

CIVIC EDUCATION: A CONCEPT ANALYSIS

Educación cívica: análisis del concepto

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ABSTRACT

The concept of civic education is the focus of numerous contemporary studies. As a socio-political issue, its importance is debated as one of the fundamental processes in the socialization of individuals. As an educational issue, it is the subject of numerous discussions regarding its curricular organization and goals. What is common to all the studies and debates is a certain indeterminacy regarding its conceptualization, as it is referred to in multiple ways, giving rise to various conceptual extensions. The objective of this present study was to carry out a concept analysis of civic education based on knowledge from political, social and education theory. Thus, by using the method of concept analysis, the objective was to try to understand it from the perspective of formal, informal, and non-formal educational processes that develop certain citizenship competences (knowledge, attitudes, and skills). Subsequently, the contexts in which civic education takes place (formal, informal, and non-formal) are

theoretically delimited, distinguishing them from other contexts of socialization where civic learning occurs. Finally, the dimensions, domains, and subdomains of citizenship competence, currently considered the expected outcome of civic education, are theoretically outlined and discussed. Nonetheless, we must emphasize that we are dealing with an essentially controversial concept, and that the concept analysis will need to be interpreted according to different target audiences and considering the reality of each historical moment.

Keywords: citizenship education; civic education; political education; citizenship; interpersonal skills, concept analysis.

RESUMEN

El concepto de educación cívica está en el centro de numerosas investigaciones en la actualidad. En tanto que cuestión sociopolítica, se debate su importancia como uno de los procesos fundamentales en la socialización de los individuos. En tanto que cuestión educativa, es objeto de numerosas discusiones a propósito de su organización curricular y sobre los fines a los que habría de aspirar una educación de este tipo. Lo común a todos los estudios y debates es una cierta indeterminación en cuanto al objeto de esta, pues en todas esas investigaciones es denominada de múltiples maneras dando lugar a extensiones conceptuales de todo tipo. El objetivo del presente trabajo ha sido el de llevar a cabo un análisis teórico del concepto de educación cívica a partir del conocimiento disponible desde la teoría política, social y educativa. Así pues, tomando como referencia el método del análisis conceptual, se propone entender la misma como aquellos procesos educativos formales, informales y no formales que desarrollan determinadas competencias ciudadanas (conocimientos, actitudes y destrezas). Seguidamente, se delimitan teóricamente los ámbitos en que tiene lugar la educación cívica (formal, informal y no formal), distinguiéndolos de otros espacios de socialización donde se producen aprendizajes cívicos. Y, por último, se establecen y discuten teóricamente las dimensiones, dominios y subdominios de la competencia ciudadana, erigida en la actualidad como el resultado esperable de la educación cívica. Con todo, se destaca que estamos frente a un concepto esencialmente controvertido, y que los análisis conceptuales sobre el mismo habrán de actualizarse de acuerdo con el público objeto de estudio y en atención a la realidad de cada tiempo histórico.

Palabras clave: educación ciudadana; educación cívica; formación política; ciudadanía; competencias sociales; análisis conceptual.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial and recurring problems in the majority of modern democratic countries is the configuration of an education model aimed at promoting citizenship that responds to the challenges of the historical period. Each generation has to face the task of discerning what scope it grants to politics in the education

of citizens. Accordingly, it must weigh the effects or consequences of the education of citizens in the context of the political community. In this regard, it is worth remembering that education is a politically conditioning act and, at the same time, it is politically conditioned (Bárcena, 1998).

Concerning the first aspect, a monograph has recently been published in this journal that explores the relationships between the theory of education and politics and we referred to this with a view to considering this issue in a contemporary light. That said, it seems prudent to start from the assumption that a human being is someone built within the framework of a culture or tradition, and tied to a way of seeing the world and relating to others, so that any educational process must necessarily be linked to the concept of a human being as a historical and relational being, who interacts with others based on the exercise of his or her freedom and responsibility. Without being exhaustive, it is enough to keep in mind that his or her convictions and decisions may undoubtedly have an impact on common life, which is why education presents undeniable challenges, with inevitable consequences for politics.

Concerning the second aforementioned aspect, theoretical research on what civic education is continues to be involved in endless theoretical and political debates of all kinds (Rodríguez et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is easy to see that the concept itself has incorporated new ideas as a result of the vicissitudes of the systems of thought and political action over the last few decades, whether due to the influence of political and institutional decisions, or to the occurrence of, for example, terrorist attacks or other events of collective violence, which are often followed by political responses in terms of civic education policy (Kells, 2022). It is noted, therefore, that the very notion of civic education is an issue as current as it is controversial and subject to constant political, educational and academic discussion (Jónsson & Garces Rodríguez, 2021; Naval et al., 2022; Anderson, 2023). Hence the importance of continuing to investigate the theoretical delimitation of the concept —as this present study aims to do— for which it is opportune to consider, from the outset, its most recent theoretical construction.

While it is true that the idea of civic education, as well as its conceptual development over time, has its roots in classical, modern and contemporary debates on the social function of education and the meaning of citizenship in each historical period (López-Meseguer, 2022), it is from the nineties onwards that what we could call a shift in competence in the educational systems of the most developed countries took place, together with the emergence of a renewed interest in civic education, in both the institutional field (Keating et al., 2009) and the academic field (García Guitián, 2008).

In Europe, this renewed interest, at the institutional level, materialized, for example, in the decision of community institutions to jointly promote social and civic competence in educational systems as one of the key competences of lifelong learning (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, 2006,

p.7). The acquisition of such competences, understood as a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes, was considered to enable individuals to “to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation” (ibid.). Civic competence therefore became the expected outcome of civic education, and one of the most relevant demands of the European Union, as already proposed in the North American context some years earlier (Center for Civic Education, 1994).

Since then, civic competence has become an obligatory reference in the identity of the European Community, acquiring greater recognition and political notoriety in both official documents and the guidelines of its Member States’ educational systems. However, recently, new nuances have been incorporated into its conceptualization, moving from the recognized concept of civic competence to a broader and more updated concept of citizenship competence, denoted as “the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability” (Council Recommendation, 2018, p.10).

These matters, apparently nominal in nature, have been translated to the field of international politics, with numerous attempts made to promote what would be different formulations of civic education, more in line with collective sensitivity and the socio-political issues of the moment. Therefore, it has naturally followed that, over recent years, various pronouncements have been made on certain civic teaching-learning processes, such as regarding the notion and importance of education for democratic citizenship and human rights (Council of Europe, 2017), peace education, intercultural education, global or world citizenship education (UNESCO, 2015), and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2019). Such statements, among others, appear to be little more than variations on the same theme, that is, the preparation of citizens for today’s circumstances, introducing different nuances in what civic education refers to, but without substantively changing the interest of educational systems being actively committed to the task of educating for citizenship.

In the field of academic research, since the emergence and progressive popularization of the concept of civic competence as an outcome of civic education, there have been numerous attempts to operationalize the concept, with the proposal of Hoskins et al. (2012) being the one that has had the greatest scope and reach. These authors see civic competence as the set of “knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to be an active citizen” (p. 13). To operationalize the concept, they established four dimensions of civic competence: civic values; social justice; participatory skills; and democratic knowledge and skills. In turn, they considered two domains of civic competence (cognitive, and affective-attitudinal), divided into several subdomains (knowledge and judgment, for the cognitive domain; values, attitudes, intentions and actions, for the affective-attitudinal domain). Each of the dimensions considered were given a series of indicators, referring to one or more

domains. Since then, the different ways of operationalizing the concept within the framework of international measurements have followed similar guidelines (Schulz et al., 2019), although it should be noted that the latest edition of the most relevant international report on civic education (ICSS) applies a greater differentiation between the domains, and confers greater independence to the affective-attitudinal domain (Schulz et al., 2023). Furthermore, these operationalizations have been progressively enriched with new indicators, based on new political and social sensitivities, such as digital participation, feminism, environmentalism, etc.

Although it is true that these proposals have contributed to establishing comparative indicators for analyzing degrees of civic or citizen competence in relation to the abovementioned dimensions, the delimitation of the concept of what civic education is—or is not—continues to be the subject of inevitable controversies. Some authors, for example, directly question the way in which the indicators have been constructed (Lupia, 2016). Others draw attention to the fact that the conceptualizations, and their corresponding operationalizations, do not base themselves on models of civic education in which authentic citizen subjectivation is promoted, and therefore restrict their value to determining a degree of socialization, and not education, of individuals (Biesta, 2016). Yet others have noted that the constructs pay little attention to the normative issues and political controversies inherent to the notion of citizenship and citizenship education (López-Meseguer, 2021; Malak-Minkiewicz & Torney-Purta, 2021). In all this, what feeds the continued controversy is the classic debate on the construction of the knowledge of education (Touriñán, 2009, 2017), with two epistemological traditions persisting that reflect broad discussions on the problem of the relationship, contraposition or balance between educational theory and practice.

Taking into account the above-noted criticisms, the present work is based on the premise that the attempts referred to so far at definition and operationalization partially reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of the concept, giving rise to numerous conceptual extensions (Sartori, 1970). This is why the present study aims to delimit and clarify the concept of civic education for its use in the social discipline.

It is clear from the above considerations that there is an often little attended to need for the concepts used by social researchers to aspire to the maximum possible clarity and precision, so that empirical investigations can achieve the highest degree of generality and verisimilitude (Weber, 2014). Thus, the present research is circumscribed to the tradition of concept analysis in the social sciences (Collier & Gering, 2009; Goertz, 2020). In particular, the concept analysis of civic education is carried out by virtue of: i) its controversial and normative nature (Gallie, 1956); ii) the risks of its conceptual extension (Sartori, 1970); iii) its possibilities for political translation (Sartori, 1984); iv) the determination of its constitutive ontological dimensions (Nussbaum, 1992); v) and attention to the multidimensional character of the concept. These elements, according to Goertz (2020), are limited to the first and second level of concept analysis, that is, to the determination of the constitutive

elements of the concept and their use in propositions of a scientific nature, therefore leaving out operationalization, which would correspond to the third level.

Consequently, in a tentative manner, it is proposed to understand civic education as those formal, informal and non-formal educational processes that are aimed at developing knowledge, attitudes and skills related to citizenship, that is, citizenship competences. Taking this definition as a reference, it follows that civic education incorporates: a first level, or contextual scope, alluding to the context in which civic education occurs (formal, informal, or non-formal); a second descriptive level, contemplating the domains and dimensions of citizen competence that such education would seek to develop; and a third sociological level, limiting the scope of civic education to an empirically observable social fact. It is precisely these different levels that have led to the characterization of civic education as a type of polymorphic, polysemic and polytechnic social relationship (López-Meseguer, 2021). Below, we will proceed with an analysis of the contextual and descriptive scopes of the concept, having addressed the sociological scope elsewhere (López-Meseguer, 2021).

2. CONTEXTS IN WHICH CIVIC EDUCATION OCCURS

In reference to the contextual scope, the presented definition allows us to differentiate between formal, informal and non-formal civic education, given that this type of education is often developed more outside than inside the contexts of school and university (Brander et al., 2020). In order to avoid possible confusion, it is opportune to clarify that the reference to school institutions refers only to one of the forms that education has adopted in societies, though never exclusively. It is worth insisting that the generic term “school” refers to a formal stage of the educational process of people, which is why we do not identify education merely with the school system, this being an institutional framework that may not always be the most suitable for civic education, because the education of future citizen occurs both in that framework and in other social frameworks too. Therefore, different types of activities may exist that can be included in the contextual contexts of civic education, as reflected in the following classificatory summary (Table 1).

According to the Council of Europe common framework:

‘Formal education’ means the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to university. It takes place, as a rule, at general or vocational educational institutions and leads to certification (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 6).

Such contextual delimitation contemplates the possibility —and this is what occurs in practice— that, in some countries, there are specific subjects related to issues of citizenship, while, in others, this subject of citizenship is conceived in a transversal manner (Arbués et al., 2012; European Commission-EACEA-Eurydice,

TABLE 1
 CONTEXTUAL DELIMITATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Context	Activity	Definition
<i>Formal civic education</i> (school, university)	Specific subjects	Teaching-learning processes carried out in specific subjects concerning citizenship.
	Transversal programs	Transversal teaching-learning programs (regulated) that result in the development of citizenship competences.
<i>Informal civic education</i> (school, university)	Informal civic learning	Socialization processes that are limited to school or university institutions.
	Conventional and unconventional participation	Participation processes (conventional and unconventional) that result in civic learning.
<i>Non-formal civic education</i> (non-regulated educational institutions)	Civic activities and programs	Activities and programs organized by non-regulated educational institutions that, in addressing any audience and having a systematic structure, favor the strengthening of citizen competences.

Source: own elaboration.

2017). Formal civic education would therefore include some form of curricular articulation of the subject, either through the direct introduction of specific subjects, or via a transversal route. Furthermore, many countries introduce different pedagogical guidelines to regulate the teaching of the subject, as illustrated by analyses carried out in Spain (Capilla, 2023), France (Bozec, 2023), the United Kingdom (Mycok, 2023), and Sweden (Sandahl, 2023), and more generally across a broad representation of European countries (Slavkova and Kurilić, 2023).

For its part, according to Council of Europe framework:

‘Informal education’ means the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, peer group, neighbours, encounters, library, mass media, work, play, etc) (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 7).

This contextual delimitation is what, in our opinion, presents the greatest problems on a sociological level. We understand that this conceptual delimitation wholly overlaps with what is usually known as political socialization (Wasburn & Covert, 2017). Political socialization, according to Hyman’s classic definition, is understood as the “learning of social patterns corresponding to [an individual’s] societal position as mediated through various agencies of society” (1959, p.25). Such an overlap would not allow us to characterize the variety of functions of regulation, financing or other activities through which educational institutions, such as schools and

universities, promote the development of citizen competencies. Thus, alternatively, it would be more accurate to apply the denomination of informal civic education to those less institutionalized learning processes that, linked to regulated educational institutions, promote the development of civic or citizen competences. Under this definition, tangible experiences of informal civic education might include institution or university citizenship projects (aiming to promote one aspect or another of civic culture), civic projects carried out in said institutions (which may be of very diverse types, and produce diverse effects), or the policies to promote the social harmony of the institution (López-Meseguer, 2021; Naval et al., 2022). In short, this includes everything that specialist literature quite imprecisely calls the school or university ethos and that has been shown to have an important effect on the development of citizenship skills (Campbell, 2019).

The differentiating element with respect to political socialization would be that this takes place in an institutionalized educational context, while the other takes place in other contexts, such as those described in the definition itself, i.e., the family, peer groups, neighbors, encounters, libraries, mass media, work and play, as well as, for example, religious groups. That is to say, these agents or agencies of social transmission do not share with regulated educational institutions ways of organizing and systematizing certain educational processes (Trilla, 2010), due to the fact that the latter are strictly school, university or institutional environments where practices are subject to certain state controls. The reason we make this distinction—in addition to the possibility of distinguishing both levels, and making more precise scientific inquiries—is that school and university institutions can in fact exert some influence on informal civic education. Such a conceptual distinction allows us to contemplate this type of education developing concrete actions, directed by the political sphere and the action of educators, while political socialization depends more on the will or discretion of the agents and agencies of social transmission exercised over certain educational contents of citizenship.

Another aspect concerning informal civic education, as we have conceptualized it, would refer to everything that has to do with participation in regulated educational contexts. Reasons that allow student participation to be classified as informal civic education have been the subject of certain critical reflections (López-Meseguer, 2021), divided fundamentally into three main considerations.

First, to speak of political participation as such in students who have not reached the minimum legal age is to contradict the assumption of participation rights that the coming of age entails. In this sense, student participation would rather be a learning of the skills or competences required for adult political participation. This does not mean that students cannot or do not have the right to participate, but rather that the purpose of participation in the school environment is to learn to participate, and therefore participating would not be an end in itself, but a means to a further end. Second, student participation is consistent with both applicable legislation and educational reality (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). Though the

legislation of European Member State countries grants students a series of participation rights, these are always limited by their status as minors. The previous reasons are naturally not applicable to a university or adult audience, but the third consideration is that, since the participation takes place in regulated educational contexts, it does not fit well with the definition of non-formal civic education. That is why, although participatory processes in educational institutions may have a participatory purpose, many of them incorporate at the same time —some of them almost exclusively— a specifically educational purpose: that of acquiring participatory skills. In any case, it must be taken into account that the concept of student participation is also the subject of controversy and academic debate (Granizo et al., 2019).

Finally, it should be noted that, when the term civic education is used, a regulated educational context is usually evoked, normally school. However, civic education is presented to us as a polymorphic reality that integrates three educational modalities, formal, informal and non-formal. Once more, according to Council of Europe framework, non-formal education refers to “any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting” (Council of Europe, 2017, p.7). What emerges from this definition is that there can be a myriad of programs or activities that fall within this scope, including, for example, those organized by both governmental and non-governmental institutions. Therefore, in order to establish a contextual delimitation that allows analyses to be operationalized, we can contemplate non-formal civic education as activities and programs organized by non-regulated educational institutions that, in addressing any audience and having a systematic structure, favor the strengthening of citizen competences.

Again, this definition demands a series of qualifications, that we can divide into three main requirements (López-Meseguer et al, 2023). First, it is considered a non-formal civic education activity or program when it is carried out for the most part by non-regulated educational institutions (school, university). Nonetheless, it may be the case that such activities are developed within educational institutions, but the organization of which depends on social institutions. If it were a program designed and implemented by an educational institution, then we would be dealing with the formal or informal civic education modalities, depending on the case¹. The

¹ The distinctive element is what the organization of the activity or program depends on: if it depends on an organization external to the school or university, but carries out activities within one or various schools or universities (or with school or university audiences outside of it), we should consider it non-formal civic education. An example is an intervention designed by a public body, non-governmental organization, foundation or association that trains teachers to organize moral debates on controversial issues in their classes in a structured way. On the other hand, if it is an activity organized by the school or university, but it takes place outside the school or university without being part of an external program, and is carried out by a teacher from that school or university, we should consider it informal education. An example is a visit organized by a teacher to a museum exhibition in which issues regarding citizenship are discussed.

second requirement is that the educational design of that which will be carried out must have a pedagogically structured character. It is worth remembering that any educational design not only involves:

knowledge of the cognitive structure of the learning subject and the sociocultural space in which it is learned [...] but also [...] the formulation of norms and rules of pedagogical intervention in concepts with intrinsic significance to the field of education (Tourrián, 2017, p. 367).

This will allow us to distinguish non-formal civic education, again, from political socialization (e.g., civic learning derived from family or work interactions). Finally, it must have an educational purpose and, specifically, an educational purpose referring to matters concerning citizenship. This requirement is shared with the formal and informal contexts, and we will deal further with it later.

We can see, therefore, that the emphasis must be placed on both educational design and the context in which the educational activities or programs are developed. This allows for the fact that not all organizations necessarily develop their activities in the field of citizenship, but it is likely that they do develop one or more civic activities. This mere practice would imply being able to consider such organizations as “civic associations” (Warren, 2001). On the contrary, those organizations that only declare themselves to have civic purposes, without translating them into specific educational activities, should not be considered under the same category. Without undermining the importance of ideas in the field of civic education —an issue that we will also examine— this distinction would fundamentally respond to a principle of methodological clarity: carrying out identification tasks in accordance with specific educational actions.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that, although this form of civic education has traditionally received less attention, in recent years, its importance at a social level has grown, as reflected in two recent reports on the subject, one at the European level (Slavkova & Kurilić, 2023) and another dedicated to analyzing the situation in Spain (López-Meseguer et al, 2023).

3. CIVIC EDUCATION DIMENSIONS, DOMAINS & SUB-DOMAINS

Consistently with the definition of civic education, civic competence is given to refer to a level achieved or desired of knowledge, attitudes and skills related to the exercise of citizenship by an individual in society through one or more processes of formal, informal or non-formal education. As a level achieved, it designates —on a descriptive level— a “degree of civic education” in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills related to the exercise of citizenship. As a desired level, it calls for a normative debate on those virtues that are necessary for good citizenship in society.

Therefore, citizen competence should allow us to identify a series of domains and subdomains that would be typical of citizenship, and a series of dimensions that structurally compose that competence, i.e., knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Schulz et al., 2019). The way of configuring the dimensions has varied to great extent in successive attempts to operationalize the concept (Schulz et al., 2023). The domains, for their part, have seen greater coherence since the first international measurements were developed on the subject. Table 2 presents a first theoretical-conceptual approach to the main domains and subdomains of the concept of citizen competence, including some elements proposed by previous literature, identified at the beginning of this study, and some new ones, resulting from the conceptual analysis carried out in this study. The contents of the table are expanded on below.

Following on from the proposed operational definition, it is necessary to make a series of points. First is that citizen competence incorporates numerous “reference objects” (domains) to which individuals orient themselves, with the determination of such objects being a matter that is the product of academic consensus and the tradition of operationalization of such concepts, as noted in the introduction of the present work.

Second, it is more appropriate to advocate for a broad definition and operationalization of the concept, as opposed to a narrow delimitation of it. The inclusions and exclusions of the referenced domains should generally respond to ideological criteria, being able to determine what constitutes a “good citizen”, and, by extension, what are and are not the “opportune practices” of civic education, as we will explore later. In this sense, the domains and dimensions presented constitute a common framework for carrying out applied research on civic education, since, in our opinion, it is broad enough to cover new conceptual profiles and update others (human rights education, global citizenship, etc.). On the other hand, it is restricted enough to separate itself from other concepts that would not necessarily constitute civic learning, as may be the case of social competence. In this regard, we share the distinction that has been made between social capital and civic culture, picking only those aspects of social capital that have a civic character (Pérez-Díaz & Rodríguez, 2011). Consequently, only those aspects of social competence that really involve true civic learning must be included (Puig & Morales, 2015).

Third, the concept of citizenship competence will need to be extended depending on the established domains and audience, and the specific indicators and items may have greater or lesser complexity, again, depending on the reference audience. In short, we consider citizen competence as a concept that can be modulated in terms of its domains and dimensions, and adjusted depending on the context (formal, informal, or non-formal) and the reference audience (schoolchildren, young people, or adults). This is without prejudice to appreciating the usefulness that composite

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE DELIMITATION OF CITIZEN COMPETENCE

Domain	Subdomain
<i>Society and political systems</i>	(i) <i>Legal citizenship</i> (the roles, rights and responsibilities of citizens at national and international levels, including human rights)
	(ii) <i>Political citizenship</i> (government, legislative and judiciary institutions of democracies, at national and international levels)
	(iii) <i>Economic and social citizenship</i> (the role of markets and intermediary third-sector organizations, as well as of citizens as economic agents)
<i>Civic values</i>	(i) <i>Freedom</i> (the freedom of the citizen or protection from the powers of the state, including freedom of conscience, expression, political thought, religious belief, property ownership, residence, and movement)
	(ii) <i>Equality</i> (the obligation of the state to provide the necessary resources to satisfy individual needs through public services, including the right to health care and social services that allow equal access to adequate health conditions and quality of life)
	(iii) <i>Solidarity</i> (the culture of collaboration, gratuitousness and altruistic humanity that encourages people or institutions to make selfless commitments in favor of others, manifested, for example, in care given especially to excluded and marginalized individuals or groups, and in the sharing of interests, needs, pain and suffering)
<i>Civic participation</i>	(i) <i>Conventional participation</i> (participation in the electoral system, and contact with political representatives)
	(ii) <i>Unconventional participation</i> (debates, demonstrations and peaceful protests, and the development of civic proposals, change projects, digital participation and ethical consumption)
	(iii) <i>Association</i> (voluntary participation in NGOs and cultural or religious associations)
<i>Civic identity</i>	(i) <i>Regional identity</i> (traits of belonging to a local community, with a shared memory, culture and traditions)
	(ii) <i>National identity</i> (traits of belonging to national community, with a shared memory, culture and traditions)
	(iii) <i>European identity</i> (traits of belonging to the European community, with a shared memory, culture and traditions)
	(iv) <i>Global citizenship</i> (multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, interreligiousness, education for world peace)
	(v) <i>Gender equality and identity</i> (equal rights for women and the LGBTBI+ community)
	(vi) <i>Political identity</i> (political ideologies and political parties)
	(vii) <i>Sustainability</i> (environmental protection, sustainable development)

Source: own elaboration based on the work of Schulz et al. (2019, p.11)

indicators have when carrying out international comparisons (with all the limitations they have when measuring concepts of this nature).

Finally, we cannot ignore that citizenship competence is a particularly controversial concept, since in its very definition it incorporates normative elements, that is, value judgments about what is desirable in terms of identity and civic values. Therefore, the most complex task in the attempt to operationalize a concept of this type involves the establishment of indicators that allow value judgments to be measured. In this regard, a series of considerations are worth making. First, such measurement attempts will always be limited and incapable of capturing the full complexity involved in making value judgments in matters concerning citizenship. Second, the attempt to operationalize concepts such as civic education or citizenship competence will always intersect with the different ideals of citizenship that one may aim to promote educationally (Westheimer & Khane, 2004). Put another way, we must recognize that every conception of civic education is ideological, and therefore incorporates various ideals about what constitutes a good citizen (López-Meseguer & Martínez Rivas, 2023). All in all, though there are distinct theories regarding the normatively differentiated ideals of citizenship that would form the basis of each civic education program (Kerr, 2002; Westheimer & Khane, 2004; Leenders & Veugelers, 2006; Coleman & Blumler, 2009; López-Meseguer & Martínez Rivas, 2023), we include as civic values those that are accepted in our European framework and that derive directly from human rights. Despite this theoretical-analytical framework incorporating a lower degree of precision in the analysis of value judgments referring to civic education, it constitutes a consensual and commonly recognized framework from which a set of values can be derived that can be subjected to measurement. Furthermore, the aforementioned theoretical models, in one way or another, have a place in this framework, with the adaptations and subtleties that are necessary in each case. Furthermore, for greater precision, one can always make specific reference to said theoretical models.

The previous considerations explain the importance of demanding greater attention to concepts and their normative aspects, especially when quantitative analyzes that incorporate value judgments are carried out. As Goertz eloquently expressed, “The amount of attention devoted to a concept is inversely related to the attention devoted to the quantitative measure” (2006, p.2), and this greatly impoverishes any object of research in social sciences.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, we could say that civic education refers, in general, to any way of intentionally teaching the importance of “the civic-political”. It is not difficult to realize that civic or citizen education has become one of the key elements of

current education (Mínguez Vallejos & Romero Sánchez, 2018), and, at the same time, an urgent task in the face of a growing socio-political disaffection across broad sectors of society (Megías & Moreno, 2022). It remains to be seen if, in fact, the intention to educate in civic matters will contribute to developing an inclusive concept of citizenship that is respectful of socio-political identities and of what constitutes the common substrate of democratic citizenship. Therefore, it is still desirable to envisage what type of competence is effective in developing a cohesive and yet plural model of citizenship. The effort made here to provide a theoretical analysis of the concept of civic education responds, tentatively, to that desire.

At this point, it is worth asking: what does the concept of civic education proposed here contribute to? In one regard, the conceptualization developed here, though it does not expressly reflect it, allows for the free conjugation of ways of academically configuring the subject, whether as a specific subject, transversally, or as the civic culture of a community. This admits different pedagogical formulations in the way of designing civic education. Whether formal, informal, or non-formal, what stands out from the three-way formulation is the need to overcome civic education being limited to what is merely instructive or discursive, in order to include social and political contexts that, in addition to the school context, allow the learning of civics. Along with this desirable characteristic, other no less important characteristics arise from civic education, if the aim is to train active citizens. Among them is the necessary collective commitment of society, and not only of schools, to ensure that civic education acquires the recognition it needs, even more so as a preventive measure in the face of the turbulent social events that are occurring around us.

Overall, the concept outlined here needs successive operational concretions, that is, the determination of those indicators and items regarding how one learns to be a citizen and the results achieved in terms of citizen competence. This will force us to reinterpret the dimensions and domains reported here, inviting us to place values, identity and civic participation as focal points of educational priority. Consequently, it is desirable to continue to investigate specific measures that can contribute to the practice and evaluation of civic education, both in the three delimited contexts outlined here, and in the activities that could be derived in these contexts.

Up to this point, we have tried to establish conceptual distinctions between the usual ways of naming the different contexts of civic education. Although we have articulated the three types of educational realities (formal, non-formal, and informal) as if they were three logically different categories, they, in fact, make up two elements of the same reference universe. On the one hand, while formal and non-formal “have in common the attribute of organized and systematized activity, which is, at the same time, the attribute that, supposedly, does not exist in informal

education processes” (Tourrián, 2016, p.538), it is necessary to insist that the specific difference between the formal and non-formal in the processes of civic education lies in the fact that educational activities are “shaped or not by the school system” (Tourrián, 2016, p.546).

On the other hand, perhaps one of the most revealing contributions of the conceptual analysis of civic education reflected here is the distinction made between informal civic education and political socialization. Thus, we distinguish between an informal context attributable to regulated institutions within the school system (schools, universities) and other contexts of socialization (family, work environments, peer groups, etc.). Civic learning takes place in both contexts, and the difference lies, therefore, in that the former are subject to certain state control (educational or university regulations) and educational agents trained for this purpose, and the latter are where said learning occurs in a more spontaneous way. One might say, for greater clarity, that informal civic education is a qualified subtype of political socialization, which is something much broader. Despite its apparent distance from educational discourse, it is thus understood that political socialization represents an important contribution of political science that is capable of integrating and giving meaning to what really constitutes civic education, not only in what is learned as civic contents, but also through what processes the meaning of being citizens is achieved. This is an indicator that it is necessary to continue researching, both theoretically and empirically, the relationship between citizenship, socialization and education. It is therefore necessary to continue identifying issues that allow us to gain more accurate knowledge of how social and educational institutions teach civic values and educate for citizenship (Veugelers, 2023), and to develop reliable indicators that allow us to measure how people learn to be citizens and with what results in different contexts (Campbell, 2019).

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