

## **SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCE: A STUDY ABOUT ANDALUSIAN TEACHERS<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** We are currently experiencing times of change and complexity; we live in a globalized world challenging educational centers (Calvo de Mora, 2008). Lifelong learning is a theoretical, political and educational proposal (Puig, Domene y Morales, 2010) that must be present in processes concerning planning and action in educational centers. In the framework of educational changes, the educational process based on competences is emphasized, as well as the concepts, actions and needs of teachers and educational centers regarding this aspect.

Competences represent a new approach to the design and development of educational action (Escamilla, 2008; Gimeno, 2008, Marco Stiefel, 2008; Medina, 2009) in order to find a connection between educational processes and the environment (productive, social...). Administrative regulations (EU, 2006 and the developments carried out by competent administrations) are defined as the new points of reference for the activity of educational centers and portray the model of citizen (national, European, international...) that should be achieved.

So, in the context of a lifelong learning project (Morales, 2009), an approach to the description of the social and civic competence, as well as to the behavior of educational centers and teachers related to citizenship education is taken. Social and civic competence is one of the competences integrating the new model of European citizen (EU, 2006). The question is what does exactly this competence mean and which elements integrate it? Thanks to a revision of the present literature (norms, regulations, and theoretical approaches) and a Delphi study, we were able to move towards the concept of a glossary that determines it (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Values and Behaviors). This process shows a consensus about the significance of 89 elements regarding the social and civic competence. The questions then are what the teachers' assessment is, what the importance of these elements concerning the competence is and which the needs with regard to it are then.

Educational centers must be conceived as the main axes of new citizens' education, as well as the main developers of this education connecting agents and environments (Calvo de Mora y Morales, 2008). However, the present question is what do the centers think and need. Thanks to a survey provided via Internet, we have approached the assessments of teachers coming from Andalusian centers (preschool, primary and secondary education) regarding

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the following issues: Teachers' engagement in the center, collaborative interactions (with other agents, institutions...), involvement in networks (educational, professional, social), actions and needs (planning, resources, training), as well as social and civic education (conceptualization, actions, and evaluation). To sum up, a series of data providing information about the current situation of Andalsian educational centers, which will allow us to design and suggest new material and resources.

Keywords: Social and civic competence, citizenship education, lifelong learning.

### **I. Lifelong learning process as framework of social and civic education.**

Socialization has always been one of the main goals of education. Even for intellectuals throughout history, education was conceived as the most relevant socialization tool. Delval (2006) mentions the French intellectual Durkheim, who defined education as the systematic socialization of young generations, because thanks to education, the different ways of life, knowledge, values and other relevant cultural features of society were transmitted. According to this point of view, educating is something more than teaching contents and habits, but to instruct. Education is understood as life training, a tool aimed for the development and for the social and personal progress.

Currently, we are experiencing an enhancing of education as a key element for the development of skills, abilities, and attitudes granting coexistence, and protecting the rights and obligations of human beings. The so-called learning society demands individuals able to face continuous changes, to take decisions based on their own criteria, with skills to select information, and eager to get involved in the fight for granting coexistence and equal rights.

Undoubtedly, the theories presented by authors such as Bolívar (2007); Domingo, (2004); Morillas (2006) and Santiesteban (2004) among others, illustrate the general feeling of a society, which is driven by continuous changes, and therefore delegate more in educational institutions and recognize them as ideal environments to live and practice democracy, as well as the values granting coexistence and respecting differences among individuals.

For these reasons, we do understand that citizenship education is a current necessity due to the features of our society, which emphasized the necessity of educating active citizens, aware of their rights and responsibilities. Citizens able to take decisions on their own, with critical thinking, engaged in achieving the common good, defending and developing democratic values, and eager to fight for equal opportunities and respect for diversity (Calvo de Mora y Morales, 2008). Thanks to the concept of education as a lifelong learning process, all explained above makes sense and allows us to face reality in every moment and context (Morales, 2009).

The European Union has always been one of the greatest promoters of lifelong learning, as it is understood as a key factor for socialization and personal development (Puig, Domene y Morales, 2010). Among some relevant documents stating this concept, it can be mentioned the *White Paper on 'Growth, competitiveness, and employment'* from the Council of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> December 1993 in Brussels. It stresses the importance given to education and training as elements contributing to economic and social changes.

Lately, in 1995 and with the aim to consolidate this idea, the European Commission published the *White Paper on Education and Training - Teaching and Learning - Towards the Learning Society*. The same year, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe announced the decision n° 95/2493/EC of 23<sup>rd</sup> October establishing 1996 as the "European Year of Lifelong Learning" (Council of Europe's decision, 2006). However, the denominated "Lisbon Strategy", which was the result of the Lisbon European Council from the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 2000, strengthens this concept and promotes policies and actions allowing its development and adoption by the member states. In the communication from the Commission "Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality" (COM, 2001), it appears as one of the first accepted definitions of lifelong learning: "*all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with*

the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective" (COM, 2001).

Thanks to this definition, it can be said that there are four main objectives attributed to lifelong learning: personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social integration, employment opportunities and adaptability. From this moment on, many documents with proposals supporting the development of lifelong learning appear. The most relevant is the "Recommendation of the European parliament and of the Council of 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning". This recommendation is the response to the need of establishing competences considered basic for the development of lifelong learning, granting equal opportunities, and providing the necessary strategies to deal with a world in continuous change.

It is defined as basic competence "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment" (Diario UE, 2006).

The figure nº 1 illustrates the eight basic competences for lifelong learning.

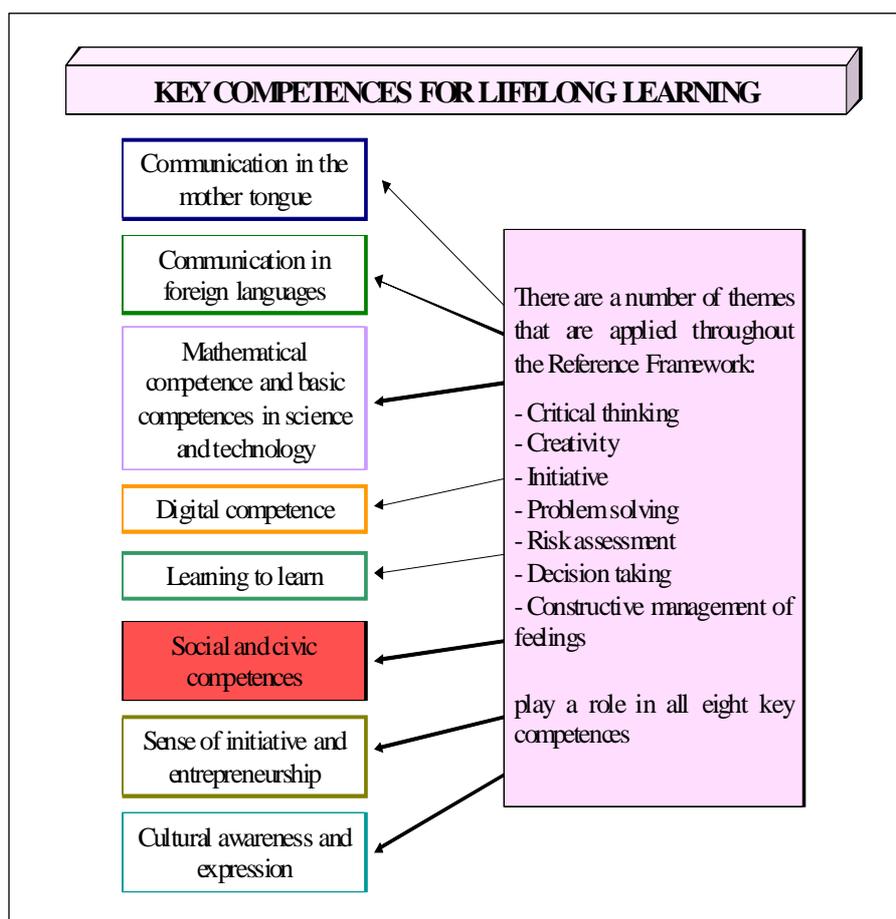


Figure nº 1. Key competences for lifelong learning (Official Journal UE, 2006).

As it can be observed, we find the denominated "Social and Civic competences", defined as: "These include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behavior that equip individuals to participate in

*an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation” (Official Journal UE, 2006).*

The cited approach is extensive to all member states, engaged to develop educational actions and policies granting the achievement of common goals.

In the Spanish educational system, it is especially relevant the implementation of the Organic Law of Education (2006), as it means the introduction of the working system based on competences implemented in compulsory education. In the Royal Decrees (1513/2006) and (1631/2006) regulating education in Primary and Secondary Education respectively, eight basic competences corresponding to the European approaches mentioned before are defined. Among these eight competences, we find the social and citizen competence, denominated before in this work as social and civic competence. *It is defined as a competence that allows people to understand the social situation one lives in, to coexist and to face conflicts using judicial ethics based on democratic values, as well as to practice democratic citizenship using your own judgment, while committing to create peace and democracy. All this maintaining a constructive attitude, responsible and supportive while fulfilling civic rights and obligations (RD 2006a; 2006b).*

The relevance of the social competence for lifelong learning, its consequences in the complete personal development and the importance given by society to knowledge and information have driven us to carry out a study in order to know and be able to give answers to teachers’ needs regarding the daily practice of this competence.

## **2. Teachers’ opinion about social and civic competence**

Aware of the importance of social and civic education in the context of lifelong learning and especially in the context where we work, our interest has been focused on approaching the opinions and assessments made by Andalusian teachers about it. The study is centered in two main phases: a) To define the concept of social and civic competence thanks to a Delphi study, and b) To assess teachers’ opinions about the importance and needs for education thanks to a survey.

### **2.1. Defining social and civic competence**

What does social and civic competence mean exactly and which elements integrate it? It is examined thanks to a revision of the present literature (Torney-Purta et al, 1999, 2001; Audigier, 2000; Marco Stiefel, 2002; O’Shea, 2003; EU Official Journal, 2006; LOE (Organic Law of Education), 2006; Marina & Bernabeu, 2007; Moreno & Luengo, 2007; Veldhuis, 2007; Bisquerra, 2008; Hoskins et al, 2008; Kerry, 2008) and a Delphi study. The goal is to create a glossary concretizing it.

The Delphi study is developed in two phases, a first one where the research team focuses in the revision of the present literature, and a second one with the collaboration of a group of ten experts (teachers, and researchers coming from different universities as well as from specialized and prestigious centers) who, through a series of questions, assess 89 elements (Annex I) structured in 5 dimensions: Knowledge (30), Skills (17), Attitudes (8), Values (19) and desired behaviors (14). The dimension of Knowledge has four other sub-dimensions called: Politics/Justice (11), Social (9), Culture (5) and Economy (5). All these elements reach in the second round a score higher than 3.59 in a scale of 5 points.

The question is what is the importance given by experts and teachers of these elements. In the figure n° 2, we find a contrast between the assessments of the experts (EXP) and the importance (IMP) given by teachers to the different dimensions and elements of the glossary. As observed, all dimensions are highly valued (above 4), being that the assessment is always higher in the case of the experts. The opinions of teachers and experts are quite similar in every dimension. It must be highlighted the greater value given to desired behaviors. On the contrary, the dimension less valued has been knowledge (concretely the economic dimension).

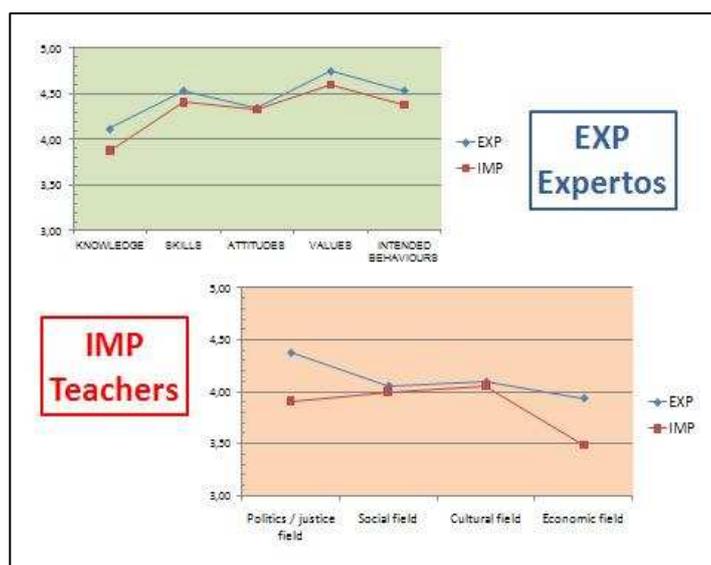


Figure n° 2 Competence assessment made by experts and teachers

Further, figure n°3 is presented to show the comparison made by teachers regarding the assessment of the importance given to the different dimensions of the glossary referring to the social and civic competence, as well as how teachers need them. It can be observed thus a parallelism between importance and needs, which are always slightly less valued. When comparing the value given to the importance and needs regarding the sub-dimensions of knowledge, a parallelism is also observed in every case. It is also here important to mention that the value given to knowledge in the economic area is slightly less than in the rest of the cases.

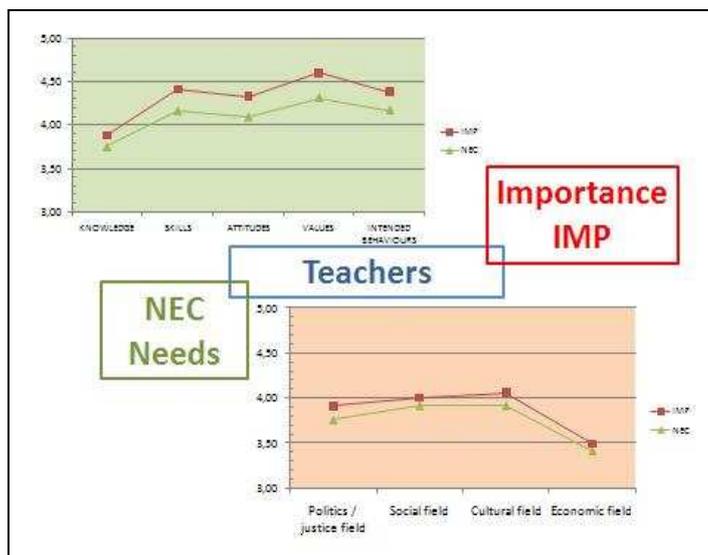


Figure nº 3 Competence importance and needs for teachers

## 2.2. Needs of Educational centers

Educational centers must be conceived as the main axes of new citizens' education, as well as the main developers of this education connecting agents and environments (Calvo de Mora y Morales, 2008). However, the question is what do the centers think and need?

In order to answer this question (teachers' involvement, collaborations, needs) a survey (reliability 0.908, Cronbach's alpha) has been delivered via Internet to all educational centers, not universities, only from Andalusia (around 94.000 teachers). The sample, with an error rate of 5% is set in 383 individuals, although the real sample counts up to 801 answers. Concerning their characteristics, there is a relative balance in gender, slightly higher in relation with men (52.30%). Most of the teachers do not hold a directorship and have not done it before (64.80%), and they have neither had responsibilities as academic coordinators in their centers (62.50%). As shown the figure nº4, there is a relevant representation (in relation with the size of the population) of the different educational levels and stages.

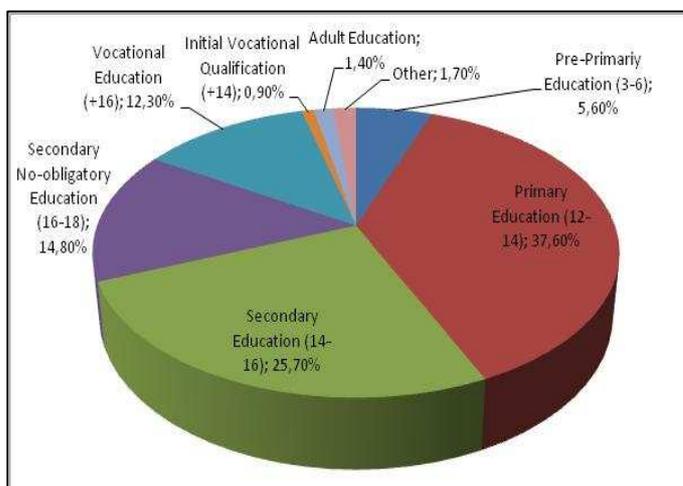


Figure nº 4. Sample distribution according to educational levels

Another significant aspect of the sample is related to the competences' development. A considerable majority (67.70) affirms that they have done learning courses or activities about competences, but only a 23.50% has followed specific training courses about the social and civic competence.

For the surveyed teachers, social and civic education must emphasize, in a scale from 1 to 5:

- a) The development of critical thinking among students (4.67)
- b) The development of democratic values among students (4.66)
- c) To teach students how to cooperate with equals (4,60)
- d) Students' participation in community activities and problems (4.48)
- e) That students learn which are the structures of the government and how do they work (4.24)

An important element to assess teachers' preparation and attitude is their involvement in educational centers. To this regard, we ask them to evaluate their identification with some relevant aspects from the center, their preparation and development. Although all aspects are positively valued for teachers (scale 1-5), the following ranking can be established:

- a) Identification with the norms and values of the center (4.11),
- b) Engagement with the educational project of the center (4.02),
- c) Cordiality and cohesion (4.01),
- d) Making use of the dialogue and communication (3.99),
- e) Taking decisions in groups (3.88),
- f) Participating in projects from the center (3.87),
- g) Cooperation and teamwork,
- h) Participating in interdisciplinary projects (3.59)
- i) Participating in projects coordinated together with other centers (3.00).

The figure nº5 represents this ranking.

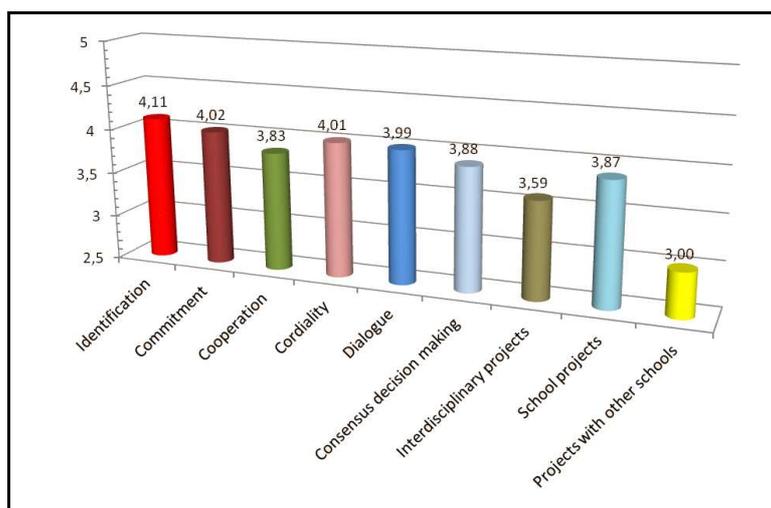


Figure nº 5. Identification of teachers with some relevant aspects from the center

Regarding the last aspect (collaborating with other centers), an essential aspect of the study has been mentioned: interactions with the community (collaborations and networks). The figure nº6, the answers regarding daily interactions of the centers with local institutions (68.2%) and with other local educational centers (67.8%) are quite high. On the contrary, collaborative interactions with syndicates and other social agents (13.80%), as well as with potential agents (3.00%) are not so frequent.

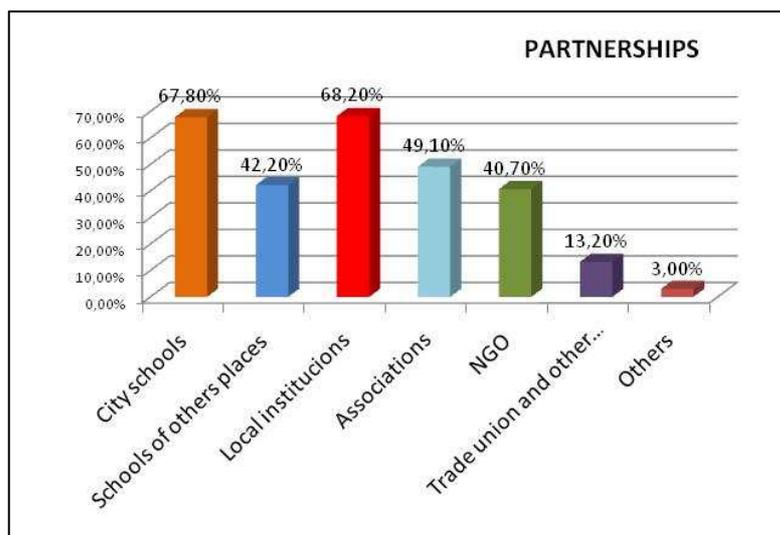


Figure nº 6. Daily collaborative interactions of the centers

On the topic of centers' involvement in networks (educational, professional, social...) half of the teachers affirm to be involved (49.10%), but there is also another half not involved (50.90%). This should be, from our point of view, a key element for the educational and learning approach in the centers. In this sense, it must be highlighted that 69.6% of the individuals participating in the survey would be interested in participating in educational networks and collaborative interactions, thanks to the support of communication technologies, with other centers.

Teachers were also asked about three necessary aspects for the center, from their point of view, in order to properly develop the social and civic competence. In the following table, the most relevant answers for the three aspects are delivered:

FIRST PLACE	SECOND PLACE	THIRD PLACE
Materials and resources (37.4%)	A training process specialized in the competence (31.1%)	Interacting with members of the educational community (teachers/students/family) (17.1%)
A training process specialized in the competence (23.80%)	Materials and resources (13.0%)	More involvement of the educational center with civic organizations (13.1%)

Chart nº1. Needs for the development of social and civic competence

### 3. Conclusions and proposals

Taking the results into account, it is convenient to step forward in the design of materials and resources under the perspective of an open and flexible repertory, allowing teachers to have a wide range of materials (documents, videos, images...). These materials will be completed with a didactic guide in order to be adapted by the teachers according to the demands and possibilities in their educational context. Among the aspects to be considered for their design, it has to be taken into account:

1. Dimensions (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values) and elements of the social and civic competence (Annex I)

2. Thematic areas:

- a) Diversity
- b) Coexistence
- c) Cooperation
- d) Culture of peace and no violence
- e) Environment and sustainable development
- f) Health and consumption
- g) Economy
- h) Culture and media
- i) Mobility and circulation
- j) Patrimony
- k) Democracy and participation
- l) Human rights
- m) Identity and social relations

3. Content areas:

- a) Transversal or interdisciplinary
- b) Natural sciences
- c) Social sciences
- d) Art education
- e) Physical education
- f) Citizenship
- g) Spanish language and literature
- h) Languages
- i) Math
- j) Technology
- k) Others.

4. Level or age of the students:

- a) Preschool Education: 3 to 6 years old.
- b) Primary Education: 6-8, 8-10 and 10-12.

- c) Obligatory Secondary Education: 12-14 and 14-16 years old
- d) Post- Obligatory Education: 16-18 years old.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to take into account the availability of information and specific education regarding the social and civic competence (glossary), as well as the strategies and didactic resources appropriate for working at educational centers, such as: a) Methodologies about collaborative learning, b) Work based on problems, c) Participation in community activities, etc.

Finally, this proposal should be surrounded by a collaborative and cooperative environment (educational networks), characterized by the exchange of information and the diffusion of experiences (good practices), resources... With no doubts a priceless means of distributing and sharing professional and educational knowledge.

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**Organizado por:**

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