

**Encounters in Theory and History of Education**  
**Rencontres en Théorie et Histoire de l'Éducation**  
**Encuentros en Teoría e Historia de la Educación**



**Chile's Citizenship Education Curriculum: Priorities and Silences Through Two Decades**  
**Le programme d'Éducation Citoyenne au Chili durant les deux dernières décennies : priorités et silences**  
**El currículo de educación ciudadana en Chile en las últimas dos décadas: Prioridades y silencios**

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Volume 22, 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085291ar>  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24908/encounters.v22i0.14991>

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Publisher(s)

Faculty of Education, Queen's University

ISSN

2560-8371 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Cox, C. & Garcia, C. (2021). Chile's Citizenship Education Curriculum: Priorities and Silences Through Two Decades. *Encounters in Theory and History of Education / Rencontres en Théorie et Histoire de l'Éducation / Encuentros en Teoría e Historia de la Educación*, 22, 206–226.  
<https://doi.org/10.24908/encounters.v22i0.14991>

Article abstract

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# Chile's Citizenship Education Curriculum: Priorities and Silences Through Two Decades

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## **Abstract**

The article examines the evolution of the citizenship education curriculum in Chilean secondary education over last two decades from the perspective of the relevance of its contents for a democratic culture. The evidence and its analysis show the variations observed in the curricula are not related so much to the ideology of the governments that enact them as to socio-cultural changes of a macro nature, such as the growing emphasis on rights and participation. The analysis confirms some deficits common to the curricula, which have implications for the development of the democratic political culture in Chile. Among these are the scarce or null presence of the values of *solidarity*, *the common good*, and *social cohesion*, as well as a paradox of quasi-silence about *voting*, common in the curricula of Latin American countries and which is contrasted with the treatment of voting in the curricula of France and England.

Keywords: citizenship, curriculum, values, democratic participation

## El currículo de educación ciudadana en Chile en las últimas dos décadas: Prioridades y silencios

### Resumen

El artículo examina las últimas dos décadas de evolución del currículo de educación ciudadana de la educación secundaria de Chile desde la perspectiva de la relevancia de sus contenidos para una cultura democrática. La evidencia y su análisis muestran que las variaciones observadas en los currículos no se relacionan tanto con la ideología de los gobiernos que los promulgan como con cambios socio- culturales de naturaleza macro, como el creciente énfasis en derechos y participación. El análisis constata algunos déficits comunes a los currículos, que tendrían implicancias para el desarrollo de la cultura política democrática en Chile. Entre estos destacan la escasa o nula presencia de los valores de *solidaridad*, *bien común*, y *cohesión social*, así como un paradójico cuasi- silencio sobre el *voto*, común en currículos de países de Latinoamérica y que es contrastado con el tratamiento del voto en los currículos de Francia e Inglaterra.

Palabras clave: ciudadanía, currículo, valores, participación democrática

## Le programme d'Éducation Citoyenne au Chili durant les deux dernières décennies: priorités et silences

### Resumé

L'article étudie l'évolution du programme d'éducation citoyenne en Secondaire du Chili sur les deux dernières décennies depuis la perspective de la pertinence de ses contenus pour une culture démocratique. L'évidence et son analyse montrent que les variations observées dans les programmes sont moins en lien avec l'idéologie des gouvernements qui les promulguent qu'avec les changements socio-culturels de nature macro, comme la croissante insistance en droits et participation. L'analyse constate certains déficits communs aux programmes, qui devraient avoir des conséquences pour le développement de la culture politique démocratique au Chili. Parmi ceux-ci, ressort une rare, voir aucune, présence des valeurs de *solidarité*, *bien commun* et *cohésion sociale*, ainsi qu'un quasi silence sur le *vote*, pourtant commun dans d'autres programmes des pays d'Amérique Latine, et qui est contrasté avec le traitement du vote dans les programmes de France et d'Angleterre.

Mots-clés: citoyenneté, curriculum, valeurs, participation démocratique

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Politics in times of turmoil and indignation provides critical ground for examining the cultural substratum of democratic belief and the contribution school experience makes towards its construction and affirmation. Political citizenship is not a static condition but rather a never-finished construction (Crick, 1962; Lechner, 1984; Sartori, 2014), whose cultural basis depends to a significant extent on education. The school curriculum of citizenship education (CE) reflects the public definition that a society elaborates through its political and educational systems. It is a direct response to what the society believes is needed to prepare the new generation for life in democracy with its consequent moral, cognitive, and socio-affective requirements (Biesta, 2011; McLaughlin, 1992). Under conditions of accelerated change in the forms of “living together” and the legitimacy crisis of democracy, (Inerarity, 2015; Norris, 2011; Rosanvallon, 2007), it becomes especially relevant to examine what a school citizenship's curriculum actually consists of. From the viewpoint of CE, Chile presents the challenge of having the most educated young generation in its history, that paradoxically distances itself from formal participation in politics through voting, favoring activist, communitarian, and protest forms instead (Brunner, Gangas & Labraña, 2020; Corvalan & Cox, 2014; Ekman & Amna, 2012).

The general question we will address is about the relevance of Chile's citizenship education school curriculum—in its evolution over the last twenty years—for the development of democratic belief and the knowledge and capacity for political participation in the new generation. In the period mentioned, the objectives and contents of the area of citizenship education were redefined on four occasions. The starting point is the curricular reform that took place in 1996 (for the level of primary education) and in 1998 (for secondary education). The Reform was intended to change the single subject of civic education and economics—defined in 1981 during the military dictatorship that ruled the country between 1973 and 1990 and positioned at the end of the high school curriculum—to contents distributed in several subjects, both in primary and secondary education. The objectives of citizenship education were also revamped to be transversal to the entire school experience. An important reorientation of values complemented this change from one specialized subject to distributed contents and objectives: democratic beliefs and values replaced the nationalist and authoritarian ones of the preceding period (Bascopé et al., 2015).

In 2009, a second change occurred when an adjustment to the curricular framework in force since the 1990s was approved, which followed guidelines proposed by the politically plural National Citizen Education Commission. This Commission was convened by the Ministry of Education in 2004 in response to a

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<sup>1</sup> This article was carried out with the support of the FONDECYT Project No. 1181239 of the National Council for Research, Science and Technology (CONICYT) of Chile.

demand by the Senate that diagnosed an educational deficit as a cause for the notorious drop in the electoral participation of young people (Mardones, 2018a, 2018b; Mineduc, 2004). A third change in the curriculum took place in 2013, when a new framework labelled *Curriculum Foundations* was established and the subject matter of citizenship education was made e

xplicit through a strand within the subject of history, geography and social sciences, from the first grade of primary education to the 10th grade (corresponding to the second level of secondary education) (Mineduc, 2013). Finally, in 2019, the curriculum of the last two grades of secondary education (Grades 11 and 12) were redefined, re-establishing a citizenship education subject, and thus turning, in this aspect, to the formula that had been abandoned in 1998.

The aforementioned changes are related to socio-cultural trends of a macro nature, their impact on political participation, and the interpretation that the political system made of them. Not only the previously mentioned decline in the formal political participation of young people, but also political corruption scandals (firms financing political campaigns and members of Congress) led to legislation in Chile directly establishing, among other legislative measures, a law on citizenship education (2016), which resulted in the 2019 curricular change.

In the framework outlined, the purpose of this article is to answer the question about the successive curricula's relevance through an analysis of their evolution in the last two decades by: a) comparing the learning objectives and contents that the successive definitions emphasized, as well as those that were sidelined or ignored; and b) analyzing this totality with thematic categories relevant to democratic citizenship (values and participation processes), coming mainly, but not exclusively, from the civic and citizenship education studies of the IEA and its Latin American module (Cox, 2010; Friedman, & Lietz, 2011; Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito, & Kerr, 2008; Schulz, Ainley, Kerr, 2012). This comparative perspective will be decisive in identifying emphases and gaps in the prescriptions of the Chilean curriculum.

This paper is organized in three sections that follow this Introduction. In the second section, we will briefly describe the methodological approach to the analysis of the curricular content. In the third section, we will compare the objectives and contents of the four curricula at the secondary school level, based on a common matrix of categories. In the last section, we will synthesize the main findings and discuss some of their implications for citizenship education and its relevance for democratic development.

## Content Analysis: Methodological Approach

The learning objectives defined in the different curricula are dense in terms of meaning, as can be seen in the following examples of the official curricular documents of different periods:

- “Value the democratic and pluralistic political organization and commit to exercising the duties and rights that it implies, appreciating the search together for a Common Good.” *Fundamental Objective of History and Social Sciences, Grade 9* (1st year of High School), *1998 Curriculum Framework*.
- “Analyze the concept of human rights, considering characteristics such as universality, indivisibility, interdependence and imprescriptibility, and the institutional framework created to protect these rights at the national and international level, recognizing, in this context, the rights linked to special protection groups.” *Learning Objective of History, Geography, and Social Sciences, Grade 10* (2nd year of High School), *Curriculum Foundations 2013*.

The challenge is to give a valid and rigorous account of what is perpetuated and what changes in the curricula under examination, where both the possibilities of their interpretation and their comparison are multiple. An important distinction from the field of content analysis in the social sciences, contributed by the work of Fairclough (2003), offers the approach we will use. This influential author argues that discourse can be thought of as a representation of a part of the world, or as a representation of the world from a perspective. While in the first case it is about identifying a territory or domain of symbolic representation, in the second it is about identifying an epistemology or ideology. Our objective in what follows fits into the first conception of discourse analysis: in our case it is a matter of identifying some “territories” of meaning, or which parts of democracy, such as beliefs and relationships, are mentioned by the different curricula without getting into the perspectives from which they do it. This restriction to the territory or domain of representation makes it possible to categorically delimit the areas of meaning that are of interest, and then to compare their presence (greater, lesser, or null) in the curricula. The comparison *within* and *between* curricula, as will be seen, will allow us to identify patterns with implications for the question about their functionality for a relevant comprehensive citizenship education.

For purposes of comparison and analysis, what is decisive are the dimensions and categories that identify the areas of meaning whose presence will be noted and compared across the curricula. These have their origin in a matrix of content analysis of curricula from six Latin American countries—Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Paraguay—elaborated by Cox (2010), for the Regional System of Evaluation and Development of Citizen Competencies (SREDECC). This elaboration has a triple origin: the conceptual framework of the civic knowledge test of the *International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS)-2009* created by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) (Schulz et al., 2008); the equivalent framework of the Latin American module of the ICCS-2009 tests, prepared by a Latin American group of experts convened by SREDECC (2008); and,

thirdly, the empirical systematization of the citizenship education topics covered by the curricula of the aforementioned Latin American countries that participated in the international ICCS-2009 study.

The analysis matrix that will be used consists of two dimensions and a set of categories, which the international tradition of research and evaluation of citizenship education described above considers as the “civic” nucleus of citizenship training. The two dimensions correspond to a) values and principles that support the democratic belief or its moral core, and b) principles and practices that sustain participation and political relations. The content categories which specify each of these dimensions are the following:

- ***Civic values and principles.*** These include twelve categories of orientations that constitute the moral foundations of a citizen and the democratic system: *democracy, human rights, diversity, equality, freedom, solidarity, tolerance, equity, social justice, pluralism, common good, social cohesion.*
- ***Citizens and democratic participation.*** These consist of eleven categories that account for the principles, roles, and founding relationships of democratic citizenship and participation: *rights, obligations, political participation, participation in school government, decision-making, critical reflection, representation, voting, accountability, negotiation, deliberation.*

This set of categories is certainly not exhaustive, but it is sufficiently foundational and complete with respect to democracy and its *ethos* and processes, and it has been empirically tested with respect to the contents of the school curricula of different Latin American countries (Cox, Bascopé, Castillo, Miranda, Bonhomme, 2014). In what follows, we give an account of the results obtained when applying the aforementioned categories to each official Chilean secondary education curriculum document between 1998 and 2019. As indicated, these concepts are counted to distinguish their major, minor, or non-existent presence. It also compares patterns of representation of the “universe” of democracy that is proposed to be communicated to students through the various curricula.<sup>2</sup>

## Contents: Focus, Emphases, and Absences

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<sup>2</sup> Methodologically, there are similar approaches in Suárez (2008) who compared the curricula of Argentina and Costa Rica, counting keywords corresponding to what is distinguished as modern civics / traditional civics; in Cox, Bascopé, Castillo et.al (2014) who compared the curricula of six Latin American countries; and in Riquelme (2018), who compared the citizenship education curricula of Argentina and Chile post-transition to democracy.

At the core of our interest in the CE curriculum is its content, or the basis of the learning opportunities that it explicitly seeks to offer to the new generation. Are there palpable changes in terms of richness and/or in the prioritization of content between the different curricula? Are there any identifiable common trends? What does the comparison of what is prioritized with what is sidelined or ignored reveal in each dimension examined?

The analysis that follows examines the objectives and contents of citizenship in the history and social sciences curriculum (which, as of 2013, is History, Geography and Social Sciences) at the secondary level, because this is where the most important and pertinent concepts and competencies with respect to the political sphere (as opposed to the civil sphere and social relationships of coexistence) are concentrated. The four official curricula that we will compare correspond to secondary education. In three of these curricula (corresponding to the years 1998, 2009 and 2013), we will examine the subject of History, Geography and Social sciences (HGCS) in four grades of high school, while in the case of the 2019 curriculum, the object of analysis corresponds to only two grades (the last two years of high school), but to two subjects: HGCS and Citizen Education. This difference in subjects covered is noted to demonstrate that the unit of analysis “subject-grade” is quantitatively equivalent in the four curricula.

### ***Values and principles prioritized by the curriculum***

Table 1 presents the set of principles and values considered in the first dimension of our analytical instrument and the number of times each is mentioned in the four curricular definitions analyzed. These are founding concepts of the moral universe of democracy—as in the case of the categories *democracy* and *human rights*—associated with the individual and their freedom—as in the case of the categories *freedom* and *diversity*—or linked to the guiding values in social and political life—the categories *equity and equality*, *solidarity*, and *the common good*.

In the first column of Table 1, the set of principles and values considered is ordered from highest to lowest according to the number of mentions present in the four curricula analyzed. With this arrangement, a smaller set of categories with a high number of mentions (or high priority) can be distinguished in its three upper rows. In the middle five rows of the table, a set of categories with a lower but considerable number of mentions (or medium priority) can be seen, and finally a set of categories with little or no mention (low or no priority), can be seen in the last four rows.

The curricular definitions of the entire period studied coincide in giving the greatest importance to the concepts and values of *democracy*, *human rights*, and *diversity*.



**Table 1***Comparative Presence of Civic Principles and Values in the History and Social Sciences and Citizen Education Curricula (1998-2019)*

Principles And Civic Values	Curricular Framework 1998 (Grades 9-12)	Curriculum Adjustment 2009 (Grades 9-12)	Curriculum Foundations 2013 (Grades 7-10)	Curriculum Foundations 2019 (Grades 11 and 12)
	Number of Mentions			
Democracy (29)*	4	10	7	8
Human Rights (23)	1	8	9	5
Diversity (16)	3	5	4	4
Equality (9)	1	2	2	4
Liberty (8)	0	1	3	4
Equity (7)	2	0	1	4
Social Justice (5)	1	1	0	3
Common Good (5)	1	1	0	3
Pluralism (3)	1	2	0	0
Solidarity (2)	1	0	0	1
Tolerance (1)	0	0	1	0
Social Cohesion (1)	0	0	0	1
<b>Total mentions</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>

(\*) Total mentions per curriculum (4 curricula). Source: Authors' elaboration based on MINEDUC, 1998, 2009, 2013, and 2019.

These are founding notions that, in the two decades under examination, despite their political differences and sociocultural climates, have not altered their priority in the curricula: democracy as the only legitimate political framework for processing differences in relation to the type of order sought, human rights as its moral foundation, and the celebration of diversity as a postmodern cultural principle. (Inglehart, 2008).

In the following five values in the hierarchy of mentions—*equality, liberty, equity, social justice, common good*—there is a noticeable increase in the 2019 curriculum, while their presence is minimal in the curricula of 1998 and 2009. Can this be interpreted as associated with the ideological differences of the responsible governments? Are the curricula defined during center-left governments (1998 and 2009) clearly different from the two curricula defined by governments of the right (2013 and 2019)? This leads us to consider what happens with the value *liberty*, which only has one mention in the curricula of the former, and seven in the latter. But this direct association between governmental ideology and the curriculum is greatly

relativized if one considers in a similar way what happens with the value *equality*: three mentions in the curricula of the center-left governments, and six in the curricula of the governments of the right.

This analysis raises the question of the influence that the dual character of the country's institutionality has on the curriculum with respect to its creation and control. On the one hand is the Ministry of Education, the government body with the responsibility for proposing it. On the other hand is the National Council of Education, a public body not dependent on the government, with a politically plural composition, mediated in the nomination of its members by the Senate of the Republic, and with final authority over the curriculum's approval. A hypothesis to consider here is that both sources are differently sensitive to ideological identity and political-cultural environmental or contextual influence. This concept of differences in sensitivity leads to the idea that the emphasis on the value *liberty* has a more governmental origin, while the parallel emphasis on the value *equality* can have its source in the educational expertise manifested in the National Council of Education. Regardless of the plausibility of the above, it is evident that in the 2019 curricular proposal for the subjects of HGCS and Citizen Education, there is a marked increase in mentions of the value bases of the three traditions of democratic thought—liberal, republican, communitarian—that the 2019 Curriculum Foundations explicitly states students must know and apply.<sup>3</sup>

The values in our matrix *equality*, *social justice*, and *equity*, on the one hand, and *solidarity*, *common good*, and *social cohesion* on the other (to which the curricula in general give medium, low, or no priority), point to two ambits of meanings that connect with a valuable distinction made by the French sociologist Francois Dubet and his team in their effort to interpret democratic trust in liberal and social-democratic societies. On the one hand, the values of *equality*, *justice*, and *equity* are related to *macro* notions about the distribution of power and opportunities in society. Their generic value substrate is equality; their referents are more structures and institutions than people, and the basic processes to which they refer are distribution and integration. Dubet et al.'s theorization conceives this in terms of *integration*, which they define as: "... a society is all the more integrated when inequalities are weak, in which all people have a place in active life, and where social protection is strong," alluding to labor markets and their public regulations (Dubet, Durut-Bellat, V r tout, 2010, p. 36). The second ambit, made up of the values in our matrix of *solidarity*, *common good*, and *social cohesion*, is more related to culture and attitudes towards others in terms of people and society. These referents are both *micro* and *macro*, and the basic processes to which they point are of cultural and relational nature rather than of distributions based on the social division of labor and pro-welfare state processes. This ambit that Dubet and his colleagues propose can be

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<sup>3</sup> See Ministerio de Educaci n (2019), Citizen Education, Learning Objective N   6, 3rd. Year of High School.

understood in terms of *cohesion*, which they define as "... the values, culture, and set of attitudes that make individuals collaborate in solidarity" (Dubet et al., 2010, p. 50).

If these two configurations of values regarding fellow citizens are examined for the four curricula as a whole, it can be seen that the configuration referring to Dubet's category of *integration* receive 19 mentions, while the category *cohesion* receives only eight mentions. This imbalance directly raises questions about the curricula's sensitivity to the cultural dimensions of trust and its centrality for building political confidence in a democracy. In terms of comparisons between curricula, the 2013 curriculum is the one with the most notable deficiencies in this regard: the definitions of objectives and contents do not mention even once the values of *common good*, *solidarity*, or *social cohesion*, nor the value of *social justice*.

At the lower end of the Table, the values of *pluralism*, *solidarity*, *tolerance*, and *social cohesion* stand out for their low presence or lack of presence in the curricula. In this case, it is clear that these are principles that are almost completely out of the picture; not only from the discussion and political visibility, but also from the educational perspective, independent of the governments and political contexts. It is noteworthy that two of these principles—*pluralism* and *tolerance*—affect the procedural basis of democracy, which requires a citizenry with vision and willingness to accept and value the other in the political processing of conflict.

### ***Citizen participation and democratic processes in the curricula***

Table 2 shows the eleven categories of the analysis model, which account for key constitutive processes of democracy, grouped into the following dimensions: a) rights and obligations of the citizen, b) critical reflection for active citizenship, c) participation, and d) political process. As in the previous analysis, the table organizes these 11 categories from highest to lowest presence in the curricula.

The categories with the greatest presence in the set of curricula are *citizen rights*, *participation in political actions*, and *competencies for critical reflection*. These are followed by categories with a moderate amount of mentions: *obligations and responsibilities of the citizen*, *participation and decision making*, and *participation in school government*. At the bottom of the table with the least number of mentions (some without any mentions) are five categories, all of which refer to fundamental processes of representative democracy: *representation*, *voting*, *accountability*, *deliberation*, *negotiation and reaching agreement*.

The category *citizen rights* receives the highest number of mentions in all the curricula, which is consistent with the almost universal expansion and cultural penetration of the focus on rights. Indeed, the mention of citizen rights is practically double those which refer to obligations and responsibilities in the three curricula of the last decade, while the 1998 Curriculum Framework confers a similar presence to these two fundamental and intimately interwoven principles of civil and civic life. The

Table 2

*Comparative Presence of the Citizenship and Participation Dimension in the History and Social Sciences and Citizen Education Curricula (1998-2019)*

CITIZENS AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION	Curriculum Framework 1998 1° a 4° HS	Curriculum Adjustment 2009 1° a 4° HS	Curriculum Foundations 2013 7° MS a 2° HS	Curriculum Foundations 2019 3° a 4° HS
	<b>N ° of mentions</b>			
Citizen rights (30)*	6	9	8	7
Participation in political actions (debates, demonstrations, protests, political parties) (20)	2	5	5	8
Competencies of critical reflection for active citizenship (19)	0	5	6	8
Obligations and responsibilities of the citizen (15)	5	3	3	4
Participation and Majority decision-making and respect for Minorities (14)	0	4	1	9
Participation in school government and / or collective projects of social action (14)	1	4	1	8
Representation - forms of representation (9)	1	3	4	1
Voting (rights, duties, responsibilities) (3)	0	1	2	0
Accountability (3)	0	3	0	0
Deliberation (0)	0	0	0	0
Negotiation and reaching agreement (0)	0	0	0	0
<b>Total mentions</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>45</b>

(\*) Total mentions per category (four curricula). HS = high school; MS = middle school.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on MINEDUC 1998; MINEDUC 2009; MINEDUC 2013; MINEDUC 2019.

cultural boundary between 1998 and the end of the 2000s is evident, then, in that there are two separate visions regarding the articulation of rights-obligations, and this is not subsequently affected by different ideologies or political contexts. It is interesting to add that regarding rights, the curriculum for the third and fourth years of high school (2019) emphasizes the importance of rights in the functioning of democratic institutions and in the exercise of citizenship. In this regard, we can highlight three dimensions that are strengthened and that were not present in the previous curricular definitions: citizen rights in relation to the judicial system, labor rights, and rights to privacy in relation to the media and social media. Likewise, regarding the category of *obligations and responsibilities*, it is important to note that in the Citizen Education subject there is only one mention referring to the understanding of the functioning of the democratic system. The other mentions are in the history

course, and address the civic responsibilities associated with globalization, caring for the environment and sustainability, and natural disasters.

As for competencies of critical reflection, these are observed as of the 2009 Curriculum, when learning objectives directly linked to the development of skills for critical analysis and reflection first appear. In fact, in the 2009 curriculum they are included as objectives and contents of the 3rd and 4th years of high school (Ministerio de Educación, 2009). In the subsequent curriculum (Ministerio de Educación, 2013), these are incorporated from the seventh grade to the 10th grade in a set of skills linked to the development of critical thinking.

Participation is triply considered by our analytical framework, which distinguishes political participation, participation in decision making and the dynamics of the majority with respect for the minority in general, and participation in school government. The three dimensions of participation clearly increase in their post-1998 curricular presence, reaching their maximum weight in the 2019 curriculum and mentioned many times at the completion of high school. In *Curriculum Foundations (2019)* (Ministerio de Educacion, 2019), political participation is approached from three perspectives: theoretical, in which the relevance of citizen participation in the democratic system for the defense of fundamental rights and the solution of social problems is made explicit; reflective, in which it is proposed to analyze and value participation based on ethical principles and consensual actions in the search for solutions to social and political challenges; and active, where the contents propose the realization of concrete actions to solve problems and challenges at the local level.

In regard to *participation and decision making*, the 2019 curriculum does not refer to the issue of “majority respect for the minority,” and instead states that participation should be oriented towards consensus and decision making that allow problems to be faced through dialogue with others. The theme *majorities and minorities* in democratic participation has a significant presence (four references) in the *2009 Curricular Framework*. However, it is not considered in the *1998 Framework*, and in the *2013 Curriculum Foundations* there is only one mention of this important aspect of the democratic political process. Regarding *participation in school government*, there is a doubling of the number of mentions (from four to eight) between the 2009 and 2019 curricula, both covering the last grades of high school. This period is when the leadership of the student centers is mainly recruited, a reality that may influence the fact that the *2013 Curriculum Foundations*, covering only up to Grade 10, gives such a low presence (one mention) to this type of participation,<sup>4</sup> which paradoxically is the easiest to address within the school setting.

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<sup>4</sup> The evidence of student participation and its dynamics in the present does not seem to support this notion: in fact, the existing research on participation in establishment takeovers reveals that 1st and 2nd year high school students are sometimes more interested in these processes than 4th year high school students, who are concerned about their preparation for the university entrance tests. See Peña & Sembler, 2019.

Of the five categories that at the beginning of this section we characterized as the core of the democratic political process— *voting*, *representation*, *deliberation*, *negotiation and reaching agreement*, and *accountability*—only *representation* has a consistent presence (mentioned in the four curricula), albeit with only one mention in two of them (1998 and 2019). Of the remaining four thematic categories, two have a low presence (*voting* and *accountability*) and another two (*deliberation* and *negotiation*) have no presence in the curricula. The category *voting* requires expansion.

As can be seen in the first column of Table 2, the category *voting* is not explicitly mentioned in the *1998 Curricular Framework*.<sup>5</sup> A decade later, in response, as previously mentioned, to the explicit reference to this issue by the 2004 Citizen Education Commission, the *2009 Curriculum Framework* included voting as an objective of the fourth year of high school, which was replicated in the *Curriculum Foundations of 2012-2013* (which increased the presence of the topic to two mentions). Paradoxically, *voting* does not appear in the curriculum of the last two grades of high school, when fourth-year students are about to reach or have already reached the legally required voting age. There is no explicit mention of this "right, duty, or responsibility" in the third- and fourth-year proposal; not in the Citizen Education course, nor in the History, Geography and Social Sciences course, although there are references, as will be seen in the next section, to elections and electoral systems.<sup>6</sup>

It is relevant here not to lose sight of the truism that *voting* corresponds to the most basic of political rights/obligations. It constitutes the fundamental linking mechanism between being a citizen of a democracy and exercising the right to choose representatives in the exercise of government (Sartori, 2014). The weakness of the vote erodes the foundations of representative democratic institutions. The fact that a trajectory of two decades of meager definitions of voting, and the related rights and duties in the curricula culminates in its absence—precisely at the moment of its maximum relevance—is difficult to understand, particularly if one takes into account the implications of a voting reform that made voting voluntary, and the evolution over the last two decades of electoral participation. This so markedly shows, on the one

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<sup>5</sup> There is a reference to the history of the "expansion of suffrage" in the "History of the 20th century," in the second year of high school, which, according to our requirement of explicit mention of the concept—voting as a right, duty—does not qualify as a mention of this category.

<sup>6</sup> In the curricular definition of the new citizenship education subject, in the introductory sections of the same, under the subtitle "Focus of the Subject," it reads: "Democratic practices also consider different scales and types of participation (voting and electoral systems, political representation, public offices, among others): phenomena such as political disaffection, the examination of the limitations and risks of democracy, and the importance of youth in the care of democratic institutions." (Ministry of Education, Curriculum Foundations 2019, p.55). This reference to the vote, however, is not fulfilled in the following definitions of learning objectives and contents. As we explained in the methodological section, it belongs to the justification discourse of the subject, and not to its binding contents for teaching; thus, it does not qualify as a mention of the category.

hand, the drop in young people's participation in general, together with, on the other hand, the socio-economic inequality of this pattern (with poorer young people voting less) (Contreras & Navia, 2013; Corvalan & Cox, 2015).

The contrast presented by the response of the country's school education to this serious development, with the comparative evidence offered by the curricula of two founding national cases in the history of democracy—those of England and France that today also confront the challenge of engaging their youth in formal political participation—could not be more stark.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the curricula of England and France place great importance on voting. In terms of the presence of this topic in the curriculum, the number of references in the English case is almost quadruple that of the corresponding Chilean case (Qualification and Curriculum Authority, 2007).<sup>8</sup> This greater presence also means a greater depth of analysis of the subject, in which voting is not only studied as a form of participation but also from its historical evolution, the way these rights are exercised at the national and at the local and community levels, along with the development of voting experiences within the school institution.

For its part, the French curriculum (Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale, 2011) in the grade corresponding to the third year of high school in Chile (*classe de première*), the subject *Civic, Legal, and Social Education* is defined as encompassing "the institutions, political and social life, the nation, and defense" (p.2), and is established with content such as "the fundamentally representative character of our democracy, [which] makes voting and elections the privileged means of popular sovereignty" (p.3). Along the same lines, it is noted within the definition that "electoral procedures do not concern only the political sphere but also the civil society as a whole." (p.3) The same text lays out as an objective the understanding of the representative democracy and the centrality of the election of representatives, and "an investigation into how political opinions are formed" (p.3) as an activity. This activity may have as a reference contextual processes of public agreement (debates on a project of urban planning or allocation of equipment for public use), or electoral processes in the political sphere.

The meager mention of voting found in the Chilean curriculum applies in a comparable way to the curricula of Latin American countries that participated in the international study of civics and citizenship in 2009 (Cox et.al, 2014) and is repeated in a curriculum comparison between Argentina and Chile on the matter (Riquelme, 2018). It is evident the curricula of the region do not give importance to formal political participation through voting, the most basic of its forms. Much less clear is the reason for this bias. Without research or literature that, for now, accompanies this observation, it is only possible to point in the direction of historical factors and

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<sup>7</sup> We are basing this on the following regarding the European curricula: Cox and García (2015) and Mardones, Cox, Farías, García (2014).

<sup>8</sup> For comparison, we used the 2007 English citizenship curriculum (modified in 2013). Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2007) *Citizenship. Programme of Study for Key Stage 4*. [www.qca.UK/curriculum](http://www.qca.UK/curriculum)

political culture that are deeper and more permanent than specific national political situations and contexts. We can infer an ambivalent relationship with representative democracy; of appreciation, as well as criticism and distrust of it, which despite the notable differences in political and educational trajectories of the countries of the region, seems to be a common factor in Latin America (Bargsted, Somma & Castillo, 2018; Schulz, Ainley, Cox & Friedman, 2018).<sup>9</sup>

## Summary and Elements for Discussion

The evolution of the citizen education curriculum in Chile in its defining milestones post-1990s, in marked contrast to all other areas of the curriculum, had two direct interventions by the political system to emphasize its importance in the school experience. In the first case, the Citizen Education Commission (2004) convened by the Ministry of Education at the request of the Senate, which was alarmed at the drop in young people's electoral participation, diagnosed the deficit in content regarding institutions and processes of democratic governance in the *1998 Curricular Framework*, which were answered by the 2009 curricular adjustments. In the second case, the *Citizen Education Law* (Chile, Law N° 20,911; 2016), which directly intervened in the curriculum, established a new citizen education subject in the last two grades of secondary education. It required each school to formulate a comprehensive citizen training plan involving all its teachers and the educational work of the institution.

The political and educational roots of this evolution—the Ministry of the area and the educational field on the one hand, and the Senate and Presidency of the Republic on the other—decisively define the long trajectory of modifications, adjustments, and redesigns to the citizenship education curriculum that has taken place from the mid-2000s to 2019. The general movement has a clear logic of expansion and increases the explicitness of the objectives and contents of the area with respect to the “baseline” of the meager 1998 curriculum. This advances in steps that are retrospectively evident in its gradualness: in 2009, contents are made explicit regarding institutions and processes of democracy at the end of secondary education that were not in the 1998 curriculum; in 2013 a content area of citizenship education was established within the subject of History, Geography and Social Sciences that goes from first to 10th grade; and in 2019, the specialized subject of Citizenship Education was added.

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<sup>9</sup> The treatment that the curricula of English-speaking Caribbean countries have for voting is close to that of England and France, and distances itself from the curricula of Latin American countries, providing additional evidence on the relevance of investigating macro cultural factors in the preferences of the curricula.



The gradual progression converges with respect to founding orientations: there are, as mentioned, no important variations in the ideological framework of the different curricula. Far from a zig-zag corresponding to the changes in the political coalition in the government, the evidence produced by the content analysis allows us to argue that the different curricula are located within certain “mainstream” visions of democracy, which the Commission of 2004 formulated in terms of integrating principles of the liberal, democratic, and republican traditions,<sup>10</sup> and that the Curriculum Foundations of 2019 make explicit as “the perspectives of republicanism, liberalism and communitarianism.”<sup>11</sup> A logic of synthesis of visions was established over the curriculum, institutionally fed by the double control of the government and the National Council of Education.<sup>12</sup> As was hypothesized in the previous section, the curricular documents and their evolution reveal more traces of the influence of transversal political-cultural climates than of the ideological imprint of each responsible government. We interpret that an example of this type of influence may be the emphasis on rights compared to duties or obligations, or the marked emphasis on participation in the 2019 curriculum, which paradoxically does not distinguish formal political participation (voting) as the key to democratic functioning.

The analysis went beyond the structural aspects and the socio-political genesis of the curricula summarized to this point. The core of this analysis included the curricular contents to determine their relevance for inducing robust political participation as well as their evolution over time. This evaluative perspective was based on a metric provided by a framework of categories rooted in the tradition of IEA's international studies on civic and citizen education; in the analysis comparing the curricula of Latin American countries; and in additional comparisons with citizenship education in France and England. The content analysis allowed us to answer the question that ranked the description and the comparative analysis: what do the curricula prioritize, and what do they sideline or ignore in terms of citizenship education issues?

Regarding values, the four curricula prioritize *democracy*, *human rights*, and *diversity*, mega-values that define the moral framework common to the orientations of the two decades. Likewise, the analysis revealed a marked deficit in the presence of *common good*, *social justice*, *solidarity*, *tolerance*, and *social cohesion* in the curricula of 1998, 2009, and 2013. Four of these five values are not mentioned in the current

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<sup>10</sup> The Commission in its Report, after distinguishing three dimensions of citizenship—the exercise of rights, the ownership of duties, and the cultivation of virtues—declares that “... each of these traditions emphasizes one of the dimensions of citizenship: the exercising of rights that it enforces against the State (the liberal tradition); citizenship as belonging to a community that governs itself (the democratic tradition); and citizenship as a domain of specific virtues (as taught by the republican tradition). Ministerio de Educación (2004) *Informe Comisión de Formación Ciudadana*, paragraph 118, p. 49. Santiago: Mineduc.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Education (2019), *Curriculum Foundations 3rd and 4th year of High School*, Citizen Education, OA N° 6 of 3rd year. Page 61. Santiago.

<sup>12</sup> Ley General de Educación (N° 20.370) 2009: Biblioteca del Congreso.

HGCS curriculum in the seventh to 10th grades of the school sequence. This deficit is partially repaired in the curriculum of the last two grades of high school (2019), which gives presence—as no previous curriculum had done—to the values of *common good* and *social justice*, while confirming the persistence of the low presence of the other three values mentioned.

The second area of citizenship education foregrounded by the analytical framework considers the relationships of the citizen with the political system. Here the different post-1998 curricula clearly converge in their prioritization of three thematic categories: *citizen rights*, *participation in political actions*, and *critical reflection skills for active citizenship*. The 1998 curriculum contrasts here, which does not mention this last category and instead emphasizes obligations and responsibilities of the citizen. As has been mentioned, there is a change in orientation regarding the rights/duties dyad between the 1998 and 2009 curricula, as well as regarding the idea of “critical skills”—which are not included in the first curriculum and then have consistent and high presence in the following three definitions.

In contrast to the thematic territory highlighted, there are four categories that can be said to remain in the shadows because they have low presence or are ignored outright in the curricular prescriptions: *voting* and *accountability* correspond to the first situation, and *deliberation* and *negotiation and reaching agreement* to the second. Our analysis of what happened with the category *voting* brought comparative curricular evidence from France and England to underline how paradoxical the trajectory established by the observable curricular evolution in our country is in this regard, and that the silence on this issue in the new subject at the end of high school does nothing but dramatize. In ideal-typical terms (Weber, 2002), a pattern becomes visible: the curriculum illuminates and prioritizes participation, rights, and critical skills, which relegates essential processes and skills of the political process of representative democracy, and creates and unequivocal bias, consisting of silence on readiness for, confidence in, or skill development for formal political participation.

The findings outlined have important implications for the future development of the citizenship education school curriculum which, in our opinion, should focus on repairing the deficits and imbalances that our comparative analysis revealed. Schematically, from a perspective that values democratic development based on a more integrated society, the curriculum should give greater presence and importance to the values that point to what is common, and to offering a better balance between learning opportunities to develop personal autonomy and learning opportunities to develop civic commitment and responsibility. Likewise, as we emphasized, the curricular development of the area should take seriously that without citizens who participate in voting, there is no legitimate democracy possible, and that for voting and participation to increase, education must try to counteract the socio-cultural tendencies that point towards the “abandonment of the agora” (Bauman, 2007, p. 231) by developing pro-participation competencies in the formal processes of democratic political institutions. The four curricula of the last two decades are

deficient in this aspect, and in particular that of 2019, which is currently in use for the completion of high school education. The strong social stratification of a minimal electoral participation of the new generation today only dramatizes the urgency for a robust and coherent response in educational terms. This deficit, although diagnosed a decade-and-a-half ago as a necessary area for focus, continues to encounter obstacles (which have not been made visible nor thematized by research) to becoming part of the objectives and contents fundamental to citizenship and civic education.

The democratic citizenship of the present is unprecedented in terms of its complexity because, unlike in the past, politics is not accepted as a legitimate homogenizing instance of people and their needs and demands, but is conceived as the articulator of differences (Rosanvallon, 2007). At the same time, it is clear that membership in a nation and its institutions can no longer be founded on primary emotional loyalties, but on the basis of an increasingly abstract elaboration, both intellectual and moral, of belief in and respect for some rules to process conflicts, and through discourse that elaborates the meanings of what is common (Habermas, 1994; Peña, 2015). If the implications of a multicultural citizenship or global citizenship are added to these conditions (Bruno-Jofre & Aponiuk, 2000; Fierro, 2015; PNUD, 2021; Veugelers, 2020), it becomes clear that the requirements of citizen education within the schooling experience have been radically increased and become more complex. Our analysis has sought to reveal and raise for discussion what is brought to light and what is, paradoxically, left in the shadows in contemporary civic education in our country, and through this analysis feed future responses to the challenges ahead in this most crucial of stakes for the development of Chile's democracy.

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