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CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF THE TEACHER OF THE 1ST CYCLE OF BASIC EDUCATION

A. S. Costa¹, A. P. Cardoso¹, J. Rocha¹

¹Escola Superior de Educação, CI&DEI, Instituto Politécnico de Viseu (Portugal)

Abstract

Citizenship Education is being increasingly debated, due to social changes that are rapidly occurring. Nowadays, the school must take on new challenges that should be reflected in teachers' pedagogical practices. This is where school gains prominence as a main agent in the formation of active citizens, capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live, by educating them for citizenship. Therefore, the present investigation aimed to understand if Citizenship Education is a disciplinary area valued by teachers in the 1st Cycle of Basic Education (CEB) [years 1-4] in the classroom, based in their perspectives. For this, we tried to verify how often Citizenship Education is addressed, in the classroom; to know the importance attributed to this subject in the various areas of student training; to identify those responsible for selecting the content covered in Citizenship Education; and to analyse the thematic areas of Citizenship Education more and less worked on in the classroom. To this end, we carried out a descriptive research using a questionnaire sent to a non-probabilistic sample of ninety-one 1st CEB teachers working in the municipality of Viseu (Portugal). The data showed that teachers attribute relevance to Citizenship Education teaching in various areas of educational action, and approach it quite frequently in their teaching practice. It was also observed that content selection responsibility rests mainly over teachers and students, and that there are thematic areas of Citizenship little addressed, such as the European Dimension of Education, or the of Education for Entrepreneurship. Considering that school is a privileged space for citizenship development, it is required that teachers guide their pedagogical practices towards themes on which it is necessary to reflect, in order to promote the development of social skills from a very early age.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, pedagogical practice, teachers, 1st Cycle of Basic Education (1st CEB).

1 INTRODUCTION

UNESCO [1] considers education for sustainable development the highest goal of its education programme. It moves beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge and the development of cognitive skills to the building of values and attitudes among students. That way education is expected to facilitate international cooperation and promote social transformation in an innovative way towards a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, safe and sustainable world, and there is therefore a strong need to educate for global citizenship.

The concept of citizenship is the result of a social and historical construction that has been evolving over the past few years, and several authors have tried to come up with a definition for that concept. It is deeply linked to notions like freedom, equality and fraternity enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights (1948). According to Figueiredo [2], citizenship represents the quality of being a citizen, i.e., an

individual who belongs to a free state, who fully enjoys his civil and political rights and complies with all the obligations inherent to that condition.

Other authors, like Janoski [3] and Menezes [4], argue that citizenship relates to universal passive and active rights with a certain level of equality of subjects living in a nation-state. Thus, citizenship involves the recognition of one's own personality, includes the right to participate in the country's political life - active citizenship – and the right of existence - passive citizenship. Citizenship refers to universalistic rights and exists in accordance with the laws that all citizens have to comply with, and ensures, subject to certain limitations, the equality of all citizens.

One of the principles of the Portuguese Basic Law of the Educational System (LBSE), which relates directly to citizenship, states that education promotes the development of a democratic and pluralist spirit, respectful of others and of their ideas, open to dialogue and free exchange of opinions, forming citizens capable of judging with a critical spirit the social environment in which they live [5] (LBSE, art. 2, n.º 5, p.3068). That way, school and most of all the teachers are essential in promoting citizenship values, skills and attitudes in their students.

1.1 The role of 1st Cycle of Basic Education teachers in promoting citizenship

In our educational system, the 1st CEB is provided through a mono-teaching system (co-teaching is sometimes required, too). The specificity of this education level is essentially characterised by the existence of an integration curriculum as opposed to a multiple-subject learning [6]. The need to provide children, from the very beginning of their education, with a broad and comprehensive education that will make them socially active and involved students is increasingly relevant. In addition to developing students' skills in all the areas of their curriculum the acceptance of diversity and the acquisition and development of civic skills [7] need to be fostered.

The recognition of the role played by the teacher who is responsible for organizing his school environment is crucial to the development of citizenship skills in students. According to Beltrão and Nascimento [8], the cross-sectoral integration of citizenship education in all school subjects represents the best possible way to achieve good citizenship, since it promotes a non-compartmentalization of knowledge and learning and favours the development and application of new educational methodologies and strategies.

Although Citizenship Education as a school subject does not have a specific syllabus, there are many topics, principles and fundamental values that should be considered. According to the Decree-Law 139/2012, of July 5th this new subject is a cross-curricular area that can be addressed in all school subjects. Its teaching does not require the existence of a separate compulsory subject, but schools are free to choose how they want to deliver it to their students. The study "Education for Citizenship in Europe" [9] identifies four instrumental skills that have to be included in Citizenship Education classes: to develop political literacy, to acquire and develop critical thinking and analytical skills; to develop certain values, attitudes and behaviours, like respect, tolerance, solidarity; and to encourage students' active participation and intervention in their school as well as in their community.

1.2 New paths in the teaching of Citizenship Education in Portugal

Citizenship Education has gained special significance with the publication of different reference documents, such as the "Referencial de Educação para o Desenvolvimento – Educação Pré-Escolar, Ensino Básico e Ensino Secundário" (Education Framework for Development - Pre-School Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education), "Referencial de Educação Ambiental para Sustentabilidade" (Environmental Education Framework for Sustainability) and the "Referencial de Educação para o Risco (RERisco)" (Education Framework for Risk). Evidently, the goal of each and every of those different frameworks was to improve the way things had been conducted in this field.

The document entitled "Educação para a Cidadania – Linhas Orientadoras" (Education for Citizenship – Guidelines) suggests ten topics closely related to citizenship education. Education for Development is one of those topics and aims to raise awareness and provide a better understanding of the factors that may cause development problems and inequalities, at local and global levels, in a context of interdependence and globalization [10].

Adopted in August 2016, the Referencial Educação para o Desenvolvimento – Educação Pré-Escolar, Ensino Básico e Ensino Secundário (Education Framework for Development- Pre-School Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education) is a guiding document designed to regulate the teaching of Education for Development, as a dimension of Citizenship Education, and to promote its implementation

in pre-school education as well as in basic and secondary education. It encompasses a set of descriptors that cover the kind of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours students of those different levels of education have to develop

The *Estratégia Nacional de Educação para a Cidadania - ENEC* (National Strategy for Citizenship Education) adopted in 2017, includes a set of rights and obligations that must be present in the citizenship education of Portuguese children and teenagers [11], so that they can become citizens who will adopt a civic conduct that favours interpersonal equality in relationships, the acceptance of difference, the respect for human rights and the recognition of the concepts and values that are part of democratic citizenship. This strategy was implemented in the 2017-18 school year in public and private schools and is part of the *Autonomy and Curricular Flexibility Project* and takes into account the *Exit Profile of Students Leaving Compulsory Education* and promotes new directions for Citizenship Education in Portuguese schools.

In the newly created subject of *Citizenship and Development*, the teachers' mission is to prepare students for life, to be democratic, active and humanist citizens in a time of growing social and cultural diversity. In this subject, students are expected to learn through the pluralistic and responsible participation of all in the construction of their own citizenship and of a fairer and more inclusive society in accordance with all the democratic requirements, the respect for diversity and the defense of Human Rights [11].

To better develop all the work related to the subject of *Citizenship and Development*, schools are supported by a set of reference documents produced by the Directorate General of Education (DGE) in close cooperation with other partner organisations. In addition, the creation of the National Platform for Citizenship Education provides teachers with information and resources that will allow them to monitor and follow up the implementation of the ENEC and to share their personal practices and all the team work developed. These reference documents are guides that teachers may follow to approach the different thematic areas and include the objectives and suggestions on how the topics and activities shall be implemented and assessed in order to provide the necessary guidance and support to the work that will be developed in the different schools and to the teacher's practice.

However, the observations carried out and the supervision of 1st CEB intern teachers' practices showed that these reference documents are not generally considered when teachers are planning their Citizen Education classes. However, those documents are available online, can be easily accessed and contain a wide range of information and educational strategies that can be adopted.

Bearing all this in mind, a research study was outlined around the following question: What are teachers' perspectives regarding Citizenship Education in 1st CEB?

Some research goals were then raised:

- i) To check how often Citizenship Education is addressed by 1st CEB teachers in the classroom;
- ii) To understand the importance attached to Citizenship Education in the different areas of the students' education;
- iii) To identify those who are responsible for selecting the contents/topics addressed in Citizenship Education;
- iv) To analyze which Citizenship Education topics are more often addressed in class and which topics are less commonly addressed.

2 METHOD

2.1 Type of research

This research aimed to understand the teachers' perspective on Citizenship Education in 1st CEB schools, particularly with regard to the areas presented in the aforementioned objectives. Hence, a cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out [12] based on the collection of the teachers' perspectives.

The implementation of this study went through two distinct phases: in the first phase, we conducted a bibliographical research that involved, among others, the consultation of the different Citizenship Education reference documents and of the legislation produced. This research was important to update

the knowledge on the matter concerned. The second phase consisted of the data collection using a questionnaire applied to teachers that allowed us to provide answers to the questions raised.

2.2 Participants and their background

The study conducted included the 1st CEB teachers (public education) who were working in the municipality of Viseu. This is a non-probability sampling for convenience [13], since participants are conveniently available to the researcher.

Initially, our intention was to involve all the teachers from the five school groupings that are located the municipality, unfortunately one of the school principals declined our request, so the questionnaires were handed out to 132 teachers of the remaining four school groupings. 68.9% of them returned the questionnaire dully filled. As a result, the final sample included 91 teachers.

The overwhelming majority (84.6%) of respondents were female teachers aged between 45 and 59. The most important age groups included teachers whose age ranged between 45 and 49 years (27.5%) and those who were between 50 and 54 years old (26.4%). Most of the teachers (51.7%) have been working for more than 25 years and hold a Bachelor's degree.

2.3 Data collection instrument

Since we could not find any instrument previously used to deal with the topic concerned, a questionnaire addressed to 1st CEB teachers was developed. That data collection instrument included closed-ended questions and multiple-choice questions and used a Likert-like scale.

Before the questionnaires were administered, a pre-test was carried out with a small sample of teachers whose profile and backgrounds were identical to those who were taking part in the full-scale study but who were working in a different municipality. No problems or inaccuracies were detected.

We submitted the data collection instrument to the DGE so that the questionnaire could be analysed and we requested the DGE permission to administer the questionnaire in all the schools involved. The request was promptly granted with the information that it meets all the technical and methodological quality requirements.

2.4 Procedure

In addition to the authorization request from the DGE previously mentioned, we had to ask the principals of the different school groupings for permission to carry out our empirical study. The context of the research project and its objectives were dully explained. Informed consent was also requested from the teachers as they were completing the questionnaires.

Once all the authorizations were granted, we went to the 1st CEB schools to distribute the questionnaires to the coordinating teachers, who then handed them out to the different class teachers. The delivery and collection of the questionnaires was a relatively long process. It took us about two months to complete it since the participating schools were relatively distant from each other.

2.5 Data processing and analysis

Once the data collection phase was completed, we moved on to the analysis and processing of the data. This procedure made it possible to obtain results that can be interpreted in the research. The quantitative data was analysed using Descriptive Statistics, namely measuring absolute and relative frequency percentages, using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - SPSS, version 21.

3 ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

3.1 Frequency with which Citizenship Education is addressed

Teachers say they regularly include Citizenship Education-related topics in their lesson plans. Around three-quarters of respondents (74.7%) admit that these topics are part of their lesson plans at least once or twice a week. Only a small proportion of the respondents reports that they discuss citizenship-related contents every day (12.1%) or 3 to 4 times a week (5.5%)

Next, we tried to understand to what extent does the discussion of citizenship-related topics go beyond what was originally defined in the teachers' weekly or monthly lesson plans. We found out that 44% of

the teachers surveyed confirm that they address topics included in the Citizenship Education guidelines once or twice a week and 35.2% of them recognize that they do it every day. 17.6% of the teachers' state that they discuss citizenship-related topics 3 to 4 times a week. Only one of them claims that he has never addressed this kind of issues in his classes.

Data shows that, generally speaking, Citizenship Education is included in teachers' lesson plans once or twice a week. Only a small proportion of the participants admit they include citizenship topics in all their lesson plans. Even though Citizenship Education is not part of the teachers' lesson plans as regularly as it might be expected, the analysis of how often it is addressed shows that teachers discuss citizenship issues with their students in their classroom. However, we believe that these results are due to the fact that many teachers feel they are discussing citizenship issues when they talk with their students about their behaviour, for instance. In our opinion, this sort of interaction does not necessarily mean they are delivering Citizenship Education to their students.

3.2 The importance attached to Citizenship Education in the different areas of the students' education

Teachers' views on the importance attached to Citizenship Education in the different dimensions that form their educational action are quite favourable, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The importance of Citizenship Education in the different dimensions of the teacher's educational action

Scopes of educational action (formation of)	Nothing important		Little important		Important		Quite important		Very important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Responsible people	1	1.1	0	0	8	8.8	20	22.0	62	68.1
Autonomous people	1	1.1	0	0	15	16.5	21	23.1	54	59.3
Supportive people	1	1.1	0	0	9	9.9	18	19.8	63	69.2
People who respect others	1	1.1	0	0	7	7.7	17	18.7	66	72.5
People with a democratic spirit	1	1.1	0	0	14	15.4	21	23.1	55	60.4
Critical people	1	1.1	0	0	13	14.3	22	24.2	55	60.4

Teaching their students how to be responsible and volunteer-minded people who are respectful of others are the items that obtained the highest scores. This means that the overwhelming majority of the respondents consider these characteristics to be very important (68.1%, 69.2% and 72.5% respectively), or quite important (22.0%, 19.8% and 18.7% respectively).

The items with the lowest score were those related to the development of autonomous people whose behaviour reflects true democratic spirit and critical thinking. The teachers considered these characteristics to be very important (59.3% and 60.4% respectively), or quite important (23.1% and 24.2% respectively).

These findings clearly indicate that the teachers surveyed consider that Citizenship Education is crucial to raise responsible people respectful of others and who practice their solidarity. Less emphasis was placed on the efforts required to develop the students' autonomy, democratic spirit and critical thinking. It should however be noted that these characteristics are also widely valued by the respondents.

This means that most teachers are well aware of the relevance of Citizenship Education in 1st CEB, namely because of the way it helps develop students' civic awareness, an element that will prove crucial in the process of raising responsible, critical, and active citizens, as stated in Decree-Law N.º 6/2001 of January [14].

3.3 Responsibility for the selection of the contents/topics to be discussed

The contents/topics that will be addressed in Citizenship Education lessons must take into account the students' sociocultural backgrounds. That way, students should play a vital role in the choice of said topics. It is therefore relevant to understand who is responsible for selecting the contents/topics and to what extent is that responsibility shared.

Teachers and students are those who most frequently select the contents to be discussed (39.6%). Then, data shows that this decision is made by the Teachers Council (16.5%), by the teacher, by the students and the Teachers Council (15.4%), by the teacher and the Teachers Council (12.1%), or solely by the teacher (12.1%). The selection of contents/topics by the teacher, students and parents was referred by 3.3% of the respondents, and only 1.1% of them referred the joint intervention of the students and the Teaching Council in that selection. The items relating only to students, or parents, were not referred.

As can be seen, the teachers' opinions on who is truly responsible for choosing the contents that will be addressed differ and none of them considers that such task should be given specifically to students or to parents alone. This seems to show that the teachers' practices call into question one of the assumptions defined in the ENECN [11], that clearly advocates that local specificities and realities should be valued over abstract real life issues stripped of all real context - the importance of local diagnosis.

3.4 Thematic areas addressed in Citizenship Education classes

The Directorate General for Education [10] defines several thematic areas that will have to be addressed by the teachers in the classroom in order to ensure the development of a global citizenship (Table 2).

Table 2

Citizenship thematic areas that more often and less often discussed in the classroom

Thematic areas	Nothing evident		Not very evident		Evident		Very evident		Totally evident	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Human rights education	1	1.1	2	2.2	26	28.6	38	41.8	24	26.4
Environmental education/sustainable development	1	1.1	0	0	15	16.5	48	52.7	27	29.7
Education about Road safety	1	1.1	3	3.3	37	40.7	34	37.4	16	17.6
Financial education	3	3.3	24	26.4	35	38.5	24	26.4	5	5.5
Consumer education	3	3.3	13	14.3	43	4.3	24	26.4	8	8.8
Entrepreneurship education	7	7.7	28	30.8	32	35.2	19	20.9	5	5.5
Education for gender equality	2	2.2	1	1.1	26	28.6	39	42.9	23	25.3
Intercultural education	2	2.2	5	5.5	32	35.2	33	36.3	19	20.9
Education for development	4	4.4	11	12.1	40	43.9	24	26.4	12	13.2
Defense and security education / peace education	1	1.1	6	6.6	26	28.6	33	36.3	25	27.5
Volunteering	3	3.3	25	27.5	32	35.2	19	20.9	12	13.2

Education for the media	3	3.3	31	34.1	35	38.5	18	19.8	4	4.4
European dimension of education	6	6.6	31	34.1	33	36.3	16	17.6	5	5.5
Health and sexuality education	2	2.2	2	2.2	34	37.4	37	40.7	16	17.6

N=91

Evidence shows that some citizenship-related topics are very present or absolutely present in the kind of work teachers develop in their lessons: environmental education/sustainable development (52.7% and 29.7% respectively), education for gender equality (42.9% and 25.3% respectively), education for human rights (40.7% and 26.4% respectively), and SRH education (40.7% and 17.6% respectively) are those most commonly referred.

Then there are some other thematic areas that are barely present in the teachers' practice or absent from their daily practice, like consumer education (46.2% and 14.3%, respectively), education for development (41.8% and 12.1%, respectively) and road safety education (40.7% and 3.3%, respectively). The same seems to happen with topics like media literacy (38.5% and 34.1% respectively), the European dimension of education (34.1% and 36.3% respectively), entrepreneurship education (30.8% and 35.2% respectively) and volunteering (27.5% and 35.3% respectively).

The promotion of the concept of European identity does not seem to be a priority for the teachers surveyed. However, addressing this dimension of education is crucial as it promotes "a better knowledge of Europe and of the European Union, in particular of its institutions, its cultural and natural heritage and the challenges facing contemporary Europe" [15].

A study involving several different countries developed by Eurydice [16] on Citizenship Education in schools revealed that, as is the case in Portugal, the European dimension used to appear in specific subjects about citizenship and in many others, such as History, Geography, Political and Social Sciences, Environment, Literature, Music and Art. In addition, many countries have been devoting special attention to the teaching of foreign languages, seen as a way to become familiar with sociocultural diversity and to communicate with the peoples of Europe.

As for the dimension related to entrepreneurship education, the different research projects conducted in Portugal [17] and [18] show the benefits of addressing this dimension at school and aim at raising teachers' awareness of the importance of developing this kind of education in young students.

The study conducted by Rodrigues [18] revealed how teachers can develop students' skills by implementing creative activities and establishing connections with other areas of knowledge. The results showed that the activities implemented to develop entrepreneurship education were important to improve the students' skills and in the end it became clear that students were comfortable with the topic.

Some thematic areas are not addressed, or are less present in the teachers' daily practice, largely because few of them are aware of the reference documents provided by the Ministry of Education (e.g., Education Framework for Security, Defence and Peace; Health Education Framework; Media Literacy Framework; Road Safety Education Framework; Financial Education Framework, among others) and that are instrumental guiding documents for the implementation of these thematic areas in the classroom.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The Citizenship Education issue has been gaining increasing importance in today's society and represents one of the main concerns of the Portuguese Educational System that considers that education means the transmission of knowledge but should also contribute to raising people who are capable of living and coexisting in society.

In this study we sought to understand the perspectives of 1st CEB teachers on Citizenship Education and on the importance attached to it. Based on the results obtained, we concluded that the teachers participating in the study attach great importance to the Citizenship Education area. They admit that they include citizenship-related topics in their lesson plans at least once or twice a week and that they address said topics in their classes quite frequently. This is relevant because the educational action conducted in this field will contribute to the development of free, aware and skillful citizens.

Evidence also showed that most teachers considered that said area was very important in all the dimensions of their educational action. This importance is even greater in dimensions such as the shaping of responsible, volunteer-minded and supportive people who are respectful of others. This clearly means that teachers are aware of the importance of the formation of responsible, autonomous and supportive citizens who are aware of and exercise their rights and obligations through the dialogue and the respect for others, driven by a democratic, pluralistic, critical and creative mind [15] and capable of living in society.

The contents that will be addressed are generally selected by the teacher, or by the teacher and his students, or by the students and the Teachers Council. On the other hand, the participation of other educational actors, namely the parents, is much less evident. This goes against the guidelines defined in the ENEC [11], which stresses the need to start from the concrete experiences of the learners to develop their sense of citizenship. Bearing all this in mind, it would be important for teachers to include all the actors who form the educational community in the students' learning, in the decision making process that will involve the choice of the contents/topics to be discussed. This cooperative and/or collaborative work logic is even more significant because this joint action will reinforce the community's commitment to pursue the ideals of democratic citizenship.

In the classroom, the Citizenship Education thematic areas that teachers value the most, those that teachers claimed to be an important part of their daily practices, were environmental education/sustainable development, education for gender equality and education for human rights. The thematic areas that teachers seemed to value less in their classroom work were the European dimension of education and entrepreneurship education. This situation may partly be due to the widespread lack of knowledge of the reference documents developed and made available online by the Ministry of Education and whose aim is to assist teachers in their classroom work.

Teachers can become aware of the existing Citizenship Education thematic areas by attending training sessions that will deal with those topics. These training sessions will be crucial to make teachers aware of the existing reference documents or frameworks that will later be developed and adapted to the educational practice of each one of the teachers through a collaborative action. This position runs contrary to the idea that training programmes are only useful to create teaching material and learn new ways to address issues.

We realize that this research has some limitations, since the study could not include all the school groupings of the municipality of Viseu. That way, our conclusions cannot be generalized to the general population and have to remain confined to the surveyed sample. Another limitation of this study is the scarcity of empirical studies conducted in 1st CEB institutions focusing on this issue that made it difficult for us to compare this study with others already carried out and to get the backing we needed to better support some of our conclusions.

Comparing the data obtained with the legal documents that guide the teachers' educational practice, such as the Educational Projects of the School Groupings and with their annual, monthly or weekly lesson plans remains a possibility that can be seized in future studies. It will then be possible to establish more effective relationships between theory and practice, i.e., between what is expected to happen and what actually happens in the everyday life of a classroom.

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