Introduction: Learning, Philosophy and African Citizenship

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1 Introduction

The concept of citizenship is extensively discussed in multiple academic disciplines including the political sciences, sociology, philosophy, anthropology and education. More recently, the expanding field of *citizenship studies*[1] has innovatively drawn on diverse disciplines and initiated lively discussion of new conceptualizations of the notion of citizenship as well as traditional state-citizen relationships. *Development studies*[2] has, on the one hand, tackled questions related to promoting active and engaged

[1] This field is best exemplified in the volumes of the journal *Citizenship Studies* published since 1997.

[2] Development studies is a multidisciplinary field discussed, for instance, in the journals *World Development*, *Journal of Development Studies* and *Development and Change*.

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citizenship in the Global South by means of interventions and, on the other, presented critical reflection on the Eurocentrism inherent in the very concept of citizenship. Citizenship education in its different forms has been extensively debated in *educational philosophy*[3] and educational research, and various pedagogical approaches to educating active and critical citizens have been suggested. The contributions to this volume are located at the intersection of these research fields.

Scrutinizing citizenship and learning and their interconnections, the book is based on a four-year research project entitled *Theory and practice of learning to be a citizen* (2018–2022), in which we have initiated conversations between educational philosophy, citizenship studies and development studies, each with its lively debates on how to define citizenship and how to conceptualize the process of learning to be a citizen. These questions are relevant for the ongoing general discussion of citizenship, for accounts of citizenship education and for the theory and practice of development.

During the project, we have frequently been asked to provide ***the*** definition of citizenship and ***the*** theory of learning from which we draw. In response, we have explained that we do not base our project on one particular definition of citizenship but, rather, acknowledge that both citizenship and learning are concepts defined in various ways depending on the theoretical traditions and conceptual frameworks used. As Shachar et al. (2017: 5) in their introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Citizenship* point out, articulating a single definition of citizenship would be a 'hopeless task'. In a similar vein, Peterson et al. (2020) in the *Palgrave Handbook of Citizenship and Education* show how contextual accounts combine philosophy, theory and education in multiple ways with the goal of citizenship education varying according to the conceptualization of 'good' citizenship in any context. Additionally, putting the theories aside, all those living their lives as citizens hold diverse conceptualizations and ideas about what citizenship means for them, and the ways in which they understand learning to take place. Against this backdrop, instead of fixing on particular definitions prior to analysis, our project has purposefully reflected the multiplicity of both scholarly perspectives and lived experiences of citizenship and learning.

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[3] The most important journals in this field include *Educational Theory*, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Theory and Research in Education*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and *Studies in Philosophy and Education*.

In everyday discussions, at least in the Western context, the first meaning attached to 'citizenship' is that of the legal status of an individual in relation to a specific state, most overtly manifested in the passport or national identity card held by the individual. In the same vein, the legal content of such citizenship—the rights and duties of which it consists—is articulated in constitutions and related legislation by most of the world's nations. However, in each context, the question remains of how these are implemented and how they manifest in the everyday struggles of citizens. In other words, there are discrepancies between formal citizenship as a status and substantive citizenship as practice (Lister, 1997). Therefore, we want to emphasize the richness of both theoretical definitions and lived experiences.

Contemporary political and social science discussions of citizenship engage with the diverse ways in which citizenship encompasses membership in a polity, which can refer to a state, but also to any other political community (Isin & Nyers, 2014). These accounts, whether drawing on liberal, republican, communitarian, critical or any other wider theoretical tradition, have multifaceted ideas concerning the nature and characteristics of both political community and its membership—citizenship. Some accounts, such as those with liberal leanings, emphasize individual rights; others, such as communitarian explanations, emphasize belonging (see chapters in Shachar et al., 2017). Some focus on participation in a political community through 'citizenship practices' like voting and paying taxes, some on citizens' deliberation and negotiation and yet others on citizenship acts such as making claims and contestation (Björk et al., 2018). Definitions of citizenship become even more multifaceted when they are combined with notions such as identity and belonging (Yuval-Davis, 1999). In such accounts, citizenship is not defined primarily as a relationship to the polity of the state, but as membership in communities at scales ranging from the local to the cosmopolitan (Clarke et al., 2014), and as interwoven with cultural, ethnic and religious ties. Given the variety of these debates, drawing on a single, specific definition would have meant excluding many relevant perspectives.

Similarly, educational philosophy addressing citizenship education draws on multiple philosophical traditions with different definitions of citizenship. Many of the wide theoretical traditions are encompassed by political philosophy, thus sharing theoretical foundations with the political and social sciences. However, educational philosophy is often more explicitly preoccupied with the question of what ideal citizenship is and

how education could cultivate and foster it. Although the traditions of the philosophy of education tend to stress the open-ended nature of any educational ideal, if a free and democratic society is the assumed aim and end of education, then ideals are a central part of educational theorizing. Therefore, the question of how to educate or promote learning for citizenship is closely connected to the ways in which good or desirable citizenship is defined. In most of the traditions, such ideal citizenship is connected to the notion of democracy where, again, ideas of learning and education vary in relation to the theory's conception of what is central to democratic life. Commonly, however, oppressive structures, inequality and injustice between humans, and how to best deconstruct them through education, have been discussed from various theoretical perspectives (Bell, 1997; Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1983, 2003; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; hooks, 1994; Hytten, 2006; Kumashiro, 2004; McLaren, 2003). Moreover, they have recently been increasingly complemented by accounts that take seriously the intrinsic value of nature and other, non-human, species (Engelmann, 2019; Horsthemke, 2020; Joldersma and Blenkinsop, 2017; Rice & Rud, 2016; Stables, 2020).

Development studies, both theoretical and in practice, has engaged with the role of citizens in societal transformation. On the one hand, international development policies have paid attention to the role of citizenship in building democratic institutions and establishing democratic governance, accompanied by a well-functioning state to ensure the realization of citizens' rights. On the other hand, development interventions, especially those implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have focused on bottom-up processes of strengthening citizens' capacity to engage (Gaventa & Barrett, 2012), to demand social accountability (Hickey & King, 2016) and to hold duty-bearers accountable drawing from the human rights-based approach (HRBA) (Harris-Curtis, 2003). Some critical observers have pointed out that such interventions are the outcome of conceptualizations of citizenship based on European and North American historical trajectories and experiences—as well as the colonial legacies implicit in those conceptualizations—which are unable to capture the notions of citizenship embedded in diverse socio-cultural contexts (e.g. Robins et al., 2008). Therefore, attempts to strengthen citizenship in the Global South and empower citizens to promote social transformation and more inclusive society can be hampered by incompatible Western ideas concerning what citizenship is and how learning citizenship can be supported.

In our project, we have scrutinized these questions in specific contexts in Tanzania and Uganda, countries with diverse postcolonial socio-political trajectories. In both countries, development cooperation, including that with development NGOs, has been a significant feature of architecture of social and economic development. For us, the empirical cases from these two countries illustrate diverse conceptualizations of citizenship held by those living their lives as citizens (Kabeer, 2005), as well as how they understand learning to take place in their everyday lives and the educational settings where specific citizenship education is provided. At the same time, however, the cases present specific historically formed conditions in which citizenship takes place (see also Alava et al., 2020; Nguyahambi et al., 2020).

In both countries, the social and political conditions of citizenship are entangled with colonial history and the related legacies concerning being a subject rather than a citizen (Mamdani, 2004). The area where current mainland Tanzania is located, Tanganyika, was under German rule from the 1880s to 1919, and then under the British administration until its independence in 1961. Uganda was also a British protectorate until 1962. Therefore, the legal and administration systems in both countries reflect, to some extent, those established by the British during colonial rule, although post-independence state-building has diverged. Despite the contested union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar into Tanzania, the first decades of independence were characterized by relatively peaceful state-building with the 'father of the nation', President Julius Nyerere, successfully establishing the spirit of a nation and preventing severe clashes between diverse ethnic groups (Aminzade, 2013). Introducing the national language of Kiswahili was an important means to state-building ends, while concentrating both political and economic power in the hands of a single political party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), in a framework of particularly African socialism, shaped citizenship experiences: while the state was there for its citizens, each citizen was expected to contribute to its development (*maendeleo*). In Uganda, on the other hand, the years between independence and 1986 were characterized by violent competition for power, including the devastating dictatorship of Idi Amin in the 1970s. The struggle over power reflected the colonial legacy of contradictions between diverse areas, related ethnic groups, traditional kingdoms and religious affiliations (Reid, 2017). When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986 after so-called bush war, it was often perceived as a guarantee of peace in the country, notwithstanding

the catastrophic war in Northern Uganda which raged from independence until 2006.

Nevertheless, although the NRM and President Yoweri Museveni's regime, in power ever since, still instigates violent retaliations against the opposition and other dissent, the overall relief of 'at least there is peace' was frequently mentioned by the rural participants in our research. However, the country continues to be characterized by divisions between ethnic groups, areas and languages to a much greater extent than Tanzania where such distinctions play a more minor and contextual role in the overall nation building (Aminzade, 2013). Both countries have introduced a multi-party democracy and conduct frequent elections; in practice, however, a single party has held power in Tanzania since independence and since the 1986 in Uganda. In Tanzania, presidential terms are limited, and the office holders have been changed accordingly. In Uganda, term and age limits have been abolished, and the same president continues to hold power despite growing demands for change by opposition movements whose activities are disrupted by the regime through violence or monetized co-option (Kagoro, 2016). In Tanzania, the opposition parties did pose increasing threat to the ruling party in the 2015 elections (Paget, 2019) but have since been more tightly controlled and restricted by it. Therefore, despite their differences, both countries provide kind on semi-authoritarian or hybrid regime for citizenship (Tripp, 2010).

As the empirical chapters of this book demonstrate, however, local practices, especially in rural areas, share many similar features, despite differences in cultures and languages. People are busy with livelihood-related activities, with attending funerals and other community events, and going to churches and mosques. The community of citizenship is mostly the village community, where it is important to be a good and contributing member. Nevertheless, in Tanzanian cases, constant connections were made between state and local citizenship ideals, with frequent local references to state vocabularies such as *maendeleo,* illustrating how locally achieved improvements were seen to contribute to the overall project of developing the country. Meanwhile, in Uganda, reflections in local communities and even in NGO-disseminated messages were geared around the idea that locals should not wait for the government to deliver; rather, communities should take care of their own development. Overall, the empirical nature of most of the following chapters means that we do not aim to make generalizations or comparison. Rather, we use diverse

case studies from these two East African contexts to illustrate multiple local definitions of citizenship and learning.

Ultimately, this book is inspired by and contributes to three different but intertwined discussions concerning the three elements of the title: learning, philosophy and African citizenship. In what follows, we introduce these discussions and describe the main contributions of the chapters: firstly, in terms of the variety of theoretical and local definitions of citizenship and, secondly, in terms of the related views of education and learning.

2   Theoretical and Local Definitions of Citizenship

Definitions of citizenship vary both within philosophical discussions and according to cultural and historical contexts. The chapters of the book describe, articulate, reformulate and analyse a variety of conceptualizations of citizenship from those provided by scholars to those articulated by rural inhabitants in Tanzania and Uganda. By presenting such a range, we want to emphasize the connections between 'citizenship' and 'learning', whether built into sophisticated philosophical scholarship or less established articulations based on everyday experiences.

In chapter "Citizenship Learning: Contextual, Material and Political", Tiina Kontinen and Katariina Holma provide an account of citizenship learning that builds on three dimensions prevalent in current citizenship studies. They argue that citizenship should be understood in contextual, material and political terms, and suggest an account of learning citizenship that resonates with these dimensions, especially in the context of Africa.

Chapters "Incompatible Ideals of the Citizen: Deliberative and Radical Pluralist Approaches in Philosophy of Education–From Reactivity to Sustainable Citizenship: Perspectives from Braidotti's Philosophy" discuss definitions of citizenship from different philosophical angles. Instead of introducing a specific canon for the interpretation of citizenship in philosophy, the chapters illustrate the wide variety of alternatives existing in the field. In her chapter, "Incompatible Ideals of the Citizen: Deliberative and Radical Pluralist Approaches in Philosophy of Education", Minna-Kerttu Kekki demonstrates how two differing accounts of democracy, one deliberative and the other radical pluralist, imply quite fundamental differences in their notions of what is central to ideal citizenship.

Hanna-Maija Huhtala, in the chapter, "Mimetic Challenges of Learning to be a Democratic Citizen", starts her discussion of citizenship from Theodor W. Adorno's pessimistic view of the (im)possibility of democracy and proceeds by scrutinizing potential sources of and solutions to such a crisis. Lenka Hanovská then introduces Balibar's concept of citizenship as inherently conflictual in her chapter, "Citizenship as Equaliberty Practice in the Philosophy of Étienne Balibar", in which she explores the antinomies in Balibar's conceptualization of citizenship, which revolved around the possibility of citizenship as equaliberty practice based on the historically evolved ideals of equality and liberty. Anna Itkonen and Katariina Holma develop the notion of sustainable citizenship based on Rosi Braidotti's new materialist philosophy in their chapter, titled "From Reactivity to Sustainable Citizenship: Perspectives from Braidotti's Philosophy", arguing that central to sustainable citizenship is the subject's aim to increase her *potentia*, understood as the capacity for affirmative relations.

Chapters "Communities and Habits of Citizenship: Everyday Participation in Kondoa, Tanzania–Climbing the Ladder? Community Perspectives on Learning to be a Good Citizen in Uganda" demonstrate contextual, historically and culturally embedded conceptualizations of citizenship in different locations in Tanzania and Uganda. The chapters draw from diverse theoretical conceptualizations of citizenship, while paying attention to local ideas of citizenship and the diverse scales, spaces and communities where citizenship is practised. Citizenship as *good membership* of the community is one of the most important themes. Ajali Nguyahambi and Tiina Kontinen, in their chapter, "Communities and Habits of Citizenship: Everyday Participation in Kondoa, Tanzania", draw from John Dewey's philosophy, where the notion of citizenship is regarded as being constructed in everyday communities in the course of taking care of shared issues. Based on this definition, they identify diverse communities in which people residing in rural villages in Kondoa District participate, and analyse the kinds of citizenship habits constructed. In her chapter, "Learning in Communities of Practice: How to Become a Good Citizen in Self-Help Groups in Rural Tanzania", Benta N. Matunga scrutinizes one important category of such communities, women's self-help groups in Mpwapwa District, and analyses the kinds of citizenship learned in this participation. She suggests that local citizenship revolves around two notions—self-development and helping each other—that resonate well with the public discourses of a good citizen in Tanzania.

Continuing with women's groups but in the Ugandan context, Karembe F. Ahimbisibwe and Alice N. Ndidde, in "Learning Among Rural Women: Village Saving Groups in Western Uganda", focus on village saving and lending associations (VSLAs) in two villages in Rubirizi District. They draw on the notion of economic citizenship as women's right and ability to access, own and use resources. Furthermore, they demonstrate how women's economic citizenship is strongly related to the questions of gender autonomy, independence and equality. Henni Alava, Janet Amito and Rom Lawrence provide an additional account of gendered citizenship in Uganda in their chapter, "Learning Marriage Ideals and Gendered Citizenship in "God-Fearing" Uganda", which contrasts Christian clerics' and lay women's views on relationships and marriage to explore the intersection of religion, citizenship and gender in Uganda. The chapter highlights that gendered and religious ideals concerning what constitutes 'good' are in themselves contested.

In the context of Kabarole District in Uganda, Twine Bananuka, Tiina Kontinen and Katariina Holma, in their chapter, 'Climbing the ladder? Community perspectives on learning to be a good citizen in Uganda', build on the notion of cultural citizenship as a continuous learning process embedded in the meanings communities apply to notions of citizenship and the citizen. They used a tool called 'the ladder of citizenship' to explore ideas of good citizenship held by community members; these they identify as having lived long enough in the community to be accepted, cultivating a source of livelihood, being God-fearing and contributing to the joint affairs of the community.

3   Education and Learning

In a similar vein, we set out to explore diverse conceptualizations of learning in both philosophical and everyday accounts. However, as we have also previously reflected (Holma & Kontinen, 2020), identification of the dynamics of learning related to citizenship is a challenging task. From the point of view of educational philosophy, selecting learning rather than education as a central concept for the book was somewhat daring. Many educational philosophers (e.g., Biesta, 2013, 2017; Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008) consider the increasing shift from education and pedagogy to the notion of learning in educational sciences an undesirable sign of a paradigm shift from a philosophical-societal approach to an individual psychology of learning processes. At the same

time, philosophers of education have shown an increasing interest in the concept of self-education as central to future challenges facing individuals and societies (Saari, 2021). Furthermore, many philosophical notions relevant to the acquisition of dispositions central to citizenship can be seen as involving an idea of learning without drawing on notions prevalent in contemporary empirical psychology of learning as an individual phenomenon. Furthermore, the field of adult education has for decades been interested in informal learning spaces where new ways of acting, doing and participating, central to one's citizenship, may be absorbed.

There are also various approaches to learning in educational theory that regard it as a socio-cultural phenomenon rather than an individual psychological process; these have been extensively used to examine learning in organizations, work and practices other than institutionalized school settings. Kontinen and Holma's account of citizenship learning draws on socio-cultural and socio-material approaches. They argue for an understanding wherein the contextual, material and political dimensions of citizenship are acquired and potentially transformed through interaction and practical action mediated by material artefacts, moving within the zone of proximal development, and located in specific conditions characterized by power relations.

The philosophical chapters of the book reflect how different concepts and ideals of citizenship ultimately suggest different ideas of what is central to learning and education. Kekki's chapter demonstrates how educational approaches based on a deliberative notion of democracy stress instilling tolerance and decreasing polarization, whereas a radical pluralist framework focuses on the central role of political action and even conflict. Due to their theoretical differences, deliberative accounts often see school as a potential space of learning democracy, whereas radical pluralist theories regard the hierarchical structure of schools as being in contradiction with very possibility of learning democratic action. Although both deliberative and pluralist traditions stress the possibility of learning from others in discussion, the former stresses learning from others through genuine listening, whereas the latter emphasizes the recognition of the political nature of emotions and identities.

Based on Adorno's and Horkheimer's philosophy, Huhtala develops the concept of *mimesis* as not only an informal but often also an unconscious and accidental way of learning, which can thus also lead to undesirable consequences. She then discusses how, based on her

approach, emotions play an inescapable role in learning genuinely democratic citizenship. Itkonen and Holma also stress the role of emotions—affectivity—in learning sustainable citizenship and argue that in order to learn to be an ethically and politically accountable subject, one must understand and manage one's affectivity and the linked capacity to relate to others.

Nguyahambi and Kontinen, in their Deweyan reflection on citizenship habits constructed in the course of participation in multiple practices, focus on learning as acquisition and its potential for reformulating habits (Dewey, 1922, 1927; Holma & Kontinen, 2020). In their analysis, they demonstrate how participation in different practices resulted in six categories of citizenship habits including engaging citizenship, something that NGO interventions sought to inculcate, and responsible citizenship, which is embedded in normal everyday practices. Their analysis emphasizes the role of participation in everyday practices in shaping the characteristics of citizenship.

Matunga draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and examines learning as peripheral participation in self-help groups in rural villages in Tanzania. Learning in communities of practice is a widely used approach in the socio-cultural tradition of learning, which understands learning not as an individual process but as something emerging from practice. She also explores in greater detail how members of the self-help group describe their learning in their own words. The notions of learning which they expressed—listening, observing, imitating and engaging in trial and error experimentation—all revolved around learning while acting together.

In their chapter on a village saving and lending association (VSLA), Ahimbisibwe and Ndidde utilize the participatory learning approach (Mayoux, 1998; Pretty, 1995), which emphasizes not only learning skills and knowledge together, but also learning as a process of empowering the marginalized. They show how VSLAs function as spaces for learning new skills, ideas and capacities related to both economic empowerment and gendered citizenship, arguing that learning by participating in saving groups is a potential way for hitherto marginalized village members to challenge local power relations collectively, and thus contribute to transformation.

Alava, Amito and Lawrence's chapter demonstrates that providing church education on gendered roles related to marriage is one thing, while religious women's learning about these during their life course is

another. Rather than reflecting on marital gender roles from the perspective of the normative ideas provided by the church, women's learning is solution-oriented and geared towards responding to (potential) problems in marital relationships. Nonetheless, the chapter pays attention to religion as a significant space of learning 'good citizenship'.

Bananuka, Kontinen and Holma draw on Jeremy Bruner's (1996) theory of folk pedagogies in their exploration of local conceptions of how one learns what is considered good citizenship. They identify five ways in which community members conceptualize learning citizenship, explicated in the Rutooro language by research participants: heredity (*obuzalirwaana*), religion (*ediini*), copying and observation (*kukopa*), challenges (*ebizibu*) and education and training (*kusomesebwa*). Overall, in a similar vein as Matunga's findings on ideas of learning in self-help groups, the analysis by Bananuka et al. shows that participating actively in community and religious activities, with their joys and sorrows, is an important way to learn.

Taken together, the chapters identify diverse conceptualizations of citizenship and learning through, first, conceptual analysis of the philosophical literature and second, by means of participation in the everyday lives in the rural communities as well as conducting interviews and group discussions; the methods used are described in detail in each chapter. Throughout the volume, the general idea has been to capture how research participants in diverse empirical locations give meanings to the notions of 'citizenship' and 'learning'.

4   Conclusion

Situated at the intersection of citizenship studies, educational philosophy and development studies, the book invites readers from these and other fields to reflect on a range of conceptualizations of citizenship and learning. First, contributions offer the power to define these concepts to both scholars and citizens located in Tanzania and Uganda. Second, they show how definitions of citizenship guide the ideals of what kinds of citizenship should be learned. Third, they provide analysis anchored in ongoing practices of citizenship to facilitate the design and implementation of attempts to foster citizenship learning. Ultimately, the book extends an invitation to shift the analytical lens from education to learning.

Contributors demonstrate that themes such as democracy, equality, liberty and justice play a central place in definitions of citizenship, while the lived experiences of citizenship revolve around joining with others to form groups to ensure better livelihoods and environments, and participating in supporting other community members. Emotions, affects and being a caring citizen are emergent themes in both aims, as they are in citizenship discussions more broadly. Diverse approaches emphasize, in different ways, the significance of consensus and deliberation alongside the importance of conflict and claim making and illustrate how the complex phenomenon of learning relates to these approaches.

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