

Chapter 21

Education for Citizenship to Integrate the Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s, when a concern for education for citizenship began to manifest, curricula plans began to be implemented in various countries which had detected that the knowledge and skills being taught in schools were not relevant to young people's lives nor the complex problems of the modern world. In this sense, education for citizenship became a concept that could integrate the different educational purposes to converge in an emancipatory education focused on the student. However, this approach required a method to select and organize the content that conformed to new educational aims, and this led to a new debate on curriculum integration.

THE DEBATE ON THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The debate regarding an integrated curriculum has a long didactic tradition and has been approached from a variety of fields. Integration has been sought through different approaches: topics or themes, daily life problems, key concepts, historical stages, specific geographical spaces, work projects, etc. Educational initiatives focusing on working with problems and the methodological prominence of students have had a long history. In this regard, important milestones along this path can be pointed out (Beane, 2005). Perhaps we need to go as far back as the Enlightenment, as it seems that the seed can be found in Rousseau or in Pestalozzi and their intuitive teachings which sought to educate further than mere rhetorical memorization (Cañal, 1999). In the 19th century, initiatives to integrate the curriculum were put forward, such as one by Herbert Spencer (1870), who -in consonance with the evolutionism of the time- suggested that subjects be categorised into “cultural periods”, where lower levels of schooling would be identified with the earlier stages of the history of civilization.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7110-0.ch021

Jumping forward to the 20th century, Dewey emphasised a teaching that promoted the development of reflective thinking applied to real-life problems in society as a way of learning about participation in democracy. Also of note are Kilpatrick's *Project Method*, and Decroly's *Centers of Interest* (1932; ed. org. 1925). Moving closer to today -and with a significant influence on recent projects- we continue to find integrated curriculum initiatives, such as the *Humanities Curriculum Project* (HCP), associated with the "teacher as a researcher" model and promoted by L. Stenhouse (1970), and the *Man: A Course of Study* (M.A.C.O.S), developed by J. Bruner (1965) and collaborators, who put forward the idea of a "spiral curriculum". There is also the study by "themes" (Henry, 1994), Efland's (1995) idea of the "network curriculum" and current formulations of "work projects" (Hernández, 2002), among others.

The term "integrated curriculum" is applied generally to curricular initiatives that are not organised into disciplines, where positions that are more or less distant to the disciplinary organization in that group can exist (Calvo & Cascante, 1999). One of the modalities of integration suggested is built on the possibility of more comprehensive schooling through different disciplinary sources. This multidisciplinary would be based on coordinating all disciplines to ensure work is oriented towards the same question or object of study, but without renouncing the logic and autonomy of each discipline.

One further step could be what is known as interdisciplinarity, where a common problem (assumed as such by all disciplines) is defined, work process stages are established and conclusions are drawn from the problem being resolved. This formula has given rise to irregular practical contributions, with some ambiguity and confusion in the delimitation between interdisciplinarity and integration, as, ultimately, contributions from the different disciplines will have their own logic and be added to the issue rather than integrated into it. Finally, transdisciplinarity aims to transcend the framework of disciplines by basing itself on the concepts and processes of knowledge development that are common to all the disciplines involved.

Transversality includes the innovative tradition of school being to "prepare students for life", i.e. in the history of progressive education the purpose of school is to teach students how to live (Bolívar, 1996, p.24). This is more necessary today than it ever has been: as the socialising capacity of the family unit is weakened and replaced by media, school takes on new meaning and value, and transversal issues could compensate for the lack of educating for citizenship (Tedesco, 1995). In practice however, what happens is that transversal content -if even considered- is included as an addition to existing disciplinary content with little academic value. Many initiatives considered to be transversal fall into a "rag bag" of initiatives when presented in the classroom, where any content that seems interesting is given, or they end up being appendices added to certain subjects without ever actually being absorbed by the curriculum.

The incorporation of transversal issues into the educational system has been seen as an opportunity to deepen an alternative approach. For some authors (Yus, 1998a), transversal themes represent an opportunity to move towards an education model that is more in line with the new society that is emerging. Conversely, so-called "global education", assumed as an educational model, could lead to overcoming disciplinary approaches and the "simple" conception of transversality (Yus, 1998b).¹

There is a common link running through all these initiatives: the idea of "teaching students to research using problems related to real-life situations" (Hernández, 1997, p.34). This implies not limiting the curriculum to traditional school content, but also using everyday knowledge so students can associate school with the real life in which they grow and learn (Delval, 2000). Integrated school knowledge has an organizational structure that is different from a "thematic" structure, the references for its formation are diverse and associated with reality, and this consequently requires a didactic method in line with that which is taught.

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