National Curricular Guidelines and Citizenship Education in Schools in Latin American Countries

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to contrast two different sources of information regarding citizenship education in Latin America: curricular guidelines, and students' civic attitudes and practices. When analyzing curricular guidelines, we consider the official national documents of the respective Ministries of Education, whereas regarding civic practices and attitudes, we analyze the results of the 2009 ICCS study. By using quantitative methods, we contrast the curricular emphasis and students' results for each of the six countries considered. Our findings show that several curricular absences are associated with students' low achievement in civic and citizenship knowledge and attitudes. Therefore, these results provide some guidelines for improving the official curricular documents and developing more empirical research on less-covered civic topics. Finally we encourage further research on classroom practices, especially on the topics highlighted in this research, such as authoritarianism, peaceful coexistence, national and regional identity, and accountability. Inside classroom research is very important to have a complete view of civic/citizenship curricular guidelines and practices, considering the limitations implied by looking at the intended curriculum (official documents) rather than the one implemented.

Keywords: civic/citizenship education, curriculum, Latin America, political socialization, comparative/international studies.

Introduction

Citizenship education has become an increasingly salient aspect of governments' agendas for student formation, since it not only provides civic skills and knowledge, but it also promotes political participation (Cho & McLeod, 2007; Cohen & Chaffee, 2012; Delli Carpini, 2009; Galston, 2001, 2004; McAllister, 1998; Owen, Soule, & Chalif, 2011; Torney-Purta, 2010). In this context, the official curricula on citizenship education in schools are fundamental for ensuring that specific contents related to citizenship, nation-state, and region can be transmitted to the students effectively, thereby developing politically engaged future citizens. Furthermore, the role of civic education acquires renewed relevance in the context of globalization. As the boundaries have become more diffuse with increasingly fluid migration, the concept of citizenship has become global as well, such that the boundaries of identity are not only national,

but also transnational or supranational (Keating, Hinderliter, & Philippou, 2009). Therefore, given constant societal evolution and change due to global trends and/or socio-political structure, citizenship education also undergoes profound changes (Kerr, 1999). This makes it particularly interesting to scholars when it is considered within the varied contexts of Latin American countries.

The aim of this study is to contrast two different sources of information regarding citizenship education in Latin America: curricular guidelines, and students' civic attitudes and participation. When analyzing curricular guidelines, we consider the official national documents of the respective Ministries of Education, whereas regarding civic attitudes and participation, we analyze the results of the 2009 ICCS study. The present study will show which aspects are covered or left uncovered in official curricula, and then contrast this with students' outcomes on the international test. Thus, the results will pinpoint the main aspects that policymakers and schools should cover to both improve citizenship knowledge/attitudes and to expand the actual reference documents to encompass a more complete range of contents and teaching objectives. This study also contributes to the literature on citizenship education in Latin American countries, identifying the most relevant contents and the principal gaps expressed both in the official curricula and through student perspectives.

International Curricular Comparison

A curricular comparison is helpful in outlining how countries from the same region, which share a language and have a similar political history, have diverged or aligned in their development of the concept of citizenship, often emphasizing some contents over others. Several European scholars have analyzed the curricula of their region, focusing on the (non-)coverage of European citizenship, with an understanding of citizenship as global, given our new world context; others have compared developed countries with similar political and socio-economic profiles. However, there is little evidence of comparative or in-depth curricular analysis of citizenship education in Latin American countries. With the present study, we aim to fill this gap to achieve a more holistic picture of how citizenship is understood and meant to be taught in the schools. We also explore how each country's context influences this understanding, as embodied in a certain curricular focus.

As Kerr (1999) asserted, curricular comparison not only highlights different approaches to citizenship education and the concept of citizenship, but it also shows the common challenges (Hughes, Print, & Sears, 2009). Thus, the discussion of potential approaches to enhancing citizenship education is enriched by considering the experiences of neighboring countries (Kerr, 1999). Though an ideal curriculum could emerge from the holistic perspective offered through such a comparison, Kerr (1999) also argued, this could not then simply be transplanted to another country without taking into account its particular historical, political, social, and economic context. Each country's context is different, and some approaches and programs that succeed in one place might not in another (Hughes et al., 2009; Kerr, 1999), so curricular comparison must be interpreted carefully. Hughes et al. (2009) argued that in international comparisons, which are albeit helpful for a better understanding of alternative practices and policies, it is fundamental that the countries compared be similar. In effect, Hughes et al. (2009) concluded that even when countries share characteristics in their citizenship education curricula, the effects of these programs can be completely different.

How countries tackle the concept of citizenship and citizenship education varies according to their historical traditions, geographical position, socio-political structure, economic system, and global trends (Kerr, 1999). These factors influence the organization of the government, as Kerr (1999) showed, which, in turn, affects certain structural characteristics of education, such as its organization, values, aims, and funding.

From a National to a Global Curriculum

Western societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in their effort to legitimize the nation-state, oriented school curricula towards the generation of a "sense of nation," teaching about their own national culture, institutions, and history, while ignoring other cultures and societies (Keating et al., 2009, p. 146). However, globalization and new technologies have affected this traditional relationship between citizenship education and the nation-state, providing alternative ways to identify and participate that go beyond the nation-state (Keating et al., 2009). For example, according to Keating et al. (2009), the official curricula of some European countries show an official understanding of citizenship that is purposely shaped to

consider new contexts, and considers the curricula as a key element in the articulation of each nation's aim in citizenship education.

Comparative studies enable us to determine whether these countries have confronted the challenge of supranational citizenship education, by acknowledging that worldwide citizenship education is becoming global, as exemplified in the cross-national programs or policies conducted by the OECD, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and by UNESCO, such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), both of which have taken a transnational perspective on education (Keating et al., 2009).

In this sense, as Kerr (1999) explained, the challenges that countries face nowadays are similar, and the educational system must be prepared to address them. These challenges include multiculturalism, pluralism, cultural heritage, diversity, tolerance, social cohesion, collective and individual rights and responsibilities, social justice, national identity, and freedom (Kerr, 1999).

For Ibrahim (2005), it is important that countries' curricula have global citizenship as a framework because this allows for a more inclusive kind of citizenship that can encompass global issues and move individuals (especially those with power and resources) to act responsibly. This is why, for Ibrahim (2005, p. 182), is important that curricula's learning frameworks support human rights, social justice, and democratic participation. Following Ibrahim (2005), it is crucial to examine whether a given curriculum's features can be effectively used to increase participation in school and to prepare students for future political participation. Given that European countries' focus in citizenship education establishes a European dimension related to supranational identity and policies (Keating et al., 2009) —which corresponds with the region's contemporary context— it is interesting to see how the countries reviewed here have responded to this global challenge to go beyond the nation-state focus. Moreover, it is instructive to examine their approaches to Latin American identity and citizenship in their curricular guidelines.

Citizenship Education: Civic and Civil

The education field is undergoing a transition from traditional civic education to a modern citizenship education (Eurydice, 2005; Suárez, 2007, 2008). In other words, there is a shift from

a merely civic focus toward a concept of citizenship (Cox, Jaramillo, & Reimers, 2005; Kerr, 1999; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010) that encompasses a wider spectrum of civil and civic elements. This new concept of citizenship education contains not only a nation-bounded or institutional perspective of civic education, but also cross-national values. Moreover, there is more recognition of the need to create abilities, rather than just content-based knowledge about civic elements (McCowan, 2009).

This study distinguishes two aspects of education: *civic* and *civil*. The *civic* dimension attempts to cover those aspects linked to formal political institutions, such as the election of representatives and membership in formal political organizations like political parties. In turn, the civil dimension is concerned with informal institutions and activities that imply interaction with local communities. Both aspects are part of a wider concept of citizenship education:

> "Citizenship education focuses on knowledge and understanding and on opportunities for participation and engagement in both civic and civil society. It is concerned with the wider range of ways that citizens use to interact with and shape their communities (including schools) and societies". (Schulz et al., 2010, p. 22)

It has been pointed out that both forms of participation interact with one another and are a necessary condition for the functioning of the democratic system:

> "Civil associations contribute to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government, it is argued, both because of their 'internal' effects on individual members and because of their 'external' effects on the wider polity". (Putnam, 1993, p. 89)

Latin American Political Context

Even though Latin American countries share a language, religion, and a similar colonial period, differences do emerge in their respective processes of political development. During the twentieth century, this region has faced several types of interruptions that put into question their democracies. In the end, these interruptions prevent us from considering them as sharing the same experiences. Nonetheless, these different interventions have often restricted opportunities for civic and civil participation. Latin America's fledgling democracies make this region an

interesting case for comparing the different ways each country has developed its citizenship education guidelines.

Although throughout the region, since the early twentieth century, there have been various attempts to empower representative regimes, these have been interrupted by military dictatorships, political unrest, civil wars, and human rights violations (Hartlyn & Valenzuela, 1997). The political instability in the case of the Central American countries has emerged due to external pressure, which triggered wars and invasions. In South American countries, the instability has arisen from pressure from landholder elites who were reacting to government policies that promoted greater political participation among citizens or that undertook land reforms (Hartlyn & Valenzuela, 1997).

Particularly in the post-dictatorship eras, efforts have been focused on voter turnout in elections to strengthen democracy, since electoral participation is its mandatory minimum (Munck, 2011). Nevertheless, the quality of their democracies has been questioned. Democratic quality can be measured by evaluating key dimensions, including participation in events like elections and decision-making processes regarding policies implemented by the government (Diamond & Morlino, 2004), and, to a lesser extent, by participation and connection among the community and peers.

The political situations of the six countries reviewed here can be represented by a set of indicators developed by Freedom House on "Political Rights" (see Figure 1) and "Civil Liberties" (see Figure 2). This analysis consists in calculating average indexes for the years in which elections occurred in each decade. These indexes range from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates a high degree of rights and liberties, and 7 indicates their absence.

As we can see, the countries that have been gradually increasing in political stability are Chile, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, Colombia, Guatemala, and Paraguay maintain a score of over three in both indexes, which places them as "partly free," since their political systems do not protect certain political rights and civil liberties.[1]

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[1] For more information about the indexes, see http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2011/methodology

The existent literature and indexes compiled by international institutions show that there is great diversity in terms of culture, political history, participation patterns, and civil and civic participation among these six countries (Hartlyn & Valenzuela, 1997). In this context, considering the diversity in democratic development and civic engagement among citizens, our aim is to explore how each country has crystalized its historical and political background in the official curricula and to determine what kind of citizen each aims to educate. Furthermore, the comparative perspective allows us to analyze the differences between the curricular guidelines and students' achievement in citizenship education among these countries, to discover the extent to which the results obtained through the international test reflect the purposes encapsulated in each official curriculum.

Data and Methods

The framework used to define the principal domains for categorizing and extracting citations from the official curricula was the same at that used to build the international tests CIVED (1999) and ICCS (2009). We also considered the Latin American module of the ICCS evaluation (Schulz & Brese, 2008; Schulz, Fraillon, & Ainley, 2011; Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999). In light of the literature review, the present study considers a six-domain framework with 50 different categories to describe these curricula (Cox, 2010). These domains are: 1) Civic values and principles, 2) Citizens and democratic participation, 3) Institutions, 4) Regional and national identity, 5) Peaceful coexistence, and 6) Macro context.[2]

This study combines two data sources. First, we analyze a database containing direct quotes from the official curricula, which define the mandatory contents and objectives in citizenship education. This database was created in the context of a SREDECC (Sistema Regional de Competencias Ciudadanas [Regional System of Citizenship Skills]) project, and is comprised of 1,843 quotes containing the full text of contents and objectives present in the reviewed documents (1,161 primary and 682 secondary quotes)[3]. Each quote refers to the categories proposed in the six-domain framework. Second, we use the information compiled by the ICCS study for six Latin American countries (Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala,

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[2] Table 1, presented in the Appendix, contains the 50 contents by domain.
[3] For the propose of this study we use only primary contents until eighth grade since ICCS students were evaluated at their last year of primary (eighth grade).

Mexico, and Paraguay), which involved a stratified sampling of 29,962 students selected from 1,027 schools (Schulz et. al., 2010).

Correspondence analysis was used to plot the relationship between each country's curriculum and the contents emphasized therein (Benzécri, 1979, 1992; Greenacre, 2007; Lebart, Morineau, & Tabard, 1977; Roux & Rouanet, 2004). At the same time, we analyzed the results regarding students' attitudes and civic knowledge in each country, using weighted likelihood estimates of IRT scales (Rasch, 1960; Warm, 1989), with a metric transformation within each country (Schulz, Fraillon, et al., 2011). We looked for statistically significant differences both between the six countries and in comparison to the international mean scores. The main results of both analyses are contrasted, generating grounds for discussion of both curriculum coverage and each country's results in the international standardized test.

Results and Discussion

Curricular Documents Review

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the amount of contents by country and domain (by a count of the number of quotes in each domain/country). In correspondence analysis notation, these tables are named column and row profiles (Table 2 and 3 respectively). The tables show the significant differences between each proportion and the "mass", which indicate differences between countries/domains.

This first analysis, which shows each country's primary curricular emphasis, indicates some differences between the countries. For example, the Chilean curriculum dedicates the larger proportion of its contents to principles and values, emphasizing this domain more than the other countries do. Mexico's and Paraguay's curricula pay more attention to contents regarding institutions, Guatemala dedicates a large proportion of its contents on national and regional identity, and both the Colombian and Dominican Republic documents stand out for their focus on citizens and participation.

The same analysis could be carried out with the complete list of contents within each domain (n=50; see Table 1), but the results would be particularly challenging to read and summarize. For a graphical solution to this problem, correspondence analysis measures the differences between

each content and the mass of each profile, calculates distances, and generates a finite number of vectors containing scores for each category of the considered variables (in this case, countries and contents). These scores can be plotted in a two-dimensional graph, where a smaller distance plotted indicates a stronger relationship between categories. In other words, the distances that the graph shows indicate the strength of the relationship between contents and the countries reviewed (see Figure 3).

The four curricular documents that contribute most to the construction of the two axes of Figure 3 are those of Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, and Paraguay. Little can be said about Mexico and the Dominican Republic, due to their low contribution levels and the weak correlation between these curricula and the axes. We also plotted only those contents with an above-average contribution to the construction of the axes (0.02). Though this approach isfar from being exhaustive, it does show some interesting relationships between contents and curricular documents in a graphical way.

The vertical axis correlates positively with "civic principles and values" contents and negatively with "citizen and civic participation" contents, while the horizontal axis is negatively correlated with "macro context" contents. Figure 3 also shows the differences in the approaches in the curricular documents of Colombia and Chile in terms of which contents each emphasizes more. Despite the great coverage of contents in the principles and civic values domain in the Chilean primary curriculum, when specific contents are consider, we find that great importance was given to institutions topics, like the armed forces and the state, as well as contents regarding the rule of law and patriotism. These are all related to what Schulz et al. (2010) called *civic education*, which examines institutional, nation-bounded aspects. On the other hand, the contents emphasized more by the Colombian curriculum are more related to *civil education*, focusing on values and skills relevant to participation in the community.

What Students Reveal about Citizenship Attitudes and Practices

The following sections present the weighed likelihood estimations scores (WLE) of a set of attitudes and practices that the students revealed in the ICCS 2009 study. These results were contrasted with the issues that were either emphasized or missing in each country's curricular guidelines. The aim was to seek topics that revealed any alignment between what the students

said and the emphases they had encountered in the official curricula. Even though we cannot argue for a causal relationship between curricular guidelines and the students' responses, this analysis does, nonetheless, open up the possibility of discussing some hypotheses and policy considerations.

Peaceful coexistence. Top of Figure 4 shows the WLE scores of the Latin American students related to peaceful coexistence at school. When comparing curricula and students' responses, a few notable issues arise. On the one hand, only the curriculum of Guatemala gives considerable attention to issues concerning peaceful coexistence (see Table 3), and it is also the country that show the lowest levels on the scale that measures attitudes towards the use of violence. This low level means that the students reported significantly less agreement with violent attitudes. On the other hand, Mexico is the country with the least coverage of such contents in its curriculum, and it also reports scores that show a level of agreement significantly higher than the mean. In addition, in Latin America, Mexican students show the lowest level of empathy towards their classmates.

Authoritarianism. Unlike peaceful coexistence, authoritarianism is not considered in depth in any of the reviewed curricula, even though the recent history of these nations has not been absent of such regimes; in fact, only Guatemala and Paraguay mention authoritarianism as a risk for democracy in their primary curricula. It is worth mentioning that the Dominican Republic showed by far the highest level of agreement with statements supporting authoritarian practices in the government under certain circumstances[4] (see Figure 4), and it had no contents referring to this issue in the primary official curriculum.

Current and future civic participation. Figure 4 also reports the WLE scores that contain information about future political participation and current participation in the community, as reported by students from each country. Chilean students report the lowest levels of both civic participation in the community and future political participation; moreover, until the eighth grade, we found no contents referring to voting, forms of representation, or participation in political actions in Chile's official curricular documents. On the other extreme, Dominican

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[4] For more details about the questions used for the construction of this and the others WLE scores see the ICCS 2009 Latin American Report (Schulz, Ainley, Friedman, & Lietz, 2011) and the ICCS 2009 international report (Schulz et al., 2010).

Republic students showed the highest levels of future political participation and civic participation in the community; this situation is in line with the wide coverage of contents and objectives referring to these issues in the official documents examined, as the Dominican Republic is the country with the greatest proportion of contents dedicated to the "citizens and political participation" domain.

National and regional identity. Mexican students showed a significantly lower sense of Latin American identity and, similarly, they are not offered any contents concerning this issue in their curriculum. The Colombian case is different; here, the official documents do not cover issues related to Latin American identity either, and the coverage of contents in the domain of national and regional identity was very scarce, but students showed high levels of Latin American identity and a higher level of positive attitudes towards their country. It is also worth mentioning the case of Guatemala, which shows coherence between the curriculum and students' attitudes, having the highest coverage of contents in this domain (Tables 2 and 3) and high student scores.

Corruption and accountability. Finally, it is interesting to note that the Dominican Republic is the only Latin American country in which students generally agree with corrupt practices in the government (Figure 4). This country has no contents concerning accountability in its curriculum, either in primary or in secondary school.

Conclusions

This research highlights the importance of changing or accentuating certain curricular orientations in the countries reviewed, and also provides relevant information that may help teachers and schools consider these issues in their daily routines. It also contributes to our understanding of the particularities of Latin America in this arena, revealing the main topics within citizenship education considered in Latin American educational systems. There is no clear pattern of contents or attitudes common to all Latin American countries; in fact, clear differences were found concerning students' attitudes and practices and in each nation's curricular documents.

We do not claim that including the content found to be missing from the curricular documents would solve the problems and change students' perceptions. Nonetheless, it is important to pay

11

attention to these critical issues by promoting programs for curricular change and preparing teachers to teach and implement these contents from the very beginning of their careers.

Finally, it is important to affirm the need for more research on classroom practices, especially focusing on the topics highlighted by this study, to gain a more complete view of these aspects, all the while considering the limitations of looking at the intended curriculum (official documents) and not that which is actually implemented.

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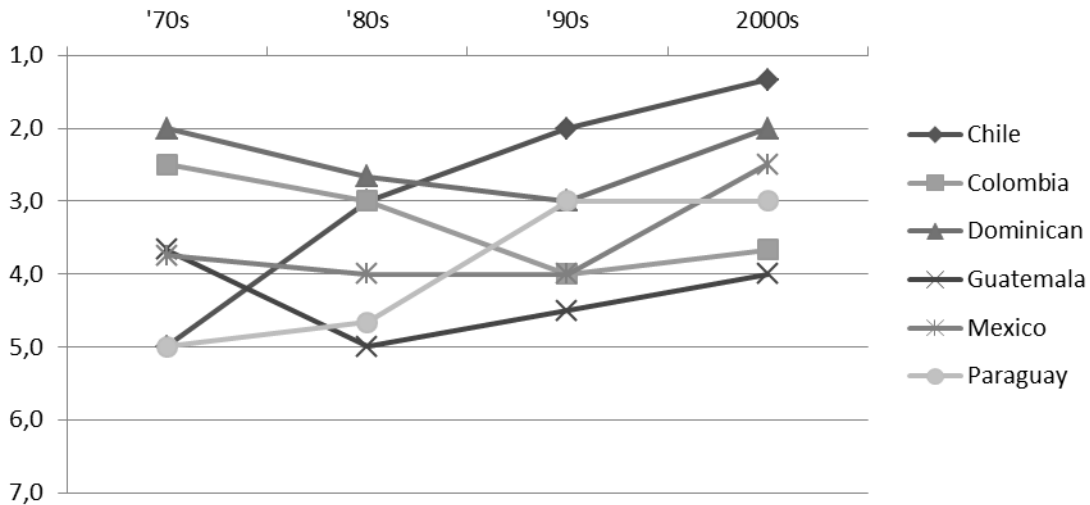
Figure 1. Political Rights Index, Freedom House.
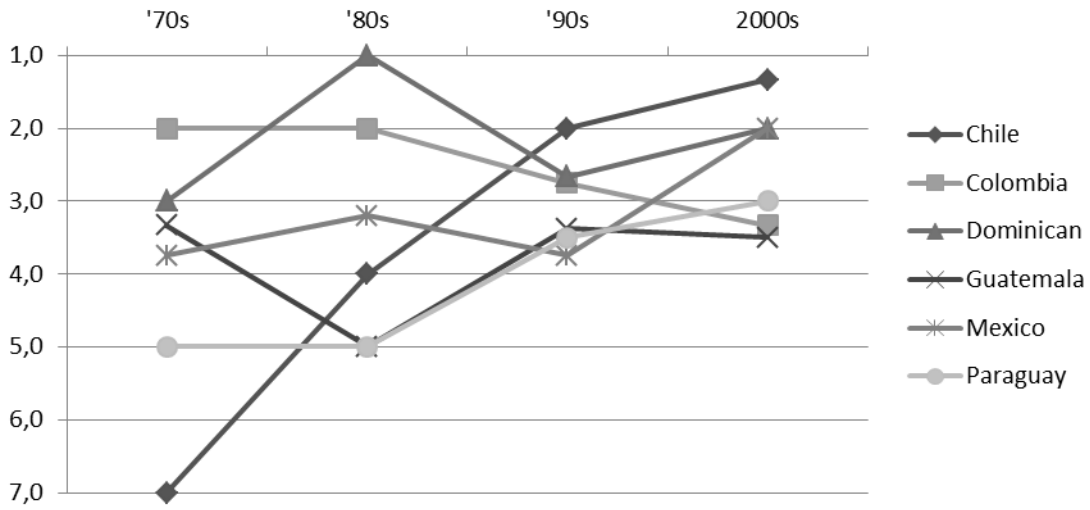
Note: Information is only available from 1972 onwards.

Figure 2. Civil Liberties Index, Freedom House.

Note: Information is only available from 1972 onwards.

Table 1. Citizenship Education Contents by Domain.

I. Civic values and principles	28. National government (federal) and regional (states)
1. Freedom	29. Constitution, law, norm, legality, culture of legality
2. Equity	30. Judicial system, penal system, police
3 Social cohesion	31. Armed forces
4. Common welfare	32. Political organizations in a democratic society: political parties
5. Human rights	33. Elections, electoral system, electoral participation
6. Social justice	34. Gremial or civil society organizations, social movements, unions, NGOs
7. Solidarity	35. Risks to democracy: authoritarianism, patronage, populism, nepotism, press monopolies, justice control, organized crime
8. Equality	
9. Diversity	
10. Tolerance	
11. Pluralism	
12. Democracy	
II. Citizens and democratic participation	***IV. Regional and national identity***
13. Citizens' rights	36. National identity
14. Responsibilities and obligations of the citizen	37. Group identities (ethnic, regional, occupational, etc.)
15. Voting (right, duty, responsibility)	38. Multiculturalism, stereotypes: race and gender prejudice
16. Representation – kinds of representations	39. Discrimination, exclusion
17. Deliberation	40. Patriotism
18. Negotiation and accomplishment of agreements	41. Nationalism
19. Participation and decision making: the majority and respect for minorities	42. Latin American identity
20. Critical reflection skills for active citizenship	43. Cosmopolitism
21. Participation in the school government and/or collective social support projects	***V. Peaceful coexistence***
22. Participation in political activities (debates, demonstrations, political parties)	44. Illegitimate uses of force, conditions for legitimate uses of force by the state
23. Accountability	45. Coexistence: value, objectives, characteristics
III. Institutions	46. Pacific and negotiated conflict resolution
24. The State	47. Coexistence skills
25. Rule of law	***VI. Macro context***
26. Power by branches in democratic governments (judiciary, legislative, and executive)	48. The economy and work
27. Government: public administration, institutions, civil services for the community	49. Sustainable development, environment
	50. Globalization

Categories retrieved from Cox (2010), made in the context of the ICCS evaluation, the framework of the regional model SREDECC, and the primary and secondary official documents from Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, México, Paraguay, and Dominican Republic Educational Ministries.

Table 2. Column Profile by Domain (Proportion of Quotes by Country).

|	Colombia	Chile	Guatemala	Mexico	Paraguay	Dominican Republic	**Mass**
Civic values and principles	24.0%	27.4% ▲	15.9% ▼	18.1%	23.3%	25% △	**19.1%**
Citizens and democratic participation	23.1% △	15.1%	16.1%	18.6%	15.1%	23.1% △	**17.7%**
Institutions	19.2%	11.1% ▼	14.8% ▼	21.0% ▲	24.4% ▲	18.3%	**17.1%**
Regional and national identity	14.4% ▼	20.5%	21.2% ▲	15.2% ▼	17.4%	17.3%	**18.9%**
Peaceful coexistence	15.4%	6.8% ▼	13.7%	11.0%	3.5% ▼	10.6%	**11.9%**
Macro context	3.8% ▼	19.2%	18.2% ▲	16.2%	16.3%	5.8% ▼	**15.3%**

▲	Proportion significantly higher than column and row profile mass
△	Proportion significantly higher than column or row profile mass
▽	Proportion significantly lower than column or row profile mass
▼	Proportion significantly lower than both column and row profile mass

Table 3. Row Profile by Domain (Proportion of Quotes by Domain).

|	Colombia	Chile	Guatemala	Mexico	Paraguay	Dominican Republic
Civic values and principles	11.3%	9.0% ▲	41.9% ▼	17.1%	9.0%	11.7%
Citizens and democratic participation	11.7%	5.4%	45.9%	19.0%	6.3%	11.7%
Institutions	10.1%	4.0% ▼	43.7% ▼	22.1% ▲	10.6% ▲	9.5%
Regional and national identity	6.8% ▼	6.8%	56.6% ▲	14.6% ▼	6.8%	8.2%
Peaceful coexistence	11.6%	3.6% ▼	58.0% △	16.7%	2.2% ▼	8.0%
Macro context	2.2% ▼	7.9%	59.6% ▲	19.1%	7.9%	3.4% ▼
Mass	**9.0%**	**6.3%**	**50.3%**	**18.1%**	**7.4%**	**9.0%**

▲	Proportion significantly higher than column and row profile mass
△	Proportion significantly higher than column or row profile mass
▽	Proportion significantly lower than column or row profile mass
▼	Proportion significantly lower than both column and row profile mass

Figure 3. Correspondence analysis, relationship between citizenship contents and primary national curricula.
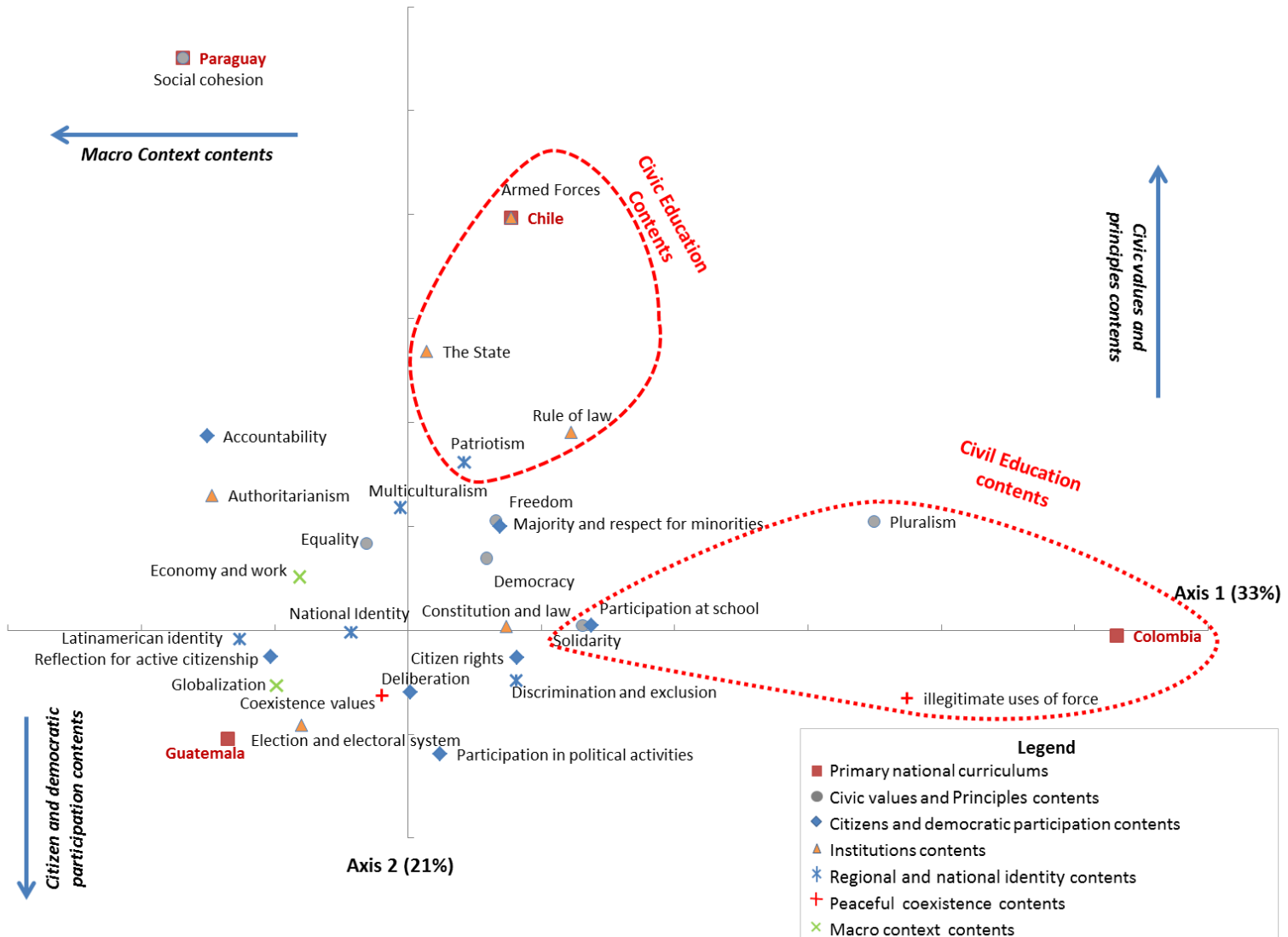
Note: Mexico and Dominican Republic curricula were removed, along with contents with below-average contribution to both axes.

Figure 4. Weighed likelihood estimations scores (WLE) of students' attitudes and practices (ICCS study).
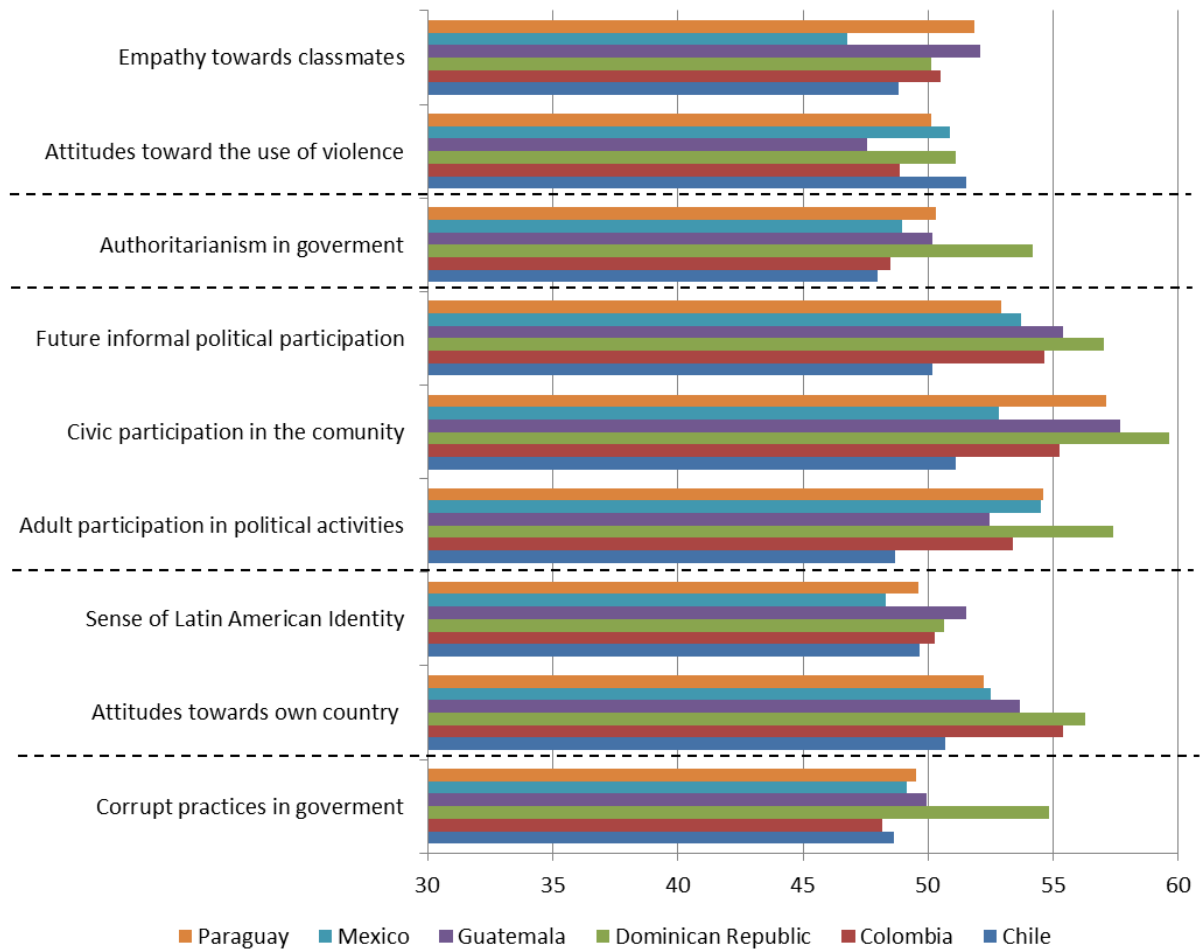
* The WLE scores were constructed to have ICCS average centered in 50.