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Article

Exploring the implementation gap in citizenship education: An analysis of policy processes from a post-colonial perspective

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Highlights:

- Brazilian case study analyses the implementation gap in Citizenship Education Policies (CEP)
- A post-colonial perspective is employed to overcome Western democratic ideals in CEP
- Five key policy processes are examined as factors influencing the implementation gap in CEP
- A clear citizenship concept and modelling learning activities contribute to reducing the gap
- Challenges include top-down approaches, external disincentives, and policy misinterpretations

Purpose: This paper explores the implementation gap in CEP using a post-colonial perspective, focusing on a case study in Brazil.

Methodological approach: By employing a qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews with frontline educators are applied. Responses were analysed using content analysis with a descriptive design.

Findings: Five key policy processes are identified, yet two – a clear citizenship concept and modelling learning activities – largely contribute to reducing the gap. The remaining three processes – citizenship education as a cross-curricular subject, professional development, and pedagogical resource accessibility – can affect the gap. However, these three can be hindered due to disincentives to implement and other challenges that arise at the frontline level.

Research limitations: The case study may not be generalisable due to the evidence available and considering the regional context.

Practical implications: Insights from the study can aid in developing more inclusive and effective CEP, particularly in post-colonial settings.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Democratic regimes have become predominant worldwide, yet civic culture has not always accompanied democratisation at the same pace. In addition, there have been recurrent public and academic perceptions concerning democratic backsliding, increased presence of populist leaders, and, ultimately, democracies in crisis. These factors, among others, have led policymakers in various countries and regions to implement Citizenship Education Policies (CEP), including in educational curricula, that can generate active citizenship behaviour and awareness (Nieto, 2017; Zohar & Cohen, 2016).

CEP refer to public policies practised in an educational setting that address broad aspects inherent to democracy and social justice – responsibility, cooperation and communication, critical thinking, personal development, and interpersonal interactions. These policies are generally practiced, though not limited to, educational systems such as primary and secondary education institutions, and can be observed worldwide.

Some examples include the “Student Voices” program, implemented in American public high schools in the state of Philadelphia. Teachers affiliated with the program encouraged students to participate in debates and critical reflections that went beyond school issues, based on an in-depth knowledge of how the public system works and the search for information on issues that impact collective life (Pasek et al., 2008). Along these lines, the “Citizen School” project implemented in the Brazilian municipality of Porto Alegre aimed to transform the relationship between public schools, the community and the state, promoting a more inclusive and participatory educational environment. The initiative sought to develop a critical understanding of social and political issues, enabling students to become active and aware citizens, capable of contributing to the construction of a fairer and more equitable society (Gandin & Apple, 2002).

As a result of engaging in a CEP, policy participants are given an incentive to actively participate in political arenas, are better capable of critically assessing sociopolitical structures and areas of social injustice, and/or improve self-perception of citizenship roles at the individual or community levels (Sánchez-Agustí & Miguel-Revilla, 2020; Weinberg & Flinders, 2018). Scholars generally state that CEPs positively affect the target population, as observed in the randomised controlled trial carried out by Barr et al. (2015). Students whose teachers participated in civic education training sessions demonstrated stronger skills for critically assessing past institutional structures and more positive perceptions of the classroom environment. They also felt more at ease when understanding and/or engaging in civic issues.

Weinberg and Flinders (2018) confirm that the exposure students have to a democratic school and/or a classroom environment that contains deliberations and participatory governance structures can impact their political outcomes. This has occurred in multiple policies and programs across a diverse number of countries, such as Australia, Brazil, Chile, Israel, Indonesia, Mexico, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Spain (Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Gordon & Baldwin-Philippi, 2014; Nieto, 2017; Rachmadtullah et al., 2020; Zohar & Cohen, 2016).

Citizenship education has especially been strengthened in post-colonial countries as a concern over the continuance of strong democratic principles in societies that deal with limited concepts of citizenship, mainly focused on Eurocentric views. A post-colonial perspective on citizenship increments criticism towards the conquering culture as well as fears and hopes colonised people have concerning their future and identities. It also rethinks issues affected by colonialism and imperialism – language, education, race, etc. (Mbembe, 1992; Sawant, 2012). Beyond the predominant

theoretical currents, whether neoliberal or neoconservative, the construction of an active citizen goes beyond simple good collective actions, implying a profound political literacy, marked by a critical and responsible base (Carballo, 2011; Crick, 2002).

Although decolonialist theories disagree with associating citizenship education with the post-structuralist approach (democracy as a mode of living), just as many post-colonial countries have been doing (Nieto, 2017), a post-colonial perspective on citizenship can increase the incrementation of global citizenship. As global citizenship emphasises solidarity between different cultures, post-colonial approaches share similar characteristics, valuing conflict resolution, communication skills, and respect and plurality among citizens.

While non-post-colonial countries value the abovementioned elements, post-colonial countries uniquely integrate these into a broader narrative of decolonisation and resistance to historical injustices. This context gives students a deeper understanding of global inequalities and the importance of global solidarity. The dynamic can be seen in the collaborative experiences in higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate) aimed at training indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Latin America (Mato, 2011). The initiatives focused on intercultural training and integrating diverse knowledge and ways of learning. Consequently, the experiences promoted a continuous dialogue between different cultures and epistemologies.

The following study, by employing the concept of citizenship through global and post-colonial perspectives, intends to empirically analyse the effects of CEP on teaching citizenship and democracy as well as its policy hardships and solutions. CEPs always come with their challenges. Scholarly works present a range of issues, from the difficulty of incrementing multicultural features in the subject to the crowded civic content curricula (Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Rachmadtullah et al., 2020; Sánchez-Agustí & Miguel-Revilla, 2020). A major concern that depletes the CEP process is the implementation gap, the struggle to crystallise the impact of a macro policy as teachers deliver civic education at the micro level (Weinberg & Flinders, 2018; Zohar & Cohen, 2016). The implementation gap is a well-known concern that policymakers and other policy actors deal with daily, and policy tools and strategies are usually elaborated to decrease the macro-to-micro gap. These may include training sessions for street bureaucrats, bottom-up approaches, pedagogy practices at the local level, etc.

Approaching this implementation gap is key to carry out CEPs that lead to high(er) levels of public participation and critical thinking. CEP studies carried out by the Council of Europe (Byram et al., 2023) have been able to develop rich analyses on the matter, describing concrete regional CEP among European member states. They outline practices and policy tools to improve CEP implementation, naturally decreasing the macro-to-micro gap. The following article aims to extend the dialogue to post-colonial countries, focusing on a regional CEP in Brazil. The study uses citizenship (education) as its point of departure from a post-colonial perspective to theorise the implementation gap in citizenship education and observe policy strategies. This is specifically observed in the Brazilian case study, with a CEP called *Estudantes de Atitude* (loosely translated to English as "Students with Attitude"). This policy is described and analysed to examine policy processes that affect the implementation gap in CEP.

The following section conceptualises elements surrounding citizenship education, emphasising post-colonial countries. There has been an increase in the number of CEPs implemented in countries such as Indonesia and Brazil. Most of the time, these countries contain democracies that have been more recently installed, in which they import structures and practices that should, though this may not always occur, adapt well to indigenous political culture. Moreover, these democracies

are more susceptible to crises and share issues experienced by more well-established democracies, for example, low voter turnout and negative attitudes towards the regime. Education policy actors and multilateral institutions alike have chosen to face this challenge head-on through the adoption of CEP (Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Nieto, 2017; Sant et al., 2022).

The third section of the paper identifies key policy processes, 'make or break points' identified in the literature, that can nurture or hinder the implementation gap. These policy processes are analysed in detail in the fourth and fifth sections. The fourth section describes the methodological aspects used to analyse the Brazilian policy "Students with Attitude" (SA) and details specific policy processes and tools that were applied.

The fifth section presents the research findings, describing policy tools and strategies adopted during CEP implementation in the Brazilian case, that is, how various hands-on modelling learning activities can decrease miscomprehension regarding the concept of citizenship elaborated by the policy formulators and rather drastically aid in decreasing the gap. Besides this, treating citizenship education as a cross-curricular subject, incrementing training sessions for frontline educators, and obtaining access to pedagogical resources are investigated as fundamental policy processes.

To finalise this discussion, the concluding section summarises how the analysis performed regarding SA enriches academic and policy debates in citizenship education arenas. The conceptual arguments concerning the need for a global and post-colonial citizenship definition and the importance of addressing the implementation gap are noteworthy themes to consider when formulating, implementing, and/or evaluating CEP.

2 REFRAMING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM A POST-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

Citizenship education, introduced as a compulsory component in many school curricula or implemented by multilateral institutions, aims to go beyond the domain of state institutions and structures (European Commission, 2017; Pasek et al., 2008). Its central purpose is to empower and give the necessary tools to individuals, shaping active citizens for a more engaged and inclusive society. Under scrutiny by researchers dedicated to understanding apathy towards democracy and pedagogical practices, citizenship education is conceived as a tool for developing informed civic reflection and strengthening democratic values (Galston, 2004; Torney-Purta, 2002; Youniss, 2011).

To comprehend the expected effects of citizenship education, the theoretical disputes surrounding the concept of citizenship must be understood. Over time, various transformations concerning what a citizen is and its role have led to changes within the scope of citizenship education. Generally speaking, some conceptions focus on embracing the classic, liberal nature of citizenship, associated with the role of the "good citizen", marked by respect for the law and the rule of law, as well as fundamental freedoms and rights. This can be extended to a social perspective, in which citizenship is intertwined with its potential to mitigate socioeconomic disparities. These facets can also be coupled with participatory citizenship, which places great value on the formal participation of individuals in the decision-making and democratic process. Furthermore, in the face of growing globalisation, global citizenship is expanding, transcending borders, and emphasising solidarity between different cultures (Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Geboers et al., 2013; Weinberg & Flinders, 2018).

Based on the set of civil, political, and social rights tied to citizenship, it is possible to discern three distinct dimensions – passive, semi-active, and active. Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz and Kennedy (2022) define the first as any feeling of belonging and patriotism in relation to national identity. Semi-active citizenship usually involves consideration of the State and sporadic participation through electoral processes. In contrast, active citizenship comprises the social and political

dimensions and a critical sense and responsibility regarding accountability. Even so, post-colonial literature has sought to transcend the hegemonic and limited vision of citizenship education anchored in Eurocentric premises. Beyond the predominant theoretical currents, whether neoliberal or neoconservative, the construction of an active citizen goes beyond good collective actions, implying a profound political literacy, marked by a critical and responsible base (Crick, 2002).

Nieto (2017) calls attention to the fact that the "good citizen" concept has never been neutral, always adopting a universalist Eurocentric standard that tends to marginalise diverse perspectives. In response to this, several alternative theories have emerged that seek to emphasise other neglected aspects, namely: i) the deliberative approach, which underscores the importance of recognising and valuing Indigenous communication practices, conflict resolution strategies, and community-based decision-making, promoting a collective construction of society rooted in local contexts and open to diverse opinions; ii) the critical or social justice approach, which highlights the necessity of acknowledging and addressing colonial legacies and social inequalities, aiming to transform power relations through a critical and decolonised consciousness; and iii) the post-structuralist approach, which questions the very structures of inequality and exclusion imposed by colonial histories, advocating for a vision of democracy that celebrates diversity, respects plurality, and incorporates the voices and experiences of historically marginalised groups.

Democratic citizenship curricula among post-colonial countries in Latin America, for example, are strongly shaped by discourses transmitted by multilateral organisations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI). By conceptualising citizenship through rational individualistic values and deliberation, these multilateral institutions attempt to aid in the formation of citizens who comply with the law and usually have Western democratic ideals. Furthermore, regional traditions of political participation and political struggle are generally disregarded, as registered in Colombia and Pakistan (Nieto, 2017; Sant et al., 2022).

Mindful of young people's apathy towards democracy, Fozdar and Martin (2020), when analysing the Australian national curriculum, highlight the need for and relevance of teaching focused on global citizenship. They also recognise the internal cultural and social diversity of Indigenous Australians for nation-building as a fundamental element in educating young people. To overcome Eurocentric citizenship education, traditional nationalist citizenship education should question power inequalities, have more reflective and dialogical approaches that allow students to be self-aware, recognise different formations of governance and participation, and rethink the "good citizen" Eurocentric mould.

From the standpoint that education transcends the mere formal transmission of educational content, scholarly works present the necessity of giving incentives as well as broadening citizenship education. In such manner, citizenship education aims to become an effective tool for cultivating educated, well-informed, and conscious individuals. The close interconnection between democracy and citizenship, which establishes a mutually reinforcing relationship, has expanded the scope of civic education, encompassing a wider range of themes and approaches. This movement aims to empower citizens to participate actively and constructively in society (Sapiro, 2004).

After discussing the theoretical foundations of the post-colonial concept of citizenship and citizenship education, it is important to demonstrate how these concepts translate into concrete pedagogical practices. The "Students with Attitude" (SA) project in Brazil is a concrete example of the concern to foster local communication practices and community decision-making. This initiative seeks to transform the educational approach by valuing cultural and social diversity and promoting

the involvement of students, specifically their reflections and care for the common good, citizenship, and human rights.

Formulated in 2019 by the Comptroller General's Office of the state of Goiás (CGE-GO), in partnership with the Goiás State Secretariat of Education (SEDUC), SA is a game-based civic learning policy that rewards public educational institutions (including Youth and Adult Education schools, Indigenous, Quilombola and Rural schools, Special Education, the Socio-educational System, and Military Schools) willing to participate in the project. There are incentives from regional school directors and SEDUC to participate and prizes for schools with higher performance levels during policy implementation. Schools are required to perform three activities that incite civic and other critical skills with their students. The performance of each activity is ultimately reviewed by the CGE-GO, according to previously established objectives, so schools can later be ranked. The final score measures how the school performed in the CEP, from a scale of 0 to 1000, and determines the type of prize they win – trips to nearby cities or abroad, sports kits, funding for school improvement, etc. (Ziller et al., 2020). The analysed policy refers to the 2021 edition – the second edition, yet the first one implemented in a hybrid format. The tasks were carried out face-to-face with students, while training sessions and any form of inter- and intra-communication were accomplished digitally.

The project established three main activities to be carried out: i) Team formation, ii) the Special task, and iii) the Civic audit. The first activity involved organising the teams: registering as policy participants on the project's online platform teachers and students from the 6th to 9th grades of elementary school and/or the 1st to 3rd grades of secondary school. By then, the teachers, specifically those who had received training from CGE-GO so they could participate in the CEP, would have also explained to the students critical elements to citizenship education, with their local context and cultural practices in mind. The lectures could include environmental preservation, caring for public assets, racial equality, integrity and corruption prevention, among others.

The following activity would be the Special Task, which aims to stimulate and strengthen team spirit and creativity by promoting an inclusive and motivating environment within the school. Each team had to create its own school chant, allowing students to express their ideas innovatively and motivating the group's enthusiasm and engagement in future activities at the local level. They had to elaborate and submit a video presenting their school and its school chant.

The last phase was the fundamental pillar of the project, the Civic Audit, which strives to give students a leading role in the critical and qualified evaluation of their own school. The students are invited to explore all the school's environments and imitate a fiscal audit of school infrastructure. Afterwards, they collectively decide which space – the library or gymnasium, for example – should be renovated. The students are tasked in asking their community for help at this point. They could invite relatives, local business owners, community leaders, and friends for donations or volunteer work to help improve or reform the space. It is through the recognition of the school environment that the appreciation and empowerment of public heritage allows for a greater commitment to preserving and deliberating inclusive public spaces.

The aim is to promote a more reflective perspective among students concerning the environments they frequent daily, seeking to identify desired improvements through critical perception and the strategic allocation of resources. The Civic Audit recognises schools, teachers, students, and Regional Education Coordinating Offices (CREs) for their ability to transform the everyday perception of the school, raising students' awareness of the challenges faced, not only within the school institution, but also in the wider community. Through open dialogue and diverse opinions among

their peers and fellow citizens, inclusive experiences are promoted in the educational context, allowing students to act as active agents in promoting meaningful change. This process contributes to developing the moral, social, and collective conscience of the individuals involved.

Participating students are encouraged to become protagonists of the actions through debates, conversation circles, theatres, and simulations, promoting greater engagement. Goals are set, and a timetable is implemented for the concrete realisation of the planned activities in a dynamic and participatory way, addressing awareness of values, anti-corruption culture, altruism, action for fraternity, and human rights education. The teachers responsible for accompanying the students in the execution of the project are monitored and advised by the management team. The latter would clarify doubts, adjust to certain needs, and support the continuation of the project. Photos and videos of the activities were sent to the project's evaluation team, which used the following criteria to score each school's performance during the project: protagonism and involvement of participants within and outside the schools, social impact of the activities developed, innovation and creativity, capacity for continuity, and complexity of the proposal.

A ceremony recognising and valuing the participants' efforts was held to encourage the continuation of the practices and for other institutions to be inspired and adopt similar projects. Students could interact and share experiences that go beyond their learning and thus promote a broader and more inclusive understanding of shared human experiences and critical thinking.

Given the emancipatory capacity inherent to citizenship education (Sant et al., 2022), we highlight the importance of including a postcolonial perspective that challenges traditional visions of citizenship and space for building a comprehensive and diverse citizenship education with multiple and marginalised perspectives of human experiences in the educational process. However, it is necessary to be attentive to the transition from theoretical vision to concrete reality. In light of this, researchers have dedicated their efforts to examining the implementation of CEP, such as SA. Yet, many academics have not researched the implementation gap in detail.

The literature investigated so far reveals the complexity of the subject, signalling the need for a more in-depth analysis of CEP worldwide. To contribute to the corpus of existing knowledge, the next section frames the CEP process and key elements that delimit the implementation gap. This analysis will allow for a more detailed understanding of CEP implementation, coupled with identifying policy elements and processes that have proved significant in regional and/or local contexts, enriching future empirical studies and policymaking at great length.

3 CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION POLICIES: THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP AND ITS POLICY PROCESSES

Effective CEP, in which expected and/or positive change is observed with the target population, involves reflecting on and overcoming this implementation gap. This is evaluated in the present paper by identifying vital policy processes implemented in multiple countries at the national and local levels. These processes are pragmatically observed in the Brazilian case.

Stakeholders initially tend to establish key policy elements that encompass multiple policy processes, as done by the Education Commission of the States in the United States and the Eurydice report in Europe (Baumann & Brennan, 2017; Sánchez-Agustí & Miguel-Revilla, 2020). After all, they are a starting point in attempting to resolve the root of the problem. These key policy elements usually revolve around (1) Governance and Finance, (2) Instruction, and (3) Continuous Improvement and Accountability, as shown in Table 1.

Governance and Finance does not only entail a clear mission statement that adequately defines what kind of citizen should come from an individual's participation in a specific program or policy. It also assumes that these policies and resource allocations must align themselves to the (inter)national paradigm for education[1]. This is highlighted by Weinberg and Flinder's (2018) findings.

Table 1. Key policy elements to approach the implementation gap in CEP

Key Police Element	Description
Governance and Finance	- Clear mission statements - Programs and policies aligned to a paradigm for education
Instruction	- Curricula, preferably for each grade level - Inquiry-based instruction for the target population - Cross-disciplinary civic learning - Pre-service teacher education and recruitment efforts supporting educators as civic educators - Ongoing professional development
Continuous Improvement and Accountability	- Assessments of participant progress - Accountability indicators of teachers and institutes - Measures of community impact

Source: Elaborated by the authors, adapted from Baumann and Brennan (2017).

Secondly, Instruction is an element that considers the educational curricula around the globe and whether civic learning is being applied across all academic disciplines or as a stand-alone subject. This concept, present in Baumann and Brennan (2017) and Hernández and Galais (2021), increases the scope of CEP implemented worldwide. Especially when citizenship education is treated across multiple disciplines, it is formidable in achieving citizenship with a global and post-colonial perspective, as observed by Barr et al. (2015) and Fozdar and Martin (2020). Instruction usually involves pre-service teacher education, recruitment efforts supporting educators as civic educators and ongoing professional development in the 'teaching for citizenship' arena.

The third element, Continuous Improvement and Accountability, implies the measurable features of a CEP. This indicates the presence of assessments that measure policy participant progress and inform the efforts made with the target population, accountability indicators that evaluate teacher and institute performance, and standards to assess community impact.

Instruction, the second element, is highlighted due to its effect on the implementation gap, as demonstrated by Barr et al. (2015), Zohar and Cohen (2016), and Weinberg and Flinders (2018). The implementation gap may suffer from shortcomings in each policy element, though there is reason to believe that Instruction should be given a spotlight. Scholars and policy stakeholders have developed (and in some cases analysed) policy mechanisms, frameworks, and policy tools inherent to the Instruction element, ultimately examining ways to counteract the implementation gap.

[1] The (inter)national paradigm for education entails the overarching frameworks and guiding principles that shape educational policies and practices both nationally and internationally. These paradigms often reflect global agreements, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. They also encompass national educational standards and policies that align with international benchmarks, thereby ensuring consistency in educational outcomes across different regions. This alignment is critical for fostering global citizenship and preparing individuals to participate in an increasingly interconnected world (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2018).

Based on the literature review performed, multiple effective processes have been identified as tangible processes that could be carried out as ways to minimise the implementation gap: (1) transmitting a clear concept of citizenship to the frontline (known in public policy analyses as a part of the knowledge transmission process; Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Nieto, 2017; Sant et al., 2022; Weinberg & Flinders, 2018), (2) considering citizenship education as a cross-curricular subject (Fozdar & Martin, 2020; Hernández & Galais, 2021), (3) incrementing professional development training sessions along with a leadership team to carry them out (Barr et al., 2015), (4) having easy access to pedagogical resources (Torney-Purta, 2002; Zohar & Cohen, 2016), and (5) modelling learning activities (Dassonneville et. al., 2012; Torney-Purta, 2002; Youniss, 2011; Zohar & Cohen, 2016). These five policy processes are key instruments to determine CEP success, whether implemented simultaneously or in a limited mix. The following subsection describes in detail what each process entails, as well as international case studies and analyses. This becomes even clearer when presenting the Brazilian case study, as their performance with a regional CEP contains these policy processes.

3.1 Ensuring Effective Implementation: Key Policy Processes

Even though most CEPs are essentially top-down, when these five policy processes are carried out adequately, they can cause educators and other front liners to assume responsibility and appropriate citizenship education teaching as their inherent role, essentially adding a bottom-up quality to the policy. This is seen in the Israeli (Zohar & Cohen, 2016) and Brazilian cases, in which the latter is presented in this article.

Sant et al. (2022) compare citizenship education among countries that were former Empires/metropoles[2] and those that were colonies – with the United Kingdom and Catalonia on one side and Colombia and Pakistan on the other. By doing so, it is clear that historical and regional backgrounds, along with the socioeconomic background of educational institutions, fiercely determine citizenship education discourses.

To avoid limited concepts of citizenship that may come from misinterpretation during implementation, a clear understanding of what constitutes citizenship, as laid out through a clear theoretical framework by policymakers, must be recognised among policy actors. Due to this issue, the first policy process, transmitting a clear concept of citizenship to the frontline, can be linked to the third process, professional development training sessions. By clearly stating concepts inherent to CEP success during (frontline) training, there is less margin for misinterpretation among policy participants.

Regarding training, it is well known that professional development fosters educators' effectiveness at integrating citizenship skills and content in other subjects. Successful training sessions, in which knowledge transmission occurs, address pragmatic challenges concerning citizenship education in educational settings, and contain participants' collective participation and active learning. In addition, they are coherent – the content is connected to contextual demands and adaptable – and/or have a sufficient duration.

[2] Sant et al. (2022) use both terms, Empire and/or metropole. While "Empire" typically denotes the colonial empires established by European powers (e.g., the British, Spanish, and French empires), "metropoles" refers to the central or dominant cities of these empires, often the capitals or major cities in the colonial powers' home countries, such as London for the British Empire and Madrid for the Spanish Empire. These places indicate the control European powers had for a long time over vast territories and diverse populations across the world, imposing their cultural, political, and educational frameworks on the colonized regions.

As evidenced by Barr et al. (2015), professional development training sessions with similar conditions positively affect professional engagement, personal satisfaction, and confidence in having the relevant knowledge or skills for implementing CEP. Although half of the intervention educators did not fully implement the CEP in their controlled experiment, their students perceived greater citizenship learning opportunities, a more open classroom climate, and greater involvement in citizenship discourse than control students.

These first two strategies become especially effective with the second policy process described in the previous section, i.e., when citizenship education is treated as a cross-curricular subject. In this manner, teaching for citizenship is not solely limited to Humanities teachers or acting as a stand-alone subject (Hernández & Galais, 2021; Zohar & Cohen, 2016).

Citizenship education should not be treated singularly but as transdisciplinary content, pertinent to all aspects of an individual's life. After all, "The skills and dispositions acquired through active civic learning (…) lead to effective participation in democratic life (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity)" (Baumann & Brennan, 2017, p. 1). When Hernández and Galais (2021) analyse the effects of citizenship education as a standalone subject in the Spanish school curricula, they observe it does not have positive results on political interest, political knowledge, and other variables.

Although the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), does not conclusively confirm that a cross-curricular approach is more effective than a standalone subject approach (Schulz, 2018), we are still examining this hypothesis. Other scholarly works, such as those by Torney-Purta (2002), suggest that a transdisciplinary approach can enhance civic outcomes.

Interestingly, the three policy processes described above – transmitting a clear concept of citizenship to the frontline, considering citizenship education as a cross-curricular subject, and incrementing professional development training sessions – are rather frequent and involve common challenges when observing the implementation gap. Zohar and Cohen (2016) bring relevant information to current CEP discussions when presenting the success of a CEP policy called Pedagogical Horizons (PH) in Israel. PH specifically contains everyday policy tools that may be overseen in small-scale CEP, that is, having easy access to pedagogical resources and modelling learning activities.

A website was created for PH, with all professional development resources uploaded, along with additional content for educators, with learning activities and lesson plans designed to use in class. A Performance Assessment Inquiry Task (PAIT), an inquiry project addressing a practical civic problem that students carry out in small groups, is also implemented (Zohar & Cohen, 2016). PAIT, or any similar activity in other countries, acts as a modelling learning activity, so students can bring to life ideas they have usually not experienced, or rather only heard or read about.

Due to the rather abstract and sometimes foreign quality that citizenship education has in multiple educational systems worldwide, these two final policy strategies – easy access to pedagogical resources and modelling learning activities – may be vital in making citizenship education comprehensible and performable. If carried out adequately, the infusion of these five policy processes may decrease or eliminate the implementation gap.

4 METHODOLOGY AND CASE DESCRIPTION

The recent growth of CEP around the world is occurring in critical contexts – democracies backsliding or in crisis, decreased trust in public institutions, and low rates of voter turnout, among others. A clear example of this is Brazil, a country that underwent democratisation in the late 1980s. Though Brazilian democracy has taken great strides, with a larger presence of political participation and a judicial legacy in Latin America, recent events show rooted issues (Ziller et al., 2020). To name a few, high levels of political distrust, scandalous corruption cases involving multiple political figures, etc.

To counteract these concerns, multiple governmental campaigns and CEPs have increased citizenship education, teaching citizens how to identify fake news or better understand political processes like Participatory Budgets. In 2019, the CGE-GO, along with participation from SEDUC, included itself in this movement. Since then, they have implemented SA, the statewide CEP, yearly. Its main activities have been described in Section 2.

Due to the large number of participating schools, cluster and quota sampling[3] were carried out. Cluster sampling considered participating municipalities in the state, selecting diverse socioeconomic qualities. After selecting municipalities, participating schools were chosen. Determinants to consider for entry into the sample focused on: participation and performance in the 2019 and 2021 editions[4]; technological structure, the presence and number of computers at the school during both years; and socioeconomic and demographic profiles. Data was provided by Instituto Mauro Borges (IMB), a regional public agency responsible for collecting information in the state of Goiás, and CGE-GO.

This paper describes a study performed as part of a wider research endeavour examining the social impact SA may have on the region. Of the two hundred and fifty-five schools that participated in the 2021 edition, seventeen schools were ultimately selected, and invitations for online interviews were sent to the school principals and the teachers enrolled in the project – one to three educators per school – a total of sixty-eight individuals. Through a self-selection process, eleven educators (six school principals and five teachers) accepted the invitation, and eleven interviews, administered orally, were carried out from January to May 2022.

This rather low level of acceptance (around eighteen per cent) may be due to several factors already registered among scholarly works analysing the reality of educators inserted in the Brazilian public education system. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2018, Brazilian teachers often experience significant work overload and correlated stress. A substantial percentage of them report working long hours beyond their contractual obligations, often involving administrative tasks and extra responsibilities contributing to their workload (OECD, 2018). This may have created dissatisfaction with extracurricular projects in which they participate, including SA.

Another critical factor in refusing the interview may have been a fear of speaking out. Policy frontliners in Brazil can usually become hesitant to express their opinions on public policies, particularly those with political implications. The political environment can be intimidating, with fears

[3] The sampling process included stratifying municipalities by socioeconomic status and randomly selecting schools within those strata to ensure representation. Quota sampling ensured schools with varied technological and demographic characteristics were included (Cochran, 1977; Patton, 2002).

[4] At the time, these were the only editions. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, CGE-GO was unable to implement the 2020 edition.

of retribution or negative consequences, such as demotions or transferals to other schools. This concern is highlighted by reports of teachers in Brazil feeling pressured to conform to certain political ideologies or face potential backlash, impacting their participation in external studies (Tricontinental, 2022).

Participants were asked a set of twenty-three questions involving a diverse number of themes, notably, the insertion of SA in the school routine, knowledge transmission, communication, participation in other policies, cheating, educator behavioural change, student behavioural change, parent/guardian participation, use of digital tools, and the implications of the hybrid format. Participants were free to elaborate in detail other themes or perceptions they deemed useful for the questions at hand.

The interviews were submitted for content analysis, and the authors performed a descriptive design. Essentially a mixed-methods approach, categories were assigned to interview excerpts to be analysed according to terminology use and frequency (Mayring, 2014). Constant awareness of predicted and new categories emerging from the data enabled the authors to identify when saturation occurred, that is, once interview statements began to coincide with themes and perceptions observed in prior interviews and new categories stopped appearing. Despite the number of interviews impacting the generalizability of the data collected, this does not take away the important elements brought to light by the frontline agents, especially with the presence of a saturation point.

The content analysis revealed several prominent categories: knowledge transmission, communication, educator behavioural change, student behavioural change, and use of digital tools. Additional categories that emerged during the analysis included disincentives to implement (the top-down) approach, socioeconomic challenges, and challenges in public education.

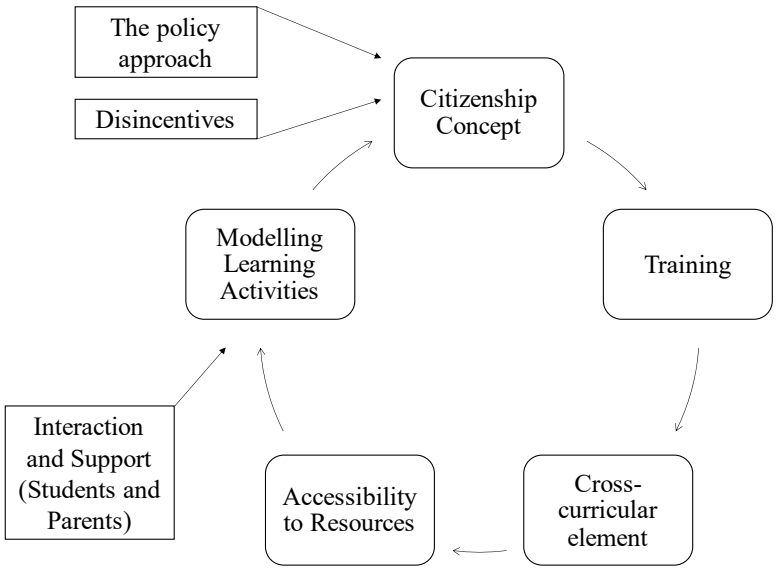
To illustrate, disincentives to implement frequently emerged as a theme, with educators highlighting an excessive workload in public education and a lack of coordination among other participating teachers. The top-down approach was another critical category, as those interviewed reported pressure from their superiors during implementation and, in some cases, dependence on school principals to perform the activities.

In summary, the content analysis made it possible to uncover key themes and new categories, enhancing our understanding of the multifaceted experiences of educators in the context of SA implementation. The following section details the interview results and provides a clearer picture of how certain policy processes may (or may not) have reduced the implementation gap.

5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The five key policy processes for effective CEP implementation, with a concern for reducing the gap, correlated with other categories identified in the study, specifically: i) how each school understood and established the policy approach (in a top-down, bottoms-up or mixed manner); ii) the interaction or support the CEP had from the students and their parents/guardians; and iii) disincentives to implement. Figure 1 shows these key policy processes as a cycle. As each of them is interrelated, it is natural to observe their cyclical nature. When considering the SA 2021 Edition, which contained these five policy processes, whether in higher or lower degrees, other variables have been observed through the content analysis, as seen in Figure 1. Findings from the interviews, presented below, demonstrate how the policy approach and disincentives mainly impacted the clear understanding of the citizenship concept employed in EA. At the same time, modelling learning activities are affected by interaction and support from students and parents/guardians.

Figure 1. A visual description of key policy processes that impact the implementation gap in CEP considering the SA case particularities



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

After initial registration in the 2021 Edition, the first formal contact with frontline educators was the pre-service professional development training sessions, led by the CGE-GO Social Control teams. CGE-GO gave each school a quota of teachers, one to three, that could participate, and these registered educators were obligated to participate in professional development training sessions. There was no restriction on teachers from any school subject from applying, and SA maintained the cross-curricular element of citizenship education.

With an internal communication strategy based on innovation and technology, as Amaral et al. (2023) stated, training sessions were conducted online and in live or recorded formats, with accessible resources to refer. Free platforms – YouTube, Telegram, and WhatsApp – were used in the 2021 Edition to decrease face-to-face interaction during continued social isolation.

Training sessions were concise and shorter than in the pilot edition in 2019, but there were multiple mechanisms to appease shortcomings. A website was created and contained public information regarding the policy, including the public notice that created SA and professional development resources. The Telegram groups included the latter, guides, and recorded presentations on how to implement the three SA activities.

Even so, miscommunication was observed, specifically concerning the concept of citizenship used. Interestingly, the interviewees did not feel comfortable using common terms involved in citizenship education, such as ‘civic skills’ or ‘active citizenship’. A majority regarded SA as a policy that gives incentive to ‘student protagonism’.

> Yes, I think it's a very interesting project for teenagers, which should continue, because it helps us at school too, right? Because as well as a prize, [it’s] not just a prize, it teaches them to have leadership, to be protagonists, to build what they want, to create strategies to solve certain problems. (DIR03; translated by the authors)

> I think that, in a way, they handled it well. In a way, it helped me a lot in this new project because we needed to work on their protagonism. And this has helped our current work, that is the protagonism the child has. Now it's their turn to speak, to intervene, right? And I think they've already started to see that in the project. They have different views on the same type

> of situation, different perspectives, different points of view, you know? And they see that this is possible. It's possible to align everything and it's possible to reach a consensus on what's best, right? I don't think that this is not only true at school, but also in life. Everything has different points of view, everything has another side, but we also have to respect that. (DIR05)

The educators described common themes inherent to a global and post-colonial perspective of citizenship conceptualisation, resulting in problem-solving, consensus-building development, and valuing diversified knowledge. Even so, front liners had difficulty associating these abilities with citizenship. This may be linked to the policy implementation approach, usually top-down or mixed with a bottom-up style; this depended on frontline investment and/or any disincentives to implement. This is exemplified below by PR12. By stating her dependence on her superior, the school principal, on obtaining information and following policy guidelines, the top-down approach is maintained, usually causing low levels of policy adherence and effective change.

> It was the principal who called me in and told us to develop some activities, and I'm working on science and mathematics. I did the game circuits in mathematics and the millionaire's show. I don't know if that was what I had to hand in. There were some activities that we could adapt. (PR12)

Due to the high workload the educators in the public education system face, such as PR12, the top-down approach can become a way for educators to declare participation in a CEP without effectively implementing it. Though most interview participants showed adamant interest in the project, when front liners do not assume responsibility in citizenship education, the notion of citizenship becomes fuzzier, and the implementation gap widens.

Concerning disincentives, low levels of knowledge transmission, communication issues (between other participating teachers, organising the information from the multiple online platforms, etc.), difficulties dealing with SA activity deadlines, and demands with teaching are the main factors. Table 3 contains excerpts of these sub-themes to exemplify.

Table 2. Sub-themes identified from the category Disincentives to Implement – excerpts from interview participants

Code	Interview Excerpt	Sub-themes
DIR02	I only took part up to that point, and for a while, I even forgot about this project because I didn't see anyone else talking about it. Everyone in my region found it very difficult.	Communication Issues
DIR03	So, I found it a bit confusing because there were a lot of people and a lot of information that was passed on, and so it got a bit confusing. I don't think the communication was that good, and I think other means could have been used.	
DIR03	Yes, we managed to plan, more or less, to talk to the kids, but I was in two schools. I was here for a short time with the kids who were taking part in the project. It was a high school, and so there were other teachers, too. I think they were very busy, and we couldn't even mobilise. It was a very tight schedule at the time. I was sad not to have been able to put it into practice.	Demands with Teaching
PR04	I don't think we even finished the project because it was very short notice, and there were some rules that I was upset about. There was a rule about the school chant [the Special task, the second activity], even if the video had the right words, just because it was done on short notice and the deadline was short. I didn't manage to read and mention everything that was instructed, you know.	Difficulty with Deadlines

Code	Interview Excerpt	Sub-themes
PR05	I see it as a good project. But just because I see it for this work, it should be, from my point of view, done with the students, even modifying some of the school's environment, you know? However, I felt that public property should be valued more. I think the SA should be geared more towards valuing heritage in my view. Because when you start working on this in school, it spills out onto the streets. [Educator confusing the CEP as a way to value school property and not civic values]	Low Levels of Knowledge Transmission

Interestingly, a key policy process, modelling learning activities, was consistently used throughout implementation, from the Special Task to the Civic Audit. This led to more interaction and support from students and their parents/guardians during policy implementation. The three activities required students to have a hands-on approach, with a large emphasis on the Civic Audit. It involved performing a fictional audit in the school and student decision-making: the students, with the help of their teachers, chose how they could improve existing physical or educational structures at their school. They were incentivised to ask local businesses for supplies and their parents/guardians and other non-participating students to volunteer.

The activity applied multiple civic mechanisms that, in the end, helped shape this Brazilian CEP. The statements from PR02 and PR07 shed light on what micro-processes this entailed. It can be assessed that it was a crucial way to decrease the chronic implementation gap.

> Then there were discussions and even votes because some [of the kids] wanted to organise the court, and others wanted to organise the library inside the school. This generated costs, and we didn't have time to find the money. So, we had several meetings. (PR02)

> I had a talk with them [the kids], I talked to them about it, and I told them that the project was so that we could not only bring this benefit to us, the issue of the court, but also to society because it would be one point less. When away from the school, [there is] the issue of kids getting involved with drugs. They thought it was great, the talk was good, everything. (PR07)

Due to the modelling learning activities, with special attention given to the Civic Audit, the educators led their students to practice active citizenship behaviour, such as holding meetings and collaborating to reach a consensus and bring awareness to how actions in the modelling activities can impact their community. These activities bring into practice the desired citizenship concept – cultivating educated, well-informed and conscious individuals, considering post-colonial concerns.

In general, the Brazilian case demonstrates that the five policy processes identified in the literature can widen or narrow the implementation gap in CEPs. The interconnected quality of the citizenship concept and modelling learning activities within the SA context led to gap reductions. Multiple modelling learning activities helped implement a CEP that is faithful to the concept of citizenship, even if the front liners misunderstand it or disregard it. The hands-on activities were extremely useful for CEP implementation. However, the citizenship concept can also be hindered, even with training sessions and accessibility to pedagogical and administrative resources, if there are external disincentives and/or if the policy approach maintains itself in a top-down manner.

The project was implemented with the collaboration of teachers from different academic backgrounds, with the support of the project coordinators (CGE-GO and SEDUC) and the school coordinators (principals). It was clear that communication played a key role throughout the implementation process. In addition, technology has proved to be a widely used tool for both professional

development and communication - accessing materials and clarifying doubts with policymakers concerning implementation.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The study explored the implementation gap in CEP with a post-colonial perspective and focused on the “Students with Attitude” (SA) project. Interviews with participants revealed several critical insights into the effectiveness and challenges of implementing CEP, in which the research team observed specific policy processes.

The definitions of citizenship were also discussed, and the idea of a “good citizen” in the Brazilian public education system in the state of Goiás still holds traces of traditional civic skills. This limits the transformative potential citizenship education has as well as the benefits of incrementing diverse knowledge and indigenous practices in the policy. Even so, treating citizenship education as a cross-curricular subject, ensuring easy access to pedagogical resources, and providing comprehensive training for educators were identified as secondary factors in successful implementation.

The data collected from the "Students with Attitude" project demonstrated that hands-on activities and interactive approaches significantly enhance student engagement and understanding of civic concepts. This case study highlights the potential for well-structured citizenship education programs to foster active civic participation and critical thinking among students, despite the constraints posed by a Eurocentric foundation of what citizenship entails.

Nonetheless, the implementation gap is not just a consequence of policymakers who abide by the “good citizen” notion of citizenship. It is also the result of the lack of recognition of the macro-to-micro gap. Though it is common for policy actors at the national level to formulate policies that will breathe life through local actions, how front liners perceive key concepts for better levels of knowledge transmission is left to the side.

The case study conclusively draws attention to the urgent issue of the implementation gap. In light of the expected positive effects of citizenship education in democracies, such as civil society participation and engagement, the final goal aims to enrich the current public policy and citizenship education literature. In this manner, it is possible to understand the need to transcend and broaden participation beyond the traditional and formal moulds, transforming citizenship education into a tool for fostering educated, informed, and aware young people.

The analysis contributes to the broader discourse on citizenship education by providing empirical evidence of effective policy processes in a post-colonial context. The insights gained from this research can inform future policy development and implementation strategies, aiming to bridge the gap between macro-level policy formulations and micro-level educational practices. Ultimately, this work underscores the necessity of adapting citizenship education to local cultural and historical contexts and achieve meaningful and lasting impacts on democratic engagement.

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