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What do secondary school pupils know about the European Union? Implications for learning

¿Qué sabe el alumnado de secundaria sobre la Unión Europea? Implicaciones para el aprendizaje

Santana-Vega, Lidia E. & Feliciano-García, Luis

Universidad de La Laguna (España)

Abstract

The development of a European Dimension in Education is an objective linked to the construction of European identity and the exercise of active, responsible and critical citizenship. The paper analyzes the knowledge of Spanish Compulsory Secondary School pupils on topics regarding the European Union. The research involved 705 pupils from five secondary education centres in four Spanish regions. Twenty four item test was designed to examine the pupils' knowledge about: a) the European institutions, b) history of European cooperation, c) European citizenship, d) Europe in daily life, e) social and cultural identity and f) human rights and responsibilities. The results show that: a) 80.3% of the pupils only answered 14 items or less correctly; b) there were significant differences among pupils according to the year of study and the region, but a small size effect; c) pupils lack knowledge regarding "Europe in everyday life", "European Citizenship", "History of European cooperation" and "The European institutions". There is a discussion of the need to define a cross-curricular approach.

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Resumen

El desarrollo de la Dimensión Europea en la Educación es un objetivo vinculado a la construcción de la identidad europea y al ejercicio de una ciudadanía activa crítica y responsable. El artículo analiza el conocimiento de los estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria sobre la Unión Europea. En el estudio participaron 705 alumnos de cinco centros de educación secundaria obligatoria de cuatro comunidades autónomas españolas. Se diseñó una prueba de veinticuatro ítems sobre: a) las instituciones europeas, b) la historia de la cooperación europea, c) la ciudadanía Europea, d) Europa en la vida cotidiana, e) la identidad social y cultural, y f) derechos humanos y responsabilidades. Los resultados muestran que: a) el 80.3% de los alumnos contestaron correctamente catorce o menos ítems; b) existen diferencias significativas entre los alumnos en función del curso y de la comunidad autónoma, pero el tamaño del efectos es pequeño; c) los alumnos carecen de conocimientos sobre "Europa en la vida cotidiana", "la Ciudadanía Europea", "la Historia de la cooperación europea" y "las Instituciones europeas". Se discute la necesidad de diseñar una propuesta curricular transversal.

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Citizenship learning should take place in the context of both formal and non formal education; as the wise old African proverb says "it takes the whole tribe to educate one child". Citizenship education is an urgent

priority in a global world since it is necessary to reverse the democratic miseducation of citizenship. According to Greppi (2012) many democratic societies are trapped in a perverse circle of "democratic miseducation". The

Corresponding autor / Autor de contacto

Lidia E. Santana Vega. Dpto. de Didáctica e Investigación Educativa. University of La Laguna (Spain).

lsantana@ull.es

circle closes when the number of badly educated citizens outnumbers well educated citizens. The miseducated majorities end up voting against their own interests, in other words, they elect leaders who, for their own purposes, know very well how to foster the systematic miseducation of the people. Bovero (2002) asks the following questions: how can the virtuous circle between democracy and progress be re-established?; how can the democratic mediation structures needed for an active involvement of citizens in the processes of formation of public opinion and the collective will be mended? Perhaps by fostering the “spirit of initiative” the citizens in the age of globalization will be able to actively respond, and in a creative and strategic way, to the challenges of global citizenship in the 21st century.

The complexity of contemporary society requires the articulation of good study plans to foster citizenship education, a spirit of initiative, autonomy and the capacity to make prudent and informed decisions in pupils. Myers & Zaman (2009) point out that the discourse on citizenship education is important because the ways that citizenship is represented shape who will be included or excluded as good citizens. The consolidation of European citizenship requires the EU citizens to: a) consider themselves as participants in the construction of the EU, b) be aware of their rights and duties, and c) see the EU as more than a set of economic and administrative institutions (European Commission, 2011; Hernández Rodríguez, 2008).

The European integration process has been managed by institutions perceived by European citizens as being remote from their everyday lives. Hence, an important part of European citizens have considered the EU as a distant political entity (European Commission, 2011). The results of the more recent reports of the European Commission show that European citizenship is not fully assumed by the inhabitants of the EU. According to the Flash Eurobarometer 365 (European Commission, 2013) only 46% of respondents

were familiar with the term “European citizen” and understood its meaning. According to the Standard Eurobarometer 77 (European Commission, 2012), only 19% of the population of the EU felt they were “European citizens”, 42% were “to some extent European citizens” and 38% “did not feel they were Europeans citizens”. The Standard Eurobarometer 81 (European Commission, 2014), shows a slight change in these percentages, which are 26%, 39% and 34% respectively.

The “Europe for Citizens (2014-2020)” (Council of the European Union, 2014) programme is an example of the main line of action of the EU, whose aims are: a) to offer citizens the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing an ever closer Europe; b) to forge a European identity based on common values, history and culture; c) to improve the understanding and mutual respect between European citizens, d) to foster a sense of membership of the European Union among its citizens, e) to enhance mutual understanding between European citizens respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, and f) to encourage the democratic participation of citizens at EU level, by developing citizens' understanding of the EU policy making-process and by promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at EU level (Council of the European Union, 2014).

The present work is based on a European Commission funded project aimed at promoting the construction of European citizenship and the spirit of initiative through a secondary school educational programme (Bombardelli & Santana, 2014). The research goals’ are: 1) to analyse the knowledge of Spanish secondary school pupils on certain topics regarding the EU and the exercise of the European citizenship, 2) to analyse whether there are differences in the knowledge of pupils about the EU according to region, study year or sex; 3) to examine the issues regarding the EU that the pupils have the most need to learn.

Antecedents

The development of citizenship is essential to meet the challenges of the domestic and international environment (del Río, 2009). In front of the dominant national narrative it's necessary the preparation of youth for citizenship in a globalizing world as they are increasingly taking on multiple civic affiliations, beliefs, and action that extend beyond national borders (Myers & Zaman, 2009; UNESCO, 2015).

The Council of Europe has emphasized the importance of education for the exercise of an "active", "committed" and "participatory" citizenship (Marshall, 2009). Education for the development of a full citizenship will help to ensure the stability and legitimacy of the EU and to respond to increased non-democratic forms of political activism (Milana, 2008). Learning the rights and duties of European citizens, democratic values, human rights, and channels of participation in a democratic society promotes changes in the behaviour of young people. These lessons are necessary for young people so that they can behave as responsible citizens and play an active role in the construction of the EU (EURYDICE, 2005). Therefore, education is fundamental in terms of increasing the involvement and participation of European citizens (EACEA 2012). According to Naval, Print & Veldhuis (2002) citizenship is not only considered as a legal status, but also as a competence, whose acquisition should be developed through education in schools as well as in other environments. The social and civic competences are part of the eight key competences for the formation of European citizens; their acquisition is essential for the personal fulfilment and commitment to active citizenship (Halász & Michel, 2011).

The development of a European dimension in education is an objective linked to the construction of European identity and the exercise of active citizenship. The Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education (EACEA, 2016), emphasize that the European

dimension in education supports the development of European citizenship through: a) information and common work, b) the learning of ideas and cultures of other countries, c) socialization through exchanges, d) a greater understanding of the "reality" of European integration, and e) the transmission of common values underpinning the sentiment of common membership.

The idea is to "Understand Europe, Feel Europe and Participate in Europe" to meet the challenges of misinformation which are felt by a part of European citizenship (Hernández Rodríguez, 2008). A key question for European dimension in education is: what should the education of European citizens be like? Many projects and programs have attempted to answer this question; many of them have created resources of great interest to improve the quality of the education for European citizenship.

Research performed with young people to study their sense of belonging to the EU, their knowledge of the meaning of European citizenship and their desire to participate in the construction of the EU (Agidarg, Huyst, & Van Houte, 2012; Cook, 2007; EACEA, 2013; Horvath & Paolini, 2013; Huyst, 2009; Jamieson 2007; Kuhn, 2016; Mahendran & Sloam, 2013) concluded that: a) young people do not reject the EU objectives and they consider their country's membership to the EU to be beneficial; b) they have a more positive view of European citizenship and the process of European integration than other age groups; c) they want a greater voice and more opportunities to vote; d) they are interested in being an active part of the integration process; e) they require more information on the advantages of EU membership; f) they know less about the EU than older age groups; g) parental socio-economic status influences transnational interactions of young people in European countries; h) young people who live in wealthier economies are more transnational. The conclusions of *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009* (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz & Burge, 2010), performed in 24 European countries, indicate

that knowledge about the EU is relatively good in pupils of Secondary Education (Grade 8), but still needs to be improved.

The Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament (2016) point out: 1) the increasing importance of a European dimension in education across the different disciplines, levels and forms of education; 2) the EU should be more visible, and better integrated, in teaching materials and extracurricular activities, given its impact on the everyday life of its citizens; 3) content explicitly related to the EU can add substantial value to school curricula and to the personal development and growth of learners. Education for European citizenship and the acquisition of social and civic competences should be achieved through classroom instruction and participatory activities in the school and local communities. The learning of these skills is an opportunity to: a) experience the values and principles of public participation, and b) prevent the valuable contribution of young people from being lost.

Method

Given the absence of previous studies in Spain on the knowledge of Compulsory Secondary Education pupils on the process of

European integration and European citizenship, this research is exploratory. A survey study was carried out in which an *ad hoc* designed knowledge test was applied for Compulsory Secondary Education pupils.

Sample

The project was developed in state secondary education institutes in four regions of Spain (Canary Islands, Andalusia, Aragon, and Castilla-La Mancha). These centres decided to collaborate in the project for two reasons: 1) their interest in improving the pupils' knowledge about the European citizenship and 2) their desire to promote the pupils' social and civic competences. It's a convenience and not representative sample of the different autonomous communities in which the participating centers are located 705 Spanish pupils and 40 teachers from Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) from five centres participated in the project (Table 1); 51.2% of pupils were boys and 48.8% were girls. The age of the pupils ranged between 12-13 (44.7%) and 14-15 (55.3%) years of age (Mean: 13.72; Standard Deviation: 0.9369); 53.5% of the pupils were in second grade and 46.5% were in third grade.

Table 1. Data from Spanish' Secondary Schools

Region	Pupils	Teachers	School subjects involved
Andalusia	157	10	Spanish Language and Literature, Geography, History, Technology, Art, Maths
Canary Islands	190	14	English, Spanish Language and literature, Maths, French, Social Sciences and Technology
Aragon	214	8	Social Sciences, Science, Technology, English, Tutoring
Castilla-La Mancha	199	8	English, Tutoring, Social Sciences, Geography, History

Instruments

The project included a test designed to examine the pupils' knowledge about the European integration process and European citizenship. The following points were taken into account in the design of the test: a) the relevant contents on the process of European integration and European citizenship and b) the information in the textbooks of Secondary Education on these issues.

Institutional websites, teaching websites, blogs and textbooks for secondary education were analyzed to select the content of the test. Based on this analysis, the following contents were chosen: 1) EU: concept and Member States. 2) Origins of the EU: background and objectives of its creation, and the EU symbols. 3) Founding values: freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law. 4) EU institutions. 5) European Citizenship: creation,

meaning, objectives, relationship between European citizenship and nationality. 6) European Citizenship Rights. 7) The European currency: the objectives of the introduction of the euro, the euro zone, EU funding, grants and subsidies from the EU.

The above-mentioned contents were used in the design of a first draft of the test which had 80 items. This first draft was reviewed by specialist teachers in the EU from the five participating universities. The test was also monitored by teachers of secondary education centres who collaborated in the project.

The test was analyzed and restructured over the course of several meetings of the project partners and collaborators in the schools. The following resolutions were adopted after the discussion process: a) reduce the number of questions, b) introduce new items, c) change some sentences and answer choices. The purpose of the successive improvements to the test was to ensure that it: 1) contained basic issues, according to the experts, on the EU and European Citizenship, and 2) were matched to the study target population. Participants in the review process fully agreed on the contents of the test. The only discrepancy occurred in the case of items on the EU economy, as happened in the study of Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt & Nikolova (2002). Some teachers felt that the topic was not appropriate

for pupils aged 12-15. Consequently, the items on economics were eliminated.

The result of the review process was a test of 24 questions. Each question had four possible answers of which only one was correct. The final score of the knowledge test ranged between 0 and 24 points. The items in the final version of the test were about: 1) human rights and responsibilities, 2) social and cultural identity, 3) Europe in everyday life, 4) European citizenship: 5) history of European cooperation and 6) the European institutions.

The correspondence of the items with the topics in the test is shown in Table 2: 12.5% of the items examined contents of Human Rights and Responsibilities (e.g. What does the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU establish?); 12.5% analyze contents about Social and Cultural Identity (e.g. What does “having a prejudice” mean?); 20.8 % examine contents about Europe in Everyday Life (e.g. What happens to the sovereignty of the countries which join the EU?); 25% analyze contents about European Citizenship (e.g. In which situations do we respect public property and goods?); 12.5% analyse the history of European Cooperation (e.g. What is the aim of the European integration process?); 16.7% examine the European Institutions (e.g. How are members of the European Parliament elected?).

Table 2. *Correspondence of the items with the topics in the knowledge test*

Test Topics	Test Items	Total
1. Human Rights and Responsibilities	1, 2, 3	3
2. Social and cultural identity	4, 5, 6	3
3. Europe in everyday life	7, 8, 9, 10, 11	5
4. European citizenship	12,13, 14, 15, 16,17	6
5. History of European cooperation	18, 19, 20	3
6. The European institutions	21, 22, 23, 24	4

The test reliability index, calculated by means of the coefficient of the two halves of Guttman, was low (0.61). The discrimination index of the test is 0.83. This value shows that the test differentiates the pupils with high and low levels of knowledge about the EU. The analysis of the discrimination index for each item shows that twelve items (50%) have an

outstanding index, five (21%) have a good index, three (12.5%) a regular index and four (16.5%) a poor index (see Table 3). The items with the lowest index of discrimination belong to the topics: European Institutions (4 items), European Citizenship (2 items) and Europe in daily life (1 item).

Procedure

The principal investigator of the project in Spain met the management teams of the participating centres and explained the most relevant aspects of the project to the teams in a briefing session and they were referred to the project website for further information. The head teacher accepted the requirement to inform the teaching staff about the project and ask for the collaboration of the teachers from different educational departments. Each centre chose a project coordinator. This coordinator was chosen from among the teachers who had decided to participate in the project. The principal investigator explained the characteristics and dimensions of the knowledge test to the teachers from the participating schools. The test was applied in the classroom by the teachers who collaborated on the project.

The analysis of the knowledge test data was performed using the SPSS.21 programme and included: a) reliability coefficient for the test by the method of two halves of Guttman; b) difficulty and discrimination index of each item; c) descriptive statistics for the distribution of the total scores in the test; d) ANOVA and T Student test for independent samples, to check for significant differences between the mean average scores of the test according to sex, region, and school year e) size effect analysis (Cohen's d and partial η^2); f) percent of correct answers for each item, g) descriptive statistics of the percent of correct answers in the test and according to topics; h) Repeated Measures ANOVA to check the significance of the differences between the mean average percentages of correct answers in the topics, and the Bonferroni adjustment

for multiple comparisons of marginal means of the main effect; partial η^2 was used as effect size index.

The Difficulty Index shows the proportion of correct answers of the top 25% of the participants with the highest scores in the test, and the bottom 25% of the participants with the lowest scores in the test. The Difficult Index is the average of the top 25% and the bottom 25% of the participants. The higher this index value is, the lower the difficulty is, and the greater the difficulty of an item is, the lower its index is.

The Discrimination Index is the difference between two proportions, the correct answers of the top group minus the correct answers of the bottom group. The greater the difference between the number of correct answers between the top and bottom groups, the more discriminatory the item is; i.e. this helps to place a participant in the top or bottom group (Morales, 2012). The criteria of Ebel & Frisbie (1986) and Morales (2012) were taken into account to evaluate the indices of difficulty and discrimination of items.

Results

The distribution of the pupils' scores in the knowledge test shows that 53% of the pupils correctly answered only 10-14 items (see Figure 1); 27.3% had a low score in the test, correctly answering 9 questions or less. Only 19.7% of the pupils were able to correctly answer 15 or more questions. According to the distribution of the scores in the test, the pupils' level of knowledge about the European integration process and European citizenship is medium low.

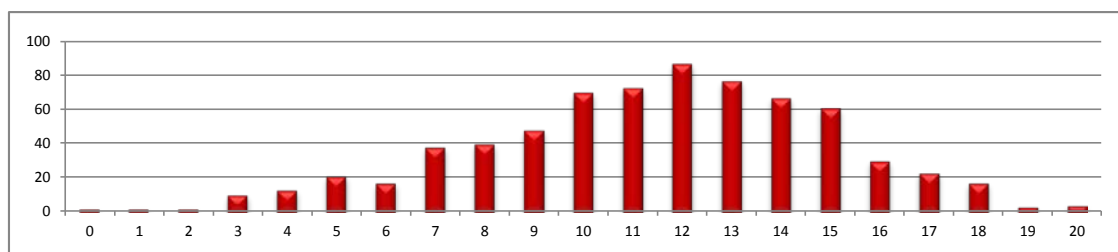


Figure 1. Distribution of the scores in the knowledge test

Mean: 11.38, Median: 12, Mode: 12, Standart Deviation: 3.59 Skewness: -0.353

The rate of overall difficulty of the test is 0.47. This rate indicates that the test has a medium high level of difficulty (Ebel & Frisbie, 1986; Morales, 2012). The test items have difficulty rates within the range of 0.79 and 0.14. Four questions have a high

difficulty rate (16.7%), eleven have medium-high rates (45.83%), eight have a mean difficulty rate (33.3%), and only one item has a medium-low difficulty rate (4.2%), (Table 3).

Table 3. Difficulty and discrimination index of the knowledge test items

Topic	Items	Discrimination Index		Difficulty Index	
		Value	Discrimination	Value	Difficulty
1	1. Which EU countries have adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?	0.35	Good	0.42	Medium-High
	2. What does the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU establish?	0.41	Excellent	0.69	Medium
	3. Which of the following situations is an act of "discrimination"?	0.31	Good	0.79	Medium-Low
2	4. What does "having a prejudice" mean?	0.34	Good	0.36	Medium-High
	5. What is the usefulness of learning a foreign language?	0.52	Excellent	0.64	Medium
	6. What approximately is the percentage of immigrants in Spain?	0.47	Excellent	0.69	Medium
3	7. How many countries form the European Union?	0.50	Excellent	0.59	Medium
	8. Approximately how many residents are there in the EU?	0.29	Regular	0.43	Medium-High
	9. What does the "free circulation of goods" mean?	0.51	Excellent	0.41	Medium-High
	10. What happens to the sovereignty of the countries which join the EU?	0.48	Excellent	0.46	Medium-High
	11. Where can you find information on the European integration process?	0.49	Excellent	0.51	Medium
4	12. What happens when you get European citizenship?	0.19	Poor	0.31	Medium-High
	13. What happens when you have a health problem and you work in another country belonging to the EU?	0.60	Excellent	0.54	Medium
	14. Where can you find the EU rules on everyday life?	0.23	Regular	0.29	High
	15. In which situations do we respect public property and goods?	0.54	Excellent	0.66	Medium
	16. What is the EU in the world?	0.49	Excellent	0.41	Medium-High
	17. Which of the following countries require a passport for entry?	0.40	Excellent	0.42	Medium-High
	18. What is the aim of the European integration process?	0.59	Excellent	0.64	Medium
5	19. When was the European community born?	0.38	Good	0.36	Medium-High
	20. What is the Treaty of Lisbon?	0.36	Good	0.38	Medium-High
	21. How are members of the European Parliament elected?	0.13	Poor	0.21	High
6	22. Who is a member of the European Parliament of your country?	0.09	Poor	0.14	High
	23. How many countries in the EU use the Euro as their official currency?	0.10	Poor	0.18	High
	24. Who is the president of the European Commission?	0.23	Regular	0.33	Medium-High

The items where the percentage of incorrect answers was greater than 50% belonged to the following topics: the European institutions (Items 21, 22, 23, 24), European citizenship (12, 14, 16, 17), Europe in everyday life (Items 8, 9, 10, 11), history of European cooperation (Items 19, 20), human rights and responsibilities (Item 1), social and cultural identity (Item 4).

The ANOVA in function of the region shows significant differences between the

mean average percent of correct answers of the groups ($F= 4.980$; $gl: 3$; $p < 0.002$). However, the partial η^2 coefficient (0.021) suggests a small size effect. The results of the multiple *post hoc* comparisons using the Tukey test show that the pupils from Andalusia had a mean average percent of correct answers significantly higher than the pupils from the Canary Islands and Aragon (Table 4).

Table 4. Mean differences according to region

Region	Mean	SD	Mean differences	Confidence intervals		Sig
				Lower limit	Upper limit	
Andalusia	50.31	13.91	4.9421	.6136	9.2707	0.018
Canaries	45.37	15.76				
Andalusia	50.31	13.91	5.0464	.9379	9.1550	0.009
Aragon	45.27	15.04				

Mean differences according to the study year show that pupils in third grade had a significantly higher average score in the test than those in second grade (Table 5). The value obtained in the Cohen's d (0.346)

indicated a small size effect. The mean difference according to gender did not show significant differences between the scores in the knowledge test of the boys and girls.

Table 5. Mean differences according to study year

Study year	N	Mean	SD	t	gl	Sig.	Cohen's d
2°	377	45.0818	15.4858	- 4.595	702.348	0.000	0.346
3°	328	50.1651	13.8872				

The mean average percent of correct answers was higher in "Rights and duties" (Mean: 68.55; SD: 25.85) y "Social and cultural identity" (Mean: 60.74; SD: 29.88); and was lower in "History of European cooperation" (Mean: 51.43; SD: 29.67), "European citizenship" (Mean: 48.49; SD: 21.72), "Europe in everyday life" (Mean: 47.42; SD: 26.17), and "The European Institutions" (Mean: 22.16; SD: 20.90). The results of repeated measures ANOVA shows significant differences between the mean average percents of correct answers of the six

topics in the test. The partial η^2 coefficient, 0.591 (Pillai's trace: Value 0.591; F (5, 700): 202.106; $p < .000$) suggests a large size effect.

The results of multiple comparisons show significant differences between the mean average percents of the six topics in the test, except in the cases of: Human Rights and Responsibilities/Social and cultural identity, Europe in everyday life/European citizenship, Europe in everyday life/History of European cooperation, and European Citizenship/History of European cooperation (Table 6).

Table 6. Pairs Comparations

(I) Knowledge	(J) Knowledge	Mean Differences I-J	Typical.Error	Sig.
1. Human rights and responsibilities	2	2.931	1.437	.626
	3	16.236	1.428	.000
	4	14.894	1.305	.000
	5	12.719	1.528	.000
	6	40.307	1.486	.000
2. Social and cultural identity	3	13.305	1.289	.000
	4	11.962	1.195	.000
	5	9.787	1.381	.000
	6	37.376	1.391	.000
3 Europe in everyday life	4	-1.343	1.056	1.000
	5	-3.518	1.272	.087
	6	24.071	1.212	.000
4 European citizenship	5	-2.175	1.121	.792
	6	25.414	1.120	.000
5. History of European cooperation	6	27.589	1.292	.000
6. The European institutions	-	-	-	-

These results show that pupils have more knowledge about the topics of "Human rights and responsibilities" and "Social and cultural identity", and a lower level of knowledge about "European citizenship and cooperation", "the role of the EU in everyday life" and "the European Institutions".

Conclusions

Training is the key to the active participation of young people in the process of European integration. The research results show that the pupils have a low-medium level of knowledge on the impact of the EU in everyday life, the history of the European cooperation process, the exercise of European citizens and the EU institutions, regardless of school year, gender or region. The results agree with those obtained in other studies (Mahendran & Cook, 2007; Horvath & Paolini, 2013) where it is observed that: a) young people know less about the EU than other older age groups, and b) demand more information on the opportunities offered by their country's accession to the EU.

This study has shown up weaknesses in the teaching learning process of European Citizenship Education (ECE) in secondary schools in Spain. ECE has been placed in the centre of ideological debate between the main political parties in Spain. The effects of said debate can be seen in the last two Spanish educational reforms, where there are opposing views regarding the contents and placement of ECE in the secondary school curriculum. Other challenges for the integration of ECE into the curriculum are the subject timetable in secondary education, the excessive academicism of the curriculum and the lack of coordination between curricular subjects, which limit the cross-curricular teaching-learning of the contents of ECE.

Misinformation leads to misunderstanding, to estrangement and to a low level of citizenship participation (Hernández Rodríguez, 2008). The limited knowledge shown by the pupils on selected topics regarding the European integration and citizenship illustrate the need to create

programmes to enhance the European identity of the young. Adolescents are at a delicate stage in the growing up process where the problem of identity is palpable. The implementation of educational programmes for citizenship help pupils to create and develop their multiple identities, i.e., to feel members and participants of both their immediate and distant environment (del Río, 2009).

Gaining a civic awareness of the environments in which our life unfolds is critical to exercise active, participatory and effective citizenship in those spaces. According to Jamieson (2007), Georgi (2008) and Verhaegen, Hooghe, & Meeusen (2016), European citizenship education should be based on contact with the EU and the increase in personal experiences with the European reality. Educational exchanges between pupils and teachers of the Member States are essential to generate the feeling of belonging to the EU.

The analysis of the degree of knowledge of Spanish pupils on European citizenship has been the starting point for the design, development and implementation of the ECLIPSE programme (Author & Author, 2014). This training programme, designed to be integrated into the curriculum areas of secondary education, aims to promote: 1) the construction of the pupils' identity as young European citizens; 2) developing key skills such as learning to learn, the competence of autonomy and personal initiative and civic competence; 3) promoting the European dimension in education in response to the challenges in the Europe 2020 strategy. As ECLIPSE is a common programme at a European level, it represents strong added value; it broadens horizons by enabling pupils to be more in touch with life in member states, discovering that European Countries have a lot in common as well as differences.

Fischman & Haas (2012, p. 174) point out that the consolidation of any given identity, be it "personal," "national," or "communitarian," is always an "educationally" unfinished project. The

emphasis that ECLIPSE programme puts on competent European citizenship should encourage pupils to know how they want Europe to develop, and to engage in promoting this, perceiving themselves as being responsible at local, national, European and international level, sharing a common destiny.

Students' cooperation with young people from other European Countries should encourage them to take a closer look at the daily life of their peers; thereby becoming familiar with their peers through social networks which would help to overcome possible prejudices and to increase their desire to get to know each other better. Working together across borders, the pupils and teachers get to know each other, will learn about the different institutions and countries, the working ways, and will practise intercultural cooperation. It is hoped that this will have a positive impact on the motivation to develop their own European citizenship through extended learning partnerships.

Schools should give pupils the opportunity to actively experience citizenship and offer them the possibility to study and discuss the meaning of being a European citizen. We can not actually teach pupils to be citizens; we can only generate appropriate learning environments to learn to be critical citizens of an EU in construction.

The preparation for citizenship is a multi-faceted and complex process embedded in the culture and educational systems of the democracies of Europe, requiring the exploration of new educative models in many countries (Torney-Purta, 2002). The fate of the EU lies in a generation of young people who shift between the attraction of the benefits of European integration and the feeling of being ignored by political institutions which are distanced from their needs and interests (Tsafos, 2006; EACEA, 2013; Sloam, 2013). The results of our research show that some topics on European citizenship need to be given greater emphasis in the secondary curriculum so that pupils can: a) improve their knowledge of the EU b)

gain participatory experiences and c) become aware of the meaning of being European citizens in both the EU and the world. Euroscepticism has grown in EU member states, questioning the European model of citizens that is being built. This circumstance requires a deep debate among young people to critically analyze the causes of the rise of Europhobia (European Commission, 2015). It is necessary to develop, in the pupils, a willingness to participate in the construction of the EU.

The integration process of the EU and European citizenship need to be covered in the curriculum of secondary education, and should be subject to individual and group reflection in the classroom. The ECLIPSE programme proposes an alternative model of education for citizenship based on transversal contents and is an alternative to the prevailing academicism in secondary school subjects. In this model, the teacher assumes the challenge of adapting and/ or design activities in collaboration with its partners, b) to act as a catalyst for class sessions, c) to work topics of European citizenship in the different subjects of the curriculum in a coordinated manner.

The low number of subjects participating in the study limits the generalization of the results. Further research should be conducted with larger samples, including pupils from more autonomous communities in Spain to confirm the extent of the educational deficiencies of the pupils' knowledge about the EU. The study only quantitatively addresses the level of knowledge about the EU. This quantitative analysis needs to be combined with a qualitative investigation to study in greater depth the genesis of the errors or misrepresentations of the pupils on the process of EU integration and the construction of European citizenship. Furthermore, it's necessary to design an evaluation of citizen competence and not only about the knowledge of the EU (Torney-Purta, Cabrera, Crofts, Liu, & Rios, 2015).

The research opens up new avenues of study into the knowledge about the EU and European citizenship. It would be advisable to

address the following questions from a quantitative and qualitative perspective: are there differences in knowledge about the EU among pupils in compulsory education, non-compulsory secondary education and college? Are there differences in the pupils' knowledge about the EU according to their socioeconomic status and region of origin? How interested are the pupils in getting information on the EU for their personal and professional future? Is there a relationship between the level of information about the EU and attitudes towards the European integration process and European citizenship? Does the degree of knowledge of the pupils about the EU affect how they argue the advantages and limitations of EU membership? Does the pupils' level of knowledge about the EU affect their intentions to exercise active citizenship? To what extent are the EU values present in the life projects of the pupils? Does the pupils' knowledge about the opportunities offered by European citizenship affect how they prioritize their life goals?

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Authors / Autores

To know more / Saber más

Santana-Vega, Lidia E. (lsantana@ull.es)

Full professor at the University of La Laguna (Tenerife, Canary Islands). Head of the Research Group in Educational and Socio-Labor Guidance (GIOES). Fields of interest: secondary education, citizenship education, educational testing, gender differences, career guidance. Her postal address is: University of La Laguna - Facultad de Educación. A.C. 456 - 38200 San Cristóbal de La Laguna. S/C de Tenerife (España).



0000-0002-2543-6543



Feliciano-García, Luis (lfelici@ull.edu.es)

Professor at the University of La Laguna in the area of Educational Research. Member of the Research Group in Educational and Socio-Labor Guidance. Fields of interest: secondary education, citizenship education, educational testing, gender differences, career guidance. His postal address is University of La Laguna - Facultad de Educación. A.C. 456 - 38200 San Cristóbal de La Laguna. S/C de Tenerife (Spain).



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