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Citizenship Education in Portugal

1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief description of the main official guidelines for citizenship education that have been in effect in democratic Portugal since 1974. Illustrations of some of the practices in education for citizenship in the formal and non-formal context and results of some research on student and teacher conceptions and practices concerning education for citizenship are also provided.¹ The work presented here was carried out within the context of the: Council of Europe's European Year of Citizenship through Education (2005); Accompaniment Group of the European Year of Citizenship through Education and of the initiatives implemented in Portugal; Academic work and research on initial teacher training in the area of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC).

2. Summary of the official guidelines on education for citizenship in democratic Portugal

In 1974, the Carnation Revolution ended Portugal's dictatorship and colonial regime, restoring citizens' basic rights and freedoms and establishing a democracy. The philosophy of the Education System Act (*Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*, 1986) was inspired by humanist and democratic principles: the freedom to teach and learn, the right to education and culture, and equality of opportunity. The education system must guarantee identity, respect pluralism, and contribute to the overall education of free, responsible, autonomous, critical, and engaged citizens in a multicultural society that values the human aspect of labour.

Curriculum reforms in Portugal enacted in 1989 revolved around developing student freedoms, autonomy, and ethical self-determination, as well as personal and social development, a sense of European and international solidarity, and the critical thinking skills necessary to both understand and participate in democratic processes and responsible, constructive change.²

In addition to the curricular areas, which have promoted education for citizenship, what are known as European clubs have also played a role since

1986. These clubs are frequently involved in partnerships, twinning, and Community and European programmes, and together undertake extracurricular activities to promote citizenship from a European perspective. These clubs rely on the volunteer efforts of teachers, students, non-teaching staff, and members of parent and other associations in official and private schools. There are now 262 European clubs in the Portuguese network, 24 of which are registered with an international network of similar clubs.

The reorganization of the primary education curriculum under Decree-Law no. 6/2001 views citizenship education as a multifaceted concept that structures all curricular development, a pillar in the construction of a school of citizens based on the emergence of a new paradigm – lifelong learning. The primary education curriculum is made up of subject-based and non-subject-based areas. Decree-Law no. 6/2001 introduced three new compulsory non-subject-based curricular areas:

- Project Area: conception, implementation, and assessment of projects, with the support of various subject-based curricular areas, organized around topics or problems of interest to students;
- Accompanied Study: acquisition of study skills and work methods that develop positive attitudes and facilitate autonomy in learning; and
- Civic Education: development of student civic awareness, critical thinking, and responsible participation in the life of the class, school, and community.

Decree-Law no. 74/2004, concerning the secondary education curriculum, prescribes the cross-curricular character of education for citizenship that is to be incorporated into or serve as complement to the curricular activities of all areas of secondary education: sciences and humanities; technology; specialized arts; professional and vocational training. The cross curricular themes of education for citizenship may be covered in subject-based curricular areas (e.g., mathematics, philosophy) and in subject-based curricular activities carried out by schools in accordance with the School Education Project and the School and Group Curricular Projects. Schools also offer curriculum-enriching, environment-linked educational activities, social assistance work, and voluntary activities, which develop the European dimension in education.

For example, the Secondary Vocational Education curriculum is intended to provide young people with a store of humanistic, sociocultural, scientific, and technological knowledge that will prepare them to take active roles as citizens and facilitate their entry into the employment market. The programme has an annual module called an Integration Area (*Área de Integração*) that develops an education for citizenship perspective. It includes the learning of cognitive skills, procedural competencies such as argumentation and pro-

ject work, ethical skills such as ethical reflection, and social participation skills and attitudes. The annual module includes topics such as The Professional World, Problems of the Contemporary World, Environment, Science, and Bioethics, Man and Society, and Authority, Community, and State.

The 2005 amendment to the Education System Act of 1986 redefines and extends the aims of higher education based on the logic of lifelong education, and with a view to the unifying of the educational process.³ This amendment extends the concept of knowledge to the problems of the contemporary world. It orientates polytechnic education towards applied research and development, adopts the European system of academic credits, and defines the recognition of certifications, their internationalization, and the parameters of student mobility within the system of higher education. It delineates the rules governing access and entry to higher education according to principles of democracy, equity, and equality of opportunity; it establishes professional qualifications for higher education faculty and for teachers at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels.

These legislative priority changes are intended to improve the level of qualifications and competencies of the Portuguese population. These priorities are found in the framework defined by the Lisbon Strategy, which recognizes the irreplaceable role of education and training in economic and technological development, social cohesion, personal fulfilment, and active citizenship. In recent decades, Portugal has made enormous efforts in raising the level of the population's educational achievements, which have resulted in substantial educational success. However, the country continues to show structural weakness in terms of the population's training and qualifications. Addressing this weakness, which has kept the country below European Union standards in such areas as school failure, school dropouts, and qualifications of the working population as a whole, demands considerable and long-term investment.

In May 2006, the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the Education System Act (1986–2006), the Portuguese Parliament, together with the Government, sponsored a national debate on education. This debate – organized around the question, How do we improve education in the coming years – was organized by the National Council for Education (*Conselho Nacional de Educação*) and took place between May 2006 and January 2007. Five themes were debated: Education and Citizenship, Quality and Equity in Education; Schools, Teachers, and Other Professionals; Lifelong Learning and Employment; Science, Research, and Educational Development; and Measures and Goals for Education. In addition to illustrating the issues, these themes also provided a framework for future courses of action. Measures are

now being implemented in order that education and training goals can be achieved by 2010. These goals can be summarized as follows:

- concentrate on education that emphasizes learning for lifelong active and responsible citizenship;
- increase the range of training offered that focuses on citizens' lifelong learning;
- conduct research on the production of knowledge about education with a view to its development.

In 2006, the Education for Citizenship Forum,⁴ an initiative of the Ministry of Education and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, was charged with the mission of reflecting on the relationship between education and citizenship, producing guidelines, and identifying and disseminating good practices, with the aim of ensuring the consistency of ongoing initiatives and helping to encourage the work of teachers and schools.

3. Knowledge, Conceptions, and Practices

The following section provides examples of educational practices identified by the Portuguese Accompaniment Group of the European Year of Citizenship through Education as well as some research data on the type of knowledge, ideas, competencies, and attitudes held by young people and teachers.

3.1 The 'Education for Democratic Citizenship' (EDC) Project

The European Year of Citizenship through Education (2005) was designed by the Council of Europe as a political frame of reference to inaugurate the ongoing implementation process within the scope of the Education for Democratic Citizenship project.⁵ Target groups would be policy makers, practitioners, trainers, and knowledge multipliers. In Portugal, the idea was to build on the experience gained during the project's first two phases (1997–2000 and 2000–2004),⁶ and national, regional, and local activities were organized, especially during the Portuguese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Some of the activities were in response to and in support of initiatives by schools and civil society, and others, such as the year-end national conference in Lisbon on the European Year of Citizenship through Education, regional seminars, and an international teacher's training seminar, were institutional. The main aim of activities carried out in Portugal during the European Year of Citizenship through Education was to support and provide sustainability to initiatives

and partnerships involving schools, municipalities, and NGOs in the area of education and teacher training. The EDC-programme included communication activities, debate and training seminars, building partnerships, and the dissemination of pedagogical and policy guideline materials from the Council of Europe. The programme activities were attended by various policy-makers, educational staff, teachers, young people, representatives from NGOs, academics, and researchers, who mentioned in particular the

- fundamental role of education in learning and experiencing a democratic culture within the family, schools, and society;
- raising of awareness that citizenship as active and responsible participation is a multifaceted concept with political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions;
- role of citizenship education in learning to live communally and in promoting social cohesion through knowledge, critical thinking, mutual intercultural understanding, a sense of belonging, knowledge and awareness of the values of solidarity, human rights, and principles of freedom, political pluralism, and the primacy of law.

Along with the activities carried out during the year, as in the regional seminars and in teacher training seminars, good practices in education for citizenship, in both formal and non-formal contexts, were identified. The regional seminar in Santa Maria da Feira in northern Portugal, was designed for primary teachers and heads of training centres in the north, as well as researchers and academics. They described and discussed their experiences in education for citizenship in formal and non-formal education in the region. There were presentations of

- guidelines produced in the context of the Council of Europe for teacher training;⁷
- research projects in the area of education, development, and social change,⁸ learner communities in non-formal education with a view to facilitating access to education and training in these communities,⁹ and learning mediators;
- work conducted by local development and adult education associations with links to the university, firms, and vocational schools, such as Local Initiative Houses.¹⁰

This seminar was combined with the European Union's Europe Day celebrations and was organized by the local council. Its target public was the region's primary schools. There were debates on issues such as environmental education, the promotion of human rights, drug abuse prevention, and affective education. The resources of the region's vocational schools were also publicized.

The aims of the international teacher's training seminar,¹¹ held in Caparide, in the district of Lisbon, were to share and reflect on experiences and activities undertaken in the context of formal and non-formal education and to conceptualize them in the light of

- political philosophy in the area of social and cultural rights and values in democracy, issues related to poverty and social exclusion, as well as the need for participation to be based on social values and social responsibility;¹²
- the concepts of EDC and teacher training¹³ produced by the Council of Europe;
- the need to discuss and identify teacher competencies and responsibilities in order to promote active and responsible learning through participation;
- the need to identify processes and methods for the training of teachers and trainers in the area of EDC.

The organization, themes, and activities of the Caparide seminar were based on the assumption that a professional teacher should understand abstract concepts, have a high level of self-awareness, and be capable of making ethical judgements and participating responsibly in society.

The practices presented by the Portuguese participants illustrated the educational responses to problems emerging in Portugal, such as the recent immigration flow from eastern countries, as well as the traditional flow from Africa and Brazil, which has altered the traditional trend of Portuguese migration worldwide. For example, the Jesuit Refugee Service NGO project¹⁴ on immigration in Portugal, and its partnership with schools and teachers of various subjects like geography and history, has developed informative and educational components, including life stories, debates on intercultural understanding, and social values that promote social cohesion. The Suão project,¹⁵ located in a small isolated village in the southern Alentejo region of Portugal, discussed its formal and non-formal educational responses to the problems of illiteracy and the isolation of its 900 predominantly elderly residents through the involvement of a primary school with forty children. This cross-generational approach empowers everyone who participates to be involved in solving their own individual problems and making decisions within a democratic process.

3.2 Research Results

Some results from empirical and qualitative research may help us to understand how the EDC curriculum is being interpreted and developed. Portuguese empirical data¹⁶ reveal that eighth-, ninth-, and eleventh-year students

- support a model of social or expansive democracy;

- consider that voting is an obligation for adult citizens;
- attach greater value to involvement in activities in the community, in particular in environmental and other voluntary organizations, than to more conventional political activities;
- express strong positive feelings about Portugal;
- support the political and economic rights of women and immigrants;
- have few opportunities for class discussions;
- perceive that classroom methods are teacher-centred.

Qualitative data on how teachers develop activities show that there is little conceptual coherence regarding citizenship education. Teachers prefer to choose social topics – for example, violence in school, young people at risk from drugs, school drop-out rates in problematic suburban areas, inclusion in school of students with special educational needs, and issues related to students from different cultures – rather than suggesting activities and strategies with an intercultural slant. They prefer to adopt interdisciplinary strategies and make use of a variety of actors and organizations, including those from the local community. Two points regarding these results and the potentialities and weaknesses in terms of the way citizenship education is developed: the choice of inclusive/exclusive strategies of citizenship education has the potential to clarify issues – like the growing inequality in the contemporary world, the weakening of social cohesion, the confusion between the role of the public and private sectors in social assistance – and underscores the rights of people as individuals and social beings, and encourages the social responsibility of the various actors. The focus on developing students' social competencies may reveal that the teachers' conceptions about aims and themes of the education for citizenship are not centred on the need for civic participation, for commitment and responsibility to society but on personal and social development of their students. Teachers also reveal a certain difficulty in developing citizenship themes and teaching strategies and activities infused with the contents of the specific scientific disciplinary areas, such as mathematics, physics, and sciences (Salema et al. 2003).¹⁷

The practices identified during the European Year of Citizenship through Education, and the research data described, confirm results of many master's degree and doctoral theses that have been written at Portuguese universities since the end of the 1990s. These investigations reveal a gap between theory and practice in citizenship and force us to consider

- the strong and weak points of citizenship practices in formal education;
- the need to assess and measure educational structures and processes and their impact on active and responsible citizenship; and
- the need for research on teacher training.

Notes

- 1 Our thanks go to Isabel Graça, a member of the Accompaniment Group of the Education for Democratic Citizenship project, and to Sandra Dionísio, a graduate in Education at the Department of Education of the Faculty of Sciences, for help in gathering information for this paper.
- 2 Cf. CRSE. *Proposta Global da Reforma*. 1988. 21–26; P. D'Orey da Cunha. *Ética e Educação*. Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 1996.
- 3 Act no. 49/2005.
- 4 Its creation was announced at the closing conference of the European Year of Citizenship through Education (November 2005). See also www.cidadania-educacao.pt.
- 5 See Ad Hoc Committee of Experts for the European Year of Citizenship through Education (2006). European Year of Citizenship through Education. Evaluation Report (2005).
- 6 See Ministry of Education, GAERI. Final Reports (2001 and 2006), and Ministry of Education, GAERI. (2001). 'Education for Democratic Citizenship: Final Report of the Portuguese Group.' Lisbon. Pureza, J.M., (Coordinator), Tuna, M., (GAERI), Pereira, I. (DEB), Duque, I., (DES), Pereira, L. (DREL), Lopes, G., Mendes, M., Carrapiço, D., (IIE), Martins, I.F. (Entreculturas) & Cibebe, C. (Setúbal College of Higher Education), Ministry of Education, GAERI (2006). European Year of Citizenship through Education in Portugal. Final Report.
- 7 R. Gollob and E. Huddleston, P. Kraft, M.H. Salema, and V. Spajić-Vrkaš. – *Tool on teacher training for education for democratic citizenship and human rights education*. Council of Europe, 2005.
- 8 For example, at the Faculty of Psychology and Science Education, University of Oporto.
- 9 For example, at the Institute of Education, Catholic University, Oporto.
- 10 Local initiative houses have been established in territories, cities, small towns, and quarters that seek more competition and that trust their citizens to promote their own progress. At the moment there are thirteen Initiative Houses active in northern and central areas of Portugal. Everyone is welcome at the Local Initiative House, including those seeking jobs, qualifications, professional alternatives, and information about professional skills programmes, projects, and business activities. These citizens are provided with guidance and empowering competencies, certification, and promotion in different structures and intervention domains such as the Active Lifelong Learning Kiosk, project workshops, and certification of competencies. Partners involved include local councils, enterprise associations, development associations, *Misericórdias* (charitable institutions), universities, and human rights NGOs. The common goal is to promote economic, professional, and social initiatives in the region and to show new directions that stimulate new forms of sustainable development, favouring the practice of the protection of the environment in small companies, encouraging cooperation between schools and training centres, and promoting concrete forms of active citizenship and the participation of the population in community life.
- 11 Council of Europe Training Programme for Education Professionals, organized by the Ministry of Education's Bureau for European Affairs and International Relations. The seminar was coordinated by Maria Helena Salema.

III. Perspectives on Citizenship Education: Country Profiles

- 12 Keynote speaker, Prof. Bruto da Costa, Chairman of the Economic and Social Council and member of the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe.
- 13 Keynote speaker, Prof. Maria Helena Salema.
- 14 Presentation by Rita Raimundo, teacher and Ph. D. student in Pedagogy, Department of Education, Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon.
- 15 Presentation by Prof. José Bravo Nico, University of Évora.
- 16 I. Menezes and R. Afonso, J. Gião, G. Amaro. *Conhecimentos, concepções e práticas de cidadania dos jovens portugueses*. Ministry of Education, 2005, and A. Torney-Purta. *Citizenship and Education in twenty-eight countries. Civic Knowledge and participation at age fourteen*. IAE, 2001.
- 17 Salema, M.H. and I. Ferreira Martins, J. Costa, M. Tuna. *Teacher Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship: description of a case study. Itinerários: Investigar em educação*. Lisbon: Centre for Educational Research, Faculty of Sciences, 2003.