

Citizenship Education – Guidelines

The practice of citizenship is a participatory process, both individual and collective, that calls for reflection and action on the problems experienced by each person and by society. The exercise of citizenship implies, on the part of each individual and of those with whom they interact, an awareness whose evolution accompanies the dynamics of intervention and social transformation. Citizenship translates into attitude and behaviour, a way of being in society that has the human rights as a reference, notably the values of equality, democracy and social justice.

As an educational process, Citizenship Education vows to contribute to the development of responsible, autonomous and solidary people that know and exercise their rights and duties through dialogue and respect for others, with a democratic, pluralist, critical thinking and creative spirit.

School provides an important context for the learning and exercise of citizenship and it reflects concerns that also matter to society and that involve different dimensions of Citizenship Education, for example: human rights education; environmental education/sustainable development; road safety education; financial education; consumer education; entrepreneurship education; education for gender equality; intercultural education; education for development; education for defence and security/peace education; volunteering; media literacy; European dimension of education; health and sex education.

Since these subjects are transversal to society, their insertion in the curriculum requires a transversal approach, both in subject areas and subjects and in activities and projects, from preschool to upper secondary education, according to the principles defined by the Decree-Law no. 139/2012, July 5th, with the changes introduced by the Decree-Law no. 91/2013, July 10th. Underlying this educational concept, there is an integrating vision of the different knowledge areas that matter to the educational practice which assumes that, besides the curricular dynamic, there is an experience of school, consistent and systematic, extended to the context where it applies.

The curriculum approach of Citizenship Education can take on different shapes, depending on the dynamics adopted by schools in the context of their autonomy, notably through the development of projects and activities of their initiative, working together with families and entities that intervene in this context, under the framework for the relationship between school and community. Citizenship Education is not a mandatory subject; therefore schools can decide whether to provide it as an independent subject or not, in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education (which corresponds to ISCED 1 and 2). It can be developed according to the specific needs and problems of the educational community, alongside and in response to the objectives defined by each school cluster or independent school within their educational projects.

Considering that the Ministry of Education and Science finds this curriculum area very important, some documents have been produced, in cooperation with other public sector bodies and institutions and with several civil society partners, which can be used as systems of reference in the approach of the different dimensions of citizenship. The systems of reference and other guiding documents are not prescriptive guidelines or programmes, they are supporting instruments which, under the autonomy of each educational establishment, can be used and adapted according to the defined options in each context, and help frame the to be developed practice.

The different dimensions of Citizenship Education are already approached in many schools, both transversely and through specific curriculum offers and projects. The dimensions for which guiding documents have been created or are being created are:

- **Road Safety Education**, assumed as a lifelong learning process involving all society with the aim of promoting civic behaviours and change social habits, so as to reduce road accidents and therefore contribute to the improvement of the population's quality of life.

- **Education for Development**, which aims to raise awareness and understanding of the causes of development problems and of inequalities, locally and globally, in a context of interdependence and globalisation, so as to promote the right and duty of every person to participate in and contribute to an integral and sustainable development.
- **Education for Gender Equality**, which promotes the equal rights and duties of female and male students, through an education free of prejudice and gender stereotypes, so as to ensure the same educational opportunities and social and professional options. This process is shaped from a growing awareness of the living experiences of female and male students, taking into account their historical growth, with the prospect of changing attitudes and behaviours.
- **Human Rights Education**, which is intimately connected to Democratic Citizenship Education, focuses in the wide spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in all aspects of people's lives, while Democratic Citizenship Education focuses, essentially, in democratic rights and responsibilities and in the active participation in the civic, political, social, economical, legal and cultural spheres of society.
- **Financial Education**, which allows young people to acquire and develop essential knowledge and skills so as to prepare them to make future decisions about their personal finances; make them better consumers in general and better consumers of financial services and products in particular; make them deal with the growing complexity of financial contexts and instruments; and generate a multiplier effect of information and education within families.
- **Education for Security and National Defence**, which aims to highlight the specific contribution of the defence bodies and structures to the affirmation and preservation of civil rights and freedoms, as well as the nature and objectives of their activities in times of peace. It also aims to contribute to the defence of the national identity and to the reinforcement of the Portuguese historical matrix, notably as a means to raise awareness about the importance of the cultural heritage in the context of the universal tradition of interdependency and solidarity among the peoples in the world.

- Promoting **Volunteering** as a means to engage children and young people in this sort of activities, so as to promote, as soon and as actively as possible, the understanding that defending core values such as solidarity, mutual help and hard-work contributes to enhance the quality of life and propels the well-balanced development of society. The creation of an educational culture based on these values reinforces the importance of volunteering as a means to promote social cohesion.
- **Environmental Education/Sustainable Development**, which aims to support the process of environmental awareness, of the promotion of ethical values', of changing attitudes and behaviours towards the environment, in order to prepare students for a conscious, proactive and fully informed exercise of citizenship, well acquainted with the current environmental issues. Thus, it is important that students learn to use knowledge so as to interpret and evaluate their surrounding reality, to conceptualise and debate arguments, to sustain points of view and choices, which are crucial skills required to actively participate in the modern day processes of decision-making.
- **European Dimension of Education**, which contributes to the students' training and partaking in the European project, enhancing their engagement, protecting their rights and duties, and thus strengthening the European identity and values. The aim is to promote a greater knowledge of Europe and its institutions, notably the European Union and the Council of Europe, the European natural and cultural heritage, and the problems that Europe faces nowadays.
- **Media Literacy**, which encourages students to use and decipher the media, notably the access and use of information and communication technologies, aiming to the adoption of appropriate behaviours and attitudes so as to safely and critically navigate the Internet and use the social networks.
- **Health and Sex Education**, which aims to give children and young people the knowledge, attitudes and values that help them make choices and decisions that are appropriate to their health and physical, social and mental well-being. Schools should provide accurate information about health protection and risk management, notably in the area of sexuality, violence, eating behaviour, substance abuse, lack of physical activity and accidents at school and at home.

- **Entrepreneurship Education**, which aims to promote the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that encourage and ensure the development of ideas, initiatives and projects, in order to create, innovate or make changes in the sphere of action of the individual depending upon the challenges set by society.
- **Consumer Education**, which aims to provide information that supports more insightful individual choice options, contributing to more responsible behaviour and solidarity from the student as a consumer, in the context of the cultural and socio-economical system where they link their individual rights to their responsibilities to sustainable development and the common good.
- **Intercultural Education**, which promotes recognition and appreciation of diversity as an opportunity and source of learning for all, in respect for the multicultural nature of society today. The aim is to develop the ability to communicate and encourage social interaction, which creates identities and a sense of belonging to humankind.

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