



Citizenship Education at School in Europe

Country Reports



CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT SCHOOL IN EUROPE

MALTA

NATIONAL DESCRIPTION – 2004/05

The national contributions formed the basis for the comparative study on the teaching of citizenship education at school in Europe. Each contribution has exactly the same structure with seven main sections entitled as follows:

- 1) Citizenship and Education Policy
- 2) Citizenship Education and the Curriculum
- 3) School Culture and Participation in Community Life
- 4) Evaluation
- 5) Teacher Competencies and Support
- 6) The European/International Dimension of Citizenship Education
- 7) Current Debates and Reforms

Contributions are available in English and, in the case of some countries, in French.

1. CITIZENSHIP AND EDUCATION POLICY

1.1. The concept of 'responsible citizenship'

Nationally, the term 'responsible citizenship' is understood as a 'status' and a 'role'.

As a social status, citizenship implies being a member of Maltese society, in which citizens are entitled to share equal rights and responsibilities. Entitlement brings with it a sense of loyalty to one's country. Citizenship as a status is guaranteed by the constitution of the Republic of Malta [Article 23(1) and (2)].

Understood as a role, citizenship involves social identity as an expression of social life in the political community which endows individual citizens with the practice of fundamental (civil) rights and functional (political and social) rights. Articles 33 to 48 in the Maltese constitution provide the safeguarding framework for these rights.

The relevant term for citizenship in Maltese language is *cittadinanza* inasmuch as it refers to citizenship as a status, and *hajja civika* or *tkun cittadin responsabbli* in terms of citizenship roles and functions.

Change and development in contemporary society, marked particularly by the process of cultural interdependence and globalisation, are extending the notion of citizenship. Citizenship is no longer defined in its former national or territorial sense. Contemporary Maltese society is grappling with such a complex notion. Following developments in Europe, the teaching and learning process in the Maltese educational system is adopting a European and global identity of citizenship in view of an expanding multicultural context in Europe and the world. While acknowledging the importance of political citizenship based on knowledge of rights and political institutions, the position in Malta is to promote active and participatory citizenship among Maltese students.

1.2. Main orientations of education policy

Education has become mandatory in Malta by the 1947 legislation on compulsory education for all children and young people aged between 6 and 14, and citizenship education, in one form or another, has been part of the school programme since that time.

The main orientations concerning active and participatory citizenship are clearly spelled out in the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) (2000). The National Curriculum, as the official legal document for the school system in Malta, sets the development of citizens and a democratic environment as one of its key objectives. Responsible citizens are described as members of society who 'acquire knowledge of the constitution [...] and of citizens' rights and duties, exercise the skills of critical acumen and investigation, and develop attitudes of defence of democracy, respect for laws, and respect for the basic rights of all citizens' (Objective 2, pp. 48-49). Knowledge, skills and attitudes nourishing education in citizenship provide the path towards the strengthening of civic values underpinning democratic life.

Principles and objectives in the National Curriculum reflect provisions in the 1988 Education Act, which sets the pace for the creation of democratic structures in schools and the fostering of core civic competencies and values.

Except for the provisos in the National Curriculum, an official policy statement on citizenship education in Maltese schools has not yet been formulated. However, the review exercise of the school syllabus with a brief to include a citizenship component, the creation of the post of Education Officer for Values and Democracy Education within the Department of Student Services and International Relations, the training sessions for heads of primary and secondary schools and student members of students' councils, together with a more consistent drive for a democratic school ethos, are in themselves an indication that citizenship education is high on the national education agenda.

2. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND THE CURRICULUM

Popularly known as 'civics' with pupils, teachers and parents, civic education included such aspects as learning table manners, road safety, personal hygiene, healthy eating habits and education in how to obey and conform to authority. In the 70s, citizenship education as an important aspect of civics as a separate subject, began to gain grounds with short after-school courses for teachers and a greater emphasis in the school syllabus. This perspective was subsequently broadened with the inclusion of human rights education. By 1987, civics, citizenship and human rights education were integrated into the social studies syllabus where the emphasis, however, was on the study of society and the institutions within it. The Education Act of 1988, which was the prime mover of the national curricula of 1989 and 1990 for Maltese primary, secondary and post-secondary schools, formalised the teaching and learning of citizenship values and civic competencies, mostly through learning experiences in social studies. During the late 90s, Maltese education followed closely the developments in the Education for Democratic Citizenship programmes at the European level, until education in citizenship and democracy reached a maturity stage so as to become one of the 12 fundamental objectives of the 2000 National Minimum Curriculum.

Education in citizenship is generally considered as a widely embracing concept to include democracy education, human rights education, education in peace and non-violence, ecological responsibility and action, global and development education, and equity in education within the broader perspective of social justice.

2.1. Approaches

The cross-curricular approach provides for the infusion of civic values and social skills in the different subjects. Education in citizenship is not treated as a separate subject but as a learning experience within other curricular areas. Programmes of study are still centrally prescribed, with only a few exceptions in the less academically oriented schools. Teachers are expected to cover the citizenship component in their respective subjects.

2.2. Aims and content

Directed specifically towards the 'development of citizenship attitudes and skills within a democratic environment', Objective 2 of the National Curriculum identifies those learning experiences through which pupils and students are enabled to:

acquire knowledge of:

- the concept of democracy with reference to the meaning of democracy in the information age;
- the history of democracy;
- the history of parliamentary democracy in Malta;
- the constitution of Malta;
- democratic life in Malta, the country in general and particular localities;
- citizens' rights and duties;
- Malta's democratic institutions;
- modes of participation in the country's democratic life;
- the emergence of interest groups;
- lobbying in a democratic contest;

develop skills in:

- active participation in the classroom and school politics;
- critical acumen and investigation;
- discussion, engagement in dialogue, debate, organisation and group work;
- working in the community;

cherish dispositions and attitudes of:

- appreciation of the importance of a democratic environment;
- criticism of all that occurs within a democratic environment;
- defence of democracy within the country;
- respect for the country's constitution and laws;
- respect for the country's institutions and authorities at all levels;
- respect for the country's cultural differences and diversity;
- respect for the basic rights of all citizens.

2.3. Competencies to be acquired

Competencies as proposed by the National Curriculum and as translated into school syllabuses can be summarised into the key skill categories of:

- critical listening, communication and debate;
- organising, planning and working with others;
- decision making and action leading to change.

3. SCHOOL CULTURE AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LIFE

3.1. Daily life at school

Schools in Malta are contributing to a safe, democratic and respectful learning environment by involving pupils, students, teachers and parents in class committees, students' councils and school councils.

3.2. Participatory initiatives in schools

3.2.1. Pupil participation

All classes in both primary and secondary schools have the class prefect system. Very few primary schools have a pupils' council, while nearly all secondary schools and post-secondary institutions have a students' council. School councils in every state and educational institution are mandatory by the 1988 Education Act.

The most recent activity was the drafting of a Students' Statute for Schools Without Violence, a Council of Europe initiative in citizenship and democracy education. Six girls' and boys' secondary schools have participated, with

Maltese students' submissions ranking among the best entries in Europe. Two students and a link teacher were subsequently invited by the Council of Europe for a prize-winners' gathering in Strasbourg, in July 2004. This was then followed by the participating schools voting electronically for the statute as submitted by the Council of Europe. Schools also took part in a one-day seminar for representatives of students' councils in secondary schools, following which two students and a teacher were invited to Italy for a workshop on school democracy.

3.2.2. Parental involvement

'At the community level, parents are among the most important partners in the educational process. Regarded as an important source of support for the curriculum, [parents can participate] in educational projects and research, which lead to an improvement in their children's educational services and curricular life.' (NMC., p. 44)

Through their voluntary services in school councils, parents are setting the right model of respect to learning and a sense of responsible behaviour. Acting as role models in the school community, parents develop in children the value of assuming responsibility for their own learning as well as a sense of commitment to social life, both within and outside school. Through parents' own initiative, other parents in the community are offered the opportunity of parental skills training programmes, with particular reference to ways of creating a democratic environment in the family based on effective communication, healthy relationship patterns and mutual understanding.

3.3. School participation in society

School participation in society takes place through joint initiatives with local councils in such areas as sports activities, upgrading of the environment around the school premises, plans for better traffic management to minimise risks for school children and school transport, and greater accessibility to the public library service in view of enhancing literacy among people in the locality.

Collaboration with environmental groups such as Nature Trust is leading to the setting up of eco-clubs and eco-schools, which work to promote an environment-friendly school ethos through better programmes for waste management at source and a greater appreciation of cultural heritage sites. Other joint projects with NGOs, like the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice and the Malta Branch of Amnesty International, drive students, teachers and parents to such activities as fundraising charity campaigns for groups at risk of social isolation, including the economically disadvantaged and refugees. Occasional visits to children's and old people's homes are accompanied by material and psychological support. Teachers and parents also help in facilitating literacy and numeracy support programmes for children and adults in educationally deprived areas around Malta. Channel 22 is an educational television medium by which schools are invited to participate in family education evening programmes. Community radio stations are still unpopular in Malta, but the few which exist often recruit the services of teachers and students in community building programmes.

Participation in activities directly linked to citizenship education include the celebration of Human and Children's Rights Days and the Global Education Week. Both events are celebrated by schools through specially designed morning assemblies, poster competitions, singing- and theatre-in-education programmes, poetry performances, costume parades illustrating different cultural characteristics, and joint marathon marches with posters and slogans designed by students.

Schools also serve as community learning centres that cater for the education of adult members of the community. Programmes in basic literacy and numeracy skills are one example of the recognition of the importance of lifelong learning and of the school's concern with catering for the community's needs and interests. (NMC., p. 89)

'In a society that is increasingly becoming multicultural, the educational system should enable students to develop a sense of respect, cooperation and solidarity among cultures [...]. [It] should cultivate within students a sense of social justice and solidarity [...] by promoting the corresponding attitudes and readiness to act.' (NMC, 2000, pp. 24-25)

The educational process seeks to extend learning experiences beyond the confines of the school by encouraging students and teachers to commit themselves to life in their community. Community Service Learning (CLS) opportunities like the examples given above enhance citizens' sense of belonging to their community, promote pro-social behaviour, and give practical expression to the values of solidarity and moral responsibility – values which should sustain active and participatory citizenship.

Good practices in sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 are evidence of how citizenship education can be addressed through the formal, informal and non-formal curriculum. This is the policy which the Education Division in Malta is and will be working on.

4. EVALUATION

4.1. Pupil assessment

A system of assessment and evaluation of pupils' and students' education in citizenship is in place in Maltese schools. In both primary and secondary schools, formative assessment of group processes, participation in class discussions and school activities, commitment in community service learning, and investigative project work, is usually adopted by class teachers. Personal qualities such as leadership skills, respect for others and unprejudiced attitude to others' ideas, together with the skills of observation, inquiry and critical thinking, are assessed in the process of learning. Knowledge of democratic systems, institutions in society and human rights is assessed together with social skills in a summative way through formal paper-and-pencil tests. Summative assessment of the written and practical components of citizenship education, mainly in social studies, European studies and environmental studies, takes place at the secondary level. Although summative assessment procedures are still the prevalent means of assessment, good progress is being made in methods based on formative assessment and on combining both procedures.

The latest educational innovation is the production of level descriptors for all subjects in the curriculum. Level descriptors, for the humanities in particular, include learning standards which can also serve as assessment criteria for citizenship education at different levels of ability in the school experience of all learners. Learning experiences and outcomes concerning democracy and citizenship, as found in school syllabuses, are guided by standards set in level descriptors.

4.2. Evaluation of schools

A formal system of school evaluation and quality assurance of teaching and learning is not formally structured yet, although schools are gradually embarking on a system of internal self-evaluation through instruments like the School Development Plan (SDP) and Performance Management Programmes (PMP). Internal school evaluation will be complemented by external evaluation through school audit in a pilot programme with a sample of schools as from 2005. School evaluation is one of the hallmark initiatives of the Maltese education system in view of the demands of flexibility and accountability in the provision of the service.

Curriculum content, pedagogy and the general school culture of democratic citizenship are being continually monitored and supported. Evaluation of citizenship education is carried out by education officers during their supportive routine school visits. This also occurs during school activities marking special events, like the celebration of the Global Education Week in the third week of November, Human Rights Day (10 December), and the School Day of Peace and non-Violence (30 January). The underlying principle of these school activities is always the fostering of civic and democratic values. The present role of education officers is more supportive than inspectorial in nature. Principal Education Officers (PEO), with a team of specially appointed officials as interested stakeholders, will be responsible for external school evaluation when this is in place.

5. TEACHER COMPETENCIES AND SUPPORT

5.1 Teacher education

Teachers at primary and secondary schools have a regular appointment and a permanent teachers' warrant. All regular teachers at the primary and secondary level complete a four-year Bachelor's Honours Degree in Education (B.Ed. Hons.) at the University of Malta. Regular teachers at secondary schools can also be recruited from graduates who follow a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (P.G.C.E.) course to obtain their professional qualification. Both B.Ed. Hons. and P.G.C.E. students have a citizenship education component as part of their professional training. This provides them with the necessary knowledge of the democratic institutions in society, the skills of debating and critical thinking, and the dispositions of openness to the diversity of cultures, languages and beliefs in an effort to overcome biases. Drawing on their knowledge, skills and attitudes, professionally trained teachers are enabled to disseminate and promote the theory and practice of democratic citizenship. Pedagogical approaches to citizenship education are a compulsory unit in the B.Ed. (primary) course, while a citizenship education component is included in the PGCE Social Studies Methodology course.

In-service courses at the beginning and end of each scholastic year form an integral part of teachers' professional development. Emerging from an official agreement between the Education Division as the employer and the Malta Union of Teachers as the representative of the teaching grades, in-service courses are mandatory for all teachers.

In-service courses are complemented by regular professional development meetings at the school level, and by occasional participation in conferences, seminars and workshops locally and abroad, mostly within the Council of Europe framework of Teachers' In-Service Training Programmes. The Education Division seeks to reach also the non-professionally trained members of the staff, mainly through in-service courses and staff development meetings at school. The latter include a few temporarily employed teachers, supply teachers who are recruited in cases of subject shortages, and instructors.

Recurrent topics tackled in in-service courses and Council of Europe workshops include aspects of citizenship education such as human rights, global and development education, knowledge of political theories, and relationship, communication and self-assertive skills training.

5.2 Support measures

The newly created post of Education Officer for Democracy and Values Education, within the Department of Student Services and International Relations, is precisely to coordinate the implementation of curricular democratic principles and objectives in the teaching and learning process, to support democratic school structures, and to foster a democratic climate in the school, together with the school leadership team, members of the teaching staff, students and parents.

6. THE EUROPEAN/INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

In view of Malta's membership in the European Union, Maltese legislation has been harmonised with E.U. legislation. This should give Maltese citizens a surer base to enjoy political and social rights as European citizens. But the conception of European citizenship by the Maltese education system should always give rise mainly to an understanding of active and participatory citizenship.

6.1. Curriculum

Efforts to introduce the European dimension in citizenship have been consistent in the last twenty years of the Maltese education system, particularly through the learning of the European languages, social studies, history and European studies. Initiatives in this direction have gained deeper roots now that Malta has become a member state of the European Union. The developing notion of citizenship is emphasising the complementary aspects of national and European dimensions in citizenship in the context of European integration and a globalised world order.

In secondary education, **social studies** and **European studies** are showing the way forward towards the inclusion of the European dimension across all syllabuses, which will also adopt a broader world view.

Social studies cover the following thematic: rights and obligations of EU citizens in the areas of work, leisure, welfare, consumer behaviour, politics and the environment; nationalism and globalisation; national sovereignty and EU membership; Malta's role and contribution to international organisations; the natural, historical and social environment in Malta and Europe; and knowledge about cultural diversity in Europe and its evaluation.

European studies cover the following thematic: the European convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms; the European social charter; the role and functions of the European court of human rights; the rise and evolution of the welfare state in Europe; the role and functioning of the Council of Europe, CSCE, EFTA, EEA and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; the interdependence of economic sectors; economic blocs and institutions; international communication in trade and economic affairs; e-commerce; the cultural heritage in Europe as it is manifested in inventions, innovations, languages and the arts; and cultural heritage as an expression of national identities.

The curriculum of **history** in secondary education covers the following thematic: the birth of the nation-state in Europe; the history of European dictatorship in Italy, Germany, Spain and the USSR; the history of European nations between the world wars; the history of German unification; the cold war as an element in the integration process; the break-up of communism and the birth of independent states in eastern Europe; the creation of the Baltic states; and EU enlargement.

6.2. The wider school context

The authorities promote and support the organisation of the Europe at School project, under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. This project is another opportunity to promote student involvement in citizenship education. Through the Art and Essay-writing Competition and the Internet Award Scheme, students are encouraged to reflect on citizenship themes and issues as a way of developing civic competencies. The project aims at helping young Europeans learn and live as active citizens in a culturally diverse and integrated Europe.

6.3. Teacher education

The European dimension is included in initial teacher education for prospective social studies teachers (secondary education). It is also included in teacher training for prospective primary education teachers, in courses dealing with citizenship education, which are not compulsory. The European dimension is furthermore an integral part of in-service training, particularly in the case of teachers in European studies.

The European dimension includes information about the concept, status and role of the European citizen; the democratic ideal and values of Europe; information about learning approaches to multiculturalism in Europe; basic skills in initiating and participating in European Youth Exchange Programmes; and pedagogical approaches to cultural understanding among European youth. Student teachers and serving teachers are encouraged to include the European dimension in all subjects and subject areas.

6.4. Support measures

Support measures for teachers related to the European dimension include the updated syllabuses with a European dimension component, supply of learning resources and teacher participation in seminars and conferences on European policies on educational developments.

7. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

Citizenship education is currently a topical subject in both the educational and political sphere.

Recent reforms emerging from this debate include:

- the setting up of the Maltese National Commission for UNESCO, which embarks on citizenship education initiatives. The latest in its series of activities is the CD-rom publication entitled *The National Library of Malta: An Interactive Guide to the Bibliotheca*, which should prove to be an invaluable educational tool to discover the treasures of the National Library for Maltese citizens and other visitors to the island, as well as the publication of an interactive learning pack for history teachers and students;
- the appointment of a National Coordinator for the Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) project of the Council of Europe;
- the setting up of the National Curriculum Focus Group on School Democracy as an interface for curriculum development and the implementation of aspects of citizen education.

The Education Division forms part of an inter-ministerial committee set up to work on a programme of activities marking the European Year of Citizenship (2005). The programme targets both schools and the community so that formal and non-formal education will be involved as key role players.

The current political and educational discussion is based on a concept of citizenship which embraces the values of shared responsibility, solidarity and participation in a multicultural European and world order. In this scenario, Maltese citizenship has assumed a new status where rights and duties are concerned, and a new role where active participation is a key factor. This kind of citizenship needs to be emphasised with learners at all levels of education, since it has a vital role in educating young people in the exercise of human rights, solidarity and daily living in the light of the rule of law. In this way, education will strengthen the fundamental pillars of citizenship in an increasingly integrated Europe.