

## Citizenship through Education in prison

Citizenship incorporates humanistic principles, namely respect for others and their differences, and is defined by values, among which are:

**Civility** is an attitude of respect, both with respect to other citizens (politeness), but also with regards to buildings and public spaces. It is a mutual and tolerant recognition of individuals among themselves, in the name of respect for the dignity of the human person, which allows greater harmony in society.

**Citizenship**, at individual dimension, consists in respecting and enforcing the laws and rules in force, but also being aware of one's own duties towards society

Finally, **Solidarity** corresponds to an attitude of openness to others. It has a relationship with the community, common projects. In these conditions, solidarity, which consists of helping the poor, directly or through public policies (such as taxes), is very directly linked to the notion of citizenship.

The majority of European countries have chosen to teach civic and moral education in a way integrated with other subjects while few ones like France still offer compulsory specific education with dedicated hours (from 36 hours per year in primary and secondary school to 14 hours in vocational high school) during all years of compulsory schooling.

An opinion research institute in France (BVA), who recently managed a survey for the National Assessment Board of the school system and the social assistance fund, reveals a renewal in the perception of citizenship which showed that a new vision of citizenship tends to prevail.

Indeed, if more than 80% of the French answer that they "totally agree" or "rather agree" with the fact that "being a citizen" is "to respect the law" or "to participate in political life" (two classic dimensions of citizenship), topics such as "to defend the right to education for all", "to fight against discrimination" or "to stand in solidarity with the poor" are also acclaimed by more than 75% who firmly anchor citizenship in a social field.

To support this renewed and pluralistic vision of citizenship, the French, highly convinced that the civic spirit, values and morals are transmitted mainly in the family, today trust the school more than 70% to participate in the construction of future citizens, alongside with parents. But this judgment appears differentiated according to the age of the respondents: the younger the respondents are, the more they support the idea of the responsibility of the school in citizenship education.

However, some young people sometimes escape these processes of socialization, and it's when they take action that their vulnerability is revealed. It is in these moments that Juvenile Justice, seized by these situations, has the responsibility to fulfil basic skills.

**Juvenile justice** concerns minors (less than 18 years old) in danger (civil action) and also minors who have committed acts (criminal proceedings). In these two areas (civil and penal), it is the Judge for children who is competent to take the judicial decision (I'm personally "lay judge" at the Court of Bordeaux for these minors). The management of juveniles by the courts is based on essential principles, namely the educability of all, the respect of the rights and freedoms of each one of them, the work on the act and the actions of education; citizenship is always the heart of our interventions.

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Every year, nearly 383,000 juveniles are cared for by Courts, with just over a third in the penal framework (170,000) and the other two thirds in the civilian sphere.

Juvenile justice in France is mainly based on one law dated February 2, 1945; it regulates education for minors in criminal charge. These minors are monitored in the context of alternative measures to social day care, institutional fostering, training and insertion but also, sometimes unfortunately, in prison (more or less 3,000 minors each year but figures are in constant increase).

The various terrorist attacks in France these recent years have left our national cohesion capacity and everyone's commitment to the values of our society in turmoil.

This brought us to the creation of Referents for Citizenship and Secularism throughout the whole national territory, in fact one per academy.

This direction was reaffirmed last February 2018 by a new government plan to prevent radicalization entitled "Prevention to Protect." Now erected into a public policy in its own right, prevention through the exercise of citizenship must be reinforced to become compulsory for all minors under our responsibility.

### **The actions and activities will concern:**

- living together, otherness (notion of identity, empathy, interculturality, mutual help and cooperation, humanitarian commitment) whose objective is to bring the young to know each others' similarities and differences,
- acquisition of critical thinking information and images decoding, the aim being to get the minor to question himself/herself and to deconstruct the information to which he/she has access to form his/her own opinion),
- fight against discrimination and all forms of intolerance (racist, anti-Semitic, sexist manifestations) whose objective is to break representations to accept the other in its difference,
- remobilization around the Republican values, learning democracy, how our public institutions work, whose objective is to work on the feeling of belonging and what makes us citizens with rights and duties,
- secularism: historical contributions to religious facts, knowledge of freedom of expression, of conscience to provoke debate and to address the rights and duties of secularism.

All the actions financed concern both the training of professionals on these topics as well as the pedagogy of individual and collective activities to be carried out with the young follow-ups.

The phenomena of polarization and various identitarian withdrawal (religious extremism, politics) that cross our society invite us to be vigilant on citizenship issues.

### **Thus education in civic values can be understood in many ways.**

In the first place, it is worth mentioning that the framework for the care of minors is also part of the social law dated January 02, 2002, for beneficiaries who are the minors and their families.

The new type of participative meetings (family and youth with professionals) must encourage their involvement in the operational life of our institutions. Thus, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms must

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be the subject of discussion and exchanges with each minor, individually and/or collectively. The establishment of an operating regulation must also encourage discussions about the rights and duties to be respected by everyone, adults and young people.

As part of all care, insertion and training activities, ... citizen actions are also offered to minors as:

- an intergenerational activity that organizes meetings with seniors living in retirement homes around activity of animal mediation, reading poems,
- activities with LICRA, association specialized in the field of discrimination,
- a writing workshop carried by Amnesty International as part of an "I WELCOME" campaign contributing to the realization of a Slam about minor refugees 3 groups of young sentenced people from different structures (e.g. 34 young people concerned) met to hear their story. This action has also received the prize for civic education through the association of the National Order of Merit,
- performing games around health and well-being,
- a micro-sidewalk activity with a radio partner on topics around citizenship,
- a sharing activity of wheel armchair with young disabled people,
- the creation of a mural fresco based on human values topic in an educational home to promote the transmission between young people who stay there temporarily.

In one of our services in Gironde, a "parent citizen group" brings together, for open discussions, parents, professionals and sometimes external speakers, on topics related to education and citizenship.

**In prisons for minors or in closed educational centers**, teachers and educators of our directorate are brought to propose various activities such as:

- the ZEN ART workshop, which allows to produce a collective work and to learn collaboration. The very nature of the activity is conducive to self-awareness and dialogue with peers. The cultural and artistic approach is an excellent medium for educational mediation, as the assessments of the projects implemented bear witness to;
- a workshop on digital to understand social networks, the protection of privacy, the phenomena of happyslapping, the cyber-sexuality, pornography, ...

Other actions have shown their interest as those of "testimonies": that of Mrs. Latifa IBN-ZIATEN, the association "Imad for youth and peace", whose son, military, is one of the victims of the Toulouse terrorist attack in 2012; that of David DESCLOS, former recidivist criminal, demonstrating his resilience trajectory throughout a show, to which juvenile prisoners attended with interest. Real support of mediation to accompany the putting in words of the young faces to this possible identificatory model.

**As criminal court decisions**, minors may be condemned to participate in specific actions designed to work on questions relating to citizenship:

The measure of reparation: this measure intended for the minors favors an individualized educational accompaniment which engages the minor in a restorative step by the realization of an activity or an action for the benefit of the victim.

The repair can be either direct to the victim (letter of apology, repair of degradation, ...) or indirect by carrying out an activity for the benefit of the community such as cleaning a graffiti.

The civic training course: for minors from 10 to less than 13 years old, this sanction aims to organize in collective sessions, modules related to social organization and civic values such as respect for others, solidarity, citizenship...

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The course of citizenship: intended for more than 13 years on penal judicial decisions, it aims to remind the sentenced minors the Republican values of tolerance, respect for human dignity and to make them aware of their duties and their responsibilities. For example, it may be a collective training around the use of mobile phones, cyber-harassment or dissemination of photos involving breaches of privacy, sexual harassment via social networks (snapchatt), ... The contents of the citizenship courses deal with discrimination, gender relations, adolescent radicalism, e-citizenship, values of the Republic .....

To return to the previously mentioned BVA survey, the classical themes of French civic education ("the political and legal institutions in France", "the creation and functioning of European units" ...) are not the most popular, the French preferring to focus on learning values. They are more than 80% to adhere to the introduction, in citizenship education, of topics such as "Human and Child Rights", "gender equality" or "the fight against discrimination". I consider, for my part, that news in France invites us to continue, even to highlight, our work around living together to allow everyone to find place in society.

But this survey also reveals that the institutions of socialization must also be renewed in their teaching methods. Alongside the traditional course of civic education, **more active pedagogies** opening institutions to the outside world are acclaimed.

Nearly 90% of French people support introduction of civic debates, implementation of solidarity or environmental projects, listening of large external witnesses or participation of young people in the life of an institution.

All in all, it is **a new face of citizenship education** that the French are drawing.

These requests are welcome as **international research and** clearly show that while the traditional civic education course improves young people's civic and political knowledge, it is not automatically linked to more developed civic attitudes and commitments, such as interest in politics, sense of political efficiency, actual or expected civic engagement ...).

There is even a paradox when studies show that the rise of civic and political knowledge is not related to more positive attitudes and civic engagement because it is not enough to be an enlightened citizen to go to vote or to engage in a civic life rich in adulthood. It is more the engagement of the young people in civic projects (solidarity, environmental, ...) supported and accompanied by our institutions which would be in link with future engagements in the adult citizen life.

In general, **it is the teaching methods that make the youngsters active by allowing them to appropriate our values** rather than more masterful forms of intervention. Thus, to understand the value of "Fraternity" (which can remain quite theoretical for young people if they are content to read it on the pediments of public buildings and in books), a group of young sentenced people can develop a citizen project in a goal of solidarity in their neighborhoods, helped by teachers, educators, ... and supported by the community.