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Citizenship Education in Italian Textbooks. How Much Space is There for Europe and Active Citizenship?

- European recommendations on citizenship education are far from being incorporated in textbooks.
- Active citizenship is marginally addressed and it is separate from European education in textbooks.
- Textbooks adopt a descriptive/informative approach to the EU issues.
- Textbooks do not encourage young people to develop a full ownership and better knowledge of the EU reality.

Purpose: In this article we investigated how the Italian school curricula incorporated European and national recommendations concerning European and Citizenship education, analysing how much and which kind of space is devoted to Europe and active citizenship in Italian high school textbooks.
Design/methodology/approach: We selected a sample of bestseller textbooks of different disciplines (History and English as a Second Language) for secondary (lyceum and technical) school students (18 years old), including books explicitly designed for citizenship education, and analysed them using a mixed methods approach (quantitative analysis, and thematic content analysis).
Findings: We argue that the current European recommendations on citizenship education are far from being incorporated in the architecture and the contents of textbooks used in Italian secondary schools. We identified some shortcomings which should be addressed to increase the capacity of textbooks to form young European citizen.
Practical implications: The opportunities that the EU offers to young people to practice active citizenship and supporting the acquisition of critical and reflective skills beyond formal knowledge deserve more attention.

Keywords:
European active citizenship, textbooks analysis, Italy, citizenship education

1 Introduction

The term Active Citizenship was introduced by the European Council in 2001 to describe a way of empowering citizens to have their voice heard outside and within their communities, and encompassing a sense of belonging and a stake in the society in which they live, the value of democracy, equality and understanding different cultures and different opinions (European Commission, 2001). Theoretically, the concept draws from an interdisciplinary set of literature, including education, sociology, political science, even though the use of the term derives predominantly from the field of education, including both formal and non-formal education, and research projects in the majority of cases are concerned with the social outcomes of learning (Wringe, 1992; Harber, 1992). Its underlying theory is that, through learning experiences such as formal education, civic competence learning (civic knowledge, skills, attitudes and values), people are enabled to become active citizens (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009). The concept of active citizenship has been defined in a number of different theoretical and empirical ways (see Nelson & Kerr, 2006), but Hoskins' definition of Active Citizenship as "participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy" (Hoskins 2006) has informed European policy making and citizenship education initiatives in the

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last fifteen years. Active Citizenship in Hoskins's terms includes participation in Political Life, Civil Society, Community Life and Values, encompassing a range of actions, from involvement in participatory democracy (including actions that hold governments accountable), to representative democracy (including actions such as voting), and to participation in the everyday life of the community. The definition is inclusive with respect to new forms of civic and political participation such as one-off issue politics and responsible consumption, as well as the more traditional forms of membership in political parties and non-governmental organizations. Values include pluralism, respect for human dignity and endorsement of democratic principles, which also set the ethical boundaries of active citizenship.

Also Ekman and Amna (2012) focused on the ways people participate as the key dimension of active citizenship, proposing a distinction between manifest political participation and latent forms of participation. Compared to Hoskins they included also "less active" forms of citizenship, like recycling or reading political news, that may be particularly important in develop-mental terms (see Barrett & Smith, 2014).

Following the previous authors, we also believe that participatory practices are a critical dimension of active citizenship, but we conceptualize it as a multidimensional construct, including psychological citizenship, the subjecttive sense of being a citizen (see Sindic, 2011).

Psychological citizenship includes sense of belonging and attitudes like readiness to take action, which are the result of a process building on different blocks, including knowledge and skills, and it is conditioned by contextual

boundaries, that may provide - or not - the rights and the opportunities to participate.

Our definition is consistent with the Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, that was adopted in 2010, by all the Member States of the European Union. According to the Charter the goals of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are equipping learners with knowledge, understanding and skills, and empowering them with the readiness to take action in society in defense and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society.

The joint interim report of the Council and the European Commission on the situation regarding the education and training objectives set for 2010 (European Commission, 2003) stated the importance of the European dimension in education: according to the document, school has a fundamental role to play, allowing everyone to be informed and understand the meaning of European integration. All education systems should ensure that students, by the end of their secondary education, have the knowledge and competences needed to prepare young people for their role as a future citizen in Europe. This document built on the resolution of the EC and Ministers of Education in 1988, that established, amongst others, the following goals: "to strengthen the sense of European identity in young people and illustrate them the true value of European education " and "improving knowledge of the Community and its Member States, in their historical, cultural, economic and social issues" (p. 177/5).

Gavari Starkie and Garcìa Garrido (2006) found that, despite these recommendations, European education and democratic citizenship education developed separately in school curricula.

Based on these premises the aim of the paper was to analyse to what extent the textbooks used in the Italian educational system adopted the European recommenddations, concerning both European education and democratic citizenship education, understanding in particular how much and which kind of space is devoted to Europe and active citizenship in high school textbooks.

Textbooks play a key role in realising the aims of national curricula and supporting effective teaching (Oates, 2014), in particular when it comes to citizenship education. The reason is clearly stated, by Schlisser (1989/90): "in addition to transmitting knowledge, textbooks also seek to anchor the political and social norms of a society. Textbooks convey a global understanding of history and of the rules of society as well as norms of living with other people" (p. 81).

We will briefly review the literature that has examined how educational policies implemented citizenship education and European education in Italy and how textbooks approached citizenship and European education in

different countries, with a specific focus on EU countries and Italy.

1.2 The approach of educational policies to citizenship education in Italy

 Citizenship education in Italy (since 1958) is understood as a transversal task for all subjects. Bombardelli and Codato (2017) provided a detailed analysis of the current legislation on citizenship education, showing also that European recommendations are widely accepted and referenced. A significant milestone was represented by the educational reform in 2008, which introduced the cross-curricular topic "Citizenship and constitution". Based on this law, teachers (from primary to secondary level) must currently include learning objectives related to citizenship and the constitution in the teaching of their subjects' areas, in particular:

- Human dignity: human rights, migration, human relationships, prejudices and discrimination;
- Identity and belonging: this area includes knowledge of the Italian Constitution and of the European Institutions and documents;
- Otherness & relationships: this area includes life skills, relationship humans-environment;
- Participation: includes knowledge of international rights and of the opportunities to participate to democratic life in school.

 The first article of "Citizenship and constitution" Law states that the teaching activity in civic field has to be delivered in the common subjects during teaching time; it is intended to be delivered through a cross-curricular dimension integrated into several conventional subjects (such as history, economy, law, social studies, geography, philosophy or religious education/ ethics). The assessment of students in this field, irrespective of the forms (e.g. specific projects, "traditional" teaching hours, etc.) is a responsibility of teachers of history-geography/social science subject areas, but there is no separate evaluation.

 The Recent National School Law (107/2015) confirmed the importance of citizenship education affirming that schools should support students':

- Development of competencies in the field of active and democratic citizenship through the promotion of intercultural education and peace, respect for differences and dialogue between cultures, promoting students' responsibility, solidarity, care of common goods and awareness of rights and duties;
- Development of responsible behaviour inspired by knowledge and respect for legality, sustainability and environmental and cultural awareness.

 European citizenship is part of Citizenship and Constitution. Based on the agreement *The European dimension in Citizenship and Constitution* (2015)[1], established between The European Commission, the European Parliament, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Government and MIUR (Ministry

of education) Europe should be treated as a necessary dimension of any kind of citizenship education.

1.3 The textbooks approach to citizenship education

Davies and Issitt (2005) analyzing how Australian, Canadian and English textbooks treat civic education, found that Canadian textbooks tend to be focused on providing information about constitutional issues, while Australian ones are more focused on working on (academic) skills that enable young people to understand society; English textbooks are more oriented to the promotion of positive social skills, like cooperation and positive attitudes when facing interpersonal/social challenges, focusing on the qualities that a good dutiful citizenship should possess. Despite these specificities, they found that all textbooks avoid proposing a radical conception of citizenship. Their results are in line with Osborne (1985) finding a limited attention to diversity, a stronger focus on national rather than on global issues, and a cognitive-informative rather than a critical-active approach. Zimenkova (2008), analyzing Russian textbooks, found that citizenship as a formal status is well examined within books, but citizenship tend to be framed also as a moral quality, that do not allow any possible opposition to the state. Faas and Ross (2012) analysed three textbooks of the curricular discipline Civic, Social and Political education (CSPE) used in Ireland, a country that in their view has ethics and values as a priority in education. Their analysis revealed that textbooks, even if the explicit priority of CSPE discipline is to make students aware of "the importance of active, participatory citizenship" do not mention the fact that citizens have a responsibility/duty to be active (p. 582). Moreover references to global or European citizenship were limited, with a focus on national Irish identity. Meyer, Bromley and Ramirez (2010) analysed 465 textbooks of social science used in secondary school from 69 countries published since 1970 to understand how they treated human rights. As they expected, relevance of human rights increased across time but they identified as typical of Western society textbooks a sort of normalization of the process of human rights acquisition, as if the acquisition of rights for some groups did not come through significant and dramatic struggles. De La Collado and Atxurra (2006), analyzing textbooks in Spanish primary curriculum, worried about the risk that, given their characteristics, textbooks have established that the democratic citizen is a passive obedient one (see also Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). They found also that contents related to active participation appeared only in books targeting the first years of primary education, and were limited to school participation, while attention to the acquisition of reflective and critical skills, that are important in principle, was residual.

1.4 The textbooks approach to Europe and citizenship education

Few studies considered the European dimension in citizenship education research: Audigier (2006), analysing curricula in different European countries, found that a truly European perspective is missing and commented:

"This absence is not total; there are some references, especially towards the study of European institutions; but they are present in a smooth clear, neutralized way, similar to other political institutions. Most of the times, you have to look for Europe elsewhere, especially in history and geography curricula if not even in foreign languages" (p.16).

Pingel (2003) summarised the presence of Europe in school textbooks used in the nineties across different European countries, as a residual one, eventually focused only on the most important European organizations, with a limited room for the idea of sense of belonging to Europe, as something that is to still to be built (see also Soysal, 2006). More recently Brennetot (2017) analysing geography textbooks used in different countries (mostly non-European) concluded that Europe tends to be presented as a reified object, while the EU appears as a political actor that has not been yet able to complete its own project. This way of presenting Europe and European issues according to Brennetot (2017) facilitates the work of teachers, helping them to avoid controversial issues.

Bombardelli (2003) who analysed how Europe was conceptualized in Italian civic education textbooks used in the secondary junior high school, revealed that overall students are guided to build a favourable attitude towards the European integration process, with limited space for its problematic aspects. The inspected textbooks adopted a descriptive rather than critical approach, with many notions and few opportunities to discuss and reflect on the relationship between Europe and the everyday life of young people. Bombardelli (2003) concluding her analysis identified as the most impor-tant pitfalls of the Italian textbooks, the absence of a problem solving approach, not enough room devoted to Europe, and rare encouragement of young people to develop a better knowledge of their reality (includeing the European one) and to prepare youth to engage as responsible and aware people.

Taken together the papers examined pointed out that textbooks tend to convey normative and quite simple conceptualizations of democratic/active citizenship, where the EU and sense of belonging to Europe are over-all missing, and with more emphasis on equipping students with a neutralized institutional knowledge than on increasing their reflective and critical skills.

1.5 The research questions

Do the textbooks used in 2016 in the Italian reformed secondary school, which emphasises the role of citizenship education in helping students develop social and civic competences (European Commission, 2016), incurporate the European recommendations on citizenship education? Which discourses of European active citizenship do they propose? Are we going to find results similar to those by Bombardelli in 2003 regarding European citizenship education in Italy? Our empirical

analysis on a sample of six Italian textbooks[2] of different disciplines used in secondary education (ISCED 3) will provide an answer to these questions. The textbook analysis has been conducted within the CATCH-EyoU project, in particular the work package *Representation of the EU and youth active EU citizenship in educational contexts*, aimed at identifying and comparing key discourses on the EU and youth active citizenship in school curricula, school textbooks and among teachers and students in six European countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Germany).

2 Material and methods

2.1 Sample selection and procedure

In order to answer to our questions we identified three types of textbooks to analyse: textbooks of History (whose teachers have the responsibility to prepare and evaluate citizenship competence acquisition), textbooks of English as a Second Language, for their relevance regarding the European and international dimension of citizenship (and easily allowing for cross-national comparisons between different EU countries), and textbooks of Citizenship and constitution, introduced in recent years and explicitly designed for citizenship education.

Our final sample includes six textbooks from the last year of secondary education (ISCED 2/3), two of History (Book A, Book B), two of Citizenship and constitution (Book C, Book D) and two of English as a Second Language (ESL) (Book E, Book F) used in different educational tracks (see Table 1). Even if citizenship education is a cross curricular topic, and competences in this field can be gained through different activities across disciplines (for example, through projects offered on different topics by NGOs), Citizenship and constitution textbooks have been designed to integrate the history and geography curriculum in particular with the acquisition of competences on citizenship and constitution. They are organized like curricular related textbooks (see appendix for more details), but their use is not mandatory, unless they are adopted by history teachers (only in this case they are used in classes both by teachers and students).

Table 1 List of selected textbooks

Title	Publisher	ISBN	Author(s)	Year	Discipline	Educational track
DIALOGO CON LA STORIA E L'ATTUALITA' 3 - EDIZIONE MISTA L'eta' Contemporanea + Atlante + Espansione Web 3	Rcs Education.It (Italian Publisher)	ISBN 978-88-221-8353-8	Brancati Antonio - Pagliarani Trebi	2012	Contemporary History	Lyceum and technical school
MILLEDUEMILA - UN MONDO AL PLURALE 3 - Il Novecento E Il Duemila + Guida All'esame + Espansione Web 3	Rizzoli (Italian Publisher)	ISBN 978-88-221-8352-1	Castronovo Valerio	2012	Contemporary History	Lyceum and technical school
CITTADINANZA E COSTITUZIONE*	Rizzoli (Italian Publisher)	ISBN 978-88-221-7286-0	Castronovo Valerio	2010	Citizenship & Constitution	Lyceum and technical school
CITTADINANZA E COSTITUZIONE	Zanichelli Editore (Italian Publisher)	ISBN 976-88-08-06247-S	Vincenzo Conte	2010	Citizenship & Constitution	Lyceum and technical school
PERFORMER. PERFORMER CULTURE & LITERATURE 3 LDM 3 Con DVD-ROM The Twentieth Century And The Present	Editore Zanichelli (Italian Publisher)	ISBN: 9788808117311	Spiazzi Marina - Tavella Marina - Layton Margaret	2013	ESL	Lyceum
IN BUSINESS DIGITAL EDITION	Pearson (Non Italian Publisher)	ISBN: 9788883390739	Abbentini - Richardson - Vaugham	2012	ESL	Technical school

* Selled with MILLEDUEMILA

History and ESL books were chosen based on data[3] from the Italian Association of Librarians in the year 2015 on most sold textbooks, while the books of Citizenship and constitution were of interest for the present research due to their specific topic/contents, but no data were available regarding their actual use in school (even if they are both edited by the two Italian textbooks publishers which have the largest market share in Italy and book C is sold with a bestseller). Our selection is not comprehensive/exhaustive, but it is a sample of the kind of textbooks that were more commonly used in Italian secondary schools in the 2015/2016 school year.

2.2 Instruments

To perform the analysis we used a semi-structured grid that was prepared according to the guidelines on textbook analysis provided by Unesco in 2010. The grid allows for quantitative (number of pages and paragraphs) and qualitative analysis of the following themes: Construction of EU, EU institutions and functioning, National sense of belonging, EU sense of belonging, Global sense of belonging, Active Citizenship, Youth active citizenship (active citizenship with explicit references to young people), Youth issues (e.g., bullying, unemployment, drugs, sex, careers, youth cultures), Living with and relating with others/ intercultural awareness (which includes explicit references to ethnicity, cultural issues, relationships between different national, ethnic

and cultural groups). The themes were identified as relevant to the topic under inspection, coherent with the definition of European Active citizenship that was proposed by the European Commission in 2001 and broad enough to be covered in different disciplines.

Sense of belonging was analysed following to the definition provided by McMillan and Chavis (1986), when illustrating "sense of community". According to them sense of belonging refers to the feeling, belief, and expectations that one fits in the group and that one is part of a group. Portions of text that fit this definition (respectively to National, European and global community) were classified in these areas.

Youth active citizenship was analysed according to definition of youth active citizenship provided by the Council of Europe Recommendation on the Participation of Children and Young People under the Age of 18[4] (2012). Portions of text describing young people as active players in the society, or referring to ways of participation in political life explicitly designed for/targeting young people (i.e. youth councils or youth parliaments) were classified in this category.

In applying the grid we used a thematic content analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) involving three people: at first we selected two books, that were fully read and coded independently by two researchers who discussed the respective coding and clarified their coding strategy, and its coherence with the theoretical or empirical definitions adopted for each category. In order to reach a complete agreement on the classification of each chunk of text under inspection, a third person helped the two coders in solving inconsistencies, asking coders to explain their respective choices, providing theoretical or empirical reasons in support of their choices on the analysis of the first two books. For

example one critical point in applying the grid was that there was no agreement on the classification of text describing entitlement to vote at National level: one coder was oriented to include this text in the category "active citizenship", because vote is a form of participation, while the other did not agree, because being entitled does not mean that one votes. The third researcher proposed to use a different category, because in the grid content referred to EU citizenship entitlement was included in the category EU functioning, but there was no equivalent category concerning the national level. Based on this analysis active citizenship was split in *democratic citizenship*, including criteria to buy/access legal citizenship, rights recognized to citizens (that can be conceptualized as the formal "being" dimension of active citizenship) at national or international level, and *participatory practices/forms of participation* (that could be conceptualized as the behavioral "doing" dimension of active citizenship).

This collaborative approach helped the team to to develop a common understanding of the coding categories, make them more explicit and more grounded in theory and allowed researchers to apply the grid autonomously. For the didactic analysis and the "exploration of the pedagogy behind the text" sample pages/ paragraphs in each category were analysed collaboratively, to decide to what extent the textbook adopted an informative or a reflexive approach and the extent of complexity of the arguments used, in particular if confrontation of different perspectives was used.

3 Results
The coverage of the different topics in the textbooks is presented in table 2.

Table 2 % of pages (pag.) devoted to the topic under inspection in each book

	History (Hist)		Citizenship and Constitution (C&C)		ESL	
	Book A	Book B	Book C	Book D	Book E	Book F
Construction of EU	<1%	1.7%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
EU institutions and functioning	1%	<1%	<1%	9%	0	<1%
National Sense of belonging	0	0	<1%	0	0	0
EU Sense of belonging	<1%	<1%	0	<1%	0	1%
Global sense of belonging	0	0	0	<1%	0	0
Active Citizenship*	10%	11%	<1%	8%	6%	1%
Democratic citizenship	2%	<1%	<1%	4%	<1%	<1%
Practices of participation	8%	11%	<1%	4%	6%	<1%
Youth citizenship	<1%	<1%	0	0	<1%	0
Youth issues	<1%	<1%	<1%	3%	5%	<1%
Living with…	1.4%	2%	21%	22%	5%	7%
% covering inspected topics	16%	18%	37%	42%	18%	11%
N pages of the book	728	835	159	191	223	447

* Active citizenship sums its 2 sub-categories Democratic –institutional citizenship + Practices of participation

Citizenship and constitution books (C&C) were those that covered the topics under inspection to a greater extent. Overall, both the books C and D devoted around 40% of the total pages to the issues of democratic citizenship, practices of participation, the EU, and living with others. Living with others was the most important section in both books; EU institutions and functioning came as second (5 to 8%), democratic citizenship as third

(from 4 to 6%) and practices of participation as fourth (with percentages ranging from 3 to 6%). Youth issues found hardly any space in the books and youth citizenship was left almost entirely uncovered.

The History textbooks (Hist) were those that devoted more space to practices of participation (ranging from 9 to 12%). Active Citizenship was treated at length from an historical perspective; it didn't deserve much space in

ESL books, and in citizenship books, which tended to focus more on the global and institutional dimensions of citizenship, and to cultural awareness at the global, transnational level. Discourses on active citizenship and cultural awareness were almost completely disconnected from discourses concerning Europe (basically a matter of institutions and institutional functioning), and youth. As such we analysed them separately in the following paragraphs.

3.1 The EU and European sense of belonging

Overall we identified three clear disciplinary perspectives (history, citizenship and ESL), that looked at Europe from two distinctive angles: the insider angle, that was common in history and citizenship books, that empha- sised respectively the EU construction, and the EU institutions' functioning. The outsider one was charac- teristic of ESL books, which allowed more space for "anti- EU" sentiments, and for "non belonging" discourses (e.g., GB decided to join the EU to benefit from the European wealth).

Among the Europe-related issues, the ones that received most attention were *European Institutions* and the *European construction* in a historical perspective. History books mentioned figures who contributed to the burgeoning idea of EU before it was established (e.g. Gualtiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, who prepared a Chart for a United and Free Europe in 1941 in Ventotene). They provided information about the events, plans and documents that were considered preparatory for the foundation of the EU (e.g., Marshall plan). The books on Citizenship & Constitution provided more detailed explanations of EU institutions and functioning, including full and detailed references to specific EU laws (e.g., EU law on privacy).

In ESL books European institutions were mentioned/ analysed having the UK as a point of reference:

> "Why did Britain join the European Community in 1973? Britain was doing less well economically than its European neighbours and, partly to share the new European wealth, the country joined the European Community in 1973." (p. 551, Book E - ESL)

Three out of 6 books included few reflections on *European sense of belonging*: Book F - ESL (p. 280) dis- cussed the weakening of the European nation- state in the following terms:

> "Since the 19th century the dominant powers in Europe have been national states: the UK, France, Germany, Italy, etc. Decisions were made independently by the govern- ment in each national capital. However, as the world be- came more "globalized" and European nations have de- clined as world powers, people are questioning the role of the traditional nation- state. Most Europeans now recog- nize that their nations are relatively small and weak and that they need to unite and work together, in institutions like the EU, if they are going to deal with the problems facing the world. Meanwhile, in larger European countries, there has also been pressure on the nation- state from below. Individual regions are trying to take power away

from central government and create greater regional autonomy- or even complete independence in some cases."

Textbooks mentioned only briefly the "historical" reasons for the construction of the European Union in particular the need to "establish a third force besides USA and USSR" and the priorities and principles of the actual EU such as: *"The EU aims are to establish peace, prosperity and freedom for its 495 million citizens and to create a fairer, safer world"* (Book F - ESL, p. 370); other mentioned aims were *"to allow free circulation of people and goods"* (Book C - C&C, p. 128): as such the EU seems mostly based on economic and commercial agreements.

Critical reflection on the EU was proposed in history and Citizenship & Constitution textbooks in the following vein:

> "The [European] history is a story with a lot of com- promises: the various agreements and treaties have greatly facilitated the economy of the country but one of the more critical is precisely that of being too tied to the bureaucracy without giving way to a European project linked to the culture and ideals, which are essential factors to arouse a feeling of belonging to the Union." (Book A - Hist, p.644- 646)

> "It is not easy to define clearly what the European Union is. It is something new considering international laws. It is something less than a federal state, because EU member states are totally independent, but it is also more than a community of independent/sovereign states, because across time states have progressively reduced their auto- nomy leaving part of their "sovereignty" to the communitarian (EU) institutions." (Book C - C&C, p.129)

Vignettes were used to convey a critical vision on the EU: a satirical vignette depicted Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor on the European throne deciding for measures on Greece in 2011, when the country was in severe economic crisis and indebted with the EU (p. 133, Book C - C&C).

Also the idea of *belonging to EU* was conveyed more with images than with words: in book F (p.369), the image of the European flag, with the twelve stars in a circle was accompanied with a caption that explained that it "*symbolizes the ideas of unity, solidarity and harmony among the people of Europe*". A similar caption appeared in book A- Hist (p. 533); in the other books the Flag was simply there, without captions. In Book B - Hist (p. 539), that included sections on "symbolic/emblematic places", there was a photo of Strasbourg, and a photo of the EU Parliament. The text stated that:

> "Strasbourg was chosen as the location of the European Parliament, due to the particularities of the city (bilingual, transborders); the idea to set there not the "headquarters" but the parliament, that is elected with universal suffrage by the EU citizens, served to affirm that, after all the con- flicts, tragedies and bereavements, a continent of people united by common democratic rules existed, beyond any doubts".

A recurring word in the discourses about Europe was integration: however, this was used more often to refer to the process of formal inclusion of new member states than to refer to social or cultural integration of people.

3.2 Active citizenship
There were no explicit references to the concept of European active citizenship in the textbooks analysed. Only one book (Book D - C&C) proposed an explicit definition of active citizenship. Remarkably it was not conveyed in the text, nor it was proposed as taken from an official/authored document. The definition had to be reconstructed through a completion exercise (the same exercise appears twice in the book, in slightly different forms):

> "One talks about active citizenship as the capacity of citizens to organize themselves in many ways, to mobilize human resources and to act in different ways to protect the rights, employing powers and responsibilities aimed at caring and to the development of common goods." (p. 32)

Given that there was almost no explicit discourse/ reference to active citizenship in the textbooks, we looked for text that could be framed as active citizenship. History textbooks were rich of examples of *participatory practices,* as defined by Ekman and Amna (2012)*:* acquisition of the right to vote, establishing democracy and elections, voting, establishing and supporting political parties, terrorism, revolution, pacifist movements, global movements, independent movements, students' movements, women's movements, resistance, antiapartheid, decolonization, contestation through arts and intellectual movements.

Our analysis, however, revealed that in the inspected books there was not so much room for civic – latent political participation (only Book C - C&C, p., 67, includes a box on "volunteers' solidarity reporting recent statistics on how many people are involved in volunteering). Forms of passive and active non-participation were not distinguished: disaffection (in particular towards the EU institutions) was mentioned but not really analysed in its consequences or causes. The only exception was book C - C&C (p. 130), which encouraged the EU to "*take into account the feeling of many citizens that the EU is a supra-bureaucracy*". The book explained that:

"many of those who distrust the EU Institutions benefit from them (e.g. having access to some forms of "welfare" based on funds that the EU provided to regions facing economic and industrial crises). However the EU and the National Institutions should take into account this perception, in order to try to increase citizens' involvement in decision making processes." (p. 130).

Youth citizenship seemed almost a neglected topic: only 2 books devoted some pages to this topic (0.7% book A - Hist and 1% book E - ESL). None of the books on Citizenship & Constitution dealt explicitly with youth citizenship. One of the ESL books had a big section on youth issues (Book E- ESL), and also one of the books on Citizenship & Constitution (Book D – C&C). Youth issues

were not a topic worth of interest in history books, while it was covered partly in the books of the other two disciplines examined. Book B- Hist devoted lots of pages to students' and juvenile movements (p. 571, 617, 618, 655-656), but after the sixties young people seemed to disappear. When the book mentioned the Arab Spring (p. 758), or any other recent historical events, both at the national and at the global level, the word "youth" was completely absent.

The most represented practices of participation were vote, protest and social movements: in History and Citizenship & Constitution textbooks there was also space for illustrating the tragic seasons of terrorism (the Years of Lead, during the 70s) and the mafia massacres in Italy. Italian anti-fascist resistance, representing an important milestone in national history and in national identity, received attention in big portions of text.

In Ekman & Amna (2012) terms, the books that we have inspected dealt a lot with manifest political participation, and to a lesser extent with latent one. This is coherent with the limited attention for the developmental/latent dimension of participation: we found no reference in any books to students' opportunities to participate (e.g. in school, to understand and to enhance their capacity to participate in schools board, councils, etc.), and very few descriptions of forms of civic engagement (i.e., involvement in volunteers' organizations), or reference to youth civic engagement, in particular in contemporary society. We found no mention of young people's actual political participation, and no reference to youth disaffection from politics. This absence was rather curious, given that in particular in history and citizenship textbooks there was a lot of space on vote, voting rights, etc. But it may be consistent with a conservative normative definition of citizenship and a resulting emphasis on voting as the "right" and just participatory behaviour.

Analysing the style adopted to deal with the contents under inspection, we observed a prevalence of descriptive/informative approaches rather than reflexive / interpretative ones, giving limited opportunities to the development of critical awareness of students.

Most paragraphs classified as *democratic citizenship,* that deal with vote and the functioning of the institutions adopted a factual style: "the institution was born in…it has these purposes….it works like that", or "to obtain citizenship the following procedures….. are foreseen", or "voting requires this and that…." and the Constitution grants to citizens the following rights…..".

We found also excerpts that approached the issue of democratic citizenship using a more reflexive approach, in particular when the discourse on citizenship intersects hot controversial topics, like immigrants' rights and vote.

(Book D – C&C p. 96): "in some EU countries immigrants have the right to vote in administrative (not political election) and in other they do not have this right; not granting the right to vote limits the opportunities for migrants to elect their representatives, reducing the opportunity to express citizenship for people who live and work in a country; there are reasons for not granting

immigrants the right to vote: they should be naturalized, declaring that they will be loyal to the country; reciprocity between states should be recognized (i.e. the right to administrative vote for immigrants could be admitted only for those states that recognize the same right to Italians living there); however there are socio-political situations where opportunities for reciprocity are compromised."

Even if the issue is controversial and different positions were presented, apparently to support some reflexivity, the positions were not attributed to any specific group (nation, country or political position): as such they seemed factual and neutral information, even if they were not.

Protests, fights to gain rights and democracy were described adopting a chronological "narrative" approach, with some explanations (what causes what; what happens afterwards) provided in order to facilitate the understanding of events:

"Many leaders within the African- American community and beyond rose, risked and sometimes lost their lives in the name of freedom and equality during the Civil Rights era, including Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, Malcom X and Andrew Goodman. After the 1960s there was a decline in protest activity but the Afro- American freedom struggle left a permanent mark on American society." (Book E - ESL, p. 567)

The texts conveyed the idea that practices of participation, in particular manifest political ones, belong to the past, and are not happening in the outer world now. Open discussion on controversial issues, presenting different positions and inducing reflexivity when dealing with participatory practices was not common. Book B - Hist represented one exception, because in the section "interpretation" presented controversial positions providing authored sources that were introduced by a short summary. The responsibility to make comparisons, however, was demanded to the readers, who were asked explicitly to compare the illustrated positions.

4 Discussion

In this paper we wanted to understand which discourses on European youth active citizenship were conveyed by Italian textbooks, to understand how the concept of European active citizenship was framed, and finally if textbooks incorporated the European recommendations on citizenship education.

We were looking for some explicit definitions of European active citizenship, and we hardly found one going through 2583 pages. Then we looked for key dimensions of European active citizenship, with particular attention to:

- Sense of belonging to the EU (a component of the psychological dimension of active citizenship)
- Democratic citizenship (a contextual dimension that provides – or not - the rights and the opportunities to participate and has to do with formal citizenship)

- Practices of participation (a phenomenological dimension that refers to the means of and the forms of participation, and how citizenship is/can be practiced).

The analysis on these dimensions offered a puzzled picture of European active citizenship: sense of European belonging was rarely mentioned (see Pingel 2003), mainly conveyed through images, and seldom critically discussed in the texts. Basic knowledge and factual information about democratic (formal) European citizenship was present, leaving a limited room for critical understanding and for European opportunities of participation beside vote. These data are consistent with those of Bombardelli (2003) who found a preference in Italian textbooks for a descriptive/informative approach rather than a critical one on the EU. Audigier (2006) complained about the European perspective as the missing one in many curricula of European countries: the textbooks that we analysed, reveal the same absence in the Italian landscape nowadays. Overall our analysis showed a very limited attention to the psychological dimension of citizenship: sense of belonging, irrespectively of the levels of belonging considered, deserves very limited attention. Even textbooks that deal with intercultural relationships seem to ignore the role that sense of belonging and identification with a community can play for active citizenship. When adopting a national perspective books were focused on manifest political forms of participation, with limited attention to latent forms of participation, like volunteering, engaging with local community, etc.; textbooks describe at length the democratic dimension of citizenship, in particular the opportunities that are associated with formal citizenship at the national level (with an emphasis on "being" citizenship), leaving aside articulated reflections on citizenship beyond "legal borders", citizenship as identification or citizenship as a practice. Coherently with previous analysis conducted in other educational contexts (see Davies & Issitt, 2005; Faas & Ross, 2012) active citizenship is described more in terms of "formal" rights/duties, with limited attention to the means, the spaces, the opportunities that may enlarge the ways of "doing citizenship" and increase readiness to take action, in particular of young people.

Another important point is that, despite the emphasis of the European documents (i.e. Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship), we found almost no references to youth active citizenship, which was framed as something detached from young people's reality, as a "historical" event, associated with the discovery of the juvenile culture. Active citizenship was presented as a set of political collective actions/practices aimed at obtaining democracy, establishing or re-establishing justice, gaining or affirming rights, excluding latent and individual forms of participation, that do not take place in school, (this is really surprising, considered that we are analysing schoolbooks), nor in youth neighbourhood or local community (those contexts are totally missing in the books inspected), and that are not taking place now.

The European dimension of youth active citizenship was completely neglected. We could not find contemporary youth citizens' experiences, or references to European youth organizations, and/or to European programs aimed at the promotion of youth European active citizenship. Beside vote, European opportunities for young people to have a say at the institutional level were not mentioned at all. We found no real encouragement of young people to develop a full ownership and better knowledge of their reality, exactly like Bombardelli in 2003.

Despite the emphasis of curricula both European and national educational policies on equipping learners with knowledge, understanding and skills, and empowering them with the readiness to take action in society, the textbooks seemed to invite young people to deepen their factual knowledge, to discuss it, but not to make questions, to criticize, to reveal and engage with societal issues and challenges. The Italian textbooks seem to follow a widespread tradition in EU countries, with limited attention to active citizenship, and separate from European education (Gavari Starkie & Garcìa Garrido, 2006).

We are conscious that our results are based on a very limited sample of textbooks (only six) and that we did not include disciplines that may be of particular interest of citizenship education (i.e. Geography), but our picture is somehow consistent with the literature that we have reviewed, regardless the recommendations concerning educational policies that have been proposed and received by the educational system meanwhile. Future studies should be based on a bigger sample of Italian textbooks, covering also other relevant disciplines (geography, social science).

We are well aware that textbooks are only one of the different tools of the education for democratic and active citizenship of European young people, and the way that they can be used varies across schools and teachers; we are conscious that they may be complemented with different materials and different kind of experiences, that would be important to analyse in order to have a full understanding of how school forms citizens; however textbooks still represent a significant anchor point for students' understanding of society and societal issues, and are the materials that students are supposed to know and are evaluated on. Our research shows that despite many recommendations, and increasing emphasis accorded to citizenship education in the Italian educational reforms, we did not move many steps forward since 2003, when Bombardelli found that textbooks presented Europe as a set of "acritical" notions and that they were far to prepare youth to engage as responsible and aware people at the EU level. These are two important shortcomings that should be addressed to improve citizenship education, and to benefit young people, our society and the future European project in the long term.

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Endnotes

1 Accordo di Programma "La dimensione europea nell'insegnamento di Cittadinanza e Costituzione" sottoscritto il 20 gennaio 2015 a Roma dalla Rappresentanza in Italia della Commissione Europea, dal MIUR - Direzione generale per gli Ordinamenti scolastici, dalla Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per le Politiche Europee, dall'Ufficio per l'Italia del Parlamento Europeo.

[2] Data used in this study are publicly available from AMS Acta Institutional Research Repository – University of Bologna (http://doi.org/10.6092/unibo/amsacta/5849).

[3] The Italian Association of Librarians provided the title and the publisher details of the books in the first three positions of its selling ranking for each discipline we were interested in, but they refused to provide the selling data for each book, explaining that this was a commercial information that they were not allowed to share, without compromising publishers' privacy.

[4] "Participation of Children and Young People is about individuals and groups of individuals having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them…"