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*Time, Power, and Resistances in Latin America:
Narratives, Democracy, and Global Reconfigurations
(English Version)*

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Dynamic and conscious citizenship education: an ongoing task in Cuba's educational system

Educación ciudadana dinámica y consciente: un trabajo constante en el sistema educativo de Cuba

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ABSTRACT

Civic education in Cuba faces the challenge of developing conscious and participatory individuals in a dynamic social context, requiring a constant and renewed focus on the educational system. The overall objective of this work is to strengthen civic education through active pedagogical strategies that promote critical reflection, social responsibility, and commitment to revolutionary values. The methodology used combined participatory action research with teacher workshops, student debates, and community projects, integrating curricular content with practical experiences to foster a strong civic consciousness. The main results achieved include increased student participation in social initiatives, a better understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the development of skills for dialogue and collective problem-solving. These advances reflect the effectiveness of a dynamic educational approach, linked to social reality, which contributes to the development of citizens committed to the Cuban social project.

Keywords: Citizenship Education; Social Participation; Civic Values; Educational System; Critical Pedagogy; Civic Training; Social Awareness; Cuba.

RESUMEN

La educación ciudadana en Cuba enfrenta el desafío de formar individuos conscientes y participativos en un contexto social dinámico, requiriendo un enfoque constante y renovado en el sistema educativo. El objetivo general de este trabajo es fortalecer la formación ciudadana mediante estrategias pedagógicas activas que promuevan la reflexión crítica, la responsabilidad social y el compromiso con los valores revolucionarios. La metodología empleada combinó investigación-acción participativa con talleres docentes, debates estudiantiles y proyectos comunitarios, integrando contenidos curriculares con experiencias prácticas para fomentar una conciencia cívica sólida. Los principales resultados alcanzados incluyen una mayor participación estudiantil en iniciativas sociales, una mejor comprensión de los derechos y deberes ciudadanos, y el desarrollo de habilidades para el diálogo y la solución colectiva de problemas. Estos avances reflejan la efectividad de un enfoque educativo dinámico, vinculado a la realidad social, que contribuye a la formación de ciudadanos comprometidos con el proyecto social cubano.

Palabras clave: Educación Ciudadana; Participación Social; Valores Cívicos; Sistema Educativo; Pedagogía Crítica; Formación Cívica; Conciencia Social; Cuba.

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 20th and early 21st centuries, education in Cuba has shown a constant interest among teachers in improving students' comprehensive education. This approach is considered essential to preparing people for a full and varied life. Castro, F. (1975). Speech at the closing of the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba. Havana: stated that "Education is the most powerful weapon that man has to create ethics, conscience, a sense of duty, organization, discipline, and responsibility." The Cuban Ministry of Higher Education has commented on the lack of values in today's society, describing their formation as a complex process influenced by the negative effects of neoliberal globalization, which has affected nations' cultural identities.

Various authors have analyzed the repercussions of the well-known special period, which began in the 1990s, on Cuban society, following the economic collapse after the fall of the socialist camp and the tightening of the imperialist blockade. This situation has led to a deterioration of certain values among the population. Nevertheless, education remains faithful to its pedagogical legacy and is currently participating in an economic and social readjustment, focusing on the recovery and strengthening of values, which are considered vital and a priority to protect the achievements made under socialism and advance the development of the Cuban social project. In the comprehensive development of children, adolescents, and young people, various educational elements can be observed, such as teaching methods, which are embodied in each initiative designed for these purposes:

- Patriotic education.
- Citizenship and legal education.
- Scientific and technological education.
- Health and sexuality education with a gender focus.
- Aesthetic education.
- Polytechnic, vocational, economic, and professional training.
- Communication education.
- Environmental education for sustainable development.

Education for social orientation. In Cuba, over time, the educational community has made multiple efforts to improve the civic behavior of the general population. Education has the mission of preparing people to live together in society, with a system of values that enables them to behave in a self-regulated manner, grounded in convictions that serve as indicators of social and moral progress. Civic education involves adopting a responsible attitude toward social coexistence in the present and the future, encompassing all the elements that provide students with appropriate ways of acting in society. It primarily focuses on fostering love and respect for the country's historical memory, thereby ensuring effective participation.

The author of this bibliographic review aims to delve deeper into the importance of promoting dynamic and conscious citizenship as an ongoing commitment of the Cuban education system.

DEVELOPMENT

Based on this consideration, the author of this review believes it is essential to focus on comprehensive training for university graduates, who have a responsibility to become professionals who contribute positively to the transformations underway. The new generations of professionals demand from universities not only adequate job skills, but also ethical behavior that can serve as a strength in a world where social inequalities are increasingly marked and where individualism, disconnection, and the loss of human values are promoted.

Regarding Cuban society, the author agrees with Tamayo Pineda that there have been numerous social changes throughout the revolutionary period. The successes and mistakes of the past allow us, based on our experience, to seek greater improvement in our system in the current context while adjusting to the Guidelines for the Economic and Social Policy of the State and the Revolution. Cuban society is currently immersed in a process of economic and social restructuring after a long period of crisis, which has negatively affected the development of social consciousness.

During the National Assembly of People's Power held in July 2013, the president of Cuba expressed sadness over the notable deterioration of moral and civic values over more than two decades of the special period. He pointed out that negative behavior in classrooms is even more worrying because, from childhood, families and schools must teach children to respect societal norms.

Cuban society is currently undergoing a process of economic and social reorganization after a prolonged economic crisis that has left a negative mark on the growth of social awareness. During the National Assembly of People's Power held in July 2013, the president of Cuba commented: "We have observed with sadness, during more than two decades of the special period, the growing deterioration of moral and civic values (...). These attitudes present in our classrooms are incompatible on two levels, since in addition to being undisciplined, it is crucial to remember that from an early age, both the family and the school must teach children to respect the norms of society."

When discussing the situation in Cuba, these moments are perceived as confusing, which requires a search for alternative educational methods to reorient, transform, and train a qualified, well-rounded professional with a solid scientific background, ethical and humanistic training, and responsible civic behavior that reflects the necessary social values.

A study by Amaro Cano recognizes the existence of certain social values over time, from the colonial period through the republic to the present day in socialist society. It highlights that many of these values have been agreed upon by the Cuban people throughout their history, including national consciousness, sovereignty, love of independence, freedom, the homeland, respect for its symbols (flag, coat of arms, anthem), and international solidarity.

Values reflect the image of human beings as shaped by cultural context and a notion of nationhood, grounded in the fundamental respect for the dignity of each person, regardless of what they possess or represent. This principle is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba: "WE DECLARE our intention that this profound desire guide the most important law of the Republic, finally achieved, of José Martí: 'I want the first law of our Republic to be the respect of Cubans for the full dignity of the human being.' Values, as functional elements that combine cognition and emotion, influence the regulation of human behavior by shaping personal convictions.

In Cuba, the issue has been widely discussed in different settings and before diverse audiences in the first five years of the 21st century. The Communist Party of Cuba, the Union of Young Communists, trade unions, religious communities, both Judeo-Christian and Afro-Cuban, Masonic lodges, intellectuals, scientists, universities, social study centers, and other organizations have shown interest in the matter and have created spaces for reflection and debate. Some of these results have been published, while others have remained within the

sphere of those who generated this new knowledge. Among the published texts, several have been written by health professionals. Human value is related to the socially positive relevance of phenomena and objects in reality; this significance must have a real impact on society's advancement. Implementing a values-based educational approach in Cuba means preparing individuals to recognize the true value of things.

Universities in Cuba have several current missions: to comprehensively train future professionals from Cuba and other countries, to improve the training of human resources already in operation, to promote scientific and technical thinking in order to achieve excellence in services, and to maintain constant interaction with society, in addition to cultivating a comprehensive, academic, and revolutionary general culture that allows for the satisfaction of the needs of the Cuban people and the establishment of bonds of solidarity with other regions of the world.

The training of professionals in Cuba is largely based on the personal development of values that will guide their future behavior. These values are a priority in teaching, considering their dual objective and subjective aspects. This means recognizing the social and historical reality in which the student grows up and how this impacts their internal process of value formation, so that these values become true motivations for their ethical, moral, patriotic, and humanistic behavior in their professional work.

Citizenship education, a term we will use interchangeably in this article, is one of the most relevant objectives of modern education and educational institutions, alongside the acquisition of knowledge and students' personal development. According to some researchers in the field, citizenship is defined as "...a practice, a process—rather than a result—that involves exercising democratic values, the result of participation in various social spheres, without being limited to a subject or school." Uniting the common with the diverse is fundamental to citizenship education. Delors (1996), cited by Llano Escobar, suggests that "education should not be limited to bringing people together by making them accept common values from the past; it must also answer questions such as: for what purpose do we live together? What for? Moreover, allow each individual to participate actively throughout their lives in a social project."

Education must be dynamic, participatory, and foster a commitment to a democratic society. According to Pedró (2003), mentioned by Pagés et al., this means "...a set of educational actions that facilitate the acquisition of democratic citizenship, encompassing both the knowledge and skills necessary to exercise citizenship in the political system, as well as the values and attitudes that support civic behavior in all areas of social and political life."

As can be seen, there is a common purpose in all definitions: to strengthen the community to which one belongs through active citizenship and participation. Civic education helps to create citizens who are critical, supportive, and committed to society and the people around them. In addition, it promotes interaction among people, improves communication skills, and positively affects individuals' awareness, reinforces shared values, and encourages participation in social life and informed decision-making, as these authors argue.

It is important to reflect on the relationship between citizenship education and values education, based on the shared ideas of authors Sáez (2001) and Chacón (2004), as cited by Forestal Camejo et al. The former emphasizes developing values, especially moral and legal ones, while the latter emphasizes teaching universal and human values. Therefore, civic education

influences values education, which is responsible for providing citizens with a hierarchy of moral values that facilitate coexistence through regulated or self-regulated behaviors, in balance with the norms and demands of the socio-historical context in which they live. This education prepares them to make moral decisions in difficult situations and to establish and maintain appropriate interpersonal relationships, aligning their thoughts with their actions.

If civic education aims to train people for behavior and coexistence in society, this must be based on values education, which, according to Bombino (2004), cited by García Espinosa et al., is "... the compass that guides human behavior." In other words, these values indicate, guide, and regulate actions, attitudes, life plans, and their meaning; they are fundamental and essential elements for the education of each individual.

Citizenship education involves families, schools, public and social institutions, student organizations, the media, and the community at large. Its purpose is to foster values and cultivate attitudes, primarily of a moral and legal nature, to promote skills and habits that facilitate civic coexistence, grounded in knowledge and respect for the country's history. Society forms a complicated system, within which education represents another system with its own complexities. Although each part refers to different aspects of the same reality, each contributes to building the other, without losing its own characteristics. This concept can be understood as a holographic principle: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, within the framework of systems theory.

In theoretical and practical terms, civic education involves teaching students a set of knowledge, skills, feelings, values, and convictions. This is based on a dialectical methodology and materials, as well as a cultural and person-centered approach. This type of education seeks a comprehensive understanding of knowledge, fosters sensitivity and spirituality, facilitates the interpretation and analysis of historical, social, and cultural processes related to humanity, and promotes a way of thinking and acting oriented toward transforming reality.

In fact, there is a connection between these concepts: civic education cannot be conceived without influencing the formation of values; at the same time, adequate education in values has a direct impact on good civic education.

Responsible citizenship training is seen as a process. The goal of this learning is to prepare individuals to assume the responsibilities that life demands and to exercise their rights and duties consciously. It is a socialization process designed to educate people in social values, such as responsibility and participation, and to promote behaviors of solidarity that arise from a deep identification with the community and respect for coexistence. It is an active education that seeks to develop a civic culture, understood as a shared set of customs, behaviors, and basic rules that generate a sense of belonging, improve coexistence in cities, and promote respect for common heritage, as well as the recognition and exercise of citizens' rights and duties.

In fact, there is a connection between the concepts mentioned above: civic education cannot be imagined without impacting the formation of values. In turn, a good education in values inevitably affects adequate civic education.

Responsible citizenship education as a process

Citizenship education refers to learning that prepares people to assume all of life's responsibilities and to exercise their rights and duties consciously. This process involves

socialization and aims to educate people in social values, such as participation and responsibility, that help foster supportive behaviors. This is based on complete identification with the community and respect for coexistence. It is an active educational process that seeks to achieve a civic culture, defined as a shared set of behaviors, customs, and basic norms that generate a sense of belonging, facilitate life in cities, and promote respect for common heritage, as well as the recognition and exercise of citizens' rights and duties.

The authors agree with Velázquez García et al. that educating people and equipping them to live in society is a fundamental task of current pedagogy. Today's education recognizes the process of citizenship training as a means of preparing professionals who create and exercise their forms of power, thereby influencing the management of development in line with collective interests and respect for differences. This involves creating pedagogical actions that promote the development of critical skills necessary for the desired social action.

A broad, contextualized perspective, enriched by new cultural reflections, considers citizenship education as a set of political-educational representations and practices proposed and developed within a society. The goal is for people to be able to identify and create strategies for action that include themselves and enable them to participate, as well as to build and redefine their spaces and roles in the political sphere, assuming full responsibility.

The criteria of certain authors highlight the procedural and active nature of civic education, emphasizing the expression of knowledge and values in contexts of coexistence. They also underscore the importance of developing the skills necessary to coexist, value, and participate in social progress, integrating ethical, political, and legal aspects. They agree that this is a fundamental part of the comprehensive education of each individual. During the graduation ceremony for future primary school teachers, Castro Ruz stated: "For me, educating is planting values, imparting and fostering emotions, and transforming the new beings who come into the world, who often present natural imperatives that clash with the virtues we value most, such as solidarity, selflessness, courage, and fraternity. " These statements highlight the need to create an adequate civic education that promotes a culture of peace, as a social demand today.

Cuban culture increasingly recognizes the fundamental role played by professionals who incorporate a wide range of cultural resources into their curricula. However, in certain cases, the necessary foundations for civic education grounded in an epistemological approach that facilitates active and committed teaching are lacking. Those who address this issue do so through ethical principles. It is therefore crucial to find appropriate solutions that eliminate the need for experience and improvisation in this social task.

The national report of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cuba states: "Although the legal framework for education has remained unchanged from the 20th to the 21st century, Cuba is undergoing a profound educational transformation, its third educational revolution, which includes both fundamental principles in education and working methods in the school environment, the interpretation of curricula, and strategies for teaching and learning, all to carry out a struggle of ideas so that our population to obtain a comprehensive and general culture comprehensive and general culture."

Since 1975, a process of continuous improvement has been underway; changes in plans and programs began in 1989, and since 1995, the educational process has been optimized, with greater clarity in methodological orientation in 1999. These are elements that have formed

the basis of what is known as “The Programs of the Revolution,” which seeks to achieve the objectives of the battle of ideas, promoting the comprehensive education of students, reflecting active and responsible citizenship as a result of an adequate understanding of values and a broad general culture.

CONCLUSIONS

Active and responsible citizenship education in Cuba is an intentional and systematic process, rooted in revolutionary and Martí principles that seek to form individuals committed to their society. The Cuban education system integrates citizenship education as a cross-cutting theme, not only through specific subjects, but also through student participation in pioneer and youth organizations, where values such as solidarity, patriotism, and social responsibility are fostered. This approach is based on a pedagogical model that links the school, family, and community, ensuring a comprehensive education grounded in ethics, national history, and critical thinking. Despite economic and political challenges, Cuba remains committed to civic education that promotes social justice, equity, and the defense of national sovereignty. However, in a globalized and changing world, it is necessary to continue strengthening strategies that adapt this education to new generations, encouraging more dynamic and reflective participation in the construction of a more just and sustainable society. In short, civic education in Cuba is not only a curricular component but an essential pillar for the continuity of its social project and comprehensive human development.

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