We citizens … beyond rights and duties, at work and in life

"Respect for one's autonomy and dignity is an ethical imperative and not a favour one can give to others (…)"
Paulo Freire

In a broad sense, citizenship is recognized as the 'right to have rights'. Therefore, there are those who understand it as a statute that confers a range of constitutionally foreseen rights.

Although the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic does not define it, citizenship can be understood as a fundamental right linked to a nationality: the 'right to be a member of the Portuguese Republic'. I am quite sure you can also recognise something similar in your countries. It requires, therefore, a relevant connection the country - to have been born in Portuguese territory, to be the child or grandchild of Portuguese, to marry a Portuguese citizen - to justify such status of inclusion / belonging to the Portuguese political and legal community."

Going a little further, being a citizen implies "practicing citizenship". However, what is this? Will it be going to school and come home daily? Will I finish my professional course and go to a job or continue to study? Is it to support my family in whatever it takes? Will you go to vote when you are older and elections are on the agenda?

Yes, that's it … but it's much more. It is the right to have rights and the right to have duties.

You have probably heard at school that you have to be responsible, autonomous, and supportive, know and exercise your rights and duties in dialogue and respect for others, in a democratic, pluralistic, critical and creative spirit. Nevertheless, what does this mean in practice?

In reality, being a citizen is an increasingly demanding attribute. In addition, the labour market will try to know how far you are "citizen". That is, to what extent do you inform yourself about what is going on around you, how far you "get off the couch" or "behind your computer screen" to fight for your rights or the rights of others. A citizen is a free human being who is ready to actively participate in seeking solutions to the problems of society, the world around him, not just the one who criticizes him.

To be a citizen is to tolerate the other. Because it is from another football club, but also because it is from another religion, because it does not have the same sexual preferences as you, because it has another skin colour, etc. In addition, he believes, society is increasingly filled with people who encourage hatred precisely because of a lack of tolerance. As an active and participatory citizen, it is up to you to make a difference. Today you are a son, "tomorrow" you will be a father or a mother and you will need to educate for citizenship. Respecting the principles just enumerated.

Exercising our rights as citizens means, still, knowing how to work in a team, in the most different situations. You already do it in school, for sure. *Do you know that this is one of the skills most employers seek in their workers?* No one wants to work with someone who isolates himself, who generates conflicts, who does not facilitate the work of the other. Sharing rather than keeping to oneself is the key to personal success, but also professional. And you think you'll feel better in an environment where group work predominates.

Therefore, when we say that we are citizens, we are not only referring to the awareness that we have rights and duties, a very common expression, indeed. We are saying and assuming that nothing will happen alone, without "me, citizen" being active. In this sense, the exercise of citizenship is a challenge for all of us, a world in permanent (de) construction.

Finally, being a citizen is recognizing that you will be in constant learning. You will never stop learning or teaching; You teach, you learn, you teach.

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"Citizenship is a collective invention. Citizenship is a way of seeing the world."
Paulo Freire