

MARIA ROSA BUXARRAIS AND ERIC ORTEGA
Universitat de Barcelona

Controversies are no excuse: Citizenship education in Spain

ABSTRACT

Here we discuss the current situation of citizenship education in Spain, briefly reviewing its legal and political context, and taking into account a questionnaire administered to an intentional sample of key informants. We argue that even though the compulsory subject 'education for citizenship and human rights' was ruled out from our classrooms, due to the numerous controversies that it raised, there still remain multiple individual and institutional initiatives that aim to form responsible, active and critical citizens. In general terms, however, it is clear there has been a backward step in this respect, especially because as an essential ingredient of democracy, controversial issues should be seen as opportunities or stimuli for learning, not as topics to be avoided or censored. Finally we recommend, among other things, to reinstate citizenship education as a compulsory subject (not as an alternative to religious education); to amend the current scientism, and other flaws, of our current legislation; to improve teachers' preparation for citizenship and values education, especially for a constructive handling of controversial issues (this requires clarification of the meaning of 'curricular free speech' among us); and to foster systematic research and dissemination efforts to optimize the civic qualities of our school cultures.

KEYWORDS

citizenship education
values education
democratic education
secondary education
controversial issues
educational system
curriculum

1. '[C]uyo temario esté libre de cuestiones controvertidas y susceptibles de adoctrinamiento ideológico'.

INTRODUCTION

Should citizenship education be forbidden? The question is not so absurd or outrageous as it could seem at first. Certainly, at international forums, there is consensus: all the experts and concerned organizations affirm once and again the paramount importance of citizenship or civic education for democratic societies. But although few politicians or public figures would dare to openly oppose this type of educational efforts, at the national or local levels the agreements are not so easy and the truth is that a number of social actors would prefer to have no citizenship education at all, rather than one not entirely aligned with their particular ideology or credo. In many cases, the consequences are merely symbolic citizenship courses, dull, inert educational contents devoid of any critical thinking element.

In 2012, for instance, explaining why the Spanish government had decided to suppress from the national curriculum a compulsory course on Education for Citizenship and Human Rights, José Ignacio Wert, Minister of Education at the time, said that the plan was to offer as an optional course a subject on Civic and Constitutional Education 'whose syllabus would be free from controversial or vulnerable to ideological indoctrination issues'¹ (Wert, as cited by Barcala 2012). Is this not an astounding example of throwing the baby out with the bath water?

Of course, indoctrination is unacceptable in any genuine democracy. But is there any genuine democracy 'free from controversy'? How could a controversy-free citizenship education possibly contribute to the formation of controversy-competent citizens? Are not lively and respectful controversies the exact opposite of indoctrination? It is true that without an appropriate moderation and social context controversies may be derailed, become divisive or even give way to violence. But these are not the only risks involved in democratic governance and citizenship education. Indifference, lack of civic participation and alienation among the youth are also grave and widespread problems about which qualified voices have been warning for years (Putnam 2000; Torney-Purta et al. 2008), and Spanish youth is no exception.

To ban any kind of controversy in the classrooms and seek refuge among the most abstract and boring articles of the Constitution is indeed a workable strategy, but one that does not really amount to educating for democratic citizenship; it is rather a poorly disguised attempt to escape from democracy. You simply cannot have democracy without discussion because 'democracy involves public discussion of common problems, not just silent counting of individual hands' (Mansbridge 1991, as cited by Hess 2009: 16). To further reflect about these and other aspects of the current situation of citizenship education in Spain, on the next pages we will, first, briefly describe its legal and political context during recent times; second, review the results of an exploratory study with secondary education teachers about the teaching of democracy, participation and tolerance; third, examine some of the main shortcomings of our current educative legislation; fourth, suggest a decidedly turn from controversy-avoidance educational strategies towards education through controversy approaches; and finally, present a set of recommendations to overcome the severe regression our citizenship education has been going through during the last few years.

SPANISH CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

Unfortunately, the Spanish state has not been able to pursue coherent educational policies during the last decades. In practice, after the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1978, the Spanish Educational System ‘has not known neither stability nor consensus’ (Montero 2009: 1). Each political party, once in power, has approved an education law suited to their own ideological principles. In fact, none of the education laws approved in the last 26 years have been the result of a national pact. Briefly, the main legal and political landmarks in this respect are as follows:

- In 1990, the LOGSE (Organic Law of the Education System) was approved while the Socialist Party was in power.
- In 2002, the LOCE (Organic Law on the Quality of Education) was passed while the Popular Party was in government, although actually it was never implemented.
- In 2006, the LOE (Organic Law of Education) was adopted with the Socialist Party once again in government.
- In 2013, the LOMCE (Organic Law for the improvement of educational quality), which is currently in force, was passed when the Popular Party returned to power.
- Recently, and somehow unexpectedly, since June 2018, the Socialist Party has returned again to power, but this political change has not brought major changes to our educational legislation as yet.

In our view, the LOE – despite its many shortcomings – is the educational law of our young democracy that has better met the numerous commitments and international demands that the Spanish State has undertaken during the last decades in relation to civic and democratic education (Muñoz 2016: 107). The curriculum reform enforced by the LOE introduced a compulsory subject called ‘Education for Citizenship and Human Rights’, designed for students in the final stage of primary education (10–12 years of age) and for students in one of the first three years of compulsory secondary education. Besides, another subject called ‘philosophy and citizenship’ was introduced for students in secondary schools.

The inclusion of these subjects stirred a great controversy in Spanish politics. The Popular Party, which belongs to the Christian Democrat International, considered this move as a moral and political indoctrination of students, and was strongly opposed to it, alleging that the State was seriously invading the individual rights area. The Catholic Church was also opposed, arguing that the LOE fostered an education marked by laicism, secularization, ‘gender ideology’ and a completely unfounded moral relativism. For them, on the whole, that law was nothing but an unacceptable State intrusion into matters pertaining to the private sphere, traditionally understood as exclusive competence of the Catholic Church. Among the themes most criticized by the church were sexual education and references to multi-parental or homosexual families as alternatives to traditional values and roles. In a general sense, Muñoz (2016) has described this stance as a ‘theoconservative critique’.

Subsequently, when the Popular Party came to power and passed the LOMCE, one of its key reforms was the suppression of the subjects related to education for citizenship in compulsory secondary education, and civic and social values in primary education. Now, the latter is taught only to those

children not taking the Religion subject. Another distinctive feature of this law is its general tendency to privilege scientific rather than humanistic knowledge. In practice, this meant a dramatic reduction of humanism and arts throughout all educational levels, all this within a clear neo-liberal framework that strongly emphasizes individual excellence, performance and competitiveness. In the LOMCE, ‘in short, the notion of citizen has replaced the notion of citizen’ (Bernal and Vázquez 2013: 41).

Both the LOE and the LOMCE encountered substantial resistances and some of the disagreements about them led to massive protests and trials at the highest judicial levels (Burchianti and Zapata-Barrero 2016). According to some voices, all these conflicts may herald a new educational pact – an unheard-of feat in the 40 years history of our democracy. However, this announcement may be viewed with some scepticism, taking into account that the main disagreements about educational matters in our history have revolved around ‘the existence of different assumptions and fundamental definitions of education, especially those related with the axiological, ethical and civic dimensions of education’ (Gracia and Gozávez 2016: 85).

INSIGHTS FROM KEY INFORMANTS: ALIVE AND DIVERSE BUT...

In this section, we will report some empirical inputs collected as part of a comparative, international study involving 28 State Members of the European Union (Veugelers et al. 2017). The aim of this effort was to analyse the policies related to the teaching of core civic values (democracy, participation, tolerance) in secondary education, and how those policies were spelled out in practice, in terms of curricula, methods and school culture. We were also interested in the role of the different actors involved in the teaching of those values: teachers, students, local communities, NGOs and other civil society organizations.

For these purposes, we adopted an exploratory, qualitative approach (Stake 2010) and employed an intentional sample that included an Official from the Education Ministry, two experts working with NGOs and four teachers from the secondary (or high school) level. All of them were pleased to participate and expose their views answering a questionnaire. As the first step, a written

Profession	Area of expertise	City size
Politician	Government Official at the Ministry of Education	Large
NGO Expert 1	Expert, Intermón Oxfam	Large
NGO Expert 2	Expert, DiverSitas Institute	Medium
Professor 1	Professor of compulsory secondary education, social sciences	Medium
Professor 2	Coordinator of ‘education for citizenship’, social sciences	Medium
Professor 3	Professor of social sciences and philosophy	Medium
Professor 4	Coordinator, ethics	Small

Table 1: Participants of the study.

questionnaire on the following subthemes was employed: educational policies, educational contents, school culture, participation, history and future of the educational policies. A key-informant (a university professor) from each country was selected because of his/her expertise in this field. The first author of this article was the Spanish representative or key informant.

As the second step we prepared another questionnaire (see Appendix A) for consulting other types of key-informants: high schools teachers, officials in charge of educational policies and NGOs representatives (see Table 1). As we have already mentioned, since 2012, the Spanish public curriculum does not demand teaching about citizenship values. Thus one might assume that both teachers and educational institutions would have renounced to this task. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. As our interviewees explained, citizenship education survives among us because a number of teachers and schools insist on promoting an active, critical and responsible citizenship, and democratic values, through very diverse educational practices that we will group according to their main focus:

- Especially planned events, for instance, to welcome students coming from other countries and to learn about their traditions, art, music and culture (Buxarrais and Burguet 2016), or periodic discussions (yearly conferences, daily reflections) about selected values (often highlighting the value of tolerance).
- Courses directly or indirectly related to citizenship, ethics and human rights. To some extent, the design and contents of these courses have benefited from the experiences accumulated while the LOE was in force, and from the general failure of purely transversal approaches to citizenship education (García and Miranda 2016).
- Promotion of student participation. In most cases, the educational centres organize assemblies to debate the students' problems and to propose solutions (Puig and Martín 2015: 13–14). But there are also innovative approaches. For instance, a very interesting project called 'We are what we do' (*Somos lo que hacemos*) aims to enable any student to present ideas for improving the classrooms, the schools or the lives of the people that surrounds them, with the only condition of willing to be part of those who transform these ideas into realities. Any student with an idea can e-mail it to the school, and the school in turn will offer him or her the necessary support to design a project and to assess its viability and possible impact. Another approach, quite appealing for the students, is community service (Puig and Campo 2015). In some Spanish Autonomous Communities, the latter has been implemented from the third course of Compulsory Secondary Education onwards, and a number of projects have received the support of different local authorities.
- Teachers' collaborative efforts. In these cases teachers meet to pool ideas and plan activities highlighting values such as solidarity, honesty, respect, etc. and this, in turn, may lead to the development of professional learning communities among teachers (Hogan 2016: 340). These kinds of initiatives have resulted in a 'style guide' comprising both their curricular and extra-curricular methods, and their corresponding objectives. The development of critical thinking was a concern present among most of the consulted high school teachers. This implies modelling citizens able to understand the problems of contemporary world and to become an agent capable of changing his or her environment and society (Martínez 2016).

- Practices like those involved in ‘educating cities’ foster new participation spaces, taking advantage of the inexhaustible source of formative stimulus present in urban environments. The Catalonian cities of Barcelona and Sabadell, in particular, have supported educating cities projects for more than twenty years now (Collet-Sabé and Subirats 2016). In this sense, the territory is seen not only as part of the curriculum, that is to say, as a communicable content, but also as an space offering endless experiences of participation – and even of governance – through, for instance, children local councils (Agud and Novella 2016).
- Activities related to the ‘school culture’, or ‘the hidden curriculum’, that is to say, related to everyday educational practices (Puig 2012). The usual strategy is to define pyramids of roles and responsibilities in the classroom, in which each student takes charge of one task or theme (e.g., conflict mediator, ICT, safety in the schoolyard, etc.). Since this kind of dynamics foster values through first-hand experiences, they are especially useful to synthesize the cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of civic and democratic values. In a more general sense, the most challenging task of the approaches focused on the school culture is to really align the values formally espoused by the school and the everyday behaviours. Below we will focus on this crucial goal.

In short, most schools considered by us reported, in one way or another, working on the following three themes: (1) identity and dignity of persons; (2) understanding and respect towards interpersonal relationships; and (3) coexistence and social values. But beyond these common themes there are few shared theoretical frameworks or practical guidelines. The Ministry of Education consults, occasionally, with some NGOs on the designs and practices of values education. However, only a few schools use the didactic materials prepared by the NGOs since ultimately these decisions belong to the schools’ head teachers.

On the other hand, most high school teachers think that they should not be in the thrall of governmental standards, which on many occasions prevent them from creating innovations and making democratic decisions with their co-workers. Instead, in their opinion, the official curriculum should be seen as a useful reference point, but each school should have an independent educational project. In their view, however, the present conditions are not precisely good in this respect. Some of them reported the disillusion of their colleagues when considering educational practices for the promotion of values, and the feeling of being trapped in a maze of curricular contents, schedules and evaluations.

Although all the school projects that we heard about are praiseworthy initiatives, the overall picture is rather negative. When agreeing with Gracia and Gozávez (2016: 99) we accept that ethical and citizenship education should be at the centre of the formal education curricula, we cannot but note with concern the ‘centrifuge’ situation of these matters brought upon by the last Spanish educational law. The optimal development of students as democratically committed citizens requires something more than the goodwill of a handful of teachers and schools, and the little spare time left by other less fundamental educational objectives. In other words, whilst the considerable diversity of projects is not a problem per se, with little or no support for systematic research or evaluations it is difficult to differentiate good educational practices from well-meant but ineffective ones, especially in the ethical

and political areas, where the relation between educational contents and psychosocial processes – or between declared values and real behaviours – is quite complex and often contradictory (Leighton 2014).

For instance, recommending paying more attention to the classroom environment and to the question of whether pupils do feel free to express themselves and dissent from others, Stradling warned about mounting evidence that ‘in coeducational classes boys often monopolise discussion of issues, frequently interrupt girls or disrupt the lessons when girls are contributing, and significantly influence the choice of issues and topics’ (1984: 127). That is to say, even though those students surely were not receiving formal machismo classes, they were somehow absorbing a hidden machista curriculum. To really change this sort of cultural climate – or a xenophobic or racist one – simple content changes or additions are not enough. Systematic research and reflection are also vital.

PITFALLS OF THE CURRENT LAW: APATHY, SCIENTISM, MACHISMO...

As we have already suggested, one of the main problems of our current educational law – and the controversy-avoidance policies derived from it – is its likely impact on civic and democratic participation. The most recent research literature on this theme emphasizes the scarce affection of Spanish youth towards the political system. The consequences of this disaffection have led, as is well known, to a lack of civic commitment among our younger citizens; to numerous complaints about their behaviour; and to a low percentage – compared with other European Union countries – of youth voting in elections (González and Beas 2012: 39).

This, in turn, seems to be a natural outcome of the close link between the economic crisis that we have faced during the last few years and the diminishing trust in our political institutions and participative democracy (Jover et al. 2014). It should be no surprise, then, that the generation deemed as the best educated of our country has not, however, been able to take ownership of the political system that arose with the Transition to Democracy. In fact, these very logics are considered the main reason for the unemployment rate – 41.6 per cent in April 2017 – affecting this segment of the population (Europa Press 2017); of the enormous difficulties that they face for emancipating themselves, less than 20 per cent according to the latest available report (CJE 2017); and also of the high numbers of persons – around 700,000 (González-Ferrer 2013) – who have felt compelled to emigrate, in recent times, due to the crisis.

It is difficult to understand how the controversy-avoidance policies derived from the LOMCE could help to remediate this calamitous situation. In fact, despite its business-, market- and science-oriented discourse, this legal framework seems to have no answer for or does not even address the aforementioned political challenges. Of course, the curricular reforms aimed to privilege scientific disciplines at the expense of humanities and arts could be read as one apparent exception, but they are not. This is especially clear if we consider the emergent notion of ‘scientific citizenship’ (Mejlgaard and Stares 2010; Árnasson 2012; Blue and Medlock 2014). In this sense, contemporary science and technology can no longer be considered a value-free, fact-based, increasingly safe and predictable knowledge. On the contrary, developments such as genomics, robotics, artificial intelligence and nanotechnology, or problems such as global warming, are marked by

uncertainties, high risks, values in dispute – or stakeholders in conflict –, and urgencies in decision-making (Levinson 2008: 856). For these reasons, many educational policies that in previous times had only the goal of enabling citizens to understand and consume science are now expanding their horizons to also actively engage citizens, or if necessary to enable them to ‘confront’ misguided or harmful technologic developments (Elam and Bertilsson 2003). At the very least, a sound and up-to-date educational policy should include the ever-increasing number of ‘controversial socioscientific issues’ (Kolstø 2001). Besides – as Marta Nussbaum (2001) has repeatedly argued – to embrace scientism implies the neglect of certain capacities seemingly required to counteract the pathological narcissism that is currently prevalent in our societies (Nussbaum 2001).

Another problematic aspect of the LOMCE has to do with the teaching methods and sociomoral atmosphere that it has actually promoted in the classrooms. In theory, the law (LOMCE: Preamble, IV) seems to appreciate the teamwork and the heterogeneity among students, but in practice it has overemphasized easily measured performances and individual competitiveness. Thus, it has often led to a regression in teaching methods, towards rote learning and passive transmission of contents, and has also promoted rivalries among pupils. Explaining why those rivalries are extremely negative, especially among children in the age range between 8 and 13 years, Larry Nucci says that schools should not engage

in practices that magnify peer comparisons [...] [because] such practices do not serve to enhance the values schools wish to promote, but on the contrary exacerbate tendencies toward invidious social comparison – one of the truly negative features of this developmental period.

(2009: 72)

In a similar vein, the LOMCE’s curricular reforms in secondary schools affected particularly the contents of citizenship education ‘closely related with the critical appreciation of the sexual and social division of labour, with the relations between men and women, sexism, homophobia, racism, xenophobia’ (Muñoz 2016: 116). And according to recent sociological studies ‘there is an increase in the control of male adolescents over their girlfriends, and there has been a resurgence of homophobic and transphobic aggressions in schools and high-schools’ (Sáez 2016: 71), not to mention the Spanish high rate of deaths caused by domestic or gender violence.

One more striking contradiction of our current law has been pointed out by Gracia and Gozávez (2016) in relation to the competences discourse. Apparently, the LOMCE embraces this educational approach as stated in the Document on the Definition and Selection of Key Competences (Salganik et al. 1999), or in the Tuning Project (González and Wagenaar 2005), but without assuming the central role that the ethical, social and civic dimensions play in the very notion of competence. A clear sign of this, in our view, is the observation that the terms ‘democracy’ and ‘tolerance’, which at first could evidence the law, assign a capital role to citizenship education, in fact only appear a few times in the text. Only five times, in the case of the concept of ‘democracy’ and two in the case of the word ‘tolerance’. No doubt this is a reflection of the scarce importance that the LOMCE actually confers to the ethical and democratic dimension of studenthood.

TAKING THE BULL BY THE HORNS: EDUCATING FOR AND THROUGH CONTROVERSY

The idea of treating controversial issues as opportunities or stimulus for learning rather than as troubles is anything but new. For instance, this piece of advice on the role of teachers in classrooms controversies was formulated more than 60 years ago:

In the heat of discussion it is important that the teacher shall be the most willing to hear another out, the least willing to point the finger of scorn at an unpopular position; the most willing to explore to the very bottom any position which may be taken; the most willing to examine critically his own position; the fairest, the coolest, the most factual person in the discussion.

(National Council for the Social Studies 1951: 135)

Since those times, the idea has been receiving increasing attention and nowadays there is a wealth of information and guidance on the educational management of sensitive or controversial issues, both in relation to citizenship education and in relation to several other curricular areas, such as history, social sciences, literature, geography, etc., from elementary school to university levels (Stradling 1984; Dewhurst 1992; Trilla 1992; Holden 2002; Oulton et al. 2004; Levinson 2006; Hess 2009; Gregory 2014). Ironically, some aspects of this educational literature are themselves controversial. For instance, in classroom discussions, should teachers adopt a neutral stance or should they disclose their moral or ideological preferences? This has been much debated but the polarization persists (Hess 2009).

Nevertheless, it seems quite clear that teachers and schools should be prepared to deal with controversial issues, first of all because pupils themselves – or some shocking news – may spontaneously raise these issues (Philpott et al. 2011: 37), but also because of their multiple educational benefits. Among the most important of these benefits are the development of the intellectual, emotional and interpersonal skills needed to participate in difficult but constructive dialogues: ‘Developing a generic understanding of the nature of controversy and the ability to deal with it is more important than developing pupil’s understanding of a particular issue per se’ (Oulton et al. 2004: 415). This is a point of convergence between the controversy education literature and the psychological approaches in favour of the systematic discussion of moral dilemmas and other deliberative activities (Kohlberg 1984; Colby et al. 2003, 2007).

In other words, the idea of handling controversial issues as educational opportunities rather than as topics to be somehow censored or avoided requires the ability to lead democratic discussions emphasizing the ‘how’ (or learning processes) rather than the ‘what’ (or learning contents). This kind of approach is well known among teachers, but the problem is that when the ‘what’ are hot topics, many parents, administrators or lay persons may have difficulties seeing beneath the surface and tend to overreact to the possibility of some type of indoctrination. ‘With this sort of climate outside the school it is not surprising if some schools disguise Peace Education under the “more acceptable” title of conflict studies of war and some schools introducing Political Education call it “decision making”’ (Stradling 1984: 125).

The general goal, then, is clear and important. But the obstacles are numerous and considerable. This is why even teachers who do believe in

the benefits of classrooms controversies are often reluctant to assume them because: they feel that neither their professional training nor their in-service training has prepared them for this type of task (Buxarrais et al. 2016); they do not have adequate textbooks or materials for this purpose; they are afraid of hurting the feelings of some pupils; and they fear that the negative reactions from the parents or administrators could endanger their jobs (Philpott et al. 2011). In fact, even in countries such as United States and Canada, it is not entirely clear what kind of legal protection a teacher can expect when exercising *curricular free speech*: ‘the right to free speech exercised in the course of regular teacher duties’ (Maxwell et al. 2018: 198). Research on the Spanish applicable jurisprudence is urgently needed.

In short, teaching moral and civic values using current social controversies is a legitimate, feasible and promising educational strategy, but the responsibilities involved should not rest exclusively on the shoulders of teachers. In addition to improvements in the teachers training, in the design of educational materials and in the support for rigorous evaluations of education projects based on controversial issues, there is also an urgent need for dissemination efforts about this type of education to prevent exaggerated fears of indoctrination, or the use of teachers as scapegoats. Instead, the public in general, and some politicians in particular should be more appreciative of the value of classrooms controversies if – following European guidelines – our schools are really going to serve as ‘pedagogical engines’ for community development (Veugelers et al. 2017: 194).

CONCLUSION

At the time of writing these reflections, changes in our educational legal framework seem quite likely, but it is not clear whether they will be based on an inclusive or a national educative agreement. We may hope they will but, if not, we should not wait idly for a consensus that may never come. Instead, we should compensate the lack of top-down agreements with bottom-up collaborative networks of teachers, administrators, parents and communities dealing with the same basic civic problems across different regional contexts. The growing interest among us in moral and civic education, education for citizenship, service learning and the role of families in values education, among other topics, allows some optimism in this respect. Looking forward, we recommend the following.

- To reinstate the compulsory character of citizenship education at all pre university levels. At risk of stating the obvious, the State simply cannot delegate its fundamental responsibilities in this area, and courses on religion should not be deemed as an alternative to courses on civic values. Citizenship education in no way diminishes or threatens the ethical contributions of religious education; on the contrary, by promoting respectful dialogues between very diverse cultures or world-views, it helps to underscore their common or universal ethical foundations.
- To revise and amend the contradictory or antidemocratic features of our current educational law, the LOMCE, among these, its acritical exaltation of science and technology, its marked devaluation of humanities and arts, its exaggerated emphasis on competition between individuals and other contradictions between the values formally espoused by this law and the educational practices that it effectively promote or requires.

- To revise and enrich the professional preparation of teachers, especially in relation to the educational processes involved in moral, political and democratic development. This includes the theoretical and practical knowledge required to lead democratic discussions of sensitive or controversial issues in a constructive way.
- To promote intervention and evaluation studies aimed at ascertaining whether the sociomoral cultures or climates of the classrooms are coherent with the civic and democratic values espoused by the schools and the official curriculum. This includes examining the effective rights of pupils to freely express their views, but also the practical conditions in which teachers must perform their work. Special attention should be paid to the legal regulations applicable in Spain to 'curricular free speech'.
- To take steps towards the strengthening of the ties between schools and families. At the present time, in many of our educational centres there is no meaningful family-school relationship. It is well known that a close collaboration between the school and the family is associated with substantial improvements in academic performance and in other social or affective dimensions, hence the need to stimulate the communication channels between these two educational agents. This includes dissemination efforts aimed at garnering support among families and lay persons for regular classroom discussions of sensitive or controversial issues.

Finally, it is worth noting than having enshrined Socrates as a democratic martyr, western civilization as a whole has decidedly put the values associated with critical deliberation well above the inertial tendencies in defence of the status quo or conventional values. The Spanish educational system should do no less.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Which is the educational policy in relation to the values of democracy and tolerance at the secondary education level? What changes have taken place in that policy since 2000?
2. The changes that have taken place in that policy are related to factors such as economic crises, the high level of power concentration in the European Union, terrorist threats, the increasing number of immigrants and refugees.
3. What is the influence of the NGOs and other organizations of civil society on the curriculum on democracy and tolerance, both at the policy and school levels?
4. How do teachers deal with the themes of democracy and tolerance in schools?
5. How can the students be democratically active in schools?
6. Are there differences among the curriculum of the diverse levels of secondary education?

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CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Maria Rosa Buxarrais, Ph.D., is currently a professor. She has a BA in psychology and a BA and Ph.D. in education. She is head of the Research Group of Moral Education GREM, Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona, responsible from 1995 until 2005 for the democracy and education programme of the Organization of Iberoamerican States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI). She was a member of the editorial board of the *JME* (2002–12) and editor of the books series on Values Education in Spanish Editorial Desclée Brouwer (Bilbao). Currently, she is a member of the editorial board of the book series Moral Development and Citizen Education, by Sense Publishers (The Netherlands), head of research at the Institute of Education Sciences (IDP-ICE) at University of Barcelona and director of the Observatory of Civics and Values in Catalonia of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain.

Contact: Campus Mundet, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón, 171, Edifici de Llevant, 3^o planta, Despatx 338, 08035 Barcelona, Spain.

E-mail: mrbuxarrais@ub.edu

Web address: <http://www.mariarosabuxarrais.com>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7511-3814>

Eric Ortega, Ph.D. student, is research fellow of the GREM on the education and society programme of the Faculty of Education, University of Barcelona. He is currently working on the topic of moral and pedagogical exemplarity under the supervision of Maria-Rosa Buxarrais, Ph.D. and Conrad Vilanou, Ph.D. His interests, however, include a range of topics in ethics, philosophy of education, pedagogical thought and history of education. He holds a BA in pedagogy and a master's degree in values education and citizenship, both from the University of Barcelona.

Contact: Campus Mundet, Passeig de la Vall d'Hebrón, 171, Edifici de Llevant,
3º planta, Despatx 338, 08035 Barcelona, Spain.
E-mail: ericorgon@gmail.com

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6747-0336>

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