AUSTRALIA AND BRAZIL:
A DIALOGUE ON CITIZENSHIP
EDUCATION IN THE
SCHOOL CURRICULA*

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Abstract: the debate on citizenship education has impacted the area of education in several aspects, mainly in the introduction of changes in school curricula. Therefore, it is timely to identify, analyse and discuss the implications that such changes have had on curricula. The present study was carried out to understand the contents, skills, attitudes and values the Australian Curriculum and the Brazilian Curriculum have incorporated to develop citizenship education. This qualitative research highlights the relevance attributed to citizenship in the curriculum of several countries and in the proposals of international organizations. Therefore, it explains the main features of the curricula in focus. Finally, the results are presented and discussed.

Keywords: Citizenship education. Curricula. Australian education. Brazilian education.


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The relationship between citizenship and education has permeated the current educational agenda. There is an evident concern with the teaching of contents, skills and values indispensable for the citizen's education. Additionally, it also involves the development of disposition and commitment to participate in public life. In this context, school curricula have been proved to be a fertile area to analyze the diversity of both conceptions of citizenship and strategies adopted by educational proposals. In order to better understand these relationships, a partnership was established between the Federal University of Viçosa in Brazil and the University of Sydney in Australia to investigate similarities, divergences and contributions the national curricula of both countries could present.

The main question is how Australia has worked on raising political and social awareness through schools to empower citizens to be active participants in taking collective decisions based on elaborated reflections. Based on the analysis of the Australian school curriculum profile, we may map strengths and weaknesses of the Brazilian curriculum, as well as present alternatives that will potentially improve the quality of citizenship education in Brazil.

Firstly, aiming to understand the approaches regarding the development of citizenship education and identifying aspects that might contribute to enhance the Brazilian National Curriculum, the present investigation highlights the relevance attributed to citizenship education in the curriculum of several countries and in the proposals of important international organizations. Sequentially, the methodological framework on which this study is based is described, followed by the appreciation of the Australian and Brazilian national curricula. The research inquiries and findings are then discussed. Finally, alternatives to raise the quality of citizenship education in Brazilian schools are presented.

The inferences offered in this investigation consist of an attempt to furnish research on the educational field and shed some light on implementing a scholarly curriculum committed to citizenship education development.
CITIZENSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL AGENDA

Not only in Brazil is citizenship education a recurring theme in educational outlines and legislation, but in several countries around the world. This topic holds a special place on the political and educational agendas of international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the European Union and the Commonwealth. It has also been gaining considerable visibility in the elementary and secondary schools and in teacher education.

There is a range of interpretations, disagreements and contradictions around this concept. Distinct proposals face a wide range of variables in their applications. However, it is a fact that citizenship education is an issue that continues to attract global interest, and, as we shall see below, it has had direct effects on school curricula.

Schulz *et all* (2010) show in their International Civic and Citizenship Education Study a variety of approaches used to develop Civic and Citizenship Education among elementary and secondary school students. One may notice, on table 1, that the topic has been considered from different perspectives in the school curricula. In some countries, it is treated as a specific discipline. In others, as a cross-cutting theme. It is also addressed in extracurricular activities, assemblies and special events. Nevertheless, a pattern may be observed. The subject receives particular attention in the curriculum and the everyday experiences of the school. More than one methodological path is taken in almost all the mentioned curricula.
Table 1. Approaches to Civic and Citizenship Education. From “The Initial Findings from the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study”, by Schulz et al., 2010, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, p. 23.

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<th>Country</th>
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Symbols:
● for all study programs and school types
* for some study programs

Petrovic and Kuntz (2014) investigate citizenship education in different countries to demonstrate the international relevance of the theme and the influence on school curricula. The authors look
into educational policies, regarding the role and meaning of citizenship education in Britain, Hong Kong, China, America, Spain, Japan, Canada, Israel, and South Africa. They analyse the impacts the neoliberal logic of a productive citizen (a competitive subject, centred on economic prosperity and whose identity largely derives from his professional occupation and individual accumulation) has exerted on educational proposals and school curricula in terms of citizenship education. Cox et al (2014) investigate the curricula of Colombia, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, and Paraguay. The group of researchers addresses aspects like the concept of democracy, the organizational (or structural) characteristics of the curricula, approaches to citizenship education in civic and civil dimensions, and provides some reflections on the development of citizenship education in Latin America curricula.

One may perceive both the relevance of citizenship education and its impacts on the school curricula of different countries. Thus, the study on the curriculum becomes crucial. The relationship between curricula and pedagogical practices of the school institution may be equated with the role of the constitution in the political system of a country as Tedesco, Opertti and Amadio (2013) attest.

According to McLaren (1994, p. 40) the “curriculum implies a picture of how to live. It is deeply implicated in the production and organization of student experiences within historically produced social forms”. Therefore, it is important to investigate how citizenship education is addressed in school curricula, along with the experiences and interpretations that are encouraged to develop citizenship goals and practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based, concerning the approach, on Qualitative Research. Therefore, the process of describing, understanding and explaining the research central theme took as a fundamental aspect the reflection on citizenship education within the dynamics of political, social and cultural relations. Considering this perspective, the analyzes developed have been concerned with exposing interpretations, meanings, values and attitudes that permeate the debate on citizenship, espe-
cially in what involves the school curriculum. As well as, the theoretical orientations, the documents and the empirical data were interpreted in the light of the global and the local context.

Taking into account that in this study, there is the intention to generate knowledge that can contribute to creating and strengthening pedagogical practices that promote citizenship education, this academic work is, regarding its nature, an Applied Research.

Concerning the objectives, it is an Exploratory Research because it provides greater familiarity with the subject and favors the construction of hypotheses to better approach it in the school environment. With this in mind, the strategy adopted was to carry out wide-ranging research on legislation and theoretical references and detailed analyzes that increased citizenship education’s understanding.

In terms of procedures, it is simultaneously a Bibliographic Research (a review of several literary productions which have already reflected on citizenship education in order to understand the topic better) and a Documentary Research (a study of research on sources without analytical treatment, such as statistical tables, newspapers, and official documents).

This research began in 2017 at the Federal University of Viçosa and was developed during the postdoctoral studies, which was held from March to December 2018 at the University of Sydney. Throughout this period, the researcher performed an in-depth study of the theoretical reference and has extensively investigated relevant educational legislation, data and information. Also, elaborated contextualized analyzes on citizenship education focused on the curricular proposals of Brazil and Australia.

Participating in the intense and significant academic experience of the University of Sydney has enriched and broadened understanding on the subject. It is important to note that attending the courses focused on the area of citizenship education and curriculum outside the social and cultural environment I was used to promoted new ways of thinking and problematizing the following subjects: reflections on education, teacher education, the role of the researcher and the universities social and political duty.

Regular attendance at meetings of the Citizenship Education Research Network (CERN) enabled the identification of narratives and the
people’s discourses related to the Australian Curriculum (CA). Besides, it sharpened awareness and raised new questions about citizenship education.

Based on this methodological framework and the daily educational experience of both universities, it was possible to recognize and to report the characteristics of the main Brazil and Australia’s curricular documents, to analyze them critically, look for similarities and differences between them, to discern the AC’s contributions to the Brazilian curriculum and to suggest actions that will enhance the quality of Brazilian education.

FEATURING AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

The initial spotlight was placed on the AC, which encompasses the learning process from Foundation to Secondary Senior. The Foundation-Year 10 Australian Curriculum is divided into eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences (History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Economic and Business), The Arts, Technologies and Languages. It is described as a three-dimensional curriculum, relying on disciplinary knowledge, skills and understanding; general capacities; and cross-cutting priorities. Concomitant with disciplinary knowledge, the AC commits itself to develop seven general skills: Literacy; Numeracy; Information and Communication Technology Capability; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding; and Intercultural Understanding.

This document focuses on the development of successful students, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. The AC also includes three priorities, which are thought as cross-cutting themes: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures; Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia; and Sustainability.

The concept of citizenship outlined in this curriculum articulates the sense of belonging, responsible and active participation in local and global civic life, knowledge and skills that allow the reflexive analysis of values, principles, institutions and practices of the Australian government’s system and laws. The discipline of Civic and Citizenship aims to develop:
A lifelong sense of belonging to and engagement with civic life as an active and informed citizen in the context of Australia as a secular democratic nation with a dynamic, multicultural, multi-faith society and a Christian heritage; knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the values, principles, institutions and practices of Australia’s system of democratic government and law, and the role of the citizen in Australian government and society; skills, including questioning and research analysis, synthesis and interpretation problem-solving and decision-making communication and reflection, to investigate contemporary civics and citizenship issues and foster responsible participation in Australia’s democracy; the capacities and dispositions to participate in the civic life of their nation at a local, regional and global level and as individuals in a globalized world (AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING AUTHORITY [ACARA], 2014).

One may notice, from the description above, that the AC proposes the construction of citizenship from the study and understanding of the Australian Constitution, considering that it shapes the vicissitudes of democracy in the country. The logic of rights and duties is supported by a diverse society where values are shared. Additionally, the content and skills to be developed from a civic and citizenship perspective are interrelated and should be adapted to specific local contexts.

Civic and citizenship skills, that are to be developed by the student, are intertwined. They enable investigative inquiries, which may lead to actions. Therefore, they encourage the ability to locate, organize and critically analyze information in order to improve knowledge and promote the setting up of solutions through democratic processes. The student will need to understand and reflect on his role as a citizen within Australian democratic society.

Students also learn others contents and skills that are indirectly related to this topic, such as continuity and change; cause and effect; interconnections; roles, rights and responsibilities throughout history; geographical processes (natural, social, political and economic); consumer/producer interdependence; and perspectives and action.
Although AC is a national program, Australian states are allowed to build up their curricula. In the case of the State of New South Wales, for instance, the NSW Education Standards Authority produced the NSW Syllabuses. It includes the Key Learning Areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Human Society and its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. In this curriculum, the Citizenship and Legal Studies Life Skills course is offered at the Secondary School to develop thorough knowledge and understanding of the rights. As far as the law is concerned, responsibilities and roles of individuals and groups in society are also contemplated to create opportunities to strengthen participation in democratic processes.

An important feature to note is that Active Citizenship and Global Citizenship perspectives permeate the structure of Australia's education. Next, we will see the definition of these two concepts from documents that guide the Australian curricula.

The conference report on active citizenship and the Commonwealth states that Active Citizenship involves decision-making and community action and “citizens should be encouraged to engage in deliberation about the world, to develop policies with governments, and to take collective action to change the world” (COMMONWEALTH FOUNDATION, 2010, p. 12). The report also declares that education is responsible for the development, knowledge, skills and attributes that enable citizens to participate, whether at a local, national or global level.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS, 2008) defines, as educational goals, that Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens.

The “Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools” (EDUCATION SERVICES AUSTRALIA, 2008) establishes global education as a fundamental bias in the education of students and teachers. Asserting that:

*Global education promotes open-mindedness leading to new thinking about the world and a predisposition to take action for change. Students*
learn to take responsibility for their actions, respect and value diversity and see themselves as global citizens who can contribute to a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

With its emphasis not only on developing knowledge and skills but also on promoting positive values and participation, global education is relevant across all learning areas (EDUCATION SERVICES AUSTRALIA, 2008, p. 2).

The document is a guide for the implementation and development of global education and pursues five learning emphases: Interdependence and globalization; Identity and cultural diversity; Social justice and human rights; Peacebuilding and conflict resolution; and Sustainable Futures, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1: Building a framework for global education. From “Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools”, by Education Services Australia, 2008, p. 5.
Besides the documents mentioned above, several initiatives embrace the topic and indicate that Australia assumes Citizenship Education as a priority. The Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship and the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools both from 2006, Educating for a Sustainable Future: for Australian Schools and the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools both in 2005 are some of them.

It is evident that Australia has been working to strengthen citizenship education and may significantly contribute to reflections on the issue regarding Brazilian curricular approaches. Notwithstanding, to understand Brazil’s National Curricular Common Base (BNCC²), it is necessary to contextualize two of the leading Brazilian laws on education.

BRAZILIAN EDUCATION LEGISLATION

The Law of Directives and Bases of Education - LDB (BRAZIL, 1996) ratifies that “Education, it is a duty of the family and the State, inspired by the principles of freedom and the ideals of human solidarity, which aims at the full development of students, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship and their qualification for work” (Article 2). It also determines that Basic Education (from 4 to 17 years old) aims to develop the student, ensuring common education indispensable for the exercise of citizenship and providing the means to progress in work and studies (Article 22).

The National Education Plan³³ (BRAZIL, 2014) establishes 20 goals for National Education, considering them essential to fully understand and practice citizenship. In general, the goals are related to the universalization of education; improvement of age and grade correlation; expansion of average schooling of the population; quality of higher education enhancement and increasing the proportion of masters and doctorate holders who are teaching and practicing in universities; appreciation of teachers of public basic education; reinforcement of democratic management at schools; and expansion of financial investments.

In the official speech presented in the Brazilian educational legislation above, citizenship is highly relevant. Nevertheless, no accurate concept of citizenship or citizenship education is clearly defined
in these documents neither in the National Common Curricular Base (BRAZIL, 2017a).

Therefore, the first consideration to be taken into account from the Australian curriculum would be the need to state clearly what educational laws identify as citizenship education and what guidelines they propose to develop it. So that, the population may better understand the role of the school regarding strengthening citizenship and that educational professionals may dialogue and implement the educational policies instituted for citizenship education.

Due to the lack of an objective definition on citizenship or citizenship education in the aforementioned Brazilian educational laws, it is important to point out that, for BNCC analysis, this text will align with the Australian Curriculum and Print researches (2002/2013). This Professor and Chair of Education at the University of Sydney and member of the ACARA\textsuperscript{4} Civics and Citizenship Curriculum Advisory Group, understands that citizenship education involves (COGAN; MORRIS; PRINT, 2002):

(1) Normative aspects - the student should be able to understand how the National Government works, as well as the legislation - rights and duties - and the means by which it is created or changed.
(2) Feeling of belonging - the student should be able to understand the social and cultural identity of the community and the country and develop a sense of belonging to society and commitment to instituted social values.
(3) Capacity and availability of participation - the student should be able to develop the skills that enable her to participate in political and social debates and decision-making, as well as to promote willingness to take part in public life.

There are five learning areas in the BNCC from Kindergarten to Elementary Education: Languages (Portuguese, Art, Physical Education and English), Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Human Sciences (Geography and History) and Religious Education. The BNCC takes citizenship as a cross-cutting theme. As discussed earlier, there is no definition of citizenship. Nonetheless, the introductory text on “Elementary Educa-
tion in the context of Basic Education” (BRAZIL, 2017b) indicates what is being considered on this issue.

The introductory text highlights the relevance of the school to provide conditions and tools that strengthen student autonomy to access and interact critically with knowledge and sources of information. The adolescent is perceived as a person full of singularities and with her own identity and cultural background. It is argued that students are consumers and protagonists in the production of their digital culture and that the school must commit itself to stimulate critical and in-depth analysis of these contents and the multiplicity of digital media.

It also proposes the incorporation of new languages and ways to use technologies. The text offers two perspectives: critical reflection on communication and manipulation and the construction of more democratic technology uses. Furthermore, it states that education must be guided by human rights and democratic principles, emphasizing that it is essential to make unnatural all forms of violence, including the symbolic violence by social groups that impose standards, values and knowledge or do not engage with different cultures found in the school and the community.

Diversity, local social interactions and those made feasible by the media and digital culture are presented as factors that enhance the construction of the “school as a formative space and a guide for conscious, critical and participative citizenship”. This is the only time the word “citizenship” is mentioned in that document.

In a nutshell, in the introduction of BNCC, the importance of building autonomy to promote the ability to think critically when using the media and digital culture is stressed. The rejection of any kind of violence is emphasized and it is also stated that the school must recognize and work with diversity.

The general skills to be developed are strongly intertwined with citizenship. It is expected that the student is able to take advantage of knowledge both to analyze the reality and to collaborate to build a just, democratic and inclusive society. Students should also develop skills related to the appreciation of the diversity of cultural knowledge and experiences; the promotion of human rights, social-environmental awareness and responsible consumption (local and global); personal and collective action based on autonomy, responsibility, flexibility and resilience.
According to BNCC, pedagogical decisions should be based on two central aspects: “knowing” (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) and “knowing how to do” (mobilization of knowledge to respond to complex demands of daily life, critical understanding and practice of citizenship to find room in the market place).

It is worth questioning whether it is enough to merely acknowledge the importance of this or that subject and whether there is guidance on how the school will prepare the student to be a citizen. It is also necessary to analyze how each discipline is instructed to support citizenship development and carefully examine which paths will be indicated for the issue to be treated as a cross-cutting theme.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to verify how citizenship education is approached within the curriculum of each school discipline and to help shed some light on the points presented above, we offer the following analysis. It contemplates the framework from Year 6 to Year 9, which corresponds to the 11-14-year-old group and to the final years of Elementary Education in Brazil.

When examining the curricula, it has been noticed that only the History curriculum exhibits objects of knowledge and skills directly related to citizenship education. Even so, the issues are not dealt with continuously. On the contrary, they are significantly disconnected along the courses. The syllabus offers a historical perspective of citizenship and forms of political and social organization; processes regarding the construction of the identity of the Brazilian nation; human rights; political, civil and social rights in the Federal Constitution (1988); analysis of the political, economic, social and cultural transformations from 1989 to date. It also considers identifying priority issues for the promotion of citizenship and democratic values. Nevertheless, it is important to give prominence to the fact that the last four points mentioned above are addressed only in 9th grade.

When it comes to Geography, there is no thematic unit, objects of knowledge or skills directly assigned to citizenship. Nonetheless, it is settled that all units highlight aspects related to the understanding
and practicing citizenship. Likewise, it is claimed that the applications of geographical knowledge are based on everyday life situations. Some of them, for instance, are related to establishing rules of coexistence in school and community and debating about proposals for expanding public spaces. Actions of intervention in real life are proposed aimed at improving the local community and common well-being. The Geography curricular proposal could be more articulated and focused on promoting a sense of belonging and willingness to participate in public life. Other subjects contribute only indirectly, through analysis and interpretation of facts, dissemination of some ways of participating and monitoring public life, promoting intercultural dialogue, and teaching values and general norms. In the Language Area, the normative aspects of citizenship education are not directly studied. It is unclear how reflective and active student’s participation in political and social debates or decision-making will be covered. Nevertheless, the strategy that will be adopted to promote willingness to take part in public life is not presented. However, one may recognize some effort to build and strengthen critical thinking about information and knowledge, broaden understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and some indirect and dispersed articulations in the development of the sense of belonging.

The discipline of English presents a thematic unit that deals with intercultural communication. It studies linguistic variation as a manifestation of ways of thinking and expressing the world. The English language is analyzed as a mechanism to construct identities in the globalized world.

Portuguese covers the reading of some legal and normative texts in order to learn the compositional structure. It also addresses the development of critical analysis; diversified textual discussions and productions; and the presentation of spaces for claiming rights and sending requests.

The knowledge and skills of Physical Education enable the expansion of perception and respect for social and cultural diversity, through the study of different sports practices and dance. In addition to contributing to the problematization of themes like discrimination and stereotypes in the sports universe, it proposes alternatives to overcome them, based on solidarity, justice, equity and respect.

In Arts, the observation of different creative processes, aesthetic and cultural matrices, and the contexts and practices of Art contribute
to enhance critical and cultural reasoning. It is possible to develop the feeling of belonging through one of the discipline topics that analyses the heritage of diverse cultures, emphasizing those that influenced the Brazilian identity.

The curricular organization of Natural Sciences has broad thematic units: matter and energy, life and evolution, Earth and the universe. The BNCC indicates concern about the ability to discuss and interpret scientific aspects in everyday life. Despite that, the informational and historical bias prevails in two moments when economic, cultural and socio-environmental changes caused by the creation of new materials and technologies are studied.

The topic of vaccination is limited to its biological and historical aspects in Brazil. It does not consider that social inequalities affect the health of the population or how the financial aspects substantially impact vaccination itself. Many varieties have to be considered, e.g. the price of vaccine types (active or inactive virus), high costs to buy and store, quantity and limitation of the target audience and investment in national research.

Mathematics is the most disconnected subject. Generally, the connections are restricted to using social information as quantitative data presented in mathematical operations.

Although the concept of citizenship education is propagated as a cross-cutting theme by the BNCC, some questions are raised while we examined the curricula from Year 6 to Year 9. Some of them are: When will students analyze normative, legal or political texts beyond their writing style? When will they question what is being proposed and which is the intention or impact of these texts? Will students be taught about how the structure of the three powers (legislative, executive and judiciary) functions? Will the concepts and principles of democracy, citizenship education, civic and ethics be studied and articulated? How will the different responsibilities of the Municipal, State and Federal governments be addressed? Is it enough to examine citizen’s rights and duties in only one unit of History?

Likewise, it is necessary to take the debate beyond the normative aspects of citizenship, questioning how cultural identity, belonging, or engagement will be addressed; what and how social values will be ad-
dressed; what strategies will be used to develop the willingness to act in political and social life. These questions provide some ground to the discussion presented below.

Given the compulsory aspect of the Brazilian curriculum, the fragilities may cause significant harm to Brazilian education. The BNCC does not provide enough support for the school to build up citizenship education as a cross-cutting theme, despite declaring the topic's relevance. Neither does it meet the needs of teachers to carry out their work from thematic units, objects of knowledge or skills that plainly intertwine citizenship to the syllabus of each discipline.

Brazilian teachers and students may be qualitatively developing citizenship education at school in their daily lives. Notwithstanding, they are possibly performing beyond the scope pointed out by BNCC, since it does not evidence or strengthen the entire understanding and practice of citizenship education.

Although the focus of this article is to discuss citizenship education specifically, it is worth emphasizing that the number of goals in each discipline is disproportionate considering the respective workload. Consequently, it regularly overloads the teacher's work. That each educational system will complement the BNCC and will be adapted to the daily life of the different Brazilian regions is illusory.

Any model is subjected to failure. However, as far as the BNCC is concerned, the weaknesses seem to belong to the political sphere. It consists of a political project that sends the population a distorted idea of participation. Providing a type of education that does not prepare for active citizenship and that, therefore, does not generate a population capable of causing changes in unequal social dynamics.

The Brazilian federal government has caused the lack of active participation of the school community and representative entities of teachers and universities through limited opportunity to discuss and build the curricular base collectively. The Ministry of Education established on 17th June 2015, through Administrative Rule 592 (BRAZIL, 2015), the Committee of Experts to prepare the BNCC. Less than three months later, in September, the first version was introduced.

From October to March, the population could contribute through an online platform, keeping in mind that, according to the results of TIC
households research (COMITÊ GESTOR DA INTERNET NO BRASIL [CGI], 2017), between November 2015 and June 2016, only 58% of the Brazilian population used the Internet. Among those who used the Internet, very few did so in order to establish contact with the government or public institutions. According to the data provided, 7% of people made contacts by email, 6% by the website (form or chat), 8% by official social networking profiles, 4% wrote suggestions or opinions on forums or public consultations of government websites, and 5% participated in polls on government websites.

The government announced on the BNCC website that 12% of the population had given suggestions on the BNCC's online platform and that 12 million contributions were systematized to produce the second version. It was quickly prepared and presented on 3rd May 2016. It should be remembered that the population of Brazil in 2016 was 207.7 million; 12% would be equivalent to 24,924,000 people.

From July to August, the government invited educators to participate. One week after this deadline, the third version of the document was presented. Although civil society and educators from schools and universities submitted strong criticism to the BNCC, it followed the legal procedures and was approved with few changes in December 2017.

We must also consider that during this period, Brazil had 4 Ministers of Education: Renato Janine Ribeiro (April to October 2015), Aloizio Mercadante (October 2015 to May 2016), Mendonça Filho (May 2016 to April 2018). Additionally, the President Dilma Rousseff was impeached without evidence (STUCKERT, 2017; CARTA CAPITAL, 2017).

Having the above in mind, the main inferences made from this research are presented below. The following reflections aim to contribute to the debate on citizenship and education in the curricula and give sustainability to the alternative to settle the problem.

Brazil faces complex problems to set up a national curriculum and put into practice the public educational policies instituted. Political-pedagogical problems reflect the uncertainties of the current political situation. Moreover, the instability of democracy and the difficulty of understanding and practicing active citizenship in the country have resulted, among other things, in the construction of a national curriculum with several weaknesses that go beyond the realms of citizenship education.
In this context, considerable investments must be made to reinforce both democracy and citizenship. It is vital to structure a democratic, inclusive educational system that mobilizes active citizenship to consolidate an effectively democratic society. In which citizens participate from the planning and decision-making processes to the evaluation of the system itself. Furthermore, it should be noted that democracy must be a continuous experience in all spheres of daily life. “Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions. Their separate assertion leads to mushy sentimentalism or else to extravagant and fanatical violence which in the end defeats its own aims” (DEWEY; HICKMAN; ALEXANDER, 1998, p. 295).

In this sense, we conclude that one of the most significant missions of the school is to be an institution that promotes and strengthens democratic relations in its daily practice. It is characterized by the engagement to increase the mentality of a democratic society, besides being based on the defense and enhancement of the common good, social justice and sustainable development.

As outlined above, citizenship encompasses normative aspects, feeling of belonging and capacity and availability of participation. Print (2013) further highlights that:

Reviewing the literature suggests that there is strong support for considering a ‘good’ citizen as one who displays the interest and willingness to understand, accept, and tolerate cultural differences, the capacity to think in a critical and systemic way, to interact with others in a cooperative manner and to take responsibility for one’s roles and duties within society, a willingness to adapt one’s lifestyle and consumption behaviour to protect the environment; a preference to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner; and the ability to be sensitive towards and to defend human rights (PRINT, 2013, p. 40).

In order to directly contribute to the preparation of the “good” citizen for life, the school must approach citizenship education through different pedagogical and curricular strategies. We recommend creating a specific discipline on the topic during elementary and high school in the Brazilian case. We alert that the BNCC curriculum needs to be reorganized to contemplate citizenship education as a transversal theme
effectively. Likewise, we suggest that citizenship education becomes a guiding theme for all extracurricular activities.

BUILDING AN ALTERNATIVE TO ENHANCE CITIZENSHIP IN THE BRAZILIAN CURRICULUM

Far from proposing a model or saying that any model is enough, some characteristics presented below may provide some perspective about citizenship education and support its development as a discipline, a cross-cutting theme and a guidance for extracurricular activities.

As far as knowledge is concerned, the school could address contents such as: concepts of democracy and citizenship, legal rights and duties, functioning of the powers in a democratic society, electoral process and function of elected representatives, historical and current relations between Brazil and Latin America, national and international diversity, social movements, cultural heritage, current political and social issues, and human rights.

As for skills, the educational institution might focus on those that allow students to engage in public affairs; to participate in reflection, planning and decision-making to solve collective problems; to have initiative and cooperate in a committed and responsible way with the community and beyond; to critically analyze information and argue about it; to resolve conflicts peacefully; and to understand and respect different cultures.

Attitudes that may be developed are self-confidence to participate in public life, interest in engaging in political, social and cultural contexts, solidarity and responsibility with the collective, commitment to the principles of democracy, resilience, appreciation of cultural diversity, empathy, criticality, as well as the development of an open mind to engage in dialogue with people who have divergent opinions.

The subject would also include a set of values on democracy, social justice, equality, dignity, freedom, ecological sustainability, tolerance and peace. Emphasizing the sense of belonging to the local, national and global communities might also be addressed.

Introducing citizenship as a specific subject in the Brazilian curriculum will allow us to deepen the knowledge mentioned above. It will
also create adequate opportunities to develop the skills, attitudes and values exposed above. An exclusively focused class on citizenship is a way to reserve time and space to establish a citizenship education. What is essential in the Brazilian case, which history demonstrates several weaknesses in the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of citizenship.

Without disregarding that, we can achieve far-reaching benefits if citizenship is, simultaneously, a cross-cutting theme and a guidance for extracurricular activities. That is, using the three pedagogical paths articulated would strengthen citizenship education.

It should be borne in mind that citizenship education is not just a list of skills, attitudes, values and knowledge that make a striking impression in the projects and official documents. It is imperative to consider the subject as part of daily school life and as a way to implement a critical curriculum.

The curriculum is a selection of content, and this choice process defines what should be present, what is most relevant or what is recognized as knowing that should be transmitted, is not neutral or disinterested. On the contrary, it is immersed in power relations and subordinated to the proposal of society that is expected to form, maintain, or transform.

In everyday discussions, when we think about curriculum, we think only about knowledge, forgetting that the knowledge that constitutes the curriculum is inextricably, centrally, vitally involved in what we are, in what we become: in our identity, in our subjectivity. Perhaps we can say that, in addition to a question of knowledge, the curriculum is also a question of identity (...) the curriculum is also a question of power (...) curriculum theories, insofar as they seek to say that the curriculum should be, cannot help but be involved in issues of power. Favoring a type of knowledge is an operation of power (SILVA, 2011, p. 15).

Therefore, the curriculum shows whether the educational proposal seeks to form a person who accepts and accommodates the status quo (Traditional Theories) or a critical citizen, engaged and transforming society (Critical Theories). The curriculum dedicated to developing
Educational citizenship is based on Critical Theories because it promotes questioning about power relations and political and social contexts. It is committed to forming a participative, reflective, critical, autonomous, democratic, supportive, and transformative subject. Therefore, it assumes a conception of citizenship that goes beyond the simplistic logic of knowing a list of rights and duties.

In Brazil, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Basic Education assert that:

*Every curriculum policy is a cultural policy, as the curriculum results from a selection and production of knowledge: a conflicting field of cultural production, a clash between concrete people, concepts of knowledge and learning, ways of imagining and perceiving the world* (BRASIL, 2013, p. 25).

Therefore, recognizing the importance of active citizenship in curricular documents and fostering citizen practices in the daily lives of schools are essential strategies to implement critical education. Whether through a specific discipline, cross-cutting themes or extracurricular activities, educational citizenship needs to be part of education committed to dialogue, intervention, and improve society.

Furthermore, internal factors of the subject can influence the performance of citizenship, such as personal motivations, goals, feelings and personality traits. It should be taken into account that subjectivity is developed in the interaction among individuals in their groups and permeated by social, cultural, economic issues and so on.

Given these points, it is reasonable to argue that, although active citizenship is a lifelong learning process, the school’s contribution is essential for the education of the citizens of this generation and future ones. Counting on technical and financial support from the state, schools may offer public education (free of charge) based on a curriculum structured from citizenship education, approaching it simultaneously in different pedagogical paths.
Conclusion

The importance of citizenship education in the world and its impacts on school curricula have been examined throughout this article to point out the theme’s relevance. The Australian Curriculum and Brazil’s National Curricular Common Base were analyzed to understand the similarities and differences between them. The reflections generated from this analysis enabled the elaboration of the main results of the research and the design of a proposal that aims to enhance the quality of the Brazilian curricular approach on citizenship education.

Among the results obtained, the lack of definitions about citizenship education in the Brazilian curriculum and the omission of straightforward strategies to develop it stand out. The existence of serious weaknesses that affect the application of citizenship education as a cross-cutting theme, as proposed by the Common National Curriculum Base, was also considered. Another relevant aspect was the perception that the Brazilian curriculum still does not reflect Critical Theories.

In this way, it is essential to establish a more structured articulation between education, citizenship, and democracy in the Brazilian educational curriculum. In this sense, we present a brief plan to approach citizenship education through different pedagogical and curricular strategies.

The analysis of the Australian and Brazilian curriculum, the theoretical background on the school curriculum regarding citizenship, the reflections and contributions exposed throughout this paper express an attempt to help the implementation of a school curriculum based on citizenship education in Brazil. Alongside, it is expected to contribute to the educational debate as well as promote the professional interchange between the Federal University of Viçosa and the University of Sydney.
sobre as implicações que essas transformações produzem. O presente estudo foi realizado para compreender os conteúdos, habilidades, atitudes e valores que o Currículo Australiano e o Currículo Brasileiro incorporaram com intuito de desenvolver uma educação cidadã. Esta pesquisa qualitativa destaca a relevância atribuída a cidadania no currículo de vários países e nas propostas de organizações internacionais. Logo, explica as principais características dos currículos em foco. Ao final, os principais resultados são apresentados e discutidos.


Notes

1. The first version of this document was published in 2002.
2. BNCC is the acronym in Portuguese.
3. PNE is continually criticized by researchers and academic entities for being more a letter of intent than an effective plan. For them, the approved PNE has disfigured the original civil society project and has an insufficient and inefficient allocation of financial resources (Gomes & Arroyo, 2017; Lima, 2015).
4. ACARA was established under Section 5 of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (Cth) on 8 December 2008. ACARA’s functions include the development of national curriculum, administration of national assessments and associated reporting on schooling in Australia.
5. In Brazil, the Law of Directives and Bases of Education (LDB 9394/96) establishes that Basic Education is composed of 2 years of Early Childhood Education, 9 years of Elementary School and 3 years of Secondary Education. The Elementary School is divided into Initial and Final Years (analogous to Primary and High School). The six-year-old student enters the first year in the first year and the period up to the fifth year composes the Initial Years. The stage of the sixth to ninth year constitutes the Final Years, generally corresponding to the age group of 11 to 14 years.
6. Religious Education was not considered because it is an optional subject.
References


SCHULZ, W et al. The Initial Findings from the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study. Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), 2010. Disponível

