Introduction

The problem with the social-democratic conception of citizenship is that injustice arises as much from treating different peoples as the same as it does from treating the same as different (Olssen, 2004, p. 181).

Since Marshall’s major contribution on citizenship as a fundamental aspect of the relationship between the individual and the State, there has been an extensive debate on citizenship as a key element for ensuring social cohesion and inclusion in modern democratic societies. Although Marshall’s paradigmatic conception of citizenship as a legal status encompassing civic, political and social dimensions has not been rejected, different emphases on the extremes of the relation between rights and obligations seem to coexist within the EU. These are synthetically represented in connection with different philosophical-political traditions: 1) Civic Republicanism, which emphasises citizens’ duties to secure a symbiotic relation between the individual and the State; 2) Liberalism, which stresses citizens’ rights, thus resulting in individuals being loosely committed to the State; and 3) Communitarianism, which draws attention to citizens and communities’ responsibilities, with a focus on reestablishing a balance between rights and obligations, although with no better definition of the relation between the individual and the State (Janoski, 1998).

Despite the variety of co-existing political configurations of citizenship as a legal status at both the national and the European levels, Kymlicka and Norman (1995, p. 131) point out that ‘citizenship is not just a certain status, defined by a set of rights and responsibilities. It is also an identity, an expression of one’s membership in a political community’. Though expanding the citizenship concept to include a social element, they still refer primarily to the political dimension of citizenship as an identity. However, Korsgaard et al. (2001) argue for multiple identities — socio-culturally constructed mental representations — that help to overcome both geographical and legal borders, thus preserving the complexity embedded in the traditional relation between civic, social and political dimensions. In doing so, Marshall’s conception of citizenship is expanded, allowing for a paradigmatic shift from fixed conceptions of civic, political and social rights and obligations to more fluid and multidimensional perspectives on citizenship as a social enterprise (Williamson, 1997). Nonetheless, this shift, not being of an ‘either-or’ but rather of a ‘both-and’ nature, seems to better depict the reshaping of relations between the individual and society at large that is consequent to observed tendencies in modern societies, such as technological developments, globalisation.
processes, etc. Thus, from a theoretical point of view, social citizenship includes, whilst moving beyond, the legal definition of citizenship.

Last but not least, because of the marketisation of economies, scholars in political arenas such as Howard Williamson (1997) stress the appearance of an ‘alternative’ form of citizenship, the ‘consumer citizenship’, which conceptualises the constant shift of responsibilities from the State — traditionally obliged to create civil, political and social rights — to the individual consumer through the recognition of a fundamental right to exercise citizenship by means of economic choices. Hence, whilst ordinary people, despite their legal status, may gain from the extension of their citizenship rights thanks to their economic power, other sections of the population, such as younger generations, the unemployed, workers at home, etc. are being left behind.

At the European level, the citizenship concept has been strongly linked from the outset to legal and economic principles, which informed the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957 (Treaty of Rome) and its enlargement in 1967, resulting in the creation of the European Communities (Merger Treaty). Accordingly, the right of free movement within the European Communities was recognised by law to specific social groups with economic status — e.g. employees, the self-employed or service providers and members of their families — in order to exercise their fundamental right to work. With the foundation of the EU in 1992 (The Maastricht Treaty), citizenship of the Union was established and the general right of free movement and residence was legally determined and extended to all European nationals (European Communities, 1992).

Yet, it was in 1997 that democratic values and citizens’ rights were strongly tied to the European education project. Thus, democratic citizenship has become a central asset of supranational policies addressing reforms of national education and training systems. Two major acts have contributed to this: on the one hand, the endorsement of the Amsterdam Treaty, which states the rights of European citizenship in both legal and ideal terms; and on the other, the Commission Communication ‘Towards a Europe of Knowledge’, issued the same year, which envisages complementarity and consistency between various Community policies affecting all European citizens (European Commission, 1997). Since then, there has been growing concern about enhancing democratic citizenship through education within the Union.

As a result, current discourses on democratic citizenship embedded in education policy and practice within European Member States are unavoidably intertwined in a broader — if not dominant — discourse on European active citizenship. The remaining sections of this article are devoted to critically reviewing the principles behind the European active citizenship ideal in order to unfold its pitfalls for education policy and practice. In the first section, the practical functioning of legal, social and economic principles within the EU is explored. In the second, existing perceptions of education for active citizenship at the European level are presented. The conclusion discusses its adequacy for enhancing democratic values and practices.

**European Active Citizenship: securing the future of the EU**

Despite existing differences in European political traditions — and therefore in the civic, political and social status of nation citizenship in different Member...
States — citizenship of the Union was established in 1992 (The Maastricht Treaty) in order to confer the civic right on all Union citizens to move and reside in a different Member State from that of nationality, as well as the political right to vote and stand as candidate in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in the Member State of residence. These fundamental rights were stressed and reinforced in the Amsterdam Treaty (1997). At the same time, existing links between national and European citizenship were clarified as follows: ‘citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship’ (European Communities, 1997). Hence, according to liberalism traditions, emphasis is primarily given, at the European level, to citizens’ rights, whilst very little, if any, attention is given to obligations derived from citizenship as a legal status. Nonetheless, citizenship rights are legally restricted to citizens of the Member States and therefore exclude certain social groups, such as minorities with resident but non-national status, e.g. the Turkish minority in Germany, Gypsy minorities, etc.

Furthermore, political rights embedded in European citizenship, such as the right to write to institutions representing the Union, were introduced in order to ‘enhance further the democratic and efficient functioning of the institutions’ as well as ‘creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen’ (European Communities, 1997, pp. 2–3). Nevertheless, the exertion of such rights presents important linguistic restrictions. In fact, even though the Euromosaic study, initiated in 1992 by the European Commission, listed the existence of 48 linguistic minorities, communication is expected to take place in one of the 12 officially recognised languages of the Union. This means, once again, exclusion of minority groups, such as the Saami minorities in Finland and Sweden, Ladin and Occitan minorities in Italy; Albanian, Turkish and Walachian minorities in Greece; Yiddish and the languages minorities between Romani and Sinti people who reside in the EU, etc. With the recent enlargement of the EU, linguistic diversity has increased enormously, due to the existence in the new Member States of approximately 90 additional minority groups, as pointed out in the extended Euromosaic study (2004).

Hence, codified rights resulting from the institutionalised relation between individual and government at the European level are far from providing all citizens of the Union with equal legal status. I argue that, at present, citizenship of the Union is creating new mechanisms of exclusion rather than promoting social equality and a strong sense of belonging to a bonding multicultural community, which are at the very core of democratic participation processes. Many examples could be listed here. Nevertheless, remaining within the Danish context, an example could be the legal recognition of European nationals in place up to recently. Despite the establishment of citizenship of the Union by the Amsterdam Treaty, in 2005 those with European nationality who were willing to stay in Denmark were entitled to ask for a residence permit, this being a precondition for acquiring legal recognition of ideal rights such as access to services provided by the national health system, local libraries, and financial institutions, as well as the right to political participation through the right to vote in local elections. In order to obtain a residence permit, European citizens were asked to provide evidence of existing study or working relations. Belonging to local groups other than educational or professional communities — for instance, to a family community through marriage to a Danish citizen — was not sufficient, unless supported by evidence of
economic power, e.g. the possession of a certain amount of capital and its deposit in a Danish financial institution.

Limiting the analysis to the codified rights recognised to all citizens fails to cover the actual experience of citizenship within the Union. In fact, as different scholars have clearly pointed out, the experience of citizenship relies not only on an individual’s legal status, but rather on the interconnection between rights and obligations to government and existing relationships within a variety of social groups and communities at local, regional, national and international level (Kymlicka & Norman, 1995; Korsgaard et al., 2001; Williamson, 1997).

Heater’s three-dimensional model of citizenship (1990; see Fig. 1) stresses the importance of learning processes in allowing human beings to behave in accordance to their citizenship status.

Drawing on Heater, Kazepov et al. (1997) introduce the concept of ‘multiple citizenship’ in order to depict the multiplicity of identities — here interpreted as the psychological processes of bonding with one’s fellow citizens at multiple levels related to different statuses — i.e. legal, political and social. In so doing, emphasis is given to different mechanisms operating in a variety of contexts which either widen or restrict the experience of citizenship in practice. As a result, when moving from the ideal status to actual practice of citizenship within the EU, the sense of belonging to a variety of social groups at local, regional, national and international levels becomes a crucial feature to foster democratic participation.

I argue that the ongoing integrative process of the Union aimed at creating a common European identity, based on the recognition of equal opportunities, access and democratic participation of all EU citizens, is founded on a limited interpretation of democratic citizenship rather than its concretisation as a multiple citizenship.
Educating Active European Citizens: a new way of creating exclusive patterns of participation

In the Commission’s Communication *Towards a Europe of Knowledge* (1997), the concern to strengthen the sense of belonging at multiple levels is elicited by the definition of citizenship as an important dimension of European education policy. It is stated that the citizen dimension ‘will facilitate an enhancement of citizenship through the sharing of common values, and the development of a sense of belonging to a common social and cultural area’. Hence, the citizenship dimension is rooted in ‘a broader-based understanding of citizenship, founded on active solidarity and on mutual understanding of the cultural diversities that constitute Europe’s originality and richness’, thus recognising that ‘knowledge of languages and cultures is an essential part of the exercise of European citizenship’ (European Commission, 1997).

One year later, in the foreword to the final report of the European Communities’ Citizenship Education Study (1998), Edith Cresson stressed this idea by recognising that ‘in a time of fundamental change, we need the solid foundation which those values [democratic values] provide, for they underlie our recognition of the social reality of a globalised world in which the significance of active citizenship extends far beyond local communities and national frontiers’ (emphasis mine).

The importance of strengthening active democratic citizenship through education has been recently underscored by the *Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning* (2006) issued by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Here, selected key competences which should be given priority in all European Member States include the ability to communicate in one’s mother tongue and foreign languages, as well as civic competence ‘based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation’.

A new urgency in enhancing democratic citizenship is also envisaged in strong cooperation between different intergovernmental agencies operating at the European level in order to monitor progress on both the exercise of active citizenship and its development through education and training in European Member States. Thus, not surprisingly — due to the long history in Western countries of enhancing democratic values through education processes — European citizenship, originally limited to a recognised legal status within the geographical borders of the Union, acquired a stronger social dimension when first linked to the broader European education project.

But despite the rhetoric, the main concern of European policies resides primarily in the participatory element aimed at securing the stability of the EU. Subsequent is the active commitment in social and political life which guarantees that the Union subsistence is at the core of European educational policy. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, the evidence of lower participation in traditional forms of political activity in almost all Union Members, e.g. voting, membership in political parties or NGOs, etc. Secondly, the growing concern about a lack of legitimacy in the process of European construction and enlargement seen in the recent ‘No’ votes to the European Constitution. These processes are accompanied by a rise in non-democratic forms of political activism, such as terrorist attacks and other forms of violence, by socially excluded sections of the European population.
Accordingly, the implicit curriculum set up at the European level to sustain European active citizenship through education stresses the following elements. Firstly, relevant knowledge of the political world should be transmitted to both the young and the older population, with a focus on: 1) what — e.g. knowledge of political concepts such as democracy, power, etc.; 2) who — e.g. knowledge of current, time-bound affairs and events, and persons who are in the public sphere; and 3) how — e.g. knowledge that underlines political acts such as voting. Secondly, due to the focus on politics, relevant attitudes for active European citizenship are being identified in the belief that individuals can influence both political decision-making and the trustworthiness of political institutions. Tolerance, peace and non-violence values, as well as acknowledgment of rule of law and human rights, therefore become relevant values. Last but not least, active European citizens are supposed to master communicating skills, including both literacy skills in one’s mother tongue and in foreign languages, and debating and critical thinking skills.

In brief, the persistent emphasis on active participation in both social and political life (e.g. through active engagement in political and voluntary groups and organisations, voting, etc. at different levels) is based upon the assumption that a pluralistic society (such as the EU) requires basic but robust civic and political foundations. Furthermore, it advocates citizenship as a ‘positive’ freedom, a balance between right and duty ‘for all’, hence, a grounding principle for social equality. Consequently, citizenship education is seen as the imposition of a uniform standard applied to all groups and people (Olssen, 2004).

If these assumptions recognise that the welfare state in modern societies is not ensured by the State only, but also by the civil society, the same assumptions underestimate the pluralistic dimension of the EU, which is still interpreted as a somehow unified society.

Several scholars in political and social sciences have provided arguments which challenge these assumptions. In particular, Iris Marion Young’s claim for a ‘differentiated citizenship’, for instance, is based on the recognition that at the very core of pluralistic societies lays a ‘politics of difference’ (1986). Her main argument is that, according to liberal, socio-democratic discourses (e.g. representative democracy, consensus based democracy), representation could result in exclusion and/or homogeneity. On the contrary, differentiated citizenship allows for participation and/or inclusion through: 1) recognition of the existence of specific mechanisms for group representation; 2) rules of equal treatment based on specificity of different social groups in order to guarantee equality of treatment; and 3) articulation of special rights.

Benjamin Gregg (2003), who supports pluralism whilst being mindful of its dangers, provides, in this respect, an important contribution. He recognises that ‘modern societies [are] increasingly heterogeneous in terms of [their] worldviews and lifestyles’ (p. 17). Hence, special attention should be paid to the different groups and communities that compose a society (e.g. on the basis of ethnicity, gender, religion, political ideas, etc.). In support of his line of argument, Gregg makes a distinction between a ‘thick normativity’, i.e. the exclusive level of commitment to a belief, an idea, or lifestyle which characterises a unified society, and a ‘thin normativity’, which adheres to the principle that people should be free to choose a belief, an idea or lifestyle to which to commit themselves. While the former creates ‘elite differences within the community’ (p. 48), the latter is more
inclusive. Hence, thin normativity provides the space for acceptance and respect of several thin normativities, whilst still recognising a minimum standard. In fact ‘a community that tolerated everything would have no identity’ and therefore ‘would not be a community’ (p. 52).

From a completely different perspective, the same conclusion is reached by Homi Bhabha, when questioning the ‘progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion [. . .] shared by organic theories of the holism of culture and community, and by theorists who treat gender, class and race as social totalities that are expressive of unitary collective experiences’ (1994, p. 142). This means that European citizens are being constructed within the educational policy discourse as historical objects of a nationalist pedagogy, according to what Bhabha calls the pedagogical imperative, rather than being recognised as subjects performing in multiple processes of signification (e.g. performative imperative). Accordingly, the present ‘crisis’ of democracy is perceived by Bhabha as ‘a struggle between a sincerely held ‘universalism’ as a principle of cultural comparison and scholarly study, and ethnocentrism, even racism, as a condition of ethical practice and political prescription’ (2003, p. 29).

Hence, from an educationalist perspective, sub-groups, sub-communities and minorities of any kind cannot participate in education (therefore in society!) on the basis of a single set of rules and procedures which does not recognise differences. This is what is happening, on the contrary, with the identification of a common European identity — first and foremost through the construction of a European competence frame — based, among others, on key skills and competences for democratic citizenship — which should support the renovation of curricula in all Member States. Thus, values and attitudes upon which basic skills and competences are identified are embedded in a conception of an existing ‘agreement’ on a good life in a mono-cultural Europe. This results in a very limited approach to cultural diversity, which is being claimed as a basic principle in almost all European education policy documents! Furthermore, it creates a tension between the recognition of local, regional, national identities and the construction of a common supranational identity to which European education policy is aspiring (e.g. through emphasis on the free movement of students, internationalisation, etc.).

With the recent enlargement of the Union, an additional risk is foreseen in a kind of adaptation of visible ethnic and cultural minorities (e.g. the Eastern European cultures) in a common culture (e.g. the Western European culture). In other words, Eastern European cultural identities are being socialised to the Western European ‘common’ identity. . . through education!

As a result, the envisaged current uniformity of educational treatment, resulting from the ideal of a common identity, leads to inequality and exclusion, thus challenging democratic participation. If equality, inclusion and democratic participation are seen as educational goals to be achieved by all Member States, they must be defined in a culturally sensitive way.

In order to do so, rather than individual and/or groups behaviour (e.g. low participation in political elections, low education attendance, violent behaviour, anti-democratic behaviour, etc.), are educational practices embodied in social structures (e.g. separation of ethnic groups in school, non recognition of foreign languages as vehicular languages for knowledge transmission and creation in school, etc.) which should become an element of political concern when discussing citizenship education policies and practices. Accordingly, rather than the curricu-
lum content, the school practices related to the curriculum (e.g. language, timetabling and other organizational aspects) should be at the core of debate on education for democratic citizenship.

Conclusion

Inclusion through active participation, which is at the core of European educational policy, represents, at present, a communitarian strategy for legitimising the Union rather than a participatory practice aimed at fostering democratic processes within Europe. As a result, mechanisms that are in place at the European level are in fact creating specific patterns of social exclusion supported by educational reforms. Those enjoying the privileges of European citizenship in the fullest sense are at present only elite minorities, the ‘avant-garde’, which, in Heater’s words (2002, p. 6), are ‘making progress in constructing a cosmopolis but in advance and on behalf of all those who in due course of time will follow’ — e.g. academics, trans-national students, representatives of intergovernmental institutions, etc.

Most citizens, on the contrary, are being excluded from enjoying at least part of the privileges, due to the distinction between active and non-active citizens resulting from institutional demand on individual’s conduct, with little, if any, attention paid to actual institutional practices. While the former — e.g. the institutional demand — needs to be balanced by the recognition of individuals’ feelings of belonging operating at different spatial/geographical levels, the latter — e.g. institutional practices — must recognise the subjective will to perform the role, the subjective dimension or ‘narrative imagination’ (Nussbaum, 1997). It is only a revision of current institutional practices based on distorted representations of individuals and majority versus minority groups in a given society that can create the ‘potential space between subject and object in which cultural experience is located’ (Bhabha, 2003, p. 32), thus allowing for performative action to become a reality.

These aspects are strongly related to identity formation processes — e.g. the identity of minority communities which is defined in relation to attitudes and perceptions of the majority community and/or vice-versa — and represent a key feature of democratic citizenship, echoing Nussbaum, ‘understanding the world from the point of view of the other is essential to any responsible act of judgement’ (1997, pp.10–11). It is this paradigmatic shift from the institutional demand on citizens to the recognition of citizens as performing subjects that challenges the ‘activism’ — e.g. a mix of volition and competence development — embedded in recent debates on citizenship at the European level.

The European ideal of social cohesion through democratic citizenship — which is fundamental for any society — should build upon a common sense of belonging and a shared identity without denial of diversity among its constituent elements — both Member States and European citizens. This is possible only through the recognition of both the overarching political community, as a framework for handling differences in a stable and secure way, and particular practices inherent in cultural communities. In other words, the recognition of certain common bounds provided, for instance, by a common European frame for competence development, should be balanced by the respect of socio-cultural differences when fostering democratic citizenship. In this regard, from both a political and educationalist perspective, the emphasis on basic universalism is welcomed but
dangerous when confused with procedural values informing educational practices in different cultural communities.

In conclusion, many tensions exist at present between the individual sense of belonging, thus the construction of a shared identity with other citizens at multiple levels, and the non-recognition of citizenship rights of minority groups by nation states and supranational agencies such as the EU. Consequently, citizens’ legal status guaranteed by EU law and the ideal of a unified European identity contribute to ongoing processes of inclusion and exclusion rather than providing the concrete opportunities for enhancing democratic participation within the Union. These tensions need to be properly addressed from a multicultural perspective if education and learning processes are to sustain full democratic participation of all citizens and the construction of a multicultural Europe.

NOTES
1. T.H. Marshall (1977) defines citizenship as ‘a status bestowed on all those who are full members of a community. All who possesses the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There are not universal principles that determine what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of ideal citizenship against which achievement can be directed . . .’.
2. These being: Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Irish (Gaelic), Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.
3. This resulting, in particular, in the development of a research project on ‘Active Democratic Citizenship’, launched in 2005 by CRELL, a Joint research centre of the European Commission, in cooperation with the Council of Europe. The project aims at identifying composite indicators to be included in the European Commission’s annual report ‘Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in Education and Training’, as well as existing data gaps to be addressed in current/future cross-country survey design.

REFERENCES


