The educated, deliberative citizen: constituents for a normative model

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Introduction – AIM of the paper and theoretical framework (1)

The aim of this paper is to make further use of and develop the idea of deliberative communication (Englund, 2000a, 2000b, 2005, 2006a, 2010, 2015, 2016) as crucial for creating sustainable democratic societies and educated citizens living educationally (cf. Englund, 2019). The more specific and demarcated aim is to present a scaffold of concepts and grounds supporting the development of an education of deliberative citizens. The overall context and reason for further working on the idea of deliberation is the still strong development and diffusion of the idea designated as ‘the deliberative turn in democratic theory’ (Dryzek, 2000, p. 1). There are many advocates that could be referred to concerning this deliberative turn. In US, James Bohman and William Rehg (Bohman, 1996; Bohman & Rehg, 1997) are two among many others. Amy Gutmann (1987), Gutmann & Thompson (2004)) and Nussbaum (1997, 1999, 2010) and in Europe Jürgen Habermas is central. What also might be stressed here is that both Gutmann and Nussbaum are among them who have introduced the deliberative perspective on schools and education (for a short review of deliberative communication and the deliberative perspective on education see Englund, 2000a, 2000b/2005).

In my earlier work on deliberation (Englund, 2000a, 2000b) the starting point has often been John Dewey’s Democracy and Education (Dewey, 1916/1985) and his assertion that deliberative education is characterized by mutual, free and open communication within and between groups. Add to that Habermas’ validity claims and his placing of communication and deliberation in a wider context. Habermas places the realization of deliberative policy and decisions in the institutionalization of procedures, where an intersubjectivity on a higher level is expected to emerge; public discourses find a good response only under circumstances of broad participation (Dewey, 1927/1988). This in turn ‘requires a background political culture that is egalitarian, divested of all educational privileges, and thoroughly intellectual’ (Habermas, 1996/1998, p. 490). So, the basic theoretical framework uses ideas from classic and modern pragmatism (Dewey, 1916/1985, 1927/1988, Jürgen Habermas, 1981/1987, 1983/1992, 1985/1990, cf. Englund, 2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2016).

In the following, I will, in three sections, make an attempt to deepen and transform the idea of deliberation to a normative model of the educated, deliberative citizen by stressing some visionary thoughts of how to learn to live educationally. But first a general argumentation for the normative model by Seyla (Benhabib, 1996), the perhaps most well known of deliberative theorists of today, for the need of developing ideas and building normative models, arguing that the fact that a normative model does not correspond to reality is no reason to dismiss it, for the need of normativity arises precisely because humans measure the reality they inhabit in the light of principles and promises that transcend this reality (Benhabib, 2002, p. 134, cf. Benhabib 1986).

Sources of inspiration for further development of the idea of deliberation (1)

As has been stressed in the introduction, there are two figures, John Dewey and Jürgen Habermas, who are my main reference points and most important sources of inspiration for further elaboration of deliberation. I start with the historical and current primarily American Deweyan tradition within educational research stressing the moral dimension of teaching and the ethical nature of teachers’ professional responsibility for creating educated citizens living educationally with names of educational researchers as John Goodlad, Philip Jackson and Hugh Sockett (the last one born in UK and educated in the English analytical philosophy of education). The Dewey-inspired Columbia professor David Hansen (2001), working with Philip Jackson for many years, is also a central figure analysing ‘the educated human being’ placed in different contexts all the way from level

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one, the specific classroom and the development of moral individualism (Hansen, 1992) to level two, the national constitution, and level three, the cosmopolitan idea of being a teacher in the world (Hansen, 2011).

While we in the Deweyan tradition of philosophy of education are referring to a mass education system we also find it important to relate the question of the educated citizen to the (primarily English) analytical philosophy of education and its tradition leaning on ordinary language philosophy and the classic works of Antiquity represented by Richard Peters (1973), who does not make an explicit use of deliberation, but in his work deals with the conversation processes leading to what he called ‘an educated man’ (Peters, 1973, p. 9, cf. Englund, 2006b). I will here also point at the need of adding his concept of man stressing ‘the educated human being’ (cf. Nussbaum, 2000). Through referring to both Peters and Nussbaum and their work on Aristotle, I will also underline their preference for the ongoing and underlying presence of the concept of Bildung and the different traditions of that concept that I will refer to in the contextualization of deliberation in this article.

Since education is a social process a criterion for educational criticism and construction implies a particular social ideal (Dewey, 1916/1985) and one of Dewey’s most distinctive endeavours was the attempt to combine the German idealist notion of each person developing his or her powers in an unfolding process of Bildung as growth through communication combined with the pragmatic denial of any fixed human essence. From there, Dewey proposed a conception of the great community where the public had to define itself (Dewey, 1927/1988, cf. Englund, 1996; Ljunggren, 1996). Dewey had a vision of a multitudinous, diverse social life that offered a limitless variety of paths to self-realization. However, like many other key ideas in philosophy and social science, the concept of community can be understood in different ways. In a genuine community, though, there must be a certain minimum degree of social integration and communities are, ideally, settings within which mediated participation takes place and where a general education for everyone plays a crucial role. For a society to be a community in this strong sense, community must be constitutive of the shared self-understandings of the participants and embodied in their institutional arrangements, not simply as an attribute of certain of the participants’ plan of life (Sandel, 1982). Sandel explains that a liberal society seeks not to impose a single way of life but to leave its citizens as free as possible to choose their own values and ends. It therefore must govern by principles of justice and respect for the human dignity of every person, principles that do not presuppose any particular vision of the good life.

Here, we could have stayed and analysed the pre-conditions in Sweden as an example (Englund, 2009, 2018), and we will make some use of this reference, but we will also make room for a transformation perspective based on curriculum theory (cf. Englund, 2015). What can be said to begin with is to put the question of how to use some earlier developed curriculum theory concepts. Can the civic curriculum code – striving for an education of autonomous knowledgeable citizens – still be seen as a strong democratic foothold representing a pluralistic public education system as the framework of the Swedish school system, which today is marketized and segregated with a huge private sector challenging public education (cf. Englund, 1986, 1994, 2009, 2018). One could also question if it is possible to maintain that a democratic conception of education has an important influence or not – today there is no explicit diligent argumentation for a democratic conception in the Swedish curriculum and education setting the stage. It can thus be questioned if the civic curriculum code still is and can be seen as the authoritative framework of the Swedish school system, a system that is much more disrupted than earlier.

How shall we then understand the concepts of society and community of today? This complicated issue is further developed by modern pragmatists like Richard Bernstein and Habermas. In his The New Constellation Bernstein, in the spirit of Dewey, discusses the possibilities for reaching decisions and acting in relation to democratic agreements. As a neopragsmatist Bernstein shares the postmodern (Rorty, 1982) linguistic turn and rejection of foundations, its fallibilism, contingency and pluralism, but he also points out that the pragmatic attitude is firmly established in social experiences and that our private selves cannot be loosened from our ethical responsibility. We always have, if living educationally, to be ready to expose our private attitudes to critique and discuss them publicly with those who have other opinions, not necessarily in order to reach consensus, but in order to understand and respect each other. In his comprehensive work, Bernstein has evaluated many attempts to create normative models intended to develop these ideas and found Jürgen Habermas’ writings among the most promising (cf. Englund, 2016).

I also believe that Habermas, 1981/1987 has given us some basic starting-points for an analysis of the relationship between society and education within a perspective of normative rationalization. This implies the transformation of the source of the sacred to communication as collective will-formation through deliberation, resting on a perspective that
social integration depends on communicative and argumentative consensual processes. It is the good argument that creates validity, a validity that also has an integrative force (Englund, 2010).

In the Swedish education system as shaped within the ‘Swedish model’ after the Second World War through the creation of a common school, citizenship rights were historically seen as rights to equal participation primarily in the national community, representing what can be called a democratic conception of education. Education was seen as a means to share in the social heritage of a community that included the exercise of civil and political rights (Englund, 1986, 1989, 1994). This also meant that education was given the task to develop a capacity in every citizen to decide collectively on the future of this society. Democracy of this kind required a state and potential popular control of the state. However, it was not the question of participation that was the crucial criterion for the deliberative movement concerning the realization of democracy, but rather the existence of citizenship rights by the common school transformed to knowledgeable and confident citizens, meaning that every citizen was a potential politician and citizen able of making use of deliberation (see, Walzer, 1983). And as has been said, for a society to be a community in this strong sense, a community must be constitutive of the shared self-understandings of the citizens embodied in their institutional arrangements, not simply an attribute of certain of the participants’ plan of life (Sandel, 1982, 1996 see also, Dewey, 1927/1988).

How then to handle the crucial curriculum question creating educated citizens in these times of questioning knowledge and dominance of goal attainment, teaching for the test and current assessments? (1)

Talking about the limits and qualities of the educated citizens we refer to, as shortly mentioned, three levels for each citizen and other inhabitants:

1) level one, the everyday’s relations within and to different social groups of citizens (different personal relations, family, working life, societal institutions and professional organizations),

2) level two, to the nation to which one belongs to through citizenship as one’s passport and other authoritative documents,

3) level three, to the world as a possible expression of cosmopolitanism.

Level one: Moral individualism (Durkheim) (2)

If we refer to the educated citizen in relation to these three levels one can say to begin with the first point that the development of educated citizens with a deliberative attitude can be facilitated but not guaranteed through education. Being a deliberative citizen means to live educationally. This implies to be open for thinking anew and to be open for the possibility of changing one’s preferences and views in light of argumentation, to be self-critical and to listen to other’s arguments and to respect the concrete Other, in sum to embrace pluralism (for definition of and further elaboration on deliberation, see my earlier articles in Englund 2006, Englund, 2016 and appendix).

The character of the educated deliberative citizen can thus be seen as a kind of moral individualism as developed by Émile Durkheim (1925/1961). He stated that education had to centre on a moral individualism: fostering a sense of dignity of each woman and man and a greater thirst for justice. Moral individualism required an education, Durkheim stressed, that shapes our vision to see unjust social relations as contrary to our understanding of human dignity. Durkheim also stressed that an education centred on moral individualism had to be secular and rational. It is essential to understand that this means an education that is not derived from revealed religion, but that rests exclusively on ideas, sentiments, and practices accountable to reason only – in short, a purely rationalistic education by which Durkheim meant, according to Cladis, an education that is informed by a plurality of society’s members (Cladis, 1992, cf. Durkheim 1899/1957/1992).

- Level two: A national constitution (Habermas) (2)

However, as an important aspect at level two and related to level three, the nation and the cosmopolitan view, I find it reasonable by referring to Habermas’ idea of ‘a political constitution for the pluralistic world society’ as presented in Habermas (2005/ 2007/ 2007) translated to Swedish 2007. The national political constitution and its underlying investigations will be the steering instruments for deciding on conflicts between different cultural (e.g. religious) and other differences in views on how to learn to live with the otherness of others whose ways of being may be deeply threatening to our own. How else can moral and political learning take place, except through such encounters in civil society?” (Benhabib, 2002, pp. 130, cf. Englund 2011).

- Level three: Cosmopolitanism – as a way to strive for and reach a direction for a new curriculum (Hansen, 2008; 2)

If we interpret deliberative communication as ‘an endeavor to ensure that each individual takes a stand by listening, deliberating, seeking arguments and evaluating, while at the same time there is a collective effort to find values and norms that everyone can agree upon’ (the Swedish National Agency for Education, 2000, p. 6, my tr., cf. Englund, 2000a, 2000b, 2006a, p. 505), we can also make an attempt to elaborate and analyse the preconditions for what we
could call a cosmopolitan deliberation: to learn to live educationally (see, Englund, 2016, 2019).

Is it then reasonable, in these times of terrorism, wars, migrant refugees, racism and threatening tensions between different groups based on ethnicity, religious and cultural traditions and interpretations, to lean on the potential of education to create mutual trust and a cosmopolitan imagination (Englund 2011)? David Hansen, author of *The Teacher and the World: A Study of Cosmopolitanism as Education* (Englund, 2007). Hansen raised the question some years ago whether it is possible to develop a next step in research juxtaposing ’curriculum as cosmopolitan inheritance with recent curriculum inquiry on educating the human capacity for critical dialogue and deliberation’; he clarified: ’Can the willingness and the skills to deliberate critically across difference be conceived as an ongoing world inheritance?’ (Hansen, 2008, p. 307). Recently, he and Carmen James also stated the need to cultivate democratic habits in schools encompassing:

learning to cooperate and collaborate with others (Stitzlein, 2014, pp. 71-2) - activities, which in turn, intensify the formation of habits of careful listening and deliberate, thoughtful speaking. Such habits position students to communicate responsibly about their experience within the school, the classroom and the larger world. They equip them to deliberate about what they are doing and why they are doing it. (Hansen & James, 2016, p. 106)

Are these thoughts a kind of utopia or can they be seen as a normative model? They seem to be a long way from current dominant views in terms of ’factual knowledge’, goal attainment, recurrent assessments, etc. Is it desirable, reasonable and possible to try to cultivate educated citizens with the qualities I have given them? And in what way can the education of citizens lead to educated citizens with the qualities or attributes sketched – with a thinking considering the need of education for the public good, a deliberative attitude characterized by a moral individualism and a cosmopolitan view?

**A vision concerning curriculum (1)**

A first aspect of a vision of a curriculum for the future would, as I see it, be based on Dewey’s and Habermas ideas of communicative reason (Dewey, 1916/1985; Habermas, 1981/1987). I would also say that it, in concrete terms, would be necessary to give more time in schools to history and societal questions as starting points for educative deliberative communication in line with proposals earlier presented (Englund, 2006a, 2006b, 2016).5

Secondly, communicative reason would be the base for teaching and learning in many knowledge areas. Instead of a centre of gravity to one-sided concentration on mediation of factual ’knowledge’ created by the demands of recurrent assessment there would be more time and space for mutual communication combined with collaborative writing/text production on current issues and dilemmas and attempts to solve these issues and dilemmas like for instance, environmental problems, social integration and segregation.

My interpretation of Dewey’s view of the curriculum (Dewey, 1916/1985) is that he is not primarily interested in developing a curriculum with specified precise and standardized course aims (like what the educational policy stands for today). He rather presents metatexts of how to treat different areas of studies and also concerning what schools have to develop in a general perspective, which I also think is a good and fruitful way for the development of teachers.

As I have developed in the earlier text *Towards a deliberative curriculum* from 2015, I mean that it is a bit problematic to, as a curriculum theoretician, look too close at school subjects as, e.g., Zongyi Deng does, namely ’that a school subject is a distinctive purpose-built enterprise’ (Englund, 2015, p. 48) which comes close to a systematic curriculum view which is the dominant one today and that this package of knowledge in one way or another has to be delivered to the students. Teachers are in this perspective too much of executors of predetermined activities. What I wish to propose and revitalize rather, is a more open didactic approach where competent teachers interpret the curriculum texts and decide in the German style of didactics. This means that the formation of school subjects and curriculum content rests on a deliberative understanding of education and curriculum (Englund, 1997a, 1997b, 2015, cf. Wahlström, 2015).

In Wesley Null’s (2011) overview of five different curriculum philosophies,6 he stresses how the deliberative philosophy underlines that ’curriculum is a public good to which all citizens can contribute’ and that the endeavour of the modern system-based curriculum philosophy of today to separate ‘facts’ from ‘values’ is rejected by the deliberative tradition. The deliberative curriculum philosophy concentrates on the processes how the curriculum comes into practice through a multifaceted deliberation opening up different moral and political perspectives.7 Even if all earlier attempts in recent Swedish history of curriculum had a limited influence (Englund, 2015, pp. 53–54), I do think that a curriculum creating educated deliberative citizens has to go through different deliberative processes on the different levels mentioned instead of the kind of process that has created the current system-based curriculum, Lgr 11, based on especially the government official report (SOU, 2007):28. In a way, we are back to the first stage of curriculum theory, the traditional, administrative and technological narrow view of curriculum (cf. Pinar, 1978; Englund, 1986, pp. 40–42). This also
means that the strong goal orientation and focus on assessment in Sweden and in many other European countries as well tend to give the deliberative communication less space and time. However, it is noticeable that deliberative communication has been and is used in many classrooms teaching democracy and social studies and stressed as successful by governing institutions like the national school inspection and also by educational researchers. Does this mean that communicative reason and deliberative communication could be a successful model also for other knowledge areas creating meaning through mutual communication directed at contextualization and analyses of different views and perhaps also in the long run 'producing' educationally living deliberative citizens.

Notes

1. In the end of this paper, I will come back to the concept of Bildung.
2. Cf. the analysis of three conceptions of community in Sandel 1982 and compare this concept with deliberation.
3. The concept civic curriculum code is developed in my work Curriculum as a Political Problem (1986) where I distinguish this code as representative for the Swedish school system from 1918/19 when political democracy is installed and the school system is situated in a democratic conflict and struggle between different social forces when it is at the same time necessary for the school system to contribute to a sense of community.
4. Within the civic curriculum code, three conceptions of education are distinguished: a patriarchal, a scientifical-rational and a democratic. Within the three decades, the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s, there is a balance between the last two conceptions within the civic curriculum code, but during the last three decades, the 1990s and the two first decades of the 21st the civic curriculum code and the democratic conception are questioned through a growing system of privatization of schools.
5. It is worth to notice that such an expansion of these school subjects is proposed by Swedish educational authorities in spring 2020, also see note 8.
6. Systematic, existentialist, radical, pragmatic and deliberative.
7. In Englund, 2015 I point at three different historical situations in recent Swedish educational history when deliberation of different kinds have been used: Before and after the Lgr 80-syllabus, the local enactment by teachers of Lpo 94-syllabus and during the value-foundation years 1999–2003 together with the projects on local enactment of the curriculum, see, Pettersson (2013).
8. See reports as Skolornas arbete med demokrati och värdegrund [The schools' work with democracy and value base]. Stockholm: The National School Inspection. Report 2012:9 and Gymnasieskolans demokratiiuppdrag [The secondary schools’ task of fostering to democracy] Stockholm: The National Inspection. Report 2019. See, also Andersson (2015).

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Appendix

- Deliberative communication stands for communication in which different opinions and values can be set against each other. It implies an endeavour by each individual to develop his or her view by listening, deliberating, seeking arguments and valuing, coupled to a collective and cooperative endeavour to find values and norms which everyone can accept, at the same time as pluralism is acknowledged.

  Deliberative communication implies communication in which:
  - (a) different views are confronted with one another and arguments for these different views are given time and space to be articulated and presented
  - (b) there is tolerance and respect for the concrete other and participants learn to listen to the other person’s argument
  - (c) elements of collective will-formation are present, i.e. an endeavour to reach consensus or at least temporary agreements or to draw attention to differences;
  - (d) authorities or traditional views can be questioned, and there are opportunities to challenge one’s own tradition and while the teacher has a crucial role in realizing a-d,
  - (e) there is also scope and opportunities for students to communicate and deliberate without teacher control, i.e. for argumentative discussions between students with the aim of solving problems or shedding light on them from different points of view.