

The construction of citizenship identity: beyond the social, moral and political subjects

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe and explain a conceptual and methodological framework that was used to analyze civic and citizenship compulsory education (K-12) quality in Mexico. This framework departs from the premise that diverse overlapping, and interdependent planes are required to shape competent citizens, committed to play their roles as social, moral, and political subjects in an effective way. These planes contribute to the generation of a strong sense of identity, sense of agency, as well as social, political, and moral self-efficacy, required for the construction of a citizen who stands up with civic courage and dignity, to promote and defend human rights, dignity itself and democracy. The approach used to evaluate the quality of the curriculum considered the national level (curriculum plans), and the local level (civic and ethical programs for each level of education). The results show that the focus of the programs of the different levels (K-12) vary in the percentage of attention devoted to the construction of the four nuclei (social, political, moral and with dignity and rights) of analysis delineated in the theoretical and methodological framework of analysis, which represent areas of opportunity to improve the quality of civic and citizenship education in Mexico.

Keywords: citizenship, democratic education, curriculum evaluation, social identity, political identity, moral identity

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Benilde García-Cabrero,¹ Silvia Conde-Flores,² María Eugenia Luna-Elizarrarás,³ Lucía Rodríguez-McKeon,⁴ Greta Papadimitriou Cámara⁵

¹Associate Professor, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico

^{2,3,5}Independent Consultant, Albanta, S.C, Mexico

⁴Associate Professor, National Teaching University, Mexico

Correspondence: Benilde García-Cabrero, Graduate Studies: Educational and Developmental Psychology, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico, Tel 5255 5622 8222, Email benildegar@gmail.com

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Abbreviations: FCE, Formación Cívica y Ética (Civic and Ethical Education); HR, Human Rights; INEE, Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education); K-12, From kindergarten to twelfth grade; MejorEdu, Comisión Nacional para la Mejora Continua de la Educación (National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education)

Introduction

Democracy is based on a set of values which allow us to imagine the construction of an ideal society. However, the problematic daily life of most democratic societies does not seem to respond to these values. The concretion of the values of democracy in the lives of people and in the organization of societies, gives citizenship education an ethical dimension that articulates the person with a humanizing historical project.¹ Democracy recognizes in everyone a moral and legal person, possessor of rights and responsible for the exercise of those rights and their corresponding obligations. To give life and stability to democracies, the presence and action of ethically and politically competent citizens is required. It is evident that these qualities are shaped through the experience of participation, which requires ensuring the right to have a voice and to organize collective actions based on the ability to influence decision-making. Thus, it is necessary to ensure the participation of pupils in classrooms and in schools in initiatives which concern them as individuals, small groups, and larger groups, enabling them to gradually develop their capacities to be sensitive, propose, organize, and carry out projects to address issues that are significant to them.

The concept of citizen that guided the analysis of civic and ethical education, and its contribution to citizenship identity described here, refers to a person who meets the formal requirements to exercise and defend his/her human rights before the law. It considers new margins of political inclusion by resizing diversity in the school environment.² Thus, a citizen is a person who is committed to the political community he/she belongs to, and who has the capacities and

values required to participate in decision-making, problem solving, as well as developing projects for the common good.³ For persons to feel and decide they can participate, it is necessary that they have sound knowledge and ethical principles in relation to citizens' rights and obligations, which allows to be genuinely committed to the well-being of his/her community.⁴ Ideally, a citizen is the person who has the motivation, and the sense of agency necessary to act with courage, and who decisively and convincingly contributes to the solution of social problems and to the construction of the common good, based on the defense of dignity and human rights.⁵ Citizenship integrates an ethos that, while incorporating a normative dimension, is conducive to the experience of values in their emotional sense.⁶

Citizens committed to the defense of democracy; are those who are concerned about public affairs and with a strong sense of belonging to their civil and political society; who are aware of their rights; with a high sense of personal and social responsibility; competent to participate, and to interact with the authority, which allows them to face problems and to develop proposals for solutions. These citizens capable of demanding accountability from their representatives, are the result of having been involved in diverse experiences, one of them, the school. Many curricula fall short of developing a well-rounded citizen. Dogmatic positions that appeal to political and moral catechism do not serve this purpose, nor do formal and instrumental visions focused on the transmission of information without real referents. A curriculum relevant and pertinent to the construction of citizenship needs to be carefully designed, considering the conditions and challenges of the country, as well as the diversity of social contexts, cultural, economic, and political to devise an approach that provides flexibility and adaptability.

A broad concept of citizenship and citizen education is not compatible with a curriculum focused on a single subject but requires a comprehensive approach that links the formal and structured experience of subjects and interdisciplinary work with the formative experiences derived from school life and the link with the social and

cultural environment. This makes the school a community of learning and practice of democracy, citizenship, and values in daily coexistence in the classroom and schools as public spaces in which interactions and situations that require regulation of coexistence take place.

Citizenship education in Mexico

In Mexico, in a short period, citizenship education, particularly at the secondary level (grades 7 to 9), has been one of the main targets of various educational reforms. Such process began at this level with the introduction of the “Civic and Ethical Education” programs which in 1999 replaced those of “Civics I and II” and “Orientation” implemented until 2008, when the Ministry of Education introduced the Civic and Ethical Education Comprehensive Program alongside the basic education.⁷ The present government, now in the last year of its regime, designed (based on former guidelines) an approach to construct what is known as “The New Mexican School”, a model that considers Civic and Ethical Education through all levels of compulsory education (K-12) as a pillar for the construction of a new moral order in which respect, tolerance, honesty, solidarity, freedom, and social justice prevail.⁴

According to the New Mexican School, although the subject of Civic and Ethical Education already addressed the principles of democratic life, in this new curricular change, the emphasis on deliberation and participation, is central. Deliberation is defined as a dialogical process that allows children to build confidence to express themselves on issues, they find problematic in their immediate surroundings, and to become aware of the power of their presence and speech. In the New Mexican School programs typically promote active citizenship, encouraging students to participate in their communities, engage in civic activities, and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. This may involve volunteer work, community service projects, or participation in student government.⁴

Civic and ethical education is to be integrated across various subjects and disciplines within the curriculum, including social studies, history, language arts, and even mathematics and science, to provide a comprehensive understanding of civic concepts and civic life. Civic and ethical education in this new approach, emphasizes critical thinking skills, particularly in the context of civic dilemmas. This involves understanding multiple perspectives and the expression of well-reasoned opinions. These features shall contribute in theory, to the integral development of students as informed, engaged, and ethical citizens capable of contributing positively to their communities and to society. However, the particularities of implementation may vary depending on the educational priorities of specific local communities where the New Mexican School Program is implemented. In this article, we review the formal curricular plans and programs that were implemented before this new approach started to be implemented since the past year.

Citizenship, defined beyond the mere acquisition of rights and responsibilities, can only be meaningful if citizens themselves are assumed as responsible political subjects, agents of change, endowed with political efficacy, and a sense of social and moral agency that can contribute to the construction of a new social order, which implies the development of other types of capabilities beyond those associated with formal citizenship. Citizenship is about the configuration of a political subject that is involved with the public, with the State and with power, to intervene in the modification of the social order and the improvement of the political community.⁸

Nevertheless, as Bernal-Guerrero et al.,⁹ point out, it is not only the public dimension of education, aimed at the development

of the political subject, that needs to be considered, but also the private dimension (the moral subject), for which it is necessary to advocate character education,^{10,11} as a fundamental component of citizens' education. The moral dimension constitutes the core plane to establish the relationship between the private and the public spheres.⁹ Self-esteem, care for others, civic responsibility, understanding of the place everyone occupies in various social groups, as well as the strengthening of the capacity to self-regulate, together with moral feelings such as empathy, compassion, indignation, feelings of solidarity, consciousness, and human dignity, are key elements in the construction of the moral dimension of civic and citizenship education.

Schools have been always considered key elements in the process of political socialization of a democratic citizen, but at present, they play an even more prominent role, due to the decline in the social capital of democracy that was provided in the past by other social institutions as families, churches, and political parties.¹² In this context, due to the important role assigned to schools to socialize students politically, one of the most important elements of the analysis of the policies and curricula in the civic education field is to determine the success of democratic education.¹³

To determine the effects of civic education, it is necessary first to evaluate the curricular programs themselves, considering a conceptual framework of civic education as the point of departure, and deriving from it, a set of dimensions, indicators and aspects that will be considered to review the plans, programs, purposes, goals, standards of achievement and educational materials related to civic education and other subjects if the plans consider a transversal implementation. This will allow to determine the quality of the programs of civic or citizenship education that are being applied at schools. This constitutes a major endeavor, because there are not simple approaches to this end, nor clear cut methodologies that allow, at the same time, to have a general overview of the quality achieved by the curriculum designers, as well as a deep understanding of its affordances and areas of opportunity for improvement.

A framework for curriculum evaluation

To evaluate a curriculum design, it is necessary to determine the degree to which the present curriculum is a reasonable exemplar of the original design, as stated in the vision, philosophy of education, attainment targets and pedagogical approach of the developers. We cannot make valid judgments about a given curriculum design (at a national level) if the instructional designers (teachers for example that design course programs) deviated from the original plan in significant ways and such deviations are much more likely to occur in the instructional design of a curriculum. So, the approach to evaluate the curriculum must be twofold: at the national level (curriculum design), and at the local level (civic and ethical programs for each level of education).

The framework of evaluation described here was part of an external evaluation consultancy, sponsored by the former National Institute of Educational Evaluation in Mexico (INEE, now MejorEdu), and aimed at determining the quality of the curriculum for Civic and Ethical Education for Compulsory Education, including achievements attained and areas of opportunity of the planned curriculum.

The evaluation departed from the premise that the integral education of students as moral, political, social subjects, with dignity and rights is not achieved within the curriculum through a single subject. To educate students as subjects capable of living in a peaceful, respectful, inclusive, democratic, and solidary way; to critically

understand their surroundings and to participate actively in their transformation; to assume, as a global citizen, an ethical commitment to democracy, human rights, the struggle for equality, liberties, sustainable development and justice, requires a comprehensive, consistent, multidisciplinary, situated and co-responsible educational experience. For this reason, the curriculum of Civic Education and Ethics in compulsory education (K-12) was not exclusively evaluated through the subjects related to this curricular field. The general object of the evaluation (the curriculum) was approached from a broader perspective, placing the gaze on multiple individual objects of evaluation (plans, programs of different subjects, guides, and textbooks, among others) through the design of dimensions, axes, nuclei, descriptors, and aspects of evaluation that allowed to account for the complexity of the general object evaluated.

The evaluation strategy included the development of a model of analysis based on a conceptual framework, aimed at assessing both, the attributes of the quality of the curriculum, and the dimensions of citizens' education expressed in the educational programs, considering the theoretical, philosophical, normative and pedagogical references of citizenship education, for peace, human rights, democracy and socio-moral development with a gender and intercultural perspective (Figure 1).

The technical guidelines for the curricular design of the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education,¹⁴ considered five dimensions of the quality of the curriculum:

- 1) Relevance,
- 2) Pertinence,
- 3) Consistency (internal and external),
- 4) Clarity,
- 5) Equity.

These dimensions constituted the pillars of the present evaluation; relevance and pertinence were evaluated in relation to four nuclei of analysis in the construction of citizen's identity. In a second level, equity, external and internal consistency, as well as clarity, were valued as attributes of the way the design of the curriculum of citizenship education was formulated.

Methods and instruments of analysis

The point of departure of the evaluation of each of the quality dimensions of the curriculum, and of the citizen's education is an analytical framework composed of categories, subcategories, descriptors, and aspects. Table 1 shows the aspects considered in the first two components.

A set of instruments was designed to assess in a comprehensive manner, the features of the civic education curriculum in compulsory education (Figure 2). As a starting point, the operational definition of the dimensions of the quality of the curriculum and of the four education nuclei s was conducted, and later, rubrics were drawn up, which include four levels of assessment: zero, low, medium, and high, each with an assigned score of 0, 1, 2 and 3, respectively. For each level, a precise description is made that supposes graduality and complexity. The high level is shaped by the desirable, from the perspective of the reference framework that underpins this assessment.

Evaluation model

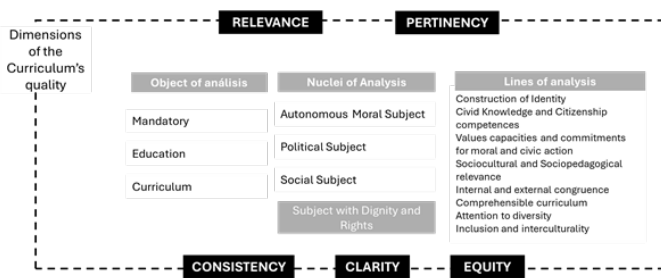


Figure 1 Evaluation model for the K-12 civic and ethical education curriculum.

Source: authors' elaboration.

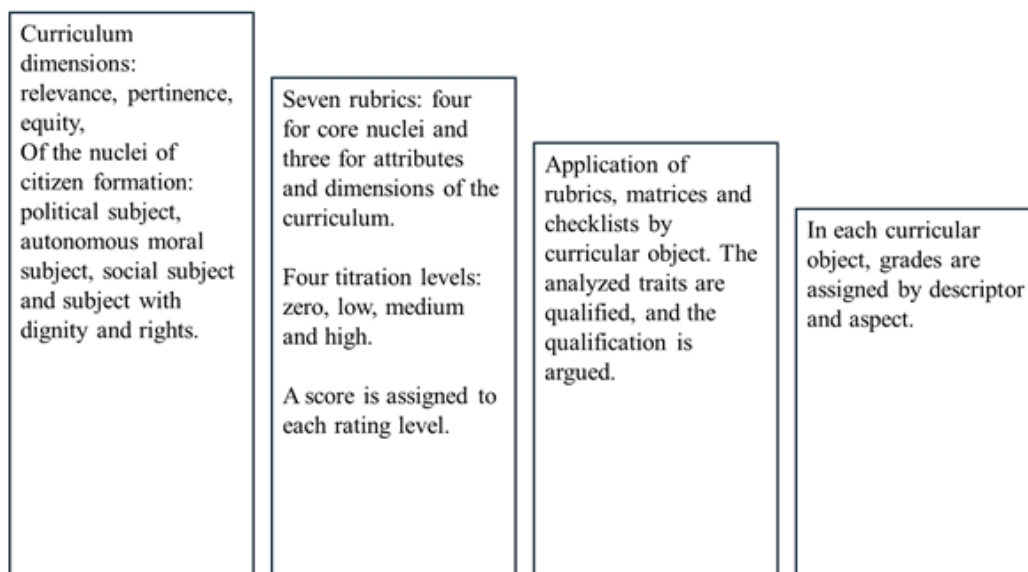


Figure 2 Analytics tools for curriculum assessment

Source: authors' elaboration.

Table 1 Dimensions, categories, and subcategories to evaluate the design of the civic education curriculum

Dimension	Category	Subcategory
Relevance	1.1. The aims of citizen education	1.1.1. Education of the citizen as a political subject 1.1.2. Subject with dignity and rights. 1.1.3. Autonomous moral subject 1.1.4. Social subject
Pertinence	2.1. Adaptation of the curriculum to conditions of socio-moral development 2.2. Adaptation of the curriculum to the conditions of the context	2.1.1. Coordination with socio-moral development 2.2.1. Historical, social, and cultural correspondence for socially relevant Education 2.2.2. Organization of collective actions socially pertinent
Congruence	3.1. Internal congruence 3.2. External congruence	3.1.1. Internal conceptual consistency 3.1.2. Methodological consistency 3.2.1. Regulatory correspondence 3.2.2. Correspondence with civic culture policy
Clarity	4.1. An understandable curriculum	4.1.2. Comprehensible curricular organization
Equity	5.1. Attention to diversity 5.2. Inclusion and interculturality	5.1.1. Learning opportunities for different students' learning conditions 5.2.1. Strategies for the promotion of equality 5.2.2. Promotion of inclusion and interculturality in the school context

Data processing and analysis

Each rubric was applied to the different curricular objects. If there were checklists or matrices included in the programs, these were applied as input for the filling of the rubric, as they offer condensed information of aspects of complex evaluation. The analysis of the curricular objects from the rubrics and their supporting instruments was conducted in a blind review process by two researchers, which allowed adjustments to be made and the points of view to be enriched. The record of this analysis includes the levels for qualitative assessment -zero, low, medium, or high, to which a score of 0, 1, 2 or 3, respectively, was assigned, and the corresponding justification.

Once the analysis was completed, the resulting database became a quantitative assessment in which the score obtained in each curricular object and aspect was recorded.

The data presented in the results correspond to the calculation of the percentage obtained in each descriptor from its possible maximum score (MP). Each descriptor is considered to constitute 100% of the score, and it is obtained by multiplying the number of curricular objects in which each aspect was evaluated by 3, then adding the total score of the aspects that make up the descriptor. That is, if you want to obtain the maximum score of a descriptor made up of two aspects that were evaluated in 20 curricular objects, you must first multiply the 20 curricular objects by 3 (which is the maximum score obtained in each curricular object), which would give us a total score of 60 per aspect, and since the descriptor consists of two aspects, its maximum score is 120. Considering the maximum score, the corresponding percentage was calculated to determine to what degree each aspect and descriptor is promoted in the curriculum, according to the total score obtained.

The construction of citizenship identity

To provide an accurate picture of the variables and process involved in the construction of a citizen's identity, we first clarified, following Biesta,¹⁵ if citizenship was primarily a political identity, or a social identity. With respect to the social understanding of citizenship, one can encounter a discourse of society falling apart and a focus on citizenship as having to do with common values, national identity, pro-social behavior, care for one's neighbor amongst others. On the other side, with respect to the political understanding of citizenship,

plurality and difference are the very *raison d'être* of democratic processes and practices and therefore, they need to be protected and cultivated.¹⁵

In the construction of citizenship identity, a curriculum can start mentioning the description of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that need to be learned to become a good citizen, but the reason because this is not a convenient starting point, is related to the fact that, unlike what many seem to assume, the learning involved in citizenship education is not neutral in terms of how citizenship itself can be understood.

Biesta,¹⁵ points out that whereas a socialization concept of civic learning is about learning for future citizenship, the subjectification conception of civic learning is about learning from current citizenship, from present experiences with and engagement in the ongoing experience of democracy. This point of view is coincident with the theoretical framework developed, except for the fact that that the construction of a citizen's identity, involves two other planes, besides the social and political: the moral construction of the subject and the subject who, "armed up" with these three "fundamental pillars" (social, political, moral) can stand up to defend his/her human rights, as well as those of the others.

The four nuclei of the construction of citizenship identity

The construction of the social subject

This nucleus seeks to promote an education that privileges solidarity towards the other and encourages learning that goes against the current pedagogical approach based on individualism. The social dimension of the education of the citizen subject constitutes a fundamental goal of education in our time, in particular the capacities to live together and to develop projects shared with similar and diverse others, as well as to generate commitments with them, and with humanity, for it is the experiences in community life that make democracy work.

This formative dimension of the citizen subject is a current challenge, given the difficulty of managing the recognition of difference from a rights perspective in everyday life, in political culture

and in public policies. These difficulties derive from practices, beliefs, and forms of collective association to the political community that historically have led to the configuration of situations of exclusion and structural segregation, supported by criteria that justify discrimination within Mexican society. It is necessary to eradicate these conditions and citizen education is a tool to do so.

To speak of the recognition of diversity is a *sine qua non* condition to promote a society of rights, inhabited by citizens — men and women — who are respected regardless of their differences. The recognition of diversity is not a minor act of benevolence, but a political and moral act, in a broad sense. In this context, the tasks of civic education contribute to the development of new ways of constructing ourselves in a community in which everyone has a place, based on mutual trust, interest in the other, respect, solidarity, and understanding of interdependence.

Characteristics of the social subject and of its formative process

The development of the ability to live in the difference and to build a shared way with others, involves multiple learnings that are built in the daily life of relationships in the classroom, school, and community. It requires experiences that privilege collaborative work in which students get to know each other; exchange perspectives, ways of being, of thinking; that is, dialogue in the difference. This will allow them to develop listening skills to understand, deliberate and build agreements, as well as advance in the shared construction of principles of action. These capacities establish conditions to link empathy with the action that civic commitment implies. This links the social dimension of civic education with the moral dimension because by encouraging a prosocial attitude that puts solidarity and reciprocity at the center to favor mutual help, a student can respond to the needs of the other, by seeking a balance between individual and social interests based on an ethic of care.

Building personal, social, and global identity

As a result of a reflective and experiential process that puts the accent on the development of self-knowledge and self-assessment experiences, students construct an image of themselves in which they recognize who they are, identify their limits and possibilities, elaborate life projects that give continuity to their process of identity construction, and favor the development of their ability to integrate into the community through flexible and open membership processes that safeguard their identity as a result of their own choices.

The Construction of the Political Subject

The political subject refers to the person endowed with the civic knowledge and the capacities to intervene in an active and committed way in public life; someone who understands the challenges and problems shared with others; who defines and applies with them actions to address these problems and who can create conditions for justice, freedom and equality, essential for the exercise of rights and respect for human dignity. The political subject is the citizen “aware of being a member of a human community (not limited to a country)” who “shares a set of values and behaviors, obligations and responsibilities, and actively participates in all the affairs of his community”.¹⁶

Often the education of the political subject encounters perspectives that restrict political activity to the sphere of government or to the struggle for public power. Consequently, the vision that has prevailed for its development is present in the promotion of a formalized

knowledge of the structure and functioning of the political system, where the political practice of citizenship is reduced to vote and the fulfillment of civic obligations, as the payment of taxes. In this limited framework of political action, the latter is proposed as a future, and not actual, exercise for students.

Hence, it is necessary to question the traditional idea of participation that has accompanied the education of citizens in our country, to ensure the development of citizens with the capacity to act collectively to influence the decision-making of matters that concern them. Several authors,¹⁷⁻¹⁹ recognize that the political dimension of the citizen subject implies diverse other forms of involvement in the public sphere, in addition to voting and compliance. This implies overcoming the notion of participation as an instrument for the conservation of the sociopolitical order - the same that privileges consensus and order - and changing its meaning towards that of participation as a means and an end for emancipation and social transformation.

At the school level, this perspective poses the challenge of students being assumed as political subjects, responsible agents of change; with a sense of political efficacy and capable of intervening in public affairs that affect, concern, and interest them. This demands the development of broader capabilities than those associated with the education of a formal citizen. It also requires a critical look at the conditions in which people and collectives have become political actors, often outside and against the channels instituted for participation.^{20,21} For this reason, in the construction of the political subject, the development of a sense of agency is essential.²²

In this perspective, political action is not limited to the procedures of liberal democracy, it also contemplates the deployment of new forms of participation to generate alternative spaces, ways of construction and circulation of communicative power outside the formal political system.²³

Characteristics of the political subject and of its formative process

Civic identity. It implies that students recognize their role as subjects in the social and political community and develop links with collective actions oriented towards common benefit. A progressive approach to the work of political institutions is considered necessary regarding the interests, needs and rights of children and adolescents. Students need to have opportunities, inside and outside the school, to directly live the results of their participation in collective actions oriented to the common welfare, in such a way that they are recognized as agents of social transformation.⁵

Civic knowledge

It involves the development of key notions for the understanding of social and political processes related to the functioning of democracy as a political system and form of social organization; its mechanisms and procedures; and the exercise of human rights (HR) within the framework of a democratic State of law. It implies the understanding of the meaning of the rules through students’ participation in the formulation of agreements, and the commitment with the ethical criteria underlying them; as well as the approach to the Constitution and the critical analysis of its application in specific contexts and situations.⁵

Civic commitment

Constituted by a set of skills and attitudes towards the public that requires the systematic and deliberate practice of democratic procedures. It involves participation in projects aimed at transforming

the environment in favor of the common good, in such a way that it fosters a deep and lived understanding of its importance in community life, in such a way that students adhere to be reflective, to the acquisition of the responsibility before the others and before the fulfillment of the civic duty. The education of the world citizen, based on his sense of belonging to humans by understanding the phenomena that represent risks for humanity, is one of the enclaves of civic engagement. It demands co-responsibility with local actions in the face of global problems, as well as the acquisition of commitments to global well-being and the mechanisms of a solidarity economy, culture of peace and sustainable development.⁵

Design and implementation of collective actions

It involves the understanding and critical analysis of problems that affect the exercise of rights and common good, and the participation of diverse actors of the educational community in the definition, implementation, and evaluation of collective actions. Another aspect of participation is the recognition that students achieve of their transforming potential, through conducting actions when facing social and political problems and evaluating their impact on the improvement of conditions for the exercise of their rights and the well-being of themselves and others.⁵

The construction of the autonomous moral subject

The term moral subject refers to the person who can discern the just from the unjust, the equitable from the inequitable, or the right from the wrong in various situations, through the moral and ethical conceptions that have prevailed in his family, school, and community throughout the course of his life.⁵

Personal commitment to an ethical posture based on principles, as opposed to an ideology of convenience, determines the strength of the relationship between moral beliefs and behavior. Personal commitment links the system of the self to moral principles, producing the feeling that there is an obligation to act in a manner consistent with these principles, generating a sense of responsibility for the actions carried out, as well as a lack of willingness to overlook and rationalize ethical errors and transgressions.

According to Frisancho and Pain,²⁵ in the current era many people are individualistic, disconnected from the collective and the public, without community ties and without interest in transcendent topics. The predominant instrumental reason of narcissist persons leads them to consider that success is measured in terms of efficiency and purchasing power. In contrast to individualistic people, there are persons with a high morality, whose values are oriented towards social commitment and justice, characterized by developing actions based on what they should be, interested in others and in their well-being, even putting their individual welfare in a second plane.

People worry about the desirability of their desires, and thus constitute what is known as “second-order desires”, according to which they conform their will. In line with what Taylor,²⁶ put forward, Narvaez and Lapsley,²⁷ state that people make careful ethical assessments or distinctions about the best or worst, the high or low, the valuable or the worthless, and that these distinctions are carried out thanks to a “horizon of meaning”. Therefore, the authors contend, our identity is defined in reference to what means to us. The position of these authors is placed in the context of modern ethical theories-beyond Kohlberg’s statements-that there is a close connection between personality, identity, and moral agency. From their perspective,

therefore, for the construction of moral identity it is necessary not only to consider the person, but also the surrounding circumstances, thus considering the social dimensions of identity.

Kochanska and Aksan,²⁸ argue that the origin of self-control, integrity, and desires, is highly relational, in such a way that moral identity emerges in the context of a history of secure attachment with significant people of the environment; hence the importance of the ethics of care and the environments that are supported in this perspective. Secure attachment promotes bonds of commitment and leads to the internalization of the norms and standards of behavior that a society establishes for its members. Narvaez and Lapsley,²⁷ consider that the construction of the moral subject, which includes moral identity, is conducted socially, takes time, requires living certain types of experiences, and needs to be cultivated.

The approach of the existence of a moral identity, considered as the internalization of goals, codes and traits of ethical conduct within the ego system, contrasts with previous models of moral conduct that emphasized moral reasoning as the only process linked to the relationship of congruence between judgment and moral conduct.²⁹ The study of morality until recently had been dominated by Kohlberg’s position, and covered social behavior, through prosocial moral reasoning.³⁰ Later, approaches focused on empathy,³¹ and moral emotions were added to this field,³² and recently, positions emerged focused on the study of moral identity.³⁰

The way reasons-moral or otherwise-support people’s behavior belongs to the realm of ethical motivation. Moral motives include attitudes, values and prejudices, and function as mediators between people’s thinking and actions. Oser²⁴ points out that ethical motivation is what “forces us to act”, after deliberating about of the personal or social consequences that will bring us to act that way.

The discussion of the relationship between moral motives and moral actions has been considered in the theory of the four components of James Rest,^{33,34} which has been taken as the basis for the definition of the attributes of the moral subject in this project. Blasi,³⁵ suggested that moral conduct could not be attributed solely to moral judgment, as Kohlberg had pointed out, and he concluded that moral reasoning or judgment was necessary, but not sufficient to explain moral action. Rest was based on Blasi’s statements and, to explain the relationship between judgment and action, defined four components from empirical evidence: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation and ethical commitment or action.

The most recent models of moral functioning,³⁶ delve into two characteristics of self-evaluation (self): control beliefs and beliefs about personal competences. In the former, the person believes that he can achieve the goals he sets out to take account of his circumstances, and the latter include the individual’s assumption that he has the means to achieve his purposes.³⁷ These two characteristics of the self-assessment are present in what has been called the sense of agency, which in this evaluation is considered fundamental for citizen education. The way in which moral or other — reasons support the behavior of people belongs to the field of ethical motivation. Moral motives include attitudes, values and prejudices, and function as mediators between people’s thinking and actions. The ethical motivation is what “forces us to act”, after deliberating about the personal or social consequences that will bring us to act in this way.²⁴ Thoma & Bebeau,³⁷ consider moral motivation as a bridge or interphase, between the feeling of having to act in a situation, and the question and decision of what to do.

The discussion on the relationship between moral motives and moral actions has been contemplated in the theory of the four components of James Rest,^{33,34} which was taken as the fundamental basis of the definition of the attributes of the moral subject.

According to Cabezas,³⁸ the subject or moral agent, must have capacity for judgment and an emotional system to be able to constitute as an autonomous moral subject, for there is no moral autonomy outside an emotional system that allows to distinguish, value, hierarchize and select a course of action. Emotions generate neural states of excitement that alert the individual, provide information, so they function as mechanisms of adaptation, information, and evaluation, as well as social functions that allow a person to communicate affective states, recognize those of others and interact with them, participating actively in promoting prosocial behaviors.

An autonomous being at the level of thought and moral action, capable of issuing moral and self-conscious judgments, must be able to abstract and reason. The correlation between rationality, autonomy and self-consciousness is considered necessary in the construction of the autonomous moral subject.

Characteristics of the moral autonomous subject and of its formative process

Moral identity conveys the person's knowledge of him/herself as a moral agent, and involves different interrelated processes—perceptions, intuitions, emotions, and habitual forms of behavior.³⁹ Modern ethical theories refer that there is a close connection between the conceptions of person, identity and moral agency, and moral agency is crucial to the conception of what it means to be a person.²⁷

A moral subject is an autonomous agent, given that he values, selects, decides between diverse options, and feels responsible for his choices, so he is supposed to be aware of them. Emotions, feelings, and affective states are consubstantial aspects of identity and, consequently, of moral agency³⁸. A robust moral identity motivates people to perceive moral matters, consider them seriously, make moral judgments based on principles and act accordingly. For Wren,⁴⁰ the experiential component is central to identity.

Ethical sensitivity is the ability to identify and understand problematic situations, considering the needs and emotions experienced, the possible alternative solutions, as well as the consequences and benefits for oneself and for others. For Moll & Oliveira-Souza,⁴¹ the human brain is intrinsically capable of understanding the world from a moral perspective, which makes it possible for most people to have an intuitive sense of justice, concern for others and observance of cultural norms. This capacity depends on a sophisticated integration of cognitive, emotional, and motivational mechanisms, which are modulated by the experiences that each person has had in his life, and it implies realizing the need to intervene in a problem, empathize with it and the people involved, take the perspective of others, connect with them, respond to diversity, and communicate properly.⁴²

Awareness and ethical reasoning. It develops from the emergence of moral awareness and the development of the sense of justice, and implies a personal and social perspective, as well as the possibility of appealing to ideals, from which the existing norms, laws or agreements are evaluated. For Kohlberg,²⁹ moral judgment constitutes the central process of morality. This approach has been refuted by research in which it has been shown that moral judgment does not predict moral action.³⁵ However, the transition from heteronomy to autonomy in the moral reasoning process described by Kohlberg remains valid and needs to be considered to develop a relevant and

pertinent citizen education curriculum. Sigel,⁴³ considers that reasons are at the heart of the educational ideal of critical thinking considered by many, as a fundamental educational ideal, central to curriculum, policy, and practice.

Ethical motivation implies prioritizing ethical action over other objectives and needs, which includes the concern to complete an ethical action and achieve ethical guidance in all actions. It draws on ethical indignation, civic courage, and empathy, which leads to respecting others, acting responsibly, and developing a positive identity⁴². Behaving ethically often leads to problems,⁴⁴ such as sacrifices, pain and suffering or social censorship; but it also derives benefits and satisfactions that are usually remote and abstract. Honesty and courage as grounds for ethical action may constitute their own reward, but they involve the risk of people losing motivation and not acting ethically in the future. Being dishonest can produce economic or social success, or both, as well as to produce joy and satisfaction. Narvaez,⁴² points out that ethical motivation implies the need to respect others, act responsibly, establish close ties with the community, find the meaning and purpose of life, value traditions and institutions and develop ethical integrity.

Commitment and ethical action imply the willingness to act in defense of the ethical principles of people who find themselves in problematic social or personal situations, due to the lack of respect for human rights and individual guarantees. It is associated with the willingness to participate and the realization of pro-social actions. It is necessary to have a series of ethical principles or values that guide behavior, as well as a series of emotional dispositions that make it possible to establish emotional relationships (affective involvement) with others, and that arouse interest and motivation to perform actions in favor of others. Likewise, moral motivation involves resolving conflicts, demonstrating assertiveness in a respectful manner, taking leadership, planning to implement decisions, and cultivating ethical courage.⁴²

The construction of the subject with dignity and rights

Citizenship is built on the exercise of human rights (HR); the development of the individual and social subject with an awareness of his dignity and rights, and with capacities for their exercise, defense, and demand, is an indispensable condition for citizenship education. The education of the subject of rights presupposes the articulation of the different dimensions of the HR: ethical, legal, historical, cultural, and political. The ethical dimension is expressed in the awareness of one's own dignity and rights; in the recognition and defense of the rights of others; and in the commitment to assume a life marked by the universal values that sustain HR and democracy. The legal dimension is addressed through knowledge of the rights established in national and international instruments, as well as the institutions that protect them. The subject of law requires understanding that the development and historical improvement of HR and its protection instruments are a product of the evolution of human consciousness, as well as progress in the political and social organization of States: as the peoples advanced in the building a more democratic and civilized society, the demands of human dignity were greater.

The cultural dimension of the HR supports the tension between the universal and the local, between the features of the human and the culturally situated. Diversity, interculturality and inclusion are aspects of the HR that are played in this tension. Finally, the political dimension of HR is deployed in the sphere of the exercise of power to transform situations that undermine the principles of dignity

and human rights, to exercise them fully and to collaborate in the construction of a just, free, democratic, and egalitarian society. The construction of the subject with dignity and right is necessarily linked to the construction of the political subject.

In Mexico, the General Law on the Rights of Children and Adolescents guarantees their status as subjects with full rights, that is, that they have the same rights, duties and guarantees as adults, plus specific others considered in national and international laws. Compulsory education students have special considerations due to their age, and they enjoy the recognition of their right to participate as active agents in the transformation of the spaces in which they operate in the search for the common good. Their identity as subjects with dignity and rights simultaneously defines them as political, moral, and social subjects.

Characteristics of the subject with dignity and rights and of its formative process

The concern for the education of the subject with dignity and rights is linked to citizenship education from the very beginning, as it emerges with the defense of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in contexts of dictatorship, repression, crimes against humanity and humanitarian crises. Currently this link prevails and expands before new challenges such as the use of chemical weapons, extreme poverty, climate change, exclusion, the migratory crisis, insecurity, and the escalation of violence linked to organized crime and drug trafficking.

Citizenship education subscribes to HR as an ethical horizon and assumes the commitment to promote citizen's self-awareness as a subject with dignity and rights, which not only knows them, but is critical, aware of its reality, admits his social responsibilities and is competent for action, denunciation, dialogue, and participation. It is the owner of a philosophy of life based on the values of solidarity, respect, justice, freedom, equality, responsibility, and legality.

Self-awareness as a subject with dignity and rights. By being aware of their own and others' dignity, from a critical perspective, the student is configured as a political subject empowered by the guarantees that the law recognizes for the exercise of their rights and the defense of dignity. This feature is related to the political dimension of citizenship education by becoming a subject capable of balancing its power against other subjects of rights and using it to transform their circumstances by their own means; empowered with tools and values to intervene in the construction of a just society, respectful of the HR by questioning and transforming the different forms of domination and violation of human dignity.

Knowledge and understanding of the HR and its defense mechanisms. The understanding of the right to have rights is a cornerstone in the development of self-awareness as a subject with dignity and rights. Citizenship education must include knowledge of the national and international instruments recognized and guaranteed by the HR, as well as the institutions responsible for their defense and protection. Beyond the formal approach to the legal framework, knowledge of laws and institutions is required, as well as their understanding and analysis in close relation with situations in which the full compliance of the HR is observed or, on the contrary, with those that constitute violations to them.

Exercise of rights requires the development of capacities and dispositions for their exercise in different areas such as awareness and critical understanding of situations of injustice that limit them for themselves or for others. The development of the subject of

rights has a social dimension because it emphasizes the sense of interdependence and common well-being; a moral dimension because of the indignation in the face of situations of injustice and inequity, ethical and civic courage ensue; and a political dimension when a disposition is generated for the transformation of these conditions and the creation of others in which full respect for the rights and dignity of all people is possible.

The Promotion of the culture of peace implies promoting attitudes of solidarity, rejecting any form of violence, denouncing injustice and discrimination, respecting diversity, seeking intercultural coexistence, or protecting the environment, attitudes and behaviors that build and maintain peace, the same as avoiding a lawsuit, stop harassing colleagues or resolve conflicts through dialogue.

Results

Detailed results of the evaluation of the curriculum of Civic Education are included in Conde et al.,⁵ for the purposes of illustration of the general results around the four nuclei of analysis.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the highest percentage is reached by the construction of the social subject in primary, followed by the autonomous moral subject in secondary. The primary and secondary FCE (Formación Cívica y Ética) program results show a noticeable improvement in most areas when compared to these data. However, there is an exception; the component dealing with social subjects shows a decline in high school programs and textbooks. As already noted, secondary education is the one that reports the best percentages in general and these are increased by analyzing only the FCE program and textbooks.

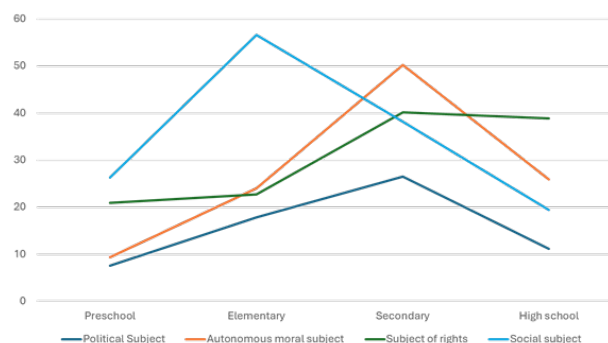


Figure 3 Percentages per core nuclei and level

The social subject is a central core in civic and ethics education, and its objective is to foster skills and values that enable students to collaborate, respect diversity, and actively participate in community life. The evaluation of the curriculum reveals significant differences between educational levels, and as mentioned, with a stronger presence in primary education that decreases in secondary education. Primary Education Programs at this level have a strong emphasis on activities that foster solidarity, teamwork, and empathy among younger students. These activities are designed to be accessible and are effectively integrated into the curriculum, using methods such as role-playing, collaborative projects and guided discussions that allow students to experience and reflect on the importance of social engagement.

In secondary education, the development of the social subject shows a noticeable decline. This may be due to several factors, including a more academic curriculum approach that may prioritize disciplinary knowledge over social and civic skills. In addition, adolescents face unique challenges in their social and emotional development that may affect their participation in social formation activities.

The results of the evaluation regarding the political subject development show significant progress in secondary education, reflecting a curricular approach that favors the development of political competencies and the capacity to influence public affairs. At this level, basic concepts of participation and citizenship rights are introduced. Activities tend to focus on understanding social and political structures at a very elementary level, such as understanding roles in the community and basic government functions.

The autonomous moral subject is a fundamental pillar in civic and ethics education, aimed at fostering the capacity for ethical discernment and fair decision making in students. This core nucleus focuses on developing individuals who can evaluate complex moral situations and act in accordance with sound ethical principles. The evaluation shows remarkable improvements in secondary education, indicating a more mature and deeper focus on these issues as students advance in their education.

The construction of the subject with dignity and rights is also an important component of civic and ethics education, focused on instilling respect for human rights and personal dignity in all students. This core nucleus seeks to develop individuals aware of their rights and responsibilities, both locally and globally. The evaluation results suggest that, although all educational levels address this topic, there is a continued need to strengthen and deepen this approach throughout compulsory education.

Discussion

An analysis of the Civics and Ethics Education curriculum in Mexico reveals that, although there have been significant advances in the education of ethical and committed citizens, there are still challenges that require attention. In primary education, a solid construction of the social subject is observed, fostering collaboration skills and respect for diversity. However, this improvement declines in secondary education, possibly due to a more academic approach that prioritizes disciplinary knowledge over civic and social skills.

The evolution of the political subject in secondary education suggests a shift towards teaching focused on deliberation, political criticism, and effective participation. This transition is crucial for the development of political competencies and the ability to influence public affairs. However, the implementation of specialized programs tailored to the needs and capabilities of students remains an area of opportunity. In terms of the autonomous moral subject, improvements are highlighted in secondary education, reflecting a more mature and deeper focus on these issues as students advance in their education. This core nucleus is fundamental for developing individuals capable of evaluating complex moral situations and acting in accordance with sound ethical principles.

The results in the construction of the subject with dignity and rights shows the need to continue strengthening and deepening this approach throughout compulsory education. Although all levels of education address this subject, the effectiveness of teaching varies significantly. An important outcome of this project was the construction of a comprehensive evaluation system to assess the pertinence, quality, and relevance of the citizenship education curriculum. The system is comprised of a set of dimensions, indicators, elements, and rubrics that allow to value the graduality, sequencing, and internal consistency, among other aspects of the curriculum.

Conclusions

The analysis of the Civics and Ethics Education curriculum in Mexico revealed multiple layers of complexity in the way students

are educated to become conscious and active citizens. Although civic and ethics education starts strong in primary school education, with a focus on solidarity, teamwork and empathy, there is a noticeable drop in secondary education. This can be attributed to a change in pedagogical dynamics that favor rigorous academic knowledge over social and civic competencies. It is important to develop strategies that maintain consistency in civic education across all educational levels, ensuring that civic skills and values are effectively integrated into the more advanced academic curriculum.

Significant advances in the construction of the political and moral subject in secondary education demonstrate that it is possible to deliver civic education in ways that resonate with students as they mature. However, this progress needs to be supported by programs that encourage critical deliberation and active participation, not only within the classroom, but also in broader community and social contexts. In addition, ethics education must move beyond basic ethical dilemmas to address complex moral situations that will better prepare students for real-world challenges. The curriculum needs to be dynamic and adaptable, not only to remain relevant in the face of social and technological changes, but also to respond to the diverse needs and contexts of students. This implies a cross-cutting integration of civic and ethical education across different subjects and disciplines, which can enrich the educational experience and provide multiple perspectives on civic and ethical issues.

While all levels of education touch on human rights and dignity issues, this approach needs to be deepened and strengthened to develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of these critical issues. Students must be empowered not only to know their rights, but also to act as advocates for rights and dignity, both locally and globally. To effectively implement a robust civics and ethics education curriculum, it is critical to invest in teacher training. Educators need to be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to teach these complex topics effectively. This includes ongoing professional development and access to instructional materials that support curriculum objectives. Strengthening civic and ethics education in Mexico requires a comprehensive approach ranging from curricular reform and teacher training to ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the educational process. Only through a renewed commitment to these principles will Mexico be able to cultivate a generation of citizens who not only understand their rights and responsibilities, but who are also actively engaged in fostering a democratic, just and ethical society.

The construction of a curriculum of citizenship education as,⁹ point out, invokes an ethical question, in terms of what the contents are to be included, considering that the rules of the system do not frequently correspond to those of the individuals. It is our contention that beyond the public and private dimensions of citizenship education associated with the four nuclei of citizens' identity, it is necessary to educate citizens to know how to face risks, to make decisions, to develop bonds of positive interdependence, that will allow to build trust and affection towards themselves and their reference groups, and to develop a sense of purpose, as opposed to a future dominated by uncertainty. This should contribute towards citizen's individuals growing and developing in ever changing contexts, in which the same systems of values and norms are not maintained, and for which as they need to develop systems of accelerated adjustments at the risk of being marginalized.⁹

As Bellino,⁴⁵ has suggested, the citizen education curriculum must clearly present to young people the risks involved, both, of participation in contexts of violence and of non-participation. Among the first are: the criminalization of collective movements,

the possibility of physical damage and the possibility of failure. Within the seconds: perpetuating suffering, increasing distrust and disappointment. If citizenship education considers the four nuclei described, it will contribute to forming citizens who will participate democratically, to reverse the adverse effects of social injustice and to build a fair future where the culture of peace prevails.

The collective product of an individual with solid citizen identity, with a powerful sense of agency, builder and active, is a plural and tolerant society where each one finds the possibility to define his own lifestyle. This product could be considered as the leit motiv, as the main reason for the existence and existence of a civic education curriculum that has optimal quality levels in each of its curricular objects. Unfortunately, there is no clear position on the construction of a pluralistic and tolerant society by strengthening identity and the sense of political, social, and moral agency.

The methodology employed to evaluate the curriculum demonstrated to be a very useful tool to characterize the strengths and areas of opportunity of the citizenship education curriculum that can be used in other countries, due to the fact that the four nuclei are central to any attempt to educate citizens. The set of dimensions, indicators, and elements can be advantageous not only in evaluating a single curricular articulation, but also in comparing them across regions and around the globe.

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