

Civic Education as a Sustainable Value in the Formation of Citizens

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to analyze the possibilities of civic education as a sustainable value for citizen education. The existing problem of the lack of civic values in the education of individuals in their formation as citizens is revealed in due time. Its referential framework is based on the theories of democracy and civic virtues, as well as the positions of the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), and the National Electoral Institute (INE). Specifically, a case study is carried out with the Center for Technological, Industrial and Service Studies No. 22 (CETis 22) in the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas in Mexico. A mixed cut measurement instrument is applied, through a survey applied to students on their last semester and teachers that make up the period 2021-2022. The information of the analyzed data is compiled and its results are presented graphically, considering that they respond to the theoretical base and its trends to rise during the analysis process. These proposals are outlined for the application of public policies focused on the promotion of civic education in educational institutions in the region.

Keywords

Civic Education, Construction of Citizens, Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

Citizenship is a form of behavior that defines the society in which we live, in each country according to its norms and culture, it may vary in some aspects, however, its objective is the same, the harmonious coexistence of the citizens that make up a nation, the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defines it as the “respectful behavior of the citizen with the rules of public coexistence” (Real Academia Española, 2022).

The form and lifestyle of a society depend on the civility of its members,

which is why there must be training that inculcates the desired and accepted values in the community (Eidhof, ten Dam, Dijkstra, & Van de Werfhorst, 2016). For the formation of a citizen to be effective, early education is required, which manages to infuse the qualities and rules of behavior determined by the society of the country in which one lives, as well as the consequences of not abiding by said rules. That is why the importance of imparting a civic education during the growth of children and young people.

The integration of civility for the formation of citizens in an education system is one of the most common ways in which society instructs this culture in young people, its methodology depends on each country.

In Mexico, the body in charge of managing resources for education is the Ministry of Public Education (hereinafter SEP). Currently, the Mexican education system includes civic and ethical education subjects at the primary and secondary levels, where minors between approximately 6 and 15 years of age are trained, and before the year 2000, it was also taught in the baccalaureate, which serves people between the ages of 15 and 18. However, as of that year, by presidential initiative, this program was deleted from the upper-middle level.

In this way, the problem develops in the interrupted process in the formation of civic education in young people, considering that it is a fundamental part of the construction of citizenship in the framework of civil, political, and social rights, including the right to vote, citizen participation and democracy.

Starting from this approach, civility and citizenship as concepts that go hand in hand in the daily life of each person who belongs to a society constituted by norms for a correct coexistence, at the same time they form a fundamental part of democracy. In Mexico these principles are elementary for the political life of the country, and the civic level of citizens is considered a fundamental pillar in the economic development of the State (Reese & Rosenfeld, 2002), which is why an efficient civic education is necessary, that manages to form a citizenry capable of committing itself to the obligations and rights granted by the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States.

In this sense, the approach to the problem manifests a lack of civic values in the formation of the individual and this, in turn, is being impacted by political decision-making that improves the common well-being of society. Its referential framework is based on the theories of the new school and moral education, as well as the information established by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), and the National Electoral Institute (INE). The empirical study is concentrated in the upper secondary level, taking as a sample the students and professors of the Center for Technological, Industrial and Service Studies No. 22 CETis 22, in the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas. The objective is to outline proposals in the application of public policies focused on the promotion of civic education, where the educational institutions of the region can consider the results for improvement as a perspective in the formation of a conscious and assertive citizen.

2. Importance of Civility in Citizen Education and Democracy

The importance of civic education is very high in the political and democratic life of any country. Civic education teaches, more than just behavior, it also nurtures a culture of appreciation and respect for their homeland and the people with whom one lives in a society (Crittenden & Levine, 2007). Citizenship is made up of a population with specific traits that acquire rights and obligations by being part of a State and the rules by which this society is governed, all these aspects are closely related to civility, which ultimately is nothing more than the form of behavior that is expected of the population to be part of a governed system.

According to Newman (1987), education is necessary as a condition of democracy itself. Democracy assumes a citizenry committed to freedom, equality, and the common good, understanding that the state exists to ensure individual rights and collective well-being, that governments must be led through consent and participation, and that progress of these purposes requires broad access to information relevant to public affairs.

Before addressing the relationship that citizenship has with civility, it is necessary to explain the concepts of each one to unravel the link that unites them.

According to Lizcano Fernández (2012), the citizen is any person considered as an active member of a State, holder of political rights and subject to its laws. Citizenship in Mexico is acquired by being born in the national territory, by being born abroad to Mexican parents or by express request of foreigners who make the decision to adopt Mexican citizenship. In this sense, “citizens of a republic” are considered men and women who, having the status of Mexicans, meet the requirements of having turned 18 years old, and having an honest way of living (DOF, 2022).

A foreigner also holds this title through a process called naturalization, to achieve it, it is necessary that “foreigners obtain a letter of naturalization from the Ministry of Relations and that the foreign woman or man marry a man or woman of Mexican nationality, who have or establish their domicile within the national territory and comply with the other requirements established by law for that purpose” (DOF, 2022).

Historically, it is recorded that the concept of citizenship originated legally during the French Revolution, it had “undoubted roots in the liberal-democratic ideology and the concept of the Rule of Law of the 19th century.

Citizenship is so important in a State because it is one of the three important parts that make it up (population, territory, and government), citizenship is the part of the population that, due to its age, autonomous decision-making capacity, and full responsibility of acts have accordance with the law, all the obligations and rights conferred by his government entity and that makes him a citizen before the Law.

Likewise, in Mexico the attributes established for citizenship consist, above all,

in an attitude or position, that is, the awareness of belonging to a community founded on law and the situation of being an active member of an independent political society (Ramírez Saiz, 1995).

The fact of being a citizen and belonging to a society commits us to take into account the responsibilities and rights that we receive, as well as fully enjoy them, with the limitations established by law, and to apply for an order and lead a peaceful quality of life.

Regarding the concept of citizenship, this has been understood as the statute that allows the exercise of a set of civic, political, and social rights and duties Borja and Muxí (2003). Therefore, Reyes-García (2013) affirms that citizenship has become a central issue of sociopolitical changes in Mexico in recent decades.

These changes according to Reyes have been contributed, among other things, by globalization which the world has entered through the technological and communications revolution in which we currently live. According to Borja (2003), citizens have gained another space, that of political society, a better expression than civil society, which is what all organizations and forms of collective action create and occupy when they go beyond their objectives and immediate and corporate interests.

In this way, citizenship can be conceived as the phenomenon where citizens become active political-social actors who have full function in the current democracy, which allows an important relationship between the State and society to extend. According to Restrepo (1995), it creates a paradigm in which “every problem of sensitive public interest has to become a state matter”, although this complex whole is currently called governance and is a practical example of why civic behavior and culture They are a pressing need at present since the participation of society in the governmental life of the country is increasingly needed, as part of the natural evolution of the government system.

On the other hand, the concept “Civic” refers to the proper or characteristic behavior of the citizen; On the other hand, the concept of civility, as well as that of civic virtues, has been gaining importance in recent years due to the growing need to highlight the role that citizens must play in liberal democracies (Camps, 2005). In this regard, Boyd (2006) argues that civility should be understood as democratic, pluralistic, and based on a sense of moral equality. The most obvious contribution of civility is functional: alleviating social conflicts and facilitating social interactions in a complex and diverse market society.

Given this concept, care must be taken not to confuse the norms established by the State with those of public coexistence, that is, a citizen may not have a civic education, but that would not mean breaking any law that would warrant an administrative sanction by the corresponding authorities, the foregoing indicates that civility or civility is more linked to a meaning that has more to do with culture than with law.

In other words, “civic behavior is the active dimension of citizenship and involves participation and responsibility. Civility is the attitude and way of acting of a good citizen” (Martínez, Montaner, & Sanllehi, 2008), therefore, this defini-

tion encompasses the concept of a free expression of the social and political duties of the citizen, which is an official referral they can be considered moral duties since they affect the community in active citizen participation.

Namely, [Bolívar \(2016\)](#) explains that active citizenship includes the exercise of obligations and commitments with others, either because the citizen is convinced to do so, or because they comply, with more or less conviction, with legality and conventions of coexistence.

In this regard, democracy is favored to the extent that citizen participation is in force, as [Puig et al., \(2011\)](#) rightly mentions, through education we can be citizens of a democracy; Education is considered to form individuals and is also the foundation of a social order.

Thus, the citizen model is directly influenced by the selected curricular contents, as well as by the discernment of the ways of life that are desirable for society at a given moment. In other words, we can affirm that the ability of citizens to fully exercise their citizenship is the result of a process in which citizen-subjects are built.

3. The Impact of Civility on the Development of Societies

Civility has a significant impact on the development of societies because it strengthens the role of citizens regarding their rights and obligations as a society, and therefore, promotes democratic attitudes. As previously mentioned, civility is linked to education in a very intimate way, therefore, it is understood that the better the educational system of the country, the better its civic behavior will be.

According to [Newman \(1987\)](#), the democratic theory has pointed out that education is necessary as a condition of democracy itself. Democracy assumes a citizenry committed to freedom, equality, and the common good, understanding that the state exists to ensure individual rights and collective well-being, that governments must be led through consent and participation, and that progress of these purposes requires broad access to information relevant to public affairs.

[Miller \(2010\)](#) has considered that schools are not the only sources of civic education, but they are essential because they cultivate the next generation of citizens and civic leaders on whom the maintenance of democracy depends. On the other hand, recent investigations have established that more years of schooling are associated with greater citizen participation and have identified some of the educational conditions that explain the differences, for example, [Kahne & Sporte, \(2009\)](#), and [Hauser \(2000\)](#). Evidence presented by [Rodrik \(2000\)](#) indicates that participatory democracies allow for higher-quality growth: they allow for greater predictability and stability, are more resistant to shocks, and provide superior distributive outcomes.

On the other hand, [García-Ojeda \(2011\)](#) highlight social capital as an intrinsic term to generate well-being from associativity and recognition of norms, social capital has the ability to facilitate the provision of collective public resources, necessary for improving the social, economic and human conditions of the population, promoting the generation of networks and linking of actors committed

to the general interest, superimposing it on the individual and thus strengthening civility that favors human development and the best condition of civility in a community (Chiang et al., 2021).

Putnam et al. (1993) shares this same position, considering social capital as a way that promotes cohesion and collective well-being in the community, based on the associativity of basic units such as the family, organizations, and the State.

In this context, citizen participation in the different political exercises raises a slope for the collusion of the theory of social capital with politics. From their approach, Putnam et al. (1993) emphasize the importance of social capital as a central connecting element to explain the variation in civic commitment. In addition to this, Putnam emphasizes that, within this civic commitment, is widespread political participation.

Regarding the civic commitment mentioned by Brehm & Rahn (1997), they carried out an analysis of how the collective manifestation of social capital must be sustainable at the level of individual civic commitment and in individual attitudes towards others. The results of their study showed the presence of social capital in the form of a close reciprocal relationship between civic engagement and interpersonal trust. These findings also go hand in hand with Rice & Feldman's (1997) theory that engaged and active citizens see themselves as a set of political equals and therefore feel an obligation to promote the public good.

On the other hand, we understand that social capital helps individuals within the network to overcome collective action problems, reduce the cost of gathering political information, and enforce the norms of civic duty (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993), it is also understood that social capital helps democracy to increase levels of political participation (Condon, 2009). In this same sense, studies have been carried out analyzing the behavior of the networks in the collective political behavior of the group. Within them, it was found that people in a formal or informal network positively affect political participation (Ikeda & Richey, 2005; Nickerson, 2008; Klofstad, 2007).

4. Methodology

A mixed measurement instrument oriented to the scaling of people is applied, based on the summarized range model developed by Likert, and one of free expression reagents to heterogeneous or multidimensional constructs. The selection of the research design is based on the review of previous empirical studies, such as Tirado & Guevara (2006), Molina, Miralles & Ortuño (2013), Reparaz et al., (2015), Cuenca & Urrutia (2020) and Zúñiga et al., (2020), who use in different application contexts, the quantitative, qualitative and mixed approach.

A survey is applied to students and teachers that make up the period 2021-2022. There is a general population of 1759 students and 60 teachers, where a representative sample is estimated with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 0.5% of a population universe of CETis 22, made up of 106 students with characteristics between 17 and 18 years of age and 12 teachers.

The area studied is the Center for Industrial Technological Studies and Services “CETis 22” in the city of Tampico, Tamaulipas, a field investigation was carried out in order to elucidate the hypothesis that decrees “There are areas of opportunity in the civic formation of CETis 22 students through education in their study programs”.

To estimate the sample size, the following formula is applied:

$$n = (z^2 pq) / B^2$$

where:

n = Sample size.

z = 1.96 for 95% confidence.

p = Expected frequency of the factor to study.

q = 1 - p .

B = Precision or admitted error.

Test applications and corrections were made to adapt it to the sociocultural and cognitive context of the target population.

The work is based on an empirically based hypothesis, as mentioned by [Cappelleras & Vergués \(2001\)](#) where he relates each conceptual category with the explicit or implicit theoretical hypotheses in the approach to the investigative work and considers that the questionnaire can be built as an instrument that allows evidencing meanings and its ranking.

Its application in the field was carried out with the participation of 10 interviewers and 4 validators, who were trained and later supervised and guided during the work. Once the sector to be surveyed was located, the coordinator indicated to the interviewers where there were subjects with the characteristics required to answer the instrument. This resulted in managing to obtain a representative sample of young people between 17 and 18 years old by applying the surveys in the educational establishment under study ([Table 1](#), [Figure 1](#) & [Figure 2](#)).

Table 1. Operationalization of the variables.

VARIABLES	QUESTION
Human Rights	Do you know of human rights?
Constitution	Do you know the document in which the law is located?
Citizenship	Do you know of basic citizen characteristics?
Equality	Do you consider yourself equal to every other citizen?
Right to vote	Do you know of the upcoming elections?
Participation	Has there been active participation in your school?
Obligations	Do you know of your obligations as a citizen?
Civil, Political, and Social Rights	Do you know of your rights as a citizen?
Democracy	Do you know what “Democracy” means?
Contribution to Change	Acknowledgment of civic education as a necessary tool for the formation of citizens.

Source: Own elaboration.

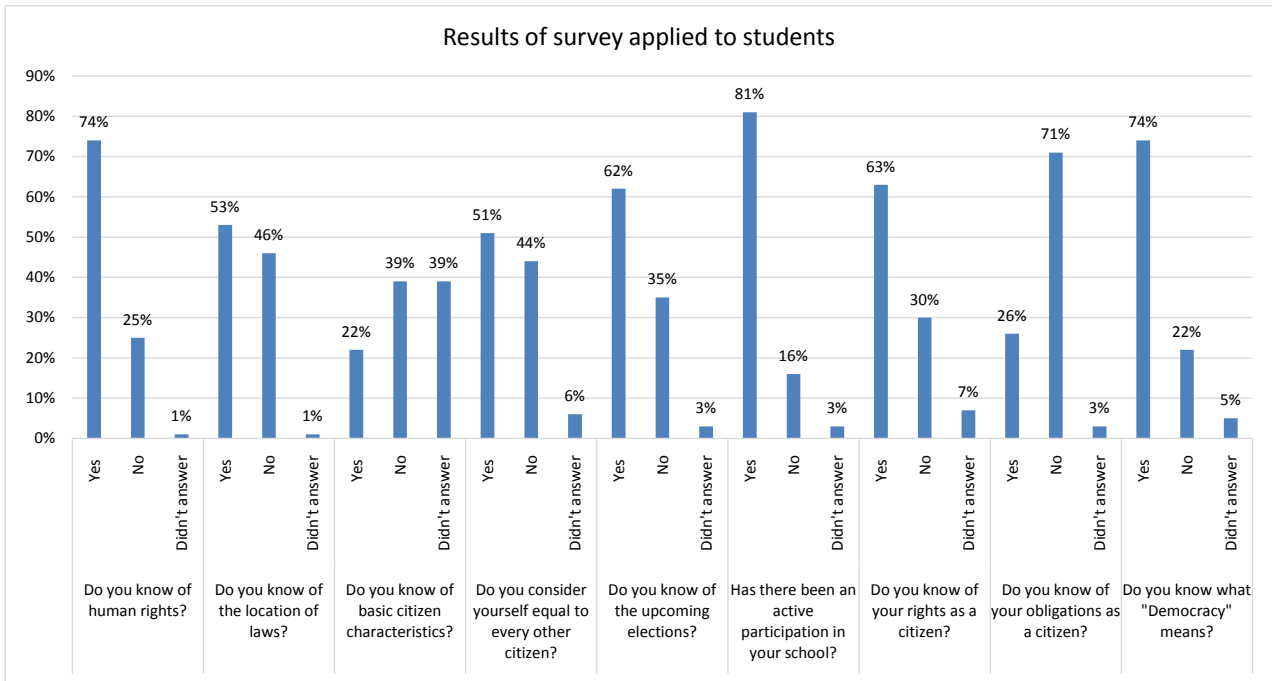


Figure 1. Degree of the relevance of civility indicators in students. Source: Own elaboration based on data from the instrument.

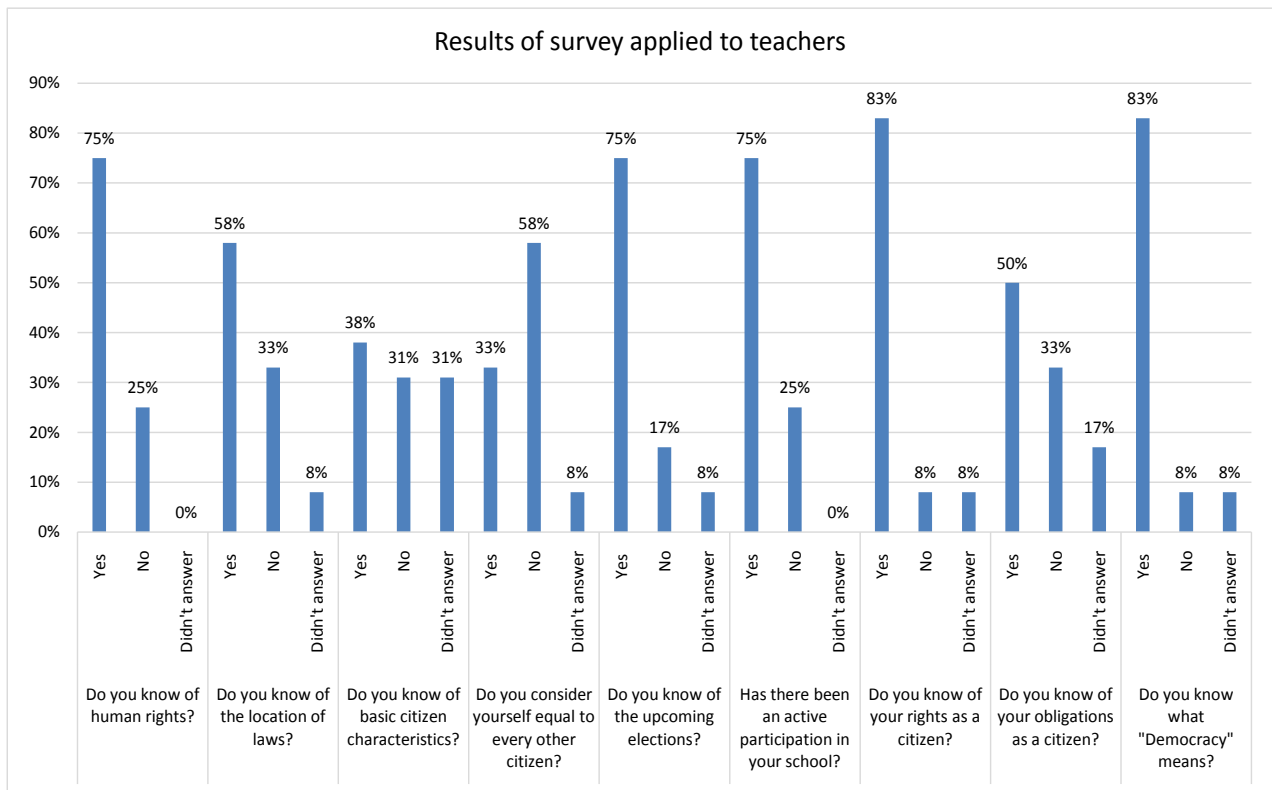


Figure 2. Degree of relevance of civility indicators in teachers. Source: Own elaboration based on data from the instrument.

5. Conclusion and Final Thoughts

The survey applied to the CETis 22 student population provides data that stands

out on its own over the established variables. The results are presented descriptively. In the case of the indicators, the students who answered affirmatively about the knowledge of human rights represent 74% of the sample, democracy with 74%, voting 62%, active participation with 81% and knowing the obligations as a citizen with 63%. However, the above, in other indicators that are intrinsically related to the referrals, students answer negatively, they do not know the location of the laws with 46%, the basic characteristics of a citizen with 39% and the rights as a citizen with 71%.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that there is a great lack of knowledge on the part of the students on the campus about their rights as citizens (71%), and only a quarter (26%) stated that they did have knowledge about the rights of as citizens. This response is consistent with the current context in Mexico, because citizens do not recognize that there is an authentic rule of law.

Regarding the results of the survey with teachers, knowledge about human rights was questioned, finding an affirmative answer in 75%, democracy 83%, voting and active participation with 75%, and knowing the obligations as a citizen 50%. In relation to the teachers who answered negatively, they do not know the location of the laws with 33%, the basic characteristics of a citizen with 31% and the rights as a citizen with 33%.

In summary, it can be verified that there are coincidences in the students and teachers of the CETis 22 educational establishment, the lack of knowledge about basic elements for citizenship in terms of human rights, democracy, laws and active participation continue to be a reason for research interest in the ambit.

The results of the applied surveys reveal the conditions in which the students and teachers of CETis 22 find themselves with respect to the variables that have been identified as the foundation of civility, in such a way that it can be asserted that the hypothesis is fully fulfilled since there are large areas of opportunity in which you can work.

In this analysis, political instruments can be seen to strengthen the civic education of the student. This, within the guidelines of the education, prevails in the government plans of a state, a town or even the entire country. On these items the idea can be supported in the construction of regional public policies.

It should be noted that it is crucial to carry out strategic evaluations of state and country schools on civic education. Carrying out actions within learning through courses, workshops, is necessary in order to make a difference and to be interactive between the parties.

The diagnosis constitutes a tool that is recommended to obtain more precise data of the real situation of the students and even of the teachers. Public institutions such as the National Electoral Institute, the Secretary of Public Education, the three orders of government, Executive, Legislative and Judicial, have programs that can be permeated in practical activities for students.

This strengthening the teacher-student relationship within these actions, to foster the civic awareness of individuals, takes us to another context at the regional level, detecting the power of suffrage, knowingly and fully exercising the

rights and obligations that we have as citizens in a free democracy in Mexico and the world.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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