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Teachers' Perspectives in Portugal and Recent Institutional Contributions on Citizenship Education

Abstract

This paper aims to focus the impact of policies on education for citizenship through two research projects pursued in the last ten years on teachers' perspectives on citizenship education and their relevance for schools and education at large. Moreover, this impact will also be seen through recent policies and state initiatives on citizenship education, as well as on higher education institutions and NGOs in their contribution to these initiatives. These analyses point to the need for a more systematic intervention in teachers' education on citizenship education and on schools initiatives in this area.

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Keywords

Citizenship, education for citizenship, teachers' perspectives, state policy, NGOs

Introduction

Citizenship education has recently received in Portugal more attention in political fora and institutions and could appear as an area with a larger emphasis in educational policies - at least, from the point of view of an observer who sees a small country struggling with an economic crisis and taking several initiatives on citizenship education. Are Portuguese policies and institutions "nowadays committed to fostering a democratic culture by actively promoting a basic democratic mentality and a critical historical consciousness (...) including an open, critical historical consciousness of the totalitarian past among its citizenry" (Hedtke, *et al.* 2007) Are these policies and orientations concerned with democratic rights such as the civil, the political, the social (Marshall 1950; Pateman 1992) and the cultural rights (Santos 1995; Stoer e Magalhães 2005; Magalhães e Stoer 2007) playing a central role?

These are central questions that some studies have confronted in different ways such as Stoer and Araújo (1992, 2000), Menezes (2003, 2005), Afonso (1999), making more visible that a debate runs through the Portuguese democracy for the last thirty years and the policies on education for citizenship have taken their place in this debate.

Some of the impact of these policies is discussed in this paper regarding teachers' perspectives. Moreover, this impact will also be seen through recent state initiatives. Hence, in the first place, the concerns for citizenship education will be clarified in some

of their theoretical framework. Secondly, teachers' perspectives on citizenship education (and civic education) and their relevance for schools and education at large are reviewed through the contribution of two studies pursued in the last ten years. These studies point to the need for a more systematic intervention in teachers' education on citizenship education and on schools initiatives in this area. Thirdly, I would focus recent policies and state initiatives on citizenship education, as well as on higher education institutions and NGOs in their contribution to these initiatives.

2. Citizenship Education in Schools as a Central Issue

Madeleine Arnot (2005) stresses that "citizenship education appears to have increased importance as a mechanism for sustaining nation-state identities as well as global economic development. Many nation-states are considering the role of education in the creation of citizens in the 21st century" (2005, 2).

As such, citizenship education can be connected with the rapid changes that contemporary societies are experiencing, at the economic as well political and social levels: globalization, growing migrant movements, asylum seekers, among other social processes. In this way, citizenship education may be perceived as an intervention by nation-states for achieving social cohesion.

However, the author also underlines that this intention for social cohesion confronts other process, quite contradictory: the sense of belonging in which national concepts of citizenship are based is itself exclusionary, since several social groups living within the nation-state are marginalized regarding their needs and their rights: "They do not have access to the rights of citizenship either formally because of their status as 'non-citizens' or because of their lack of economic, social and cultural resources which deny them opportunities to participate in formal political structures and state institutions" (idem). Arnot sees this exclusion as lived by groups of women, minority ethnic groups, asylum seekers, the disadvantaged and those with disabilities, a. These processes can be named as processes of marginalization, powerlessness, (Young 1990) and as processes that undermine democracy. Iris Young, in one of her latest books (Young 2000), underlines the need to find ways and processes to develop inclusion.

Several social groups experience forms of marginalization concerning policies and other social measures taken without considering their needs. Many are perceived as 'non citizens'; others do not find the economic, social and cultural conditions that enable them to participate in institutions that are centrally related to their lives. Therefore, states and governments need to be careful in their formulation of policies around citizenship education, as Arnot stresses: they need to be attentive regarding "the stratificational and destructive effects of performance and managerialist cultures in schools" that can mask "hierarchical values of society with notions of the 'common good'" (Arnot 2005, 2).

This emphasis of Madeleine Arnot is important when the concern is with rights, democracy, inclusion in the sense that the most underprivileged should have enlarged opportunities to better their lives. Therefore, citizenship education is in the middle of these pressures and expectations: nation-states search to find an ally in a subject as citizenship education for framing their citizens in more conforming ways or at least in accordance with what are their own policies and frameworks, in these periods of profound changes. At the same time, more open expectations put an emphasis on citizenship education as a liberating way of getting a better knowledge of social realities and human rights, and of experiencing opportunities more diverse and open to respond to people's needs and expectations.

Following this line of argument, citizenship education should have in mind the emphasis that Bernstein and Arnot put on the importance of schools - in a line that

certainly owes to T.H Marshall and the political theorists and feminists as the late Iris Young and Nancy Fraser, among other authors - to create spaces and processes in order that pupils can experience their pedagogic rights: the **individual** right ('**enhancement**') to become confident as a learner; the **social** right to be included and valued as an individual and as a member of a community; and the **political** right to participate in the decisions which affect their lives (Bernstein 1996; Arnot 2005).

Therefore, it is stressed that citizenship education needs both to foster a democratic mentality and a critical historical consciousness of the totalitarian European past - in general, it means the political sphere - as well as lines of orientation concerning social and individual rights. Are teachers expressing these concerns in their perspectives? In the next section, two studies are reviewed addressing these issues.

3. Teachers' Perspectives

Certainly, there are studies carried out in Portugal with other countries in international networks that have focused teachers' perspectives on citizenship education. One of these studies, involving Greece, Spain, Portugal and the UK (England and Wales) – financed by the EU - has investigated how student teachers, completing their professional training and preparing to work as teachers, were viewing education for citizenship as well as gender relations in the public and private sphere. This research, by investigating young professionals' thinking on questions around education for citizenship and social change, has revealed cross-national similarities and differences. The research was based on a questionnaire, on focus group discussions and interviews, by student teachers and supervisors. A majority of student teachers answered the questions around citizenship education¹.

As far as these student teachers were concerned, citizenship education should be a new matter in the school curriculum and should focus equality of opportunity, in the sense of non discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, ethnicity, social class, etc. and social and personal development – autonomy, loyalty; some (16 in 120) have pointed to citizenship as rights and duties, such as political participation meaning the right to vote. Multiculturalism and the fight against racism were pointed out by some; also Portuguese cultural identity was mentioned by a small group. The most relevant feature appears to be the emphasis on moral and personal development - it is necessary to learn to be an individual and to learn it with others; at the same time, the reference to the principle of equality of opportunity is understood mainly as access. Summing up, education for citizenship appears to be more connected to a humanistic, Christian perspective, than to a social contract having its origins in French Revolution on equality, liberty, fraternity and state concerned with these values (Araújo/Rocha/Magalhães/ Ferreira 1995).

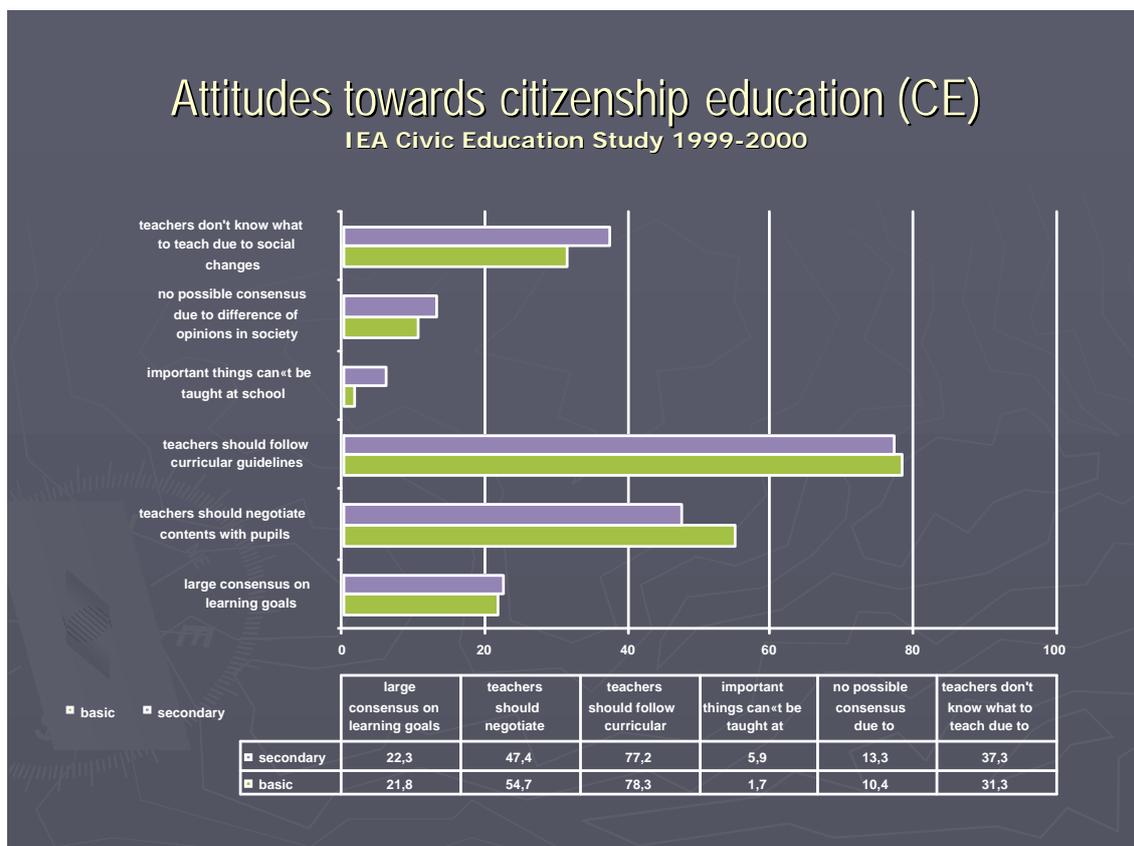
As far as their education as student teachers is concerned, a third considers that their professional education was not related to topics of education for citizenship. However, the majority saw this relation through developmental psychology or introduction to education; a small number, see it in sociology of education. As far as obstacles are concerned, the great majority point out that pupils are not interested in this subject matter. Teachers' conservatism was also considered as an obstacle to the expansion of citizenship education in schools.

¹ The project, financed by EU, was called "Promoting Equality Awareness – Women as citizens", 1995-97. The questionnaire sample was answered by 180 student teachers. The Portuguese team in the Oporto University, Faculty of Education, was constituted by Cristina Rocha, Manuela Ferreira, Maria José Magalhães, M. Fernanda Martins and myself as team coordinator. The international Project was coordinated by Madeleine Arnot (University of Cambridge, School of Education).

Hence, it is possible to underline that this study not only revealed that student teachers were, at the time, seeing their education as future teachers as not concerned centrally with education and citizenship; it also revealed that there was not a pivotal concern with this issue in Portuguese policies and their implementation.

The second international study to be mentioned has been produced more recently by a team where Isabel Menezes² has lead the Portuguese team, the IEA/CIE Civic Education Study 1999-2000 (cf. Menezes *et al.* 2005). This study has worked with a large survey of 1500 secondary teachers and 1200 teachers of compulsory schooling (6-15). Again, as in the former research situation, there was no subject matter directly connected to civic education, in their professional education. The following graphic presents some of the attitudes of teachers towards 'civic education' in schools:

Graphic 1



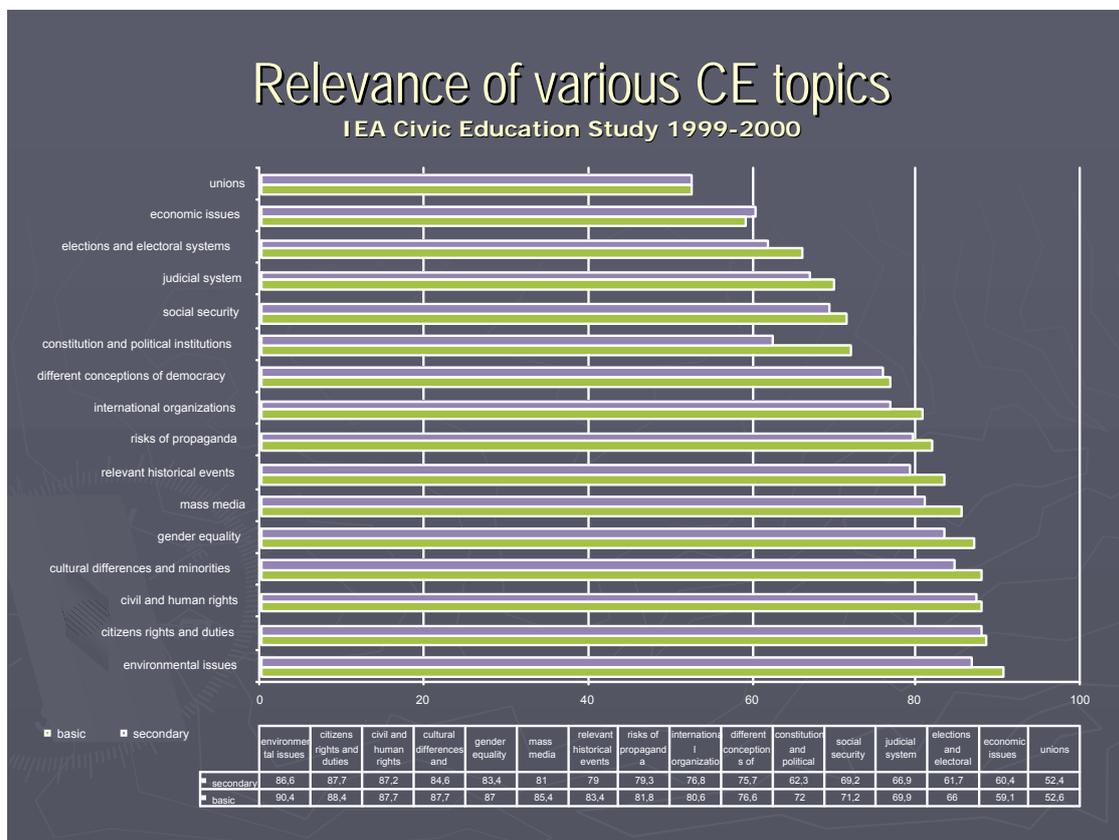
Source: Menezes *et al.* 2005, 166

As the authors underline, the great majority thinks that teachers should follow curricular guidelines in 'civic education'. Almost half of them consider that it is necessary to negotiate contents with pupils. Almost half of them perceive that important topics related to it can be taught in schools. A significant percentage thinks that it is possible, despite social changes and conflicts, to get a consensus on matters to be taught in this area. However, also a significant number answers that they do not know what to teach due to social changes (cf. Menezes *et al.* 2005, 166).

² I am very grateful to my colleague Isabel Menezes and the team for allowing me to use some of the slides of their study.

When asked about possible topics of civic education, teachers should answer regarding the importance they gave to each of them as well as their own educational fitness to teach each of these topics. In the next figure it is possible to observe the topics of CE that teachers think are more relevant:

Graphic 2

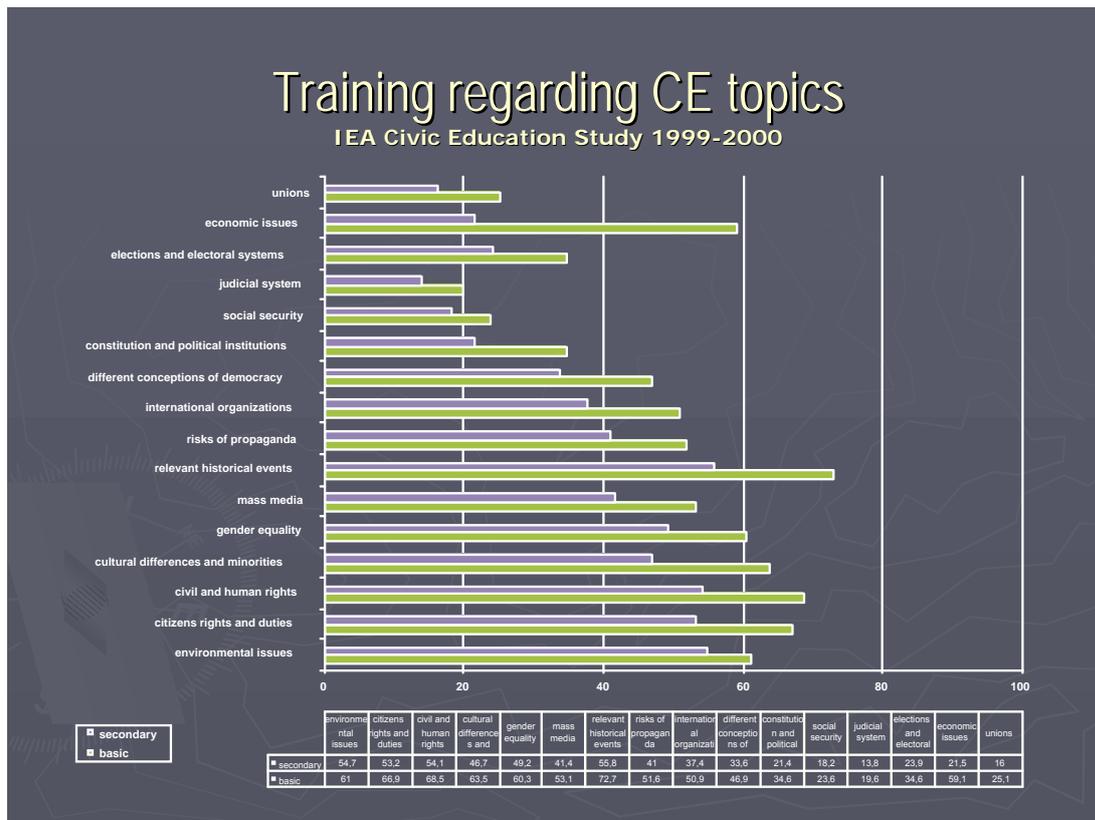


Source: Menezes *et al.* 2005, 173

As it can be observed, the most important topics for teachers are the environmental issues, civil and human rights, cultural differences and minorities, gender equality, mass media – more than 80% -, while unions, economic issues, electoral systems, judicial system, social security are considered of less relevance (nevertheless they get more than 50%). Considering the cultural, political and economic broader issues, probably it is the cultural which attracts more attention. The interesting thing to notice here it that these results appear to be quite close to what the IEA study conclusions: that internationally the most relevant themes are history, citizens’ and human rights and environmental issues (cf. Losito & Mintrop 2001).

In the next figure, the focus is on how teachers recognize their educational training as connected (or not connected) with the topics they have selected as more important.

Graphic 3



Source: Menezes *et al.* 2005, 173

It may be noticed that only a third to half of the teachers agree that they have received training in the selected topics; moreover they appear to agree that this training has been more in the areas they were also considering more relevant.

Again, the phase I of the IEA project suggested “a tenuous disciplinary and subject-matter background of civic education teachers” and insufficient training on the area (Losito & Mintrop 2001, 159). Regarding the topic mentioned above, the results for the whole IEA study also confirm this tendency of the attributed importance of specific topics as connected with the training received (importance-training- opportunities) (ibidem)

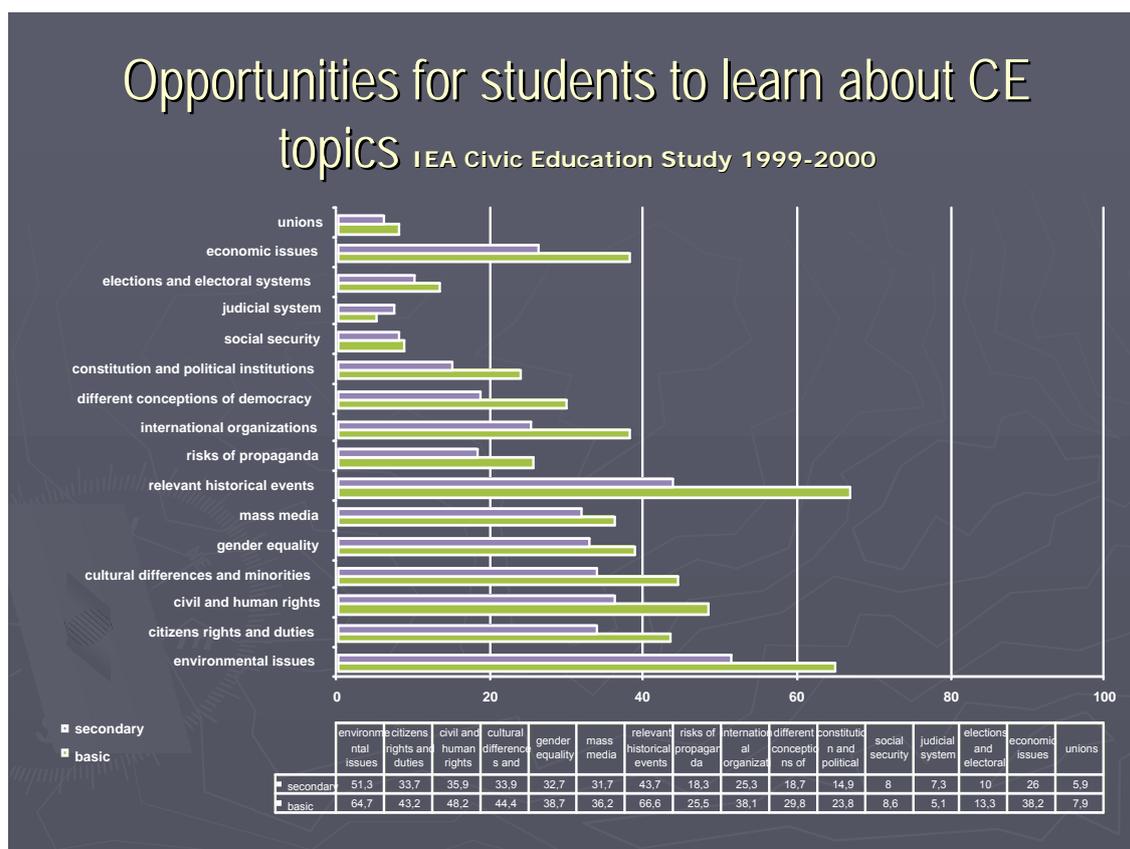
The last figure presented in this study focus our attention in a special way, because teachers point out that they do not find opportunities for pupils being able to learn/debate the areas that they think are more important: apparently they feel that school institutions do not create these conditions, or the educational state authorities are not too much concerned with CE. The authors of this study underline that:

“in addition to the great majority of teachers noticing the great importance of several items (only inferior a 60% in economic and unions issues), they consider less frequently to have the skills in these domains (...). The gap is even broader when ‘opportunities for students to learn about CE’ are considered, only recognized by the majority of teachers concerning ‘environmental issues’ and ‘relevant historical events’; however, more than 40% refer that ‘enough’ or ‘several’ are the opportunities in the domain of ‘civic and human rights’, ‘migrations’, ‘cultural differences and minorities’, and ‘citizens rights and duties’. It may be noticed that between 10 and 20% of teachers estimate that students do not have ‘any opportunity’ to learn, during secondary teaching, about issues such as ‘risks of propaganda’, ‘Constitution and political

institutions', 'elections and electoral systems'; and between 20 and 30% on issues of 'social security', 'judicial system' and 'unions'" (Menezes *et al.* 2005, 173).

Portuguese teachers appear in the IEA study as strongly confident in the role of the schools as relevant for the 'development of students' attitudes and opinions about matters of citizenship' as compared with many of others countries. They are not alone in this view, but their position is fairly confident concerning schools: only 3% agree or strongly agree on the view that schools are irrelevant on this issue (Losito & Mintrop 2001,170). In fact, Portuguese teachers appear to stress the importance of state policies on the area of citizenship education to involve more students in other areas than those they have identified.

Graphic 4



Source: Menezes *et al.* 2005, 173

The detailed attention to the work of the IEA project, integrated in an international network, brings several contributions and is relevant in terms of partial comparison with the former study. To sum up from both studies above referred (ie. the PROCIMAS and the IEA studies), it is clear that citizenship education is an area where it is needed a stronger intervention by the state but also can receive contributions from other institutions. As an area with a new configuration, concerned with citizenship, democracy, participation in political parties and unions, rights, international concerns, economic issues, etc., it can be expected that teachers have a systematic education on these matters in their educational professional institutions. Therefore, both studies propel us to think that the state as well other institutions (Town Halls educational services, NGOs, unions, cultural associations, etc) should contribute making this area as a more substantive, visible and at the centre of schools activities.

4. New Policies in the 2000s

Afterwards, the ministry of education has published the legislation in 2001, creating a mandatory curricular space of Civic Education and a Project Area from grades 1 to 9, without specific syllabus, in the sense that it is a curricular space and not a subject. Citizenship education appears as transversal in the primary and secondary cycles as a non-disciplinary area.

Some years later, a review of the policy implementation in EU countries in the so-called Eurydice Report (2005) appears quite optimistic on its chapter on Portugal, even if the information is more on policy orientations than in the actual ways that schools are incorporating and doing CE. It acknowledges that schools are developing various activities within these areas. It refers to "schools promoting several projects for personal and educational integration, through experiences of participation and cooperation" (2005,105). It also refers to the orientation of establishing formal agreements with several other institutions, such as local authorities, associations "as communication networks of innovative experiences and support materials, concerning human rights, cultural and historical heritage, health education, environment education, consumer education or traffic education" (2005,106). Other initiatives are mentioned as the Youth Parliament, where pupils from schools elect others that participate in a national assembly organized by the National Parliament to discuss social, political issues or the Citizenship Day, celebrated in schools (16 May).

Besides the Eurydice Report, when searching for actual changes on citizenship education after the state legislative initiatives, it is possible to find out sites in the internet with several initiatives, from local authorities, cultural institutions on this area, illustrating the attempt to develop activities with schools. But the existence of these sites does not mean that this is a central and strong issue.

5. Recent State Initiatives

Last year the ministry of education and the ministry of state have convoked a forum which is still running for discussing citizenship education in its different versions, with different actors going from teachers and educators to members of NGOs, social writers, feminists, multicultural educators, and representatives of minority groups. The state minister assures that this forum for citizenship education should veil for "the enrichment of curricula in schools to promote citizenship, and consequently, gender equality and the fight against discrimination" (Lacão 2007, 2).

At the same time, a new bureau called for citizenship and gender equality has been created, substituting others three, related to women's rights, domestic violence and equity in work. It is stressed that it should have a scientific and a technical vocation, concerned with gender equality and in the interdisciplinary and transversal domains of citizenship education, protection of maternity and paternity, professional, personal and family conciliation, the fight against gender violence and support to victims. It is also concerned with the participation in parity of women and men in political life and institutions. Moreover, this bureau will be also concerned with citizenship education.

Hence the first point I would like to stress is the specific visibility of citizenship in the current debates and policy formulation, in the educational field - not meaning that these debates are heard with intensity. In fact, and since the involvement of the former president of the Portuguese Republic, citizenship is more in the political agendas. At the time, 2000, he was stressing the new mandate that schools have nowadays, differently from the past - **schools as spaces of socialization, cultural development and social protection** - hence they cannot be only deposits of children; **freedom and security** are central and behaviours that put at risk them should be fight against;

schooling dropping out needs also to be put strongly in the agenda, not only because the right to education is permitted to fade away; children are not educated as citizens.

He also has stressed the **responsibility of all** – schools, parents associations, local authorities, social security, administration of justice and also the bureau for the protection of young people on confronting school problems and involving schools in the **quest for citizenship**.

Secondly, citizenship education appears to be framed by **democratic participation in the context of social, gender, ethnic inequalities** and sounds as a form of empowering citizens. Therefore, it could be said that some educational and social policies appear to be guided by concerns where citizenship is understood, as Stewart (2001, 185) points out, “at the centre of the dialectical relationship between domination and empowerment”. Probably, it could be said that it is not a liberal perspective that is stressed in these state initiatives, i.e. meaning the concerns for the individual and its freedoms and unique rights. Nor a perspective of civic republicanism emphasising that the common good needs to overcome all the specificities of social groups who have less power, for common sake. Nor a perspective of citizenship as a duty in terms of the need to internalise the social rules of a community or a political state, in normative, disciplinarian and even nationalist configurations.

Thirdly, it looks quite stimulant that citizenship education is strongly connected to gender equality. Visibly, it is through gender inequality that education for citizenship and the education of citizens, both are dimensions of what we are talking about – are approached. I find this quite promising and in the line also suggested by Touraine (2006) supporting the idea that many of the social analyses and interventions on equality can start by women’s situation and going from these to more inclusive questions and problems. In this sense, these measures appear to contradict what Carole Pateman stresses: “The problems facing women are still not seen as problems of democracy. There is a tendency for anything connected with women to be bundled under the heading ‘women’s issues’ and then treated as a matter of a special or sectional interest, an interest that demands privileges” (Pateman 1999, 6).

To Sum Up

I am asking myself whether I have presented a optimistic view on Portuguese contemporary initiatives on EC. Most probably what we can witness is more ‘talk’ than ‘action’. I must say that I am very curious to see to where these policies and initiatives will take us to better schools and other educational institutions in the sense for more lived forms of citizenship.

It may be stressed that in Portugal two generations of citizenship concepts, strongly influencing EC have been developed and we are living them simultaneously. The concept of citizenship based on what citizens share in common aiming at equality, was dominant from mid 1970s until mid 1980s, as Portuguese society evolved from dictatorship to democracy. The model of citizenship based on cultural differences and identities has emerged, under a mitigated form though, in the 1990s and is pervading educational perspectives on citizenship. It appears that this last policy framework is giving more attention to the second. But certainly, it is important to stress that, as it has been said in the framework paper:

“democratic citizenship cannot be adequately captured if it is merely defined as an array of social skills as the acceptance of some individual rights and responsibilities and/or as the disposition of some declarative knowledge about how the current political system, the economy and the society works” (Hedtke 2007, 8).

Therefore, in Portugal it is certainly necessary to develop a systematic study of how citizenship relates to social and educational processes in schools and framed by concerns of what the different actors articulate around citizenship. The pedagogic councils in schools are pivotal to being heard on their projects of EC. I must say that I expect from future research a way of contributing through universities³ and their research a renewal of concerns to develop Education for Citizenship.

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³ The universities play also their role on citizenship education, although it should be much more developed. The role universities are playing:

- Master courses on education for citizenship, in some universities;
- Sociology of Education is also an area of education for/in citizenship in teacher education and educators in non formal institutions, where EC finds a strong consonance through the analysis of human rights, multiculturalism, exclusion/inclusion, etc. in the educational as well as in the political field for mire transformative agendas;

I would like to make a special reference to the late Stephan Stoer who was able to contribute on a pivotal way to establish a critical perspective of sociology of education in Portugal in teacher and education courses in general.

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