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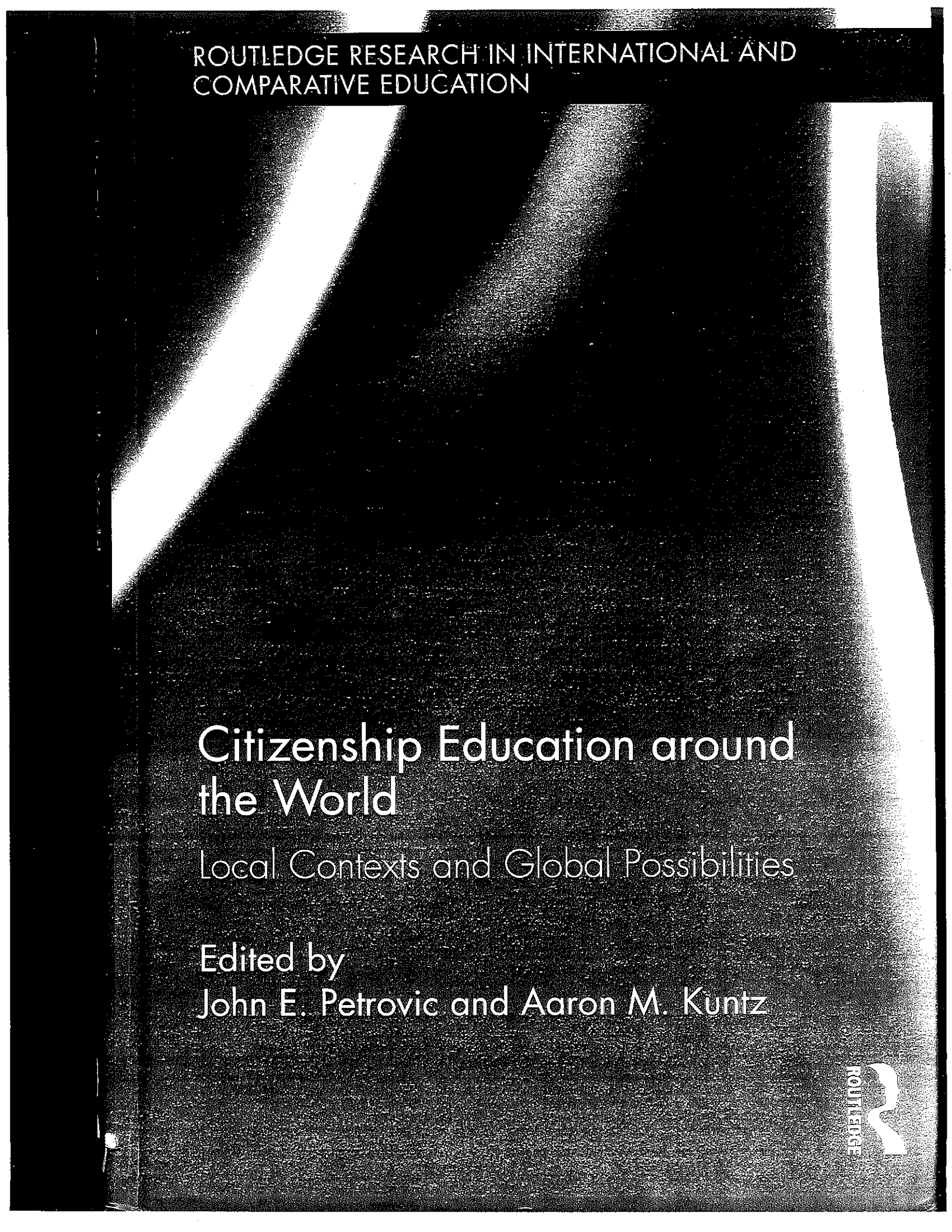
Citizenship Education around the World

Local Contexts and Global Possibilities

Edited by
John E. Petrovic and Aaron M. Kuntz



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Maria-Eugenia Luna-Elizarraras

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the general characteristics of citizenship education in Mexican "basic education" (which includes primary school, from grades 1–6, and secondary school, from grades 7–9). Highlighted is the preponderant role played by the formal curriculum in defining the content of citizenship education that all schools should promote. This curriculum proposes to locate school-based citizenship education at the forefront of pedagogical initiatives that insist on the necessity of forging a critical, participatory democratic perspective that is congruent with the challenges of global citizenship and based on universal values and human rights.

The tension between this curriculum and everyday school practices is also analyzed. It is in this context that one can identify the various difficulties faced in the implementation of recent initiatives for a citizenship education that would transcend traditional civics instruction and contribute instead to the development of actual citizenship competencies. Most of these difficulties are attributed to the lack of adequate strategies for in-service teacher education. However, in this chapter I argue that schools' organizational and administrative conditions provide the greatest difficulties insofar as they limit or impede the emergence of experiences of democratic community, as well as practices that would overcome the formalism that has characterized school-based civic education. Indeed, the pertinence of the matter of school administration and organization for civic education, and for the benefit of other domains of learning, has not been linked to civic education initiatives per se. Based on the analysis presented here, I provide suggestions for linking the forms of citizenship education comprising the curriculum with the practices that make up the real organizational conditions of schools in Mexico.

MEXICAN SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Formally, Mexico is a federation of states organized in a democratic republic that was constituted as an independent country at the beginning of the

nineteenth century, when it became independent from the Spanish crown after three centuries of colonial life. Currently, Mexico possesses a predominantly mixed race population, and 6% of the population speaks one of the eighty-nine indigenous languages.[2]

Throughout its history, Mexico has been characterized by its centralized and authoritarian governments. While the nineteenth century represented an arduous process of conformation of the laws and institutions that would consolidate the current form of republican government, the twentieth century witnessed the rise of a system of democratic government in which the same party—the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), or "Institutional Party of the Revolution"—assumed the presidency for seventy consecutive years.

In this period, the practice of political power was characterized by the application of authoritarian measures such as limiting the viability of other party options. The most relevant and viable party presence was the right-wing Partido Acción Nacional (PAN, "National Action Party") which in the year 2000 finally obtained the presidency and governed for two consecutive periods. Earlier, still under the PRI, numerous acts of repression and political prosecution took place against social movements of peasants, workers, teachers, and students, in diverse moments between 1950 and 1970: disappearances, clandestine killings, and massacres.[3]

According to Favela, as Mexico has tried to constitute itself as a lawful state, the mechanisms to deal with social protest have become more flexible, with a greater disposition to negotiation, while other resources have been put into practice to contain and inhibit the opposition.[4] Thus, for example, in recent years the neutralization of collective actions and protests has been achieved by promoting participation in institutional and bureaucratic processes. At the same time, the state has been led to open itself up and diversify the channels for citizen participation beyond the mere casting of votes.

The 2000 change of party in the presidency had to do in great measure with protests and organization among several sectors of society. Indeed, since 1988, when popular opposition was first expressed about the suspicion of fraudulent presidential election results, the citizen, particularly organized in and through civil society, generated continuous movements around the opening of participatory spaces, and to ask for an accounting of federal, state, and municipal governments. In a diverse manner, the citizen finally took on her role as a political subject.[5] The creation in 1997 of the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Human Rights Commission), the constitutional acknowledgement of Mexico as a multicultural nation in 1992, the creation of accountability mechanisms for public services, and the recognition of citizens' right to access public information and hold accountable government actions all constitute examples of the opening and diversification of state institutions as a response to citizens' demands.[6]

As noted, in the 2000 elections, for the first time in seventy years, a change in the party that held the presidency of the country took place: the PAN defeated the PRI in democratic elections. This party alternation represented, for a good portion of the citizenry, a possibility to exercise their rights by casting a vote and trusting the institutions responsible for the regulation of electoral processes. Besides, it constituted an opportunity for citizens to participate and positively value their power to influence decisions, at least with regards to who rules the country.

The PAN, as an opposition party for fifty years, questioned the authoritarianism of numerous PRI governments, as well as the patronage system and corrupt practices that were performed at the federal, state, and municipal levels. Notwithstanding, the twelve years of the PAN government did not consolidate various aspects of its political agenda; on the contrary, it has been often accused of the same vicious practices of PRI governments.

In this brief overview of Mexican political life, it is possible to situate the rise and development of a notion of citizenship with clear communitarian aspects, that is, one clearly identified with the "collective" ideal of the Mexican nation.[7] As with the majority of modern—particularly Latin American—nation-states, the organization of republican institutions was supposed to be accompanied by the formation[8] of a citizenry that would know how to use them. Yet this communitarian vision was translated rather abstractly and distantly into nationalistic values, such as love of fatherland, independence, and justice, which would fill the speeches of presidents and other political figures throughout nearly all of the twentieth century.

During this period, what prevailed was a kind of state paternalism centered on the figure of the president; citizen participation was limited to voting in elections, and for this reason independent political organization and participation was discouraged. Even though it may be true that in Mexico, unlike other Latin American countries, there was never a military dictatorship as such, the exercise of political power did have a strongly authoritarian cast.

What eventually contributed to generating new kinds of relations, characterized by a liberal orientation,[9] between government and citizenry, were diverse internal social processes, such as the oppositional social movements in Mexico during the second half of the twentieth century; the influence of mobilized social organizations and the entirety of civil society in those countries that did suffer military dictatorship; and the need for our country to participate more actively in the international markets. In this context, individual rights and freedoms acquired greater weight. At the same time, as already mentioned, the greater attention to human rights, participatory citizenship, and the political right to demand accountability from government representatives has required us to think in terms of a competent citizenry active in decisions of public interest.

Mexico is an unequal country in which the market liberalization of the 1980s translated neither into national economic development nor the

elimination of economic disparities. Such differences are expressed in various spheres of social life: wealth distribution, political participation, access to education and high-quality health services, as well as differentiated opportunities for men and women, among the principal concerns.[10] Even as the concept of citizenship that prevails nowadays has been moving closer to a viewpoint in which citizens should act politically well beyond electoral periods, this viewpoint still faces great difficulties in fostering political practices that are coherent with both the exercise of human rights and the disposition to contribute to the common good. In certain respects, citizenship constitutes a reference point around which we might highlight those social features that can generate cohesion between a population as unequal as Mexican society is, in economic, social, cultural, and political terms.

On the other hand, the recent recognition of our country's multicultural reality has required a more inclusive notion of citizenship that implies appreciating the diversity of our (mostly indigenous) languages and cultures, as well as making the effort to comprehend that the better part of our mestizo population represents the "other" for the members of these cultures. In this way, citizenship acquires a broader quality that includes diverse cultural categories.

The actual forms of citizenship practiced today in Mexico serve to question the perspectives on citizenship governed by the extremes of liberalism and communitarianism and commonly wielded in political discourse. The problems that the citizenry needs to solve in our country must thus be rooted in an understanding of citizenship that goes well beyond the "merely juridical *status* granted by a state; it also implies a reciprocally engaged *relationship* between persons in the public sphere."[11]

HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN BASIC EDUCATION

Since the time that Mexico was founded as an independent nation, schools were given the task of forging citizens with a strong feeling of national identity and identified with the institutions and laws that began to regulate their organization. Through the subjects of history and geography, mainly, a basic knowledge about the characteristics of the country was promoted, as well as the understanding of the main historical process that led to its formation as an independent country. In this way, citizenship education had a strong nationalistic character that was translated into the study of geography and national history.[12]

These attempts, whose origins date back to the end of the nineteenth century, contrasted with the social and political environment that prevailed in the earlier years of independence, where foreign invasions by France and the United States took place, as well as internal wars due to the process of separation of state institutions from the church and attempts

of the Conservative party to establish an empire headed by the European archduke Maximilian. Also, the idea of a national state ruled by laws and institutions ran into serious obstacles such as the exercise of local political power in several regions of the country, where inherited colonial practices prevailed and where the owners of estates reoccupied their properties and exerted influence over the local governments.[13]

The first known proposals for civil education were based on the teaching model that was generated by religious catechism.[14] This approach induced pupils to memorize phrases that were related to what was considered to be a good citizen. Starting from a question with a predetermined answer, students repeated definitions from memory about the characteristics of a good citizen. At the same time that contents that would foster patriotic love in nursery school children were discussed in the first pedagogic congresses at the end of the nineteenth century, moral primers focused on good behavior, conventional social norms and proper customs also proliferated.[15]

By the end of the 1910 Revolution, public education received another big impulse to incorporate large sectors of the population into primary schools. Educational projects, especially those of civic education, gradually acquired new emphases that expressed the ideals of social justice and formal democracy that had been brandished during the revolutionary movement. Notwithstanding, it is possible to identify that during the main part of the twentieth century, the principal axis of citizenship education was constructed around nationalism linked with formal democracy.[16] This kind of citizenship education promoted a formal treatment of public life: an emphasis on the formal structure of government, the political administrative organization, and the political constitution. These elements scarcely made reference to pupils' life. On the contrary, they maintained a distance between students and the social and political life of the country and the world, by means of a conception of citizenship as exclusive of the adult world and centered in government actions, where citizens' participation was kept limited to the casting of votes and to established institutional channels.[17]

Up until 1971, there existed the subject of civic education in the syllabus of basic education. Between 1974 and 1993, civics was incorporated into the social studies area.[18] In 1993, the subjects of civic education in primary and civics in secondary were restored and a distinct feature of their incorporation was the inclusion of topics related to human rights, particularly those of children, and education in values. In this 1993 reform, the programs included nationalism-related elements, which were considered to be an important aspect of civic education and civics, and denominated "Strengthening of National Identity."

In 1999, topics on ethics and human development were incorporated into the new subject of civics and ethics education, in the secondary school syllabus. In this project, Ethics was introduced in an outstanding manner, and as an important aspect of citizen's formation. With this, the

autonomous margin of decision of individuals with respect to public affairs became explicit. Besides, material related to the conditions and possibilities of adolescents was introduced as a starting point from which students would reflect and make decisions concerning their life as citizens.

In this way, secondary-level civics and ethics education currently promotes the development of a "citizenship morality that establishes criteria that belong to an Aristotelian heritage, with respect to its communitarian sense, where individuals in a society must respond to the exigencies of a political community. And we also think of another with a Kantian hue that appeals to the freedom of the subject, who is capable of dictating laws for oneself."[19]

In this new subject of civic and ethical education the SEP made clear its desire to bring into closer contact the personal lives of students—as legal minors with particular needs and interests—with the sphere of public and collective life. The need to re-conceive citizenship education was enriched by a participatory perspective on democracy, the recognition that individuals develop multiple levels of belonging (local, regional, national, and global), and an accompanying perspective on interculturalism as "an alternative that provokes one to re-ground and organize the social order, because it insists on fair communication between cultures as world figures . . . that recognize the other as different. The other is neither erased nor isolated; rather, there is a search for understanding, dialoguing, and respecting him."[20]

Beginning in 2000, education based on competencies (a perspective that sought to ensure the presence of learning experiences in real contexts where students develop) derived in a complete reformulation of the program of civic and ethics education in secondary, and its introduction at the level of elementary schools. In both programs, eight civic and ethic competencies were outlined: (1) knowledge and care of oneself; (2) self-regulation and the responsible practice of freedom; (3) respect and appreciation of diversity; (4) sense of belonging to the community, the nation and humankind; (5) handling and resolution of conflicts; (6) social and political participation; (7) sticking to legality and a sense of justice; (8) understanding and appreciating democracy. This program for secondary education was published in 2006[21] and that of primary in 2008.

By means of the competencies that were defined for this subject, the curricular programs introduced topics that were associated with the acknowledgement of the prevailing cultural diversity in Mexico, as well as the development of interculturalism[22] as a path for developing positive attitudes and values toward those who express differences of varying kinds, but especially ethnic and cultural. On the other hand, such programs included topics related to a participative democracy, in which a more active role is conferred to the citizen in democratic societies, which goes beyond casting a vote in electoral processes, a trait of the formal perspective of representative democracy in previous syllabi.

In the year 2000, the Secretary of Education of Baja California initiated "Cultura de la Legalidad" (Culture of Lawfulness) in secondary schools of

the north region of the country. This program was generated in the United States as part of a policy to fight corruption and organized crime from schools. It then became wide-spread in the northern states of Mexico and was later incorporated into the curricular space of state subject, and is applied in the entities where it is considered necessary.[23]

In 2007, the Safe School Program was generated, which constituted a part of the so-called "Limpiemos Mexico" ("Let's clean Mexico") government strategy against drug traffic. This later changed into "Vivir mejor" ("Living better"). This program, in contrast with its predecessors, did not propose curricular contents but a series of actions to be carried out by directive personnel in order to propitiate safety conditions for students, mainly in those regions of the country with high levels of crime.

Since the late 1990s, besides those programs initiated by the Ministry of Public Education, other public institutions developed programs that were targeted to children and adolescents from elementary and secondary, with the aim to promote an initial knowledge to the work of public institutions, as well as to contribute to the development of participation and the acknowledgement of their rights. The Federal Electoral Institute has started out consultancies with kids since 1997, in which adolescent girls and boys participate. Also, the legislative power organizes annually the so-called "Kids' Parliaments," in which primary schools students from all over the country participate.

EFFORTS TO BRING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION CLOSER TO CITIZENS' REAL NEEDS AND PRACTICES

Throughout this journey of the different projects of citizenship education, it is possible to note the development of a nationalist project that turned each time more intercultural, universal and cosmopolitan. The latter applies to the discourse of programs and syllabi in which different perspectives around the citizen were expressed. While turning from a colonial society into a centralized one, in the nineteenth century, and with a paternalist and authoritative state, a citizenship education was not required beyond informing students about some aspects of institutions and their functions. For that purpose, a history that fed national identity sufficed: a unique history for all the country, in which revolutionary governments appeared as its end and climax of the country's political development, and identified with the love for a large and generous nation.

In this manner, citizenship education was centered in the development of trust in governors and institutions. Its contents have spun around the importance of a representative democracy that focuses on a citizen which lays the responsibility of decision making in public life on the representatives they elect. In this way, the commitment of vote casting was outlined as the only mechanism of democratic participation that was fostered during most of the twentieth century.

The observation and vigilance by the citizen over governments' performance as well as the demonstrations and pacific social protests were not an issue for citizenship education until the appearance of programs and the publishing of textbooks in the twenty-first century. For this reason, participative democracy is a new element in citizenship education, gaining legitimacy as a facet of citizen performance in the 1988 electoral process, in which a great number of citizens expressed their lack of satisfaction with PRI governments. In this period, there was also a great citizen participation in the vigilance and realization of elections. Also, the 1994 *zapatista* movement was featured by its pacifism and demonstrated the importance of mass media as a complement to citizen participation to spread the movement in the national and international contexts.

As was pointed out before, the 1993 syllabus was the one that introduced contents related to human rights and the National Commission of Human Rights—an institution created in 1992. Its presence in the programs of civic education and civics distinguished them from constitutional rights, which had already been a matter of study in these subjects since the 1960s. The latter gave way to the incorporation of children's rights and the promotion of a vision that extended far beyond the electoral processes: the defense of the rights that all people are granted by birth.

With the appearance of the party transition that took place in the year 2000, a possibility was opened, inside and outside SEP, to generate several proposals that were oriented toward the formation on values and citizenship education. In each state of the country there appeared proposals from approaches.[24] SEP had to "contain" these emerging proposals and to organize one of its own through which guidelines were given for citizenship education all over the country. Also, when faced with traditional civics, which was imprinted with an authoritarian perspective about the "must be" of citizens, the official syllabus had to incorporate other elements that acknowledge other subjects and processes favoring the development of a citizenship culture. This change of perspective in citizenship formation at the basic education level responds to a generalized acknowledgement, in the social and political life of the Mexican society, that the political culture of citizens is configured in non-formal spaces, beyond the context of governmental institutions.

Foundations of Citizenship Education

It was in this context of liberalization that citizenship education was structured on a foundation which brought in multiple disciplinary influences, thereby providing a cornerstone for conceiving of different ways to shape children and adolescents through basic schooling. Among the disciplinary influences one could recognize first and foremost was philosophy and its diverse areas, including ethics, axiology, and political philosophy. In this fashion, a curriculum framework was created which could include: rational knowledge from diverse moral perspectives, the substance and nature of ethical values, and political thought about the relationship between individuals and the state.[25]

With these elements in place it was possible to establish a citizenship education that would include the socio-moral dimension along with an understanding of the functioning of government institutions and the role of citizenship vis-à-vis government action. Such reference points fostered a conception of citizenship education as a process that should be promoted from childhood on, generating values oriented to an interest in the common good, mutual responsibility, and political and social participation.[26]

Currently, in political and educational discourse, a conceptualization is made of the following characteristics:

- Interested on local, state, national, and international public affairs.
- Capable of self-informing and critically judging the quality of information that circulates through the media and information and communication technologies.
- Committed to causes that contribute to common well-being.
- Participative and exigent before the actions of the government and of other sectors of society whose decisions affect the rights and well-being of all the population.
- Shows disposition to organization with persons or groups, in a responsible manner, in order to solve problems and to improve well-being conditions.
- Capable of exchanging points of view in a respectful dialog, in which there is room for the right to dissent.
- Aware about his/her rights.
- Interested in taking advantage of participatory spaces and citizen resources to address authorities.[27]

These features are present in regulatory documents and in the curricular program of basic education. We can now characterize such features in terms of a citizenship education rooted in the life experiences of students, in the contexts where they learn and grow, so that from such experiences we can move them toward an understanding of the moral and sociopolitical dimensions of the world around which we can develop skills, values, and attitudes.

THE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM OF STUDY AND THE IDEAL OF CITIZENSHIP THAT IT SUSTAINS

The citizen program in basic education expresses a group of expectations and ideals that, in good measure, are congruent with the characteristics of a democratic education around everyday practices. This program starts from kindergarten and continues through elementary and secondary school, that is, throughout the entirety of basic education.

First, the syllabus of basic education—which includes kindergarten, primary, and secondary, as pointed out—is organized into various "fields of formation," which go through these three levels. The field that is more

directly involved with citizenship education is named "personal development and coexistence." In this field of formation, the course of study known as "personal and social development" occupies pre-school education, while the subject of "civic and ethical education" is studied in both primary and secondary schools.

In the following section, the characteristics of citizenship education in each of these educational levels are described.

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

This education, addressed to children between three and five years old, is comprised of a course of study organized into five formative fields.[28] The field that is more closely related to citizenship education is that of "social and personal development," which covers "the attitudes and processes of construction of personal identity and emotional and social competencies; comprehension and regulation of emotions, and the ability to establish interpersonal relationships. It also promotes self-regulation by agreeing on limits to behaviors."[29] At this early level, citizenship education emphasizes the immediate interactive context and encourages students, on the one hand, to identify their own ability to regulate their emotions and personal reactions, taking into account their effects on other people. With this emphasis, the foundations are laid for students to begin recognizing shared interests, which in later years will be broadened toward the public interest and the identification of their personal position in relation to the public interest—a constant aspect of citizenship with respect to the events of public life.

This field is divided into two aspects: personal identity and interpersonal relationships, and each one contemplates the development of certain competencies. Thus, some aspects from liberal and communitarian perspectives are visible in this educative level.

Personal Identity establishes the following as competencies: "Acknowledges his/her qualities and capacities, and develops a sensibility for others' needs and qualities," and, "Gradually acts with greater confidence and control, according to external criteria, rules and conventions that regulate his behavior in the different contexts of participation."

These competencies also contemplate the achievement of expected learning outcomes that are related to citizenship education. Among the more notable of such learning outcomes are students' knowledge of their own tastes, interests, feelings, and motivations, as well as the effort required to reach their goals; and their capacity to confront challenges and strategize ways to deal with them, both individually and collectively. Also included is the ability to express disappointment when their opinions are neither heard nor accepted, as well as the consideration of others' opinions in order to live harmoniously. Finally, such competencies include the inclination to offer support to those who need it and to learn how to take care of and respect oneself.

Another group of learning outcomes refers to the student's ability to identify the consequences of the language s/he uses to participate with others, as well as his/her capacity to control his behavior with regard to the care and respect that others deserve. Altogether then, personal identity expresses many features of the liberal perspective on citizenship.

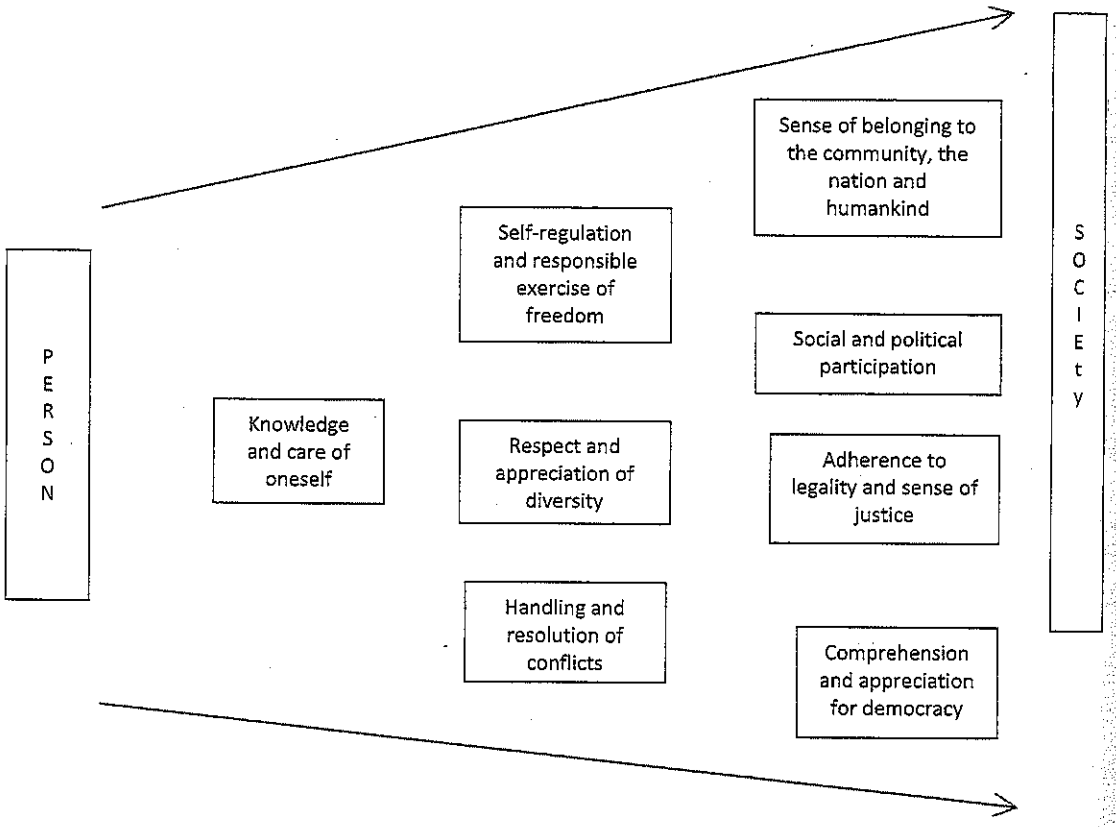
The other part of this formative field, interpersonal relationships, establishes the following competencies: "Accepts his classmates as they are, and learns to act according to the necessary values for life in a community, putting them into practice in daily life," and, "Establishes positive relationships with others, based on understanding, acceptance and empathy."[30] In this aspect the communitarian conception of citizenship is most evident, especially through the allusion to values articulated in Article Three of the Constitution, which establishes the ethical orientation of all basic education: freedom, equality, justice, democracy, solidarity, love of country, sovereignty, respect for human dignity, and respect for diversity.

As part of these competencies, the learning outcomes that are highlighted include those related to the identification of those capacities common to both girls and boys for engaging in diverse activities, as well as confronting situations that are unjust or in which rights are not respected; and their disposition for assuming responsibility and collaborating on individual and collective tasks, as well as the ability to interact with children with different qualities and interests. Other learning outcomes include the acceptance and application of rules based on equality[31] and respect, and the identification of the diversity of ethnic, linguistic, physical, and gender characteristics—and the importance of the participation of everyone in the life of society.[32]

As can be appreciated from the expected learning outcomes that correspond to the four competencies promoted at this educational level, the personal and interpersonal dimensions constitute the starting point for reflection about the society and the place students have in it. The reference to the context of daily coexistence of students bestows importance on the practice of competencies.

Primary and Secondary Education

In both levels of elementary education, the subject of civic and ethical formation promotes the development of eight civil and ethic competencies whose development is fostered in a gradual manner. Such competencies include: knowledge and care of oneself; self-regulation and the responsible exercise of freedom; respect and appreciation of diversity; sense of belonging to the community, the nation, and humankind; handling and resolution of conflicts; social and political participation; adherence to legality and sense of justice; comprehension and appreciation for democracy. These competencies are developed throughout primary and secondary education and it is through them that the combination of communitarian and libertarian elements are expressed; these, in turn, start in the students' personal sphere and move out toward broader processes in social life, as indicated in the following diagram.



The curriculum of civic and ethical education for both primary and secondary schools is developed through five units in each grade (See Appendix 1), thereby allowing them to unfold in the established timeframe. In Appendix 1, one can observe that in each grade the curriculum follows a trajectory starting with themes rooted in the students' personal sphere—this is the case for Unit 1 in every grade—in order to move from there to the exercise of freedom and responsibility in Unit 2. Unit 3 takes up the sense of belonging to different social groups, cultural diversity, and interculturalism. In Unit 4, themes related to the role of citizenship in a democratic state are addressed, as well as the function of laws in protecting rights and regulating the actions of government. Finally, Unit 5 explores the resolution of conflicts across diverse spheres of social life.

In the case of primary education, besides the work derived from this subject and mainly developed in the *classroom*, other dimensions are considered to promote civic and ethic education:

The *cross-curricular work* is a series of themes in which knowledge is brought together by students across a variety of subjects in order to face situations of social and ethical relevance. Some of the proposed themes are:

- Environmental education for sustainability
- Education for peace and human rights
- Intercultural education

- Gender perspective
- Health education
- Sexual education
- Ethical consumption
- Financial and economic education
- Road safety education
- Transparency and accountability
- Culture for prevention of drugs addictions
- Rational and ethical use of technology[33]

The *school social environment, or climate,* is another dimension concerned with the daily coexistence within the classroom and the diverse school spaces. It is considered that such an environment has an impact in the formation of students through practice and relationships with others, which bear values and attitudes. Among the aspects of the school environment to be considered for civic and ethic formation, the following relate most directly to citizenship education:

- The respect for people's dignity
- Conflict resolution and negotiation of personal and community interests
- Equity and inclusion
- Participation
- The existence of clear and democratically constructed rules

Students' daily life is another dimension for the consideration of coexistence experiences that pupils have beyond the school context, in other groups like the family, the community, friends and other organizations. The aspects that are considered as valuable in this dimension for civic and ethic formation are:

- Care of oneself, identity and personal and family expectations
- Rights and responsibilities at home, in the community and the country
- Respect and value of diversity, participation and conflict resolution
- Understanding of relationships among students, family and mass media

Other components of this proposal are the so-called formative proceedings mechanisms, which consist of central strategies for civil and ethic formation in any of the contexts in which they develop. Dialogue, empathy, decision making, comprehension and critical reflection, development of ethic judgment, work projects and participation remain central to citizenship education. Such mechanisms, while articulated as dispositions to be developed in students, consist of specific learning strategies for civic and ethical.[34]

These mechanisms also suggest the promotion of constant attention to students' experiences in their most immediate everyday contexts of sociability. In this way, the programs suggest the possibility that students will analyze the functions of law in social life and the manner in which they can

be justly applied. To achieve this, the programs start in the first years of primary school with the recognition of how norms are applied in everyday life, thereby facilitating the identification of the values and attitudes necessary for respecting such norms and following them as shared agreements.

CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The subjects of citizenship education have notably been transformed with respect to the first proposals raised in the nineteenth century, and that were then also validated throughout the better part of the twentieth century by focusing on the formal knowledge of government institutions and the laws of the country. Through the concept of civic and ethical competencies, the current programs of study advocate a change in the conception of the personal-individual sphere toward a personal-social sphere by means of the practice of ethical reflection. With this practice, bridges are built in which the students can perceive the relationship that the exercise of political power and political participation has with their lives, that is, their needs and interests as children and adolescents.

In this way, the nationalist perspective that lent both content and form to the prior collectivistic emphasis on citizenship has been enriched by a broader vision of civic identity that today no longer gets reduced to an abstract picture of the country. On the contrary, identity now is recognized as being the result of a constant process that may have multiple referents—region, national, all of humanity—and that also surpasses the older notion of *mestizaje* ('mixed race') that had the practical effect of negating the truly pluriethnic and multicultural character of our country.

Additionally, the liberal component of citizenship has been included in new programs for citizenship education by recognizing the rights and liberties of all people, in particular the rights of children. Moreover, such education has been enriched with pedagogical practices that make feasible the possibility for students to develop the capacity to make decisions and deliberate over their ensuing consequences as one way of further developing their own autonomy.

Currently, syllabi offer a wider view of citizenship and citizenship formation in several aspects, as mentioned in the following:

- Consideration of the needs, interests, and conditions of students[35]
- Acknowledgement of multiculturalism and the need to build intercultural relationships to overcome a homogenizing perspective, based on the idea of crossbreeding
- The distinction of citizenship as a formal status and citizenship as a series of competencies, which has allowed children and adolescents to exert diverse attitudes, commitments and citizen knowledge

- The acknowledgement that citizenship is built-up by a series of practices that in order to be developed, requires the constant exertion in spaces where students coexist daily

In several studies of school work that has been generated through current programs of civic and ethic formation, a series of practices can be identified which overcome the work centered on note dictation, memorization of concepts and constitutional precepts, as well as the abstract treatment of formal aspects of civics. Among those practices, the following remain important:

- Incorporation of brief research tasks into the daily work of students, incorporating information derived from the environment in which they live
- The recovery of ideas and experiences of students as illustrative examples, or as analysis of situations in order to contrast them with diverse information
- The elaboration of questions that seek the generation of debate among students, as well as the manifestation of their opinions, due to the fact that those questions admit several answers, while opening the opportunity for students to formulate arguments to which they can apply information of several types
- The approximation of concepts to the experiences of students, as well as their application to formulate explanations about what is taking place in their daily surroundings
- The promotion of actions of social participation to improve the surrounding conditions through tasks that are accessible to all students, as well as the negotiation of proposals through mechanisms of citizenship such as group debates, the taking of polls, the publication of texts that express shared ideas and sentiments, and the writing of petitions directed to particular authorities, all within the context of school and community life, and with the support of educators

These changes in the approach to classroom work around citizenship education, though subtle, represent advances in the conceptions and practices that are starting to be perceived in basic education schools. The classroom practices show significant advances with respect to those identified ten years ago, in various close-ups to the implementation of civic and ethic education. Some of the most frequent difficulties among educators were: their lack of knowledge to take advantage of students experiences as an starting point to confront several aspects of citizenship; the tendency to indoctrinate students with their adult perspective before several points of view submitted by students; the use of formal and abstract explanations that became distant from the reality of pupils.[36]

With respect to the teaching methods that educators must apply in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes, the changes that were required

can be perceived as a simple matter of didactic resources and strategies, that is, as a methodological problem. However, it also represents an issue of perspective with respect to citizenship and the path already walked by students in their formation as citizens, even though they do not bear this legal status.

Also, the contents of the current syllabus suggest challenges to school work as a coexistence space, and therefore, to its formative potential. Specifically, aspects related to the school environment identify challenges that question the way in which primary and secondary schools are organized and function to work.

This way, from the syllabus the need is outlined for schools to: offer students participation spaces; apply democratic forms for decision making which pertain to the whole school community; prevailing of full respect to human rights; and that the practice of discipline by adult authority respects students as worthwhile persons.

Notwithstanding, in several approaches to school practices of civil formation, the existing tension is emphasized among a series of organization guidelines that give school an authoritative hue, which is characterized by the following features:

- School management is centered in adult decisions, with scarce margin and opportunities to define and decide collective issues in which students could and should be taken into account.
- Actions that are promoted for the school as a whole, derived from the subject of civic and ethic formation, or from other programs, (as those activities promoted by other institutions, like the ones from the Instituto Federal Electoral (Federal Institute for Elections),[37] are usually confined to the activities of the subject itself and the responsibility for their application is delegated to the educators that teach them.
- Closely related to the prior characteristic, the development of competencies for citizen is not part of the agenda of collegiate encounters of educators. Citizenship education does not constitute a priority either for teachers to generate agreements about the way to act or solve any conflict. Often, educators think about the need to promote values when they deal with disruptive students' behavior, in order to reinforce disciplinary measures..
- The limited use of spaces that are created for student participation such as, the school assembly, the bulletin board and the society of alumni. Such spaces are usually defined in their contents and the way to utilize them by educators, but with a very limited margin for students to express their interests, needs, proposals and opinions within them.
- Due to the fact that the actions and contents which are proposed in the programs of civic and ethic formation are more general, since they invite to the incorporation of particular interests of each school, their realization is usually minimized or simply nullified. Its abandonment is also due to the lack of a prescribed schedule to carry them out.

Due to this final constraint, the written proposal of the syllabus of Citizenship Education runs into a series of breaks and discontinuities that, occasionally, oppose its guiding principles and thereby complicate its concrete application in the classrooms and schools. The aforementioned issue, which is a frequent quality of the relationship between the written programs and school practices, shows the persistence of citizenship education approaches that are still rooted in an abstract coverage of curricular content, thereby eclipsing the possible relationship between such content and students' real lives both in and out of school.

CONCLUSION

This proposal, orientated toward the development of competencies implies for the main users of programs (i.e., the educators) the need to have the availability of administrative and organizational school conditions that allow the display of teaching approaches that are congruent with the pedagogical principles that guide civic and ethic education. Among others, the following needs can be highlighted.

A shared evaluation among educators, principals, and educational assistants in each school, of the sense of citizenship in the integral education of students is needed. The latter suggests the approval of a collegiate discussion to define concrete actions around the aspects of school coexistence that can contribute to citizenship education.

This requires the appropriate functioning of the School Board (Çonsejo Técnico Escolar), since citizenship education is not only a teachers' responsibility, but it is also a task for all the people who work at schools: principals and supervision personnel.[38] This way, it will be possible to develop common criteria and strategies to propitiate alumni participation, to solve conflicts that arise among them and other members of schools, to establish and modify rules that are related to attributions, rights and responsibilities of those who integrate the school community.

On the other hand, it is necessary to have conditions for teachers to grant the necessary time to the application of activities such as research, team and group discussion, the collaborative work among students and the tasks that are oriented to social participation inside and outside school. These are activities that are frequently undervalued and are usually substituted by note taking of teachers' explanations, questionnaires to be solved with information from textbooks, as well as the answering of written exercises with these materials. These activities imply less time and a lesser action of students inside and outside the school.

Citizenship formation requires appreciation in schools as an opportunity to analyze the dynamics of social life and the school itself. That is why educators have to generate within schools spaces of dialog and formation in which they can test various forms to regulate students'

behavior at school and to acknowledge that the adult authority must be exerted from other perspectives.

The school as a whole, as a space of coexistence, far from being a simple extension of citizenship education, requires to be valued as the immediate ground where students can test the knowledge in the lessons of civic and ethic education. The palpable validity of the respect for human rights at schools, the equal treatment, the rejection of discriminatory attitudes and gender equality, constitute conditions that educators and directive personnel need to take care of in order to have students experience their viability and benefits for personal and collective well-being.[39] If the importance of the school environment is not acknowledged in citizenship education, a risk arises that students will consider it as an academic discourse that has no validity with their reality and, in the worst scenario, a simulation game.

The recognition of the role of school administration and organization for the citizenship formation of children and adolescents acquires a greater relevance in light of the results obtained by Mexico in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS 2009), in which the fact that programs by themselves will not ensure an adequate development of citizenship competencies, as the ones evaluated by that research.[40]

Therefore, it is necessary that the Public Ministry of Education provide an impulse to the development of citizenship formation through the environment and school coexistence, by means of guidelines and materials addressed to School Technical Councils. Through these mechanisms, it is mandatory for schools to have the availability of technical and pedagogical capacities in order to take decisions about the measures that must be set out to advance the strengthening of such formation, which is present in the syllabus, but requires collective resonance in the daily school life.

The current citizen syllabus is at risk of becoming simply a formality if students do not set out the civic and ethic competencies outlined in it. The isolated work by some teachers, mainly in secondary schools, limits possibilities for students to experience life at school as a community. Also, daily schedules require a certain degree of flexibility for the development of formative activities that occasionally require a longer time, or the intervention of several educators or school staff.

In this manner, citizenship education needs to be established as a point in the agenda of School Technical Councils, for the importance that formation has in the students´ lives and for schools to achieve their educational purposes.

One must always bear in mind that certain practices, values, and attitudes are acknowledged by the syllabus, while others that have current and authentic validity for students are excluded. In citizenship education, the attention to these practices that occur in the daily life of each school is crucial to start out a meaningful formation for the children and adolescents of the twenty-first century, their communicational and socialization experiences overflow any attempts of formalization through the syllabus.

Appendix

Grade	*U*
PRIMARY	
1°	I
2°	G
3°	C
4°	G
5°	G
6°	Fr
SECOND	
2°	C
3°	T

Source: SEP

Appendix 1 Syllabus of Civic and Ethic Education for Primary and Secondary Education

Grade	*Unit I*	*Unit II*	*Unit III*	*Unit IV*	*Unit V*
PRIMARY EDUCATION					
1°	I know and take care of myself	I express myself, take responsibility, and learn to decide	I know and respect people that surround me	We build rules to coexist and live better	Dialoguing to solve differences and improve our surroundings
2°	Girls and boys that grow and take care of themselves	My responsibilities and limits	We all need from each other	Rules for harmonic coexistence	Building up agreements and solving conflicts
3°	Careful, cautious, and protected girls and boys	I learn to express my emotions, set goals, and fulfill agreements	The care for the environment and appreciation of cultural diversity	Laws that regulate coexistence and protect our rights	We learn to organize ourselves and solve conflicts
4°	Girls and boys that take care of their health and personal integrity	The exercise of my freedom and respect to my own rights and others' rights	Mexico, a diverse and plural country	Mexico, a regulated country by laws	Citizen participation and pacific coexistence
5°	Girls and boy that build their identity and prevent risks	Girls and boys that learn to be free, autonomous, and fair	Girls and boys that work for equity, against discrimination and for the care of the environment	Democratic life and government	Conflict solution without violence and linked to human rights
6°	From childhood to adolescence	Making decisions according to ethical principles for a better future	The challenges of societies now	The pillars of democratic government	Social events that demand citizenship participation
SECONDARY EDUCATION					
2°	Civic and ethics education in social and personal development	Adolescents and their coexistence environments	The civic and ethic dimension of coexistence	Principles and values of democracy	Toward the identification of ethic commitments
3°	The challenges of personal and social development	Thinking, making decisions, and acting for the future	Identity and interculturalism for a democratic citizenship	Participation and democratic citizenship	Toward an informed, committed, and participative citizenship

Source: SEP (2011) *Agreement No. 592*.

NOTES

1. I want to thank Professor Bradley A. Levinson for his valuable comments to this manuscript.
2. INEGI, Population and residence census 2010 (Censo de Población y vivienda 2010):http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/poblacion/lindigena.aspx?tema=P#uno, (consulted on 14/07/2013). According to the 2010 census, México possesses a population of 112,336,538 inhabitants.
3. Sergio Aguayo, *The tray: A history of the intelligence services in México (La Charola. Una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México)*, México, Grijalbo; Ramírez, Ramón (1969) *The mexican student movement (El movimiento estudiantil mexicano)*, (México, Era, 2001).
4. Margarita Favela, "Political System and Social Protest: From Authoritarianism to Plurality" ("Sistema político y protesta social: del autoritarismo a la pluralidad"), en Ordorica, Manuel y Jean François Prud'homme (Eds.) *Great Mexican Problems. Abridged Edition. (Los grandes problemas de México. Edición abreviada)*, V. 2, (México, El Colegio de México, 2012) 89–92.
5. Carlos Monsiváis, *Free Admission: A Chronicle Of A Society That Organizes Itself (Entrada libre, crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza)*, México, Era 1987).
6. However, according to Favela, during the PAN federal governments (2000 to 2012), and protected by a discourse of "institutional modernization," the regime not only has reduced social rights by issuing new legal dispositions against pensions and social security, but it has also started out a process of contraction of individual rights, shielded by a discourse against insecurity" (Favela, M. *Op. Cit.*, p. 92.)
7. Even republican France also found itself with the challenge of developing sentiments and faculties tied to the new order. Cfr. Rosanvallon, Pierre, *La consagración del ciudadano. Historia del sufragio universal en Francia* [*The acknowledgment of citizenship. Universal suffrage in France*], México, Instituto Mora, 1999.
8. The term "formación" in Spanish is notoriously difficult to translate into English. Similar to the term *bildung* in German, it refers to the broad shaping of human habits, values, and desires. Formación is often used alongside citizenship in Spanish-speaking contexts, in order to indicate that citizenship "education" requires much more than knowledge or skill. Here I will sometimes translate term as "education," when it is used quite similarly to the well-known English phrases "civic or citizenship education," but occasionally I will preserve the broader meaning of the term as "formation."
9. By liberalism I mean a political perspective based on freedom and individual rights as the cornerstone of political action and of the relationship between individuals and the state and its institutions. (Cfr. Puig, Josep María, *Prácticas morales. Una aproximación a la educación moral* [*Moral Practices. An Approach to Moral Education*], Buenos Aires, Paidós, 2003.). It's important to note that some aspects of this kind of liberalism were present alongside collectivist nationalism; witness the fact that throughout the nineteenth century the struggle for constitutional reform centered on the fight for religious freedom and the secular state, with the attendant separation of church property from the state, and precisely the Liberal Party played an important role in this. Nonetheless, the exercise of individual rights and freedoms in everyday life remained severely limited, and they were even confounded with "modern" social norms and conventions.

10. Fernando Cortés and Orlandina de Oliveira (Coor.), "Social Inequality: Introduction" ("Desigualdad social. Introducción"), in Ordorica, Manuel y Jean François Prud'homme (Coor.) *Op. cit.*, 19–21.
11. Bradley Levinson citado en Adriana Acevedo and Paula López, *Ciudadanos inesperados. Espacios de formación de la ciudadanía ayer y hoy* [*Unexpected Citizens. Spaces of Citizenship Formation Yesterday and Today*], México, El Colegio de México/Cinvestav, 2012, 21.
12. Josefina Vazquez, *Nationalism and education (Nacionalismo y educación)*, (México, El Colegio de México, 1975); Maria Eugenia Luna, "On formation with a national (ist) sense to the citizen of a global village" ("De la formación con sentido nacional (ista) a la ciudadanía de la aldea global"), in Alba et al, *Civic and Ethics education in Basic Education: challenges and possibilities in the context of a globalized society (La Formación Cívica y Ética en la Educación Básica: retos y posibilidades en el contexto de la sociedad globalizada)*, (México, SEP-AFSEDF, 2011), 110–118.
13. Fernando Escalante, *Imaginary Citizens: Memorial of the Efforts and Misfortunes of Virtue and an Apology of the Triumphant Vice in the Mexican Republic: A Treatise of Public Moral (Ciudadanos imaginarios. Memorial de los afanes y desventuras de la virtud y apología del vicio triunfante en la República mexicana: tratado de moral pública)*, (México, El Colegio de México, 1992).
14. Eugenia Roldán, "The nineteenth-century Mexican school as a ceremonial initiation to citizenship: norms, catechisms and public exams" ("La escuela mexicana decimonónica como iniciación ceremonial a la ciudadanía: normas, catecismos y exámenes públicos"), in Acevedo, Ariadna y Paula López (Coor.) *Unexpected citizens. Spaces of citizen formation yesterday and today (Ciudadanos inesperados. Espacios de formación de la ciudadanía ayer y hoy)*, (México, El Colegio de México-CINVESTAV, 2012).
15. *Mexican Simon. Reading Book for Schools*, (*El Simon Mexicano. Libro de lectura para uso de las escuelas*), (Mexico, Antigua Imprenta de Murguia, 1868); L. H.B.V. A. *Civic Instruction for Children* (*Instrucción civica para uso de los niños*), (México Antigua Imprenta de Murguia, 1892).
16. In 1921, the Ministry of Education (Secretaria de Educacion Pública [SEP]) was founded and since then has had in charge the design of a national curriculum for pre-school, primary and secondary education.
17. Maria-Eugenia Luna, "Citizenship Education in the Latin American Region," *34th Annual Pacific Circle Consortium Conference*, Ashland, Oregon, 2010.
18. In 1974, two syllabus plans were established: one of them was organized by subjects and the other was structured in thematic areas. In the latter, the social studies area integrated the subjects of history, geography, and civics.
19. Maria Eugenia Luna, "Citizenship Education in Mexico," in John J. Cogan and David. Grossman, *Creating Socially Responsible Citizens. Cases from the Asia-Pacific Region*, Charlotte, Information Age Publishing, 2012, 136.
20. SEP, *Políticas y fundamentos de la educación intercultural bilingüe en México* [*Policy and Basis of Intercultural and Bilingual Education in Mexico*], México, 2007, 40, 41.
21. The program was published as part of the Secondary School Reform, which was of curricular character.
22. As indicated above, it was in the final decade of the twentieth century that the multicultural nature of Mexico was finally recognized; such recognition was tied to the actions of the Zapatista Army of the state of Chiapas, a non-violent indigenous movement which made visible the living conditions of the indigenous people in that region of the country.

23. In Mexico, there is a national syllabus for basic education which provides an elective space in secondary schools, in which educational authorities from each state propose regional contents. Currently, in this space, there exist state programs inscribed in the field of Citizenship Education and the so-called "Culture of Lawfulness." The opening for this state space was introduced in 1993 under the name of Elective Subject.
24. Bradley Levinson and Margaret Sutton, "Civic Education Reform for Democracy. U. S. Models in Mexico and Indonesia, in Doyle Stevick and Bradley Levinson (Eds.) *Advancing Democracy Through Education?*, (North Carolina, Information Age Publishing, 2008).
25. Victoria Camps, *Los valores de la educación* [*Values of education*], Madrid, Anaya, 1996; Carlos Cullen, *Autonomía moral, participación democrática y cuidado del otro* [*Moral Autonomy, Democratic Participation and Care of Others*], Buenos Aires, Novedades Educativas, 2004; Risieri Frondizi, *¿Qué son los valores?* [*What are values?*], México, Fondo de Cultura Económica (Breviarios, 135), 1972; José Fernández, *Filosofía política de la democracia* [*Political Philosophy of Democracy*], México, Fontamara, (Biblioteca de Ética, Filosofía del Derecho y Política, 43), 1997.
26. Bernard Crick, *En defensa de la política* [*In Defence of Politics*], México, Tusquets Editores/IFE, 2001; Monserrat Payá, *Educación en valores para una sociedad abierta y plural. Aproximación conceptual* [*Education in values for an open and plural Society*], Bilbao, Desclée de Brouwer, 2000; Luis Salazar and José Woldenberg, *Principios y valores de la democracia* [*Principles and Values of Democracy*], México, Instituto Federal Electoral, (Cuadernos de Divulgación de la Cultura Democrática, 1), 1997.
27. SEP, *2011 Program. Basic Education (Plan de Estudios 2011. Educación Básica)*, (México, SEP,2011), 58.
28. These fields are language and communication, mathematical reasoning, exploration and knowledge of the world, personal and social development, and artistic expression and appreciation.
29. SEP (2011) *Agreement No, 592*, 46.
30. SEP, Ibid.
31. The kind of equality that is referenced in the programs of study is that which individuals have before the law, as well as their equality in dignity and rights. As mentioned previously, economic equality is a still unresolved matter in Mexican life.
32. Ibid.
33. SEP, *2011 Curriculum programs. A guide for teachers. Basic Education. Secondary. Civic and ethic Education (Programas de estudio 2011. Guía para el maestro. Educación Básica. Secundaria. Formación Cívica y Ética)*, (Mexico, SEP, 2011); SEP, (*2011 Curriculum programs. Guide for teachers. Basic Education. Primary. First grade (Programas de estudio 2011. Guía para el maestro. Educación Básica. Primaria. Primer grado)*, (México, SEP, 2012).
34. There now exists in the Ibero-american context an extensive pedagogical literature which includes strategies whose names are linked to the types of dispositions that are sought to be cultivated amongst students. Cfr.: María Rosa Buxarrais *et al*, *La educación moral en primaria y secundaria*, México, SEP, 1999; Greta Papadimitriou and Sinú Romo, *Capacidades y competencias para la resolución no violenta de conflictos. Educación para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos*, México, MxGraw-Hill, 2005; Josep Puig y Xus Martín, *La educación moral en la escuela. Teoría y práctica*, Barcelona, EDEBE.
35. Lilian Alvarez and Maria Eugenia Luna, "Civic education in the transition to the new century" ("La educación cívica en la transición al nuevo siglo"), in

Democracy and Civic Education (Democracia y educación cívica), (México, Electoral Institute of Distrito Federal, 2007), 59–84.

36. Luna, M. E. ("Mexican secondary schools: conditions and possibilities for the development of citizenship culture." Paper presented at the XXV Annual Conference of the Pacific Circle Consortium, Christchurch, 2001)
37. This program consists on the realization of surveys among students, within primary and secondary schools, about the conditions in which they live their rights and the situations that impair their respect and fulfillment.
38. SEP *Guidelines for organization and functioning of School Councils (Lineamientos para la organización y el funcionamiento de los Consejos Técnicos Escolares)*, (México, SEP, 2013), 11. The school councils are composed of teachers and key administrative personnel in each school. Such councils make both pedagogical and administrative decisions about what activities will be conducted throughout the school year.
39. Levinson, We Are All Equal: *Students Culture an Identity at a Mexican Secondary School, 1888–1998* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2001).
40. W. Schulz, J. Ainley, J. Fraillon, D. Kerr, B. Losito, *ICCS 2009 International Report: Civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement among lower-secondary school students in 38 countries*, (Amsterdam, IEA, 2010).