

Farini, F. (2019) The paradox of citizenship education in Early Years (and beyond). The case of Education to Fundamental British Values. *Journal of Early Childhood Research* (accepted version, April 2019)

## **Introduction**

In April 2015, the Early Years Inspection Handbook (Department for Education, 2015) instructed inspectors to make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management to actively promote British Values in the settings. Although not explicitly included in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS; Department for Education 2014), education to Fundamental British Values (FBV) is now a core duty for all English early years settings that must now demonstrate to government's inspectors to promote 'equality, diversity and British values at the heart of the setting's work' (Early Years Inspection Handbook, Department for Education, 2015).

However, the paradoxical position of FBV in early years education is here argued. On the one hand, the semantics of FBV is genuinely educational: they are knowledge that creates the conditions for further learning and experiences (Baraldi and Corsi 2016). On the other hand, learners have limited opportunities to experience, test and assess the learned knowledge, due to their limited agency in the education system. Agency refers to the possibility for children to "respond, mitigate, resist, have views about and interact with the social conditions in which they find themselves" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005: 380). This definition of agency accounts for three interrelated dimensions of 1) action (*respond, mitigate, resist*), 2) perspective (*have views*) and 3) social context (*interact with social conditions*). The concept of children's agency implies the relationship between children's actions and social conditions (Bjerke, 2011; Valentine, 2011). The social conditions of children in education can be conceptualised as their position (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999) in discursive constructions that determine expectations (Luhmann, 1984). From a sociological perspective, expectations are social structures that make actions within social processes "intelligible and relatively determinate" (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999: 16). It is possible to utilize positioning theory to understand the position of children in education as centered around role expectation of standardized performances, with few possible variations. In education, children are positioned as "learners" who are expected to display their learning responding to adults' solicitations aimed to assess children's change of competence and knowledge. The use of positioning to conceptualize the limits of children's agency in education aligns with the idea that the social conditions of children's actions should be explained in "relational" terms (Mayall, 2002), because children's agency means "doing

with,” in the context of a hierarchical, although dynamic, generational order of relationships (Alanen, 2009). A relational and inter-generational approach to agency seems to be particularly convincing if applied to educational contexts.

The position of children in education limits their agency in the dimension of action, reducing children’s opportunity to utilize and experience FBV in the same social context where they learn them. FBV may be learnt by children; however, the role-centered positioning of children in education, reinforced by the generational order, limits their opportunity to practice FBV, therefore to use them as foundation for further learning and experiences. While nothing prevents children from having views on FBV, the lack of opportunities for children to actively participate in decision-making in educational interactions prevents the achievement of children’s agency (Fasulo, Lloyd and Padiglione, 2007).

The position of children in education defines, as well as it is defined by, cultures of education and structures of educational communication that may limit the space for children’s agency. This contribution will examine education to FBV within the culture of education underpinning the EYFS and the Early Years Inspection Handbook. The ideological and methodological similarities between education to FBV and Citizenship education will be also discussed based on the analysis of the Crick Report, to situate education to FBV in a broader cultural process characterising education in England during the last 20 years. The discussion will support the claim that the ambiguous image of the child within the EYFS, both as an agent of its own education as the object of cultivation towards the future adult, reduces the opportunity for situations where knowledge can be recombined and applied are not provided, because young children have limited opportunities to make choices per their personal judgment. It will be argued that this is a consequence of the semantics of FBV (similarly to the semantics of Citizenship education) as knowledge to be applied in the future, and outside the education system.

As documents, Early Years Inspection Handbook as well as the EYFS and the Crick Report, and other educational policies are analysed using document analysis.

## **1. Methodology**

Atkinson and Coffey (2004) refer to documents as ‘social facts’, which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways. Document analysis is systematic procedure for reviewing documents, to elicit meaning (Rapley 2007) by finding, selecting, appraising and synthesising data into major themes (Labuschagne 2003). Educational documents include attendance

registers, minutes of meetings; manuals; school brochures; teachers' professional journals; organisational or institutional reports; curricula.

Document analysis is deemed as particularly appropriate to approach educational curricula through a focused intensive documentary case-study (Stake 1995). Curricula have been used in past investigation as key to decipher emerging social forms in the semantics of education, for instance regarding digital learning and computer mediated communication (Angers and Machtmes 2005; Scollan and Gallagher 2016). The research presented here analyses a diverse range of documents. The Crick Report (1998) is analysed due to its success in defining a contemporary semantics of citizenship and citizenship education underpinning not only school curricula but also current governmental guidelines to embed the foundation of civic virtues in early years practice. The second document of interest for the research is the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014 (EYFS), in its most recent revision (2017). The EYFS is a framework that sets standards for the learning, development and care from birth to 5 years compulsory for all early years providers in England registered with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The EYFS is made object of analysis as documenting the hegemonic pedagogical and political approach to education to FBV in early years settings across different areas such as 'communication and language', 'personal, social and emotional development', 'understanding the world'. A third document analysed is the handbook for OFSTED inspectors working in early years settings (2015), which contains the guidelines to assess if, and how, early years settings meet the standards imposed by the EYFS. Whilst the EYFS as a curricular framework presents generic learning and developmental goals, the handbook for inspectors specifies the empirical indicators to observe the achievement of such goals, related to activities, planning and management. The relationships between the image of the child and the education to the fundamental of civic virtue is the main theme explored in the analysis of the three main documents, by identifying and organising meaningful and relevant passages of text (Corbin and Strauss 2008, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006, Bowen, 2008).

Whilst the analysis of documents produced for public use does not imply neither working with human participants nor with private communications, ethical considerations are still involved. This starts from the initial design of the study, which is aimed at the public good by criticising current policies to promote alternative approaches to education to civic virtues in early years settings and by extension, across the education system. It is also believed that the present document analysis is in itself an ethical practice. Document analysis can maximize the value of public investment underpinning the design and delivery of policies by utilising them as the foundation of innovative research towards revision and improvement. Finally, document

analysis ensures replicability of study findings and therefore, greater transparency of research procedures and integrity of research work.

Document analysis is not a formalistic methodology: documents are understood as historical objects; for this reason, the analysis of the position of FBV in the early years education is now introduced by a discussion on the ideological foundations of citizenship education in the English education system.

## **2. The ideology of citizenship education in English curricula.**

In this section, the case is advanced that education to FBV in early years is part of broader cultural processes within the education system towards the construction of citizenship as the object of educational planning. The introduction of education to FBV as statutory requirement for early years settings is considered as the maturation of a cultural movement that had already brought Citizenship education into the English Curricula a few years earlier.

Whilst mainly concerned with the position of Citizenship education in school curricula, the discussion presented here is relevant for the introduction of FBV in early years education, for several reasons. First, the education to FBV is considered as propaedeutic for subsequent citizenship education. The second reason concerns the semantics of social participation shared by education to FBV and Citizenship education, based on the cultural form of rights descending from responsibilities. Thirdly, there is a similarity in the pedagogical approach to teaching FBV and teaching Citizenship, consisting in the centrality of the adult and the passive role of the child. It is therefore believed that a review of the ideological foundations of Citizenship education can serve as a discussion of the cultural and political underpinnings of the introduction to education to FBV in early years settings.

Nowadays, Marshall's model (Marshall 1950) is widely acknowledged as hegemonic in the English discourse on Citizenship (Kymlicka and Norman 1994; Kymlicka 2008), also informing aims and objectives of citizenship education (Osler 2000; Olsen 2004).

Developed from a series of lectures delivered at the London School of Economics, Marshall's model is first and foremost an attempt to provide a theory on the evolution of citizenship as the succession of the development of civil, then political, then social rights. The latter form of rights refers to the welfare rights implemented by British governments' policies at the time of Marshall's essay. The political point advanced by Marshall is that in a situation of the welfare State, social rights are awarded universally based on the status of citizenship. For this reason, the extension of social rights does not entail the destruction of social classes and the capitalistic mode of production.

In light of his socially dense concept of citizenship, Marshall is considered a pivotal figure in the post-World War II turn in liberal thought, remembered as New liberalism, whereby political and civil rights are considered to be mere procedures if they are not preceded by the recognition of social rights.

Coherently with its general theory, Marshall proposes a tripartite model of citizenship education, is based on 1) rights and responsibility; 2) political literacy; 3) community involvement. The first component, rights and responsibility, is itself a tripartite category, collating civil rights, political rights and, most controversially, Marshall's original contribution concerning social rights.

Civil rights, largely developed in the eighteenth century are the rights necessary for individual freedom, such as liberty, freedom of speech, justice and property rights. Political rights, which developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, are chiefly understood by Marshall in the framework of representative democracy, as the right to vote and to stand for political offices. Whilst Civil and Political rights were already included in traditional, history-based, Civic education, the political controversy during the 1970s concerned Social rights. Social rights are defined by Marshall as:

a range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being, according to the standards prevailing in the society' (Marshall 1950, p. 149)

Marshall's view of social rights aims to 'civilise capitalism', reducing the inequality that the economic system tends to produce. Marshall's social rights aligned with post-war consensus (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994) appeasing both the Social Democracy of the Labour Party and the model of Managed Capitalism of post-Churchillian Conservatives (O'Sullivan 2014). However, during the 1970s, the consensus around the meaning of citizenship had left way to a polarised debate centred on the legitimacy of social rights, as British political discourse was hegemonized by the emerging ideology of the New Right, emphasising Civil rights and Market self-regulation rather than Social rights (Biesta and Lawy 2006). The vanishing of consensus on the very meaning of Citizenship prevented any further advancing of Citizenship education until the late 1990s.

It was only with the 'New Labour' that some political consensus on the meaning of citizenship was restored, enabling the relatively recent, and relatively dramatic, developments in citizenship education to take place. In 1997 the historical momentum was created whereby the

government-commissioned *Advisory Group on Citizenship* could successfully put forward the case for the compulsory teaching of Citizenship in the English curriculum.

Hodgson argues that by the end of the twentieth century, Citizenship education to some extent came to be a relatively safe alternative to some of the much more radical political education that was taking place in schools since the late 1970s on an *ad hoc* basis (Hodgson 2008). Biesta and Lawy (2006) demonstrate how the new Labour largely accepted the individualistic interpretation of the role of the citizen that the Thatcherite programme had bequeathed them, emphasising the alliance between individual rights and a sense of responsibility and obligation. In a favourable cultural environment, the recommendations advanced by the Advisory Group were publicised through a landmark paper, name the 'Crick Report', after the Chair of the Advisory Group (1998).

The Crick report is informed by the 'rights and responsibilities' rhetoric of New Labour, and builds upon a partial recovery of Marshall's semantic of citizenship. The Crick report considers three interrelated learning outcomes for Citizenship education: 1) social and moral responsibility towards those in authority and each other; 2) community involvement, including service to the community; 3) political literacy, that is, the knowledge, skills and values to be effective in public life. The Crick report is a political document, and the learning outcomes of Citizenship education fits in the Communitarian agenda brought forward by new Labour, calling for morally motivated, responsible and politically engaged citizens (Etzioni 1995). Citizenship education aims to:

make secure and to increase knowledge, skills and values relevant to the nature and practices of participative democracy; also to enhance the awareness of rights and duties, and the sense of responsibility needed for the development of pupils into active citizens; and in doing so establish the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community' (Crick 1998: p.40)

Crick report was to become the ideological and technical imprint of compulsory Citizenship education (Burton and May 2015), that began in September 2002. However, the Crick report was subject to criticism for being indifferent to issues of equality and social justice. Stemming from a critical approach to the limited incisiveness of citizenship education, research from the early 2000s (Osler & Vincent, 2002; Osler and Starkey, 2003) pointed to the inability of the Crick Report to acknowledge processes of globalisation and increased interdependence that make all human lives interdependent and influenced by events in other parts of the world. The

Crick Report, and the idea of citizenship education underpinned by the report consider that the nation State is the natural locus for democracy and that the State alone has the power to guarantee the rights of its citizens. The consequence of such State-centred approach is a concept of citizenship education that is not completely tuned to the reality of a globalized society. From this criticality, research and theoretical elaborations have been proposing since the beginning of the new millennium the alternative concept of cosmopolitan citizenship. Initially developed within the debate around the consequences of globalisation that characterised social sciences in the 1990s (Gilroy 1997; Hutchings & Dannreuter, 1999; Kymlicka, 2001), cosmopolitan citizenship quickly entered the educational debate. According to Osler and Starkey (2003), a movement towards education for cosmopolitan citizenship is required to align to processes of globalisation and increased interdependence where human lives are influenced by events in other parts of the world. Education for cosmopolitan citizenship should incorporate the local, national, regional and global dimensions of citizenship. More than the simple extension of the spatial focus of interest, education for cosmopolitan citizenship represents a methodological innovation, valuing learners as active contributors as well as valuing their voices as a resource for education to include diverse experiences and meanings of young people's participation to the life of communities and groups. Centred on the learner as a global citizen in the present, education to cosmopolitan citizenship could embrace Gilroy's plea (Gilroy, 1997) for the inclusion in the discourse on citizenship and human rights of transnational and/or diasporic communities and minorities.

This position was indirectly subscribed by the influential Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review, also known as the Ajegbo Report (Ajegbo et al., 2007). The Ajegbo report was commissioned as a response to the eruption of racial tensions and extremism; whilst the main recommendation of the Ajegbo concerned the addition of Community cohesion and integration to the core goals of Citizenship education as identified by the Crick report, its most interesting contribution to the debate on citizenship education is perhaps the idea that identities are not only linked to cultural heritage, but also to where people work, to their leisure activities and consumption patterns. Citizenship involves making connections between status and identities as individuals with the lives and concerns of others with whom they share a sense of community. The Ajegbo report and the cosmopolitan concept of citizenship seem to link in understanding citizenship as a practice. Citizenship education should not only should provide learners with the opportunity to practice citizenship but also being prepared to listen to their voices and experiences as active members of diverse and multi-layered communities.

Notwithstanding the abundance of critical observations, sometimes advanced in Government's backed research such as the Ajegebo report, Crick's framework successfully resonated across the whole political spectrum on its publication and has continued to do so over the last 20 years. Scholars have suggested that the success of the Crick report is due to its ideological continuity with the New Right Agenda, for instance the emphasis on personal responsibility and individual choice (Miller 2000). The importance of the Crick report cannot be underestimated in relation to early years education, as it constitutes the ideological architecture of education to FBV, with its emphasis on the development of sense of responsibility and obligation towards the others. It is argued here that the Crick Report is the most direct and important influence *on*, as well as *in*, the education to FBV early years settings. The report revived Marshall's model of citizenship, which in turn constitutes the philosophical underpinnings of education to FBV. The influence of the Crick report is pivotal also regarding methodological aspects. Its affinity to 'safe' teacher-centred pedagogies, interested in transmitting 'good' citizenship, rather than promoting the social and critical capabilities of young people (Tomlinson 2005), resonates with the approach to education to FBV. This is the starting point for the next section, concerned with the paradoxical position of education to FBV in early years education.

### **3. Fundamental British Values as educational knowledge**

The inclusion of education to FBV as a statutory requirement for Early years settings entails the transformation of FBV into a set of learning outcomes therefore the object of educational planning. From a sociological perspective all educational curricula, as well as educational planning, can be understood as a component of a triadic configuration that also includes the teacher and the learner, helping to stabilise the relationship between the latter two (Weick 1979).

A triadic configuration 'teacher, learner, curriculum' unburdens both the teacher and the learner, enabling more stable pedagogical relations. It is against the curriculum that the history of the interactions, as well as the personal characteristics of the participants can become meaningful for the interaction. School curricula represent one of the changes encompassed by the morphogenesis of the modern educational system at the end of the eighteenth century, with the so-called discovery of the child, the universalization of classroom education and the professionalization of the teacher (Vanderstraeten 2006).

Curricula do not only reduce the complexity of the educational interaction; curricula also reduce the complexity of the internal environment of educational settings, limiting the possibility of choice for teachers, pedagogues and managers. As State-enhanced programmes



for decision making, curricula represent an interface between Education and its social environment. The State administration cannot teach but can imposed curricular models and organizational structures.

All educational curricula and all forms of educational planning aimed to attained established curricular goals for the development of the child, simplify decision-making for teachers, as well as for practitioners and managers in Early years settings. Age-specific activities are imposed, that must be tailored to secure development in the Core areas of development ‘understanding the world’, ‘personal, social and emotional development’, ‘people and communities’. FBV are now presented as a core component of all the Core areas.

#### **4. Fundamental British Values and the EYFS: the present as preparation for the future**

Since 2015, education to FBV is a core component of Early years settings statutory duty to secure a positive and socially constructive development of the child. FBV are as important as any of the many facets of a State-designed well developing individual. Early years settings must demonstrate to provide teaching of FBV via play-based activities to avoid financial penalties.

Due probably to the awareness of the vacuity of a concept such as FBV, the Agency that implement inspections, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) presents a non-negotiable trivial list of values to be transmitted to a child: 1) Rule of law, 2) Mutual respect and tolerance, 3) Democracy and, 4) Individual liberty.

The first two Fundamental Values refer to learning how to manage feelings and behaviour, treating others as the child wants to be treated and understanding that rules matter. The third and the fourth values refer to learning how to make decisions together, making use of self-awareness and self-confidence.

The analysis of the curriculum evidences the enduring influence of Marshall’s model of citizenship in the version revived by the Crick report. It can be therefore noted, that the Conservative-led educational policy underpinning the Inspection Handbook 2015 can be considered as a continuation and expansion of the cultural project inaugurated by the New Labour government, and evidence of some continuity in the semantics of citizenship across the political spectrum. The four pillar of Marshall’s citizenship, that is, rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance, democracy and individual liberty are transformed in fundamental values to be transmitted via pedagogical planning.

Criticism of the educational treatment of FBV has concerned the elusiveness of the idea of distinctive British values (Jerome and Clemitshaw 2012) and the difficulty for practitioners of

avoiding a language implying some form of moral supremacy to other nations and cultures (The Guardian, 2014). Notwithstanding the importance of a discussion on the ideological implication of a nationalisation of Fundamental Values, it is believed that how such values should be transmitted is an interesting object for sociological analysis.

The guidelines for Early years inspections demand settings to include in their planning activities that are directly relevant of the transmission of FBV. Education to FBV is presented as a core resource to equip children to acquire the ‘core knowledge they need to be educated citizens’, to ‘develop skills and understanding to play a full part in society’ (Department for Education 2015).

The moral foundations of future British citizenship are presented as learning outcomes of adult-led and adult-centred activities. Education to FBV must be shown on paper in terms of pre-planned activities pictorially linked to the desired learning. The educational treatment of FBV sees them, literally, as a valuable object to be ‘passed’, to be ‘transmitted’ through a learning process monitored by the practitioner as the ‘knowledgeable other’ (Parsons and Bales 1955), and inspected by State bureaucrats.

However, pedagogical planning neither prevents practitioners to devise opportunities for children to practice FBV nor denies space for the voice of the child to be heard. Looking at the Characteristics of Effective Learning and Teaching embedded in the current EYFS, the best teaching practice consists in ‘supporting children to think critically and become independent learners’. The (well) developing child makes sense of the world through ‘opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places technology and the environment’ (Department for Education, 2014b).

The child-initiated pedagogy informing the Characteristics of Effective Learning and Teaching is influenced by the Reggio Emilia Approach, being based on the acknowledgement of the child as an agent who makes choices relevant for its own education (for a curricular perspective on the Reggio Approach see Siraj-Blatchford 2008; for a sociologically informed analysis see Baraldi 2015).

Thus, the pedagogical foundations of the EYFS would suggest that Early years settings in England represent a favourable environment for children’s experience of FBV in their everyday life, enhancing the use of educational learning to learn. But the EYFS is a complex document, at the intersection of contrasting agendas; for instance, the concept of child-initiated pedagogy is accompanied by an indication that Early years education, therefore education to FBV too, must be provided as preparation to future stages of life.

The preparatory nature of Education to FBV aligns with the generalised trend towards the reconceptualization of Early years provision as preparation for the following stage of life which means supporting 'School Readiness' (Office for Standard in Education 2014; for critical voices see Bingham and Whitebread 2012 and O'Connor and Angus 2013).

Under the umbrella of School Readiness, Education to FBV, and all aspect of Early years provision, are colonised by the culture of schooling, based on standardised expectations and generalised learning outcomes. Education to FBV is thus embedded a top-down implementation model in which practitioners are perceived as the *implementers* (Jerome *forth.*) as determined by State-administered decision-making programmes, while their voice, as the voice of the child, is noticeable for its absence.

Government's guidelines for Education to FBV dictate educational planning, for instance expecting settings to 'support children with material on the strengths, advantages and disadvantages of democracy, and how democracy and the law works in Britain' (Department for Education 2014c). FBV are a core component of the 'knowledge, skills and understanding which young children of different abilities and maturities are expected to have' (Department for Education 2014b). The EYFS indeed provides references to literature listing the social skills that provisions must impart to children (for instance Heckman and Kautz 2012): Motivation, Sociability, Attention, Self-regulation, Self-esteem, Time preference. They are evidently skills for a successful participation in school education. Education to FBV is approached as an addition to them.

FBV are therefore included in a discourse of expectations, performances, measurability and assessment, and Early years provisions must secure that FBV support children in being 'developed enough' for the next stage of their life, which coincides with school education.

What is missing from the picture is children's experience of their social contexts in the here and now. Early years inspectors must assess the social development of young children, measuring their 'acceptance and engagement with the FBV of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect' (Department for Education 2015).

Early years provision is expected to develop children's skill and attitudes that *will* allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to society' (Department for Education, 2014c). FBV are future-oriented, foundations of a process of learning citizenship which is projected in the future. Practitioners 'ensure that children understand their own and others' behaviour and its consequences, and learn to distinguish right from wrong', 'learn to take turns and share, and challenging negative attitudes and stereotypes', to 'develop the skills that *will* enable them to positively contribute to their communities' (Department for Education, 2014b).

Lloyd (2015) argues that the 'School colonisation' of Early years provision is further enhanced by its marketization in the aftermath of the 2006 Childcare Act. Within a market-driven competition for accessing scarce resources, it is now the effectiveness in securing school readiness that shows the quality of early years provision to families and funding bodies (Moss 2009). It is here argued that marketisation further reduces the space for children's agency, favouring the implementation of knowledge-based predetermined learning objectives.

The ambiguous status of FBV as educational knowledge in early years education is caught between the continuation of a long tradition of promotion of civic virtues, and the impossibility for children to experiment them due to limited agency in the education determined by the position in communication processes.

Taylor's (1989) historical account of the conceptualisations of human value can support a discussion on the ambiguous relationship between young children and citizenship status. According to Taylor, in hierarchical societies human value was ranked against the proximity to the owner of the land. Examining the transition from feudal societies to societies based on trade in Western and Southern Europe, Taylor observes a semantic evolution, whereas human value is a function of dignity, which is taken to be both the possession of, and what it is owed to, each and every individual, regardless of the conditions of their birth.

Dignity is presented here as a principle generating the semantics of children's citizenship. An ongoing research on recent policies on early years education and care in England, Ireland and Italy (for the discussion of some initial results, see Farini and Scollan, 2016) suggests that such theoretical position may be useful in interrogating policy-making as a document presenting the hegemonic discourse on childhood and citizenship.

For instance, the principle of individual dignity that defines the boundaries of legitimate political and legal initiatives around citizenship can be recognised at the foundations of policies that identify early education and care as a primary asset to guarantee equality of opportunity for children.

Notwithstanding the universalistic semantic of dignity human value as a structural form does not disappear in modernity; in order to differentiate grades of human value, the universal and inclusive principle of dignity is coupled with the selective and exclusive principle of 'level of development', which is measured according to separateness from others, self-governance and independence from the claims, wishes and command of others.

The circular relationship between the condition of minority of the child in the discourses of modernity and the reproduction of the double semantic figure of dignity and development can

be exemplified by modern European scientific theories, for instance developmental psychology.

Freud's theory of taboos (Freud, 2011), puts at the foundation of human society self-regulation and self-control, exercised by separated individuals. Freud metaphorically and epistemologically link primitives societies to a condition of childhood, which allow a translation from cultural to generational relationships. Childhood, of humanity as of the individual, is on the contrary marked by lack self-control and separation from the world. From influential Freud's theories, the idea of childhood as a society of 'sauvages' within modernity, places children in a liminal space in society where, whilst protected by the recognition of their dignity, are excluded from the exercise of citizenship for their incomplete separation from the adults. Another example is offered by Piaget's developmental psychology (Piaget, 2011), where young children are seen as 'egocentric' in the sense that they are not aware of a difference between themselves and the rest of the world. Individual development, is the ability to create a distinction between self and the world. Separation between self and the world is the goal of child's development as a condition to access to reason. Both Freud and Piaget's theories depict change as a movement from a less to a more desirable state, coinciding with normatively stipulated anticipations of improvements as the child who accomplishes the transitions to the adult life phase.

While Taylor suggests that the function of the combination of development and dignity is to detect a shared quality among aristocracy and bourgeoisie, that would otherwise be separated by degrees of honour, such coupling has been the catalyst for semantics of categorical distinction: development is associated with general historical movement (savages against civilised), gender (female against male), ethnicity (black people against white people) and personal development (child against adult).

In fact, the coupling between dignity and development is currently accepted in the public discourse only with regard to intergenerational order, and in particular within education (although being the object of criticism, particularly from the area of childhood studies (Wyness, 2014; Leonard, 2016)). In education, the concept of development and its underpinning structure, that is, the coupling between the inclusive principle of dignity and an exclusive principle still generates social semantics.

Whilst dignity generates inclusive and universal human rights, citizenship generates exclusive and conditional personal rights (Mattheis, 2012). Research suggests that in education children do not experience the negation of their human rights. After all, education is provided, to use the language of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) 'for the best interest

of the child' (article 3). What children do experience is the exclusion from 'personal rights', therefore the exclusion from citizenship in the education system (Biesta and Lawy, 2006). While the semantics of rights is based on the dogmatic of human dignity (Luhmann, 1981; Teubner, 1988, 2010), human dignity that does not presuppose human essence; on the contrary, it is the individuality of children that is constructed in the social sphere based on limited access to personal rights. Separateness from others, self-governance and independence allow to define different grades of individual value, despite the universal attribution of dignity. Children have dignity, but are not separated from others, consequently to their incomplete development: this contribute to legitimize the creation, typical of European modernity, of the condition of moral and legal minority.

Children are recognised human dignity, they are protected and nurtured, but they are not recognised personal values, and this allows their exclusion from citizenship in the education system (Burton and May, 2015).

Theories on the semantic of human value developed in modern constitutional thought (Joerges et al., 2004; Lee, 2005; Teubner, 2010, 2013, 2014; Kumm et al 2015) can help in understanding the ambiguous relationship between young children and citizenship status. The starting point of the argument would be Taylor's idea that in modern western society human value is based on dignity, which is taken to be both the possession of, and what it is owed to, each and every person regardless of the conditions of their birth (Taylor, 1989).

However, constitutional theories emphasise that citizenship is not linked to universalistic dignity, but to conditional inclusion in all social domains (Teubner, 2010, 2014; Verschraegen, 2011). For this reason, citizenship lends itself as a case study for the interpretation of the position of childhood in society.

Dignity is the foundation of children's rights, which in turn have been underpinning early education and care policies over the last three decades on a global scale. Children's rights are a generation-based expression of human rights, and can be understood, following Teubner (2010), as a social institution that secures the constitutionalisation of the individual, that is, the preservation of the conditions of dignity. The most sophisticated and influential example of constitutionalisation of the child is surely offered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC globally strives to change the way children are treated and protected from neglect, abuse and exploitation and although the UNCRC is a set of rights for children, it regards human rights, providing children with a distinct set of rights instead of as passive objects of care and charity (UNICEF, 2015).

Lee (2005) distinguishes human rights, concerning the preservation of human dignity, from ‘personal rights’, concerning inclusion in all social domains and therefore defining the meaning of citizenship. Whilst Lee’s aim is to classify different forms of rights, the separation between citizenship and human rights has been elsewhere recognised as pivotal in the crisis of modern constitutionalism (Dimitrijevic, 2015). This is particularly important in relation to children, as it opens a space for the ambivalence between the recognition of children’s rights as human rights, and the conditional citizenship of children. Children’s safeguarding and well-being posits adult’s protection of the ‘future citizen’ in opposition to the risk of children’s active citizenship in the present.

This is evident in the fundamental article 3 of the UNCRC. Article 3 introduces the concept of child’s ‘best interests’, meaning that a child’s interests are to be defined by the adult, for the child. Here, with some level of linguistic ambiguity, ‘interest’ is used to frame the rights of the child within a ‘children needs’ discourse. Best interests are not defined and advocate from the child for the child (and the adult) but are defined by the adult for the child.

Adult’s protection of children separability, ‘acting on behalf’ of the developing children to preserve the condition of dignity of the future individual also underpins (human) rights-based policies such as the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* in England (Department for Education, 2015b) or the *Children First Act* in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2015).

The semantic of children’s rights as ‘human rights’ underpins a truth of children’s agency as subordinate to the ‘responsible adult’. This is the paradox of agency: the relevance of children’s agency depends on the relevance of adults’ actions in promoting children’s actions. This paradox originates from the position of children, who have no access to the most important decision-making process in social systems (Baraldi, 2016).

The paradox of agency as dependent on adult action underpins policies as *Listening to and involving children and young people* in England (Department for Education, 2014c), the *Childminding and day care for Children Under Age 12* in Ireland (Health and Social Care Board, 2012) and the *Childhood’s Right Convention* in Italy (Autorità Garante per l’Infanzia e l’Adolescenza, 2015). How much the voice of the child can make a difference depends on an adult decision. Agency of the child, that is, its position as a citizen in the present, is a function of an external assessment of its development, against an abundance of standards generated and the intersection of the discourses of science, education, politics and law.

## **Conclusion**

The overarching argument of this contribution is that Citizenship as education knowledge, to be used by the child orient judgment and choice, is limited by the position of young children in the society, and in particular in the education system. FBV are created as educational knowledge, but such knowledge cannot be used as the foundation of further learning, due to the impossibility of experiencing it, verifying expectations, reflecting upon what has been done to gauge what else could be done (Baraldi and Corsi 2016).

The idea of child-initiated pedagogy introduced in the EYFS has the potential to address children's meanings and experience of citizenship as practiced, but only if it is matched by a pedagogy and analysis which allows children and young people to develop skills for critical thinking and political change. In the current cultural climate, the hegemonic idea is that education to FBV needs to set the foundation for addressing the contract between citizens and the Nation State at a later stage of the education system. However, it is argued here that education to FBV should go beyond this, exploring explore young children's lived experiences. This approach to education for citizenship is perhaps best conceptualised as education for *cosmopolitan citizenship* (Osler and Starkey 2006; Osler 2011), which equips children to contribute and to engage constructively with difference at local, national and international levels. It is therefore an inclusive rather than exclusive concept because it assumes that everyone in society, including young children are citizens not moving *to*, but *through* citizenship. Indeed, this approach makes no distinction between what might otherwise be regarded as a status differential between citizens and not-yet-citizen.

Conceptualizing citizenship as an ongoing practice involves a fundamental change in the way citizenship education is conceived and articulated, transferring emphasis from questions about the manufacturing of citizens to the investigation of the complexity of young children's experience of citizenship, and how they perceived themselves as citizens in the present.

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