onto-epistemological divisions between knowledge and being, human and other-than-human, are questioned even within Western-centric parameters (Barad 2007), and the future feels like the coming of an unknown era or a time of complete human destruction (Stengers 2014). The posthumous condition, Garcés (2020) argues, makes us feel a new experience of totality: humanity is exposed to the real possibility of total death. Yet, against this shared challenge, posthumous politics are increasingly fragmented and polarised, and collective action is only a matter of immediate salvation or palliative care (Honig 2017). There is no emancipation other than death, a world without humanity.

In this article, we ask, does current citizenship education reflect these three conditions of emancipation? And what does this say about the emancipatory dream of modern schooling?

Citizenship education in Catalonia, Colombia, England and Pakistan

We examine how these questions have historically manifested in the four cases we examine: Catalonia (Spain), Colombia, England (UK) and Pakistan. In selecting these cases, we acknowledged intrinsic links between modernity and coloniality (Mignolo 2011)

and we were driven by an explicit interest in examining contexts differently positioned in the ‘abyssal line’ (Santos 2018, 20). We decided to focus on two former colonies and two former metropolises, about which we had powerful insights. Of course, each of these cases is much more complex than its positioning as a former metropolis/colony. For instance, England occupies a centric position within the United Kingdom, whereas Catalonia is traditionally considered Spain’s periphery. Colombia has been an independent state since 1810, whilst Pakistan gained independence from the British Empire in 1947. Colombia, England, and Pakistan have full sovereignty over their education system, whilst in Catalonia, schools are regulated by both Spanish and Catalan authorities. We acknowledge that this assemblage is particularly complex, but we argue that this gives us an opportunity to consider citizenship education through multiple experiences.

Catalonia

In Spain, citizenship education has for two hundred years been a battlefield for three very distinctive traditions: liberals, Catholic-conservatives, and republicans/libertarians. Prior to liberal revolutions (19th Century), any form of mass values education was left to the Catholic Church. But in the middle of the Napoleonic invasion, liberals began to defend state schools as an instrument to guarantee that new generations would defend ‘Spanish citizenship, its rights, religion and government’ (González Pérez 2014). It is worth noting here that similar principles were embraced by Catalan nationalists when they began to gain popular and legislative support at the beginning of the 20th Century. Like the Spanish state, Catalan nationalists also conceived schools as an instrument to generate affinity with the Catalan nation.

By contrast, the first republicans understood citizenship education as an emancipatory tool. Aligned with Kantian approaches, republicans understood that if children were provided with modern knowledge, they would be better placed to act according to the republican principles of freedom, equality, and fraternity. Republican and later anarchist thought interweaved in the creation of progressive schools that dominated republican Catalonia (1931–1936) with the explicit purpose ‘to achieve swifter integral emancipation of the proletariat’ (Tiana Ferrer 1996, 675). There was an expectation that new generations would embrace socialist or internationalist values when educated with knowledge.

When F. Franco won the civil war and began a dictatorship that lasted almost forty years (1939–1975), one of his first actions was to transform schools so they would socialise new generations into Spanish nationalist and catholic conservative values. The return of democracy brought socio-political and educational changes. Spain became a decentralised constitutional monarchy, a European Union member, and claims for Catalan autonomy from Spain grew. In Spain, current policy underpinning school practices is explicitly framed by the OECD ‘competences’ model, including a civic competence. In Catalonia, young people are expected to become free citizens who appreciate the Catalan, Spanish and European communities. Yet, debates on citizenship education continue to be extremely polarised. Conservative sectors explicitly oppose any form of citizenship education, which is seen as a form of (liberal) state interference into families’ (catholic) values (Gomez Rodríguez 2008; Sánchez-Agustí and Miguel-Revilla 2020). Meanwhile, the curriculum in Catalonia is continuously scrutinised by Spanish authorities under suspicion of Catalan separatist indoctrination (SINDIC 2018).

Colombia

In Colombia, the beginning of mass schooling went hand-in-hand with the processes of independence led by Spanish descendants who were profoundly influenced by the European Enlightenment (Sant and Gonzalez 2018). As in early Spain, the emancipatory function was here highly intertwined with the purpose of socialising children and young people into the values of Christian-Catholicism, the nation-state, and liberal-democracy (González-Valencia and Santisteban-Fernández 2016). However, the cultural/ethnic background of the people of Colombia was very different from Spain. More than ninety ethnic communities lived in Colombian territory, and Eurocentric, indigenous and Afro-Colombian worldviews coexisted (DANE 2007).

Since the introduction of mass schooling, there has been a shift from hegemonic discourses which ignored ethnic diversity or presented the education of indigenous communities as a civilising mission to discourses presenting schooling as a way of providing opportunities to citizens regardless of their ethnicity (Enciso Patiño 2004). School practices have also changed over time, from privileging Eurocentric worldviews over any other epistemological, political, and economic framing, to an asymmetric context in which different worldviews currently coexist in curricular enactments. For example, in some schools, young people are directly educated to be citizens of the nation-state. In others, Christian-Catholicism approaches to civics coexist with indigenous onto-epistemological framings of schooling, which make no distinction between human and land.

Two socio-political events have further influenced current citizenship education policies. Firstly, the education system has been reformed following human capital principles (Bonafant 2002). As in other settings (e.g. Maire 2021), education in Colombia is targeting the education of a global citizenry in a market economy. Meanwhile, indigenous schools struggle in a context in which education's economic function is prioritised over everything else (Bodnar 2005). Secondly, the long Colombian conflict and the more recent peace agreement has obliged citizenship education to pay particular attention to peace and the constitution of a harmonic and peaceful society. The imperative of a common good has eclipsed the multi-conflictual nature of the Colombian society (Sant and Gonzalez 2018).

England

In England, nineteenth century policymakers and academics tended to understand state sponsored citizenship education as something to be resisted given their preference for 'sacred' individual liberties (Heater 2001). It was not until the Nazi ascension to power that some liberals began to think that there was a need to socialise new generations into liberal principles rather than leave such things to chance (Heater 2001). In the absence (until 1989) of a national curriculum, it was up to particular community organisations to decide whether and which form of citizenship education should be taught. If any explicit citizenship education existed, it was mainly in the shape of an elitist system. Elite students learnt citizenship-related knowledge, skills and values for academic and professional success whilst most pupils were socialised in civic principles such as politeness, respect, the rule of law, and so on (Davies 1999).

In 2002, citizenship education officially became a curriculum subject area and gained a profile in the public debate. However, successive reforms have evidenced two main dynamics. Firstly, we are witnessing a shift towards socialisation and economised modes of citizenship education (Biesta 2009). Initial attempts to bring an emancipatory-orientated citizenship education, via, for instance, emphasis on political literacy, were replaced by emphasising depoliticised character education and financial literacy (Jerome and Kisby 2022). Secondly, there has been an increasing focus on the nation-state as a power structure, with all schools having to promote Fundamental British Values (DfE 2014). The combination of constant curricular changes, internal division among those advocating for citizenship education, concerns about indoctrination and the economisation of schooling, and lack of curricular specification has resulted in the neglect, asymmetry and depoliticisation of explicit citizenship education practices in schools (Frazer 2007; Weinberg 2020).

Pakistan

In Pakistan, mass schooling was not entirely implemented until the country became independent in 1947. Under the rule of the empire, different education systems, for the elites and the general population, coexisted, directly or indirectly controlled by the British. In both cases, there was a clear attempt to create forms of education that would somehow contribute to making loyal citizens of the Empire (Peshkin 1962). Ever since Pakistan became independent, the country has oscillated between democracy and dictatorship, between liberal values and a theocratic approach (Ahmad 2008). As in Colombia, the independence leaders were Western-educated and saw in the new Pakistan state a possibility to create a new education system that would simultaneously favour their citizens' liberty and the cultivation of crucial moral values (Dean 2008). National cohesion also was a priority, one that came to be further considered after the secession of Bangladesh.

In 1977, the military coup brought the Islamisation of the Pakistani state and its schools. Citizens were to be educated as 'true practicing Muslims', an ideal promoted through the textbooks used in the government schools (Dean 2005), and primarily socialised as members of the *Ummah* (Muslim global community) (Zia 2003). Whilst the country became a parliamentary republic in 2003, these two competing visions coexist in today's society (Kadiwal and Durrani 2018), roughly reflected in the country's private and public sector education systems. On the one hand, there is an 'Enlightened' vision that conceives good citizenship as 'a rational and democratic person who lives by democratic ideals' (Ahmad 2008, 99) and who is loyal to pluralist Pakistan nation-state. On the other hand, there is a theocratic vision that rejects secularity and conceives Pakistani Muslims as members of the worldwide Muslim *Ummah* (Ahmad 2008). Alongside, Pakistan's main educational concern is to favour 'social and economic development' (MFEPT 2018). Current policy (MFEPT 2018) explicitly refers to human capital theories to emphasise that Pakistan 'has the responsibility, to equip its young people with knowledge, creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills so that they can make the right choices for themselves, their country and play a responsible role as global citizens' (MFEPT 2018). Hence, a range of citizenship education discourses (socialisation/emancipation; global/national; secular/religious; political/economic-orientated) are interwoven in the Pakistan educational landscape.

An assemblage of theory, policy, and practice

This article is conceived as a theoretical contribution which brings together an assemblage of theory, policy and practice from four sites (i.e. Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan). Our assemblage was built over a period of five years (2016–2021), in which there were major political changes in our studied contexts (e.g. the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, the 2016 Colombian peace agreement referendum, the 2018 referendum for Catalan independence, and, from 2020, a global pandemic). As in Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages, we established 'connections between certain multiplicities' ([1988] 2017, 24) (i.e. theoretical framework, the policies and histories of countries detailed above, and some empirical data) that function as stimuli for our theoretical analysis and propositions. Our aim is to produce new theory that allows us better to understand our current citizenship education landscape and so be able to make recommendations for its future development.

We emphasise the theoretical focus of the project and as such provide only limited details about our empirical approach. The empirical components of this project took place between 2016 and 2018. In 2016, the seven authors of this article met to decide the overall design of the study. Initially, we wanted to know more about how citizenship education was conceptualised in policies and in beginning teachers' discourses. We drew upon our own insight expertise together with explicit checking with other local scholars to collect relevant policy documentation officially accepted, related to the citizenship education purpose of education, and regarded as highly influential in schooling thinking and practice.³ Simultaneously, we worked with student teachers across five university programmes in Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan on a voluntary basis. The ninety-seven participants had studied a range of disciplines (e.g. languages, history, geography, sciences) and wished to become secondary school teachers. We asked them to answer a qualitative survey divided in two sections: one focused on teachers' role as civic educators, and another related to the strategies they would deploy to facilitate citizenship education. We conducted nine follow up interviews with participants (five in England, two in Pakistan, and two in Colombia)⁴ where volunteers expanded on their perspectives.

A theoretically-driven analysis of our assemblage of contexts, their policies and practices (student-teachers' questionnaires and interviews) followed. We used Garcés' theoretical framework to interrogate our transnational assemblage as a whole. We considered the presence, functioning and relationships of the three conditions of emancipation (i.e. modern, postmodern, and posthumous) in the policies and the empirical data. This was an iterative process involving local-focused analysis and translational-focused contrast. We used the histories above and our subjective insights to contextualise meanings and build tentative holistic conclusions. In what follows, we connect or 'plug in' (Jackson and Mazzei 2013, 261) the different components of our assemblage. We first reflect on the assembled policies, histories and student teachers' perspectives through the lens of each of Garcés' conditions of modernity and we create diagrams to map out the complexities of each condition. We then layer these different diagrams-maps to explain what constitutes citizenship education today and to build an argument for a future emancipatory-orientated citizenship education.

Citizenship education today: reflecting within our current assemblage

'Modern emancipation' is alive

The modern condition is very much alive in our citizenship education assemblage. The Kantian discourse of education deeply underpins the perspective of citizenship education as an emancipatory practice. Kant's '*sapere aude*' is translated by our participants as 'leading out' (PAK11), 'enlightening students in a way that abolishes privileges' (ENG26), and so [they] 'can develop their own thoughts without being influenced by their parents' (ENG44). In a resemblance of liberal, Republican, and libertarian thought, there is an understanding that knowledge and critical thinking lead to more ethical stances. We see this in clear connections in the curricula between facts and skills, and values. One of the aims of social science education in Colombia, for instance, is 'to prepare men and women who can actively participate in society with a critical, solidary and respectful conscience'⁵ (n.d., 13⁶).

Our empirical data suggests a very linear and universalist way of thinking. A social science student teacher in Catalonia explained that to teach citizenship they,

would use historical moments and geographical data to make students realise that, for many years, people did not have the rights that we have today (and that are not held by people in other places). And that it is important to fight to maintain them⁷ (49CAT)

We read this quotation as an illustration of how the notion of 'rights' is presented in universalist terms; it is ahistorical and ageographical. There is an understanding that all cultures progressed (or will progress to) obtain these rights 'that we have today'. The universal linear way of thinking structures the modern condition (see, e.g. Mignolo 2011). A participant in Pakistan mentioned, 'When the country will be educated, then Pakistan will be developed' (11PAK), one in Catalonia added, 'I can't stop looking towards the North. Northern countries are politically and socially united to advance towards their future' (59CAT).

In England, Colombia and Pakistan, policies or/and some practitioners take the socialisation of new generations as citizens of the nation as a given. For instance, one of the participants in Colombia explained that, by transmitting knowledge, children and young people would be educated 'integrally, respect national values and scientific processes' (76COL). In England, schools are expected to 'enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England' (DfE 2014, 5). In a combination of Kantian idealism and Hobbesian realism, new generations are educated, so they are simultaneously autonomous and loyal to the nation-state order. By acquiring knowledge, skills, and values, young citizens will be enlightened about the importance of the nation-state (Figure 1).

The postmodern is partial and consequential

Citizenship education, in its postmodern condition, functions as a fragmented reality, 'constituted in and through a complex, heterogeneous, fragmented, discursive "regime"' (Nicoll et al. 2013, 838). In our assemblage, students are expected to be simultaneously socialised in a range of political orders. This is clear in Pakistan policy, according to which Pakistan is responsible that young people 'make the right choices for themselves,

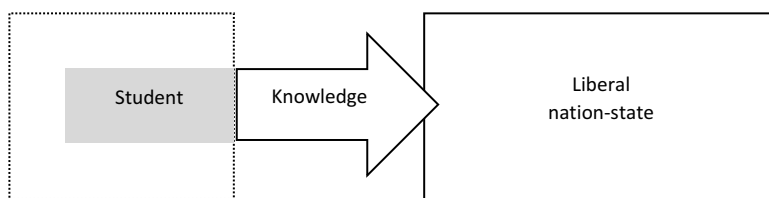


Figure 1. ‘Emancipation’ within modern underpinnings of citizenship education.

their country and play a responsible role as global citizens’ (MFEPT 2018). One of our participants explained that as a citizenship educator, their role was to facilitate that students would gain knowledge from them so they would ‘love our country and Islam and be a good human in society.’ (11PAK, participant, Pakistan). In Spain, the ‘civic competence’ is explicitly defined in relation to,

Critical knowledge of concepts including democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, human and civil rights, as well as its enactment in the Spanish constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, international declarations, and its application in different local, regional, national, European and international institutions (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte 2015)

In this part of the assemblage, political orders appear in juxtaposition. Policy documentation and our participants’ views rarely acknowledge that, for instance, the application of the concept of ‘democracy’ as seen by Spanish and Catalan (regional) institutions, by Conservatives or by liberal/republicans might be different. There is no acknowledgement of the competing discourses between the two main Pakistani narratives (i.e. ‘Enlightened nationalism’ and worldwide Muslim Ummah). Policies tend to point at some form of consensus that forecloses ideological stances and ignores intrinsic tensions within each society, particularly in contexts of unrest (Chong, Sant, and Davies 2020).

However, these political tensions do exist in our assemblage. In England, historical conventions remain, and citizenship education is often regarded negatively as a form of uncritical socialisation. One of the participants explained, ‘I think “educating citizens” feels a bit en masse, like a production line of people. It seems to imply a national education of what is to be a citizen’ (ENG33). Yet, respondents did support some form of political education, providing this was a ‘more global term’ (ENG31) referring to ‘globality, not religion or nationality’ (ENG36). Similarly, a participant in Catalonia explained,

I believe we have for a long time overcome the Romantic and Enlightened ideas of the “nation-state”, today we are citizens of an entirely globalised and intercommunicated world (CAT59).

In our analysis, citizenship education can be experienced in its postmodern condition as there are competing dimensions and political stances in play (see Figure 2). As illustrated in the Colombian case, in their schooling experiences, a student might be taught by someone who emphasise the nation-state, by another teacher who focuses on cultural globalism, another who prioritises religion and so on. Not only that, in the context of a classroom, each student will share these experiences with others who will also have their particular stances. There are many competing projects available for new generations to

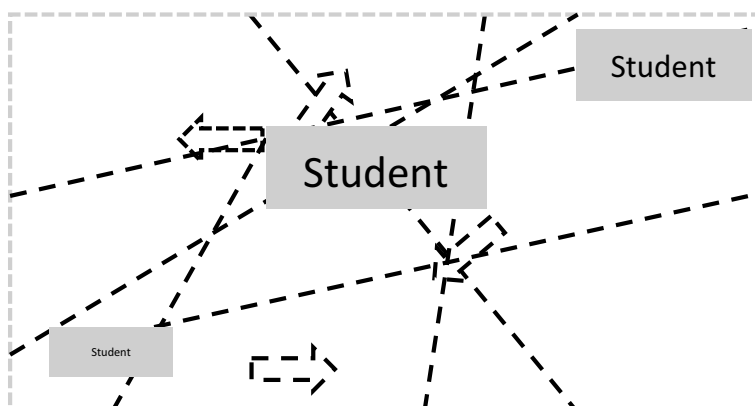


Figure 2. 'Emancipations' within postmodern underpinnings of citizenship education.

align themselves, and it is impossible to predict the numerous combinations resulting from different parts of the assemblage. Whilst variety of perspective does not necessarily imply individual divergence or that coherence may be achieved through difference, it is possible that through the multitude of experiences there is some potential for political emancipation.

However, we find emancipation is possible only to some extent. In postmodernity, the epistemological and capitalist structure of modernity remains intact. This is what Marina Garcés (2020) names as the 'prisons of the possible' (119). We might well imagine citizenship education as emancipations presented in Figure 2, but, in practice these emancipation(s) are conditioned by these epistemological and capitalist barriers (Figure 3).

Policies and practitioners might differ on the normative order towards which new generations should be socialised. However, they do not disagree that they need to provide children and young people with relevant rational knowledge in order to do that. Each defence of a particular social order appears to have its own modern epistemological

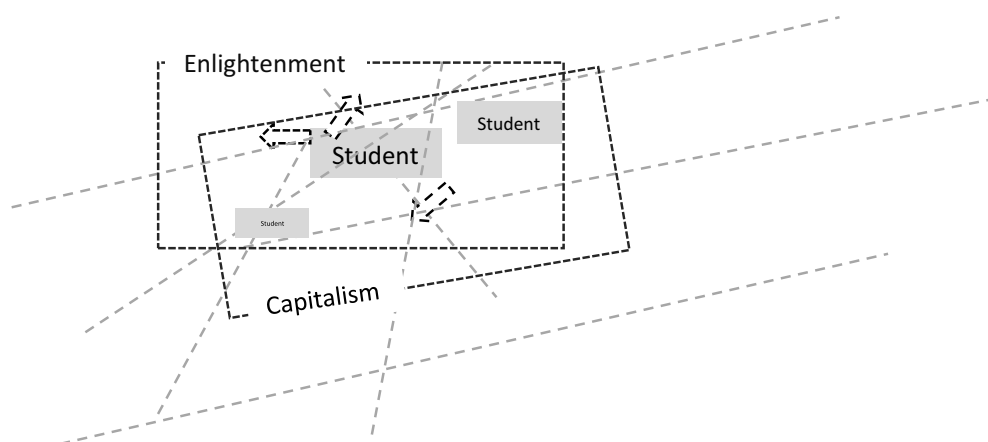


Figure 3. The 'prisons of the possible' within postmodern underpinnings of citizenship education.

grounds. The participant above (CAT59) advocates for a globalised form of citizenship in reference to *overcoming* Romantic/Enlightened nation-states. Two different prospective teachers in Colombia explained that teachers have to ‘favour knowledge’ and ‘transmit information’. Yet, for the former, this would evolve into citizens who are ‘responsible and show solidarity’ with the rest of humanity, whilst for the latter, this knowledge would lead to identification with the national Constitution. A rationalist and disembodied form of knowledge sets the route for all possible destinations.

Capitalism becomes visible and explicit to all under the postmodern condition. As Garcés (2019) points out, economic globalisation and postmodernity go hand in hand. We see this in the increasing input that theories of human capital have in citizenship education itself. If we are to educate ‘global citizens’, it comes not so much from Kantian Cosmopolitan principles as out of the market economy and nation state (Maire 2021; Veugelers 2021). The economic discourse is evident and increasingly dominant in the policy documentation, either by explicit reference to ‘human capital’ (e.g. Pakistan), the framing of citizenship as a standard or as a competence (e.g. Catalonia, Colombia), or the explicit discussion of financial citizenship (e.g. Catalonia, England). This economisation of citizenship education and schooling more broadly also explains the neglect of citizenship education in educational policy (as is the case of England). Our participants themselves felt this shift towards an economic discourse. For instance, a beginning teacher in Pakistan explained, ‘When I was a student, I thought that education is necessary for all and by getting education I will be a useful person of society but now my views have been completely changed, we get education for good job only.’ (PAK8)

The posthumous condition is felt

Whilst the posthumous condition felt very obvious to us, researchers immersed in our data in the context of a global pandemic, it is fair to say that it was not explicit in the other components of our assemblage. However, symptoms of decline emerge in some of our participants’ cynicism towards their prospective job. The capitalist system, under neo-liberal governance, further reduces the possibilities of emancipatory citizenship education. Opportunities for different forms of education, like those encouraged by indigenous people in Colombia, are under increasing scrutiny to be efficient. Some participants described their future job as ‘to complete the paperwork required’ (ENG41) or to respond to the demands of ‘shifting global economic policy and national bureaucracy’ (COL14). Citizenship education loses importance as ‘all society expect from us is a title’, says one of the participants. They continue, ‘our society has taken any expectation from us, limiting our chances to see our life principally as a commercial transaction’ (COL77). If, according to Garcés (2020b), a cynic is a practitioner who refuses intersubjective praxis and normative ideals, the posthumous condition has the potential to transform teachers into cynical practitioners. Under these circumstances, citizenship education is relegated to a form of life skills, including educating children and young people about ‘further education; fill in forms; open bank accounts/housing/food; general everyday real-life issues’ (ENG46). The political dimension of citizenship, or the possibility of engaging with discussions around power, are here erased.

For some of our participants, the feeling is that teachers and students are also material prisoners of the capitalist system. Felt certainties challenge the uncountable possibilities

presented under the postmodern condition. There are implicit acknowledgements that ‘scarcity’ (CAT59) is leading us to an imminent ‘ending of the human race’ (COL88) and the ‘we are this all together’ (COL87). When looking for alternatives, these participants return to the modern Kantian narrative of humanism or postmodern narratives of multiculturalism, highly influenced by rationalist epistemologies.

Meanwhile, one participant in Colombia explained,

In our *vereda*,⁸ there is a lot of inequality, schools without resources, without books, without technology. Schools have walls that are falling apart, teachers with bad health, a bad salary. To me, global citizenship is like going to the moon, forgetting that there is an earth (COL14).

The posthumous condition is here experienced in very local, material, and embodied ways. The posthumous condition prevents this practitioner from considering any normative ideal (e.g. global citizenship). Stein et al. (2022) argue that those outside of modernity might be better prepared but also more vulnerable to the collapse of modernity. Our assemblage suggests that those in the margins, like the participant above, are more likely to feel the tightening of capitalism and experience the posthumous condition. As Garcés (2020b) explains, ‘abstraction and totality are the privileges of those who can wriggle out of concrete situations and their real limits’⁹ (151). The immediacy of felt reality closes the door to any form of alternative (Figure 4).

Conclusions: a future for emancipatory-orientated citizenship education?

In this article, we have plugged in our theoretical framework inspired by the work of Marina Garcés, to our analysis of a particular citizenship education assemblage comprising policy, student teachers’ and academics’ views from Catalonia, Colombia, England, and Pakistan. Emerging from this assemblage, the layering of four different diagrams gives us a complex set of experiences of our reality. Our analysis suggests that the emancipatory dream of modern schooling is very much alive in the micro-dimensions of our assemblage. On both sides of the abyssal line, many teachers and policymakers involved in citizenship education still hold out (some) hope for the emancipatory power

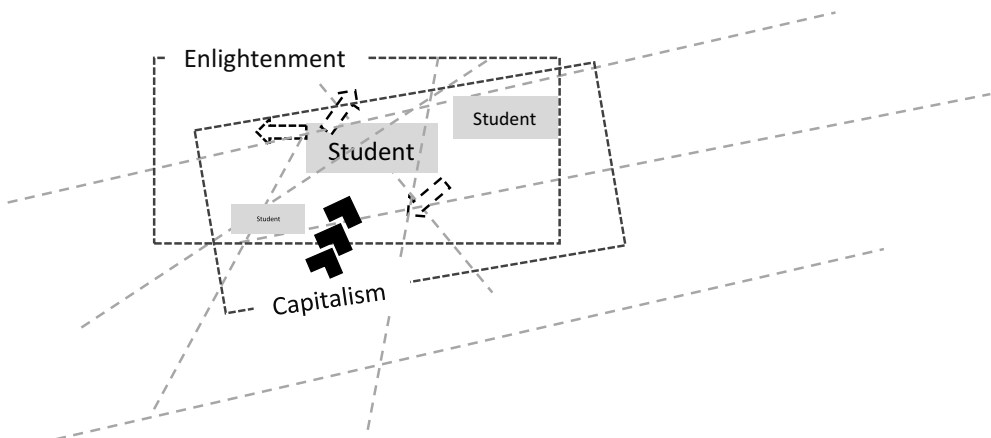


Figure 4. The ‘prisons of the possible’ within posthumous underpinnings of citizenship education.

of schools. This is not to say that citizenship education is emancipatory *per se*. But, against those who argue that citizenship education only ‘inculcate dispositions in pupils’ and rarely ‘permit challenges to the institutional status quo’ (Merry 2020, 133), we argue that citizenship education still contains within itself the contradictions of emancipatory education (Garcés 2020b).

We can see these contradictions in the way modern and postmodern conditions interact in our assemblage. In our four examined settings, citizenship education policy and practice has retained much of its modern underpinnings. There is an understanding that if children and young people are presented with appropriate knowledge, they will assimilate the values of the nation-state as their own. This ‘modern form of emancipation’, we argue, might well focus on political content (e.g. rights, institutions, nation-state), but it does so in a depoliticised way that does not acknowledge power and it troubles the emancipatory potential of citizenship education.

However, the multiplicity of actors involved in each citizenship education ‘event’ creates possibilities of political emancipation far beyond what those in the early stages of modernity imagined. Modernity conditioned political emancipation within the nation-state’s framings, but in our current reality, sovereignty is fragmented across different power bodies (Brown 2010). We agree with Veugeliers (2021), who argues that students are required to comply with norms that are reformulated continuously and that the place of citizenship education should facilitate young people’s understanding of how these norms are developed. However, in our expanded interpretation, the plurality of norms also offers opportunities. Against those who are concerned about citizenship education being a mechanism of nationalist indoctrination (see, e.g. SINDIC 2018), we argue that political ‘emancipations’ are possible as a result of the multiplicity and competition of existing socialisation attempts. Late modernity has shown that thankfully for some, and sadly for others, a range of perspectives within and outside the (liberal) nation-state, including theocratic accounts (e.g. Pakistan), distinctive worldviews (e.g. Colombia), and intra/supra-national orders (e.g. Europe, Spain, Catalonia), are possible in the parameters of political plurality that the same state represents. In this complexity and unrest across our four contexts we are able to consider citizenship education, even if only imperfectly, liberated of determinist country-specific discourses that prioritise religion, the Romantic nation, the liberal state, the international proletariat or a future global order. The multidimensional approach to citizenship education that Frazer (2007) saw as downgrading ‘the political’, open the doors, in our understanding to manifold possibilities of action, expanding the ‘dream’ of political emancipation beyond the limits of the nation-state.

As highlighted earlier in this article, our analysis is transnational, yet, we tentatively reflect on the differences across our four sites. In England, there appear to be a wide range of political and multidimensional discourses that could open the doors to numerous possibilities. However, the scepticism about the emancipatory potential of citizenship education combined with the increased economisation of all school practices have led to a situation in which there is no time or space to talk about politics (Weinberg 2020). We fear that teachers in England are at risk of embracing a cynicism that condemns schooling to its posthumous condition. In Catalonia, political plurality (e.g. Catalonia/Spain/Europe; Liberalism/Republicanism) is explicitly manifested in both citizenship education policies and practitioners. In most cases, the enlightened narrative of political progress

(from dictatorship to democracy within the EU) sustains an overarching citizenship education discourse. This can also partially explain the opposition of conservative and far-right sectors (Sánchez-Agustí and Miguel-Revilla 2020). Yet, even across all competing positions the ‘competential’ framing of citizenship education appears to be depoliticised. In Colombia, citizenship education is approached through two antagonistic experiences. Policies and some teachers embrace the modern dream of emancipation where rational knowledge is seen as a pathway towards a national and/or world citizenship in peace, whilst capitalist underpinnings of the competential framework are obscured (as it was in the Catalan case). Meanwhile, the appeal of economic productivity threatens any possibility of emerging epistemological plurality, and those who experience capitalist scarcity lack the ‘luxury’ to think about emancipation. In Pakistan, the ‘enlightened’ vision prevails in our assemblage and it explicitly evidences the constitutive entanglement of the three modern structures: the nation-state, capitalism and Enlightenment (Stein et al. 2017). Citizenship education is built through the modern emancipatory dream that rational knowledge will lead to a more harmonic and economically ‘developed’ nation. Together with Kadiwal and Durrani (2018), we question whether this approach, far from being emancipatory, reproduces colonial and economic injustices within the Pakistani society.

Our analysis suggests that, in all these settings, the nation-state can be politicised, but emancipation is always restricted within two modern prisons of the possible: Enlightenment and capitalism. If power presupposes the possibility of acting differently (Foucault 1982), Enlightenment and capitalism are not structures of power, but barriers confining current citizenship education policy and practice. As capitalism exhausts raw resources and poisons what is left (Stengers 2014), the capitalist prison will become tighter and teachers might have no choice other than reacting to material emergencies, whilst others will be at increasing risk of embracing cynicism as their only available option. Emancipation requires alternatives to our current situation, but no existing possibilities can be considered, and no alternatives can emerge if all that we do is ‘cynically’ and ‘efficiently’ educate entrepreneurs for a future society that will scarcely exist. If citizenship education, as an emancipatory practice, is to survive, there is an urgent need to politicise and unsettle the economic dimensions of citizenship.

Emancipation is also limited, within our citizenship education assemblage, by the lack of acknowledgement of the political nature of onto-epistemological underpinnings of most conceptions of ‘common good’ and ‘citizenship’. Garcés (2020a) argues that the Enlightenment was initially conceived as a project of distrust against any given truths. Our analysis suggests that our citizenship education assemblage is extremely trusting of the emancipatory virtue of modern/rationalist knowledge. This conviction, we argue, not only makes us complicit with the colonial shadow of modernity (Mignolo 2011), but it also imprisons our options to be/know politically in alternative ways. Decolonial scholars are making serious attempts to bring onto-epistemological plurality to some universities (Santos 2018); we argue that teacher educators have a responsibility to facilitate the same in schools. Teachers, as citizenship educators, need to be able to politicise knowledge (see, e.g. Pashby and Sund 2020).

Our political imagination is also eclipsed by our anthropocentric assumptions. As citizenship education academics, we positioned students, student-teachers and academics

(humans), texts, policies and theories ('discourses') as the primary elements within our assemblage. But, through the course of our project, we increasingly felt that there were many other layers to consider. Posthumous experiences, like that of the teacher who talks about school walls or our own lockdown reality, makes us reconsider emancipation in a confined form. Citizenship education needs to keep humans as the focus and to recognise that we are interconnected with the world we inhabit. We make politics among us, but surrounded, constrained and enabled by 'things' which we often have little control over (Honig 2017). Only insofar as we acknowledge that our condition as 'citizens' of our region, nation or earth does not protect us from exposure to material scarcity, will we be able to think about how to educate new generations who will hopefully survive 'the end of the world as we know it' (Stein et al. 2022, 275).

To think of a non-anthropocentric non-rationalist non-capitalist emancipatory form of citizenship education might sound contradictory to many. Yet, we are not moving the focus of citizenship education out of power and emancipatory politics (Frazer 2007); rather, we are suggesting that, at a time when modern institutions are in deep crisis, we need to disentangle citizenship education from its capitalist and Enlightened underpinnings to find alternatives. This is, citizenship education needs to politicise knowledge, economics, and 'things'.

Citizenship education, as we imagine it, does not come without restrictions. We are 'imprisoned' by others we care about and such restrictions are needed for us to have any chance of avoiding complete human destruction. However, what we are suggesting here is a different form of citizenship education that conceives emancipation as a situated practice where we think by ourselves *with* others (Garcés 2020b, 23). Stengers (2014) suggests that in the event of the forthcoming catastrophe, we will have to 'think politically, (...) in the collective sense, with one another, through one another, around a situation that has become a "common cause" that makes people think' (131). This is how we transform the modern account of emancipatory political autonomy into situated co-experienced politics that might engender viable ethical alternatives outside our current confines. Thinking with Garcés (2020b), we argue for a citizenship education that focuses on how we can live with others to survive emancipatory dreams which actually carry the seeds of our own destruction.

Notes

1. We refer to the countries in alphabetical order.
2. Translation from Spanish is our own.
3. see appendix online for a list.
4. The number of interviews in each setting was decided by local researchers considering their available resources.
5. The translation (from Spanish) is our own.
6. https://www.mineduacion.gov.co/1759/articles-339975_recurso_1.pdf
7. Quotes from participants in Catalonia and Colombia have been translated (from Spanish or, in some occasions, Catalan) to English by ourselves.
8. A 'vereda' is a subdivisional administrative part of a rural municipality in Colombia.
9. Translation from Catalan is our own.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all participants in our study as well as our colleagues, particularly Mariona Massip i Sabater.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was partially funded by a Manchester Metropolitan University's Research Accelerator Grant and by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities [EDU2016-80145-P].

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