

Citizenship Education in an Age of Measurement (2):
Toward a New Paradigm of Evaluation in Citizenship Education

Kotaro Abe, Ryoji Nagai, Kengo Nishimoto

Shinpei Kuwajima, and Akira Yanagibashi

The University of Tokyo

Abstract

The purpose of this paper (the second part of this research) is to describe the resent conditions of citizenship education and to show a new paradigm of evaluation in citizenship education.

Section 1 will show you a new conception of citizenship education by Gert J. J. Biesta. He calls it “subjectification.” However, Biesta has not talk about the evaluation of it. That is why we inquiry of new paradigm of evaluation, and we would refer to Biesta’s intellectual resources: Jacque Rancière and John Dewey.

In section 2, we will describe citizens as the *spectators* of schooling from Jacque Rancière’s theory: one of the important members for the assessment of schooling. They are *not* the consumers of schooling: they not only pay taxes for supporting their schools but also should participate in the assessment of schooling.

At section 3, we will focus on John Dewey. Dewey’s thought on democracy is very fruitful for constructing a new paradigm of evaluation. Democracy is a way of associated living for Dewey. Democracy consists of association and communication. For Dewey, the democratic society always has fallibility: people have a chance to retry something. Therefore, in the democratic education, if children made a mistake it would not mean an

evil thing to be eliminated. Rather it is a chance to reconstruct one's ideas and to retry something.

The evaluation in citizenship education should *not* be made up with “predetermined correctness.” If we admired Biesta's conception of citizenship education, we should also admire some mistakes and the chances to retry.

Keywords: citizenship education, the ignorant citizens, subjectification, spectators, democracy

Introduction

The purpose of this paper (the second part of this research) is to describe the resent conditions of citizenship education and to show a new paradigm of evaluation in citizenship education. We would regard Gert J. J. Biesta's arguments as a leading theory. At first we would like to refer to his main argument briefly in order to grasp some premises of this paper.

Biesta is not only a thinker of citizenship education but also a researcher who reintroduced the normative question into education: what is education for? For him education “is by its very the nature a process with direction and purpose (Biesta, 2010, p. 2).” “That is why the question of good education [...] is not optional but always poses itself when we engage in educational activities, practices and processes (Biesta, 2010, p. 2).” He showed a new citizenship education (“subjectification” in his word) that was not dependent on the predetermined ends.

However, he has not described how its evaluation would be. Therefore, it will be meaningful to us (in an age of measurement) to consider the paradigm of evaluation in a new type of civic learning.

1. On Biesta's Conception of Citizenship Education: What is "Subjectification?"

1. 1. On "The Ignorant Citizens": An Impact of Un-predetermined End

Biesta pointed out the danger of "a *domestication* of the citizen -- a 'pinning down' of citizens to a particular civic identity -- and thus [it] leads to the erosion more political interpretations of citizenship (Biesta, 2011, p. 142)." Biesta said the "danger of domestication [...] is not only there because of the existence of particular claims about what the good citizen is, but also flows from more fundamental assumptions about the interconnections between citizenship, knowledge and education (Biesta, 2011, p. 142)." Therefore, he introduced "the ignorant citizens."

The ignorant citizen is the one who is ignorant of a particular definition of what he or she is supposed to be as a "good citizen." The ignorant citizen is the one who, in a sense, refuses this knowledge and, through this, refuses to be domesticated, refuses to be pinned down in a pre-determined civic identity (Biesta, 2011, p. 152).

Biesta also introduced "subjectification:" a new conception of citizenship education. It "focuses on the question how democratic subjectivity is engendered through engagement in always undetermined political processes. This [...] is no longer a process driven by knowledge about what the citizen is or should become but one that depends on a desire for a particular democratic mode of humantogetherness (Biesta, 2011, p. 142)."

In this way, Biesta radically raised a problem of conception of citizenship education. Its key concept is an un-predetermined educational end: the ignorant citizens.

1. 2. The Necessity of "What is Education for?"

Biesta also raised the problem about "good education." In his book, *Good Education in an Age of Measurement*, he criticized an age of measurement and emphasized the

necessity of “What is education for? (Biesta, 2010, Chap. 1).”

I have shown that we live in an age in which discussions about education seem to be dominated by measurement of educational outcomes and that these measurements play an influential role in educational policy and, through this, also in educational practice. The danger of this situation is that we end up valuing what is measured, rather than that we engage in measurement of what we value. It is the latter, however, that should ultimately inform our decisions about the direction of education. This is why I have argued for the need to engage with the question as to what constitutes *good* education, rather than, for example, effective education.

(Biesta, 2010, p. 26, the italics in the original)

For Biesta, education needs to ask what education is for in order to protect education from the erosion of measurement.

1. 3. How Do We Evaluate?

“What is education for?” -- this question is about educational values and educational end(s). However, Biesta has not ever discussed the evaluation in citizenship education. He only emphasized “a desire for engagement with the ongoing experiment of democratic existence (Biesta, 2011, p. 151).” Therefore, it would be valuable to try to construct a new paradigm of evaluation in citizenship education, and this is the starting point of this research.

At the following two sections of this paper, we will focus on the two main intellectual resources of Biesta: Jacques Rancière and John Dewey.

2. From Consumers to Spectators : Participation of Citizens for Educational Assessment

In this section, we will consider a framework of assessment⁽¹⁾ from Jacques Rancière's thought. His thought seems to be a hint when people construct the assessment of public education in an age of measurement. We would like to refer to the NPM (the new public management) theory at first in order to grasp the recent condition of public education.

2. 1. NPM Governance and Public Education Today

Recently the welfare state government has been at the crisis point and a new concept has appeared in NPM (the new public management) theory: governance. Governance has appeared as an alternative concept of "government" in the failure of government and market (Keating, 2004). Governance had been well known by coming the NPM theory in fashion in 1990s. NPM governance has been emphasized and the government reform in private way has been enforced (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000).

NPM governance is constructed by managerialism, which leads private sector's method to public sector or to new institutional economics theory that introduces the incentive mechanism into public service. In this respect, less government (or less rowing) and more governance (or more steering) are emphasized (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

Today, the method and theory of NPM has used in public education reform. For example, civic assessment plays an important role for school choice. However, there are some problems of assessment (Takami, 2010). For example, the faithful standard or criteria has not been established. The quality of schooling has not been improved by competition with the diversity of suppliers. Therefore, we need to construct a new assessment theory. A new theory seems to be constructed without the measurement based way or the predetermined standard. Moreover, now we may have to abandon the idea that

the educational results should always been evaluated by teachers (as specialists who have more knowledge than students). In this respect, Rancière's theory would be a hint for our argument.

2. 2. Ignorant Spectators: Rancière's Spectator Theory

Rancière pointed out that not all spectators have the knowledge to appreciate performances (such as plays, music concerts, pictures), but they can appreciate performances in their own way (Rancière, 2009).

She[spectator] observes, selects compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other thing that she has seen on other stages, in other kind of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way (Rancière, 2009, p. 13).

In this way, "spectators see, feel and understand something in as much as they compose their own poem, as in their way, do actors or playwrights, director dancers or performers (Rancière, 2009, p. 13)." This argument depends on the equality of intelligence between spectators and performers. Such equality is a key concept for Rancière. He showed this idea in his work on education.

Rancière criticized that the old-fashioned principle of education always "divides intelligence into two [knowing minds and ignorant ones] (Rancière, 1991, p. 7)." For Rancière, intelligence exists in the place "where each person acts, tells what he is doing, and gives the means of verifying the reality of his action (Rancière, 1991, p. 32)." Therefore, only the "ignorant" schoolmasters can realize education (that based on the equality of intelligence between students and teachers) for Rancière. Student does not have as much knowledge as teachers have, but they can understand something in their

own way. Rancière applied this logic for his theory of spectators.

2. 3. Citizens as the Ignorant Spectators of Schooling

If we premised Rancière's theory, we would conclude that the assessment of schooling should be opened to the citizens as the ignorant spectators of schooling. Of course, they are amateurs of schooling and do not have as much knowledge as teachers have, but therefore it seems that they can make educational assessment better (their participation into the assessment of schooling will enable to realize education with the diversity).

However, this idea does not mean that we should consider the citizens as consumers of schooling: their judgment is not always the most important for schooling. They can only bring the different viewpoints (that is at least different from teachers' viewpoints) into the assessment of schooling.

3. Dewey's Democracy: Democracy as a Way of Associated Living

In this section, we will focus on Dewey's democracy in order to clarify the connotation of Biesta's subjectification: to "exposure to the experiment of democracy (Biesta, 2011, p. 152)."

3. 1. Democracy: Association and Communication

For John Dewey, democracy has two dimensions: association and communication. Association implicates the mode of living and communication implicates reorganizing society.

Association is the way and mode of living with others. Dewey said that democracy is "primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience (Dewey, 1916, p. 93)." According to Satoshi Tanaka, "conjoint communicated experience" implies the care for others (Tanaka, 2012, p. 80). Therefore, association is a way of living, which is opened and communicated experience with others, and it has an ethical aspect.

Communication is the mode that making the common interests. Communication works for reorganization of society (community). “Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. [...] Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common (Dewey, 1916, p. 7, the italics in the original).”

3. 2. Democracy as “Fallibilism”: On Dependence and Plasticity

In order to conceive Dewey’s democracy more deeply, we will refer to Richard Bernstein’s fallibilism. Fallibilism is an intrinsic aspect of the theory of democracy.

In *The Abuse of Evil*, Bernstein referred to Dewey’s theory of democracy as a pragmatic conception (Bernstein, 2005). He said, “the mentality of pragmatic fallibilism [...] is anti-dogmatic and anti-ideological (Bernstein, 2005, p. 51).” For Bernstein the important point is making not consensus but politics that “requires a commitment to persuasion (Bernstein, 2005, p. 73).” In other words, Bernstein refused the definitive discourse. It is important for him to continue debating and deliberating. This is Bernstein’s fallibilism.

To grasp Dewey’s democracy as fallibilism, it would be better to clarify two aspects of his association: dependence and plasticity. Dependence is a sort of weakness and “the flexible and sensitive ability [...] to vibrate sympathetically with the attitudes and doing of those about them (Dewey, 1916, p. 48).” Plasticity is “essentially the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of later situations (Dewey, 1916, p. 49).”

In this way, association is a way of living sympathetically with others (communicating experiences) and of reorganizing action. As well as Bernstein’s fallibilism, Dewey’s democracy as fallibilism is reorganized constantly.

3. 3. To Exposure to the Experiment of Democracy

Biesta's subjectification has to do with an "exposure to the experiment of democracy (Biesta, 2011, p. 152)." His "democracy" is mainly based on Dewey's democracy.

As we mentioned, Dewey pursued both sufficiency of human life and continuation of social life in the background of democracy. For Dewey, it is very important that education is only possible in the democratic society, and the democratic society could be maintained by democratic education. Dewey regarded dependence and plasticity as the important parts of education. In other words, cultivating association is essential to education. Satoshi Tanaka showed that when association appeared as "altruism" or "unselfishness," it would be the mode of interpenetration (Tanaka, 2011, p. 138).

Now, we can conclude that Biesta's conception of civic education (subjectification) is regarded as the process to be "democratic" in Deweyan meaning: associating with other people and making community through communication. Moreover, Dewey's democracy is regarded as fallibilism. Therefore, Democratic education should be opened to make mistakes and retry.

Conclusion

We can conclude that a new paradigm of evaluation in citizenship education should consist of at least the following two elements: (1) a new participants in assessment of schooling (citizens as spectators) and (2) democratic conditions (in Deweyan meaning).

A new type of citizenship education (such as Biesta's subjectification) has to do with not the predetermined end (such as the good citizens) but an un-predetermined end (such as the ignorant citizens). Therefore, its evaluation (or its assessment of schooling, which contains such type of citizenship education) should be implemented in the un-predetermined way. In a new evaluation, it seems that the "correct" answers cannot be predetermined. Rather the "correctness" of an answer should be confirmed or be revised

in the process of evaluating in (democratic) education. In this respect, a new paradigm of evaluation, which has to do with un-predetermined ends, would be very to exposure to “experiment of democracy (Biesta, 2011, p. 152),” and it would be a new step for constructing really democratic education.

Notes

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(1) In this paper, “measurement” is regarded as concerning a predetermined end (such as “good citizens” in “socialization” of Biesta’s theory). “Evaluation” is completely different from “measurement” in respect of concerning with “subjectification” (Biesta's conception of citizenship education) and with un-predetermined ends. “Assessment” is a word concerned with the level of the accountability of the schooling.

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