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Citizenship Education in Spain: Current Perspectives in a Diverse Society

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Abstract

In Spain citizen education had been reflected across the educational system. Nevertheless, at secondary level these areas are diluted in the daily material and relegated or simply forgotten. The recent Statutory Law of Education has taken a further step. The law includes a mandatory citizenship curriculum. The purpose of this paper is to analyse this process. The paper focuses on the evolution of citizenship education in the Spanish curricula at secondary schools. The research design is based on interviews with responsible persons in different autonomous communities and content analyses of textbooks. Key questions are focused on the delivery process and the models of citizenship education. This exploratory study is part of one research project conducted at national level.

Decentralisation is deeply rooted in Spain's history. Since 1978 it has been at the heart of the political scenario and having a strong imprint in many public policies as education. In this way, the Spanish Constitution declares that education will be decentralized. The competences are distributed among the state, the Autonomous Communities and the city councils. The truth is that the Education Ministry plays a role as a cooperative leader. In consequence, the Spanish education system combines national directives with a decentralized structure that gives great weight to the seventeen Spanish autonomous communities.

The Ministry should ensure an adequate supply and quality. Among the function, it should mention the edition of the National Curriculum. This is detailed in a specific Act that includes objectives, minimum contents and assessments criteria that every Autonomous Community must take into account for develop its own subject curriculum.

In May 2006, citizenship became a new statutory foundation subject in the Spanish curriculum. Due to the new Education Act, the current National Curriculum (RD 1631/2006, December 29th) incorporates a mandatory citizenship competence. It could be said that the general aim is to train students in order to practice their rights and responsibilities as citizens. It includes two subjects on citizenship for secondary education. The first one, *Education for citizenship and Human Rights*, is compulsory in secondary education. A second one, Ethic-civic education, is placed in post compulsory secondary education.

This topic raised doubts and opposition among different social agents (politicians, Catholic Church, families' associations) and it could be said that it become the centre of

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education debate. Therefore, the implementation of citizenship in secondary schools has been fraught with difficulty. In seven communities the subject has been implemented during the course of 2007/8 and many books by commercial publishers have been edited.

This paper focuses on the evolution of citizenship education curricula at secondary schools. The analysis of the Citizenship National Curriculum will serve as a path for reflection about the objectives, contents and assessments. It is an exploratory study as a part of one research project conducted at national level: *What citizenship education is needed? Proposals since a research about teachers' and students' ideas and attitudes on citizenship education*. The research is supported with funds from the Dirección General de Investigación Científica y Técnica, Spain (SEJ2007-64719/EDUC).

Background

In 2004, the Spanish Ministry of Education published a document entitled "*An education of quality for all and among all*" which speaks, explicitly, of citizen education that allows an active participation in democratic society. Until that moment, citizen education had been reflected right across the educational system. A relevant role was assigned to this field, considering it as a vertebral axis of transversality (Naval and Laspalas, 2000). It constituted a "*global project of humanization*". Nevertheless, especially at secondary level, these areas are diluted in the daily material and excessively relegated, or simply forgotten in comparison with the traditional materials.

At that time, citizenship was most commonly integrated in other subjects (History, Latin) or offered as a cross-curricular issue (Eurydice, 2005). In practice, the diversity was the main characteristic. A great variety of approaches offered a wide panorama, from a narrow interpretation (provide whole-day events, keep out of sight across the curriculum) to a broader view which advocates engagement of the whole school community. Some schools were concerned about preparing young people to participate as cosmopolitan citizens, capable of shaping the future of their communities. They also provided a number of opportunities for pupils to be involved in citizenship education through school councils and through clubs in and out of schools (Feito & García, 2007; Maiztegui & Eizaguirre, 2008). However, research is needed to know the rates of the provision offered, and participation figures.

It should be mentioned in passing that NGOs have been quite effective in providing support for citizenship education. Especially, their contributions appear to be quite significant in providing materials, packs, and web-based resources to support global education in the school sector (Maiztegui, 2006).

Some pedagogical innovative experiences (red Atlantida or Learning communities) have been pioneered in citizenship education (Luengo Orcajo, 2005). Inspired in the *Brasilian Democratic Schools* and Paulo Freire's theory of autonomy, those pedagogical movements are aware that schools run the risk of becoming isolated from culture, community and parents. Therefore, one of the main features of these initiatives is partnerships with parents and local community. An option based on equalitarian dialogue. Another characteristic is the equity principles of those movements. Those movements gave life to interesting experiences about democratic citizenship at schools (Feito & García, 2007). In this case, many of the investigations fall under the section of case studies. These publications are framed in the sociocritical and hermeneutical

paradigm that seeks to create actors conscious of the causal determinants of their beliefs and practices. We can see that, compared to other European countries, there is only a little empirical research in the field of education and citizenship.

In that diverse context, in 2006, the Statutory Law of Education¹ was approved. It took a further step in the development of citizenship education. According to this Act, it is provided that, among the education objectives, the importance to prepare students for the active practice of citizenship and the respect to human rights: “to develop participation capacities for social, cultural, political and economical life and to make effective their right to democratic citizenship”². In fact, citizenship became a new statutory foundation subject curriculum to be allocated in primary and secondary education.

The Spanish obligatory educational system extends from six to sixteen years. The stage of Obligatory Secondary Education includes four years that correspond with the first years of secondary school (12-16 years), divided into two cycles of two years each. The obligatory period is completed with a further two years of non-obligatory education that allow direct access to university. Regarding the new citizenship subject in secondary education, a first course, *Education for citizenship and Human Rights*, is placed in compulsory education. A second one, *Ethic-civic education*, is located in post secondary education.

Its currency has made it the object of great controversy and, consequently, both praise and criticism. On the one hand, the favourable opinions are based on the idea that to create a good citizen an educational effort is required. In addition, it is considered that this is an opportunity to make explicit content and values that have often been relegated to the hidden curriculum. Some defending persons of citizenship education criticised the Law because they considered that citizenship goes beyond information and requires the practical involvement of the citizens. On the other hand, some social actors³ did not approve the mandatory courses. They argued that the choice of values is a difficult subject of consensus, between families, teaching staff and the Ministry. From this perspective, the necessity of a plurality of options was an central argument, since they fear that an official ideology, contrary to their own ideals, will be transmitted through the citizenship subject.

The debate about citizenship education must be seen in the context of recent political situation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that recent Spanish political atmosphere was characterized by the confrontation between the main political parties (Socialist party and Popular party). This environment had an influence in this topic, different position even went to the awareness objection that some families submit to the State. In this sense, the well-known philosopher Victoria Camps (2007) asserts that social life and the debate about citizenship reproduces the confrontation between political parties and it has the risk to give a *coup de grace* to social debates. According to her this controversy could flow into a passive citizenship.

It is important to consider that a liberal state has the right to promote values on children from diverse community. However, government undoubtedly represents beliefs about ways of living that will be not subscribed by all citizens. As Mark Pike (2007)

¹ Ley Orgánica de la Educación (LOE), May 2006 (BOE 04-05-2006).

² Statutory Law of Education (LOE) (BOE 04-05-2006).

³ Some hierarchy of Catholic Church and the Popular Party should be mentioned.

concludes: “*the extent to which state-sponsored values are promoted might indicate the degree to which students are respected as citizens or treated as subject*” (p.472). The complexity of citizenship could have been a scenario for a deep social debate, it seems to us that the political situation obstructed it. Now, the debate is mainly forgotten, the objection is quite an anecdote, several text books have been published on this topic and seven Autonomous Communities introduced this subject in September 2007. Although it should remember that other Autonomous Communities have not clear lines for next courses.

Citizenship National Curriculum: Social and civic competencies

In this section we look at social and civic competence, included at the National Curriculum, and directions about citizenship education courses, and present a content analyse of the official document. Conceptual and contextual perspectives allow us to illustrate different elements across the curriculum.

Education for citizenship is one of the great modern narratives of education, which indicates a utopian path to improve the individual and to turn him or her into an active citizen, conscious of his or her rights and duties. This responsible citizen will have the necessary capacities and sufficient interest to participate in public life, at local and global level (Council of Europe, 2001). We are dealing with a narrative, in the sense of constituting a general orientation that makes sense of speeches and directs the social debate (Gimeno Sacristan, 2003). The Spanish Curriculum reflects these aims:

“to understand the reality, cooperate, live together and practice democratic citizenship in a plural society as well as getting involved in making a better society” (p.688)

The general idea is that all young people are to become responsible citizens who will make a positive contribution to the society. The text explains it: “*education should allow young people to assume the exercise of individual and social rights and duties in a respectful atmosphere towards other persons and other moral, politics and religious visions*” (p.715). It continues “*identify citizens’ duties and exercise civic habits in the school environment will give an opportunity to initiate cohesive societies characterised by freedom, prosperity, equity and justice*” (p.715). Previous quotations include some central concepts. We are going to comment three aspects. First, the model of citizenship, second the context of plurality and third the ideal of social cohesion.

First, citizenship is obviously a complex concept which is constantly changing. Since Marshall first crafted citizenship as an explanatory framework to explain legal, political and social rights, a wide variety of distinguished scholars have used this theory. Concerning the model of citizenship, the concept of democratic citizenship developed by the Council of Europe shapes the horizon. Duties and rights constitute key elements of this process. That means that a citizen ceases to be a mere depositary of rights, and becomes an individual who seeks participation in areas of empowerment (Hopenhaym, 2001).

In terms of practice, this active citizen is associated with participation. This suggest that schools need to be built around democratic decision-making practices. The Council of Europe considers that “*participation is concerned with ensuring that each individual can take her/his place in society and contribute to its development at whatever level it may*

be” (Council of Europe, 2001). We speak of equipping people with a commitment to act and resources for participation in public space (Banks, 1997). Responsibility is mentioned among civic values. Pike (2007) has suggested that the notion of social responsibility mediates between the two core liberal values, freedom and equality, and it is intended to ensure that important choices and activity are based on logically consistent rational justification.

Second, a context of diversity. Increased diversity and increased recognition of diversity require a re-examination of the ends of citizenship education (Banks, et al, 2005). As other countries, Spain has become a country of migration. This situation is a recent phenomenon, which arrives after an uneven development. Between 1975 and 1985 the foreigner population increased 76.682 persons and twenty years later, between 1995 and 2006, the number of foreigner residents grow in 2.304.530 persons (Secretaría de Estado de Inmigración y Emigración, 2006). These trends have resulted in a growing representation of international migration in the Spanish population (around 10.20% in 2006). At school system the increase is significant. There were 57.406 pupils in 1995-96, the number increased to 420.350, in 2005-06 (Plan Nacional de Inmigración, 2007). Spain is hosting a large number of people from Morocco, Ecuador, Colombia and Rumania.

Diversity appears across the document. It explains that citizenship competence “*involves understanding the social reality, using an ethical judgement based in democratic values when confronting the conflicts derived from living together situations and exercising citizenship*”. The National Curriculum holds that citizenship will necessarily include human rights and ethic development. However, it is interesting to note that a sense of shared values as abstract concepts is not seen as an especially effective approach to support cohesion. On the contrary, tangible and meaningful in day-to-day life experiences are more often cited as effective (Communities and Local Government, 2007). A look at this issue reveals the importance of participation in deliberation with other groups.

Citizenship requires individuals to imagine themselves in a community and every community is constituted by a multiplicity of narratives. Therefore, sharing citizenship means seeing and sharing our own narratives with those of others (Kratsborn, Jacott and Ocel, 2008). In a context of cultural and religious diversity, Mark Pike remembers (2007a) that “*Education for democratic citizenship is necessarily tied to the values of a specific form of government and a ‘democratic society is one in which certain moral and interpersonal values prevail’ It is therefore vital for young citizens to compare the values underpinning the citizenship curriculum they follow at schools with the values they acquire in their communities and homes*” (pp. 473). The true is that members are bound to each other by interdependence, rather than shared values (Kratsborn, Jacott & Ocel, 2008).

It seems clear that Spanish Curriculum emphasizes gender mainstreaming⁴. Despite notable gains in the last few decades, gender inequality continues to impinge women’s ability to realize their rights and the full potential as partners in the development of society. Although the education enrolment figures for girls may be comparable with those for boys, even at the University level (50,26%) (Instituto de la Mujer, 2005),

⁴ It appears among aims, objectives and contents.

important questions surrounding citizenship and women confront this scenario. Women are perceived as active in different domains but men usually have higher levels roles (Flecha, Puigvert, Santos & Soler, 2002). For instance, they are less represented at work and political participation ratio also are quite low. This approach is coherent with other national policies developed by Socialist government. One of the most striking examples is the Act *Effective equality between men and women*⁵, it was approved as a key project during the first Zapatero administration period.

Third, social cohesion. The concept of social cohesion not only includes the notion of common sense but also the idea of a society in which similar life opportunities are available. It relates more than respect for diversity to encouraging positive relationship between different groups. Definitively, it suggests the importance of building a common future (Commission of Integration and Cohesion, 2007). According to the mandatory Spanish curriculum, citizenship education become a instrumental tool to improve social cohesion. "*identify duties and the derived assumption and exercise of civic habits in the schools and social environment will allow students to initiate in the building of a cohesion society*".

The role of education in the construction of a fairer and more equitable society is neither obvious nor banal. Nevertheless, this discourse runs the risk of becoming a stereotype. It should not be forgotten that the debate on education, equity, and integration carries with certain internal conflicts. Institutional education appears to have a twofold effect on the situation of migrants, women, minorities and excluded groups (Santibañez & Maiztegui, 2005). On the one hand, education offers the opportunity to get ahead in society. On the other hand, research shows that the decrease in acts of discrimination has led to little reduction in certain (economic, political and psychological) dynamics that immobilise certain groups and which constitute barriers to their self-determination (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2000).

A sense of belonging is a prerequisite to be a participative citizen and experiences of discrimination undermine it (Banks, 1997; Osler & Starkey, 2005). This situation explains why discussion about migration, inclusion and citizenship is perceived as such a complex topic. In this context, a basic challenge is to reconcile the recognition of multiplicity ways of life, experiences and aspirations with the equalitarian structure of citizenship (Bauböck and Rundell, 1998). We comment two possible barriers to community cohesion in Spanish society:

1. The concentration of immigrant children in particular schools. In Europe, they tend to be congregated more in areas of high urban density, the public network and in the context of low socio-economic levels (Eurydice, 2005). One of the most striking examples is the Spanish case. In Spain, studies show that most of these children study at public establishments (78 per cent), with around 20 per cent attending private ones (Defensor del Pueblo 2003). This distribution disparity means that certain schools need to encourage a higher number of immigrant students to attend, while the local population chooses others. It can not be denied that there is a risk of segregating different groups and forming 'ghetto' schools.

⁵ Ley Igualdad efectiva entre hombre y mujeres, (16/03/2007). Instrument for equality in labour market, policy and social contexts.

2. *Prejudices and stereotypes against minorities.* Spaniard attitude of contempt towards immigrants has increased fourfold (from 8% to 32%) in the last years, (CIS, 2007). The “least valued” of immigrants are citizens of Moroccan nationality. There are also more manifestations of xenophobia. However and luckily, these acts are isolate incidents (Lorente & Alonso, 2007). More subtle discrimination actions are presented and children of immigrant suffer more violence (Aguado, 2006; Centro Reina Sofia, 2005). Another matter of concern is the rise of racist violence at schools, especially fuelled by students who have affinity with the far right towards students of immigrant origin (Lorente & Alonso, 2007).

How can we overcome those barriers? The problem of inclusion and exclusion plays a crucial role when dealing with the questions surrounding participation and diversity (Van Steenberger, 1994). Individual will behave according to their perception of participation in society. The feeling to be included would make easy to become better citizens. Whereas, exclusion leads to detachment from society (Kratsborn, Jacott & Ocel, 2008). The Spanish Act alludes to the “*necessity of sense of belonging and a common vision*”. In new dynamic societies, educator should incorporate this redefined citizenship that give way to expanding cultural representations. Regarding this aim, the role of schools should vary depending on the diversity rates. The British Department of Children, Schools and Families⁶ stresses that in schools with diverse pupils population, the activities aimed at supporting “*pupils form different ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other, will be contributing towards community cohesion. For other schools where the pupil population is less diverse or predominantly of one socio-economic ethnic, religious or non-religious background, more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between children and young people form diverse backgrounds*” (2007: 6).

Citizenship national Curriculum: contents, methodologies and assessment

Normally, citizenship education involves political literacy, the development of critical thinking and certain attitudes and values, and finally an active participation (Crick, 1998). The mandatory Spanish curriculum mentions those dimensions the knowledge, values and the development of critical thinking. In the chapter about objectives, Spanish Act includes thirteen capacities without making difference between the two proposed courses. Whereas, both contents and evaluation paragraphs include differences for every course. Among the objectives understanding the difference, culture, gender diversity. Human rights acts as background we point out the transversal notion of make their own decisions, and take responsibility main objectives: to develop political literacy, to develop the attitudes and values needed to become responsible citizens and to stimulate active participation.

During the first course, human relations and Human Rights are organised around five topics:

1. Common contents

⁶ It could be remember that recently a new Spanish Ministry on Social Affairs and Education follows this British organization instead of the classical one divided into two different ministries: Education and Social Affairs.

2. Human relationship and participation. Family, handicap people, participation in social context
3. Civic duties and Rights.
4. Democratic societies in the XXI century.
5. Citizenship in a global world.

In the second group ethics is an important dimension. In this course, six contents are identified:

1. Common contents
2. Identity and alterity. Emotional education
3. Ethics theories. Human rights
4. Ethic and policy. Democracy. Constitutional values.
5. Social problems in present world.
6. Men and women equality

Resources produced by commercial publishers provide activities to develop skills of enquiry, reflection and communication rather than participation. Different units provide materials to explore complex issues and reflect on their own involvement in these topics. As it was above mentioned, citizenship programme of study provides content to be developed. Texts books identify human rights as a framework of universal values to explore a wide range of issues as human rights, the political role of United Nations, democracy, taxes, etc. The emphasis is on providing background knowledge about these topics that are considered units of work. In general, different case studies introduce a topic (global society, living together, human rights, discrimination), there are also activities about the comprehension of readings. Another repeated methodological proposals are comment about articles by different authors and questions and comments about the students' own experiences. As the experiences of other countries shows to us, the risk is the limited opportunities to explore values and attitudes that underpin knowledge and understanding and skills elements (Ibrahim, 2005). This could lead to simplistic interpretations if citizenship education.

Becoming a knowledgeable and engaged citizen is a process, and education should facilitate the development of consciousness (Banks, et al, 2005). Citizenship education should help student to examine issues and questions about major social topics (human rights, justice, race, gender, religion, disability) in a comparative way. Analysing different approaches that more help students to learn, Kerr and his team (2007), point out two strategies. Each of them require different teacher's abilities:

- *Discussion and debate.* This strategy appears to be effective only where the teacher or facilitator have good skills and is able to keep the discussion under control.
- *Small group work.* In this case there is a need to ensure that students are kept on task by supporting work activities and offering direction.

In a broad sense it is close to the concept of transformative learning which refers to *“the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-set) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective. It involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of other to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulted insight”* (Mezirow, 2000:16). In fact, it is assumed that student’s experiences of citizenship influence their commitment to values of social justice and equity and respect for diversity (Ibrahim, 2005). In fact citizenship education is more than a course or a subject.

Citizenship education requires the formation of related values, attitudes and opportunities for students to become engaged in debates and also in practical activities. It implies the development of skills to analyse complex issues and reflect on values. The Spanish Curriculum recognized the relationship between citizen competence and other competencies as *learn how to learn, autonomy and personal initiative and linguistic communication* (p.717). The risk is to over emphasize the last ones, just following the commercial published resources. This reflection introduces the topic of teachers’ role in citizenship education.

In Spain, the role of coordinate citizenship has fallen to teachers from other subject areas. Teachers of social sciences are responsible for the first course, and Ethic’s teachers will assume the second course.

Concerning teachers involvement, they need to provide meaningful opportunities for students to actively participate in school, family and community based activities. Today teachers received some help by the education government technician, however there is a need for specific training. The fact that implementation of citizenship is being left to non-specialist could suggest that in practice citizenship is being given a low priority. As Kerr (2007) point out there is not always possible for citizenship to be taught by a small team of skilled teachers or teachers with enthusiasms for the subject. A key problem in this regard is when teachers have not a clear understanding of what citizenship entails. Then, books become the key instrument to follow the course.

Evaluation is not a trivial issue. The Act includes several criteria. Most of them are concerned about the recognition, knowledge, understanding and expression of some concept (*Recognise human rights as main ethic reference for human behaviour, Identify and express the main ethic theories, understanding the historical meaning of democracy*). Other evaluation items emphasize the value associated to peace culture, the difficulty will come when teachers should assess this competencies in ordinary life, (*show civic attitudes related to environment care, assume responsibilities*). In general, the assessment of citizenship curriculum is problematic because commonly used assessment strategies (written tasks, student portfolios, observation) may lead to difficulty in accessing some objectives. Consequently, schools have to define the evaluation systems for recognising student’s achievement.

Some challenges for citizenship education

A great challenge that faces education is to be able to assist people in the process of learning to know, to do, to coexist and to be, in agreement with the four pillars of education established in the UNESCO Delors report. This challenge is reflected in the

project of a prepared, active, critical and responsible citizen who feels able to participate in public life (Eurydice, 2004; Council of Europe, 2001).

Diversity presents a challenge for citizenship education. Schools must deal with diversity and with the companion concept unity (Banks, et al, 2005). The first one refers to differences and variation, and the second one about the common bonds that are essential to a cohesive society. The balance between these two pools constitutes another challenge for Spanish education system.

Besides, it must be remember that the breadth of the aim of citizenship curriculum may account for some difficulties. The National curriculum mentions two approaches, education about citizenship and education for citizenship. It is designed to produce informed and politically literate citizens (education about citizenship). At the same time, citizenship education aim to produce active citizens with a commitment to values and behaviours (education for citizenship). This is especially problematic as far as assessment is concerned (Pike, 2007).

For citizen education, the school constitutes a microcosm of society in which to learn and practise citizenship, but this only happens when the management, the teaching staff and the rest of the personnel give pupils the opportunity to do so in daily life. In summary, this type of education entails a restructuring of the system, where the pupils are given the possibility of participating in decision-making in an open and democratic way (Council of Europe, 2001).

In this situation, several challenges in their work are presented to the teaching staff:

- To use new methods of education that leads to independent learning by the pupils and surpass the mere transmission of content.
- To strengthen the active methodologies that allow the development of critical and comprehensive thought by the pupils.
- To develop the values and feelings of the pupils, so that they feel like members of a community, and at the same time to make identifications with other, more distant geographic spheres to develop the dimension of globality.
- To coordinate with other social agents, since the work of education for citizenship is the responsibility of diverse social agents.

In accordance with these affirmations, teachers would have to extend their professional tasks, traditionally cantered in academic aspects. Also, they would have to remember that a key to success does not reside in the implantation of the subject, but in the suitable education of the teaching staff in conceptual and methodological aspects and those related to citizenship itself. Those challenges offer a series of issues, which requires further exploration during the course of our research.

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