

## **Paper for Workshop V.: Education for Sustainability and Intercultural Learning (projects)**

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### **“Citizenship Education in the Curriculum”**

*The aim* of our research has been to analyse how integrated textbooks of Social Science, Natural Science and Technology (1), written for primary school children (6-12 years old), deal with the issues of education for democratic citizenship encompassed within the European framework and the Spanish education reforms. Firstly, we analysed the contents considered and the contexts in which they are presented. Secondly, we analysed the group activities from the perspective of the citizenship competences that they promote. In both cases, having defined the categories, we then proceeded with a twofold research methodology consisting of both a qualitative description of the contents and their quantification, in order to illustrate the image of desirable knowledge presented by textbooks, as well as the underlying educational approaches.

*As far as contents are concerned* we identified any content related to citizenship education, such as responsibility, participation, conflict resolution, diversity and human rights (2). Then we carried out the quantitative analysis, in accordance with the so-called ‘spatial analysis of content’ (Johnsen 1996, Ninnes 2002), which consists of analysing textbooks page-by-page, in order to calculate the amount of space contents oriented towards democratic citizenship in general, as well as the frequency with which each individual category (responsibility, participation, conflict resolution, diversity and human rights) appears, in terms of the total number of pages in the book. Finally, we described how these contents are presented.

1- Textbooks select specific types of contents and scales within the available range and then focus on them to a greater or lesser extent, thus configuring a specific perception of citizenship. In most of the cases textbooks limit themselves to providing nothing more than an informative overview. In this sense, the results of the study coincide with those of other works which point to a strong tendency within the curriculum towards a superficial treatment of these topics (Kerr 1999, Morris and Cogan 2001). Furthermore, and somewhat paradoxically, this tendency towards a merely descriptive treatment is more pronounced in the final years of primary school, and in the case of some publishers, the situation is further aggravated by the fact that certain contents considered to be of vital importance are not even included in the textbooks, or if they are, are treated in a perfunctory manner. In short, it seems that the textbook publisher selected by the school has a significant influence on the extent to which themes related to democratic citizenship are dealt with in the classroom. Similarly, the number and type of contexts presented by the textbooks indicate a clear bias in the examples studied, as well as widely different perspectives for intervention in relation to the future citizen. In this way, the choice of textbook can be seen to exert a strong influence over which contents and values are dealt with, and the quality of the treatment provided.

2- There is a general tendency, clearly visible in all the textbooks analysed, to focus in particular on habits, rules and obligations. It is certain that a good citizen should be accustomed to respecting the codes, rules and obligations of basic reference groups (family, school). However, we believe that from the point of view of democratic citizenship, responsibility should not be limited to complying with established rules and regulations. Responsibility implies a) care and concern for others, b) an ability to foresee the consequences and effects that our actions will have on other people, and

c) an understanding and concern for the consequences of our actions (Crick 1998). Unfortunately, however, this approach is barely present at all in the textbooks studied. In fact, conflict resolution based on responsible analysis is only dealt with by two of the four publishing firms analysed, and even then it accounts for only a very low percentage of contents. On the other hand, we were surprised at the somewhat cursory attention paid to reflective and critical skills, to which theoretical ideals attach so much importance (Dürr, Spajic and Ferreira 2000, Hicks 2001, Marco Stiefel 2002). In this sense, we should perhaps ask ourselves whether by paying too much attention to the acquisition of habits and the importance of obeying rules we are not contributing to the construction of an image of an essentially obedient and passive citizen. We believe this is the case, unless these contents are accompanied by others focusing positively on conflict resolution and active participation.

3) Similarly, we believe that a responsible citizen who complies with and respects rules and conventional social habits will be unable to respond adequately to the challenges posed by modern democratic societies, unless, of course, he or she is also willing to 'participate' actively. Paradoxically, if democratic processes and principles are learned through personal experience (Kaplan 1997, Chilcoat and Ligon 1998, Potter 2002) then many doubts tend to arise. What type of citizen are we creating when we provide students with theoretical knowledge regarding democratic institutions but rarely give them the opportunity of connecting this knowledge with their everyday lives? Can we really expect to train responsible, participatory citizens if we refuse to analyse and discuss the basics of democracy (only one publishing firm does this)? In fact only two publishing firms (the same ones that deal with conflict resolution) focus on active participation and the direct involvement of students, but even in these cases, such contents are confined to the first years of primary school; which in turn raises another question: why is it that such questions are put to one side at exactly the moment at which students become mature enough to really appreciate them?

4) The concept of diversity is treated mainly from an informative perspective, with few opportunities being offered for critical reflection. In this sense, we agree with the Council of Europe when it states that in a multicultural Europe 'it is vital to recognise diversity and the cultural and political rights of minority groups' and that 'rights cannot exist without responsibilities and responsibilities cannot exist without the right to enjoy conditions which enable each citizen to contribute to and participate in society' (Belanger 1999:17-18). In this sense, is it not vital for textbooks to go beyond merely providing a physical description of these concepts and to treat the problems surrounding 'multiple identities' or 'the rights of minority groups' in a more open way?

5) We were surprised by the scarce attention paid by the textbooks analysed to the concept of human rights, which is dealt with by only two of the publishing firms during the last two years of primary school, especially since 'human rights form the basis of the law in democratic societies' and constitute the priority axis of citizenship education (Audigier 1999). The publishing firms that deal with this concept generally opt for a fairly factual approach, accompanied by a number of activities which enable students to develop a critical knowledge of the theme. Nevertheless, operational and functional knowledge regarding the defence of human rights is not dealt with, causing the training provided to fall short of the ideal of active citizenship.

6) We do not believe it would be right to talk about the type of citizen promoted by 'textbooks' in general, since there are a number of clearly differentiated trends. Nevertheless, it is evident that publishing firms which give priority to instilling respect for established rules and which focus mainly on factual descriptions of political institutions and different cultures do not offer the same possibilities as those which pay more attention to processes of conflict resolution and promote more direct student participation.

*As far as activities are concerned* we started out by reviewing one-by-one all the activities of the textbooks in the sample, to then go on and pull out those that could be classified as interactive, i.e. not individual. Furthermore we recorded the actions required for each activity (using the infinitive verb: describe, comment, debate, survey, create) and the guidelines provided. In this way, we allocated a typology to each group activity and counted the number of activities within each type (group activities that foster psychomotor skills, group activities that contribute to the development of cognitive skills, group activities that require a reply to social matters, activities fostering group decision-making, group activities that require creation, group projects) as well as the total percentages of group activities.

1) It is patently clear that not all activities involving working with others foster the development of active citizenship skills to the same degree. Textbooks choose certain kinds of activities and levels from those available and provide them with greater or lesser presence and that choice represents a specific citizenship option. The very limited percentage of more facilitating activities (or their gradual reduction and even disappearance) is striking, especially as regards those involving decision-making, creativity or projects in all textbooks, but in different ways. Once again the election of textbook is very important. What is paradoxical is that if citizenship competences (Durr *et al.*, 2000; Morris & Cogan, 2001; Marco Stiefel, 2002) are limited and focus mainly on the early years of education, and even stop appearing in certain publishers, are we really preparing participatory citizens, able to understand and exercise their responsibilities, especially if we do not foster any fundamental competences for this, or if they are limited to the first years of education?. Only very few activities focus on promoting co-operative work (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Nevertheless, we should recognise that some textbooks truly make full use of the potential of project-work, thereby actively engaging with the spirit of active teaching, promoting teamwork in different tasks that require building, organising and planning.

2) On the other hand, there are very noticeable differences between publishers. Despite these differences, however, there is a clear tendency to only partially take into account educational psychology recommendations. The actions of asking, valuing, comparing opinions, drawing conclusions and reaching a consensus which are supposedly necessary for group work are fairly minority and are rather the exception than the rule. Even more infrequent are debating activities structured around materials and documents, where different or problematic viewpoints are compared or issues for conflict resolution are dealt with.

3) Out-of-school activities are generally scarce, so the possibility of opening a student up to an adult social world is limited to a very small number of experiences (the family, some sectors of the labour market and to a lesser extent experts on a subject or group and institutional representatives). Many of these activities are optional, so the integration of the school into the community with a view to the social acquisition of knowledge is limited. Hence, if an activity is aimed at information-collecting or commenting, we ought to be wondering to what extent active and co-operative learning is encouraged if information elaboration is minimal? Having said this, there are also activities that try to get the information collected from the world outside the school to be dealt with in a more co-operative fashion, through the preparation of tables, murals or conclusions. Nevertheless, there are only very few cases in which operational proposals are made that encourage the participation of students in improving the community

*Finally*, we should point out that the analysis we have made here should be compared to other pieces of research, thus widening the sample of publishers and geographical contexts. This would enable us to a) get to know the predominant publishing tendencies for the models; b) carry out transnational research and c) specify the scope

and means of developing the different publishing proposals within the school reality. In short, we believe that all of this will allow us to find out more about the citizenship models being proposed, upon which school practice is based.

## Notes

(1) The sample of 24 textbooks was selected on the basis of three fundamental criteria. Firstly, all books analysed were textbooks, given that such publications constitute one of the key didactic resources available to teachers. Secondly, the study focused on Social Science, Natural Science and Technology books (one joint publication after the educational reform), since this area of the curriculum offers a wider range of possibilities for the inclusion of this type of content than certain other areas (such as Mathematics, for example). And thirdly, all the textbooks included in the sample were published between 1992 and 1999, given that it is from this moment onwards that we can reasonably expect values oriented specifically towards democratic coexistence to be included, in accordance with the ideals encompassed by the education reforms introduced in both Europe and Spain.

(2) Contents related to citizenship education (categories)

-Responsibility: Contents regarding the regulation of relations in different contexts (family, school, local environment), specifying tasks, rules, obligations, attitudes and behaviour characterised by respect and care.

-Participation: Contents that either provide information regarding existing participatory bodies or directly involve students in shared projects both within and outside the school environment.

-Conflict Resolution: Contents that deal with the problem of conflicts and offer possible resolution techniques.

-Diversity: Contents that aim to raise students' awareness of differences or to promote the right to equality, between both people and groups.

-Human Rights: Contents that deal with issues related to basic human rights.