Geography Education and Citizenship Education in Portugal: A Challenge for the 21st Century

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Abstract

The contribution of geography education to citizenship education is recognized by geography educators. Still, globalization created new territories and new "borders" not always easy to cross—but they all exist and coexist giving new meanings to the idea of space appropriation. Geographical space has gained all these dimensions and can no longer be viewed in terms of its materiality. This article addresses the concept of citizenship education for Portuguese geography teachers within the multicultural nature of Portuguese society and schools. A final reference is given to the importance of cities as places of citizenship education.

Keywords

citizenship, education, geography, multiculturalism

Introduction

The concept of *border* is a key concept in geography. As Ciattoni (2003) puts it, "border" is an insatiable geographical object. Associated with the concept of territory, the "border" is a universal structure, an organizational scheme fundamental to social and human life on Earth. The "border" is also a changing geographic reality that can be addressed in so many ways and can take many forms: linear, zoned, or simply mental and imaginary.

In geography, the territory is space appropriated for a certain social group and the "border" is the physical or psychological limit of that territory. Globalization created new territories and new "borders" not always easy to cross—but they all exist and coexist giving new meanings to the idea of space appropriation. Geographical space has gained all these dimensions and can no longer be viewed in terms of its materiality.

Geography education is inevitably connected to these new approaches of territory and its limits, as the multicultural dimension of societies has made it impossible to ignore that many global issues are now reflected in our countries, regions, cities, and of course in our schools. And for a subject specially designed to understanding the relations between nature and society and its impacts in our daily lives, the notion of inclusion and exclusion is particularly relevant. It is a geographical concern to understand how students can acquire knowledge that prepares them to analyze and understand the complex and relevant problems in this world of multiple relations.

This is also a teachers' concern expressed in many studies done in Portuguese schools. The complex world is no longer a distant reality but it is here in our lives and in our classrooms. The "borders" geography education addresses are not just national borders or European ones but they are increasingly social and physiological. And these are many times the most difficult ones to address. Through citizenship education, teachers in general and geography teachers in particular try to address many issues related with the need to develop critical thinking about complex global issues that are now a reality in their lives.

Portuguese schools are multicultural territories where sometimes the borders in terms of social divisions and the invisible and visible lines between groups are very real and it is important to challenge those borders which deny freedoms, rights, and capabilities. This article shows that school geography has been trying to "tear down walls" in what concerns the understanding of the world. First, we refer to the meaning of "citizenship education." Then, the article focuses on presenting the nature of school diversity and how school geography, through teachers' voices, provides a territorial dimension of analyses important in an effective citizenship education and practices.

This multiscale analysis is important when thinking about citizenship at different levels and its impact in human and social development. It allows to analyze problems at local, regional, national, and global level and critically analyze its impacts also at different levels. The methodology of research

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consists of documental analyses about recent changes in the composition of Portuguese schools, recent changes in school geography, and teachers' perceptions regarding citizenship education, using a qualitative paradigm of research.

It also includes an analysis of which geography contents better adapt to dealing with problems of diversity, inclusion, and exclusion, as well as the experiences teachers consider more appropriate to debate these issues. The data presented are selected from a broader research that intends to prove that many of these approaches can be made at local level, or in other words, that cities can be spaces where the benefits and problems of globalization can be found and studied and where the notion of territory and border can give an important framework to geographical education in Portuguese schools.

The Meaning of Citizenship Education

A wide range of terms is used worldwide to denote a form of teaching and learning that in some way encourages good citizenship. These include citizenship education, civics, social studies, life skills, and moral education. In addition, there are relations with a variety of subjects (e.g., history, geography, economics, politics, languages, environmental studies, and religious education). Discussion of citizenship education therefore encompasses a diverse and complex curriculum area (Jackson, 2004).

Following an analysis of the more than 300 known definitions of democracy associated with citizenship education, David Kerr (2003) identifies a number of linked themes and concepts that are common to citizenship education:

> They include the *themes* of: the *preservation* of something, such as democratic society and its associated rights; the notion of *participation* in society; the *preparation* or *capacity building* of young people for active and informed participation; a focus on *inclusion* or *integration* into society; a concentration on *contemporary society*, the encouragement of *partnerships;* and the *promotion* of an international perspective . . . The definition also highlights a number of key *concepts* that underpin citizenship education, including *democracy, rights, responsibilities, tolerance, respect, equality, diversity* and *community* . . . Citizenship education also involves the *dimensions* of *knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values*. These *dimensions* are brought together through teaching and learning approaches, which have the primary goal of shaping and changing the attitudes and behaviour of young people through into their adult lives. The lifeblood of citizenship education is modern society and discussion of the topical and sensitive issues it throws up. Citizenship education enables consideration of these issues, often set within an appropriate historical framework, from a range of perspectives." (pp. 7-8, italics added)

Portugal followed the recommendations of the Council of Europe on education for democratic citizenship (Council of Europe, 2002). The Council of Europe clearly referred to the fact that it was a responsibility of present and future generations to maintain and safeguard democratic societies, and that education had an important role in promoting the active participation of all individuals in political, civic, social, and cultural life. Thus, education for democratic citizenship was very important and should be implemented in all member states. It was declared that

> education for democratic citizenship should be seen as embracing any formal, nonformal or informal educational activity, including that of the family, enabling an individual to act throughout his or her life as an active and responsible citizen respectful of the rights of others;
> education for democratic citizenship should be considered a factor for social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and solidarity, that it contributed to promoting the principle of equality between men and women, and that it encouraged the establishment of harmonious and peaceful relations within and among peoples, as well as the defense and development of democratic society and culture; and
> education for democratic citizenship, in its broadest possible sense, should be at the heart of the reform and implementation of educational policies.

Following this and other important recommendations, the Portuguese Ministry of Education published in 2006 the "Strategic goals and recommendations for an action plan of Citizenship Education" (http://sitio.dgidc.minedu.pt/cidadania/Documents/FECidadaniaSP.pdf). It refers the need to offer all students a common base of knowledge, attitudes, and values through an accurate education for rights and responsibilities in an educational perspective for global citizenship that allows the following:

> contribution to students' personal and social development based on diversified experiences of democratic life;
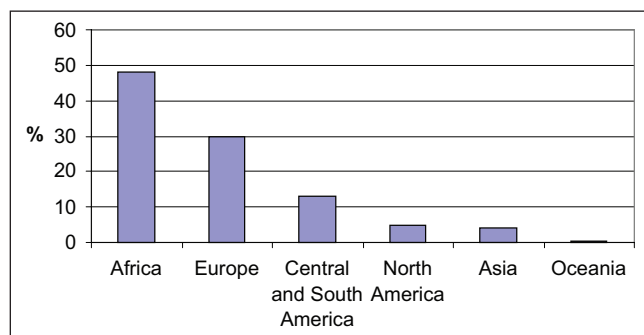> students' development as active members of society able to eliminate the social mechanisms that build and reproduce inequality and discrimination, as well as able to value diversity as a way of human enrichment; and
> students' awareness of their responsibility as members of society, encouraging participation, coresponsibility, and compromise in the building as world, where freedom, justice, and solidarity really exist.

This is particularly important when considering the changes Portuguese society has been going through in what concerns its multicultural dimension. And of course, schools

Table 1. Immigrants in Portugal in the Last Decades (National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2010)

	Immigrants
1980	50,750
1990	107,767
2000	207,587
2008	436,020

Figure 1. Immigrants according to continent of origin in 2000 (National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2010)

are an expression of these changes, as it will be addressed in the next chapter.

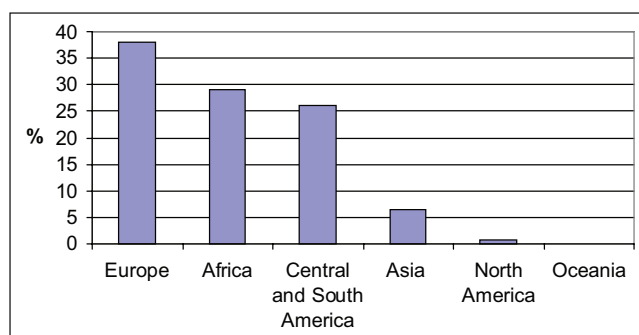## Multicultural Dimension of Portuguese Schools—Recent Changes

Portugal was for many centuries a country of emigrants, but recently this situation has changed. In the last decades, Portuguese society has been changing as a result of the changing times—each year, more and more people from different countries, cultures, and religions have been arriving to Portugal in the pursuit of work and a better life. Although this situation is not new to Portugal that for many years has received immigrants from PALP (Portuguese Speaking African Countries) and Brazil, what makes this phenomena challenging has been the arrival of many immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The National Institute of Statistic recorded the following values for immigrants in Portugal, in the last decade (Table 1).

It is clear to perceive that the percentage of immigrants has been growing in a fast rate practically doubling each decade. The origin of the immigrants also changed as shown in Figures 1 and 2, for the last 10 years:

It is clear that in 2000, it was still Africa the main supplier of immigrants to Portugal (almost 47% of the total immigrants). The majority of this African immigrants arrived from the PALP (a total of 95% of African immigration to Portugal), as Table 2 shows.

During the decade of 2000, these figures started to change and presently Europe is the main supplier of immigrants who arrive in Portugal. Figure 2 shows the shift from a strong

Figure 2. Immigrants according to continent of origin in 2008 (National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2010)

African immigration to an unprecedented number of European immigrants arriving in Portugal.

The majority of these European immigrants arrived from several destinations, especially from Easter Europe as Figure 3 shows.

Immigration from Eastern European countries is now almost 70% of European immigration. It is important not to forget the percentage of immigrants arriving from Central and South America, the relative value of which has increased since 2000 (about 12% of the immigration total and in 2008 reaching more than 25% of the immigrants arriving in Portugal). These immigrants are mainly from Brazil (95% of immigrants originating from South America in 2000 and 81% in 2008).
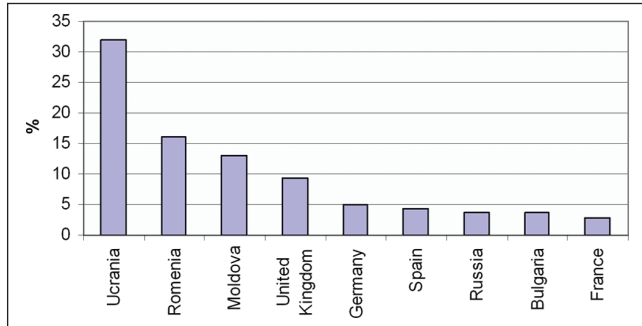
This changing pattern of immigration presents many challenges to both state and society. This flow of immigrants to Southern Europe has made the Mediterranean region more complex and created many new problems. The nature of immigration since the 1990s is a remarkable mix of nationalities and skills (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004).

But it is not only society that has had to face these recent changes: The educational system has also felt the need to adapt to this new Portuguese reality. School is becoming a mix of nationalities and cultures. If society is increasingly multicultural, Portuguese schools include, nowadays, a young population of different cultural origins. The school has more than ever before an importance in recognizing the multiculturalism of school attendants. It is necessary to take in consideration this dimension in such a way that all the differences are respected and still school prepares its students to life in society (Bernardo, 2007).

The integration of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and minorities in the Portuguese education system follows the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, particularly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child36 (Article 2, n.1), which is applied independent of the child's legal status. The national legislation and the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (Articles 13, 15, 73, and 74) bestow rights of equal treatment in access to education and teaching, independent of race, language, territory of origin, or religion. In these terms, any child (exiled,

Table 2. PALP (Portuguese Speaking African Countries) Immigrants in 2000 (National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2010)

Cape Verde	Angola	Guinea-Bissau	São Tomé e Príncipe	Mozambique
47,093 (50.3%)	20,416 (22%)	15,941 (17%)	5,437 (5.8%)	4,619 (4.9%)

Figure 3. Countries of origin of European immigrants in 2008 (National Institute of Statistics [INE], 2010)

refugee, or parented by irregular immigrants) has a right to education and social service (Dias, 2005).

Portuguese legislation also accommodates the recognition of qualifications held by foreign students who may wish to enter the national education system, rendering them equivalent to current Portuguese qualification certificates or other diplomas. Applications are analyzed by the Ministry of Education according to a table that contemplates 25 countries. A Support Office for the Recognition of Qualifications and Competencies is maintained by the ACIME (High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities) for this specific purpose.

Immigrant, refugee, or asylum-seeker students who enter the Portuguese education system benefit from pedagogic support which is both adequate to their situation and compatible with the resources available to their new school. The support measure ought to be focused on the removal of all that hinders the students' progress and the creation of specific activities for the learning of Portuguese as a second language, whenever they prove necessary. Schools should also perform a diagnostic assessment of the pupil, followed of an individual educational support plan (Dias, 2005).

According to a Ministry of Education report (Direcção Geral da Educação [DGIDC], 2005), Portuguese schools were attended by students of 120 nationalities, which have a total of 80 languages as their mother tongue. This report intended to characterize the situation of the students whose mother tongue is not Portuguese and reached some interesting conclusions:

Although students from Angola and Cape Verde are in the top of the countries of origin of the students who were not born in Portugal or whose parent's mother tongue was not Portuguese, Brazil and Ukraine are now in third and fourth position, between

2001/2002 and 2004/2005. The percentage of Brazilian students represented 8.2%, while the percentage of Ukrainian students had increased to 8%.

According to the data of the study, which involved more than 15,000 students, countries such as Brazil, Ukraine, France, Moldavia, Germany, and Switzerland had a growing number of students in Portuguese schools, while others were in low numbers such as Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé e Príncipe, and India, in what concerns students whose mother tongue was not Portuguese.

Among the 80 languages spoken by students at home, the "crioulo" languages spoken in PALP countries are the most common, followed by Ukrainian. The majority of the students speak Portuguese in school with teachers and peers, but 5% communicates with their peers in "crioulo."

There is also a relation between school achievement and nationality. Among the best succeeded students, there are nationalities such as Moldavia, Switzerland, Germany, Romania, and Ukraine.

In what concerns the understanding of school subjects, in a scale of four (ranging from "good," "satisfactory," "not satisfactory," to "don't understand anything") 40.6% of the students got a "satisfactory" and 30% reached "good." Yet, one in each four students shows great difficulties in the mastering of Portuguese language and almost 5% considered "don't understand anything" in what the use of Portuguese language is concerned.

In what concerns school achievement, 60% of students whose mother language is not Portuguese manages to get a satisfactory level, and the remaining 40% refer in equal parts to very good levels of achievement and negative achievement.

The fact that students enter the system without testing for Portuguese language skills has given rise to some criticism. In fact, immigrant students are integrated in schools without having actually developed the learning skills necessary to cope with the curricula. It was exactly this situation that led to the implementation of a program of integration of students whose mother tongue was not Portuguese, in 2005, by the Ministry of Education.

Having presented the situation in terms of nationality and cultural diversity of Portuguese schools, it is important to refer how the school system has been trying to overcome all the challenges of multicultural schools. If much has been done in terms of educational policy, a lot remains in the

hands of those who contact directly with students—the teachers. And if in some school subjects it is difficult to approach the item of living in a multicultural society and school, in school geography this item is an important curricular part of the school subject.

Thus, geography gives an important contribution in terms of discussing these new situations which are a reality of Portuguese classrooms. In the following chapter, a study involving geography teachers will be presented—It was important to know their views and practices in citizenship education; considering Portuguese multicultural school, school geography is even more relevant in what concerns dealing with differences in terms of language, culture, religion, and other aspects.

School Geography and Citizenship Education—Recent Approaches in Compulsory School

Due to the growing ethnic, cultural, racial, language, and religious diversity in Europe and throughout the world, citizenship education needs to be reviewed to prepare students to function effectively in the 21st century. Citizens in this century need the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to operate in their cultural communities and beyond their cultural borders (Banks, 2003).

The role of school has never been so important in helping students to develop, not only thoughtful and clarified identifications with their cultural communities and their nation-states but also clarified global identifications and deep understanding of their roles in the world community. According to DeJaeghere (2009), schools should be talking about critical citizenship pedagogical approaches that bring coherency to other approaches found in different forms of education and apply them to the purposes of citizenship education in multicultural societies.

These approaches are summarized by the author in four main areas:

1. including marginalized knowledge and voices in the curriculum to allow for the construction of alternative forms of citizenship, and seeing this knowledge in relation to, and as a critique of, mainstream constructions of citizenship and democracy;
2. learning and enacting double-consciousness, which is examining one's perspectives about and identity related to citizenship through the eyes of another (self-awareness and awareness of others' perspectives) *and* understanding the complexities of citizen identity affected by discrimination and oppression;
3. developing intercultural understanding through intercultural learning experiences to engage others in civic relations and spaces; and

4. utilizing strategies for collective social action, such as a collaborative engagement of students, teachers, schools, and communities to create social change.

So, how can school geography do its part?

The International Declaration on Geographical Education for Cultural Diversity (International Geographical Union [IGU], 2000) considers in its preamble that school geography is committed in the world effort to enhance the ability of all citizens to contribute to creating a just, sustainable, and pleasant world for all. In fact, the nature of geography education has specificities that make this school subject a major contributor in overcoming some of the bias that arise in a multicultural society and of course in multicultural school systems.

In fact, geography education offers foundations for people of the world to develop

- the ability to be sensitive toward and defend human rights;
- an ability to understand, accept, and appreciate cultural diversity;
- an ability to understand empathies and critique alternative viewpoints about people and their social conditions;
- a willingness to be aware of the impact of their own lifestyles on their local and broader social contexts;
- an appreciation of the urgent need to protect our environment and bring about environmental justice to local communities and regions that have experienced environmental devastation; and
- an ability to act as an informed and active member of their own and the global society.

Portuguese National Curriculum (Department of Basic Education [DEB], 2001) doesn't have a specific discipline to address citizenship education and so, this task has been attributed to the several curriculum subjects. Some guiding lines are presented in terms of what dimensions school subjects should address in the formation of a conscientious citizenship:

creation and development of a personal and social identity;

participation in civic life showing responsibility, solidarity, and a critical attitude;

respect and valorization of individual and group diversity in what concerns their communities and choices;

development of an ecological awareness leading to the valorization and preservation of the natural and cultural heritage; and

valorization of the relational dimension of learning and the ethical principles that regulate the relation with knowledge and the others.

In view of these recent concerns, school geography in Portugal was reorganized in terms of contents and competences (DEB, 2002). It assumes its vocation in terms of giving a fundamental contribution to citizenship education. The concept of the "geographical competent citizen" is introduced and defined as "the one that has spatial skills, having the ability to view spatially phenomena, interconnecting them, and understand their territorial patterns, use different scales of approach, and understand territorial, cultural and individual identity."

Considering that the teaching of the subject should be centered in the interpretative dimension of several educational experiences and not in the theoretical contents of geography, school geography is organized in six broad themes that should be developed in compulsory school:

The Earth: How to study it and represent it;
Natural environments;
Population and its patterns;
Economical activities;
Development contrasts; and
Environment and society.

In each theme, teachers should create learning experiences that allow the development of general competences and also specific geography competences: location, knowledge about places, and dynamisms of the interrelations among places. So, what does learning geography mean?

According to the International Declaration on Geographical Education for Cultural Diversity (IGU, 2000), geography plays a major role in identifying cultural diversity of people around the world and their potential communality of Earth through the study of place, space, territory, natural resources, and people's livelihoods. In so doing, geography acts as an important "bridge" between the physical and social sciences. Geographers have a long history of significant contributions to decision making at local, regional, and global scales for a variety of issues, including resources management, health, environmental assessment, transportation, climate changes, and hazard management. Because humanity's common concern at the start of the 21st century is about its natural and human-created environment, geography's main contribution to the future of the planet now lies in its pedagogical and scientific efforts to explicate further our understanding of spatial aspects of the human–nature interface.

This contribution to the understanding of the world also implies civic education—Through geography, students are encouraged to explore and develop knowledge and understanding, skills, and attitudes and values. In terms of knowledge and understanding, one of the most relevant issues is the diversity of peoples and societies on Earth to appreciate the cultural richness of humanity. In terms of skills, students develop the ability to use communication, thinking, practical and social competencies to explore geographical topics at a range of scales from local to international. And in terms of values, students develop the capacity to understand their surroundings and the variety of natural and human characteristics on the surface of the Earth as well as learn to respect the rights of different social groups.

School geography in Portugal pursues all these goals, and its educational relevance increases when considering diversity issues not only in a regional or national scale but also in a local scale, in the classroom, in the school. Geography deals with issues closely related to citizenship, multiculturalism, among others. These issues are very important nowadays, and geography allows a multidisciplinary and global vision of the world events. Even in what concerns globalization, school geography bases its analyses in the understanding of other cultures, in intercultural and economic changes, and in changes in general (Cachinho, 2000).

In the next section, geography teachers share their considerations about these issues and explain how geography themes adapt to dealing with aspects of multiculturalism, citizenship education, and other important questions. More important, how do geography teachers view their roles as citizenship educators through geography in their multicultural classes.

Geography Teachers Perceptions on Citizenship Education—The Importance of the Territorial Dimension

These data are part of a broader research concerning school geography in Portugal, teachers training and concerns, reorganization of the school subject, and the role of geography in the national curriculum. About 200 geography teachers participated in this research explaining how they have adapted in the last decades to changes in the national curriculum in general and in the particular subject they teach—geography.

The first thing teachers were asked was, considering the main themes of school geography, which ones adapt better to allowing approaches related to citizenship education in their classrooms. The Figure 4 shows that this is a cross-curricular theme in geography, but there are two themes that presented themselves as particularly relevant to this kind of approach. The themes are presented in the order they are taught during the last 3 years of compulsory school (at least till 2009, because now compulsory school has 3 more years, but that's another issue).

It is important to refer that teachers were also asked about the themes that are most interesting in developing issues about sustainable development and environmental education, but for the purpose of this presentation, we will focus on the themes that most adapt to citizenship education issues. The graph shows two main themes for this purpose—"population and its patterns" and "developments contrasts."
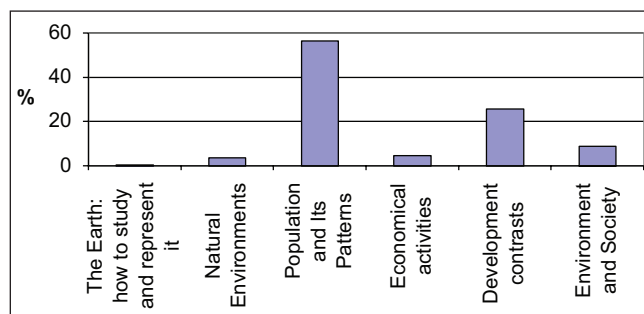
Figure 4. Geography themes and citizenship education

We will focus on the theme related to population and its patterns to understand the kind of learning students can do. The study of this theme implies developing learning experiences related to

- Population
  - Distribution and factors
  - Evolution of the population and demographic variables
- Mobility
  - Types of migrations
  - Migratory fluxes
  - Causes and consequences of migrations
- Cultural diversity
  - Factors of identity and differentiation of populations
- Urbanized areas
  - Urbanization and rural areas
  - Urban areas' structure
  - Urban and rural ways of life

In geography research, some of the findings have already proved the need to approach these items within a territorial context. Issues like cultural diversity need a territorial basis of analyses which provides different types of learning. One thing is talking about cultural diversity in the world, in Europe, in the city, or even in the neighborhood; another is approaching these issues in a des-territorialized context (as it is done many times in citizenship education).

Close approaches are more connected to students' experiences, feelings, and emotions, and at this local level of analyses, certain issues can have the effect of challenging students' reflections and critical thinking about their own beliefs. The analysis of some phenomena at a regional level may also be interesting to develop a wider awareness of cultural issues. And making the same study at the global level will certainly give another understanding of the cultural diversity issue.

So, how can teachers manage all these approaches in the geography class? Giving students the possibility to range from these different levels of analyses enables them to grow from "their own experience"–based perceptions to a wider
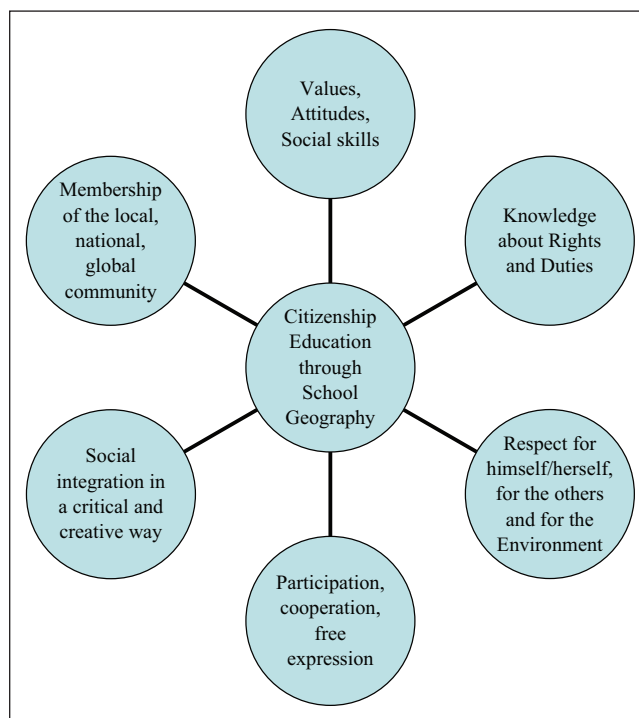

Figure 5. Geography teachers' perceptions about citizenship education

comprehension of the phenomena. This means involving students in problem-based activities, many times arising from their own experience. The development of a geographical literacy can be based in memorization of isolated geographical facts. Students live in a multidimensional world and become aware of it in many contexts. It is the daily relationship with the environment that helps shaping knowledge and understanding of space.

The multicultural dimension of the classrooms can be an important asset for teachers when approaching population and diversity issues. And through geography, it is possible to do these multiscale analyses to show that oftentimes local issues are a consequence of global ones. Or, on the contrary, students may perceive that those global issues have local impacts that reflect in their existence and perceptions.

The most important contribution of geography is, by setting a territory of analyses, with its physical or imaginary borders, it is clearer to approach certain issues. When asked about the importance of citizenship education, which is a concern for geography teachers, many referred to values and attitudes, but the majority considered that these should be worked within a context that helped to clarify the questions in discussion. And it was clear that some teachers give more importance to a local level of analyses of problems whereas others consider that the regional and global dimension can never be forgotten to understand the dynamics and interrelations of natural and social issues (Figure 5).

The analyses of teachers' perceptions about their role in addressing issues of citizenship education showed that there are six main areas that are considered fundamental:

the development of values, attitudes, and social competences;
the formation in terms of knowledge about their rights and duties as members of society;
respect for others and the environment, know himself or herself;
formation of the individual conscientious of the world they live in, active and participative in society;
formation of the individual in terms of his or her integration in various communities; and
the idea that citizenship education implies some kind of membership that can range from community level to global level.

Comparing those with Kerr's (2003) themes that involve citizenship education, Portuguese geography teachers share this common idea of contribution to the integration of students in their communities and have an active and constructive participation in them:

Preservation of something: In geography, the idea of a sustainable world is very connected to the theme of development and social issues;
Notion of participation: In geography, students develop competences related to problem solving and decision making about social, economical, and environmental issues;
Focus on inclusion or integration: In geography, through the learning of different places, societies, and problems, students learn to respect differences in a plural society, and are sensible to the existence of different cultures and worry how they relate and interconnect;
Promotion of an international perspective: Geography education helps in developing awareness about the main problems of the world, and develops the notion of geographical diversity and the ability to search for strategies that lead to the possible solution of common problems;
Key concepts: Through geography education, it is possible to clarify many key concepts (knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes, and values) as geography deals with real problems of the real world.

By giving all these approaches a territorial dimension, geography education allows the approach of issues of diversity, conflicts, integration, or any other in a real context that can be very effective in terms of developing critical analyses competences. That may be the most important contribution of geography education to tearing down walls.

Final Reflections About Urban Geography Contribution to Citizenship Education

In the previous sections we tried to demonstrate how Portuguese society is more than ever a multicultural one, and how it reflects in the complexity of our schools and how it was necessary to develop different approaches to help students understand this diversity and adapt to it. The particular case of school geography was referred, an example of a school subject that has taken the lead in many projects and studies related to citizenship education.

The themes explored by the school subject are particularly relevant in studies about social and economical problems of our societies and their impact in the territorial. It was also mentioned that it is exactly this possibility of conducting studies at different scales that gives geography its importance in terms of approaching issues of human and social development. We would like to refer to the importance that urban studies have been gaining in specific areas of study of many global issues.

According to Cabigon (2008), understanding the nature of cities in globalization is essential *knowledge*. In fact, cities all share common traits (e.g., a market-oriented nature). They also hold a potential for dualism (*promise*: wealth, innovation, and social change; and *trouble*: prostitution, poverty, crime, and pollution, among many others). Cities are very important both globally and *locally*. They are the center of trade, commercial establishments, business firms, advanced culture, and technology. They are the destinations of immigrants hoping and searching for employment. Cities represent the most often used and influential places in the world.

This means that our success and survival in the world today and tomorrow depends on the knowledge we have about cities. Cities are particularly challenging entities to understand. Equally important is that they are constantly evolving, impacting on our lives and the lives of others. Geographers have always been interested in cities as they sometimes reflect many events that happen at a different scale, and reproduce many of the issues that also appear at different scales. Being a close reality for Portuguese students, what happens in the city may be a good place of study to understand most complex phenomena.

The importance of the city as the living place of a great part of humanity in the 21st century was celebrated in 2010 in the Expo in Shanghai, titled, "Better World Better Life." Urban inequality in the cities always has a social and territorial expression. And these inequalities can have serious political repercussions. The UN Report State of the Cities 2008/2009 clearly refers to the danger of social inequality in the cities (UN-HABITAT, 2008):

Social and economic inequalities can awaken a host of negative sentiments among the poor and dispossessed and lead to mass action, or worse, civil strife,

either because disparities are not acknowledged and thus not remedied, or because corrective measures such as laws and redistribution policies attempt to entrench the status quo or seek to placate those mired in a highly unequal system and

Inequalities can also reduce the base of social and political support for fundamental structural reforms necessary to embark on a path of high growth with more equity.

The discourse about the city could easily be the discourse about the world's inequalities and this is why geographers give a special attention to the city when creating citizenship education activities. In her research, Soenen (2002) presents a study on community development in urban environments undertaken in multiethnic schools in Flanders. The main purpose was to research changes in schools and use the complexity and diversity of the city to build social integration and a sense of community. Some of the conclusions of the study reinforce the importance of the city approach in dealing with multicultural integration issues.

The movement of educational cities has been drawing educators' attention since 1990 to the fact that the city provides the best material conditions from which to forge a general offer of diffusion of the learning and the knowledge needed for life in society and, at the same time, can create the greatest range of inequalities in its distribution. The city is a shopwindow filled with an array of offers and possibilities waiting to be chosen, but very often, they are not taken advantage of, or else there is an unequal distribution of the freedom to do so (International Association of Educating Cities, 1990).

In its Charter of Educating Cities, it is stated that diversity is inherent in the modern city and the notion is that it will increase even more in the future. Accordingly, one of the challenges facing the educating city is to foster a balance and harmony between identity and diversity, taking into account the contributions of the communities of which the city is comprised and the rights of all those living in the city to feel that their own cultural identity is being recognized.

And these are important reasons why to approach human diversity in school geography at the local scale is very important to help students grasp the real impact of their imaginary borders in the place they live in. Because "borders" are real and their impact is visible in the living space of cities. And it is by fighting the closest ones that maybe distant ones will fade away.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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