

# THE DEMOCRATIC PARADIGM: A VANISHING ACT?

QASIR SHAH  
UCL Institute of Education  
qasir.shah.14@ucl.ac.uk

*Abstract:* The premise of this issue of the journal is that in western secular democracies the principles underlying the democratic paradigm at the national level are not in any serious doubt. It is this presumption that I wish to address. This paper will assert that the citizen is no longer at the heart of the democratic process. Using the example of the UK, I will argue that this is a consequence of the representative nature of liberal democracy which conceptualises citizenship as a legal status, giving citizens protection of the law rather than participating in its formulation or execution as in the civic republican model. Liberal democracy not only eschews greater political participation, it does not prepare citizens for it. There currently exists a democratic deficit at local and national level which is leading to a decline in active citizenship. Therefore any attempt to democratise globalisation without addressing the weakening of national democracies will simply lead to the current political elites populating new 'democratic' structures. With this in mind I will counter arguments utilised to discredit the civic republican model of democracy. I will argue that in England the present educational system, predicated upon a narrow skills-based agenda premised upon an economic rationale, is undermining democracy by not preparing the citizenry for active political participation or to critique governance. In addition, policy changes in England are leading to the commodification of education which will undermine its social purpose and *inter alia* democracy.

*Keywords:* citizenship, education, liberal democracy, deliberative democracy, learning economy.

*Only the educated are free*  
Epictetus (c. 55 – c. 135 AD)

## INTRODUCTION

“The basic principles of democracy are that the people have a right to a controlling influence over public decisions and decision-makers, and that they should be treated with equal respect and as of equal worth in the context of such decisions”. As such when one discusses democracy one should begin “with its basic principles or ‘regulative ideals’, rather than with a set of political institutions” (Beetham 1998: 21). For Beetham, this is the case because institutions have evolved over time and are a product of the struggle for greater emancipation. To focus only on the structures of democracy would be to prioritise form over content and this does

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not open structures to any objective critique regarding whether they can be judged more or less democratic. One must always remember that democracy is always in flux and will never be fully realised because “[democracy] is always a matter of (...) degree” (ibid.). Moreover to focus only on structures of governance rather than principles means that one may neglect other expressions of democracy such as citizens organising collectively to solve issues, promoting interests, influencing government policy etc. Consequently, any democracy should always be viewed through the lens of the citizen, for it is she who provides governmental institutions with moral authority (ibid.).

The premise of this issue of the journal is that in western secular democracies the principles underlying the democratic paradigm at the national level are not in any serious doubt. It is this presumption that I wish to address. This paper will assert that the citizen is no longer at the heart of the democratic process. Using the example of the UK, I will argue that this is a consequence of the representative nature of liberal democracy, which conceptualises citizenship as a legal status, giving citizens protection of the law rather than participating in its formulation or execution as in the civic republican model. Liberal democracy not only eschews greater political participation, it does not prepare citizens for it. There currently exists a democratic deficit at local and national level, which is leading to a decline in active citizenship. Therefore any attempt to democratise globalisation without addressing the weakening of national democracies will lead to the current political elites populating new ‘democratic’ structures. With this in mind I will counter arguments utilised to discredit the civic republican model of democracy. In addition, and most importantly, I will argue that in England the present educational system, predicated upon a narrow skills-based agenda premised upon an economic rationale, is undermining democracy by not preparing the citizenry for active political participation or to critique governance.

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## LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

*Decline of the importance of the citizen*

In his *Politics* (Book 4, Part IV) Aristotle stated that: “If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost”. (Aristotle 1992) The citizen should be both the starting point and the focus of democracy, but this is no longer the case. In 2004, Colin Crouch observed that key political questions are now determined and solved between “elected governments and elites that overwhelmingly represent business interests” (Biegelbauer and Loeber 2010: 4) The integration of states into supranational organisations has come at the cost of democracy as many decisions are made at an inter-governmental level, bypassing the citizen. This is a problem that exists not only at the global level in supranational institutions and multi-national corporations, but also at the national level. The voice of the ordinary citizen is being ignored and political participation is denied to her – and I would argue she is being made apathetic and powerless in order not to question the hegemony of the neoliberal philosophy in most western democracies. The rise of neoliberalism also coincides with a decline in political participation. Without greater political participation of the polity democracy is invariably weakened. For the globalisation of democracy to take firm root we must begin by strengthening democracy at the local and national level, and reverse the decline in political participation. Only then will we be able to address the democratic deficit found in the supranational organisations.

There is a serious problem at the heart of liberal democracy today in many Western countries, evidenced by disillusionment, disenchantment and apathy towards the governing elites. All political parties dabble in the dark arts: sophistry and rhetoric resurrected by modern day spin-doctors. A study by the London School of Economics in 2012 (Wilks-Heeg, Blick and Crone, 2012) warned that British democracy was in terminal decline – blaming corporate power, unrepresentative politicians and apathetic voters leave UK “increasingly unstable”.

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*Possible causes of decline in political participation*

*Concentration of power.* The UK has a parliamentary democracy but most of the power is concentrated in the hands of the Executive: Parliament rubber stamps decisions of government and promulgation of laws. This has led some to believe we reside in a *post-democratic* stage where governments tightly control debates (with politicians “whipped into subservience” (Jeffs and Smith 2002). The hallmark of parliamentary democracy is the right of Members of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords to introduce a Bill. However only a small minority of Bills put forward in either House by their members ever become law. The situation is further compounded because citizens are largely passive and apathetic to the political process – and in Bernard Manin’s words (Manin 1997): behaving as an *audience* selecting from options provided by the elite, rather than participating in the formulation of policy and the decision-making process of government.

*Impact of liberal democracy.* Liberal democracy conceptualises citizenship as an “important but occasional identity, a legal status rather than a fact of everyday life” (Walzer 1989: 215) – this *citizenship-as-legal-status* gives citizens protection of the law rather than participating in its formulation or execution as in the civic republican model. This is not conducive to promoting or preparing citizens for greater political participation. Liberal democracy and especially the hegemony gained by neo-liberalism in the West since the 1980s functions to reduce ‘big’ government to ensure that the individual, possessed of greater rights, is unencumbered by the state and other individuals from interference in her private affairs. These liberties are primarily to be exercised in the private rather than the political domain. Liberals’ greatest fear is that “ideas about the ‘common good’ can only have totalitarian implications” (Mouffe 1993: 62) by restricting or sacrificing the individual right. Consequently, for Faulks “the active citizenship campaign [of the 1980s] was consistent with the neo-liberal agenda of Thatcherism, which was concerned more with the development of a citizenship based upon the assertion of the individual and market, rather than a genuine concern for the promotion of community values” (Faulks 1998: 128). The active citizen was first

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and foremost meant to participate in local community and provide services that the state had reduced through the rolling back of the welfare state (Faulks 1998). The liberal concept of citizenship does not promote active citizenship except in terms of being a 'good' citizen, engaging for example in voluntary community work.

*The unrepresentative nature of representative democracy.* Liberal democracies are representative democracies; but what happens when a representative democracy is unrepresentative and all the power is vested in hands of the Executive? It is discomfoting that in the UK since 1945 no party has gained more than a 50% share of the vote (Kimber 2012). This may be the result of the first-past-the-post system of British democracy, which permits a disproportionate ratio of seats gained to votes cast. People's votes do not possess equal weight and this is bad for democracy. The 2015 General Election highlighted the unfair nature of this system: the Prime Minister David Cameron, with 36.9% of the votes cast, asserts he has a 'clear' mandate for his policies, and is unresponsive to the wishes of the majority of the electorate who did not vote for his party. Liberals argue about the danger of the tyranny of the majority but since 1945 there has only been government by the minority, which is equally bad.

All this is compounded by the fact that it is the Executive that takes all important decisions of policy formulation and the promulgation of laws. In this process citizens are merely an *audience* – passive observers of the decision-making process from the outside. We need some variant of participatory democracy as practiced in ancient Athens, but many consider this impractical in the modern world. But is this really so?

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST CIVIC REPUBLICANISM

The main arguments levelled against civic republicanism fall into four categories: Firstly: the modern state is so complex that great expertise is required on the part of those who govern; secondly: people are too busy to engage in the sort of participatory democracy practised in ancient Athens; thirdly: the heterogeneity of modern society precludes such participation; and finally: a neo-

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liberal vision of the world which sees the individual possessed of superior rights, unencumbered by state interference. I shall run through each argument in turn. I will refer to a number of longitudinal and cross-sectional surveys, in particular the annual Audits of Political Engagement (APE)<sup>1</sup>, and the CELS<sup>2</sup> and CiT<sup>3</sup> studies into citizenship education (CE) and young people.

*Argument #1: complexity & expertise*

Benjamin Constant (1819 in Leydet 2011) contended that the scale and complexity of the *grands États modernes* precluded the kind of civic engagement required by the civic republican ideals of a participatory democracy. Constant's ideas were echoed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Joseph Schumpeter and Robert Dahl for whom the complexity of the modern state necessitated the concentration of power in the hands of a professional elite. They argued that post-industrial societies require technical, political, and administrative expertise to function, in addition to the time and interest for deliberation in order to reach informed judgments, instead of being susceptible to uninformed public opinion. This was to protect us from the tyranny of the majority, as ordinary citizens have neither the expertise, the time nor the interest. But do elected representatives have these specialist skills?

There is little evidence to support this argument, in fact the contrary is true – for example after the 2015 General Election in the UK, of the MP intake only 25% had a background in politics (Hunter and Holden 2015). Moreover, if the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a degree in Modern History, how does that qualify him to be in charge of the country's finances? Many in the UK share the educational or professional background of MPs, and possess cognition and conflict avoidance skills which are associated with the active citizenship skillset – especially amongst those in the higher socio-economic groups (APE10) (Hansard Society, 2013).

The modern state is complex to navigate – one needs to possess knowledge of governmental and societal structures as well as the socio-economic and political links that underpin a society, but few MPs initially possess the relevant expertise, and knowledge. It may be true that for some citizens politics is too difficult to com-



prehend. However, evidence from a number of studies (Benton et al. 2008; Keating et al. 2010; Henn and Foard 2014) points to an association between being well-educated, or in a higher socio-economic group, with possession of greater ‘citizenship skills’, and an interest in political engagement. Similarly, there is evidence that adults who are active citizens are so because they possess a strong sense of responsibility, which is rooted in ideas of justice and care, gained not so much through citizenship education but from their early life influences, especially those of the family and community (Holford and van der Veen, 2003). If we are serious about the idea of an active democratic citizenry with its concomitants of social inclusion and equity, we must examine the reasons for the great disparity between the rich and the disadvantaged of society. In the words of Ian Martin, in order to prevent citizenship becoming a mechanism of exclusion, “[w]e need to look at: how our electoral and parliamentary systems work, and in whose interests; how our education, health and welfare services continue to reproduce and, indeed, legitimate inequality; how free we really are as citizens to know and say (...) what we think and what we want” (Martin 2003: 574).

*Argument #2: people are too busy*

Given that 54% of the APE10 cohort stated they were too busy for political involvement, one might agree with Constant that many citizens no longer see politics as being central to their identity, due to their many social and economic interests. However there is a sizeable minority who expressed a desire to participate both at a local level (43%) and national level (38%). These proportions increase in the upper two socio-economic groups AB (50% and 43%) and C1 (50% and 45%). However, the even greater scandal is the marginalisation of the lower two socio-economic classes in political participation with C2 (34% and 28%), and DE (31% and 30%) professing a desire to participate. Given that most citizens are unacquainted with political processes, as well as never having had the opportunity to participate in politics except in Local and General Elections, one could also argue that their concept of personal identity does not encompass the idea of the *zoon politikon* being integral, as was the case for the

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Athenian *polis*. Consequently it is unsurprising that they do not give political participation a high priority in their lives.

*Argument #3: heterogeneity*

Given the heterogeneity of modern societies, it would appear impossible to conceive of a community based on a single 'substantive' concept of the *common good* that does not come at the expense of the modern interpretation of individual liberty (negatively conceived as the absence of coercion to achieving one's desired ends) without descending into totalitarianism. Isaiah Berlin's *Two Concepts of Liberty* are held to discredit civic republicanism. However, Quentin Skinner has challenged the idea that liberty negatively conceived precludes political participation by underpinning civic virtues on principles of respect: freedom and equality for all. Using Harrington, and in particular Machiavelli, he conceives liberty negatively as being the guarantor of individual liberty. Machiavelli argued in his *Discourses* that though most of us desire a personal liberty that is unencumbered by others, this cannot be achieved unless we live in a community whose Constitution is based on free institutions in which all citizens participate actively. Why? Because Machiavelli believed that to pursue self-interest (although considering it a natural human instinct) was a symptom of corruption, as it results in citizens forfeiting their civic obligations, and this in Skinner's view inevitably leads to the destruction of the free state (Skinner 1983). However, civic virtues need to be cultivated through coercion and constraint (Skinner 1986) by law, and this paradoxically forces the citizen to be free. Skinner holds that once we abandon the liberal notion of constraints as interferences, this paradox can be resolved, and the liberal claim of liberty and political participation being incompatible can thus be refuted. And the idea of the common good having precedence over private interest as being a necessary condition for enjoying individual liberty can then be understood. Liberty maintained by law would be the same for all members of the polity, whether rich or poor. By linking civic virtue to the common good of the *res publica* and devotion to the common liberty of the *patria* we move away from attaching it to a substantive concept of the common good, to a set of political principles underpinned on freedom and equality

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for all. Even liberals such as Stephen Macedo (1990) and William Galston (1991) emphasise the importance of *public reasonableness* – listening to others, being sensitive and respectful of other people’s differing identities, and acknowledging that these differences may lead to differing political views.

However the idea of civic virtues taking precedence over private interest needs to be cultivated and shown to be a necessary condition of enjoying liberty and forming part of the citizen’s “political identity: something to be constructed, not empirically given” and not simply a legal status (Mouffe 1992: 75). But how and where is one to develop this and related virtue(s), if there are competing models of citizenship that individuals may hold dear? Surely they weaken the integrative function of citizenship? (Leydet 2011). “[T]here will always be competing exegesis of the idea of democratic citizenship” (Mouffe 1992: 75). But this is the very nature of the thinking citizen, who engages in a serious dialectic to uncover the essence of the truth rather than simply engaging in the spin-doctoring of current day sophists in political circles. Skinner’s arguments are very different to the Utilitarianism that John Rawls would argue against, namely: individual rights being sacrificed for the sake of the general welfare predicated upon a particular conception of common good (shared moral values of the substantive nature).

#### *Argument #4: the primacy of the individual*

I believe the heterogeneity argument, in its extreme form, can lead to the neo-liberal idea of the primacy of the individual, and the prioritisation of individual liberties. This is because individuals are unique and have different wishes, desires and needs. Since the 1980s, with the rise of Thatcher and Reagan, politically the individual has been held at the heart of society, with a radical roll-back of the state, with *laissez-faire* economic policies leading to: deregulation of markets, privatisation and radical tax cuts – citizens have been encouraged to become more self-sufficient and self-interested. This Conservative philosophy is premised upon Nozick’s belief that the state’s role should be that of a ‘night-watchman’: ensuring peace and security and protecting individual, but not positively guaranteeing natural rights even if this leads to

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inequality. Like Hayek, he accepts inequality as natural – explainable by natural ability, effort and personal incentive. For both individual liberty depends on there being a free market economy.

However, the weakness of (neo)-liberal notions of citizenship lie in the fact that our individuality and humanity reaches its highest expression (or what Freire termed our ‘ontological vocation’) in relationships, collective endeavour and caring about each other. In the words of John Donne: No man is an island entire of itself. Concentration on the individual unit distorts the reality of the system of government and leaves to chance the health of communities that are needed for a good life (Walzer 1997). Neo-liberals gloss over the impact of structural inequality upon one’s life chances, and the fact that the market economy makes people more acquisitive and self-centred – hampering their moral development and their communal solidarity. Thus I would argue that the neo-liberal hegemony is fundamentally a divisive philosophy that is incompatible with any notions of the democratisation of globalisation in civic republican terms as it rejects the idea of society and the *zoon politikon*. It accepts economic cosmopolitanism because it serves to remove borders in order that the individual (the wealthy elite) goes unencumbered in her quest (‘liberty’) to accumulate ever greater riches. If one holds deliberative democracy to be an encumbrance to the neo-liberal individual, and this ideology filters into the purpose of education, then the ideas of participatory democracy and democratisation of globalisation are undermined. This is what I will address next.

## EDUCATION

Society is made up of people, and the strength, resilience and adaptability of a society depends wholly on those traits in its people. These traits are nurtured through education: education therefore forms the basis of any society. The struggle for democracy and the struggle for citizenship are essentially the same, and this, as Giroux reminds us, is “both a political and an educational task” (Giroux 2002: 432). However, of equal relevance is how education is structured and delivered. What we believe to be the democratic paradigm is evaporating before our very eyes, with the marketisation of societal structures, including education, not just

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the economic. In the UK, democracy is steadily being undermined through the educational system which is predicated, as in most Western nations, on an economic rationale first articulated by OECD in 1996, and taken up by Tony Blair and the EU. Without much debate we find ourselves with the purpose of education now defined in terms of human capital predicated upon a skills-based agenda. This contrasts with the social justice agenda which informed educational policy before the 1980s – especially the social purpose tradition in which adult learning was seen as a lever for empowerment and emancipation (Fieldhouse and Associates, 1996).

It is my contention that the present system does not, and will not produce (in sufficient numbers) the kind of individuals who would be interested in addressing issues of the democratic deficit in globalisation. Unless one challenges the economic imperative of the educational system – which neither fosters nor *habituates* citizens to political participation – the idea of the democratisation of globalisation will remain just an idea. Let us examine the features of the education system which I argue undermines greater political participation and consequently democracy itself.

### *The learning economy hegemony*

Under the ‘learning economy’ hegemony successive governments have viewed education in England as an important lever for economic growth and global competitiveness. Skills are equated with economic success. So why is an education system predicated upon a skills-based agenda bad for democracy and the democratisation of globalisation? It is essential to educate citizens in order for them to earn a living, and thus flourish. There is nothing wrong with this, but such an emphasis on a limited vision of the scope of education “should not comprise the whole or even the most important part of it. The key point is that [skills] should be approached through other aspects of education and as part of the whole task of learning to be human in its richest and most fulfilling sense” (Macmurray 2012: 662).

For Macmurray education’s purpose was to cultivate ‘humanity’. Like Confucius Macmurray believes that this can only be developed through reciprocity and care for one another. Moreover

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for Macmurray “the paradox of human nature” is that though born human, we also have to learn to become human. Thus if humanity is premised upon mutuality then “the first priority in education (...) is learning to live in personal relation to other people [i.e.] learning to live in community” (ibid.: 670). This is of vital importance because “failure in this is fundamental failure which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity” (ibid.: 662). This is essential if we wish to educate students to be concerned citizens who can look beyond individualistic notions of society, to a more communitarian one. There has been a growing recognition that it is not enough for education to promote ‘good’ conforming citizens, but ones who are critical and active – citizens who would be less predictable but more democratic (Crick 2002 in Jerome 2012). To this end Citizenship Education (CE) was introduced in the UK in 2002.

However, the status of CE was undermined at its inception by the Crick Report on citizenship education itself (Crick and Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998), which applied a “light touch” to its implementation in the school curriculum by not requiring a more prescriptive curriculum for fear of being accused of political interference in subject content (McLaughlin 2000: 546), and of recognising the professional abilities of teachers by trusting them to engage learners, by localising and personalising the content and format (Halliday 1999 in Jerome 2012: 13). The Crick Group did not wish to be prescriptive as to the specifics of the curriculum, for fear of being accused of political bias and of interference in teachers’ professionalism. Consequently schools were provided with little guidance to implement CE regarding either format, content, teaching qualifications and resources. Unfortunately, this pragmatic approach has led to the main issues envisaged by the 1998 report, such as political literacy, being delivered patchily, with some schools developing good Citizenship practices while others squeeze CE into cracks in the timetable. In addition there may be little monitoring or assessment of student progress, and ‘pupil voice’ initiatives being mere “tick-box” exercises rather than truly engaging students in the decision-making process (Ajegbo et al. 2007 in Keating & Kerr 2013).

Moreover, the CELS 2008 report found that one fifth of the teachers still lacked confidence in teaching about the EU, parlia-

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ment and government and the global community, with nearly 20% not at all confident in delivering about voting rights. Additionally, a teacher survey discovered 50% of the teachers stating they had received no training on Citizenship and two thirds believed they required more training (Keating et al. 2009 in Keating & Kerr 2013). Jerome estimated a shortfall of 1160 qualified Citizenship teachers in England (Jerome 2012: 117). CELS data also indicated a continued predominance in some schools of didactic teaching methodology.

### *Policy design flaws*

According to Keating and Kerr (2013), the CELS longitudinal study has provided evidence that by disregarding the recommendation of the Crick Group report to make CE compulsory up to the age of 18 (it was made compulsory only up to the age of 16) has weakened the positive effects of CE. Statistical modelling of the CELS data suggests that the potential benefits of CE are quickly eroded if not consolidated further through to post-compulsory education, and helped to undermine the perception of CE as a serious subject (Keating and Kerr 2013). It is too early to draw concrete conclusions regarding the effectiveness of CE in making young adults active as citizens. From the CELS 2001-2010 report there is evidence to the effect that CE can be effective in engendering positive civic and political practices, provided children have encountered CE on a regular basis. CE delivery should be planned and taught by specialist teachers who are confident in their subject-matter, where there is clear assessment of CE learning and where CE is given high status in school. However, as yet the number of politically active young people remains relatively low (Keating and Kerr 2013).

### *The commodification of education*

Steven Ball argues that educational processes are being rendered “into metric form, into comparable performances” which serve to render them “into a form which is more readily privatised – that is, into a contractable form, into a form for cost and profit

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calculation, into a version of education which can be reduced to a commercial exchange based on output indicators, which can be monitored” (Ball 2004). “Everything is quantified and valued according to the potential exchange gain (Slater and Tonkiss in *ibid.*). Ball argues that current policy discourse idealises and romanticises the private, “while the bureau-professional regime of public welfare provision is consistently, and often unthinkingly, demonised”. In this world-view, state schools/universities are seen as “value/commodity producing enterprises” (Rikowski in *ibid.*). At the school level, the emphasis of learning and teaching is attached to high-stakes testing and this comes at the expense of deep-knowledge learning, with the homogenisation of curricula whose delivery is proscribed reducing the autonomy of the teacher. When the measure of success is defined in terms of examination results achieved by an individual, the professionalism of the teacher is seen through the narrow lens of what Giroux calls “specialised technicians” whose main function in the bureaucracy of school is that of “managing and implementing curricula” (‘deliverers’ of results) rather than as “transformative intellectuals” – scholars capable of combining reflection and practice; enabling students to be thoughtful (Giroux 1985).

Given the policy flaws resulting in patchy delivery of CE coupled with the pursuit of an economic rationale for the purpose of education the ground for its marketisation is well-established in England. There is an ideological drive to force all schools to become free schools and academies (similar to Charter Schools of America), run by a myriad of charities, foundations, social enterprises etc., with many private providers biding their time for the opportunity to profit from running schools. This dismantling of the national system of public schooling provided by the state is leading to something which “is beginning to resemble the patchwork of uneven and unequal provision that existed prior to the 1870 Education Act” (Ball 2013). In the name of parental choice, and greater school autonomy, [l]ocal democratic oversight has been almost totally displaced. Our relationship to schools is being modelled on that of the privatised utilities – we are individual customers, who can switch provider if we are unhappy, in theory, and complain to the national watchdog if we feel badly served – but with no direct, local participation or involvement, no say in our children’s education (*ibid.*)

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This in effect is the marketization of Education, whereby private individuals and companies, with their ‘managerial’ expertise, are seen as providing the best solutions to the raising of standards. However, a market approach to Education will come at the expense of its social purpose of “maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society” (Dewey 1909: 7). A market approach to teaching will not emphasise an education that will enable a child “such possession of himself that he may take charge of himself; may not only adapt himself to the changes which are going on, but have power to shape and direct social change” (ibid.: 11).

Giroux argues that critical, self-reflexive citizens acting with social responsibility and prepared to make moral judgments, are fundamental to the survival of democracy (Giroux 2011: 4). Critical literacy is necessary to decode texts, institutions, social practices and cultural media, in an active, reflective manner. An Education predicated on a skills-based agenda, propagated and perpetuated by such organisations as the OECD and EU, will make for citizens accustomed to didactic, depoliticised, skill-based knowledge and will not develop broad critical literacy. If we do not address the question of critical literacy we will become more susceptible to what Foucault called ‘regimes of truth’ which are teleological and totalising whereby the “[dominant] discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” – it assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ (Foucault 1973, in Hall 1997: 72). As Gramsci warned, the hegemonic class are very good at projecting their thinking upon the subordinated – making them believe this thinking as ‘common sense’ and ‘natural’, thus lulling them into false consciousness. However, such ‘common sense’ is not “rigid and immobile but is continually transforming itself” (in Hall 1982: 73) and can be contested.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In order for globalisation to be democratised one has first to habituate the people with political participation at the local and national level. For Machiavelli and Skinner, only by participating

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in civic matters will we come to be free and our liberties guaranteed, and protection guaranteed to the institutions that support them. As Ralph Miliband argued “the practice and the habit of democracy” needs to be understood, experienced, and practised as part of the texture of our everyday lives (Miliband 1990 in Martin 2003). Active citizenship requires providing citizens with opportunities to participate in activities that are meaningful to them. What we need is deliberative democracy whereby issues of national and local importance are deliberated before the decision making process. There may be consultative committees but they must have teeth and not be mere ‘talking shops’, giving the impression of being relevant to the decision making processes. It is worth here considering Sherry Arnstein’s contention (Arnstein 1969) that citizen participation should encourage the redistribution of power and enable the disenfranchised citizens – those excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included. Though it would be quite impractical to conceive of every citizen having an active role in government as Aristotle envisaged, nonetheless the Aristotelian view, David Miller argues, can still serve today as “a benchmark that we appeal to when assessing how well our institutions and practices are functioning” (Miller 2000 in Leydet 2011). This requires reclaiming the idea of the *zoon politikon* as an integral part of citizens’ identity – this requires redistribution of power, with genuine forums for expression. As long as we have liberal democracies, we will continue to have a democratic deficit for liberal democracies, with their emphasis on individual liberty, are antithetical to the notion of deliberative democracy. For active citizenship to take root, citizens need *agora(s)* – the ancient Greek assembly place where citizens debated the key issues of the day.

More opportunities for political participation will address the finding that people express the desire to have more influence than they feel they have. Arnstein was right in stating that most of the time governments were engaged in providing non-participative activities which were tokenistic rather than delegating real power of action to the citizens. However, there is an elephant in the room called ‘structural inequality’, which impedes participation: unless this is addressed the democratic deficit that exists will not be resolved in our society today. In addition, ‘meaningful’ citizenship requires power. Unless declining political participation is ad-

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dressed as well as encouraging the disenfranchised to participate at the local level, global organisations will continue to be populated by the elites and their vested interests.

The transformation of society cannot happen overnight. A first step on the road to change would be to initiate the teaching of Global Citizenship which would be taught not only at school but for its impact to sediment carried on to undergraduate and postgraduate studies. There is evidence that cosmopolitan attitudes are associated with children who learn about international (or at least European) issues at school, as is knowledge of a foreign language (Keating 2016). There is also evidence from CELS and CiT reports that if CE is not sustained throughout the compulsory school career and beyond then its influence wanes dramatically. Alongside Global Citizenship education, education itself should be underpinned on dialectical reasoning and critical pedagogy. Many people possess critical thinking skills, but it is limited to the specific fields in which we believe we have expertise (or learning). What we lack is critical pedagogy which would open our minds to the bigger picture, and prevent us from accepting ideas such as: the primacy of the individual, the impossibility of a fully participatory polity, or that politics and government are too complex for most, and requires specialist knowledge to understand. For if this were indeed the case then, one should ask the question: why does our education system not provide such knowledge?

The learning economy hegemony, with its economic rationale, is not conducive to producing critically reflective citizenry, who could participate in any politically purposeful, let alone hold their leaders to account. And this has serious implications for the health of our pluralistic democracy. Today many are unaware, or unable to distinguish between the 'real' and 'illusory' world, lacking the critical literacy to perceive their exploitation and domination by the elites and giant corporations. We can halt the diminishing of democracy by engaging in the *demystification* of this neo-liberal narrative that so distorts reality with its fallacious arguments.

It is worth remembering that the word idiot has its roots in the Greek *idiotes* which in Athens was used negatively to describe those citizens who selfishly did not participate in civic matters. Pericles stated: "we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has

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no business here at all". Our battles for freedoms were hard fought – the elites did not give up their powers out of altruistic egalitarianism, but for fear of revolution. Citizens today need reminding that civic engagement, as Machiavelli argued, is the key to guaranteeing one's freedom: not being civically engaged opens the door for others to dominate us. Unless the citizen is habituated to active political participation (beyond just voting at Local and General Elections) she will remain apathetic to the democratisation of globalisation, while the elites of nations will continue to rule in their own interests at the national and supranational level, rather than those of their citizenry. And unless we address the decline in democratic participation and critical literacy at nation-state level, then any democratisation of globalisation or the globalisation of democracy will lead to the old political elites populating any new institutions created.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Data was collected from cross-sectional surveys – the annual Audits of Political Engagement 10/11 (APE, 10/11) comprising a representative sample of the British population (Hansard Society, 2013, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Citizenship Education Logitudinal Study (CELS) (Benton et al. 2008; Keating et al. 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Citizens in Transition in England (CiT) (Sturman et al. 2012).

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