

International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences
Volume 12, Issue 3, 30th November, 2023, Pages 304 – 327
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/rimcis.11968>

Educating for Participatory Citizenship in the Social Sciences Classroom: A Practical Experience

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Abstract

Within the competences developed in the social sciences classroom in secondary education, one of the most influential in shaping society is social and civic competence. In this context, educating for citizen participation and democracy is one of the main tasks in this stage since it lays the foundations for personal development, and it is the last stage in which competencies are developed globally. This exploratory type of research carries out a qualitative analysis of the results of a didactic intervention whose purpose is this task. It was carried out with a sample of 143 students, chosen by convenience procedure, not probabilistic, under the necessary conditions to participate in the intervention during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years. Its objective is to analyze the training of secondary education students in Spain from the areas of social sciences and philosophy for democratic participation in society. The analysis methodology was qualitative and was carried out with the help of WEBQDA software. The results show an evolution in the knowledge about the concepts of "democracy" and "participation" and the disposition for citizen participation in the students included in the sample.

Keywords

Teenagers, social sciences, didactics, participation, social and civic competence.

To cite this article: Corrales-Serrano, M. (2023). Educating for Participatory Citizenship in the Social Sciences Classroom: A Practical Experience. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 12 (3), pp. 304-327. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/rimcis.11968>

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International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences
Volumen 12, Número 3, 30 de noviembre, 2023, Páginas 304 – 327
© Autor(s) 2023
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/rimcis.11968>

Educación para una Ciudadanía Participativa en el Aula de Ciencias Sociales: Una Experiencia Práctica

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Resumen

Dentro de las competencias que se desarrollan en el aula de ciencias sociales en Educación Secundaria, una de las más influyentes en la configuración de la sociedad es la competencia social y ciudadana. En este contexto, educar para la participación ciudadana es una de las principales tareas de esta etapa, ya que sienta las bases para el desarrollo personal, y es la última etapa en la que se desarrollan competencias de manera global. Esta investigación exploratoria realiza un análisis cualitativo de los resultados de una intervención didáctica cuyo propósito es esta tarea. Se llevó a cabo con una muestra de 143 estudiantes, elegidos por procedimiento de conveniencia, no probabilístico, en las condiciones necesarias para participar en la intervención durante los cursos 2020/2021 y 2021/2022. Su objetivo es analizar la formación del alumnado de Educación Secundaria en España desde las áreas de las ciencias sociales y la filosofía para la participación democrática en la sociedad. La metodología de análisis fue cualitativa y se llevó a cabo con la ayuda del software WEBQDA. Los resultados muestran una evolución en el conocimiento sobre los conceptos de "democracia" y "participación" y la disposición para la participación ciudadana en los estudiantes incluidos en la muestra.

Palabras clave

Adolescentes, Ciencias Sociales, didáctica, participación, competencia social y ciudadana.

Cómo citar este artículo: Corrales-Serrano, M. (2023). Educating for Participatory Citizenship in the Social Sciences Classroom: A Practical Experience. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 12 (3), pp. 304-327.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/rimcis.11968>

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Among the most important educational challenges that arise today, one of those that stands out is undoubtedly the contribution to the education of people to become active and participatory citizens. (Rainie et al., 2012; Villalobos et al., 2021). For this purpose, it is important that, from the first years of their education, boys and girls can understand for themselves that they are part of a society in which they participate and that they build that knowledge within their actions and their way of life (Heredia-Zubieta, 2018). For this to be possible, it is necessary to generate the ability for students to participate as adults, critics, and independent people in the processes of democratic participation in the society where they belong (Donbavand & Hoskins, 2021).

In response to this objective, a school is equipped with a series of pedagogical means that allow it to work with students for the appropriate development of their mission within society (Pagès, 2015). One of these tools is competence based in education (Fernández-Berrocal et al., 2017; Feito, 2010). This strategy is aimed at ensuring that students are able to use, theoretically and practically, what they have learned in the different areas of knowledge by the time they finish school.

Within the key competences, those that address, more specifically, the social development of students are social and civic competences (Fuentes-Moreno et al., 2019; Puig-Gutiérrez & Morales-Lozano, 2015). Like other key competencies, this competence must be developed in the teaching–learning processes of all during education (Puig-Gutiérrez & Morales-Lozano, 2015; Redondo, 2016). However, subjects in the social sciences area seem to be more predisposed to a holistic development of this competence (Canal et al., 2012; Grant & Vansledright, 1996; Pagès, 2009). In other words:

Social Sciences play a fundamental role for the formation and development of social and civic competences during the education stage of people. The skills acquired at this stage allow students to be adults, with critical capacity, with knowledge about how the society in which they live is built, and with the skills to participate in matters of that society (Corrales, 2021, p. 24).

Introduction

Social and Civic Competence as a Tool to Educate about Participation

Having the work by competencies to face the task of educating about citizen participation as a base, it is necessary to approach the teaching–learning process from the development of social and civic competence. According to the competence framework of the Organic Law of Modification of the Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE):

Social competence is related to personal and collective well-being. This requires us to understand how people can achieve a state of optimal physical and mental health, both for themselves and for their families and for their immediate social environment, and also understand how a healthy lifestyle can contribute to it (p.). Civic competence is based on critical knowledge about the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and human and civil rights, as well as its formulation in the Spanish Constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and in international declarations and their

application by various institutions at local, regional, national, European and international levels¹

Participation of Young People in Today's Society

The starting point of this research is the observation of the value that teenagers and young people give to the possibilities of participation that current society offers them, both in more structured settings and in other more informal ones (Corrales et al., 2021a). In this context, according to Delgado-Algarra, "The lack of interest in citizen participation has increased this concern, affecting transnational policies and intensifying the interest in the implementation of citizen participation in educational practice" (Delgado Algarra & Estepa Giménez, 2012, p. 522). Following this line, this study focuses on analyzing teaching practices for the development of civic participation in students.

As a basis for this study, it is necessary to analyze the terms in which the participation of young people in today's society is proposed (Delgado-Algarra, 2017; Delgado-Algarra & Estepa Giménez 2017). When discussing youth participation in different spheres of society, the first thing that needs to be pointed out is the fact that we are referring to the population range between 14 and 30 years of age. This age range places within the concept of "youth" more than half of the students of secondary education (from grade nine to ESO/KS3 onwards); therefore, it seems pertinent to address the issue raised.

The focus of this research is placed, within the age range that includes teenagers and young people (14-30 years of age), on those who are studying to obtain the General Certificate of Secondary Education (ESO in Spain, 3rd and 4th level), with subjects between 14 and 16 years, and post-compulsory education (baccalaureate in Spain, 11th and 12th level, with students between 16 and 18 years of age).

The importance of developing this competence lies, on the one hand, in that they are already part of society, and, as such, they have rights and obligations towards and, on the other hand, in the initiation of the active construction of said society (Harris et al., 2010; Hustinx et al., 2012). With this aim, various programs and projects of the European Commission have been developed with the aim of disseminating democratic values and raising awareness about the power of education and its role in the creation of a democratic and participatory citizenship (Ferrerias et al, 2020). It is in this line that Cefai asserts himself when referring to youth associations in the following terms: "they are the places where the relationship of ordinary citizens with their private and public life is built: places of double circulation between civic actions and personal experiences" (2003, p. 112).

Similarly, the 2030 Agenda marks, in relation to SDG 11 ("Sustainable cities and communities"), and 16 (peace, justice, and solid institutions), the importance of initiating citizen participation (Gamboa, 2021).

Concerning details regarding youth participation, a report on young people's participation was prepared by the Youth Institute (INJUVE). The historical series of the past years in which this report was issued shows these data:

- 37% of young people state that they are in a youth association.
- 27% say they have been before and now they are not.

- 36% affirm that they have never been in any association (INJUVE 2012 report, p. 418).

Table 1 summarizes this information as it appears in the INJUVE report.

Table 1

Percentages of young people's participation in different types of associations. Source: own elaboration with data from the INJUVE 2012 report

Association type	Belong	They do not belong, but they have before	They have never belonged
Sports	19%	28%	52%
Religious	6%	8%	85%
Cultural	8%	10%	81%
Social club	4%	9%	86%
Music	4%	6%	90%
Hiking	2%	8%	90%
Charitable	4%	8%	87%
Civic	1%	3%	95%
Pacifist	1%	3%	95%
Human rights	2%	3%	94%
Ecologist	1%	4%	94%
Students	6%	8%	85%
Professional college	2%	2%	95%
Politics	1%	3%	95%
Union	1%	3%	95%
Feminist	1%	2%	97%
Other	1%	2%	75%

The data reveals that the majority of teenagers and young people who participate in some type of association do so in sports associations, while in other types of associations, participation does not exceed 10%.

In contrast to the European data provided by the Eurobarometer dedicated to youth in 2016, it can be observed that 60% of young people in Spain said they had not participated in any associative activity in the last 12 months. This percentage is eight points below the European Union average and places Spain in 17th place out of a total of 28, behind western and northern European countries, and ahead of eastern countries (INJUVE 2012 Report, 420).

The indicated data make, if possible, more pertinent the reflection and analysis of the role of the school in education for citizen participation (Pagès, 2015; Sáez-Rosenkranz et al., 2017).

In relation to this development, on the horizon is the adequate understanding of how democracy works, as a structure for citizen participation. There are numerous studies that support the need for this educational development to strengthen the acquisition of the capacity for democratic participation in society (Mogilka, 2003; Bueno-Salinas, 2019; Grau-Vidal et al., 2019). Thus, school, democracy, and citizenship have become linked through the development of various projects such as IRES, GEA CLIO, and other educational experiences (Nunes & Mendes, 2021).

This study focuses on analyzing a didactic intervention to acquire a better understanding of the issues of participation and democracy for students.

Investigation Objectives

First of all, what was said above raises a series of research questions related to the possibilities of developing an awareness of citizen and democratic participation, both from its theoretical aspect and in practical aspects, in secondary education students:

- The necessary elements: what is the essence of the question of citizen participation within the secondary education curriculum?
- How are the contents of the social sciences area and the philosophy area organized in relation to citizen participation?
- What methodological strategies are most appropriate for this development?
- What formative effect does the application of a teaching–learning process of these curricular contents—which have the explicit purpose of developing citizen participation—cause in students?

In order to find the answers to these research questions, three working hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: the secondary education curriculum includes objectives, basic knowledge, and qualification criteria that enhance the education in participation skills of secondary education students.
- H2: the application of active learning methodologies in the teaching–learning processes of the areas of philosophy and social sciences promotes and enhances the acquisition of skills for participation in society in the students of this stage.
- H3: the design and application of an adequate teaching–learning process allows the development of a vision oriented towards democratic participation in secondary education students.

Taking these hypotheses into consideration, the main objective is to analyze the teaching of secondary education students in Spain for citizen participation in society, from the areas of social sciences and philosophy.

Likewise, the secondary objectives on which this main objective focuses are the following:

- OS1: identify curricular contents of social sciences related to education for citizen participation.
- OS2: design a didactic intervention in which the identified curricular contents for an education for participation are developed based on the use of active learning methodologies.
- OS3: carry out an analysis of the learning outcome of this didactic intervention to determine the degree of understanding of the concepts "participation" and "democracy".
- OS4: identify the most appropriate active learning methodologies for the curricular development of basic knowledge linked to education for participation.

Method

Investigation Design

This study is exploratory in nature and was developed in keeping with the action research model. The link between the researcher and the didactic intervention was analyzed over the course of a longitudinal study carried out over two academic years. The results analysis approach is qualitative and based on locating and analyzing the presence of key concepts in the textual sources collected after the didactic intervention.

The designed research addresses two main phases; this has made it possible to find answers to the questions formulated in this research and to verify or refute hypotheses:

- In order to respond to the first hypothesis, and to OS1, the first phase consisted in curricular exploration of knowledge areas involved in this study (philosophy and social sciences) so that bases can be found on which the study can support the teaching–learning process of democratic and participatory competencies.
- The second phase, aimed at responding to hypotheses 2 and 3 and OS 2, 3, and 4, consisted in the design of a didactic intervention in the subjects of social sciences (fourth ESO), and philosophy (first baccalaureate). These subjects were selected because the curricular contents taught in them are applied to research objectives and questions. This didactic intervention was designed by combining active learning methodologies. The main active methodologies used were gamification, flipped classroom strategies, and problem-based learning.

The relationship between results obtained in both phases of research allowed us to obtain an overall vision in relation to the subject under study.

Participants

To carry out this study, we worked with a sample selected by a convenience procedure as opposed to a probabilistic procedure. Because it was carried out as a didactic intervention of longitudinal nature, it was necessary for the researcher to be able to maintain regular contact with the participants before, during, and after the intervention. The inclusion criteria that were taken into account for the selection of the participants were the following:

- Studying in fourth academic year at the beginning of the intervention;
- Enrolled in the study center where the intervention was carried out so that follow-ups can be carried out.
- The sample on which we worked was made up of a total of n=143 students who completed the fourth year of ESO and first year of baccalaureate between the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years. The main characteristics of this sample are the following:
 - Regarding gender, the sample was distributed as follows: 78 females and 65 males.
 - Regarding the modality of studies they have chosen when going from fourth year of ESO (GCSE) to first year of baccalaureate (sixth form), 51% opted for sciences, 33% opted for the social sciences itinerary, and 16% opted for the itinerary of humanities.
 - The participants in the sample belong to five different groups/classes studying in the Extremadura Autonomous Community (Spain).
 - The ages of the students were between 15/16 years old at the beginning of the intervention and 17/18 when the study came to an end.
 - Six students who repeated a grade during the course of the didactic intervention were discarded from this sample. Therefore, for the longitudinal study, a total of n= 137 participants have been taken into account.

Table 2 shows the distribution of students according to groups/class, gender, and type of study:

Table 2

Distribution of the sample in the five work groups according to gender and the modality of secondary education studies. Author's own elaboration

Groups	Gender		Study modality		
	Male	Female	Sciences	Social sciences	Humanities
Group 1	15	13	15	8	5
Group 2	16	15	17	10	4
Group 3	18	11	14	7	8
Group 4	17	11	13	9	6
Group 5	12	15	14	8	5

Data collection procedure and instruments

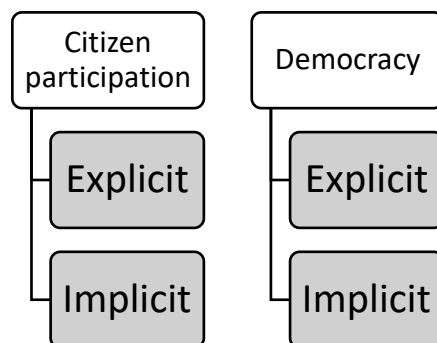
Depending on the study design, several data collection strategies were used in the two phases of the investigation:

In relation to the curriculum study phase, a textual analysis procedure was used in which two main analysis issues were taken into account: an explicit presence of the idea of citizen participation and the idea of democracy, and an implicit presence of the idea of citizen participation and the idea of democracy.

Regarding the field of research, three main blocks were analyzed: general, social sciences curriculum, and philosophy curriculum. Figure 1 shows the network of concepts that was used to structure the qualitative analysis of the sources.

Figure 1

Search categories for curricular information



For the data collection of the second phase of the investigation, the following procedure was carried out:

- At the beginning of the didactic intervention, the students in the sample were asked to write a free text of at least 150 words in which they answered two questions related to citizen participation and democracy:
 1. What do you think about the possibilities for young people participating in society?
 2. Based on your knowledge of the concept of democracy, do you think you have the possibility of actively participating in it?
- Once the intervention was completed, a semi-structured interview was carried out (Ozonas & Pérez, 2004) with the students in the sample at the end of each of the academic years. The main issues of this interview were what was learned about citizen participation and democracy. Table 3 shows the starting structure used to conduct the interviews.

Table 3

Starting structure in semi-structured interviews

Block	Questions
Block 1	Questions related to the academic year and assessment of social sciences and philosophy subjects
Block 2	Questions related to the idea of participation
Block 3	Questions related to knowledge about democracy
Block 4	Questions related to what was learned in the didactic intervention
Block 5	Questions about the vision of democratic participation after the didactic intervention

- The final products of each set of activities applied in each academic year were also collected. These products are relevant to the study, since they allow the researcher to observe the level of awareness development of the students based on the acquisition of competences developed in academic years covered by the intervention.

Through this procedure, a total of 326 textual sources collected in the various phases of the didactic intervention were analyzed.

Data Analysis Procedure

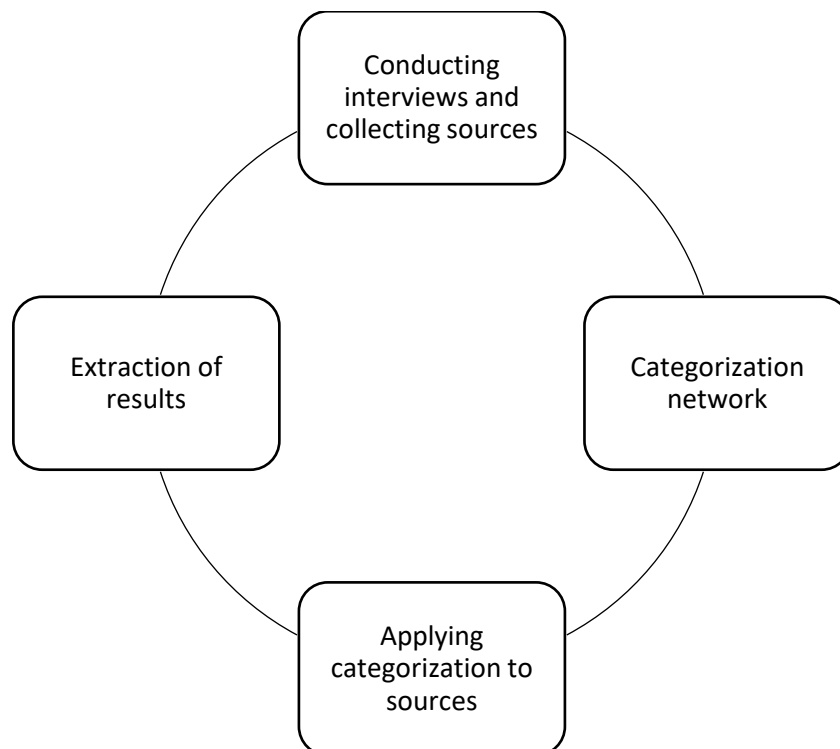
Considering the characteristics of the sources and the research data, the application of a qualitative methodology was considered as the ideal analysis procedure (Kornblit, 2007; Loayza 2020). The objective of using this methodology is to be able to detect the aspects in the evolution of the vision that the students have about a series of conceptual cores linked to the curricular contents and the main purposes of the research (Corrales et al., 2021b). For this analysis, the WebQDA software (Souza et al., 2016), specialized in qualitative analysis, was used. The process was carried out as follows:

- Written compilation of materials that were useful as research sources.
- Design of a categorization network linked to the main concepts that currently appear in the curriculum in the different subjects and that are related to issues of democratic participation and the development of a critical sense.
- Application of a categorization process to the different texts, with the objective of detecting the possible evolution in the vision of the students related to the subject analyzed.

The steps of the process are explained in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Description of the qualitative analysis process of the sources (author's own elaboration)



Results

Findings in the Curricular Contents

In relation to the first of the working hypotheses, the curricular analysis carried out allows us to affirm that there is an implicit and explicit presence of basic knowledge and specific competences related to democracy in the curriculum. The main texts located during the process are shown below.

“Participation” in the General Framework of the Curriculum

When carrying out the analysis of the introductory elements of the curriculum, the presence of statements that advocate the participation of teenagers and young people is appreciated:

Article 3:

Promotion of attitudes of social commitment, for which the development of school associations in the center itself and the participation of students in youth associations in their environment will be promoted (Decree 98/2016 p.10)

Further on, in article 4, within the scope of the same general provisions, this reflection occurs in relation to the role of key competencies:

The key competencies are a fundamental element of the curriculum when determining the learning that is considered essential for students in favor of their fulfillment and personal development, as well as for their participation as citizens in the interpersonal, social and labor spheres (Decree 98/ 2016, p.12).

Going into the objectives of compulsory secondary education as a stage, it can be seen how one of the objectives makes explicit reference to the issue that is the object of this work:

Develop the entrepreneurial spirit and self-confidence, participation, critical sense, personal initiative and the ability to learn to learn, plan, make decisions and assume responsibilities (Decree 98/2016, p. 32).

“Participation” Geography and History

A curricular analysis of the contents and competences linked to the subjects of geography and history also allows us to locate some elements intended to develop the awareness of citizen participation.

2. Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology. This subject helps for data interpretation and information, promoting effective participation in social life (economic indicators, population rates) (Decree 98/2016, p. 148).

In an indirect way, the study of the issue of participation in the development of the analysis of the different models of government in each historical period can be raised; although, certainly, this study is left to the discretion of the teacher.

"Participation" in the Subject of Philosophy

In the philosophy area, there are also some implicit and explicit elements that allow the development of competencies for citizen and democratic education. In the introduction to the subject, there is this explicit reference:

The subject must start from the previous knowledge of the students so that significant learning can take place. If what you want to achieve is reflection and criticism, it can only be done by encouraging participation, debate and the diversified activities (Decree 98/2016: 415).

This is complemented by another introductory text, which presents the participation in this way:

Finally, in its most practical aspect, moral and political philosophy, aesthetics and logic, provide the contents and procedures for the student to develop and rationally base own moral, political and aesthetic judgments, and adopt from them, the autonomous, responsible, critical and active attitude, which requires their participation as a citizen in a complex and democratic society, as well as their full formation as a person (Decree 98/2016: 660).

Indirectly, some competencies related to the state models that have occurred in history and their philosophical basis are developed, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Contents susceptible to development in relation to citizen participation in the history of philosophy. Source: self-made

Period	State model	Philosophical substrate	Learning standards
Classical antiquity	Athenian democracy	Plato and Aristotle	Plato: politics (the ideal government); the degeneration of political forms. Aristotle: politics, justice, and language ("the political animal"); the forms of government.
Middle ages/ renaissance	Medieval politics	T. Aquino Machiavelli	Political theology. Politics as the art of domination.
Modern age	Social contract	Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau	Locke: political liberalism. Rousseau: contractualism.
Contemporary age	Modern Democracies	Marx Habermas	Utopian socialism. Communicative ethics.

All of the above allows us to conclude that the curriculum of the subjects analyzed offers the possibilities to develop teaching–learning processes in which the subjects can be educated in participation and democratic competencies.

Results Linked to Didactic Intervention

Regarding working hypotheses 2 and 3 and secondary research objectives OS2, OS3, and OS4, the results are as follows:

In relation to OS2, it was possible to satisfactorily carry out the design of the didactic intervention which had two phases of application, depending on whether the students in the sample were in the fourth year of ESO or in the first year of the baccalaureate.

In the first phase of the intervention, carried out within the framework of the subjects of geography and history, in the fourth level of ESO, an intervention consisting of a role-playing game was applied, in which the students, divided into groups, developed the role of the various groups that participated in the Spanish transition. The methodology used was gamification (Rivero-Gracia, 2017; Llorens Largo et al., 2016; Ardila-Muñoz, 2019; Sánchez-Martín et al, 2020). The curricular contents developed through this intervention are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Curricular content linked to the didactic intervention. Source: Decree 98/2016

Content	Evaluation criteria	Valuable learning standard
The transition to democracy: world economy crisis, political alternatives to Francoism, continuity, reform or breaking off; the role of the king; law for political reform; the first democratic elections. The constituent period: pacts of the Moncloa, Constitution of 1978, and the state of the autonomies.	1. Describe the difficulties of the transition to democracy since Francoism in a context of economy crisis, explaining those measures that allowed the first elections in democracy to be carried out. 2. Characterize the new model of the democratic state established in the Constitution of 1978.	1.1. Explain the alternative proposed policies after the death of Franco and who defended each one of them. 1.3. Describe the performances promoted by the President of Government Adolfo Suárez for the political reform of the Franco regime. 2.1. Explain the process of elaboration and approval of the Constitution of 1978 and its essential characteristics.

The didactic sequence is divided into three stages:

- In the first stage, the gamified narrative in which the intervention takes place was introduced into the classroom. This narrative is supported by the television series *The Ministry of Time*. Based on this narrative, it was explained to the students that they were going to travel back in time to the transition era. To make the game more realistic, a series of documentation was delivered which introduced the students to the role-playing game.
- The second stage, as a way of training for time travel, was based on the development of the theoretical contents of the subject linked to this historical period. The development of this theoretical content combined traditional methodology with flipped classroom strategies (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2019; Corrales, 2021).

- In the third stage, the game was developed by dividing the students into groups of four people entrusted with designing a constitution in the style of the Constitution of 1978. To do this, they were required to apply the outline of the constitution which they had learned in the previous stage.

For the second phase of the intervention, carried out while the students were in the first year of the baccalaureate, the contents and specific competences of the philosophy subject—in which some fundamental elements for the understanding of democracy are explained, such as the political systems or the democratic model itself—were used. This phase had the following stages:

- Development of theoretical content through the application of a flipped classroom strategy.
- Division of the sample by groups with the objective of working in a problem-based collaborative learning process (Luy-Montejo, 2019) consisting of the design of an ideal city in which the rules of a democratic system related to some of the learned political models were provided.
- Application of gamification strategies during this collaborative task consisting of rules applicable to the design of the ideal city which allowed the students to add a series of points to access rewards related to the subject.
- Development of a final escape room in which the students were involved in the need to solve a problem that put the future of their city at risk. To win the game, it was necessary to apply the democratic strategies learned during the previous phase.
- The intervention that has just been described, and which responds to research OS2, has a series of relevant characteristics for the purposes of this research:
 - The use of specific curricular contents of the subjects involved.
 - The use of active learning methodologies such as problem-based learning, the flipped classroom, and gamification.
 - The development of the application of intervention during two academic years with the same sample.
 - The combination of subjects and areas of knowledge.

Learning Results

In relation to the third research objective, the analysis of the textual sources, both the writings of the students and the final products of each phase of the intervention allow us to carry out an analysis of knowledge about concepts and an in-depth analysis of them, which are shown below:

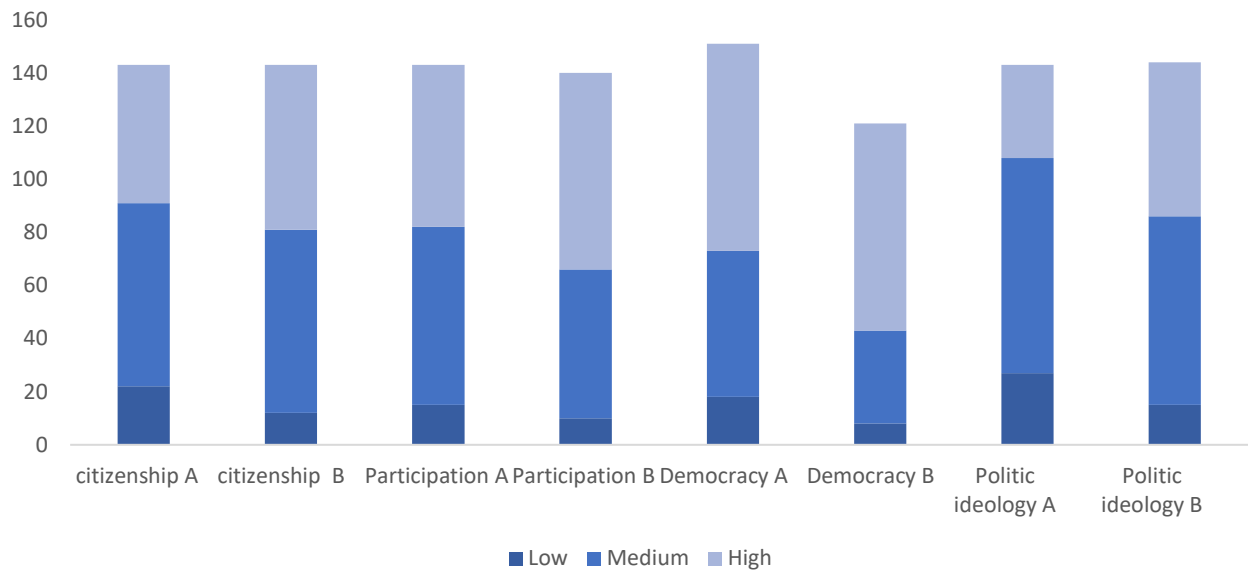
Learning skills linked to democratic participation

To verify the learning of the main concepts related to democratic participation, the analysis of the final products of the didactic intervention in its fourth ESO phase and its first baccalaureate phase was carried out. The results reveal a medium-high understanding of the concept by the students participating in the intervention. The main concepts that were

categorized were citizenship, participation, democracy, and political ideology. Figure 3 shows the results. These were obtained by assessing the number of fragments of the textual sources in which the students reflected each of the parameters. Data correspond to the sources of initial free text (A) and semi-structured interview or final product of the work (B).

Figure 3

Proportion of fragments in which the students in the sample reflected their low, medium, or high knowledge about the concepts of participation, democracy, citizenship, and political ideology in each academic year, before (a) and after the intervention (b)



To facilitate understanding of the categorization and the depth, some examples of citations from the textual sources, in which some of the studied concepts were found, are shown below:

Source in which the concept of medium-level democracy is defined (origin: semi-structured interview):

It is a parliamentary system because of the central role played by the legislature or Parliament. National sovereignty corresponds to the Spanish people, that is, all citizens are holders of public power and from this derive the legislative, executive and judicial powers.

Source in which the concept of a high degree of participation appears (origin: final product):

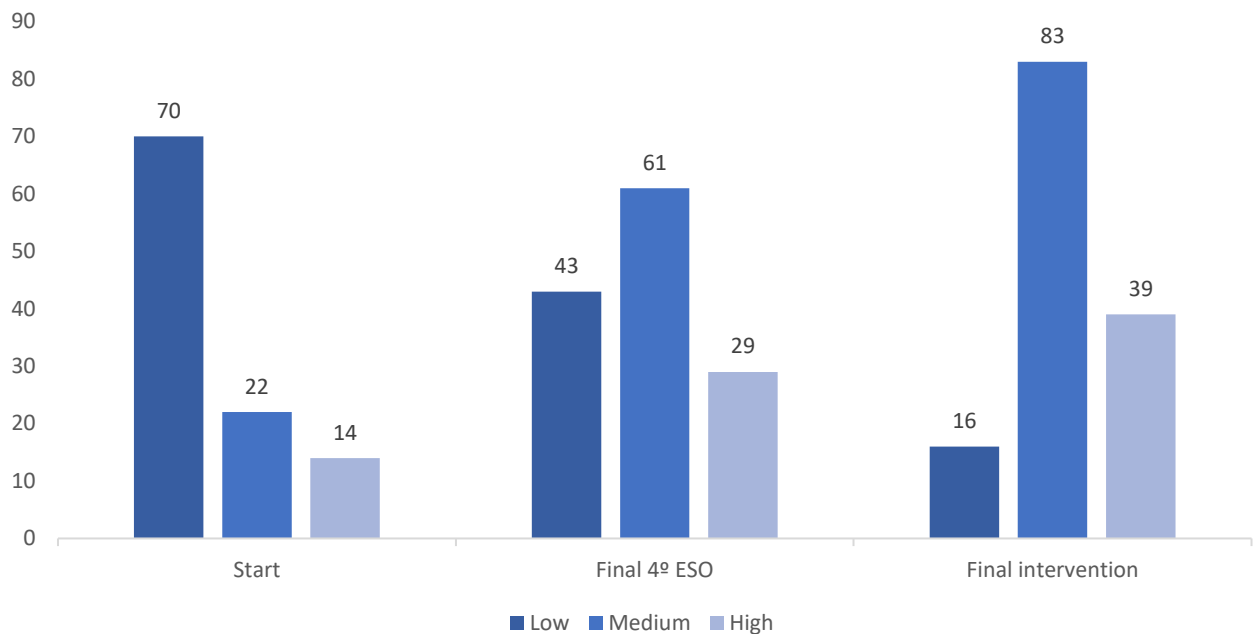
I believe that there are aspects in which we are prepared and others in which we are not. I think that we are a generation that was affected by the current circumstances and that can be transmitted as discomfort towards the current system.

Sources that show a predisposition to participate in society

In the semi-structured interviews carried out at the end of the intervention, it can be seen how the students in the sample express, sometimes explicitly, their predisposition to participate actively in the construction of society. Figure 4 shows this evolution categorized into low, medium, or high predisposition.

Figure 4

Evolution of the predisposition for the participation of the students of the sample (sources "Start" correspond to the initial free text, "Final 4th ESO" to a semi-structured interview, and "Final" intervention to final products)



To facilitate understanding of the categorization, some examples of citations from textual sources are provided below:

Low:

It depends, because there are informed about what is happening in our country and are prepared, but there are other people who are not. People of my age are not mature enough to vote on something that important, the age required to do so is determined for some reason, and even then, many people who are 18 years old may not feel ready.

Medium:

I think that because of the knowledge we have on the subject, yes, however, it is still better that we participate with an age of 18, greater knowledge and greater maturity.

High:

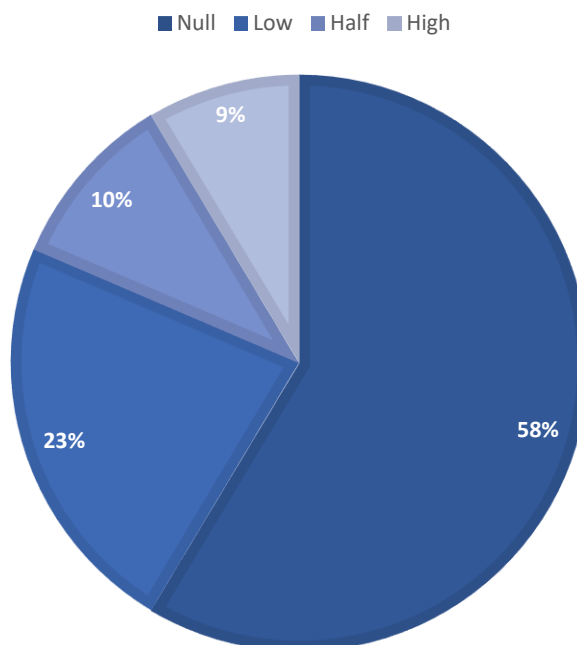
It is very important that we participate actively in society from now on, so that our voice is heard, and so that we can contribute with new ideas.

Categorization of change of mentality regarding citizen participation

In relation to the previous section, it can be affirmed that in a significant percentage of the sample participating in this research, there was a change of mentality in relation to their abilities and the possibilities of their active participation in the construction of society, as observed in Figure 5. This change was detected by contrasting the differences that occurred in the way of understanding participation as the intervention progresses.

Figure 5

Proportion of fragments that reflect a change of mentality in relation to the participation of the students in the sample



Assessment results on learning methodologies

In reference to the fourth research objective, the active learning methodologies used in the design of this didactic intervention present a series of learning advantages that are indicated below:

Flipped classroom (semi-structured interview source):

Thanks to the fact that we have been able to study the theory through the videos, we could carry out activities related to participation in class that have helped us to learn a lot.

Gamification (semi-structured interview source):

Whenever games are used, the classes are much more entertaining than usual, but it must be said that you also learn. Having to research something to achieve a challenge always motivates me a lot, and it makes me learn almost without realizing it.

I like the games, although sometimes I get a little nervous because I don't know if I'm going to be able to overcome the challenge. It's okay to learn that way, although sometimes your nerves play tricks on you.

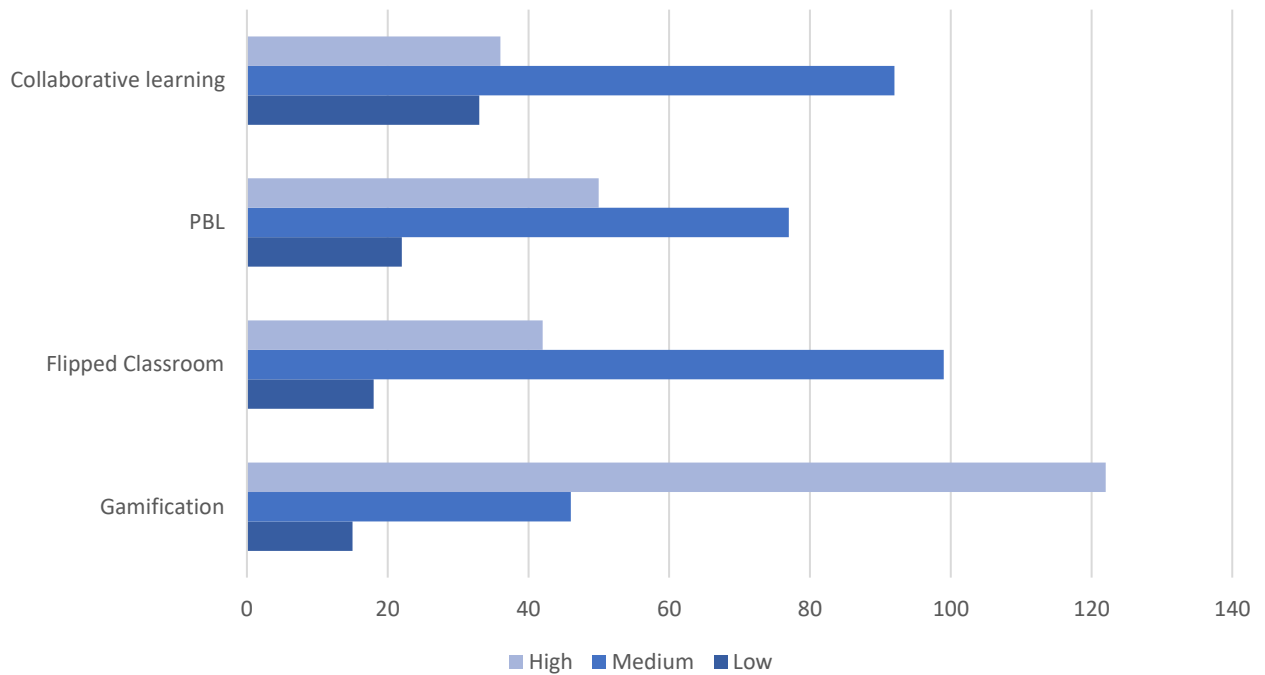
ABP (end product source):

I think that the fact of having a challenge has helped me to learn, a problem to solve, as if it were part of history and the democratic participation of the future depended on me.

Figure 6 shows the presence of references to these learning methodologies in the sources.

Figure 6

Presence of mentions of the active methodologies in the sources, depending on their high, medium, or low valuation



Conclusions and Discussion

After the analysis was carried out, it could be affirmed that the working hypotheses were verified.

In relation to the first of the hypotheses, H1, and OS1: the secondary education curriculum includes implicit and explicit references that enhance the education of secondary education students so that they become people with the capacity for developing democratic participation in society. This makes teaching democratic participation to students at this stage possible.

In relation to hypotheses H2 and H3, linked with OS2 and OS3 (both related to each other), the application of active methodologies in the teaching–learning processes in the areas of philosophy and social sciences favors and enhances the acquisition of participatory competence in students during this stage. The design and application of a didactic intervention structured with active methodologies has produced an interesting evolution in the students in relation to the contents and competencies studied.

It is necessary to review two elements that qualify these conclusions. On the one hand, each of the subjects provided their contribution to the development of the competencies under investigation: the geography and history subject allows students to understand the origin and process of implanting participatory structures in the organization of society, while the subject of philosophy provides knowledge on the typology and modes of this participation. In addition, the various active learning methodologies allowed the intervention to be developed in an active and motivating manner for the students.

The first conclusion drawn from the research carried out is the fact that the Spanish secondary education curriculum includes elements that can be developed didactically and methodologically to promote the acquisition of participatory and democratic competencies by students. In this sense, the present investigation agrees with the findings of the study by Anguera and Santisteban (2012), which carried out an analysis of the secondary education curriculum and reached similar conclusions. For their part, Canal and collaborators highlighted the possibilities that the curriculum offered for education in participation (2012). Results from other similar studies provided additional evidence (García, 2019; Quinquer, 2004). García (2019) highlighted the need for teachers to use these curricular contents with methodological designs that are amenable to the development of democratic competencies. Other studies (Hoge, 2002; Jeliaskova, 2015; Reynolds et al., 2019) highlighted the possibilities offered by the curriculum to develop education in democratic competencies in various educational contexts.

Regarding the possibility of developing didactic interventions, the conclusion is that this was possible thanks to the advantages offered by the combination of active methodologies over learning. This methodological combination is valued in previous studies (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2020; López, 2006; Corrales, et al, 2021a).

Regarding the acquisition of competence learning related to democratic participation, the results obtained reveal a development in the acquisition of participation and democracy competences in students of the sample. This development continues along the lines described in other studies (Corrales et al., 2021b; Guannipa-Ramírez et al., 2019; Rojas & Suárez, 2020; Torres, 2001), allowing us to conclude that the subjects chosen are adequate for the development of the competencies required.

Regarding OS4, the evaluation that the students make of the methodologies used allows us to affirm that the gamification methodology seems to be the most valued, due to the high motivational power shown. In relation to gamification, previous studies affirm that it is a very efficient resource in terms of student motivation (Araújo & Carvalho, 2017; Delgado-Algarra, 2022; Huotari & Hamari, 2017). Regarding the flipped classroom methodology, it is considered a good tool to adequately develop other types of activities within the classroom (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2019; Herreid & Schiller, 2013; López & Pastor, 2017).

A methodology combining problem-based learning and collaborative learning was valued by Salmerón (2010) as a very useful tool for students to focus on a specific objective. Studies by Luy-Montejo (2019) reached the same conclusions and highlighted the motivation generated by this didactic strategy.

Among the limitations of this study, we must point out the fact that it is limited to the geographical area of Spain and that, although it works with a sufficient sample for a qualitative study, it would be necessary to expand it in order to obtain quantitative results. Taking this into consideration, future work could complement this study with data collection and quantitative analysis and replicate the experience in other educational contexts.

Notes

¹ Recovered from <https://educagob.educacionyfp.gob.es/curriculo/curriculo-lomce/competencias-clave/social-civica.html>

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