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POLITICAL FORMATION OF CITIZENSHIP IN YOUNG PEOPLE FROM HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN MEXICO AND GERMANY

Abstract

This chapter presents an analysis on civic values in the Mexican and German youth population (high school education students), considering the set of capabilities and civic dispositions that mobilize young people of both countries, and which together reflect the calls “civic virtues”, with the purpose of knowing what characterizes the political formation of the youth citizenship in Mexico and Germany.

The study is from a comparative perspective, which takes as its main methodological reference the classic text of George F. Bereday (1968) *El método comparativo en pedagogía*, displaying in this text the level prior to the comparison called *juxtaposition*, which is the simultaneous examination of various civic virtues among both populations.

Introduction

It is difficult to find in the history of humanity such a vertiginous social, economic and technological revolution as carried out in the transitions from the twentieth to twenty-first century, modifying our way of thinking, interacting and communicating among individuals of every nation.

We live in an increasingly “small” world in which everyday people and groups of people of different ideological and cultural symbol interact in a diversified scene, in an increasingly complex network of relations between individuals and with instances of power, a world involving for Montes (2012) a coexistence that requires everyday more tolerance, more solidarity and more sophisticated interrelation mechanisms that allow conviviality that transform into affordable a world more just and capable of transcending the risks of a dehumanization that destabilized the species of sense of existence.

A global citizenship is required, a social transformation from its ethical bases, which entails a need to adapt not only our individual but also collective behavior, that affects, of course, education also, (Ayuso, 2007; Delgado, 2006), not only in the means but also in the purposes.

Is in the field of education in which it is established, not unique but determinately, the axiological conception of values transmission of the members of a society, from one generation to another, and that this has an impact on the formation of mechanisms for moral judgment, emotional management, treatment of the difference and decisions making that contribute to improve the conviviality and to exercise a responsible and informed citizenship aiming it towards the achievement of justice and equity.

That is why many of the controversies related to democratic theory, have found a space, although reduced, in educational reflection, especially with the issue of citizenship education (Bárcena, 2010: 40).

This paper recovers the experience of academic exchange carried out in Germany as part of a research project studying the Master of Education Sciences, training in interculturalism and education program. The study population is located in the educational context of high school, specifically in a high school incorporated into the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo (UAEH) and in the German case, in the comparable educational model *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

In this sense, the civic values that make the political education in Mexican and German young people are analyzed, considering the field of research on citizenship as educational problem, which is analyzed from a set of capabilities and civic dispositions, called “civic virtues” that every human being deployed in the exercise of citizenship, which includes not only the knowledge, interest and participation in public or political sphere, but also the way how is put into practice freedom, critical thinking, interpersonal confidence and towards the institutions of public interest.

The comparative education as a method of research

For Calderón (2000), the comparison as a method of social sciences, compares complex operations and see links under variable conditions, that is, as a way to connect facticities (events which may or may not happen) and relate relations (Schriewer, 1989: 83, cited in: Calderon, 2000: 11).

In this sense, if we start from an epistemological notion, compare is to confront one thing with another (Sartori & Morlino, 1999). Furthermore, compare involves assimilating and differentiate the limits, that is, it is considered comparable (very similar) to what properties or characteristics, and not comparable (too different) with respect to what other properties or characteristics (Sartori & Morlino, 1999). “*Comparative education* is therefore a challenging discipline of reflection and analysis, which enrichment requires institutional support to promote itself through teaching and the development of comparative research projects between educational systems of other countries, the results will allow us to know more deeply the policies and models that guide them, as well as the actions undertaken by the different actors involved in its configuration” (Calderón, 2000: 16).

In the words of Sartori & Morlino (1999), we compare to “locate”, to learn from the experiences of others, to have terms of paragon (who does not know other countries does not know its own).

Analysis of the civic virtues in students of Mexico and Germany

The study was conducted with a sample of 156 students of high school, 78 participants from every nationality, in an age range of 16-22 years old, the average is 17 years, 97 women and 59 men, of which 42 percent work and 58 percent no.

German students are found in an age range of 17-19 years, with 50 women and 28 men, of whom 51 work and 27 not. Compared with Mexican students, their age range is between 16 and 22 years old, with a mean of 17.5 years, of which 47 are women and 31 men, and only 10 work, while 68 do not.

Now, with regard to the activities carried out by young students, when they are declared to participate in associations, the following is observed: while Mexican students have greater participation in cultural groups, German students have it in

sports groups; emphasizing that while the lowest percentage of participation in Mexico is the activity as a candidate (a leader who represents the students in a classroom), in Germany the lowest percentage of participation was obtained for the altruistic institutions.

In relation to the reasons that make students participate in an organization, the biggest reasons for Mexican students with equal percentages are “to change certain things” and “to help others” while the German is “help others”. “This guideline give us to think that both young Germans and Mexicans have a willingness to translate the feeling of brotherhood in acts of support to groups or other collective movements, in addition to do this actively” (Heller, 1998).

Regarding the associations that young people form part, the majority of both German and Mexican students form part of a sports association and political associations are those of which least form part, however, for Mexican youth, percentages of young people participating in politics are higher than those of the Germans, 57.7 versus 1.4 respectively. This means appealing to Kymlicka (2001), Mexican youth have greater capacity and willingness to engage in public discourse on issues related to public policy, that is, Mexican youth show greater *public spirit* that young Germans.

With regard to the vote, nine in ten German students plan to vote, compared to the case of Mexico which is 74.4. Questioning about the main reason why will exercise the vote, German students mentioned that is because it is their right, while Mexico's youth will vote because they want to choose their rulers.

Asking about several statements about political culture, both German and Mexican students mostly agree with be in disagreement that politics is a matter of adults, in Germany a considerable percentage agrees with this statement; as well as students from both countries support that politics is for both men and women. Questioning students about participates in politics, Mexican and German population strongly agree they do this to find their own benefit, however, in Germany a considerable percentage points is in disagreement.

In relation to what they believe is the main difficulty for students to participate in the improvement of school life, while young Germans consider it is because of not knowing how to do it or who to turn to, young Mexicans think the main difficulty is the lack of interest of students. It is interesting that both German and Mexican students believe that it is task of the school to prepare students to participate in the political life of the country.

In relation to what are public figures in whom students have higher and lower confidence, Germany population answered they rely completely on the figures of judges and police, while in Mexico do not trust anything in the police figure; both countries rely heavily on the figure of the teacher.

When questioned in relation to which person should govern a country, while German students believe it has to be person chosen by the people, Mexican students consider they must be experts in political and government affairs.

Conclusions

In this second decade of the 21st century, High School education is staged in a difficult situation, on the one hand, due to the demands of quality, equity and coverage; and on the other, the variants and complex social and cultural conditions

in which it operates and seeks its legitimacy as a forming and not formalizing school towards higher education.

In relation to the civic virtues that characterize both populations, we note the following: students in Mexico and Germany are characterized for a passive citizenship (Bárcena, 1997, cited in Molina, 2011: 34-35), since they demonstrate an awareness of the possession of their rights and duties as citizens, acquired by the fact of being part of a particular community or society (citizenship by affiliation), however, little participation or demand of full exercise of those duties is also shown (citizenship by conviction) with knowledge and responsibility in acting, which makes to still not reach an active citizenship.

Although both populations present features of a passive citizenry, we also find interesting points of convergence and divergence, which make us think in the cultivation of a possible active citizenship or simply targeting a sort of communities of sense or relocation phenomena in response to the ravages of economic and cultural globalization.

For example, as convergence points, we find that in both populations show an arrangement for solidarity actions to pairs of friends and groups; the processes of civic socialization are stronger and more durable with reference to classmates and friends than other means of socialization, in addition to, there is a willingness to respect and tolerate other that thinks differently.

The divergence points are explained in terms of social and cultural conditions through which citizenship operates in Mexican and German youth. The Mexican youth civic spirit is more characterized by the desire for a democratic and fair society under the idea that the country must be transformed from within and not from without, by policies generating better living conditions among Mexican people. Bárcena (2010: 35) translates this as a subjective definition that democracy requires, an effect or consequence of the action of men, whose nature is to be an essentially political being, assumes options of value, a normative reference for ideals and aspirations.

On the other hand, the German youth, displays a civic spirit, marked by comfort, having social conditions and educability, fully favorable for optimal personal and professional development.

We also note that German youth shows a higher level of confidence in the figures and entities responsible for the impartation of justice, a situation that contrasts with young Mexicans who trust less on authority, probably because they do not perceive certainty at the time of impart justice.

Finally, we found the Mexican youth have a greater willingness to engage in matters of collective interest than the German youth, in addition to, the former show greater interest in improving the context and school climate, which German young people already have. Following Kymlicka (2001: 345), we shall say that Mexican youth show greater public spirit than German youth, engaging themselves in the discourse on public policy issues.

As Heller (1998: 225) says, this results in the provision of *civic bravery*: the virtue to speak out for a cause, or an opinion that we believe is the correct, as a democratic conviction, in the hope that justice can be done.

This raises major challenges for the case of the Mexican high school level education on citizenship education and the way how they are being trained or

educated in citizenship, certain segments of the youth population. The mission of pedagogical reflection in democratic social contexts must be the interest in moral and civic education as one of the main priorities of any “modern” educational system wishing to increase their own quality levels and extend the estimation for democracy, conceived as a form of civic life (Bárcena, 2010: 47).

Training in values must be understood as a process of nature evolutionary, permanent, that allows to develop the autonomy of subjects to forge and define their own criteria of moral judgment and to develop the ability to adapt their behavior (Schmelkes, 2004).

For all these reasons, it is possible to open new veins of knowledge around the topic that concerns us, delve, for example, in transversal studies that take into account how to generate the conditions for the construction of an active and participatory citizenship, and new educational approaches in the context of the implementation of the Integral Reform for High School Education in Mexico, as well as those arising due to the process of integration and unification that Germany and the European Union experiences.

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