



La experiencia docente, el plan de estudios y los valores democráticos en España¹

Teaching Experience, the Curriculum, and Democratic Values in Spain

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Resumen:

La formación de ciudadanos para la democracia ha sido un asunto abordado en la literatura durante décadas. En este trabajo, se establece como objetivo conocer las problemáticas que el maestro ha tenido en su quehacer docente para ser un modelo cívico de comportamiento, influidas por el marco ideológico y curricular que ha originado las sucesivas reformas educativas en España desde la Ley General de Educación de 1970. Para ello, se desarrolla un estudio de caso múltiple, realizando entrevistas con profundidad a nueve docentes jubilados. Tras el análisis, los resultados ponen de manifiesto la percepción de las reformas curriculares como poco arriesgadas, lo que aumenta la influencia de un currículo oculto condicionado por un contexto sociocultural con déficits democráticos.

Palabras clave:

Democracia; docente; España; legislación; contexto cultural.

Abstract:

The issue of educating citizens for democracy has been widely discussed in the literature for decades. This study aims to examine the difficulties teachers have faced in their professional practice when attempting to act as models of civic behaviour within the ideological and curricular framework shaped by successive educational reforms in Spain since the 1970 General Education Act. To this end, a multiple case study was conducted through in-depth interviews with nine retired teachers. The results indicate that these curricular reforms are perceived as insufficiently ambitious, thereby increasing the influence of a hidden curriculum shaped by a socio-cultural context marked by democratic shortcomings.

Key words:

Democracy; teacher; Spain; legislation; cultural context.

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Résumé:

La formation des citoyens à la démocratie est une question abordée dans la littérature depuis des décennies. L'objectif de cet article est d'identifier les problèmes rencontrés par les enseignants dans leur travail d'enseignement afin d'être un modèle de rôle civique, influencé par le cadre idéologique et curriculaire qui a donné lieu aux réformes éducatives successives en Espagne depuis la loi sur l'éducation générale de 1970. À cette fin, une étude de cas multiples est réalisée en menant des entretiens approfondis avec neuf enseignants à la retraite. Après analyse, les résultats révèlent que les réformes curriculaires sont perçues comme peu risquées, ce qui accroît l'influence d'un curriculum caché conditionné par un contexte socioculturel marqué par des déficits démocratiques.

Mots clés:

Démocratie; enseignant; Espagne; législation; contexte culturel; contexte culturel; Espagne

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Introduction

Schools and the education system have a reciprocal relationship with culture. Schools are embedded in societal structures, norms, and values, while also developing their own internal school culture (Depaepe & Simón, 1995). These aspects are crucial for democratic development within and beyond schools, as education's primary function is to cultivate active citizens for democratic participation (Bolívar, 2008). This can be viewed socio-culturally, focusing on social interaction, or politically-legally-academically, emphasizing knowledge of democratic procedures (Apple & Beane, 1999).

Feu et al. (2017) highlight the curriculum's role in fostering democracy. The curriculum defines learning components and standards, shaping both an educational and societal model (socio-cultural aspect) and developing democratic content (political-legal aspect). It's a practice among society, teachers, and students within legal and cultural frameworks, generating values and interpretations implicit in education (Renés, 2018; Torres, 1995). Achieving civic behavior requires a learning model based on Vygotsky's sociocultural constructivism (1978), emphasizing active, participatory learning for democratic integration (Johnson & Johnson, 2018). This demands teachers with analytical, reflective, and democratically open perspectives (Brady, 2020), fostering a respected democratic school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016), align-

ning with the humanist motivation of integral education (Molina-Pérez y Pulido-Montes, 2024).

Nevertheless, societal changes necessitate school transformation, often starting with legislation but needing time to impact school culture (López, 2013), especially when school practices contradict societal citizenship ideals.

This research briefly considers Spanish legislative changes as a framework for educational shifts. In Spain, the legislative process of school configuration, marked by numerous reforms with inconsistent outcomes (Cuñat-Roldán & Cuñat-Giménez, 2022), is influenced by religion's role, partly explaining the curriculum and its impact on teachers.

Reflection on schools as spaces for democratic values must acknowledge limitations within a traditionalist context (LGE, 1970), despite early inclusions of equal opportunity (Milito & Groves, 2013). The 1978 Constitution and the 1979 concordat cemented religious education's role, further defined by subsequent laws (LOECE, 1980; LODE, 1985). Later laws (LOGSE, 1990; LOE, 2006) emphasized democratic education, including "Education for Citizenship" while navigating religion's place. Neoliberal approaches (LOCE, 2002; LOMCE, 2013) further shaped the cultural context for democratic citizenship development. The role of curricula and teachers must be understood within this context of cultural and social division.

Theoretical background and research objectives

The literature on the relationship between education, democracy, and citizenship is extensive. Works such as Adams (2000), Apple (2019), Belavi and Murillo (2020), Feu et al. (2017), Fielding (2012), Gajardo and Torreggo (2021), García and López (2014), Mejía-Rodríguez (2024), Pezoa-Carrasco and Muñoz-Zamora (2022), Straume (2016), Welsh and Saphiqua (2018), and Woods and Woods (2012) are particularly relevant. Furthermore, important literature connects education with the development of civic-democratic behaviors, shared responsibility, and social justice, including the works of Bisquerra (2008), Hidalgo-Zurita and Robles-Zurita (2020), Martínez et al. (2023), Sarramona (1993), and Simó et al. (2016).

Nevertheless, research on teachers' perspectives on citizenship and democracy is scarce. Relevant contributions include: Almeyda and Jimé-

nez (2020), Astaíza-Martínez et al. (2019), Bambozzi et al. (2016), Belavi et al. (2021), Estellés (2017), García (2017), Kreuger and Ramos (2017), Marolla et al. (2022), Martínez et al. (2022), Pineda et al. (2020), Puin et al. (2021), and Rico y Ponce (2024).

Within the conceptual and legislative context, the objective of this article is to learn about the problems teachers have encountered in their teaching work to be models of civic behavior since the LGE of 1970, based on their testimony as an expression of the hidden curriculum. To this end, two secondary objectives are specified:

- (1) To identify the problems associated with the configuration of the school curriculum and its ideological support.
- (2) To identify the difficulties related to teacher training and attitude as influencing the hidden curriculum.

Methodology

Method

In the context of a constructivist paradigm, associated with the examination of socially constructed realities and a qualitative methodology (Martínez et al., 2014), a case study (Martín, 2011) is employed as research method, prioritizing the voices of the participants. Specifically, an evaluative and inclusive multiple case study is carried out (Martín, 2011), which involves description, explanation and judgement regarding the object under study, and the recognition of sub-units within the main theme. Individual interviews are used as a research technique.

Participants

This research involved a non-probabilistic, opinionated sample (Bisquerra, 2004). The conditions for choosing the participants were that (1) they had worked in basic education, (2) they were retired from professional practice and had a large number of years of experience and (3) their profiles were diverse (training, speciality, involvement or not in management, etc.).

Given the importance of the profiles of the teachers for the interpretation of the research results, Table 1 includes some key data on the participants.

Table 1

Description of the participants.

Participant	Details
Participant 1 (P1)	Woman. She worked as a teacher and counsellor. In her 45-year career, she has alternated between classroom teaching and professional secondments. Trainer of trainers.
Participant 2 (P2)	Man. He has developed his professional career since the 1980s, in private and public institutions. He has worked in some twenty destinations.
Participant 3 (P3)	Woman. She studied in the 1970s. At the age of 20, she began to work in a non-democratic context. Teaching in different subjects and at different stages.
Participant 4 (P4)	Woman. She enrolled in the Spanish education system after being the daughter of emigrants in France. She studied to be a teacher and started working in 1977. 38 years of teaching experience.
Participant 5 (P5)	Man. He studied Education in Alicante, starting to work in 1971, in a Patronato school. Later, he moved to a public school, with experience in all the current stage of Primary Education and the seventh and eighth years of General Basic Education (EGB).
Participant 6 (P6)	Man. He studied Education in Alicante, in 1983. Afterwards, he studied the Diploma in Social Sciences, Pedagogy and Doctorate. He worked at different stages and centres, as well as on secondment at the Institute of Education Sciences (ICE). He joined the University.
Participant 7 (P7)	Woman. She studied Education, Pedagogy and Socio-community Intervention. She was on secondment to different organs in the field of education. She is involved in the drafting of different educational laws, including the LOMLOE.
Participant 8 (P8)	Woman. She studied Education and Fine Arts. She has a long professional career. Since her retirement, 15 years ago, she has been involved in education through artistic-educational projects.
Participant 9 (P9)	Man. He studied Education and Geography and History. 43 years of teaching experience, with different fields of work (adult education, specific centre, inspectorate, university lecturer...). He participated in the Education White Paper of 1969 and was one of the inspirers of the programme of animation and promotion of adult education in the Valencian Community.

Instrument

This study used a single instrument: an in-depth interview protocol. A semi-structured approach allowed in-depth exploration of thematic sub-units, with questions about experiences, viewpoints, impressions, and knowledge. While protocol questions were initially guiding and open to reformulation, specific queries ensured research objectives were met, covering opening (training, career choice, experiences), development (understanding democratic identity, teaching model developed, curriculum's role in configuring democratic identities, methodology applied and its democratic influence, perceptions of teacher training and attitude, etc.), and closing aspects (the extent to which education is considered continuous or renewing regarding democratic identity).

The interview's validity was justified by the researcher's characteristics, question type, interview context, and participants.

Procedure

The main phases of the research (Martín, 2011) are briefly outlined in this section.

STEP 1. PREPARATORY PHASE

In this phase, partly reflected in the theoretical framework and participant description, the study's delimitation was followed by case selection. Initially, five teachers were chosen, with additional participants added during the research.

STEP 2. INTERACTIVE PHASE

- Entry into the field. After approval of the project by the Ethics Committee of the University of Alicante, the contact phase with potential participants began, via telephone or common intermediaries.
- Conducting the interviews. The interviews took place between January 2020 and March 2021. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes each and were recorded.

STEP 3. ANALYTICAL PHASE

Given the research's nature, a mixed deductive-inductive analysis was conducted (Huberman & Miles, 2000) using ATLAS.ti (7.5.18). The pro-

cess involved analyzing five initial interviews, then adding subsequent ones until data saturation. The cyclical analysis began with a general overview to locate segments for each meta-category, followed by a detailed analysis to identify specific categories. Table 2 presents these meta-categories and analysis categories.

Table 2

Meta-categories and categories of analysis

Mecategories	Categories
Curriculum	Identity construction
	Inclusion of democratic practices
	Educational equality
Teachers	Teacher training
	Teacher selection
	Teachers' attitudes

Acknowledging the inherent limitations of qualitative research, each researcher conducted the analysis individually, reformulating resulting categories based on a comparison of their approaches. This aimed to triangulate information for more robust results.

Results

The main results are described below, taking the specific objectives as a reference.

Curriculum-related problems

In relation to the first specific objective, the analysis is based on the categories "Identity construction", "Inclusion of democratic practices" and "Educational equality".

First, Spanish curricula are perceived by teachers as promoting a unique identity, which is contrary to the multiple identities of democratic societies.

On the one hand, the curriculum is described as an instrument of control:

Una administración que ha querido tener un poquito más controlados ha necesitado estos instrumentos por escrito³; (...) esas asignaturas que nos llevan a nuestra identidad (...) eso no está bien regulado, ni está ni se le espera. No, solo está regulado en aquellos sitios donde hay intereses y se adiestra⁴. [Part2]

On the other hand, this area is organised according to a patriotic discourse, as is exemplified by Participant 4, with her incorporation into the Spanish education system:

(...) Llegaba a España sin haber trabajado nunca la geografía. Nos hacían aprender todos los cabos, los golfos, los ríos, cosa que no se ha olvidado nunca. El mapamundi entero y la historia, claro, era la cultura. Y entonces yo no tenía ni idea⁵. [Part4]

Furthermore, this unified discourse is combined with curricular gaps, and narratives that are excluded from being part of the cultural heritage and which therefore restrict the students' capacity for critical thinking and historical perspective:

... el pueblo ignora su historia tiene mal futuro porque te pueden engañar, te tienen que contar cómo han sido los reyes que nos han precedido y cómo ha sido 40 años de un dictador y qué es este rollo de la política de los partidos⁶. [Part4] (...) en el sistema educativo español a la historia contemporánea no se llega nunca... en nuestro país, no lo estudió ni Dios⁷. [Part9]

Second, the analysis of the inclusion of democratic practices in the curriculum shows other difficulties inherent to design. One obstacle tea-

3 An administration that has tried to have a little more control has needed these written instruments.

4 Those subjects that guide us to our identity (...) this is not well regulated, nor is it, nor is it expected to be. No, it is only regulated in those places where there are interests and training is provided.

5 I arrived in Spain without ever having studied geography. They made us learn all the capes, the gulfs, the rivers, something that has never been forgotten. The whole world map and history, of course, was the culture. And at that time I had no idea.

6 ... people who ignore their history have a bad future because they can deceive you, they have to tell you about the kings who have preceded us and how it has been 40 years of a dictator and what this political party politics is all about.

7 In the Spanish education system, you never learn contemporary history... in our country, not even God studied it.

chers noted was its length, which limits non-prescriptive practices: “Hi ha molts condicionants, evidentment que el currículum, sobretot a Primària (...) sobrecarregat de continguts”⁸ [Part6], but with the the absence of values as an axial, not circumstantial, element:

(...) los programas renovados incorporaron al curriculum escolar una serie de materias entonces quedaban de maravilla (...) eran pompones bonitos en una base instrumental (...) la escuela en este país siempre es leer, escribir y contar. Eso tiene que hacerse en la escuela, y más cosas también⁹. [Part9]

(...) no es que solo sea un currículum instrumentalista y tecnicista, sino que es, a veces, disperso y denostado, porque un currículum configurado el estilo clásico pues tiene una coherencia, pero cuando uno no sabe qué incorporar, es que ya no sabe dónde está¹⁰. [Part9]

If the unique discourse and the difficulty of developing democratic practices are identified as problems, the social division caused by the curriculum is no less so, both for organisational and curricular planning reasons, as well as for internal issues concerning the subjects themselves.

Among the former, the use of curricular elements for the purposes of integration that ultimately devalue the teaching as a whole stand out:

[Part5] Luego, vinieron también los mínimos (...) y sube la integración. Pero claro (...) estamos haciendo tontos también. Luego aparecen las escuelas famosas, de periodo especial, que llevaban a los niños más retrasados, unas horas allí. Pero no, no, no¹¹.

8 There are many determinants. Obviously, the curriculum, especially in primary school (...) overloaded with content.

9 (...)the renewed programmes incorporated into the school curriculum a range of subjects that looked wonderful (...) they were pretty pompoms on an instrumental basis (...) school in this country is always about reading, writing and counting. That has to be done in school, and more things as well.

10 (...) It is not only an instrumentalist and technicist curriculum, but it is sometimes dispersed and reviled, because a curriculum configured in the classical style has a coherence, but when you don't know what to incorporate, you don't know where you are.

11 Then the minimum (...) and integration increased. But of course (...) we are also making fools of ourselves. Then the famous special period schools appeared, which took the most backward children there for a few hours. But no, no, no.

Classification by ability and socially reproduced gaps through school resource allocation were also guaranteed: “Había trampa porque los profes más bonicos estaban en su programa de inmersión y que eran los que venían de movimiento de renovación pedagógica”¹². [Part2]

Among the latter, the division comes from subjects such as religion. There is a majority of students who continue to take the subject and a minority who have no real alternative: “la religió... És un anacronisme. (...) però és assumpte latent, perquè si tenen la possibilitat d’escollir la religió catòlica ho fan, pero clar que passa amb els alumnes magrebís, no tenen opció”¹³ [Part6]; “aunque los padres no querían que el crucifijo estuviera en la pared porque ya la escuela era totalmente aconfesional, había profesores que no lo admitían y continuaban rezando”¹⁴ [Part5]. However, the influence of religion is not only a matter of the configuration of subjects, but also permeates the organisation of the school. Thus, in a secular school, “llevábamos a los niños que se pusieran la ceniza el Miércoles de Ceniza”¹⁵ [Part4]. This division is subsequently reproduced in the ideological debate associated with the incorporation of subjects that explicitly deal with values and democracy, which are, however, viewed as positive by teachers:

me parecía una cosa estupenda y maravillosa para conectar con las cabecitas de los críos en cosas que el currículo no nos permite porque no hay tiempo. Entonces, una vez a la semana teníamos ese debate, esa puesta en común de la idea de todo el mundo. Eso sí, la religión, no¹⁶. [Part4]

12 There was some cheating because the nicest teachers were in their immersion programme and they were those who came from the pedagogical renewal movement.

13 Religion is an anachronism. (...) it is a latent issue, because if they have the possibility to choose the Catholic religion, they do it, but of course, what about the Maghrebi pupils, they don't have a choice.

14 And then, although parents did not want the crucifix on the wall because the school was already totally non-confessional, there were teachers who did not accept it and continued to pray in class.

15 We used to take the children to put on the ashes on Ash Wednesday.

16 I thought it was a great and wonderful thing to connect with the little minds of the kids on things that the curriculum doesn't allow us to do because we don't have time. So, once a week we had that debate, that discussion, that sharing of everybody's ideas. Of course, religion, no.

Problems related to teacher training and attitudes

To achieve the second specific objective, the following categories will be considered: “Teacher training”, “Teacher selection” and “Teachers’ attitudes”.

Initial teacher training is a key problem. Teachers recognize their learning as memory-based, excessively disciplinary, and not very useful for value-promoting and participatory teaching, directly related to hidden curriculum messages: “En las universidades no estamos formando a esa persona crítica que resuelve casos profesionales que yo te decía... no, aún estamos formando, en muchos casos, con exámenes de formación memorística”¹⁷ [Part2]; “Entonces, me doy cuenta de que en magisterio sabíamos sistemas, ecuaciones de no sé cuántos, no sé qué, una barbaridad de matemáticas...pero no sabíamos enseñar a leer y escribir, pero nada”¹⁸ [Part3].

This situation is aggravated by a perception of non-evolution in the training of new graduates (“ahora estamos en un mal endémico, habría que plantearse muchas cosas de base”¹⁹ [Part9]), with proposals that are understood to be witty and far removed from the necessary theoretical training:

la ministra, la semana pasada, dice que los maestros tienen que hacer un año de prácticas. ¡Pero si yo ya lo hice en el año 67! (...) O sea, ¿los maestros van a construir la identidad y van a adquirir las habilidades profesionales en el año de prácticas que van a estar con los practicantes en la escuela?²⁰ [Part9]

This reality combines with the lack of recognition of teachers by the different levels of public administration. If the objective is not to train

17 In universities we are not training the critical person who solves professional situations that I was telling you about... no, we are still training, in many cases, with memorised training examinations.

18 So, I realise that in education we knew systems, equations of I don't know how many, I don't know what, a whole lot of mathematics... but we didn't know how to teach reading and writing, but nothing.

19 We are now in an endemic situation, many things need to be considered at the basic level.

20 The minister, last week, said that teachers have to do a year's internship. But I already did it in 67! (...) In short, are teachers going to build their identity and acquire professional skills in the year of internship that they are going to spend with the trainees in the school?

critical intellectuals, we will end up with technicians who apply closed programmes, say the participants. This is directly related to the selection of teaching staff:

Si queremos realmente transformar la escuela, los mejores son los que tenemos que elegir para que transformen la escuela (...) no el que no tiene otro remedio... los mejores. Y los mejores significa que tenemos que hacer atractiva la profesión con reconocimiento.²¹ [Part9]

Added to these issues is the question of attitude, where willingness and commitment are only options: "El funcionario, aunque sea profesorado, tiende a que si no tiene una exigencia dan menos de sí, eso hay que reconocerlo"²². [Part7]

Al final, tú eres un verso libre, tú eres una isla. Y la escuela no puede funcionar con casos aislados (...). Creo que hay un porcentaje demasiado alto de superficialidad y un porcentaje más pequeño de gente que entra a la profesión comprometida, sabiendo que es un tema muy importante para la sociedad, que es el motor del cambio²³ [Part4].

They also recognise that, despite the presence of renewal groups in the LOGSE, the teaching practices of some were moving away from the law ("Dios mío, está destrozando la ley, está destrozando la convivencia"²⁴ [Part3]), while in others, the more traditional professional culture persists ("Hay una cosa que no han podido quitar, y sigue todavía, que es la base racional-constructivista del modelo, pero es igual, no lo defiende el profesorado, por lo cual se sigue dando clase con prácticas antiguas"²⁵ [Part7]).

21 If we really want to change the school, the best are the ones we have to choose to change the school (...) not the one who has no other choice... the best. And the best means that we have to make the job attractive with recognition.

22 Civil employers, even if they are teachers, tend to give less of themselves if they are not demanding, it has to be recognized.

23 After all, you are a free verse, you are an island. And the school cannot function with isolated cases (...). I think there is too high a percentage of superficiality and a smaller percentage of people who join the profession committed, knowing that it is a very important issue for society, that it is the driving force for change.

24 My God, he's destroying the law, he's destroying coexistence.

25 There is one thing they have not been able to remove, and it still remains, which is the

The construction of authority is also perceived as a problem by professionals who are more accustomed to authoritarianism and unfamiliar with negotiation, while it is advocated by others beyond the existing law:

una cosa que está clara, y es la relación del maestro con el alumno, es que la autoridad del maestro, de la maestra, es moral. Es que eres una persona valiosa y necesaria para ese engranaje; da igual caja roja, LOMCE, LOE...²⁶.
[Part4]

In this sense, training and attitude are transferred to teaching practices which transmit, as part of this hidden curriculum. Moreover, “la escuela es un reflejo social, es difícil ir mucho más allá en la escuela de lo que la propia sociedad permite”²⁷ [Part9]. In this way, reality is uncontrollable without a global training and innovation project. As Participant 6 stated, “Si els mestres no estem formats, no estem convençuts d’això, la cadena no funciona”²⁸.

Discussions and conclusions

From the beginning of the research, the main objective was to identify the problems that teachers have faced in being civic role models, influenced by the ideological and curricular framework of the successive reforms in Spain since the 1970 LGE. To fulfil this general objective, two specific aims have been outlined, the results of which will be discussed.

The first relates to the configuration of the explicit curriculum, legislatively developed and subject to political changes. As teachers expressed, “cada ministro que iba llegando iba queriendo tener su medalla en la educación”²⁹ ([Part4]). Thus, teachers perceive the curriculum as reflecting ideological intentions, making it more or less aligned with democratic configurations depending on the modification’s origin.

rational-constructivist basis of the model, but it is not supported by the teaching staff anyway, which is why classes continue to be taught with old practices.

26 One thing that is clear, and that is the relationship between the teacher and the pupil, is that the authority of the teacher is moral. You are a valuable and necessary person for that machinery; no matter the “caja roja”, LOMCE, LOE...

27 School is a social mirror; it is difficult to go much further in school than what society itself allows.

28 If teachers are not trained, if they are not convinced of this, the chain does not work.

29 Each minister who came wanted to have his or her own medal in education.

los gobiernos que han sido más de izquierdas (...) siempre han sido más de creer que las personas puedan razonar por ellas mismas y tomar decisiones para ser participativos, y crear una democracia adecuada, que los de las derechas que no les interesan las personas que puedan pensar por ellas mismas porque son un peligro³⁰ [Part1].

Despite teachers' expressed professional commitment to fostering democratic attitudes and behaviors, and their continued concern for social justice (Briones et al., 2021), they critique the curriculum as a tool for ideological control rather than a neutral instrument. They perceive it as reflecting specific, often nationalistic, values, influenced by both conservative and progressive agendas (Sánchez-Agustí, 2011). The curriculum's extensiveness, lack of flexibility for innovation, and absence of deep reforms have hindered the fostering of democratic practices. Teachers view it not as a process of democratic cultural construction (Apple & Beane, 1999) but as subject to numerous superficial changes within the long-standing tacit agreement between conservative and progressive ideologies established during Spain's democratic transition (Cabero, 1996).

Furthermore, teachers feel democracy isn't sufficiently discussed. While they highly value the inclusion of citizenship education as a dedicated subject, considering it essential even at the university level ([Part3]), its implementation sparks political and social debate (Tiana, 2016). This is partly because it's seen as a secular alternative to religion or as redundant with other subjects (Rodríguez-Lestegás, 2007). Additionally, subjects traditionally involved in identity construction (history, language, religion, etc.) are seen as promoting a singular historical perspective and marginalizing other identities. The conflict surrounding the introduction of citizenship education, even late into the 20th century, highlights an ongoing democratic deficit where compromise and reconciliation remain goals. It also underscores the enduring influence of conservative and Catholic ideological culture in Spanish society, impacting both progressive and conservative governments.

30 Governments that have been more left-wing (...) have been always more inclined to believe that people can reason for themselves and make decisions to be participatory, and create a good democracy, than those on the right who are not interested in people being able to think for themselves because they are a danger.

qué pasó con la izquierda en el poder, pues lo mismo: dubitativa, timorata, etc. y con 202 diputados en las Cortes, si no recuerdo mal, (...) una mayoría para (...) haber hecho lo que tenía que haberse hecho, no se hizo y, si las cosas no se hacen a su tiempo, pues luego son chapuzas (...) en este país no nos hemos hecho mayores todavía³¹ [Part9].

Second, teacher training and attitude are interesting to discuss. Participants describe teacher training as memory-based, impractical, and needing improvement in social processes (Ceballos-Vacas et al., 2025). This theoretical training hinders a break from traditional school practices (Hammond, 2015), which contrasts with the teacher profile needed for a democratic school culture based on a reflective, critical, and communicative socio-constructivist identity promoting cooperation and social interaction. The curriculum, as per Gimeno-Sacristán (2007), is embedded in culture, and school culture transformation requires a collective consciousness not ensured by training. Thus, the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1994), as teachers' testimonies show, reproduces traditional practices, in this context, inherited from the Franco regime (1939–1975): “llegabas a la escuela y tenías los dos mundos, el mundo que había creado franquismo y el mundo que iba pegando golpes”³² [Part3].

If initial teacher training and recruitment don't align hidden curriculum practices with participatory models, teacher attitude is crucial for developing democratic values. Despite reforming groups, democratic practices often stem from individual teacher interest, not collective effort, indicating a lack of social consciousness and socio-cultural openness (Brady, 2020).

In short, teachers perceive curricular reforms as superficial, implying a greater influence of the hidden curriculum. The latter, along with teacher training and attitude, depends on a social and school context with distinct action patterns and ideological agreements hindering deep democratic education changes, as in Spain since the 1970 LGE. The tacit pact between conservative and progressive ideologies since the democratic transition has shown, according to teachers, a lack of commitment

31 What happened with the left in power, well, the same thing: doubtful, timorous, etc., and with 202 deputies in the Cortes, if I remember correctly,...) a majority (...) to have done what should have been done, it was not done and, if things are not done in time, then they are botched jobs (...) in this country we have not yet grown up.

32 You arrived at school and you had the two worlds, the world that had been created by Franco and the world that was coming to blows.

to deeply understanding school as a space for democratic culture. This is evident in the disjunction regarding religion or citizenship education and the conception of the teacher as a model for renewing democratic citizenship through a socio-constructive approach.

Thus, in line with Gimeno-Sacristán (2007), “los currícula son la expresión del equilibrio de intereses y fuerzas que gravitan sobre el sistema educativo en un momento dado”³³ (p. 18), so that “la escuela va siempre a remolque de la sociedad”³⁴ [Part9].

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33 Currícula are the expression of the equilibrium of interests and forces that are at play in the education system at a given moment.

34 School always lags behind society.

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