

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AS A CURRICULUM SELECTOR

Curriculum design: a fundamental aspect of the teacher's professionalism

We know that the idea of a programme to guide teachers in their teaching activities is a long-obsolete concept, even though it is still present in the practice of many teachers. Today, in several countries, single and prescriptive programmes are no longer the rule; ministerial indications only constitute a general reference framework at national level: they provide the aims of school education, the profiles emerging from the different cycles, the cultural axes in which to make the various disciplines converge, some theoretical suggestions on learning processes as a basis for choosing teaching methods.

Then, however, the task of deciding and organizing the educational activities of each institute is up to the individual schools, and this is not only an expression of freedom of teaching and school autonomy, but especially the school's ability to adapt the training proposal to the characteristics of its territory, the needs of its students and also present events (for example, today it is important to help students understand migratory processes and climate change, whereas twenty years ago the priorities probably were wars or pandemics). The curriculum design, therefore, is not the same for all schools and does not always remain the same, but is the product of teachers' collective construction, the result of research and educational innovation in a given place and in a given time.

Today, therefore, the teacher's professionalism is not so much shown in his/her knowledge of the subject he/she teaches and in his/her ability to explain it, but in possessing two types of skills:

- the first, relating to curriculum design, which consists in the ability to identify the most effective learning experiences, the most significant educational choices, the most appropriate strategies, with attention to the integration between disciplines, to allow students develop the envisaged disciplinary and citizenship skills;
- the second, relating to the management of the class group, which consists of the ability to tutor and control classroom dynamics and to make initial, intermediate and final evaluations.

How to design a curriculum

Designing a curriculum for a specific school year, school cycle or school course of study means answering three closely interwoven questions:

1) What do I teach? Each subject offers the possibility to study a large quantity of contents and to do so in an order that does not necessarily have to be the traditional one (for example, if it is logical to study plane figures before solid figures, there is no reason to study epic poems before contemporary literature). It is not possible to deal with all contents, all the more so since the problems of the present impose to pay attention to new topics that often have to be dealt with in an interdisciplinary way. But there is little time available and therefore I must inevitably identify priorities and make choices. What criteria can I use to make them?

2) Why? What are the reasons why I choose a topic or propose a certain learning path? What are the objectives that I want to achieve? Since the purpose of school study is not to learn notions, but to develop skills, the subjects I propose to students must be such as to allow the growth of skills related to both disciplinary and active citizenship fields. This is already a very good criterion to decide which learning paths to include in the curriculum.

3) In what way? What are the best methodologies to achieve skills development? We know that transmissive teaching, based on the lesson and the textbook, provides information, but hardly develops skills, including disciplinary ones. In this case, too, a different choice is required; could it be an active teaching method in which students participate in a research or in the creation of a product? An interdisciplinary approach, able to better explain the complexity of a topic? A learning approach that uses sources from different media and with different languages? Based on these methodological options, it is possible to select the themes/issues that can be treated most successfully if this type of teaching strategy is used.

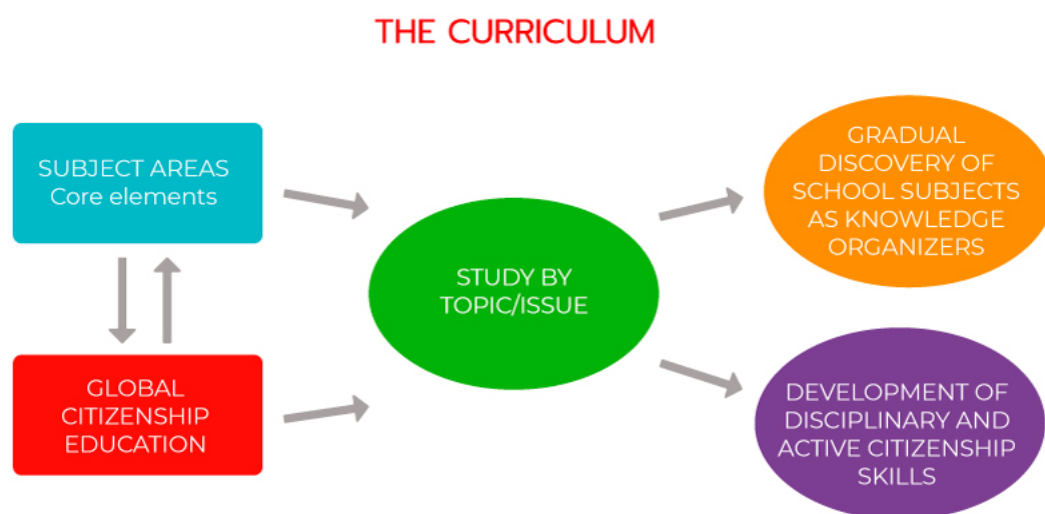
Global Citizenship Education as curriculum selector

A very important criterion to make the choices required by curriculum design can be the educational approach provided by Global Citizenship Education, and not only because GCE is indicated by the international community as one of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and therefore, in some way, we are required to include it in our curricula designs. In fact, the great themes proposed by the GCE, being problems of the world in which we live, can arouse the interest of students and we know that motivation is the first component to become successful learners. Moreover, these themes require an interdisciplinary analysis which, on the one hand, allows us to learn and use concepts and procedures of each topic in concrete situations and not in the abstract and limited form of the school text, and, on the other hand, teaches us to face complex phenomena where scientific and humanistic knowledge must necessarily meet. Finally, topics such as inequalities, rights, the relationship between human beings and the environment, migration or multi-ethnic societies invite to carry out research and reflection and require personal involvement. They lead to teamwork, problem-solving, finding and critically evaluating information, identifying links and relationships, all of which are skills required in student exit profiles.

Surely using the GCE in curriculum design implies that school education is not neutral. However, this does not imply taking an ideological stand, but rather adhering to the following three values:

1. Making efforts not to understand issues in a unilateral way, but in their complexity
2. Explaining the point of view from which issues are interpreted
3. Recognising that the acquisition of knowledge entails individual and collective responsibility.

The following scheme tries to summarise the elements of curriculum design:



The curriculum consists of a series of modular learning paths on themes and problems, able to motivate students and propose a disciplinary or interdisciplinary teamwork research and production.

Two interacting components allow to choose the topics of these paths: the core elements of each subject (i.e. the concepts, procedures and central themes of each subject) and the contents and aims of the GCE.

This way of learning, approached through active and interactive methodologies, allows to develop disciplinary skills and active citizenship attitudes.

Finally, at least in the upper secondary school, it is appropriate to devote some time to introduce students to how over time school subjects have become specific organizers of knowledge; to show them how this understanding of knowledge is reflected in schools, in the publishing industry and in the academic world, although today the world of

research increasingly requires the interaction and collaboration of all the different fields of knowledge.

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