DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND THE STATE IN LATIN AMERICA: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Bradley A.U. Levinson y Juan G. Berumen

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Since the political transitions and economic reforms of the 1980s, and especially since the end of the 1990s, Latin American states have been active in revising programs for civic education in order to create a more broadly democratic political culture. Perennially a bulwark of national identity and allegiance for more authoritarian or populist regimes, civic education in schools has been reconceived as a space for fostering democratic citizenship.[1] Yet what does this democratic citizenship consist of? What kind of citizen, for what kind of democracy? And how does the State, primarily through its ministries of education, but also in concert with a variety of national and international organizations, use schools to form democratic citizens?

To say that the State forms citizens through schools is already to grant the State a kind of unitary agency, and thereby to misrepresent the heterogeneity of interests that converge in State education ministries involved in democratic citizenship education (DCE). Much has been written about the rise of the "neoliberal state" in Latin America, and its recent challenge by a variety of democratic socialist or populist regimes. Undoubtedly, the neoliberal state brought with it a pervasive economistic and individualistic rationality that suffused most aspects of public policy. Indeed, the neoliberal State has attempted to reconstitute, and in some ways erase, the very idea of a democratic public. Yet the State is also a complex ensemble of ministries and charges, conditioned as much by global forces as by the domestic politics of legitimation.[2] The complex and contradictory nature of State policy is revealed, in part, through a sociology of state educational bureaucracies charged with developing programs in DCE.

When one looks closely at this domain of national ministries of education throughout Latin America, one must recognize three fundamental points: 1. The degree of **ideological coherence** and **organizational discipline** within education ministries varies a great deal; 2. The tendency has been toward an increased **engagement with international models and programs** for FCD, bringing with it all of the attendant problems of geopolitics and donor conditionality; and 3. The tendency has been toward **increased collaboration between ministries of education and other government sectors** (e.g., in Mexico, the Federal Electoral Institute, the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, and the *Instituto Nacional de Salud*), as well as with **non-governmental organizations** in civil society. Depending on the force and unity with which a democratically elected party or alliance takes over leadership of the state apparatus, hence the ministry of education, prior interests and commitments within the ministry

---

[1] School-based civic education remains but one player in the drama, variously competing and aligning with the many forces and influences that shape the future citizen, from popular culture and the media to peer groups and scarce economic opportunity. Thus, the broader term, "citizenship formation," includes state-sponsored, school-based initiatives, as well as informal socialization processes and civil society initiatives.

[2] See Tedesco, 2006, and Arnove, 2006.

may still flourish. Because of this organizational and ideological diversity, it is not uncommon to find certain offices of the education ministry pursuing programs and policies that are frankly contradictory with other ministry programs.

Dynamic relations between global, national, and sub-national actors also determine the course that citizenship education may take. At the transnational level, foreign assistance for citizenship education may breed dependence and constrain the choices policy-actors feel that they can make, thereby shifting decision-making power too far from the local conditions. International partners often lack the requisite historical, cultural and linguistic knowledge to relate effectively with their local partners. In addition, their support may come with ideological strings attached, or with attitudes wholly inappropriate to the context in which they are working. At the national level, domestic politics, conflicting policies, weak civil society and conservative bureaucracies may hamper attempts to implement more active and democratic forms of citizenship education. And at the local and classroom levels, economic constraints, authoritarian teaching-styles or school-leadership, and outdated materials may all hinder attempts at reform. These challenges, from the global to the local, are themselves interrelated in complex ways.[3]

Framed by these considerations of the state enmeshed in global-local dynamics, we undertake an initial conceptual mapping of the complex, ever-expanding landscape of democratic citizenship education in Latin America (We will use DCE as an acronym, while noting that often the term *formación* is used, such as the oft-heard phrase, "*formación ciudadana para la democracia,*" or FCD). We begin with a brief recounting of the policy environment, as well as the organizational and institutional landscape that drives programs in democratic citizenship education. We then move on to a content analysis of major programs, documents, and policies in order to examine definitions and assumptions about "democracy" and "citizenship education for democracy." We note tendencies and contradictions between the values and skills that different programs, organizations, or countries emphasize. We argue that each program forwards a unique amalgam of key tropes and values that undergird conceptions of democratic life, and that such emphases reflect the context —local, national, and transnational— in which such programs take shape. Finally, we look at pedagogical and structural-administrative issues, noting how DCE at least as often involves changes in the **forms** of policy making, school governance, school-community relationships, or student-teacher relationships.

A final methodological note is in order. This paper is far from exhaustive. It represents a first attempt to catalogue and introduce programs that are in fact heterogeneous and often overlapping. It is

---

[3] One fundamental presupposition of this paper is that the model political citizen of constitutionalist democracy, legitimated by Western political theory and exported now around the world, actually enfolds a number of particular cultural and ideological assumptions. Moreover, when this model of political citizenship meets the embedded cultural definitions of citizenship present in national and regional cultures of Latin America, unique adaptations are likely to take place. We align ourselves with the stance recently articulated by Anderson-Levitt (2003), that the expansion of Western institutional forms such as modern schooling does not so much impose a new regime of meanings as provide a new template for making meaning. Thus, on the one hand, globally circulating conceptions of democratic citizenship, typically originating in the constitutional democracies of the North, become uniquely adapted and appropriated by national education ministries in the development of policy and curriculum reform for civic education. The form that such adaptation takes is ultimately determined by: a) the nature of the interaction between national and global actors, b) the dynamics —both historical and current— of the national structural, political and cultural contexts in which reform takes place, and c) the institutional dynamics of national education ministries as the primary policy making bodies. Similarly, conceptions of democratic citizenship are exchanged amongst non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society, and these, too, are subject to local interpretations and appropriations.

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

2

based primarily on document collection at a distance and the first author's research and participatory experiences in various settings, including special sessions of the Organization of American States and a study of policy making for DCE in various offices of México's Ministry of Public Education (Levinson, 2004, 2005, 2007). In general, we concentrate on national-level programs, or programs sponsored by national education ministries. We try to include some of the many non-governmental organizations in this landscape, but we have barely begun to document their full range and involvement. Such NGOs are themselves highly diverse, with many of them functioning only at regional or local levels, others operating at the national level in various kinds of collaborations with ministries of education, and still others operating as local outposts of international organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Civitas International).

2. THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE OF DCE

Any attempt to understand the growing phenomenon of DCE in Latin America must reckon with the following questions: What are the major organizations sponsoring democracy, and how do they work? Who funds them? What laws and policy statements have been passed that are driving these programs? What is the prevailing political and social climate, and what is the existential context, in which certain kinds of programs and policies are being developed (e.g., a prevalence of human rights abuses; corruption; civil war; narcotraffic)? Finally, what role do government agencies, especially ministries of education, play in developing and implementing these programs, and what role do various NGOS —local, national, and international— play? What kinds of collaborations/relationships, if any, exist between these different sectors?

Answering these questions has turned out to be much more difficult than we initially anticipated. Over the last 20 years, there has been an explosion of policies, organizations, and programs attempting to educate the democratic citizen. Some of these are dedicated wholly to the project of democratic citizenship education, while others merely include DCE as one among many related goals and activities, such as "environmental education" or "education for human rights." In this research study, we have included those educational programs and policies that make some specific reference to democracy building or democratic citizenship in their documents. We have taken as a starting point those that have been submitted to the Organization of American States' permanent portfolio of Strategies and Programs for Promoting a Democratic Culture through Education by their respective national ministries as representing efforts in DCE, and we have supplemented these with our own independent web-based and snowball techniques.

We ought to note first of all that the kinds of visible programs and initiatives in DCE, while associated with particular organizations, often have their roots in broader social movements that find their expression within such organizations. With the (re)emergence of democracy in Latin America, a variety of social actors who'd participated in the democratic struggle have now moved into positions of leadership. Often having endured the worst measures of dictatorship, they now find themselves at the forefront of efforts to consolidate a democratic culture and thereby forestall future swings back to authoritarian rule. For instance, many of the key actors involved in the creation of México's ambitious secondary-level program in *Formación Cívica y Etica* (FCE) were part of the broad student movement for democracy of the late 1960s and 1970s. They most strongly push for an educational model of what Levinson has called the "critical citizen" (Levinson, 2005, 2007). Yet from the right there is also an

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

3

increasing presence of democratic educators, many of them associated with the long-time opposition party, *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN). Many of these actors have been protagonists in a social movement that seeks to restore certain "lost values" (authority, respect) that are seen as victims of negative postmodern and postnational forces. For them, DCE may carry hopes for a "return to law" and a proper respect for traditional authority.

Since the early 1980s, then, independent Latin American nations, as well as nations in regional educational alliances, have included some form of DCE in their education plans and reforms. The Organization of American States (OAS-OEA) would have to be considered the most proactive and powerful policy body to sponsor DCE throughout Latin America. Before 2001, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) within the OAS had already undertaken significant efforts in leadership development for democracy. At least since the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile in 1998, numerous mandates for attention to "democratic values and practices" have been promulgated during OAS general assemblies, plenary sessions, and Summits of the Americas. Such efforts were strongly bolstered by the signing of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the OAS in September of 2001. Articles 26 and 27 of the Charter placed emphasis on the need to develop a "democratic culture" to accompany democratic political reforms. In particular, Article 27 mandated that "special attention shall be given to the development of programs and activities for the education of children and youth as a means of ensuring the continuance of democratic values, including liberty and social justice." Since that time, the Program for the Promotion of Democratic Leadership and Citizenship (PROLIDEM for its acronym in Spanish) within the UPD, as well as the Unit for Social Development and Education (UDSE —recently disbanded and reorganized under the new OAS secretaryship), have taken the lead in convening meetings to share knowledge of best practices throughout the continent and articulate a consensus. Such groundwork eventuated in the passage of the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices, in August of 2005. The Inter-American Program consists of a variety of activities, under the rubrics of "research," "professional development," and "information exchange," designed to advance the agenda of education for democracy in the Americas.[4]

---

[4] See the document, "Adoption of the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices," OAS, August 12, 2005, for details about the sequence of promulgations and agreements that gave birth to the Inter-American Program. It is worth noting the importance of the Summit of the Americas process in ultimately giving shape to the Inter-American Program. The Summits were established as a process to facilitate dialogue between presidents and top government officials within the western hemisphere. According to the Summit website, the focus has shifted throughout the 20th Century with each attempt to stabilize the process. The foci include commercial enterprise (1900's-WW2) to the ideological confrontations and regional security interests of the Cold War Years (1940's to 1990's), to the more recent consensus of three fundamental points: democracy, free markets, and the need to strengthen multilateralism in the region (1990's to present). Currently, the 34 Summit of the Americas nations are the same as the 34 member States of the Organization of American States. Cuba is the only nation excluded because of its political ideology. There have been three Summits and two special Summits since the inaugural Miami Summit (1994). The OAS plays a vital role as the Secretariat of the Summit of the Americas Process and in the implementation and follow-up of Summit mandates.

Strengthening democratic practices in member nations is a common theme since the first Summit (Miami, 1994). The Summits recognize the significant role that civil society plays and this attention steadily intensifies with each Summit. Civil society is seen as "one of the most important tools for success of governments' development policies." As a result, Summit member governments are encouraged to form alliances with civil society. This democratic vision expanded recently to include civil society in the Summit process, and such an emphasis will likely increase with each summit. The latest Summit in Argentina (2005) also expanded to include the role of the economy for democratic efficacy. Economic development is acknowledged to be conducive to democratic political stability.

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

4

The OAS is one kind of international organization, consisting of member states, that influences the direction of DCE within Latin America. However, there is also a very active NGO sector, with varying degrees of collaboration with, and funding from, state agencies. For instance, Civitas Latin America is a US-based non-governmental organization that provides democratic education services to its Latin American partners. It receives a major portion of its funding from the United States Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress; additional support is provided by the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other sources. Civitas facilitates these services through a national and international network of individuals, civil society organizations, educational institutions and governmental agencies. Its educational programs for democracy incorporate a variety of activities to help achieve its goal of institutionalizing an approach that focuses on student-centered curricula and corresponding teacher pedagogies. Civitas Latin America is therefore a major player in facilitating relationships between state education ministries and NGO programs.

Other strong influences come from member-state organizations, such as the United Nations (especially through UNESCO), the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO has worked to improve education worldwide. For UNESCO, citizenship education has become an increasingly important means for human beings to learn about their rights and responsibilities. Like Civitas, UNESCO works on a global scale, and often in the same countries. But UNESCO acts more as a source of information than a service-providing agency. UNESCO provides materials such as the citizenship education handbook, "Defense in the Service of Peace," and "Educating for Citizenship"—a multimedia CD-ROM designed and produced with the support of Education International—. It also publishes reports on the global and local condition of democratic education.

The OEI is another member-state organization that comprises this institutional landscape. Through programs like *Educación para la Ciudadanía, Democracia y Valores en Sociedades Plurales*, and publications like the *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, the OEI attempts to catalyze education reform efforts. In 2005, the *Red Centroamericana de Educación en Valores para la Ciudadanía y la Democracia* (RED CAEV) was created through the OEI, with a specific mandate to coordinate and cross-fertilize DCE efforts throughout the Central American region.

In its initial phase, the IDB helped create the *Observatorio Regional de Competencias Ciudadanas*, which included a membership of the Ministries of Education from six Latin American countries (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, México, Nicaragua, Panama). This program was created in response to a perceived or real loss of democratic credibility in these countries. More recently, the Observatorio received a substantial grant from the IDB, under its program of "Regional Public Goods," and has evolved into the Regional System for the Evaluation and Development of Citizenship Competencies (SREDECC).[5] The first articulated goal of SREDECC is to develop a standard definition of citizenship competencies for Latin America, taking into consideration the diverse understandings and practices that exist throughout the continent. The second (and most expensive) goal is to create an evaluation process that will analyze the current practices of citizenship education in primary and

---

[5] The list of 7 participating countries has now changed somewhat: Brasil, Paraguay, República Dominicana, México, Guatemala, Chile y Colombia.

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

5

secondary schools. The evaluation will compare results across the countries and thereby provide data for further reform. Finally, SREDECC will help coordinate the formulation of citizenship education policies, programs, and practices across the region.

It is important to consider the kind of "policy influence" that the OAS and other multilateral organizations may exercise on national governments and education ministries, which still hold the ultimate power in terms of resource allocation and education policy for DCE. At the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, held in April of 2004, delegates were attempting to hammer out the details of a document that would serve as a programmatic statement for the new Interamerican Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices. After some objections by committee members that the language of the document was becoming too narrowly prescriptive to encompass the variety of efforts in the region, the committee head, Mexican Subsecretary for Basic Education Lorenzo Gómez-Morín, responded by reiterating that the 4th principle of the document was "very important." He read it out loud: "*El Programa NO deberá ser prescriptivo y único. Deberá ser orientador e incluyente para que abarque las diferentes iniciativas que ya existen.*" (The Program should not be singular or prescriptive. It is meant to be inclusive and informative so that it encompasses the different initiatives already in place.) But then, given this amplitude, some group members wondered what the purpose of creating a Pan-American program was, after all, or why even call it a "Program." Gómez-Morín again responded by emphasizing that they were all engaged in "*una forma de política internacional...el programa es para orientar y fomentar.*" ("a form of international policymaking…this program is to inform and promote.") He went on to say that, at least for the case of México, which he knows best, a program such as the one that they were trying to articulate "*se convierte en un soporte de política educativa muy importante* (can become a very important education policy impetus)…*El prestigio de una organización como el OEA nos da un instrumento para impulsar políticas para la educación democrática*" (The prestige of an organization like OAS gives us a tool for promoting policies for democratic education). The Mexican minister's statement acknowledged the way that supranational organizations like the OAS could be used as a kind of leverage, a mechanism of legitimacy, for supporting national-level policy initiatives.

In this paper, we do not provide detail on national institutional landscapes. Many of our questions remain unanswered, and will require a much more systematic and profound investigation of legal and political frameworks within particular countries —a project which we have undertaken with respect to five countries whose demographics and political histories vary significantly: Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Guatemala, and Nicaragua—.

3. KEY VALUES OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: CONTESTED MEANINGS

Virtually every Latin American State has subscribed to one or more of these regional and international policymaking bodies. State education ministries are thus strongly conditioned by the agreements, mechanisms, and policies that such bodies establish. National laws and policies are often formulated with reference to them. In this way, a broad hemispheric commitment to DCE has been orchestrated. Yet when we examine particular programs, we must ask: In DCE programs and initiatives, how is "democracy" implicitly or explicitly defined and conceived? What kinds of knowledge, competencies, values, or dispositions are highlighted? Finally, what is the political/social context in which certain values and competencies are highlighted over others?

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

6

In virtually all DCE discourses and programs, there is broad agreement about the need to supplement "mere" electoral democratization with more robust and far-reaching cultural change. Policymakers see education —more specifically, schooling— as the most effective way to bring about such change. There is also broad agreement that such education cannot rely on the timeworn accumulation of encyclopedic knowledge that characterized the "old" civic education. Rather, DCE necessarily involves the creation of new values, dispositions, skills, and knowledge. It is not surprising, then, that terms like *valores* (values) or *ética* (ethics) or *normas* (norms), as well as *competencias* (competencies), figure prominently in DCE programs. Such programs seek to instill deep commitments to democracy in which core values and knowledge undergird reflective action.

Where the DCE programs differ is in the values they highlight and the competencies they seek to develop. As we shall see, some place emphasis on deliberative conceptions of democracy, others rule-of-law, others participatory democracy, and so forth. And in cases where the rhetoric would seem to be similar —such as the ubiquitous reference to *participation*— the meanings can be quite different as well.

Such differences were apparent in the Special Meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States of 2004, already cited. In his inaugural statement to the meeting, called "Promotion of a Democratic Culture Through Education," Assistant Secretary General Luigi R. Einaudi set the tone by emphasizing the "promotion of democratic values and practices," and the "teaching of democratic values." A series of opening speakers then followed. The Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago, Hazel Manning, described her country's attempts to build a "values promoting school" through projects such as "Project Peace" and the "School Discipline Initiative." She quoted a few times from Victor Frank, who says that "the last freedom" is the freedom to "choose one's attitude in whatever the circumstances." The head of the OAS Unit for Social Development and Education, Sofialeticia Morales, highlighted peace, human rights, and critical thinking as the key components of democratic education. She also placed emphasis on equity and democracy in school governance itself—in order to have education for democracy, she insisted, we must also work for the democratization of educational systems and procedures. Then the Mexican Sub-Secretary for Basic and Normal Education, Lorenzo Gómez-Morin, put at the forefront of DCE the peaceful resolution of conflicts and "antagonisms" in society. He sketched out México's new program in "Education for a Culture of Lawfulness," which puts emphasis on combating delinquency and corruption, but also the "strengthening of the decision-making processes within a respect for the law."

As the political outlier within the OAS, Aristóbulo Izturiz, Secretary of Education for Venezuela, couched his remarks in reference to his country's "republican revolution" of 1999. Since that time, he claimed, Venezuela's education system has been oriented toward the creation of a truly democratic society, the transformation of a formally democratic state into a substantive one: turning *democracia política* (political democracy) into *democracia social* (social democracy); *educación para un estado de derecho* (law abiding education) into *educación para justicia social* (social justice education); democracia formal (formal democracy) into *democracia participativa* (participatory democracy); and democracia representativa (representative democracy) into *democracia protagónica* (proactive democracy). In counterpart to the previous speaker, he urged an education for "participación y protagonismo en la toma de decisiones" (participation and advocacy in decision-making).

Juana Inés Díaz Tafur, Vice-Minister of Basic Education for Colombia, presented her country's program in "citizenship competencies." Such competencies, she noted, had been articulated

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

7

to standards not only in cognitive knowledge but also in the realm of emotions and dispositions for action. Finally, Richard Nuccio, Director of International Programs for the non-profit, U.S.-based Center for Civic Education (CCE), presented a skeletal version of his organization's "Foundations of Democracy" scheme, which lists the "primary concepts" of democracy as authority, responsibility, justice, and privacy. I noted that since 2002, the CCE has grown its presence throughout Latin America through its Civitas Latin America program. Some NGO-based programs in DCE, such as the Colombian Fundación Presencia's "Towards the Construction of a Culture of Citizenship," lean heavily on CCE concepts and materials.

Clearly, the opening panel of this OAS event had already articulated a wide range of meanings for DCE. If for some DCE primarily sought to cultivate "individual freedom" or respect for "privacy," for others it sought rather to promote "critical thinking" and a "protagonistic" attitude toward public decision-making. Were all these meanings compatible? An analysis of the array of DCE program documents reveals a similar welter of possibly contrary "values." The term "participation," for instance, is perhaps the most pervasive of all in DCE discourse. Yet participation can be linked as easily to a neoliberal as to a socialist democratic project, and a unified, standard definition of democracy or citizenship does not exist in Latin American DCE. Each program implements DCE according to its own needs and contexts. As a result, the definition of democracy takes on its own local significance and the role of DCE varies. Let us examine the meanings of democracy in a small sample of current Latin American programs.

In Argentina, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology initiated a program in Professional Development of Teacher Trainers in Ethics and Citizenship to address a gap between previous policy and practice. A curriculum emphasizing DCE was already in place. The Curricular Reform of 1995 established the teaching of Ethics and Citizenship Education. However, there were low rates of participation as teachers refused to teach the curriculum in the classroom. A lack of training was one of the reasons. As a result, the Professional Development of Teacher Trainers in Ethics and Citizenship is responsible for training teachers in Ethics and Citizenship Education. This includes the creation of training teams, establishment of networks, and development of curriculum that meets the needs and demands of teachers. "The program was created to form citizens capable of participating in a pluralist and democratic society and was directed especially to modify the traditional paradigm of training, and to introduce a component of investigation – action into the teacher's work….In sum, these methods try to develop the capacity for dialogue, for building a personal perspective, the capacity for empathy or to put oneself in another person's place, to make decisions, which are the capacities required for the participation and living together in a democratic society."[6]

A related program in Argentina is called *Normas de Convivencia Escolar*, which explains in its title as having an important rationale "*porque interviene en un tema central de la cultura democrática que es la producción de normas*" (because it intervenes in a central theme of democratic culture, which is the production of norms). In Guatemala, the program in *Valores y Formación Ciudadana* "intends to promote and construct democracy by means of the practice of values, foregrounding respect, responsibility, honesty, and solidarity, with the objective of forming citizens who are creative, innovative, forward-thinking, and conscious of peaceful and intercultural coexistence…" (i*mpulsando el respeto, la responsabilidad, la honestidad y la solidaridad, con el objetivo de formar ciudadanos y ciudadanas innovadores, creativos, propositivos y conscientes de la*

---

[6] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from the OAS permanent portfolio.

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

8

convivencia pacífica e intercultural, así como contribuir al fortalecimiento del liderazgo comunitario en el mundo de la globalización). Meanwhile, Bolivia's *Educación para la Democracia* aims to "promote the exercise of democratic values, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the completion of norms (*cumplimiento de normas*), and social participation."

In these programs, we see a certain consistency, a recurring emphasis on core values such as respect for diversity, solidarity, etc. However, we also see some variation in how these terms are understood or actualized programmatically and pedagogically.

Several DCE initiatives in Latin America have focused on democratic alternatives to problem solving. For instance, in the last 20 years Colombia has witnessed an excessive amount of violence. DCE initiatives have often come in response to the conflict and violence that has characterized the country for the past several decades. Thus the program in *Competencias Ciudadanas* states that:

> *Educating for citizenship is an important priority nowadays in any part of the world. Due to the situation of violence in Colombia, it is indispensable to educate boys, girls and young people to be sensitive, responsible, respectful, free and able to solve conflicts through peaceful means in order to build a just and democratic society...The Citizenship competencies are the grouping of cognitive, emotional and communicative abilities, knowledge and attitudes that together enable each citizen to act in a constructive manner in a democratic society. Citizenship competencies allow for citizens to respect and defend human rights, to contribute actively to a peaceful living, to participate responsibly and constructively in the democratic processes and to respect and value plurality and differences.*

In Trinidad and Tobago, the School Discipline Initiative follows a similar path. It was created to address discipline issues in school. The curriculum focuses on teaching good citizenship, involving parents, and establishing student councils. In Argentina, meanwhile, one program of the national ministry of education is called *Mediación Escolar*, or school mediation:

> *This program proposes the design and the implementation of peer-mediation projects that promote constructive criticism and nonviolence for emerging conflicts between students. In this framework, school-based mediation is conceptualized as a tool that contributes to preventing the escalation of violent situations while, at the same time, it constitutes an opportunity to prepare youth for a life of democracy, peace and human rights.*

The teaching of democracy does not always occur inside the classroom. For example, in Peru, there was a low rate of academic achievement, especially for girls, in the sub region of Chanka. The Ministry of Education developed the Punkukunata Kichaspa program to attend to this problem. Its goal is to "empower communities to appropriate their own educational processes and especially to make them conscious of the importance of gender equality." The program thus encouraged local communities to take control of local schooling for girls. As a result, the government provided a lesson in democracy by democratizing the education process. Likewise, the Argentina initiative on professional development localizes control of the education process by modifying the traditional paradigm of training and incorporating the specific needs of students and teachers in various contexts. The schools become the producers for training and curriculum development.

The discrepancy in meanings of democracy became abundantly clear to Levinson during his study of how the Mexican program in *Formación Cívica y Etica* (FCE) came to be. Based on his previous fieldwork, reading of popular and scholarly literatures, and ongoing trips to México, Levinson identified at least three powerful societal discourses that formed and expanded throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Each one of these discourses expressed certain understandings of democracy, and each one, Levinson argues, would impact the eventual formation of the FCE program. Such discourses emerged out of rather different social sectors and movements, but each one articulated a set

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

9

of pressing concerns that cut across broad sectors of Mexican society. Each one also highlighted a different set of "values" that needed to be recovered or constructed. Finally, if there is one theme that cuts across all the discourses, it is the concern with human rights and the creation of a culture of "tolerance." Fed up with political violence and economic misery, and disgusted by the impunity accorded to most perpetrators, many Mexicans by the 1990s had seized upon human rights as a crucial value. The notion of human rights, in turn, was often vitally linked to the attainment of democracy. However, human rights could also become a kind of Rorschach of cultural projection: the place of human rights, and the route to achieving a regime respectful of such rights, would vary by discourse and social sector.

One discourse, which Levinson calls "lost values" (*valores perdidos*), drew attention to the signs of what many observers call "social disintegration," such as increased violence, corruption, divorce, and disregard for adult authority. The assumption made by this discourse was that traditional values of respect, honesty, and obedience had once effectively ordered society, but had since fallen into disuse. There was a strong sense of proper social hierarchy having become challenged and turned upside-down. Most strongly articulated through conservative Catholic organizations such as the national "Parents' Union" (UNPF), the discourse on lost values nevertheless resonated with a much broader public. The often explicit solution proposed by the very same discourse was the recovery of values that had been "lost" in recent years —typically through religious education or other kinds of catechistic instruction, and the reassertion of paternal control—.

Another discourse, which Levinson calls the active and "critical citizen" (*el ciudadano crítico*), highlighted the importance of creating deeper democratic habits and a political culture that would support a transition from one-party rule to a pluralist democracy. Most strongly articulated by a generation of left-leaning Mexican intellectuals and leaders who'd come of age in the political opposition to the PRI-dominated state, the discourse of the "critical citizen" called for a new participatory sensibility amongst citizens, most of whom were seen as having grown complacent, fatalistic, or too accustomed to state largesse. This form of participation presupposed an ethos of respectful dialogue but also critical questioning, in which existing social hierarchies and received norms would be subject to constant critique. The new citizen would actively consider different social and political options through a critical discursive process, and arrive at independent stances. The discourse of the critical citizen implicitly valued equality over hierarchy —gender equity was often prominently touted as a goal—. Although it originated in the more highly schooled sectors of society, this discourse, too, found resonance across broad sectors of society that had been irrevocably changed by experiences of immigration and/or consumption of cultural media such as television, movies, popular music, and the Internet.

The third discourse, which Levinson calls "accountability" (*rendición de cuentas*), virtually created a new phrase in Mexican Spanish overnight, since there had been no adequate predecessor to this cultural import. Even more clearly influenced from abroad than the other discourses, the discourse on accountability called for greater transparency in public management and more valid and neutral forms of evaluation in assessing educational "quality". One of the important assumptions of this discourse was that the goals of transparency and quality called for both institutional and personal transformations. On the one hand, new kinds of institutional arrangements, such as the creation of a quasi-independent National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE), or the implementation of a merit-based assessment of teacher performance, would leverage higher quality and greater public accountability. On the other hand, the discourse called for the cultivation of a new subjectivity which

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

10

placed responsibility for public outcomes —such as students' learning— on individuals as well as institutions. In this sense, the new democratic citizen had to learn to become more responsible —that is, accountable— for his/her actions.

The FCE program, which was first implemented in 1999, reflected all of these meanings and influences. According to the official program of studies, the new subject adopts a focus that is "formative, secular, democratizing, nationalist, universalist, preventive, and communicative." In the second of three years of study, especially, students are to learn about the "values of living together" (*valores de la convivencia*), as well as the more specific "civic values and citizenship formation." What are considered the key values of democracy are imparted to students: liberty, equality, equity, justice, respect, tolerance, solidarity, and responsibility. Echoing such emphases, the new Uruguayan program, *Educación en Valores*, also states as its fundamental goals the teaching of "shared universal values and the construction of consensus."

By 2001, a new presidential administration controlled the federal education ministry in México, and the Sub-Secretary for Basic Education, Lorenzo Gómez-Morín, had brought with him from Baja California a new secondary education program called Education for a Culture of Lawfulness (ECL). According to the documents submitted to the OAS portfolio, this program aims "to strengthen a culture of respect to the laws as a basic principle of a democratic society. The cultural changes may contribute to the reduction of delinquency and corruption." Importantly, ECL was only adopted by certain states as an elective course, even as FCE continued to be the anchor program for citizenship education in the *secundaria*.

One can see a full range of the meanings and values of democracy for the authors of the FCE program, the Venezuelan Secretary of Education, and the Mexican UnderSecretary of Basic Education. In the latter's discourse, respect for law and authority figure most importantly. In the Venezuelan case, the meanings of democracy embrace strong goals of social justice and equity, and broad-based local participation in decision making linked ultimately to the State. In the Mexican FCE program, individual liberty and responsibility is balanced with an emphasis on justice, solidarity, and participation in local problem solving.

Clearly, the notion of participation is subject to the greatest variety of meanings and interpretations. Participation has become the ubiquitous watchword of programs for FCD. Schools are supposed to create participatory dispositions, or competencies, through dialogic, student-centered, problem-solving pedagogies. Yet participation has also become a kind of Rorschach image, susceptible to manifold cultural and ideological projection. We know that the term participation can be drafted as easily into a neoliberal project of governance as a social democratic or socialist one. If in Latin America the modernizing, developmentalist state of the 1940s-1970s wanted "productive" citizens who worked for the good of the country, the neoliberal state wants "participatory" citizens who can learn to solve their own problems and provide for their own needs privately, or at best through civil society. Meanwhile, the populist democratic state wants participatory citizens who become public "protagonists" for state-led social change. Thus, meanings of democratic participation may correspond roughly to state forms and state projects.

4. THE MEANING OF THE FORM: PEDAGOGY, SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, AND *LA TRANSVERSALIDAD*

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

11

In this section, we briefly explore the actual design of new programs for DCE to explore the way they propose to use schools and other educational sites to construct democratic citizenship. How is the teacher's role, and the teacher's pedagogical approach, being redefined in DCE programs? How are relationships —between and amongst teachers, students, and administrators— being reconsidered as an essential component of education for democracy? To what extent is the democratization of school governance conceived as an essential part of DCE? In general terms, how much is the FORM of teaching and learning, the texture of school life, being considered as essential to DCE as the formal knowledge and curriculum? Perhaps our most important finding is the clear ascendance of programs that move beyond curricular reform to attempt a change in teachers' practices and the culture of schools. Yet we also wonder, in the absence of much evaluation or empirical evidence, whether high-sounding programs translate into actual changes in the bureaucratic, hierarchical legacy of schooling across the Americas.

A review of DCE programs and policy documents makes it clear that the authoritarian, encyclopedic classroom is in retreat. Time and time again, DCE programs exhort teachers to practice new dialogic, participatory, and problem-solving pedagogies. Instead of providing the right answer, policy documents say, teachers should now invite questioning, debate, and critique. Instead of imposing the values of democracy on students, teachers should invite students to embrace such values by relating them to their everyday problems and concerns. And instead of posing democratic participation as an adult behavior only, teachers should conduct local experiments in democratic problem-solving, with students as meaningful protagonists.

Likewise in retreat is the centralized school structure of decision-making, with the principal as "maximum authority." DCE programs encourage robust dialogue amongst teachers, parents, and administrators, often through decision-making structures, like "social participation councils," created through decentralization reforms. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to model democratic behavior in their relations with one another, especially through respectful deliberation and power-sharing.

Finally, the notion of *transversalidad* has developed as a key discourse and theme in DCE. *Transversalidad* refers to a horizontal expansion or intercalation of democratic norms and practices. At the secondary level, *transversalidad* refers mainly to cross-curricular efforts. Rather than locating DCE exclusively within civics or social studies classes, schools are urged to develop a "transversal axis" (*eje transversal*) of citizenship education. In other words, all teachers, and all school subjects, should be undertaking the task of DCE by adopting new pedagogies and interactional climates. Some countries have even taken *transversalidad* to include transforming the school planning process and experience to become as inclusive and holistic as possible. In this way, the entire educational system attempts to model and enact democratic values.

Clearly, what all of these developments have in common is a movement away from a focus on content to **form**. What matters less than the knowledge inscribed in books, the official curriculum, is the behavior of teachers and format of teaching, the so-called hidden curriculum. Because it is such a pervasive term in the Latin American context, this section will further elaborate on *transversalidad* by briefly describing three programs in three different countries, and then highlighting a fourth one in some detail.

In Costa Rica, the government launched an initiative in 2000 to revamp and transform the entire national education system. It was imperative for all those involved that *transversalidad* as a

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

12

reflexive and analytical practice drive the design, development, and implementation process. Numerous meetings, trainings, and workshops were held to facilitate dialogue in different locations throughout the country over a span of three years. These gatherings also acted indirectly as support networks for all those involved. The Costa Rican reality was also taken into consideration at all stages.

This education focus visualizes the opportunity to gradually generate a curricular transformation that will lead us to the establishment of a national curriculum that is pertinent to, and coherent with, the demands of actual society.

Considerable efforts were then taken to be as inclusive as possible. Personnel from different levels in the education profession (teachers and administrators) and the government were invited to participate. However, it is interesting to note that community members, parents, and students were still excluded.

The previously mentioned Mexican program in *Formación Cívica y Etica* (FCE) was first implemented in 1999 by the Subsecretary of Basic Education in México. Technically, FCE is a new school subject for all 3 grades of *secundaria*, or "junior high school." However, FCE also incorporates the notion of *transversalidad*, and purports to include various aspects of the education experience, such as the academic content, the school environment, and the everyday life of students. Its objective is to promote explicitly the civic and democratic values of the country by making the school into a kind of microcosm of national society.

A different approach is taken in Brazil, where the national government takes on a relatively reduced role in comparison with the previous two programs in Costa Rica and México. The Ethics and Citizenship program attempts to involve the entire school community. The emphasis is on joint actions between the school and community in building a critical and ethical Brazilian citizenship. The program integrates four axes of inter-related themes: Ethics, Democratic Living, Human Rights, and Social Inclusion. The program provides resources and support, such as the training of teachers and other educational professionals to work in the program, distribution of the printed material "Ethics and Citizenship: constructing values at school and in the society" (which has a chapter devoted to each of the four axes), the promotion of regional seminars to facilitate discussions, and mechanisms to facilitate accountability. The program stresses that it is part of the Continuing Professional Development Education Program, and will not replace the current school curriculum or existing teacherss professional training.

In Argentina, *El Programa Nacional de Convivencia Escolar* (The National Program of School Conviviality) is an attempt to decenter the State as the source of democratic values. Although focused on the educational institution as a whole, the program positions teachers as the key factor, considering their exposure to the daily interactions in the schools. The program provides assistance, advice, and support in the development and practice of the program. It encourages all educators to focus on the realities of Argentinean society, and that which is relevant to it.

Convivencia Escolar started as a local program in the province of Buenos Aires in 2000. The program's main objective was to replace the former national decree of *normas de disciplina* (discipline norms) with a more democratic *normas de convivencia* (Coexistence/tolerance norms). The former national decree was a remnant from the military dictatorship (1976-1983), which used schooling as a socializing tool for order and control. Schools would give students *amonestaciones* (reprimands), with a certain arbitrary point value for each behavioral infraction, determined by individual teachers and principals. Theoretically, major infractions, such as hitting another student, and talking back to a

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

13

teacher, could count up to 24 points. (Interview with Fernando Onetto, National Program director, March 23, 2006) In practice, most *amonestaciones* were 1-5 points. A student who accumulated 25 points was expelled from school.

Onetto explains that certain changes in this older structure of discipline were first challenged with the 1994 law of federalization, which democratized schooling to a certain degree. This included the creation of *consejos escolares locales* (local school councils). He further comments that some educators interpreted the 1994 changes as "*super progresista*" (super progressive). Others interpreted these changes as the government abdicating all responsibility for running the school under the guise of giving "democratic" power to the students.

Onetto refers to his experience in the Buenos Aires province to provide some insight into the school's climate. The principal could no longer simply impose his wishes on the teachers and students. Rather, "one needed to respect the school culture in order to avoid generating resistance or indifference. This is not to say that the principal had lost all sense of authority. There was still a need to respect some of the principal's traditional power. However, the principal is now expected to take some matter between the teachers and turn it into an occasion for further discussion (*devolver al debate*)."

By the end of 2003, Onetto claims that about 30% of the schools in Buenos Aires province operated in a "mixed form," with some still using a*monestaciones* along with the new *normas de convivencia*. The vast majority of the remaining 70% of schools created new *normas de convivencias escolar*. The program reached about 1,100 *escuelas polimodales* (high schools) in three years.

The *Convivencia Escolar* program went national with the election of President Kirschner in 2003. Onetto was appointed the program's national director. Onetto wants the program to maintain its grassroots beginnings and operate as a "*trabajo de diseño local*" (a locally designed project). He warns, "*no hemos querido que sea una politica que se impone a la nacion... debe haber una voluntad local para que sea sostenible*" ("we don't want it to be an ideology imposed on the nation…there needs to be a local desire to sustain itself").

The *Convivencia Escolar* program has three separate components. The *Normas de Convivencia Escolar* functions in the *escuelas polimodales* (high schools). The *Programa Escuela y Familia* (the School and the Family Program) examines the teaching profession in its relationship with parents, primarily at the basic level. The *Programa de Formacion de Directores y Supervisores* (Directors and Supervisors Training Program) works with US professional equivalent of principals and superintendents at both the primary and secondary levels of schooling. Overall, *Convivencia Escolar* cites the improvement of normative quality, and the end to law suits in the largest school districts, as major accomplishments for school districts that have completed three years in the program. For districts with one year in the program, improvement in the preparation of supervisory personnel in becoming advisors on issues of school tolerance towards democratic values, and the formation of administrative collectives at the supervision and school leadership staff level, are major achievements as well.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

14

In this paper, we have undertaken an initial conceptual mapping of growing efforts for democratic citizenship education (DCE) in Latin America. Our guiding questions have concerned the organizational and institutional landscape, the contested meanings, and the new pedagogical and curricular forms of DCE programs sponsored by Latin American states. Theoretically, our interest is in exploring the role of the state, and specifically the state education ministry, in producing "democratic citizens."

What we have learned in this first phase of our project is that, in the sphere of DCE, the degree of **ideological coherence** and **organizational discipline** within education ministries varies a great deal; 2. The tendency has been toward an increased **engagement with international models, charters, and programs** for DCE, bringing with it all of the attendant problems of geopolitics and donor conditionality; and 3. The tendency has been toward **increased collaboration between ministries of education and other government sectors**, as well as with **non-governmental organizations** in civil society. Powerful multi-national organizations are setting a common agenda for DCE, yet the dynamics within particular states and state ministries, and the occasionally competing agendas and interests, give rise to varying forms and meanings of DCE.

Programs for DCE are important and exciting in a number of regards. They are a crucial component of efforts to build a new political culture from the remnants of various military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes that have plagued Latin America. Yet clearly there is need for more research in this area. Perhaps the most important questions for further research involve the nature of non-governmental activity in DCE, and the kinds of relationships that are facilitated, or denied, between state ministries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs in Latin America have become important policy actors, often capable of expressing broad popular interests in cases where a representative democracy has not been able to do so. Yet NGOs may serve narrow, private interests as well. How do NGOs operate in the arena of DCE?

REFERENCES

Anderson-Levitt, Kathryn, Ed. (2003). *Local meanings, global schooling*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Arnove, R. (2006). La educación en América Latina: Dependencia, subdesarrollo, y desigualdad. En X. Bonal (Ed.), *Globalización, educación y pobreza en América Latina: Hacia una nueva agenda política?* Barcelona: Fundación CIDOB.

Levinson, B.A.U. (2007). "Forming and Implementing a New Secondary Civic Education Program in Mexico." In E. Doyle Stevick and B.A.U. Levinson (Eds.), *Reimagining civic education: How diverse societies form democratic citizens.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. pp. 245-270.

Levinson, B.A.U. (2005). Programs for democratic citizenship education in Mexico's Ministry of Education: Local appropriations of global cultural flows. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies 12*(1), pp. 251-284.

Levinson, B.A.U. (2004). Hopes and challenges for the new civic education in Mexico: Toward a democratic citizen without adjectives. *International Journal of Educational Development 24*(3), pp. 269-282.

Tedesco, J.C. (2006). La integración social y los nuevos procesos de socialización: Hipótesis de trabajo. En X. Bonal (Ed.), *Globalización, educación y pobreza en América Latina: ¿Hacia una nueva agenda política?* Barcelona: Fundación CIDOB.

Westheimer, J. y Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal 41*(2), pp.237-269.

Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación. Vol 5, No. 4, pp. 1-15.

15