



CHAPTER 11:

The Role of IEA's Civic and Citizenship Education Studies in Mexico¹

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Abstract This chapter addresses the participation of Mexico in IEA's International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 and 2016 cycles. How participation in these IEA civic studies, its framework, and results contributed to educational discourse in Mexico is shown in three ways: as a reference for emerging global trends in civic education teacher training programs; as a resource for independent, state, and national research projects; and as an important source of information for Mexico's Public Education Secretariat which helped reshape and define the competencies for the basic compulsory citizenship education program reforms since 2010.

Citizenship Studies and Assessments in Mexico

There is a broad scope of materials relevant to understanding Mexico's participation in national and international studies related to the topic of citizenship. Various types of surveys, assessments, questionnaires, and other instruments have been used in assessments to gather a wide array of information from adults and young people. Mexico participates in two important international studies related to citizenship that focus on adults. The first is the World Value Survey (WVS), which has been administered during seven cycles, beginning in 1981 (World Values Survey Association 2018). The second study is Latinobarómetro (Latin barometer); it is an annual survey that involves 18 Latin American countries and monitors the development of democracies, economies, and societies using indicators of attitude and behavior (Latinobarómetro 2018). These studies are conducted with adults and ask only a few basic questions about their knowledge of political topics. At the national level, information about civic matters has been gathered from adults. These include the Country Report on The Quality of Citizenship in Mexico (Instituto Federal Electoral and Colegio de México 2015) and the National Survey on Political Culture and Citizenship Practices (conducted in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2012). These are coordinated by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación 2012). To broaden the information base, a sample of grade 8 students (second year of basic secondary school) participated in the last two cycles of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) (2009 and 2016), which was coordinated by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). From this, two national reports have been published (Sistema Regional de Evaluación y Desarrollo de Competencias Ciudadanas 2011; Conde et al. 2018).

1 The opinions expressed in this chapter are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the SEP, Mexico's educational authorities, institutions or its members.

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Some previous research in Mexico has centered on students' views of citizenship. The most emblematic is *The Politicization of the Mexican Child*. It examined the political attitudes of Mexican students from grades 5 to 9 and opened a new research area on political socialization (Segovia 1975). Also important is the Children and Youth Survey, administered every three years since 2012 and coordinated by the National Electoral Institute (Instituto Nacional Electoral [INE] 2017). This institute places ballot boxes in different parts of the country so children and teenagers from age three to 17 years can draw or write down their perceptions and opinions of different topics related to citizenship. The last cycle, for instance, asked participants to express their ideas about topics such as trust, security, and justice (INE 2017). It is interesting that some results from the adult and children's studies are similar in identifying the issues of interpersonal and institutional mistrust (Conde et al. 2018).

Mexico did not participate in the IEA Civic Education Study (CIVED) (Torney-Purta et al. 2001), but its framework and results shaped subsequent national studies such as *Civic Knowledge in Mexico: A Comparative International Study* (Tirado and Guevara 2006; see also Caso et al. 2008; Meléndez 2011).

A national source of information about the quality and levels of civic knowledge of Mexican students has also been the national assessments for civics and ethics education, aligned with the national citizenship curriculum. It was not until 2009 and 2016 that Mexico participated in IEA studies in this area. The contributions of these two studies will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Civic and Citizenship Education in Mexico

History and Reforms of Civic and Citizenship Education

Citizenship education has been an area of formal education almost since Mexico's birth as an independent nation. Most of the training proposals have been a task of education ministries since 1821 and at present it is the responsibility of the Secretariat of Public Education. Citizenship education emerged in the nineteenth century and was aimed primarily at cultivating a sense of citizenship with a strong nationalist emphasis (Vázquez 2005; Luna 2014).

Over the last 100 years, Mexico has experienced important political and social changes that have influenced the direction of the country's educational system and made a direct impact on civic education. After Mexico's revolution in 1910, the idea of a new kind of nation accentuated the importance of having a compulsory civic education subject. Changes in the political system and social life also required the inclusion of ethics.

In 1993 two new subjects were introduced to the curriculum: *civic education* (primary school) and *civics* (secondary school). Both included some topics of international relevance such as the promotion of human rights, particularly those of children. As an initiative of the Ministry of Education, a significant change in secondary level civic and citizenship education took place in 1999 when the subject *civics* became *civics and ethics education* (CEE), introducing a cross-curricular focus, a more multicultural, cosmopolitan approach rather than a strictly nationalist one, and a comprehensive, integral, and constructivist approach (Levinson 2004; Levinson 2007; Meléndez 2011). The name change also implied that an educational dimension emphasizing ethically based decision-making was introduced with applications for adolescents' everyday life. Before this time, ethics had been absent from the curriculum of all the post-revolutionary governments because of its association with religion and the government's anticlerical orientation.

In 2000, the educational authorities of the state of Baja California implemented a new subject aimed at promoting a "culture of legality" (i.e., respect for rule of law). In 2009, this subject became an elective option in the national curriculum that individual states could adopt: Democratic

citizenship education for legal culture building (Levinson 2005; Meléndez 2011). Another change took place, in 2006, when the Public Education Secretariat (SEP) proposed a modified approach to CEE, organized around the development of civic and ethics competencies. It had four key components: a designated subject, a cross-curricular program of activities, a model for learning through the school environment, and an emphasis on relevance in students' daily life. These elements prevailed at least until 2011. Stimulated by the election of a new government in December 2018, a review of the 2017 curriculum is currently taking place.

Purposes and General Characteristics

The current citizenship curriculum is mandatory for all public and private schools in the country and the latest proposal was published in 2017, and it still includes the specific CEE subject with these purposes:

- (1) To strengthen students' identities to encourage participation and self-development
- (2) To exercise freedom and autonomy by employing dignity and human rights as the principal criteria in their actions
- (3) To promote the development of critical judgment and help the consolidation of civic values, based on human rights
- (4) To appreciate the ties of belonging that provide identity to social groups, for the promotion of solidarity, equity, interculturalism, diversity, and pluralism
- (5) To promote a culture of peace by demonstrating ethical sensitivity and civic awareness in the face of unjust situations
- (6) To appreciate their sense of belonging to a democratic State that guarantees justice through rules and institutions and respect for human rights
- (7) To participate in decisions and actions aiming to change the school, community, and municipal setting in favor of the collective well-being and defense of human dignity

In the first grades of basic education, citizenship topics are integrated across areas; the subject CEE itself is taught in grades 4, 5, and 6 of primary school (one hour a week), and in the three grades that make up secondary education (two hours per week).

CEE in Secondary Education

In secondary education, cross-cutting issues are identified, and CEE shares them with other subjects in the curriculum:

- Native Language (typically Spanish). Social practices of language use for social participation.
- History. Construction of nation-states, laws, and institutions in Mexico, and processes related to globalization.
- Geography. Public wellbeing according to the Human Development Index (HDI), environmental problems, and sustainability.
- Natural Sciences. Health care, ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- Socio-emotional Education. Abilities oriented toward autonomy, empathy, and collaboration.

For the teaching of CEE in secondary school, there is an array of textbooks prepared by private publishers who follow the contents of the official national curriculum and pedagogical perspective formulated by the SEP. Textbooks are the most fundamental resource that teachers utilize (Quiroz 2000; Sandoval 2000; Landeros 2016). A review of the outcomes found an emphasis on the development of the cognitive or knowledge aspects of citizenship. This deemphasizes attitudes and abilities related to citizenship. This is in spite of the fact that the students are expected to engage in projects to promote inclusion, environmental care, a culture of peace, and attention to collective needs, all of which are recognized as part of a holistic citizenship education.

Between 2006 and 2014 two large-scale standardized assessments were developed: the National Evaluation of Student Achievement (ENLACE), and the Tests of Educational Quality and Achievement (EXCALE). These included a comprehensive assessment for the subject of CEE. In 2015 the National Plan for the Evaluation of Learning Outcomes (PLANEA) was launched in a coordinated manner, and it is still being used.

The Role of the School and Community Context

The current curricular approach to CEE encourages the actions aimed at “practical use (of human rights and democratic principles), both in situations of daily life and in relation to social problems: (SEP 2017, p. 440). Teachers are to encourage democratic deliberation in school to analyze aspects of daily life, as well as promoting work projects for the development of civic skills such as collaboration. The curriculum document urges consideration that both “the classroom and the school at large are spaces that foster learning, socialization, and the formation of students” (SEP 2017, p. 441). In Mexican Spanish, the term *formacion* (formation) signifies a broad, holistic development of the students’ competencies and dispositions, much like the German term *Bildung*. This is somewhat different from the meaning of education in English, which is more limited to cognition. Furthermore, the topics designated for cross-curricular treatment deal with the conflict of values in various situations of social life. Cross-curricular or transversal work in Mexican schools often includes topics such as human rights, migration, and environmental sustainability.

The CEE program presents general guidelines to encourage the participation of students in the school context and daily community life outside the school. However, an important improvement would be to include specific references to opportunities for taking part in decisions about school life that affect students directly. Some space already exists for this purpose (e.g., wall newspaper or school assembly). The guidelines point out that CEE should contribute to a better school environment, but there should also be suggestions about activities in participatory bodies that already exist in schools such as Student Council, School Council, Community Council, or Parents’ Association.

Some Debates: Specific Areas of Opportunity

In a critical analysis of the characteristics of citizenship education, authors such as Bolívar (2007) and Scheerens (2011) have raised the need to discuss various ways for this type of education to spread throughout the school experience. Likewise, recent analyses of the 2017 Educational Model (Chávez 2019; Conde et al. 2017; Conde et al. 2018) have offered valuable clues to identify areas of opportunity for citizenship education.

These are among the current debates about civic and citizenship education in the Mexican curriculum between teachers, policymakers, and parents:

- How to connect CEE to the real interests and everyday lives of students (among teachers and those who develop curriculum).
- How to integrate the interpersonal skills involved in the moral and political education of students in order to enhance socio-emotional learning (among curriculum makers).
- The loss of emphasis on some civic and ethical competences when they became part of “curricular axes that organize thematic contents” (among curriculum and policymakers).
- The inclusion of areas such as School Climate and Students’ Daily Lives, which used to be formative spaces providing opportunities for participation and solidarity at school (among curriculum makers, teachers, etc.).

Curriculum is an essential device that ensures the systematic implementation of citizenship education in México, but for it to function properly and widen its reach and impact, different policymaking approaches are needed to work alongside it. These approaches include—but are not limited to—the use of important sources of information by decision-makers, such as student

learning outcomes on national assessments, Mexico's results on ICCS, and certainly addressing some of the country's specific needs that are known sources that help build a democratic citizenship (e.g., public safety, health and social welfare). In contrast with the past, Mexico's participation on the last two cycles of ICCS has provided an opportunity for the promotion of new research studies and evaluations in the field of citizenship.

Mexican Teachers' Pre-service and In-service Training in Civic and Citizenship Education

Civic Education Teachers' Pre-service Training

The most recent educational reform in Mexico in 2013 was intended to ensure that professional knowledge and aptitude requirements were met by establishing a comprehensive evaluation system for entrance into the teaching profession; this was also linked to tenure and promotion (e.g., to School Principal). However, due to a widespread misperception of the evaluation process as being part of labor legislation rather than educational legislation and that it would limit educators' possibilities to hold their current status, teachers protested the reform through nationally organized marches, closing of schools, and semi-permanent encampments near or outside of official buildings. These were covered in national and international media³ (e.g., El Universal, El País, New York Times, Forbes, BBC News).

According to the 2013 reform, becoming a teacher also now required meeting a set of criteria established by the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE)—an autonomous institution—and the General Law for the Professional Teaching Service, which includes the guidelines to carry out the evaluation process to access the Professional Teaching Service. The evaluation process consists of the administration of two standardized assessment instruments. The first test focuses on the assessment of pedagogical abilities and the level of content knowledge mastery of the applicant for the particular school subjects.

The second phase is an examination, which assesses the applicant's level of skills in communication, reflection, and potential for improvement of teaching practice. It also explores the applicant's attitudes toward professional practice, school management, community outreach, and legal and ethical responsibilities (SEP 2018). To become a secondary school teacher the person must study in one of the Federal or State (private or public) Teacher Training Colleges.

In 2018 a new teacher training program was introduced by the Public Education Secretariat: Bachelor's Program for the Teaching and Learning of Ethics and Citizenship Education in Secondary School (Diario Oficial de la Federación 2018). It includes subject matter and pedagogical principles, while considering emerging social, cultural, economic, and technological issues and changes.

Opportunities for Professional Development

Between 2008 and 2012, civic education teachers could choose to participate in annual courses and workshops (SEP 2007). However, this training program was judged to be insufficient in helping teachers acquire the skills needed. Some believed that this was because the training was mostly content and pedagogy-centered, and it did not have enough opportunity for dialogue and the recognition of the diversity of students' needs and of teaching approaches (Chávez 2009). In 2018, the SEP published the operating rules for the National System of In-Service Training, Knowledge Updating, and Professional Advancement for Basic Education Teachers that introduced a new subject called socio-emotional education. Currently a new catalogue of courses is being considered, which includes topics such as human rights, education for peace, peaceful school coexistence, and gender equality. There are 19 Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), including one for CEE teachers covering some of these areas.

³ For more information of the published news articles, see Ahmed 2016; BBC News 2013; De Llano 2016; Expansión 2016; García et al. 2016; Parish 2013; Zabludovsky 2013.

Awareness and Use of ICCS in Mexico: Social and Educational Perspectives⁴

The Role of ICCS in Shaping the Curriculum⁵

Staff members of the Citizenship Education Team (CET) in the Curriculum Development Division are responsible for reviewing new developments and publications as well as the information that national assessments provide on this topic. This includes key documents derived from national and international research studies about civic education (Schulz et al. 2010; Martínez and González 2010; Schulz et al. 2018). The major conclusions from these reports were:

2009

- The average civic knowledge score (452) of Mexican students was significantly lower than the ICCS international average, which was set to 500 scale points and a standard deviation of 100 scale points (Schulz et al. 2018). The majority of students (61%) were at Level 1—the lowest proficiency level of civic knowledge—or below it, only 10% achieved level 3. The score achieved by females was significantly higher than that of males, with a 24 scale point difference.
- Mexican students support gender equality, equal rights and opportunities for ethnic groups and some basic democratic principles, and 40% did understand that media monopolies or nepotism among public officials had negative implications for democracy.

2016

- In general terms, students' average civic knowledge scores in most participating countries increased between 2009 and 2016, with differences ranging from 1–42 scale points. In Mexico there was a 15 score point increase with reference to the 2009 cycle, and the percentage of Mexican students at Level A, the highest proficiency level (equivalent to Level 3 in the ICCS 2009 classification), increased 3 percentage points; this appears to be related to better use of relevant information along with the ability to apply knowledge to understand civic engagement. Gender differences, although slightly lower (21 scale point difference), showed that female students continued to perform significantly higher than male students (Conde et al. 2018).
- An open discussion of political and social issues in the classroom is a predictor of civic knowledge. Mexican student's perception of the classroom as a space that offers them opportunities to have open discussions showed a significant difference of only one score point increase, with respect to 2009 results. This is relevant because it outlines the need for more comprehensive research into the type of discussion that is taking place inside of Mexico's classrooms.

The Use of ICCS 2009 Results

ICCS 2009 has been a reference point for Mexico since 2010. Members of the CET used the framework to identify key concepts in order to compare them to the ongoing civic education program of 2010, as well as to develop a new proposal for 2011. The CET found that some important contents that were assessed by the ICCS cognitive test were absent from the contents specified in the CEE program. This was discussed and a few actions have been taken to make improvements, such as including social cohesion and legality as specific contents in the secondary level curriculum. However, in 2011 a significant change took place and the new focus was now defining competencies. With this, the ICCS 2009 national report became an important reference for program development.

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5 Information obtained in an interview done with personnel of the General Management of Curriculum Development office of the Secretariat of Public Education.

The Use of ICCS 2016 Results

Time constraints prevented the use of the ICCS 2016 framework as input for the development of the new program that was going to be launched in 2017. Furthermore, the 2013 constitutional reforms changed the structure and responsibilities of the Secretariat of Public Education, which implied that it was no longer going to coordinate ICCS; rather, a newly created autonomous institution, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation, was appointed as the sole responsible organization. With these changes and the moment in which they occurred, use of ICCS 2016 framework as input for the 2017 curriculum was not possible.

After the 2017 program for civic education was developed and the ICCS 2016 results were published, the CET reviewed the framework. Matching elements were found, such as society and civic systems, and democratic values (i.e., equity, freedom, sense of justice, a sense of belonging, and civic participation) (SEP 2017).

A lack of a strong and contextualized official publicity campaign of the results presented an opportunity for the press to publish specific descriptive results, which were alarming due to the lack of context and meaning. For instance, information on how 43% of Mexican students stated that they would participate in illegal acts, such as blocking traffic with the purpose of expressing their opinion, was highlighted.⁶ When the CET examined the 2016 study results, specifically from the questionnaire regarding students' opinions, they noticed some increase in their interest in participating in civic activities. More students were getting involved in school matters through the Student Council, and also identifying organizations outside of school with whom they could work. That probably reflected beneficial results of the 2011 curriculum which was stimulated by civic engagement results from ICCS 2009. The low civic knowledge scores and some trends in attitudinal responses were of continuing concern, however.

Some of the topics that were part of the CCE subject matter program appeared in a different curricular position in 2017 (e.g., the topic of emotions under socioemotional education and environment under geography).

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⁶ For more information of a sample of the published news articles, see Camacho 2017; Provencio 2017; Reporte Indigo 2017; WRadio 2017; Zócalo 2017.

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