

The Role of Education in Promoting Citizenship: A Comparison between Europe and Latin America

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Abstract: This article examines the importance of educational processes for creating a new, conscious, and participatory citizenship, paramount to strengthen democracies today. We will observe these complex interconnections through a qualitative methodology based on an introductory theoretical study on plural and participatory citizenship. We will then anchor it to an overview of the educational strategies implemented in Europe and Latin America based on official documents by the various bodies of these two geographical macro-areas or supranational organisms, such as UNESCO, concerning both countries. In the conclusions, this comparison will highlight coinciding interests in strengthening educational projects to promote participatory citizenship, despite differences at the national and supranational level between the two regional contexts.

Keywords: education, participatory citizenship, Europe, Latin America.

1. Plural citizenship and the strategic role of education

Educational processes are crucial for the development of countries and populations. However, musings on education cannot focus only on the educational process itself. Instead, they should first aim attention at the relationship between education and society or, in other words, between educational ideals and practices and the society of reference. Studying the educational processes (and all other processes connected to them, *e.g.*, learning and training) means considering the link between education and the social reality that encompasses all the constituent dimensions of society itself. Indeed, the constitution of reality is one of the aspects that influence the development of everyday dynamics within society. The individuals who become part of the society (by birth) or of a new society (by relocation or immigration) must be able to adapt to the socio-cultural context (society/system) without having to deny their social, psychological, or cultural peculiarities and identity.

Again, we cannot take the relationship between education and society as a standalone object of study. We must also consider its transformations in relation to the social, cultural, economic, and political changes that affect the social contexts. Our reflections must include the relationships between individuals and the educational objectives and practices. To do this, we cannot but use an interdisciplinary approach. In such a complex scenario as the global society, where several dimensions are closely intertwined, many topics or research are relevant to educational processes (Lawrence, 2008). In recent years, some of them have become more important than others, particularly *intercultural education*.

Ethno-cultural pluralism (Savidan, 2009) is not new in the history of humanity. The reflections on educational processes and formative systems are focused precisely on the cultural aspects, which are the first to be involved in integration processes. In contemporary society, marked by large migration flows, they are fundamental for cohesion and civic coexistence. The debate on multiculturalism (Taylor, 1992; Baumann, 1999) as a new way of conceiving culture and its dynamics that is concretized by cultural integration, is topical. Culture can only come from an intercultural education promoted by the institutions in charge because only integration creates the conditions for everyone to have equal chances to choose for their life project, *life chances* (Dahrendorf, 1988).

We cannot study the dynamics connected to the relationship between education and society through simplistic analyses. All individual activities take concrete form only upon interaction with others or when expressing a need to be satisfied. The multi-dimensionality and multi-contextuality of everyday life require an equally multidimensional analysis that overcomes the opposition between the *micro-* and *macro-* of educational processes (Man-

gone, 2015). The first dimension refers to the social actions of individuals; the second one to social systems and their organizational forms. The reality experienced by individuals is constructed through a socialization process that is learning and internalization but also exteriorization and objectification (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). These phases design the fundamental process of self-structuring, which links society, knowledge, and the individual. Its guarantees must be twofold. On the one hand, the integration and adaptation of individuals; on the other, the maintenance, development, and updating of the objectified knowledge that allows civil coexistence and the right degree of competitiveness in both work and the economy. We must consider and understand education within this dialectical process composed of different moments.

What follows is the question of the relationship between education and society, expressed, on the one hand, as equitable access to educational institutions and, on the other, the use of knowledge as a resource (Artiles *et al.*, 2011). Globalization affects the economic and socio-cultural dimension of society. It has enhanced, rather than reducing, the interdependence between rich countries and poor, creating new inequalities and influencing social relations. The relationship between education and society inevitably sheds light on the problem of equal opportunities and the reduction of inequalities, both of which are paradoxes of a global society (Sen, 1995).

To understand the socio-cultural and economic-political dynamics of contemporary society, it is sufficient to adopt a broad definition of equity. We will, therefore, understand it as the “final distribution of the most egalitarian resources compared with that originally resulting from the economic and financial markets” (Mangone, 2012a, p. 15). Indeed, equity can be considered in different forms, as different are the applications of this principle. Its interpretation can be threefold. First, as an equal distribution of resources among separate groups (social, ethnic, etc.); second, as the equal possibility of access to resources regardless of the income of individuals; and, finally, as an equal opportunity of access for equal needs. This political project is still far from materializing because defining a shared criterion of equity is by no means an easy task. It implies the involvement of various spheres of individual life: from the ethics of human rights to the health sciences, populations, and society, to economics and politics.

If we transpose to educational processes the forms mentioned above, we can understand equity in two ways. On the one hand, as an equal possibility of access to education independently of individual income and, on the other hand, as equal distribution of knowledge among different groups (social, ethnic, gender, etc.).

In the first case, in the Western European world, this condition is guaranteed by the public education systems flourished in the wake of the protests

of the cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Betti & Cambi, 2011), who became the voice of the inequalities existing in the education systems, opening it up to all social classes. Public schools guarantee the first level of equity but do not always ensure the second one, especially given the strong migration flows recorded in recent decades, particularly in the Mediterranean countries. If this was the evolution of the education system in Europe at the end of the last century, many Latin American countries, in the same years, struggled against dictatorships, leading to the unequal development of education systems. In this contribution, we do not intend to address this issue, focusing instead on the problems that education and training systems must face when the context becomes increasingly multicultural, requiring intercultural integration (Malizia *et al.*, 2008). Such a situation calls for an evolution of educational processes towards a multidimensional vision. We should see the institutions, teachers, and students as a whole. Above all, we should acknowledge the relationships formed among them – and between them and the rest of society. Our aim should be to overcome the traditional visions that kept these levels and the different elements involved in the educational and training processes separate.

Schools are a place of education for the world. They should already be moving towards forming new polyvalent or trans-ethnic cultural identities. Education becomes a multidimensional process of interaction between subjects of different cultural identities, who through the encounter live a deep and complex experience of conflict and reception as a valuable opportunity for personal growth. The perspective is changing what hinders the construction of a new civil coexistence, including developing changing the school system and requalifying the educators.

Education to an ever-plural citizenry is a work of knowledge that is not limited to actions (through methodologies) but is tasked with a double promotion. On the one hand, the comparison between individuals of different cultures; on the other, social cohesion, thus giving rise to fair opportunities through the circulation of knowledge. The aim is to use education to eliminate the obstacles to the construction of a new civil cohabitation based on a form of citizenship that goes beyond pluralism, also by changing the school system and using media and technologies¹ (if necessary) to reduce “distan-

¹ Jenkins (Jenkins *et al.*, 2009) believes that the new plural culture, encouraged by the “sociability” of technologies, prompts to engage in civic debates and participate in community life. It contributes to the emancipation process through opportunities for meaningful decision-making within the civic context of belonging. The research supporting his vision shows that several factors turn a meaningfully used Internet into a “place” promoting social equality. Among others, the available level of interaction, the opportunity to foster community social ties, the possibility to support collaborative knowledge-building activities. When these criteria are met, the Net contributes to improving the daily life of those who live on the margins of society (Stasova & Khyanova, 2012; Mehra *et al.*, 2004).

es”. However, we must acknowledge that there are too often realities of extreme marginalization on the ground, in which the gap in terms of inclusion and reduction of the digital divide has not yet been filled (Sartori, 2006) and requires even more attention following the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Towards a new concept of citizenship

Since ancient times, populations (or parts of them) have moved, territories have been occupied or freed, trade has expanded, borders have become more and more crossable, producing an ethnocultural pluralism of humankind. In the light of these transformations, the arising question is whether a real and substantial integration between these diversities is possible. We consider integration as a dynamic process that must necessarily deal with a severe dilemma between “local and therefore particularistic forms of belonging” and “supranational forms of belonging”. The former are unsuitable for integration and solidarity, while the latter are too universalistic to guarantee the social identity, an essential condition for real integration.

The current cultural and political context has led to the transformation of the dimensions of solidarity (Zoll, 2000) and posed the problem of *citizenship*. The latter we commonly divide into three elements, as defined by Marshall (1950): individual freedoms, participation in political life, and the right to participate in societal dynamics. However, its expression contracts in to two forms: a *legal-formal* one and a *substantial* one. The former refers to the acquisition of citizenship, which allows the exercise of individual freedoms and participation in political life since an individual “exists because he or she is a citizen of the state”; the latter relates to real integration, which is achieved only with the active participation of individuals in societal dynamics (Cappelli & Mangone, 2012). This last form, in turn, is realized through two modalities: *a*) the right to be included, to assume duties and responsibilities in daily life at the local community level; *b*) the elaboration and implementation of policies for the protection and guarantee of common goods, and for the exercise of the right to democratically influence the decision-making processes considered relevant by and for the individual and her community.

It should be noted that legal-formal citizenship is not sufficient for the realization of the other (substantive) form, which contains the principles underpinning the real integration processes. To be not only “plural” but also “participatory”, citizenship must be accompanied by processes allowing for the full expression of the right of representation and participation in the social, political, and economic life of a country. This usually happens if the two forms of citizenship merge.

In contemporary society, participatory citizenship is that aspect of a territory's policies allowing citizens to participate in the life of government and/or strengthen their sense of belonging to the community. New forms of governance accentuate citizens' actions in defining their needs and recognise the role that they and their social aggregations (formal and informal) can play as partners in a development process, rather than being passive recipients of services. In the last decades, a new process of participation has widened the audience of those who, in various capacities, join the process of decision making and planning of a territory. Citizenship has a dual nature. It is an objective of the governance policies of a given territory as well as an aspect affecting decision making, planning, and programming of interventions. It is possible to imagine different modalities of participatory citizenship based on different and complementary perspectives (Mangone, 2012b): *a)* to contribute to the elaboration and implementation of policies that protect and guarantee a *common good*; *b)* the right to influence in a democratic way the decision-making processes relevant to the individual and collective life of a territory; *c)* the right to be included, to assume duties and responsibilities in daily life at the local community level since it is in the daily life of each individual that participation begins to happen.

The cultural processes described here confirm and reinforce the need to build on participatory citizenship, the promotion of initiatives and the mobilisation of resources, through the ever-increasing introduction of planning and programming practices. This is possible only through the principle of subsidiarity², which must be interpreted as support for widespread responsibilities and not as an exemption of the public/institutional actors from taking charge of the development of a territory and the well-being of all citizens. The institutions will have to organize different subjects with specific interests, which will interact on the needs and demand for development (human, social and economic), to build an organic *community policy*. This policy will be concretized with the enhancement of the community as a resource and a representation of the territory. Activating a community effort means liaising the citizen with the formal and informal networks in the area and supporting and promoting all those community networks of solidarity and reciprocity that spontaneously occur in a community.

This idea of participation-based citizenship has an inherent declination in both a global and a democratic sense. Each group must decentralize, without denying its cultural references, to transform the globe into a common context of exchange and confrontation in which everyone can cooperate for

² The principle of subsidiarity already existed in ancient Greece (Plato and Aristotle) but reached its highest expression in the social sphere with the social doctrine of the Church. Its whose etymological derivation can be traced back to the Latin *subsidiu(m)* and precisely to the military language used to indicate reserve troops.

growth and mutual enrichment with a sense of shared responsibility (admittedly, not always tension-free). Over time, the idea of citizenship has been reconsidered, given the low level of participation in governance and politics, especially by young people, which has led to the experimentation of alternative forms of participation in many non-European countries (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 1999). This is in line with an ethic of politics that, to be truly democratic, tries to minimize the asymmetries in relationships. There is a shift from an individual dimension of being (needs and rights) to one of doing (duties and capacity to act), directing decision making processes more and more towards a new idea of citizenship.

3. Participatory citizenship and education

The importance of rethinking the complex interrelationships between state and individual, to broaden and protect the conditions for the promotion of inclusion and participation, has led to an interesting “redefinition” of the concepts of education and citizenship.

From classical political theory to the most recent alternative study perspectives, there is convergence on the need for a democratic strengthening based on dialogue. The latter, in turn, should be founded on democracy education, considered as a prerequisite for the development of the knowledge and skills to promote participatory praxis in political-institutional life. There is a growing proportionality between democracy and education, the latter identified as the cardinal variable for a democratic metamorphosis as well as a measurement of its maturity (Picarella, 2018).

In this sense, democracy education must be understood as a transversal and interdisciplinary path, accompanied by policies boosting the formation of a critical and conscious citizenry for the development of the individual, human rights, and fundamental freedoms based on coexistence, inclusion, and solidarity. Educational processes aim at connecting culture with the enhancement of the human being, between freedom and personal fulfilment (Bertagna, 2009; Guardini, 1964). These processes must consider individual and intersubjective instances but also ethical-political virtues that, through citizen participation, make them tools for a socio-political regeneration (Palazzolo, 1977).

The above implies the recognition of education as a strategic dimension for cultural literacy, socialization, and civic reconstruction. The latter rests on educational processes aimed at developing critical capacity, prompting actions oriented to the common good, able to stimulate democratic values and ideals and fully express the qualifying element of democratic citizenship education, *i.e.*, the encounter-comparison with the other.

It emerges that the concept of citizenship education, increasingly used in recent years, shows many facets. It connects to two core concepts. First, that of citizenship as an articulated and coordinated system of skills and values pertaining to socialization. Second, the importance of a change in the pedagogical offer, which should aim at promoting the skills needed to exercise active citizenship (Mortari, 2008). As Maritain maintained (1977), democracy dies when incapable of relating to education, as the democratic essence itself, in its being a *modus vivendi*, is no longer present. Maritain's vision is still relevant today.

From the end of the 19th century, theoretical-politic speculation considered education a functional mechanism for the stability of social systems. It emerged in Locke's aim of pedagogy for the formation of the state elite, in Rousseau's interpretation of the manifestation of the human essence in the relationship between education and politics, in the Mill's perspective of the educational pillar for the creation of free and responsible citizens.

The acknowledgement of the importance of the relationship between education and democracy to widen participatory and inclusive spaces grew stronger during the last century. It expressed itself fully through the progressive education movement and Dewey's pragmatism, which focused on the social objective of the educational process, a prerequisite for an informed and, therefore, active public opinion. The need to aim at forms of critical education also characterises Arendt's vision. Indeed, the scholar stresses the impossibility of achieving a quality democracy without civic education³. It also marks the theories of the various successive generations connected to the fourth Frankfurt school, all anchored to the awareness of the inadequacy in terms of solving historical-political-cultural problems. They hoped to rebalance this conflict through the "formula" of participatory citizenship and its ability to impact the political-institutional sphere, which cannot disregard the civic-political education of citizenry itself (Picarella & Mangone, 2020). On the other side of the ocean, this formula is fully expressed in Freire's pedagogy. His vision was based on the concepts of critical consciousness and pedagogy, stemming from a perfect synthesis between theoretical elaboration and the challenges posed by the social liberation and emancipation movements. In globalized contexts, the potentialities of emancipation unearth and highlight stark criticalities. They are closely linked to the process of "conscientization", which, in the scholar's words, is a "historical compromise" (Freire, 1980, p. 26). Conscientization is a critical reading of the capitalist system and its production of exclusion, homologation, and passivity. Freire's conscientization takes shape through reflective, critical, participato-

³ "Democracy only works for a people educated in democracy. And only in a democracy can people be educated for democracy" (Arendt, 2006, personal translation).

ry, and democratic education, and the dialectic between theory and practice is configured as an epistemological movement intrinsic to this process. Assuming the importance of dialogue, cultural diversity and pluralism, Freire highlights the importance of constructing a proposal of education for a new, alternative, and disalienating cultural action, in which citizen participation allows knowledge to become “subject” of socio-cultural and political processes and interventions (Freire, 2011).

With the growing multiculturalism of contemporary societies, citizenship and, consequently, education have been reformulated, due to the constant need for a conjunction between identity claims and cultural recognition. Today’s global scene poses the challenge of citizenship education, *i.e.*, training in social behaviour that harmoniously synthesises autonomy, participation and sharing. We will now quickly examine these three concepts, relating them to citizenship. The assumption of autonomy is indispensable for the progressive construction and conscious defence of one’s cultural identity. Similarly, participation is vital to open new spaces for critical reflection and democratic decision-making through dialogue and intercultural encounters, which frame the cognitive adventure of sharing. Promoting the awareness of shared values and working so that collective action does not ignore them, is an eminently educational interest. Indeed, its educational importance is even higher than its political one since the very meaning of citizenship takes on an added value when supportive in solidarity and participating in the many forms of civic action. These criteria should be re-evaluated – today more than ever – as the foundation of our democracies, since a culture of participatory citizenship must nourish the predisposition to interweave relationships and create a sense of community, spreading unconditional solidarity (Santerini, 2001). A new kind of socialization aimed at making people and groups aware of the challenges of multi-ethnic and multicultural contexts, able to be politically active in an ever-changing world, would allow them to perceive even more the centrality of their role in responsibly leading this change.

The transmission of knowledge, therefore, represents an excellent starting point for this purpose. The knowledge to be cultivated must be reflexive, which “deconstructs to reconstruct” (Picarella, 2018). Citizenship education does not mean educating “about” citizenship but “for” citizenship. It is not providing passive knowledge but promoting critical awareness, which is necessary for conscious participation in public affairs. It also means educating “through” citizenship since it is precisely through lived experience that a sense of community and a spirit of citizenship matures, capable of awakening souls. Citizenship education means educating people on critical thinking and experience to concretely construct forms and modalities of recognition and realization of one’s rights. A pedagogy of commitment aimed at the concretization of the essence of politics: the search for the common

good. A regulatory idea that directs the life of a community that, in turn, must educate and be educated in dialogue and collaboration, necessary for responsible citizenship and the basis of any participatory practice. In terms of socio-political praxis, especially in recent decades, the increase in civic participation has been inversely proportional to the crisis of traditional electoral participation, favoured by deliberative and participatory democracy, which have enriched and broadened the liberal-representative notion. The dialogical-collaborative component marks the difference in the realization of blunt processes of participatory citizenship, which have masked the distrust towards traditional forces and mechanisms.

The implementation of practices capable of influencing the construction of the democratic political-institutional design has given rise to a significant field of experimentation, today global best practices, which underline the importance of a growing institutionalization that can convert them into real policy instruments⁴. The forms of participatory citizenship and organized activism in the public arena have had, although not without problems and steps back⁵, a virtuous effect in terms of institutionality, strengthening the legitimacy of the new participatory aspirations. Democracy is taught, learned, and practised; to form citizenship we need educational systems that prioritise education as a public good. Without education – understood as a “community” of reciprocity, participation, sharing and critical awareness – democracy cannot be perfected, because education is citizenship and emancipation. It should be constantly committed to reducing inequalities and exclusion.

4. A comparison between Europe and Latin America

The questions that now arise – also given the lack of interest of the younger generations in politics – is what role education plays in promoting these new global forms of participation-based citizenship and, above all, whether educational approaches are differentiated geographically. We will consider two macro geographical areas: Europe (not only EU) and Latin America. But first, we will review how supranational agencies and bodies have dealt with this question in the globalized society.

⁴ For example, experiences such as that of Porto Alegre, which paved the way for bottom-up constitutional reform processes. Among the mechanisms and tools used were referendums, plebiscites, revocation of mandate, consultations, surgeries, participatory budgeting, public debates, neighbourhood committees, etc. For more information, see, among others, Picarella (2018, pp. 107 ff.).

⁵ These experiences wanted to address the democratic crisis and the institutions' inability to respond to increasingly complex needs and problems. They are, however, liable to backfire in terms of political personalisation (Picarella, 2018, p. 128).

The first international agency to support actions towards citizenship education was UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). In 2012, it promoted the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), following the *World Declaration of Education for All* adopted at the Jomtien conference in 1990 which later gave birth to the international movement EFA (Education for All) coordinated by UNESCO. The main educational lines can be summarized as follows: *a)* bringing every child to school by removing barriers to entry and completion of the path; *b)* improving the quality of learning to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills to achieve life and work goals; *c)* promoting global citizenship – GCE, Global Citizenship Education (UNESCO, 2015) – through educational paths aimed at creating change to respect diversity and others, thus allowing individuals to understand the changes of the 21st century. UNESCO's activities in this area are further formalized with the establishment in 2016 – on the 70th anniversary of its founding – of the *Chair on Global Learning and Global Citizenship Education* at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) and the formalisation of the GCEN (Global Citizenship Education Network).

This new concept of citizenship is also linked to the idea of sustainable development. Indeed, among the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) identified in Agenda 2030 by the United Nations (UN, 2015) and waiting to be declined into national policies, Objective 4 is dedicated to education: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*

Starting from the positions of UNESCO and the UN, other bodies are also activating interventions which, given the socio-economic framework of the last decades, promote these new forms of citizenship and review the strategies of inclusion through education.

4.1. What happens in Europe?

Starting with the Europe 2020 strategy, Europe proposes to achieve a “smart”, “sustainable” and “inclusive” growth, with a strong emphasis on the need to reduce inequalities. The need to reduce inequalities calls for a correction of social inclusion policies, which can no longer be a mere exchange of information to promote equality and mutual understanding but should be effectively geared to ensure that the “benefits of recovery are shared as widely as possible”. At the basis of the renewed policies of the European Union is the awareness that, to contribute significantly to the reduction of poverty, the promotion of social inclusion and the concrete implementation of the “inclusive society”, it is important to have an impact also and above all through the process of improving education and lifelong learning systems. The latter started with the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 and was made even more urgent and by the continuous changes in European soci-

ety. Previously, Europe published two important documents on educational efforts, which should not be forgotten. The first is the White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (European Commission, 1993), under Jacques Delors' presidency, which stressed the need not to limit the objectives of schools to the mere acquisition of skills, but to aim at developing the individual as a whole, that is, the individual who learns to "be". The second is the White Paper on *Education and Training* (European Commission, 1995) which implemented Delors' White Paper through a simultaneous analysis and operational guidelines at the European Union level in the fields of education and training.

For the focus of this article, the Council of Europe's Recommendation (2002) on *Education for Democratic Citizenship* is central for the European macro-region. The document establishes two principles: 1) education for democratic citizenship is fundamental to the Council of Europe's primary task of promoting a free, tolerant and just society, and 2) it contributes, together with the Organisation's other activities, to upholding the values and principles of freedom, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law, which are the foundations of democracy. At the same time, it states that education for democratic citizenship should be seen: *a)* as any other form of formal, non-formal or informal educational activity, including that of the family, which enables an individual to act throughout his or her life as an active and responsible citizen respecting the rights of others; *b)* a factor of social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and solidarity, which contributes to promoting the principle of equality between men and women and which fosters the creation of a harmonious and peaceful system of intra- and inter-popular relations, as well as of defence and the development of society and democratic culture; *c)* a central element in the reform and implementation of educational policies; finally, *d)* a factor of innovation in terms of the organisation and management of general education systems, curricula and teaching methods. With this recommendation, Europe, at the start of the new millennium, sets out what will characterise all policies and strategies aimed at education and training processes from then on. As the culmination of the Council of Europe's efforts to define concepts, policies, and strategies for the application of good practice in democratic citizenship education, 2005 was declared the *European Year of Citizenship through Education*. The concept of citizenship evolves together with that of European citizenship and its current contents: "Citizenship education, which includes learning about the rights and duties of citizens, respect for democratic values and human rights, and the importance of solidarity, tolerance and participation in a democratic society, is seen as a means of preparing children and young people to become responsible and active citizens" (Eurydice, 2005, p. 3). In Europe, the notion of "responsible citizenship" is not

transposed by individual member states, although it is present in various official documents. Many countries use another expression to refer to this concept, e.g., “civic participation” (Latvia, Romania), “civic attitudes” or “civic awareness” (Poland), “civic engagement” (Romania) or “civic rights and duties” (Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Scotland). In general, it can be said that “responsible citizenship” covers matters related to the knowledge and exercise of civic rights and responsibilities (*Ibid.*). Despite these lexical differences, all countries share a global understanding of the concept and its implementation by associating it with values such as democracy, human dignity, freedom, respect for human rights, tolerance, etc. The Council of Europe adopted Guidelines published in 2008⁶ and updated in 2010 (Global Education Week Network, 2008 and 2010) which will then be taken up in another document (Council of Europe, 2010) attributing primary importance to education in the pursuit of its mandate (peace, human rights and the rule of law). With this recommendation, the Council decides not to activate a specific program, but to promote a continuous and highly relevant educational activity, which develops, in particular, along two main lines: “education for democratic citizenship and human rights” and “global education”.

The social changes occurring at the beginning of the third millennium, also in the light of the UNESCO global action programme (2015) for education, are pushing the management bodies of the European Community to adopt further documents, also given the interventions supporting sustainable development. In 2017, the European Council adopts the *European Consensus on Development* which states: “development education and awareness-raising can play an important part in raising levels of engagement amongst the public and in addressing the SDGs at national and global level thus contributing to global citizenship” (European Council, 2017). After, the European Council (2018) approved the Recommendation on key competencies for lifelong learning (Directive 2018/C 189/01), which replaces that of 2006 (2006/962/EC) – joint Parliament and Council of Europe – and includes among the operational indications also the promotion of the “development of competencies in the field of citizenship”. Active and responsible citizenship and social inclusion become key competencies – in other words, civic competencies broaden their horizons to become *citizenship competencies*.

In recent years, therefore, efforts and attention have increasingly shifted to promoting citizenship education, especially in response to the threat to fundamental values such as peace, equality, and human rights, which Europe has faced for a while. Many countries are working to change their policies on the teaching of citizenship education (Eurydice, 2017), given that culture

⁶ Many countries are currently adopting national strategies for global citizenship education, including Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, and Spain.

and learning are paramount to ensure mutual respect and promote inclusion and equality.

Civic and social competencies, previously identified in the 2006 Recommendation, are among the main objectives of the Strategic Reference Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020 framework) to be implemented through education and training, as well as the promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

4.2. What happens in Latin America?

We discussed above the most significant stages in the evolution of the actions and strategies adopted in specific by the European Union regarding the promotion of national policies and plans in the individual member states. We will now examine Latin America, a macro-region that is quite different from Europe for two reasons. First, many of its countries have long endured dictatorships. Second, while there are numerous regional organizations, supranational structures including most states are almost completely absent. We must also consider the debates marking the Latin American context: the decolonization of education and the need for cultivating an emancipatory political-pedagogical thought. The latter, in particular, must be independent of the Western and Eurocentric perspective and able to contribute effectively to the challenges of democratic consolidation in that geographical area. The answer, therefore, is to create a new pedagogical paradigm to facilitate decolonization processes. In this perspective, the full development of the decolonial turn cannot but entail a deep and radical problematization of the educational system, its institutions being the main mechanisms of reproduction of the dominant social structure. The development of this theoretical-epistemological condition underpins the pedagogical proposals for promoting the identity, culture, and ancestral knowledge of the Andean and Amazonian indigenous civilizations. These proposals' aim is threefold. First, reformulating public policies on education; second, decolonizing them; and third, opening institutional and academic spaces for critique and reflection. They wish to design multinational curricula following the peculiarities of this macro-area, from the Andean cosmivision to indigenous languages, thus promoting interculturality and inserting them fully into the universal human knowledge (Saavedra *et al.*, 2007; Dussel, 2003; Mignolo, 2003; Walsh *et al.*, 2006; Lander, 2003).

In Latin America, as in the Caribbean, the definition of lines and interventions for the *Educación para la Ciudadanía Democrática* (ECD) has been linked both to historical aspects (dictatorships) and to processes of social change (inequality, lack of social integration, violence, etc.). The (historically speaking) recent end of dictatorships has forced Latin America to rebuild democratic mechanisms and social cohesion. Given the weakness of its so-

cial fabric, it is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for these young democracies. Indeed, most Latin American countries have plenty of obstacles to full democratic consolidation. Democracy is threatened mainly by hyper-presidentialism, which deforms the political-institutional sphere through dynamics of verticalization of the representative dimension, together with the fragmentation of traditional political forces and personalization of the electoral-partisan arena (Picarella, 2018). Mixing and feeding off each other, these trends cause strong distortions that translate into the continuous oscillations recorded by the Democracy Index⁷, which increasingly highlight sudden and dangerous transitions from “flawed democracy” to “hybrid regime”, up to its more recent slide towards “authoritarian regime” (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021).

To curb these dynamics, it becomes essential to strengthen civil society and citizens’ participation. It is especially true for some of the weaker sections of the population (the poor and ethnic and cultural minorities). There is, however, a sort of domination of the National Ministries of Education regarding education for democratic citizenship, and this mainly for three core points: “The degree of *ideological coherence and organizational discipline* within education ministries varies considerably; 2. The trend has been to increase *commitment to international DCE models and programs*, with all the problems related to geopolitics and donor conditioning; 3. The trend has been towards increased collaboration between ministries of education and other sectors of government” (Levinson & Berumen, 2007, p. 16).

For the above reasons, in 1999, the *Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo* created the *Diálogo Regional de Política*. It aimed to build a network for the exchange of experiences among Latin American countries to help face the great globalization challenges. Among the networks identified, one concerned precisely the *Educación y Capacitación de Recursos Humanos*. This network had promoted a study entitled *Educación para la Ciudadanía y la Democracia para un Mundo Globalizado: una Perspectiva Comparativa* (Espínola, 2005), which was presented in 2005 in Washington at the VII General Meeting of the Banco and subsequently at the Report on Democracy in Latin America (UNDP, 2004). This meeting highlighted that democracy and the free market had to be considered the new economic and political paradigm to foster modernization, development, and integration in a global economy.

⁷ The Democracy Index captures the state of democracy in 165 countries around the world. The Economist Intelligence Unit has compiled the report Democracy Index since 2006, 2021 marks its thirteenth edition. “The Democratic Index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. Based on its scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then itself classified as one of four types of regime: ‘full democracy’, ‘flawed democracy’, ‘hybrid regime’ or ‘authoritarian regime’” (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021, p. 3).

In it, the school becomes the privileged space of socialization and, therefore, the ideal place to educate new citizens on democratic and ethical practices for social life. Educational systems thus transform the traditional ECD, based on civic education, into an ECD based on education for a new modern citizenry.

In the last 20 years, all Latin American countries increased the number of policies and programs aimed at educating the democratic citizen. Some are exclusively oriented to democratic citizenship education, while others include ECD among their various objectives (e.g., environmental, or human rights education).

In broad strokes, the above is the process that has led to the development of interventions promoting democratic citizenship education in Latin America. As mentioned, it differs from what happened in Europe. In Latin America, programmes and initiatives have often originated from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Alternatively, they stemmed from social actors who had resisted dictatorial measures and who, with the rebirth of democracy, had taken a prominent position in society. Alternatively, they stem from organisations such as UNESCO (much more than in Europe), the Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos (OEI) and the Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID). It happened since the 1980s, when independent countries in Latin America, through the Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), had given rise to cooperation forms for developing actions and plans for the ECD. In 2001, the Inter-American Democratic Charter was signed, whose articles 26 and 27 stress the need to develop a democratic culture to accompany political reforms. In particular, art. 27 stated that “[...]. Special attention will be given to the development of programmes and activities for the education of children and youth as a means of ensuring the permanence of democratic values, including freedom and social justice”. Likewise, the UNESCO position is clear: citizenship education is paramount. However, the institution is considered more a source of information than an agency providing a real service. Conversely, the Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID) created the Observatorio Regional de Competencias Ciudadanas, which included the Ministers of Education of the following countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama. With vast funding from the IDB, this structure was transformed into the Regional System for the Evaluation and Desarrollo de Competencias Ciudadanas (SREDECC) to implement a programme on “Bienes Regionales Públicos”. Its main purpose was to define the standards of citizens’ skills for Latin America, considering the different educational systems existing throughout the continent. The participating countries partly differ from the founders: Brasil, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, México, Guatemala, Chile, and Colombia. Finally, the Organización

de Estados Iberoamericanos (OEI) promotes programs⁸ such as *Education for Citizenship, Democracy and Values in Plural Society* by channelling its efforts into reforming the education systems. In this sense, one program stands out. It is the *Educational Goals 2021: the education that we want for the bicentenaries generation* (Marchesi, 2009), by the Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (OEI) together with the Conferencia Iberoamericana de Ministros de Educación. It is a collective project to address, through education, the challenges in [terms of] participation, democratic citizenship, justice, solidarity and social inclusion, economic and socio-cultural development. The program relies on education and the formation of citizenship as a transformative force in Latin American societies, setting eleven goals to be achieved during the second decade of the third millennium. The results, published annually, show a general convergence of the educational policies of Latin American countries. There is a growing trend at the normative level about adopting educational agendas aligned with the principles proposed on the subject. However, there is an interesting gap between normative predictions and practice, which rests on a persisting divide in terms of inequality, poverty, and access to education. The assessment document, *Miradas sobre la educación en Iberoamerica* (OEI, 2019) highlights issues on strengthening and maintaining skills in non-traditional disciplinary areas (environmental awareness, human rights, etc.), as well as in digitization. The crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the macropolitical, organizational, and managerial level. Consequently, it is necessary to reorganise education, establishing strong educational programs for emergencies. They must ensure far-reaching access to adequate Internet connection and availability of appropriate devices as well as suitable education for teachers. Otherwise, the risk is an out-of-control widening of the gap due precisely to an exacerbation of pre-existing structural difficulties that were never resolved.

From the 2000s, each Latin American state has autonomously tried to direct interventions and educational actions towards what is now internationally recognized as a priority for all self-declared democratic countries - namely, the *Educación para la Ciudadanía Democrática* (ECD). It entails the definition of new practices and curricular paths of education (Cox *et al.*, 2014), which vary from country to country. Despite these differences, there is a clear need for further study. The construction of educational paths for democratic citizenship is crucial in building a political culture able to contrast the ever-returning authoritarianism that plagued Latin America in the past.

⁸ In 2005, the OEI also promoted the Red Centroamericana de Educación en Valores para la Ciudadanía y la Democracia (RED-CAEV) aimed at coordinating and strengthening the efforts of the ECD in the Central American region.

Conclusions

While being substantially different, Europe and Latin America share an interest in establishing and strengthening new educational paths towards participatory citizenship. Their differences can be ascribed to both the political history of these two regions and their representation forms.

Europe is a union (although not a federative one); therefore, all member states have time limits for adopting its recommendations. This is not the case in Latin America. Here, there is no confederation of states but only supranational organizations. While very influential, the latter hold no real juridical power over the member states, unlike the European Union.

From a political point of view, the general tendency for both is to promote model comparisons and adopting shared international agreements and programmes. For educational systems, this means activating innovative paths for the acquisition of citizenship-related skills. It means understanding *legal concepts* (social structure, economy, and politics) as well as *phenomena* of social transformation. Global Citizenship Education (or planetary or worldwide, according to partly overlapping terminologies) finds its main frame of reference in the United Nations Organization, especially UNESCO, and its first declination is in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace” (art. 26).

Consequently, many supranational and international recommendations stress the importance of promoting active and responsible citizenship at all levels of the education system by adopting multidisciplinary approaches to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to live harmoniously in a democratic and multicultural society. The concept of citizenship to which these recommendations refer goes beyond the mere legal relationship between the individual and the state. It relies on compliance with a set of shared values that underpin democratic societies. The educational policies adopted in response to the demands of equity, social cohesion, equality, inclusion, and freedom share a common reference point in citizenship education. Despite inter- and intra-regional differences, the objective seems to have generally been the strengthening of democratic culture through the development of shared values and, at the same time, the preparation of the new generations for active participation in a democratic society. Citizenship education is, therefore, effective in developing political culture, critical thinking, and active participation. Aware that building a civil coexistence between peoples requires adequate civic competence, all recom-

mentations stressed the civic dimension. This entailed identifying specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that translate into the capacity for solidarity and community engagement, closely linked to constructive, multi-level participation in the democratic decision-making process.

Acknowledgements

This article results from a collaboration between the two authors on a joint research project. The two cooperating institutions were the Department of Political and Communication Sciences (University of Salerno, Italy) and Grupo Aldo Moro (Maestría Internacional en Ciencia Política, Universidad Católica de Colombia-University of Salerno). Emiliana Mangone wrote the sections 1, 2, 4 and 4.1.; Lucia Picarella wrote the sections 3, 4.2. and the conclusions.

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