Democratic citizenship in textbooks in Spanish primary curriculum

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This paper analyses how textbooks deal with the issues of education for democratic citizenship encompassed within the European framework and Spanish educational reforms. The sample comprised the 24 individual texts in social science, natural science, and technology for 6–12-year-olds. This paper delimits and defines the six themes for analysis: responsibility, participation, conflict resolution, diversity, and human rights. It offers a qualitative description of the content of each theme as well as a quantitative assessment of the frequency with which they appear. The results indicate that European ideals of citizenship education are dealt with unevenly, and in some cases barely, in these textbooks.

Keywords: citizenship education; curriculum; socio-personal education; Spanish education; textbooks.

Democratic citizenship as an educational challenge

The genesis of post-industrial society within the framework of a globalized world has given rise to a host of problems that are undermining the structures and principles of democracy. Far from encouraging responsible participation, disillusionment with democratic institutions and the difficulties encountered in the struggle to find fair and just ways of meeting the challenges facing modern-day societies prompt a search for refuge in individualist attitudes. Within this social context, a demand is increasing for the inclusion in the school curriculum of attitudes, skills, and values aimed at encouraging democratic citizenship in modern, complex, democratic, and multi-cultural societies (Anderson 1998, Levin 1998, 2000, Cogan and Pederson 2001, Potter 2002). Such issues gained particular importance towards the end of the 20th century as a new point of reference in light of the dangers that arose as the result of the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the spread of fundamentalist attitudes, and the development of a globalized...
world. In Europe, this interest was reinforced by the process of political union and the need to guarantee its survival through significant development of a civil society.

Citizenship education can be understood as the knowledge, means, and activities designed to encourage students to participate actively in democratic life, accepting and exercising their rights and responsibilities. This task, which should be carried out both within and outside the school environment, concerns all those who stimulate, practise, and promote citizenship learning (Osler et al. 1995, Audigier et al. 1999, Hébert and Pagé 2000). From this holistic perspective, the principal aim is to strengthen a democratic culture that touches on all possible aspects of social life rather than focusing exclusively on a ‘political citizenship’ which does not look beyond participation in electoral processes.

Nevertheless, the place of content around democratic citizenship in textbooks and the school curriculum is the object of fierce debate (Calvert et al. 1998, Kerr 1999). Thus, from an epistemological point of view, notions of citizens and citizenship may take their place within liberal or community-based concepts, which place special emphasis on either individual rights or the idea of a link with a specific community (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). Similarly, notions of democracy may be located within republican or liberal concepts, which underpin notions of participatory democracy or representative democracy, respectively. From a historical and social perspective, citizenship identity has revolved around the nation-state, giving rise to political concepts of citizenship, whereas the internal diversity of current societies is oriented more towards multicultural or intercultural notions of citizenship. Moreover, at the beginning of the 21st century, the formation of supra-national political entities is giving rise to a transcultural idea of citizenship, i.e. European citizenship, while the ongoing process of globalization is resulting in a cosmopolitan citizenship that encompasses the universalist traditions of liberals and socialists. By contrast, the new polis (a metropolitan area and region with a certain degree of political autonomy) is structured around a local or glocal idea of identity or citizenship.

In other words, educators are faced with changing ideas of citizenship, both in regard to its scale and to its very nature. Needless to say, the way in which these perspectives are taken into account will affect the writing of textbooks, giving rise to more or less unidimensional or more or less complex perspectives on citizenship and democracy. As we seek to evaluate and analyse textbooks, we must explore the extent to which scales of social participation and activity are presented or concealed, and the extent to which restricted or multiple social and citizen identities are promoted.

The complexity of the different approaches is clearly reflected in the school environment. From a methodological point of view, the question of how to implement citizenship education is controversial. Holistic approaches aim to ensure that citizenship education becomes a controlled, assessed part of the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools, although its introduction should coincide with the introduction of a global outlook on the part of the school and its curriculum. Yet, many believe that the principles of democracy that underpin citizenship education will only be assimilated when an exemplary context of participation and democratic
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relations is provided by the school environment itself (Kaplan 1997, 2000, Rainer and Guyton 1999) and the community (Chilcoat and Ligon 1998). In other words, many believe that the curriculum and specific syllabuses will have a very limited impact if students are not given the possibility of experiencing for themselves their rights and responsibilities in their everyday lives, and if these concepts are not approached from a reflective and critical perspective (Hicks 2001, Marco Stiefel 2002).

However, this is not the only possible approach. There are methodological alternatives for promoting citizenship skills (Kerr 1999). On the one hand, the most reductionist didactic approaches are fundamentally oriented towards the transmission of knowledge and information (i.e. the processes of governing systems and their constitution), and are generally based on teaching to the class as a whole, with limited opportunities for stimulating student interaction and initiative. On the other hand, the more open approaches aim to teach students how to understand and develop their own participatory abilities in both school and community contexts, generating learning opportunities through debate and discussion, project work, and, in general, a wide range of participatory experiences. Such designs are mainly based on the idea of the democratic school (Dewey 1978) and on theories derived from active learning (Niemi 2002), co-operative learning (Emmer and Gerwels 2002), and service learning (Johnson and Notah 1999).

In fact, the methods used to focus on democratic issues in the curriculum vary widely, as several studies comparing countries and schools have shown (Hansen and Olson 1996, Morris and Cogan 2001). Davies (1997: 126) has suggested that studies are needed to analyse how issues related to citizenship are taught in different countries. Some of these issues have already been examined, at least in part, in various studies on human rights (Firer 1998), diversity (Sleeter and Grant 1991, Osler 1994), and responsibility (Volman and Ten Dam 2000).

The project presented here responds to this need and is located within the context of the Spanish Education Reform—Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1990)—which is rooted in the social and political changes occasioned by the country’s internal democratic evolution and its new relationship with European institutions. The Reform’s approach theoretically converts the formal education system into a school of citizenship designed to respond to the challenges of the new era with a formal teaching system based on knowledge, procedures, attitudes, and values. The key concepts are: the basic principles of democratic operation; rights, duties, and responsibilities; human rights; participation; diversity and tolerance; conflict and resolution; social groups; sociopolitical organizations; and the defence and recovery of the ecological balance. Although some subject-areas, such as social sciences, can be more easily adapted to deal with these themes, it is hoped that the task will be shared by all subjects. To this end, the Spanish Reform proposes a cross-curricular treatment of contemporary problems and concerns (education for peace, education for diversity and equal opportunities, environmental education, and education about the media), to be dealt with during class time in order to raise citizen awareness and open up new channels of action and social improvement.
The legal texts of the Spanish Reform establish the objective of a basic, open, and flexible curriculum. Within that framework, the autonomous regional administrations develop their frameworks, and schools develop their individual curricula accordingly. The aim is to leave enough of a margin to enable each school to develop its own educational profile on the basis of what it understands by education for democratic citizenship. In reality, however, this margin may be influenced, or even compromised, by publishing firms which, as large corporate groups, provide teachers with the textbooks that define the criteria on which their teaching activities are based. In this sense, it is vital to analyse the contents of the textbooks to define which concepts of citizenship they transmit and what contribution they might make to students’ citizenship education.

**Approach and methodology**

**Objectives**

This study investigates the extent to which primary school textbooks in Spain, particularly in the Basque Autonomous Region, incorporate the ideals of democratic education and citizenship. We analyse five specific topics considered fundamental within Western and European approaches (Belanger 1999, Naval et al. 2002): responsibility, participation, conflict resolution, diversity, and human rights. In specific terms, three objectives were established:

- To analyse how values oriented towards democratic citizenship are dealt with in integrated social science, natural science, and technology textbooks; and to determine the specific aspects considered and the contexts in which they are presented.
- To analyse the approach adopted by different textbooks in relation to questions of democratic knowledge, skills, and values, and to study their continuity or sequencing throughout the primary school curriculum.
- To establish the frequency with which each of the aspects analysed appear throughout the entire content of the textbooks, as well as the global frequency of this type of content in comparison with more academic or traditional subjects.

**Sample**

The sample comprised 24 integrated textbooks of social science, natural science, and technology from textbook series developed by four different publishers (Bruño, Elkar, Erein, and Santillana) for each of the 6 years of primary school education (ages 6–12) (see Appendix). The sample was selected on the basis of three criteria:

- All books analysed were textbooks, given that such publications constitute one of the key didactic resources available to teachers,
within the wide range of existing curricular materials (reference books, reading books, activity books, etc.

- The texts covered an integrated social science, natural science, and technology programme; these areas offer a wider range of possibilities for the inclusion of citizenship content than other subjects (e.g. mathematics).
- All texts included in the sample were published between 1992–1999; it is from this period onwards that values oriented specifically towards democratic co-existence could be anticipated, given the ideals encompassed by the educational reforms introduced in both Spain and Europe.

**Definition of analysis categories**

After reviewing the literature around textbook analysis (e.g. Beck and McKeown 1991, Venezky 1992, Lebrun et al. 2002, Ninnes 2002), we began our study by identifying and defining ‘contents for democratic citizenship’ (as opposed to descriptive disciplinary academic contents) within the subject area ‘social science, natural science, and technology’, i.e. geographical and economic landscapes, animals, plants, natural materials and their properties, technology, etc. We identified contents that deal with the issue in an explicit manner through text, images, or activities. We ensured that the analytic categories were exclusive:

- **Responsibility**: Content about the regulation of relations in different contexts (e.g. family, school, local environment), specifying tasks, rules, obligations, attitudes, and behaviours characterized by respect and care.
- **Participation**: Content that either provides information about existing participatory bodies or directly involves students in shared projects both within and outside the school environment.
- **Conflict resolution**: Content that deals with the problem of conflicts and their possible resolution.
- **Diversity**: Content that aims to raise students’ awareness of differences or to promote the right to equality among both people and groups.
- **Human rights**: Contents that deal with issues related to basic human rights.

**Methods**

Having defined the categories, a process that served both to guide our assessment of the contents and avoid overlap, we proceeded with a description of the contents and their quantification. In the qualitative analysis, we sought to specify how the aspects related to democratic citizenship were dealt with, and to order them so as to illustrate the image of desirable knowledge being presented as well as the underlying educational approaches. Each text was analysed page-by-page to identify any content related to responsibility,
participation, conflict resolution, diversity, and human rights. The quantitative study consisted of a page-by-page analysis, in order to determine the space dedicated to each category using the page as the unit of reference: 1 page, 1/2 page, 1/4 page (see Johnsen 1996, Ninnes 2002). The aim was to define the coverage oriented towards democratic citizenship in general in terms of the total number of pages in the book, as well as the frequency with which each individual category (responsibility, participation, conflict resolution, diversity, and human rights) appeared.

Findings

We present the results by category, specifying the aspects of the topic dealt with by each series and the context in which each topic is presented (see table 1). We then discuss the general questions about values for democratic citizenship arising from the quantitative analysis, and, finally, we offer several conclusions and reflections.

The responsibility-based approach in the home, school, road, and civic environments

Responsibility in the family context, which appears in all of the textbooks to a greater or lesser extent, encompasses two principal dimensions: basic habits or obligations and the distribution of tasks, although other topics, such as responsibility as an obligation or care, also appear, albeit less frequently. During the first years of primary school, textbooks focus frequently on the basic habits of family collaboration (e.g. cleaning, sewing, ironing, tidying up, putting things away, washing, shopping, cooking, laying and clearing the table, making the bed, and looking after plants). However, the presentation of habits, dealt with by way of cartoons or instructions indicating what is right and what is wrong, gradually becomes less frequent in subsequent years, to be replaced by other aspects, among which the distribution of tasks in the home is particularly predominant. The models presented by the textbooks often suggest an even distribution of tasks in which everybody co-operates, with the message being transmitted either through the models themselves or through activities in which students are asked to identify those responsible for certain jobs. Similarly, the situations of different women are also discussed in terms of their positions and roles (grandmother, housewife, etc.). Other foci of attention include the consequences of women going out to work, the differences between housework and other jobs, the negative effects of housework for women (e.g. salary, holidays, sick leave, human relations), and varying male attitudes to housework. The subject of caring for other members of the family (e.g. elderly or sick relatives, younger siblings, etc.) is presented more timidly than the other topics (see table 1).

Contents about responsibility in school are included in three series (Bruño II, Erein I, II, and Elkar I) during the first 2 years of primary education, and address attitudes about work in the classroom or responsibility in
Table 1. Aspects of democratic citizenship in primary schools dealt with in the series.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>First and second level (I–II)</th>
<th>Third and fourth level (III–IV)</th>
<th>Fifth and sixth level (V–VI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the family context</td>
<td>Bruño I, Erein I</td>
<td>Bruño III, Elkar III, IV, Erein IV</td>
<td>Santillana VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the school context</td>
<td>Elkar I, Erein I, II, Bruño I, II</td>
<td>Erein IV, Elkar III, IV, Bruño IV, Santillana IV</td>
<td>Erein V, Bruño V, Elkar VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road responsibility</td>
<td>Erein I, II, Elkar II, Bruño II, Santillana I</td>
<td>Santillana IV</td>
<td>Elkar VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic responsibility</td>
<td>Erein I, Bruño I, II</td>
<td>Erein III, Elkar III, Bruño III</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Team building</td>
<td>Bruño I, Erein II</td>
<td>Bruño III, Erein III</td>
<td>Erein V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussion of rules</td>
<td>Bruño I, II</td>
<td>Erein III</td>
<td>Erein V, VI, Elkar VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decision-making</td>
<td>Erein I, II, Bruño I, II, Elkar II</td>
<td>Erein III, IV, Elkar III, Bruño IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School’s organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional sphere</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Town council</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Autonomous region</td>
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<td>• Spanish state</td>
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<td>• European union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>Bruño II</td>
<td>Bruño III, Erein IV</td>
<td>Erein VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At school</td>
<td>Bruño II</td>
<td>Bruño III</td>
<td>Bruño V, Santillana VI, Elkar VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Bruño II</td>
<td>Bruño IV, Santillana III</td>
<td>Bruño VI, Santillana VI, Elkar VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity as regards people</td>
<td>Santillana II</td>
<td>Bruño III, Santillana IV</td>
<td>Elkar VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td>Bruño I, II</td>
<td>Erein IV</td>
<td>Bruño VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic-social diversity</td>
<td>Bruño II</td>
<td>Bruño III, IV, Santillana IV</td>
<td>Santillana V, V, Bruño V, VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural diversity</td>
<td>Santillana I, II, Bruño II, Elkar II</td>
<td>Santillana III, IV, Bruño III, IV, VI</td>
<td>Elkar VI, Erein VI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human rights</th>
<th>First and second level (I–II)</th>
<th>Third and fourth level (III–IV)</th>
<th>Fifth and sixth level (V–VI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General ideas</td>
<td>Bruño VI, Erein VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evolution and enumeration</td>
<td>Bruño V, Santillana VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s rights</td>
<td>Bruño VI, Santillana VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s rights</td>
<td>Bruño VI, Santillana VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>People and organizations</td>
<td>Santillana VI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human rights in the world</td>
<td>Bruño VI, Santillana VI</td>
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</table>
the use of materials. Similarly, attention is also drawn to the necessity of obeying the rules of co-existence. Other aspects, such as the identification of students’ rights and responsibilities, are barely dealt with.

Road responsibility is one of the contexts of responsibility, understood as obligation, to which the textbooks dedicate most attention; it is dealt with in all of the series fairly consistently throughout the entire primary school cycle (see table 1). The treatment of the topic is also similar in all of the textbook series, with a general emphasis on the importance of obeying road signals, respecting the highway code, and appropriate pedestrian behaviour. In contrast, other less rule-based aspects of responsibility are given very little attention; reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of cars vs public transport, road safety, ways of avoiding accidents, or suggestions for improving traffic patterns appearing only occasionally.

Civic responsibility, which, together with road responsibility, is dealt with more or less thoroughly by all of the series, includes several different perspectives. The predominant focus centres on a rule-based approach that covers the importance of knowing how to interpret and obey both the instructions expressed in public signs and symbols (e.g. no smoking, silence please, etc.) and those issued by figures of authority. Emphasis is also placed on respecting and caring for public places and the items in them. Other aspects of responsibility, such as respect for others in the form of, e.g. helping a blind person cross a street, etc., receive only a cursory mention.

In general, issues around civic responsibility are dealt with during the first years of primary school. In some cases, the subject is presented in its own right, through instructions and cartoons illustrating the rules or behavioural sequences necessary for co-existence, as well as, to a lesser degree, through the presentation of problematic situations such as road-safety education, health and environmental awareness, etc.

Participation in the school, social, and institutional environments

Participation in the school context is dealt with in four separate blocks. Three of these—team-building, establishment of rules, and decision-making or organization of activities in the classroom—are most common during the first years of primary school but are not treated by one of the series (i.e. Santillana; see table 1). On the other hand, knowledge of participatory bodies, predominant in the final years of primary school, is dealt with by all series.

Team-building is only dealt with by two series (Bruño I, III, Erein II, III), through the identification of activities that can be carried out as part of a team, either by analysing the attitudes required for the team to function positively (i.e. ways of collaborating) or by focusing attention on the team itself (i.e. description of its members, common objectives, organizational methods, etc.) (see table 1). On a few, very isolated occasions, there were activities that offered guidelines for teamwork, specifically about the organization of round-table debates (i.e. ‘Identify and write down doubts’; ‘Decide who is going to speak’; ‘Respect people’s turns’; ‘Do not make noise’; ‘Focus on the theme at hand’; ‘Listen to others carefully’). The two series that deal
with this dimension (Bruño I, III, Erein II, III) also focus on the establishment of rules by discussion, stressing its importance, promoting the establishment of rules for teamwork, or encouraging students to discuss their rights and responsibilities during the first 3 years. These participatory aspects are further enriched by the inclusion of the decision-making, organization of events, and activities dimension. In three of the four series (Bruño I, II, IV, Erein I, II, III, Elkar, II, III), a game-/play-based approach (e.g. a party day in class, a games day at the school, a Christmas party) was used during the first 2 years to motivate participation through the organization of events, selection of prize-winners, and decoration of the classroom. This approach was also evident in the third year through the preparation of an end-of-year excursion, and also through participatory activities, i.e. debate, aimed at improvement of the school.

Participation in the running of the school is dealt with by only one series (Erein V), with a focus on the School Council: members, frequency of meetings, and the subjects discussed. Another aspect refers to the positions that make up the school’s organizational hierarchy (duration of each term of office) and, in some cases, offers an in-depth description of a specific position (election/selection procedure, duration, tasks involved, difficulties, and advantages).

Social participation (Erein V, VI, Elkar VI) is dealt through an exploration of the different possibilities for citizen membership in three fields: leisure, culture, and sport. The issues are generally explored by identifying associations existing in the immediate environment. From a more functional perspective, one text (Erein V) offers guidelines for analysis: objectives, number of members, operational diagram, activities, area and materials, system of income (fees, subsidies received, etc.), and methods of distributing costs. Finally, union membership is alluded to only in the form of succinct and precise references to unions’ origins and achievements.

Participation in the institutional sphere is limited to information about political institutions, ranging from local authorities to the European Parliament. During the final years of primary education, this topic is focused on to the virtual exclusion of all other contents and dimensions of participation. Surprisingly, only one of the textbooks (Bruño V) deals with general questions of institutional participation, relating them to everyday life: definition of democracy; ideas upon which it is based and degrees of application of democratic life (family, school, etc.); basic concepts; advantages of democratic co-existence; the differences between democratic and non-democratic methods of organization; and identification of co-operative activities, e.g. laboratory, workers’ assembly, etc.

The town council as an institution is dealt with in all but one series (Santillana), although a variety of different approaches are used. In some textbooks (Bruño III, Erein III), the council is treated as a public, citizen-oriented body, with special emphasis being placed on its value as an institution designed to improve quality of life and well-being, solve problems, and make decisions about issues that affect everyone. Other texts (e.g. Elkar III) focus on ways of accessing the town council (i.e. the electoral process), the positions of the various councillors, and the distribution of functions (including a list of services offered). Finally, one textbook
(Erein III) opts for a more hands-on approach, seeking to enhance participation skills by organizing a council session in the classroom, based on the discussion of a specific theme. The text includes guidelines for the process of deliberation and the tabling of a class proposal for a child’s day during local festivals.

All four series include only enumerative and descriptive information about participation in political institutions. In the case of the Basque Autonomous Region and the Spanish State, the textbooks (Bruño V, VI, Erein V, VI, Santillana V, VI) focus on the current context and organizational background, as well as on the most important characteristics of the legal system and institutional framework. In the case of the European Union (EU), the texts (Bruño V, Elkar VI, Erein VI, Santillana VI) analyse the origin, development, and institutions of the EU, as well as the principal concerns expressed by European citizens.

Conflict resolution at home and at school

Two series (Bruño II, III, Erein IV) deal with conflict resolution. The series deal with it more or less consistently throughout the primary years. However, the idea does not appear at all in the other series (Elkar, Santillana).

Conflict resolution at home is dealt with differently in the two series covering the theme. One series (Bruño II, III) makes use of hypothetical everyday situations to identify the problem, assess the different possibilities, and suggest solutions (e.g. cooking lunch because parents are late home; assessing the difficulties of everyday co-existence, and the behaviour of each person in a hypothetical conflict that students can relate to). The other series (Erein IV) that deals with the theme of conflict resolution at home opts for a more general approach, developing three basic ideas: everyday co-existence is not easy; people have different ways of thinking; and, because of this, people often argue and get angry. A series of questions explores the reasons why children get angry and argue with their parents, siblings, or other members of the family. In addition to analysing these reasons, the exercise also tries to raise awareness of how arguments end and explore possible methods of resolution. This raises awareness of everyday conflicts (i.e. their causes and real results) and invites students to reflect openly on positive resolution methods. However, in the majority of cases, no questions are asked and no information given about recommended methods and procedures for conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution at school is dealt with by only one series (Bruño II, III) during years 2 and 3. The approach used takes advantage of everyday situations, such as possible conflicts at break-time in the school grounds among students with varied and opposing interests who share the same space and have a limited amount of time. A carefully-prepared activity serves to guide students through the resolution process: definition of the problem; identification of opposing interests; proposing of alternatives, discussion, and decision-making. This exercise also serves as a reference model for other activities that deal with similar situations within the classroom, thereby teaching students how to formulate effective resolution proposals.
Diversity is a value oriented towards co-existence that appears, to a greater or lesser extent, in all four series, although the topics focused on (i.e. general ideas; people who are different because of a disability; gender equality; and social and cultural diversity), and the approaches used vary significantly from one series to another.

General ideas are based mainly around the diversity/equality binomial, focused on humankind’s fundamental needs and common feelings. The most common approaches concentrate on physical differences among people and human groups, presented through cartoons or photos outlining the physical characteristics of people from different races. However, during the last 2 years of primary school, all of the series place special emphasis on processes of racial intermixing. Other general characteristics such as religion and language, etc., are also included as indicators of diversity (see table 1).

Diversity in people is dealt with explicitly in two series (Bruño III, Santillana II, IV), mainly during the first 4 years after which it is no longer alluded to. The approach used is based around physical disabilities and handicaps (blindness), alternative motor-skills (left-handedness), and, to a lesser extent, people suffering from diseases.

Gender equality is examined explicitly in only two of the series (Bruño I, II, Erein IV). Bruño approaches the issue during year 1 by asking whether some games are specifically for boys and some for girls, and during year 2 by exploring equality between men and women in professional occupations. Erein IV deals with this issue during year 4, through a series of informative sections, images, and questions designed to encourage debate about clichés and stereotypes.

Socio-economic diversity is dealt with explicitly in two series (Bruño II, III, IV, VI, Santillana IV), although only Bruño focuses on this theme consistently throughout the entire primary school curriculum. Two topics are focused on: the gap between rich and poor countries, and social diversity resulting from immigration. Several key socio-cultural problems are dealt with through these issues (housing, food, health, future expectations, integration, immigrants, etc.).

Cultural diversity among groups is the most thoroughly explored topic, and also the one with the most varied approaches. More and more space is dedicated to this issue as students move up from one year to the next. In the first cycle (years 1 and 2), it is only included in two of the series. Santillana I and II dedicate one page at the end of each lesson to diversity, showing a variety of different environments, villages, monuments, and customs from foreign countries; Bruño II includes a globalized teaching unit outlining similarities and differences and showing how one person can belong to many different communities. During the second cycle (years 3 and 4), both series continue developing this theme. Whereas Santillana III and IV continue with a complementary approach, describing customs from different cultures at the end of each lesson, Bruño III and IV concentrate all their contents in a single chapter in each text. The approach to multiculturalism focuses more on what people have in common than on what makes them different, with
reference being made to the common need for food, work, protection, communication, and entertainment constant. During the third cycle (years 5 and 6), a minimal reference is made to Islamic civilization and the contributions to technology made by Chinese culture, whereas nomadic peoples and the relationship between landscapes (desert, jungle, tundra) and cultures are the object of closer attention and in-depth development.

**Human rights**

Contents related to human rights are dealt with only during the last 2 years of primary school, and by only two of the four series. Bruño V introduces the issues in a brief section in year 5 and then in greater depth during year 6, when it includes a specific teaching unit on the subject. Santillana VI discusses this topic only in year 6, where it includes questions on human rights within the framework of other topics as well as dedicating an entire section to the topic (see table 1).

The aspects of human rights that are explored are as follows: basic anthropological and legal issues; evolution and enumeration of human rights; children’s rights; women’s rights; people and organizations working in favour of human rights; and the current situation regarding human rights in the world. An analysis suggests that both series offer an historical perspective on human rights, with the social history of civilizations being used in one case (Bruño VI), and political and social history, mainly contemporary, in the other (Santillana VI) as the disciplinary framework within which the evolution of human rights is described and explained. Thus, both series approach the issue of human rights from the perspective of linear progression. Santillana VI stresses the spatial contrasts and different rates of evolution of the principles; Bruño VI contrasts the ideal situation expounded in the principles with current reality.

The material content of human rights is explored through both enumeration (Bruño V) and classification (Santillana VI). Three specific groups of rights are identified: political rights; social rights; and the scope of human rights as a concept. Both texts opt for a thematic approach to children’s rights and women’s rights, thereby enabling the issue to be explored in greater depth.

The inclusion of contents about people and organizations working for human rights and a fairer world is particularly important from the point of view of citizenship education. Each of the figures studied represents an arena of activity and serves to broaden the horizons of human rights: Gandhi (non-violent fight for independence); Emmeline Pankhurst (women’s suffrage); Martin Luther King (civil rights for African-Americans); Rigoberta Menchu (rights of indigenous peoples); and Nelson Mandela (the fight against apartheid). This theme holds the added interest of enabling protest procedures to be explored, although always strictly in accordance with the principles of non-violence.

Activities focusing on human rights are also of particular interest in citizenship education. They are intended to raise students’ awareness and to develop moral conscience, empathy, the ability to see things from a different
In short, the information presented in these teaching units encourages an educated outlook, while some of the activities help students develop a critical knowledge of the subject of human rights. However, little attention is paid to promoting operational and functional knowledge about the defence of human rights or the issue of ‘responsibility in the fulfilment of obligations’.

**General questions about values oriented towards democratic citizenship**

Table 2 indicates that the percentage of total content dedicated to democratic citizenship oscillates between low and very low, varying in accordance with the outlook adopted by each textbook and series. Not all contents oriented towards citizenship are dealt with, and, in all the textbooks, such contents (responsibility, participation, conflict resolution, diversity, and human rights) never account for more than ∼16% of the material presented.

Paradoxically, this relatively limited presence contrasts with the educational importance attached to these values. However, it is worth considering a few of the issues around citizenship education with the aim of identifying the different educational approaches offered by these textbooks. Thus, the intensity of coverage of each topic coupled with the analysis of continuity throughout the curriculum highlights which contents were considered most and least important by each of the series. Two different situations were identified (see table 2):

- A limited emphasis throughout the entire curriculum in the case of two series (Elkar and Santillana), although the former does make somewhat of a comeback during the 6th year—the final year of primary education.
- A fairly balanced treatment throughout all 6 years, as regards both the quantity and importance of the topics (Bruño and Erein).

In other words, there is no general unified approach; each series has its own underlying approach. However, beneath all this lies the basic problem of how to sequence and provide a sense of continuity with regard to contents dealt with in such different ways.

Both the relative emphasis dedicated to citizenship contents and the distribution and sequence of that contents indicate the importance attached to these values within the approaches of each series. However, we also need to explore the implicit questions from other perspectives. Thus, we need to consider the total effort made by undertaking a more detailed analysis of the values oriented towards citizenship education covered by each series, and the way in which this is done. As seen in table 3, we have a set of extremely heterogeneous situations.

A clear correlation can be seen between the highest or lowest frequency and the heterogeneity of the values dealt with. It is also clear that the series which give the least emphasis to contents oriented towards co-existence also tend to focus on a narrower range of values, and vice versa. In the cases with
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>No of pages</th>
<th>Responsibility (%)</th>
<th>Participation (%)</th>
<th>Conflict resolution (%)</th>
<th>Diversity (%)</th>
<th>Human rights (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>1.9</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
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Table 3. Values which appear in the texts.

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<td>Participation</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Diversity</td>
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<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
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<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

a low total percentage, the series mainly focus attention on a single value: responsibility in one case (Elkar) and diversity in the other (Santillana).

Although this last observation may suggest that when the number of values dealt with increases only a very superficial or perfunctory treatment is given to each theme, this is not the case. The series that deal with a higher number of citizenship values are also those that offer the richest and most varied exploration of the theme, often taking into account the suggestions made in the psychological literature (Bruño and Erein). However, merely dealing with a wider range of values does not necessarily indicate a balanced treatment with regard either to years or continuity. Nevertheless, both Bruño and Erein make a concerted effort to attain some sort of balance, in respect of both the emphasis, i.e. frequency of appearance, and also the continuity and variety of approaches used in relation to co-existence values.

**Discussion and conclusions**

In recent years there have been demands for curricula designed to promote democratic citizenship. The textbooks we analysed deal with content related to democratic co-existence in a fairly cursory (as evident in the percentage of pages), descriptive, and even superficial way. Furthermore, this tendency towards a merely descriptive treatment is more pronounced in the final years
of primary school. In this sense, the results of the study support the findings of other studies that point to a strong tendency towards a superficial treatment of the topics around citizenship (Kerr 1999, Morris and Cogan 2001). Unfortunately, that which is considered to be most functional and critical in citizenship education has a very limited presence in these textbooks, and in the series compiled by some publishers hardly appears at all.

Despite the importance of a wide-ranging and consistent treatment of values oriented towards co-existence, what we observed is a tendency towards focusing on a few specific values, while other key issues are relegated to the sidelines. We highlight the fact that textbooks select specific contents within the available range, and then focus on them to a greater or lesser extent, thus configuring a specific perception of citizenship. Consequently, the number and type of contexts presented by the textbooks indicate a clear bias in the examples studied, as well as widely different perspectives for intervention in relation to the future citizen. This may have consequences if the series selected by a school has a significant influence on how the themes related to democratic citizenship are dealt with in the classroom. The choice of textbook may constitute a curricular factor that affects the level, scope, and quality of a school’s work around the themes related to co-existence. It is vital that teachers know the potential and opportunities offered by their text—although we should not conclude that the use of one textbook or another is the sole determining factor: the social and professional skills and ideals of the teacher will always act as a filter of what any textbook presents.

However, there is a general tendency, clearly visible in all the series we examined, to focus particularly on habits, rules, and obligations and hardly touch on the themes of care and concern for others. The theme of responsibility, as treated in these series, attaches more importance to the local sphere than it does to the family or school environments. All of the series pay specific attention to obedience to road and traffic regulations and, to a much lesser extent, to civic obligations of the kind associated with, for example, attitudes and behaviour on public transport, etc.

The acquisition of habits of obedience and respect seems to be a logical curricular concern, especially during the first years of primary school when such habits are being formed. This is a question about which all the textbooks we explored had a clear point of view: a citizen should respect the codes, rules, and obligations of basic reference groups (i.e. family, school). However, we believe that, from the point of view of democratic citizenship, responsibility should not be limited to complying with established rules and regulations. Responsibility implies care and concern for others, an ability to foresee the consequences and effects that one’s actions will have on other people, and an understanding and concern for the consequences of one’s actions (Crick 1998). Unfortunately, such themes are barely present in the textbooks we examined.

Similarly, we were surprised at the somewhat cursory attention paid to the reflective and critical skills to which theoretical ideals attach so much importance (Duerr et al. 2000, Hicks 2001, Marco Stiefel 2002). Should we ask whether, by paying too much attention to the acquisition of habits and the importance of obeying rules, we are not contributing to the construction of an image of an essentially obedient and passive citizen. We believe this is
the case, unless a concern for rule-following is accompanied by themes which focus positively on conflict resolution and active participation.

Contents relating to active participation appear during the first years of primary education, and are then phased out almost totally during later years. It is evident that these themes can and should be dealt with in immediate contexts, and some of the series show great skill in presenting the school context, particularly the classroom. In this way, some textbooks present contents designed to encourage team-building, discussions of classroom rules, and the organization of events and activities. However, the participatory role of citizens cannot, and should not, end in the classroom. Particularly striking is the minimal attention paid to the participatory resources available in both the school and local institutions.

The political context, which is dealt with during the later years of primary education in all of the series, and is the focus of the texts to the exclusion of all else, is treated almost exclusively from an informative perspective. There is no opportunity offered for learning ‘through’ and ‘for’ participation. The texts rarely venture beyond a mere description of institutions, and make no attempt to present these institutions as a context for citizen participation. Similarly, social (non-political) participation, which appears gradually during the second and third cycles, is given marginal treatment. In fact, participation in non-political associations is mentioned only in Erein V, VI.

We believe that a responsible citizen, who complies with and respects rules and conventional social habits, will be unable to respond adequately to the challenges posed by modern democratic societies unless he or she is also willing to ‘participate’ actively. However, paradoxically, when democratic processes and principles are learned through personal experience (Kaplan 1997, Chilcoat and Ligon 1998, Potter 2002), many questions and doubts tend to surface. What type of citizen are schools creating when they provide students with theoretical knowledge about democratic institutions but rarely give them the opportunity of connecting this knowledge with their everyday lives? Can we really expect to prepare responsible, participatory citizens if we neglect analysis and discussion of the basics of democracy (only one text [Bruño V] addresses this)? In fact, only two series, which are also the only ones dealing with conflict resolution (Bruño II, III, Erein IV), focus on active participation and the direct involvement of students. However, in even these series, these themes are confined to the first years of primary school—which raises another question: Why are such questions put to one side at exactly the moment at which students become mature enough to appreciate them?

The textbooks also tend to avoid conflict, and few deal with issues of conflict resolution, even though such issues are an important element in citizenship education. Conflict resolution based on responsible analysis and reflection is only dealt with by two of the four series we analysed, and even then the coverage is very limited.

The concept of diversity, another of the key goals encompassed by citizenship education, is treated mainly from an informational perspective, with few opportunities being offered for critical reflection. Although diversity is dealt with in some of the texts from the perspective of personal and lifestyle
differences, e.g. diversity among people or diversity of gender, in general the theme is limited to a descriptive overview of different cultural customs that bear little or no relation to students’ own lives and experiences.

In this sense, we agree with the Council of Europe: In a multi-cultural Europe it is vital to ‘recognize diversity and the cultural and political rights of minorities’, and that there are ‘no rights without responsibilities but there are also no responsibilities without the right to enjoy conditions making it possible for each citizen to contribute [to] and participate in society’ (Belanger 1999: 17–18). In this sense, is it not essential for textbooks to go beyond merely providing an outline of these concepts to explore in a more open way the problems surrounding, e.g. ‘multiple identities’ or ‘the rights of minority groups’?

We were also surprised by the limited attention paid to the concept of human rights. This theme was addressed by only two of the series (Bruño V, VI, Santillana VI) during the last 2 years of primary school. ‘Human rights form the basis of the law in democratic societies’ and constitute the priority axis of citizenship education (Audigier et al. 1999). The cross-national nature of human rights should form the backbone not only of the European identity, but also of the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship (Wihtol de Wenden 1999, Borja et al. 2001). However, the series that deal with this concept opt in the main for a factual approach, accompanied by some activities that enable students to develop a critical knowledge of the theme. However, operational and functional knowledge about the defence of human rights is not dealt with, causing the curriculum to fall short of the ideal of active citizenship.

We do not believe it would be right to consider the type of citizen promoted by ‘textbooks’ in general; there are several clearly-differentiated trends. Nevertheless, it is clear that the series which give priority to instilling respect for established rules, and focus mainly on factual descriptions of political institutions and different cultures, do not offer the same possibilities as those which pay more attention to processes of conflict resolution and promote more direct student participation.

If preparation for co-existence is one of the objectives of the curriculum, then educators must strive to interrelate the themes around this concept to a much greater extent than we saw in the textbook series we explored. In this sense, we should be considering both the theoretical frameworks around citizenship education and the ideas that preceded the contemporary understanding. We should be looking again at the discussions of, for example, socio-personal education (Thacker et al. 1987, Ryder and Campbell 1988, Best et al. 1995, Lang et al. 1998), the participation- and responsibility-based approach (Educators for Social Responsibility 1984, 1987, Berman and La Farge 1993), and education of character (Lickona 1991).

Acknowledgements

This research project, a continuation of previous studies (López and De la Caba 2002a, b), forms part of a project subsidized by the University of the Basque Country–Spain (1/UPV 00024.354-H-13892/2001).
Notes

1. These publishing firms, which account for \( \sim 25\% \) of the total Spanish market, were chosen because they publish some of the most commonly used textbooks in the Basque Autonomous Region (Isasi and Erriondo 1996). Elkar and Erein are two of the Basque firms with the greatest influence in schools in this region, while Buño and Santillana are among the five largest firms in Spain (Gimeno Sacristán 1995), and their books also have an important impact within the Basque educational environment. Buño, Elkar, Erein, and Santillana together control 75\% of the market share in Basque primary schools (Isasi and Erriondo 1996).

2. A Roman numeral following a publisher’s name indicates a volume in the listings in the Appendix (each numeral corresponds to a different level of primary school).

3. A school council, a representative committee in which decisions are taken by majority, consists of one city councillor, the headmaster, one office worker, the school secretary, one-third of the teachers, and (comprising 50\% of the total) parents and students.

4. In Spain, primary school textbooks are developed by a publisher, rather than an ‘author’.

References


Chilcoat, G. W. and Ligon, J. A. (1998) ‘We talk here. This is a school for talking’: participatory democracy from the classroom out into the community: how discussion was used in the Mississippi Freedom Schools. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 28(2), 165–183.


**Appendix: List of textbooks analysed in the study**

All the textbooks analysed in this study are published in Basque and Spanish, the official languages in the Basque Autonomous Region. Each textbook on environment knowledge has contents related to three subject areas: social sciences, natural sciences, and technology.


