

**Education for democratic citizenship being debated in Spain -  
Study on the concept and its application within the context of education policies  
(1970-2006)**

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**Abstract**

This research aims to conduct a comparative analysis on the content and purpose of the Spanish educational policies through two perspectives: on the one hand, from the perspective that argues that the subject “Education for Citizenship” should be taught as a subject in the curriculum, and from the perspective that emphasizes that this content can be taught through the contents of other subjects with a transversal character.

To do so we first examine the concept of citizenship and the educational policies through legislation that has regulated the Spanish education from the 1990 Act to the present. Secondly, we analyze some undertaken initiatives for developing its contents. Finally we show the results and conclusions of the work regarding to the comparison both in law as in the area of the curriculum.

**Education and citizenship in the recent history of Spanish education**

As is the case with other Western countries, analysis around the concept of citizenship has been progressively changing as a result of the deep political and social transformations that have occurred over recent decades. The transition from dictatorship to democracy, entry into the European Union, the phenomenon of immigration, globalisation and technological revolution, among other factors, has given a new meaning to education for democratic citizenship as a means of dealing with the new problems. In turn, this discipline stands as a pillar that enables an education in values and certain cross-curricular themes to be integrated, instead of proposing these as once-off or isolated actions. In this context, and once we get past the concept of education as merely transferring knowledge, school is considered as the ideal platform for establishing human, civic and social values.

On 16 October 2002, the European Council marked the starting point with Recommendation 12/2002 by stating that education for democratic citizenship *includes all practices and activities designed to help young people and adults participate actively in democratic life by accepting and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society*, and asked the governments of the Member States to make education for democratic citizenship a

priority in education policy and reforms. In Spain, this recommendation was enacted in Law on Education 2/2006 of 3 May, where it stated the need to create a subject called “*Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights*.” The major change the law entailed was the introduction and development of basic skills as a new element in the curriculum. It was not a matter of introducing new content but rather a new way of conceiving and proposing the educational curriculum. From that point onwards the debate started in Spain.

One sector of society felt that this reform was not necessary as this content had always been taught in the Spanish education system, either in a cross-curricular way or as part of subjects with other names. The same sector of society stated that the educational goals proposed in the school curriculum and which took the form of the subject of education for democratic citizenship, was not a new idea but rather, in one form or another, was already included in previous laws on education. Indeed, the debate has gone beyond any purely academic issue and in recent years has come to be a central point for debate between the main political parties. This position is not wrong, but it is also true that cross-curricular teaching as a method of establishing values to the education community as a whole has failed in a significant number of education centres, especially if we examine secondary education.

### **The profile of education for democratic citizenship in the study plan: an unbalanced discourse**

As a first discourse on education for democratic citizenship, it is important to keep in mind that this is not the object of a single subject, given that it includes basic skills such as those associated with social and civic skills, but rather that it is a situation that has an impact in all schools and, by extension, involves the wider community as a whole.

Various studies conducted on an international level state that, as we have experienced in Spain, although cross-curricular learning is a good goal, it is not the only option available. The guarantee of success should not be dependent on the individual decision of every teacher or on there being a good cooperative working environment; rather it is better to strengthen it with its own subject as a specific area of thinking. In fact, this is the case in the majority of European countries (16 also have it established as its own subject), according to the Eurydice report (2005) on the situation of education for democratic citizenship in Europe. In any case, there are other specifically cross-curricular themes (environmental education, health education, sex education, etc.) that do not form part of the education for democratic

citizenship content. This means that, on the one hand, some continue to advocate for the cross-curricular treatment of these fields and, on the other, they commit to the separate subject. Without denying the obvious importance of these issues and the fact that they need to be dealt with in school, it is doubtful that they are connected to exercising democratic citizenship and respecting human rights.

In the final analysis, educating for democratic citizenship is a shared and community task and therefore it is necessary to leave the solitariness of the school and make the whole community also assume some responsibility. Education centres must establish agreements, networks and alliances with the families, town and city councils and social institutions in the community where they are located. In difficult times such as these, new ways of involving the educational community are possible. To this end we must change position and change perspective. *Changing position* means positioning ourselves within an area of cultural, family and social networks which can build new commitments on education. Schools should make society responsible. *Changing perspective* means that instead of a closed school based on outdated models, we should imagine our action as part of a new public education space. It is time to put 'society at the school's service' instead of the 'school at society's service.'

The task should not just be delegated to the school, at the same time there must be work to involve the community and have it take on responsibility if we do not want to contribute to increasing dissatisfaction with educational work, and the unease and identity crisis among teachers. At the end of the day, educating for democratic citizenship does not just concern educators and teachers, because it is the goal of all social agents and bodies. Taking on the task of educating in isolation, faced with the lack of ties uniting family, school and means of communication, is a source of tension, unease and new challenges. Educating for democratic citizenship should mean creating an educational environment or atmosphere as a joint and shared action as, at its root, civic education aims to be a *social project*, a new structure of the school and society as an expanded educational field, divided into multiple spaces, time, socialising or educational agents. Without a link between school and society, apart from the fact formal educational activity will always be insufficient; the most serious aspect is that the contradiction between providing an education in desirable values and educating for the values that prevail in real life will survive. For this reason it is necessary to restore the community dimension of this type of education.

## **The nature, timeframe and teachers of the new discipline**

In general, subjects and areas referred to moral training are considered common. The law, in its third final provision, states that they are *'the basic aspects of the curriculum which form the minimum education.'* This means that they are compulsory, can be assessed and are present at all levels of basic education and in the secondary school diploma (known as Bachillerato in Spanish) curriculum. Its timetable and place within all the cycles or in relation to other subjects or areas, are comparable to Language or Mathematics and have been established under the terms we will analyse below. The Spanish Autonomous Regions then have room to supplement or solidify it (art. 6.4 de la Ley Orgánica 2/2006).

We can already add some of the planned developments to the instructions set forth in the law. Following the sequence of events, the first clarification came from Royal Decree 806/2006, of 30 June which established the timeframe for applying the new order of the education system. From the information there we can highlight the references to years and stages which will include some of the subjects associated with the area of education for democratic citizenship. The timeframe for application of the new education system regulation, once the basic education of the cycle or stage has been set (before 31/12/2006), will be staggered into academic years, by stages and their respective years.

Our information complies with the general provisions. According to these, *'primary education will be provided by teachers who will have competence in all areas in this level...'* (art. 93.2)<sup>1</sup>For Compulsory Secondary Education (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, or ESO), article 26.3 states that *'the Education Authorities will establish the conditions that allow teachers with the relevant qualification to teach more than one subject to the same group of pupils in the first years of the stage.'*

Apart from this fact, both for Compulsory Secondary Education and the Secondary Diploma course, we can say that the teachers will have the relevant teaching degrees or qualifications and that, in contrast with previous levels or courses, they will be specialised according to subject. If we focus on the name of the subject, in the Secondary Diploma course it is called Philosophy and citizenship, and that, to a large extent, it is an extension of the Ethics subject that was taught in the 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education mainly by

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<sup>1</sup> This article states: *«...The teaching of music, physical education, languages or any other teaching determined by the Government, after hearing the regional Governments, will be taught by teachers with the corresponding specialization and qualification».*

philosophy teachers, then the task of teaching would be assigned to philosophy teachers<sup>2</sup>. Something similar can be said of the teachers of the alternative subject to Religion, 'Society, Culture and Religion', in the 3rd and 4th years of Compulsory Secondary Education and the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the Secondary Diploma course. Specifically, in the III block of the subject, corresponding to the Secondary Diploma course, where it reflects on the impact of religion and tolerance in society, the standards of development granted the preference to philosophy teachers. However, there is no lack of proposals to create a new teaching speciality with its own selection tests. The latter, to the extent that it could strengthen the possible ideological stamp of the selected staff, seems to us to run a greater risk of infringing on students' freedom of religion and conscience.

### **Education for democratic citizenship in education laws: a comparative point of view**

Education laws have, of course, been drawn up in line with the social changes and circumstances experienced at each time and place. The laws we describe below are no exception and indeed, education for democratic citizenship which is the subject matter of this inquiry, is particularly involved in the education law in force in Spain, the Organic Law of Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación or LOE) of 2006. However, in this analysis we wish to prove that in previous decades people were already talking about citizenship and education in citizenship although not using these terms and with other content.

The year 2005, which the European Council declared the European Year of Education for Democratic Citizenship, was decisive in consolidating the ideas of the law on education that was subsequently drawn up. For this reason, and if we consider the interest there is throughout the world in improving the systems of coexistence, we see it as timely to deal with this issue from a new context where it has been firmly established in the national curriculum. However, we can sense that both in the seventies with the General Law on Education (Ley General de Educación or LGE) as well as in the nineties with the Organic Law on the General Structure of the Education System (Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo or LOGSE, 1990) this content was included, albeit from a different perspective, with different nuances and using other names. In the juxtaposition we present,

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<sup>2</sup> Article 94 (State junior and senior secondary education teacher): «In order to teach junior and senior secondary education a degree on the subject, an engineering or architect degree, or an equivalent graduate is required, as well as the pedagogical and didactic traineeship at a postgraduate level according to what this current Act states, but taking into account that the Government could validate other academic titles for specific areas with the corresponding hearings to the Regional Governments». For additional information refer to article 100.

we will check what the common elements are and what is different in what we today understand as education for democratic citizenship.

#### **A) The General Law on Education of 1970**

This educational measure arose in the final years of the Franco dictatorship when *Civic-Social Education* was a subject in 4th year in primary school and *Formation of the National Spirit* (or *Politics*) in the Secondary Diploma course, was the subject designed to teach the citizen (subject) about values such as national identity and spirit. The General Law on Education on the other hand, did not propose a specific subject for political themes, but rather education for democratic citizenship issues were included in Social Sciences taught in Basic General Education (EGB), and moreover, the social and anthropological area of the Secondary Diploma course was established to cover '*geography and history, with special attention to Spain and Hispanic peoples; philosophy, political, social and economic education.*' In reality, we can say that politics continued to be present in the education system, albeit in another way.

It seems obvious that we cannot find the term citizenship in the law as we understand it nowadays. Nevertheless, certain nuances show us its meaning and its ties to other content. At that time there was no subject with that title yet training in life values was very much present.

This underlying idea in the law essentially corresponds to the view Aristotle puts forward in Book V of *Politics*, in the assessment he gives of the conditions of education for the citizen. Where in essence the LGE attributed Professional Training with the new challenges of a training model that was better suited to the real needs of the labour market, the aim of the new subject called education for democratic citizenship is cohesion and social integration, two allies for the comprehensive training of citizens in the field of labour. We can understand this goal to achieve comprehensive human training, as well as preparing students for the responsible exercise of freedom, as stated in article 1 of the law, as being key points in laying the groundwork of the ideals of education for democratic citizenship.

In any case, in the years when this law was enacted and education began to be put into operation, planning and programming were supported and governed by the Church. Indeed, article 6 of the law guarantees the religious education and spiritual and moral action of the Catholic Church. Therefore, we are dealing with a training model very closely tied to

moral aspects. In the Secondary Diploma course, article 22 expressly states that special attention be given to *'the development of religious-moral habits.'*

In general, we can say that the model of education for democratic citizenship that is proposed remained tied to religion and to education in religious values.

### **B) Another very different perspective marked the Law of 1990**

With regard to civic education or education for democratic citizenship, the Spanish education system continued to have no clear, defined solution. The LOGSE opted for cross-curricular teaching in education in values and only the curricular specification was carried out, limited with the inclusion of Civic Ethics as a subject in the 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO). Organic Law 10/2002 of 23 December on Education Quality lacked any formulation on education for democratic citizenship. Its model was formed around education in values, establishing a subject called *Society, Culture and Religion*. Cross-curricular teaching once again became the main way of teaching democratic values.

Traditionally, the LOGSE has been identified as a law with a special focus on diversity. Therefore, its main body is particularly rich and sensitive to issues relating to flexible groupings, with curricular and methodological adaptations or with attention to strengthening, among others. With regard to citizenship, the Preamble clearly states the importance granted to education as a key instrument in *'...acquiring the habits of democratic coexistence and mutual respect, becoming prepared for responsible participation in the different social activities and bodies.'*

To this end, both in primary and secondary education it establishes the goal of *'appreciating the basic values that govern life and human coexistence and operating in accordance with these'* (art. 13). Without making explicit reference to education for democratic citizenship, its ideals underpin the entire text of the law. It is essentially established in several aspects, one of these, namely article 2, underlines that the educational activity will be undertaken keeping several principles in mind, among which: *"...personalised training, that favours a comprehensive education in knowledge, skills and moral values of the students in all areas of their personal, family, social and professional lives."*

If we study the Royal Decree 732/1995 of 5 May which establishes students' rights and duties and the centres' coexistence regulations, we find different references to this issue in

primary and secondary education which help us understand and consider its importance and its involvement in the different areas of knowledge, which are:

STAGES	AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEGISLATION
<b>Primary education</b>	Knowledge of the natural, social and cultural environment, foreign language, Spanish language and literature	Royal Decree 1006/1991, of 14 June, which establishes the minimum level of education expected from Primary Education.
<b>Junior secondary education</b>	Ethics, social sciences, geography and history; foreign languages	Royal Decree 3473/2000, of 29 December, which modifies Royal Decree 1007/1991, of 14 June, which establishes the minimum level of education expected from Compulsory Secondary Education.
<b>Senior secondary education</b>	Philosophy, history, foreign languages, history of the contemporary world (branch of social sciences); Latin (branch of humanities); economics (branch of social sciences)	Royal Decree 3474/2000, of 29 December which modifies Royal Decree 1700/1991 of 29 November which establishes the structure of the Secondary Diploma course, and Royal Decree 1178/1992, of 2 October, which establishes minimum level of education expected from the Secondary Diploma course.

### C) The Organic Law on Education Law, 2006

This is the law that is closest to the concept of education for democratic citizenship. Here it is dealt with explicitly and as a new concept under the title: Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights. This subject is taught both in one of the two years of the 3rd cycle in Primary School as well as in Secondary School.

In the spirit of the law the possibility of promoting a participatory culture is considered, an objective which involves education for democratic citizenship and which can be achieved through it. The aim is to promote and foster democratic values among students, values such as tolerance, solidarity, cooperation and respect for others. Specifically, the law itself mentions that *'The State has an obligation to educate all citizens in civic values and virtues which promote social cohesion.'* (Art. 27.2 LOE)

Based on this law, education for democratic citizenship is formulated with the aim of making students into active and responsible citizens who can contribute to the development and well-being of society. To this end, three basic content modules are proposed, the first focusing on political culture, the second on critical thought and the development of certain



attitudes and values and the third on active participation. In the case of the Spanish curriculum, the following thematic blocks are proposed in order to cover each one:

THEMATIC BLOCKS	Individuals and interpersonal and social relationships	Community life	Living in society
MAIN CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Freedom</li> <li>- Responsibility in decision-making</li> <li>- Children’s rights</li> <li>- Respect for gender differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peace</li> <li>- Road safety</li> <li>- Principle of coexistence</li> <li>- Civic habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil protection</li> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- Defence as a civic and solidarity commitment</li> <li>- Peace</li> </ul>

In the primary level, the content referring to education for democratic citizenship, as shown in the table below, starts with education on the aspects that are most personal and closest to students. Fostering and developing these values will help develop more remote one or ones closer to society and life in community.

THEMATIC BLOCKS	The personal and close	The interrelationship aspect of community life	Social coexistence
MAIN CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the emotional dimension,</li> <li>- autonomy,</li> <li>- individual rights and responsibilities,</li> <li>- the equality of rights and differences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- coexistence,</li> <li>- participation,</li> <li>- community life in close groups .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the principles and areas of,</li> <li>- collective rights and responsibilities.</li> </ul>

The number of hours of primary and secondary school time devoted to this content is 50 and 70 respectively and the titles of the subjects are as follows for each year:

YEARS	TITLES
3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle of Primary 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ESO	Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights
4 <sup>th</sup> year of ESO	Ethical and civic education
Secondary Diploma course	Philosophy and citizenship

The main content that is currently discussed in these subjects was included in the previous law under the subjects known as: Ethics (in 4th year of Compulsory Secondary

Education) and Philosophy (1<sup>st</sup> year of the Secondary Diploma course), however the current law includes the concept of citizenship itself, integrated into the subject's title.

It should be pointed out that in the law of 2006 there is greater attention to educational content unlike those put forward in the LOGSE, that are characterised by giving more attention to the technical and practical content of education.

### **Some comparative conclusions**

Although it may feel like we are dealing with a new subject in the Spanish school curriculum given its title, the fact is that once its content has been analysed, we can see that in one way or another and to a greater or lesser degree, the essence of education for democratic citizenship has been present in the three laws analysed here. Though the current Organic Law on Education is, without a doubt, the one that most broadly adopts the identity, there are nevertheless constant references to it in the previous laws.

For several writers, Victoriano Mayoral (2007:18) among them, education for democratic citizenship cannot be considered a new concept, what appears to be new is only its *'generalisation and redefinition as a result of new facts that are exerting an influence, even on the idea of citizenship and the struggle that is unleashed around it to determine its scope.'*

In all cases, the content of this subject is linked to values, to learning and internalising these values and this has been present all the time although with different levels of intensity EURYDICE (2002). Faced with this fact we can ask ourselves, in what terms has education for democratic citizenship manifested itself in each one of the laws?

On an international level, the official guidelines propose the following classification for inclusion in the curriculum of education for democratic citizenship in primary and secondary school, the models are as follows:

1. *Independent subject*: this is a subject with its own identity and that can be compulsory or optional within the curriculum<sup>3</sup>.
2. *Integrated*: this title is used if the subject forms part of one or more subjects<sup>4</sup>.
3. *Cross-curricular education theme*: this title means that education for democratic citizenship is present throughout the curriculum<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> As eg.: England, Sweden, Poland, Luxembourg, Greece, etc.

<sup>4</sup> As eg.: Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Germany, etc.

These are three non-exclusive modes meaning that several can co-exist within in the same curriculum.

If we recap the laws that are the subject matter of our study we can see a different mode is used in each one:

<b>LGE, 1970</b>	<b>LOGSE, 1990</b>	<b>LOE, 2006</b>
Education for democratic citizenship as a subject called Civic education. <i>Mode: Integrated.</i>	Education for democratic citizenship as a cross-curricular subject through education in values. <i>Mode: cross-curricular and integrated education theme.</i>	Education for democratic citizenship as an assessable subject in the curriculum with the same name. <i>Mode: Independent subject.</i>

Lastly, if we take an overview at the laws, we can see that their Preambles, without having regulatory force, are a good indicator of the law’s intentions and enable us to gauge their spirits. In the General Law on Education we can only find an introduction in this regard and not a preamble proper. In any case, below we highlight the ideals that have existed in each one of these laws if we focus on education for democratic citizenship.

<b>LGE, 1970</b>	Among the objectives are ‘...make the entire Spanish population a participant in education, basing its actions on the most genuine and traditional national virtues; - ‘...supplement general education with professional training which provides the skills for the individual’s productive incorporation into working life’ - ‘...offer equal opportunities to all’.
<b>LOGSE, 1990</b>	‘...study in depth some aspects relating to coexistence, contributing to training new citizens’.
<b>LOE, 2006</b>	‘...educations is the most appropriate means to guarantee the democratic, responsible, free and critical exercise of citizenship which is essential for the creation of advanced, dynamic and fair societies’

Bearing in mind the amount of years that separate each of the laws and considering the political dimensions underlying each one, nevertheless we can still find certain nuances which lead us to think about the nature of comprehensive training that is entrusted to the education system at each time in relation to integrating all citizens into society.

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<sup>5</sup> As eg.: Spain and Portugal.

In reality, the basis of an education in moral and civic values should be ethics and politics and never be biased or ideological. It must be grounded in a reflection on freedom, responsibility and human morality with a view to passing a vision of those moral and civic values that enable us to live together in peace and freedom on to students.

In this regard, democracy as the best system of political organisation must be known about, appreciated and practiced in schools; it is not enough to have one subject for exercising democracy, yet if no-one in the school highlights the values, principles, rights and duties that make citizenship, then our teenaged students will not know how to appreciate the achievement of freedom and civil rights nor learn how to behave with respect and tolerance towards those who are different.

Education in values must contribute to training citizens (men and women) who play a part in society: the democratic effort must nowadays be aimed towards favouring a type of citizen, one with the skills to live side-by-side with others in open and pluralist societies, based on tolerance and on viewing difference as an asset that contributes to improving society.

During the period of time in question, namely the history of education in Spain, social and civic education have been present as a specific subject or integrated into other subjects, in addition to also being taught in a cross-curricular way. With the LOE it returns to being a specific subject while maintaining its cross-curricular nature at the same time.

The democratic traits of the new education system were outlined during the political transition in Spain, but the LODE, 1985 (Organic Law Regulating the Right to Education), the LOGSE, 1990 and the LOE, 2006, were the laws that best developed the consolidation of the constitutional values in the education system: pluralism, equality and freedom.

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