Social and Civic Competence and Values Education in Schools with High and Low Level of School Effectiveness in The Basque Country

Competencia social y ciudadana y educación en valores en centros de alta y baja eficacia escolar de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to demonstrate whether values education (VE) is a factor associated with school effectiveness in primary schools in the Basque Country. The specific objectives are: 1) to analyse the level of social and civic competence (SCC) of students according to school effectiveness/network, gender, socioeconomic and cultural index, place of origin and language used at home; 2) to ascertain teachers' assessment of the evaluation of VE in their schools; 3) to identify the practices they carry out to educate in values. Using multilevel regression statistical procedures, 31 centres that met the criteria to be considered highly (15 centres) or lowly effective (16 centres) were selected. A total of 2,819 students completed the test, which was used to measure the level of SCC in the Diagnostic Evaluation. A questionnaire was administered to 212 teachers (131 belonging to highly effective schools and 81 to lowly effective schools). A total of 59 interviews were also carry , 31 with the Education Inspectorate and 28 with Management Teams. Schools with a high level of effectiveness obtained significantly higher scores on the SCC and their teachers valued VE more positively than those with a low level of school effectiveness. The practices most frequently used to educate in values are related to the Coeducation Plan, the Coexistence Plan and, in the case of Catholic centres, the Pastoral Project. It is concluded that VE is another factor that contributes to school effectiveness. Good practices are also identified, and a stereotypical performance based on the sex of the students is recognised.

Keywords: school effectiveness; values education; social and civic competence; primary school.

Resumen

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La *finalidad de este estudio es comprobar si la educación en valores (EV) es un factor asociado a la eficacia escolar en los centros de Educación Primaria de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco. Se plantea: 1) Analizar el nivel de competencia social y ciudadana (CSC) del alumnado según eficacia/red del centro, sexo, índice socioeconómico y cultural, origen y lengua empleada en el hogar; 2) Conocer la valoración del profesorado sobre la EV en sus centros; 3) Identificar prácticas de EV. Mediante procedimientos estadísticos de regresión multinivel, se han seleccionado 31 centros que cumplen los criterios para considerarlos de alta (15 centros) o baja eficacia (16 centros). Un total de 2.819 estudiantes cumplimentaron la prueba que sirve para medir el nivel de CSC en la Evaluación Diagnóstica y se aplicó un cuestionario a 212 docentes (131 pertenecientes a centros de alta eficacia y 81 de baja). Se realizaron también 59 entrevistas, 31 a Inspección Educativa y 28 a Equipos Directivos. Los centros de alto nivel de eficacia obtienen puntuaciones significativamente superiores en la CSC y su profesorado valora más positivamente la EV que los de baja. Las prácticas más recurridas para educar en valores se relacionan con el Plan de Coeducación, el Plan de Convivencia y, en el caso de los centros católicos, el Proyecto Pastoral. Se concluye que la EV constituye un factor más de la eficacia escolar de los centros, se identifican buenas prácticas y se reconoce una actuación estereotípica en función del sexo del alumnado.*

Palabras clave: eficacia escolar; educación en valores; competencia social y ciudadana; educación primaria.

Introduction

Research on school effectiveness and improvement seeks to determine the factors, at the school and classroom level, that lead certain educational centres, despite the adverse situation of their environment, to achieve high levels of performance and equity among their students (Delgado-Galindo et al., 2021; García-Jiménez et al., 2022).

Three major stages have been identified in studies in this field (Chapman et al., 2016; Martínez-Garrido, 2015): 1) *Effective Teaching* (1930-1960), which focused on teachers and the characteristics that defined the ideal teacher; 2) *School Effectiveness* (1960-1980), which focused on the school as a whole, and 3) *Educational Effectiveness and Improvement* (1980-present), which has sought to understand the capacity of schools to influence the comprehensive development of students, taking into account a series of characteristics such as prior performance and the social and cultural context of families. It is precisely in this last phase that work has been carried out that considers values education to be an intrinsic dimension of effective teaching and schooling, promoting the improvement of academic results (Carr, 2006; Duc and Thi, 2020; Lovat, 2017a, 2017b; Lovat et al., 2009; Rossini and Peiró-i-Gregòri, 2015; Roux and Dasoo, 2020).

Although values education has been questioned in various education systems for years (Lovat and Clement, 2008; Murillo and Hernández, 2011), there has been a resurgence in all its forms and approaches (Arthur et al., 2017; Berkowitz and Bier, 2007; Botia, 2007; Lind, 2007; Lovat and Toomey, 2009). According to Print (2015), there are two key issues: education in schools is never free of values, and all schools 'teach' values in some way. Furthermore, it is possible and fruitful to establish a direct relationship between values and school effectiveness, since school effectiveness corresponds, among other things, to personal development and to the functions of social change and the promotion of justice and equity that the school has (Barba, 2007; Brown, 2010; Lovat and Toomey, 2009). Similarly, these non-cognitive constructs can be perceived as prerequisites for cognitive learning, but they can also be included as educational objectives (*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*, 2017). Some recent national and international studies highlight values education as a central theme in schools (Fernández-Espinosa et al., 2023; Fuentes et al., 2024; Kropfreiter et al., 2024; Packham et al., 2024; Watson et al., 2025).

In the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, social and civic competence is reflected in the current Basic Education curriculum, defined as "the conscious adoption of the values of a democratic culture based on respect for human rights, critical reflection on the major ethical issues of our time and the development of a sustainable lifestyle" (Decree 77/2023, 2023, p. 45). In addition, Education Law 17/2023 of 21 December makes

direct reference to education in values, placing them at the heart of coexistence, teaching and learning, and inclusive, quality schooling.

Some studies have established the interrelationships and differences between character/moral education and civic/citizenship education (Althof and Berkowitz, 2006), concluding that the two are compatible and mutually supportive (Lu, 2024). Although the concept of civic education is controversial (Capilla, 2023; López-Meseguer and Mínguez-Vallejos, 2024), it can be defined as the educational activity that consists of training younger generations to play an active role in democratic life, respecting human rights and valuing diversity, while developing personal values and attitudes (Council of Europe, 2017; Kells, 2022).

Various studies on school effectiveness conclude that civic competencies are mainly explained by the individual characteristics of students and by factors outside school (Dijkstra et al., 2014; Isac et al., 2011). At the school level, the relevant factors are the promotion of a democratic classroom environment that encourages critical debate on controversial political and social issues, positive interpersonal relationships, and the creation of opportunities to practise democracy (Isac et al., 2013).

Some reviews of civic education pedagogy in various countries highlight efforts to build an inclusive democracy and increase student civic participation by encouraging debate on critical issues and curricular and extracurricular activities that have been shown to improve civic participation (Campbell, 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 2021; Reichert and Print, 2017; Youniss, 2011). In primary education, they are mainly exposed to character education programmes, which emphasise the importance of developing ethical values, while in secondary education, political simulations and courses on civic engagement at the community level, such as volunteering, are more common (Lin, 2013).

Other studies propose strengthening citizenship education in Europe (Hedtke and Bombardelli 2019; Mickovska-Raleva, 2019) to develop active and competent citizenship by reinforcing knowledge of European political decisions and institutions.

The International Study on Civic and Citizenship Education (INEE, 2023) allows countries to monitor their progress towards UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals, such as Goal 4.7 for quality education, which ensures that students acquire the theoretical and practical knowledge required to promote a sustainable lifestyle, human rights, gender equality, a peaceful culture, global citizenship and cultural diversity, valuing their contribution to sustainable development. According to the ICCS 2022 Report (INEE, 2023), when comparing the 22 participating countries (16 European) with a sample of 82,000 students in the 2nd year of secondary education (3,500 Spanish), Spain is in the group of countries with above-average performance in civic and citizenship competence and equity. The evolution of the results from 2009 to 2022 has not undergone any significant changes. Students' perception of threats to democracy in Spain is similar to the average for most participating countries and the EU. Spain ranks above average in support for gender equality (with significant differences in favour of girls and students with a higher Socioeconomic Status Index (SESI)) and the rights of migrants, as well as a high awareness of environmental protection.

For all these reasons, the purpose of this study is to analyse whether values education (VE) is a factor associated with school effectiveness in high and low-level primary education (PE) centres in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC) and, specifically:

- To analyse and compare the level of social and civic competence (SCC) of students in schools with high levels of school effectiveness (CAEF) and low levels of effectiveness (CBEF) and in public and state-subsidised private schools.
- To analyse whether there are differences in the level of CSC among students based on gender and other variables such as ISEC, place of origin, or language used at home.

- To ascertain the assessment of the Education Inspectorate, management teams and teaching staff of EV in CAEF and CBEF schools and in public and state-subsidised private schools.
- Identify EV-related plans being implemented in schools in the Basque Autonomous Community.

Methodology

This research is descriptive, aimed at analysing phenomena in detail and exhaustively at one or more points in time (Queceda and Castaño, 2002). To meet the objectives, a mixed research design is proposed, using quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. The quantitative phase is divided into three parts: 1) the selection of CAEF and CBEF centres, 2) analysis of the CSC level of students at CAEF and CBEF centres, and 3) analysis of the items referring to EV in the questionnaire answered by teachers at centres in the Basque Autonomous Community.

As for the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two groups of key informants from the selected centres: Educational Inspectors and Management Teams.

Participants

In the first part of the quantitative phase, data collected in five Diagnostic Assessments (DA) carried out in the Basque Autonomous Community on all 4th year Primary Education (PE) students were used. It is, therefore, a census and longitudinal study (at the centre level, since the DAs are cross-sectional in the 4th year cohorts in the case of PE). The total number of schools is 409, of which, once the statistical analyses detailed below were carried out, 15 CAEFs (66.7% of the subsidised network and 33.3% of the public network) and 16 CBEFs (75% of the subsidised network and 25% of the public network) were identified (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participating centres by network

Network	Level of effectiveness	N	% Migrants	ISEC Low	ISEC High
Public	CAEF	5	6.7	75.88	24.12%
	CBEF	4	25.4%	22.58%	77.42%
State-subsidised	CAEF	10	6.7	53.93%	46.07%
	CBEF	12	3.9	30.25	69.75%

In the second phase, the analysis focused on the CSC scores obtained by students from 15 CAEF centres and 16 CBEF centres, a total of 2,819 students (47.14% female and 52.85% male). To conclude the quantitative phase, 212 primary school teachers from schools in the Basque Autonomous Community (61.8% from high-efficiency schools and 38.2% from low-efficiency schools; 25.2% men and 74.8% women) collaborated by completing a questionnaire.

In the qualitative phase, 59 interviews were conducted, 31 with professionals from the Basque Government's Educational Inspection Service and 28 with management teams from CAEF and CBEF schools in the Basque Autonomous Community.

Procedure

High-efficiency (CAEF) and low-efficiency (CBEF) centres were selected using multilevel modelling statistical techniques in order to obtain an ordered list of primary education centres (EP) in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (CAPV). Specifically, the data obtained in five editions of the Diagnostic

Assessment (ED) by 4th year EP students in the following competencies were analysed: Linguistics in Spanish, Linguistics in Basque and Mathematics.

In order to analyse this data, its multilevel structure was taken into account, i.e. the scores obtained in each of the competencies associated with the pupils (N1), who in turn are grouped into different schools (N2).

From the point of view of contextualised cross-sectional models, each student's performance has been considered a dependent variable in N1. Given that the aim is to isolate the school effect, only strictly contextual variables have been included in the models, i.e. those in which the school has no capacity to intervene: gender, the linguistic model in which the students pursue their studies, the ISEC (r whether or not the student is a recent migrant to the education system, whether or not Basque is the family language, suitability for the course and previous performance in the previous year in each competency assessed by the ED).

In the case of N2, factors affecting the school are incorporated: the network (public or state-subsidised private) and the aggregate values of the other level 1 variables.

With regard to longitudinal models, hierarchical regression models have also been carried out in which N1 corresponds to the year of application of the test, N2 to the schools, and the dependent variable is considered to be the percentile corresponding to the average score or the contextualised residual.

These analyses provide results that facilitate an orderly relationship between CAEF and CBEF schools from a fourfold perspective:

- Criterion 1. Extreme residuals. A centre is CAEF (or CBEF) if its average residuals are very high (or very low).
- Criterion 2. Growth in scores. A centre is CAEF (or CBEF) if its scores show a marked upward (or downward) trend (Newton et al., 2010).
- Criterion 3. Extreme scores. A centre is CAEF (or CBEF) if its average scores are very high (or very low).
- Criterion 4. Growth in residuals. A centre is CAEF (or CBEF) if its residuals show a marked upward (or downward) trend.

Considering the two extremes of the table (high- and low-efficiency centres), the scores, residuals and time were selected, as noted above, 15 CAEFs and 16 CBEFs from EP (see Table 2). These factors and criteria used in the selection of centres based on their school effectiveness are detailed in greater depth in Lizasoain-Hernández (2020).

Table 2

Distribution of centres according to criteria

Level of effectiveness	Criterion	Nomenclature	No. of centres
CAEF	1	Extreme score	1
	2	Extreme Waste	4
	3	Score Growth	2
	4	Growth in Residual	8
CBEF	5	Extreme Score	1
	6	Extreme Waste	4
	7	Decrease in Scores	2
	8	Decrease in Residual	9

To determine the level of CSC among students at these centres, access was gained to their results in the two editions of the ED in which it was assessed; a reliable, stable test with a high degree of significance (Basque Government, 2008). These data were analysed using SPSS Statistics 24.0 software.

Once the CAEF and CBEF centres had been selected, the task focused on gaining an in-depth understanding of the reality of these centres in the area of EV, an approach based on interviewing two groups of key informants: Educational Inspectors and Management Teams, following a script shared with experts in the field (Galicia-Alarcón et al., 2017). In order to obtain these collaborations, the criteria established by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) for Research Involving Human Beings (CEISH) were followed and, once the interviews had been transcribed, the content relating to EV was analysed to obtain the categories of analysis.

The week after the interviews were conducted, the online questionnaire was sent to the teaching staff, with the aim of having them complete it within a maximum period of two weeks, providing information about their beliefs regarding EV and the plans that are being implemented in the centres through which this content is being worked on. To determine the reliability and internal consistency of these factors, *Cronbach's alpha* statistic was applied, obtaining a reliability index for the complete questionnaire of α=.832, which is considered acceptable.

The latest version of the NVIVO programme was used to analyse the qualitative data, while SPSS software was used for the quantitative data.

Results

Social and civic competence and school effectiveness

After analysing the results obtained by the centres according to their level of effectiveness, significant differences were found between them, with CAEFs having the highest average scores. Furthermore, taking into account the grouped criteria, it was found that those at the extreme high level obtained significantly higher scores than those at the extreme low level, but, on the contrary, these differences are not significant when comparing schools that are rising and falling (see Table 3).

Table 3

Differences in CSC level

CAEF M (SD)	CBEF M (SD)	t/z	Sig.	d
248.95 (50.45)	244.98 (51.50)	-2.289	.05*	.077
Extreme high scores M (SD)	**Extreme low scores M (SD)**	t/z	Sig.	d
256.95 (47.20)	243.06 (55.09)	-3.872	.001***	.271
Decrease in Scores M (S.D.)	**Growth in Scores M (D.T.)**	t/z	Mr.	D
245.74 (50.04)	243.42 (51.90)	-.494	.621	.045

On the other hand, significant differences have been found based on other variables, revealing that schools in the subsidised network obtain higher scores than those in the public network; those female students score higher than male students; and that non-immigrant student and those from Basque-speaking families obtain higher scores than immigrant students and those from non-Basque-speaking families (Table 4).

Table 4

Differences in CSC level based on other variables considered

Subsidised network M (SD)	State network M (SD)	t/z	Sig.	*D*
249.41 (51.08)	239.22 (50.05)	-4.454	.001***	.201
Female students M (D.T.)	**Male pupils M (D.T.)**	**t/z**	**Sig.**	***D***
252.11 (50.43)	242.28 (51.11)	-5.143	.001***	.194
Non-immigrant students M (D.T.)	**Immigrant students M (D.T.)**	**t/z**	**Sig.**	***D***
247.80 (51.12)	225.60 (43.58)	-4.268	.001***	.467
Basque-speaking family M (S.D.)	**Non-Basque-speaking family M (D.T.)**	**t/z**	**Sig.**	***D***
257.00 (49.53)	244.00 (50.90)	-5,984	.001***	-.258

There are also differences depending on the ISEC of the centres, with students from high-level centres obtaining a higher CSC (Table 5).

Table 5

Average score of schools according to their ISEC level

High level M (SD)	Medium-High Level M (SD)	Medium-Low Level M (D.T.)	Low Level M (D.T.)	Next	h²
256.32 (49.11)	250.11 (50.94)	236.03 (50.19)	231.80 (52.20)	.001***	.034

Teachers' beliefs about values education in their schools

In general, all teachers rate both VE (M=7.93; SD=1.61) and the importance of the educational community agreeing on the values to be promoted among students (M=7.64; SD=7.93) very positively.

Significant differences are found in teachers' assessments according to the type of school network. Teachers in subsidised private schools give a significantly more positive assessment of VE in their schools (Z=-4.04; p<.001***; 8.25 vs 7.30) and believe that values are shared to a greater extent among the educational community (Z=-3.67; p<.001***; 8.08 vs 7.05) than teachers in the public network (Figure 1).
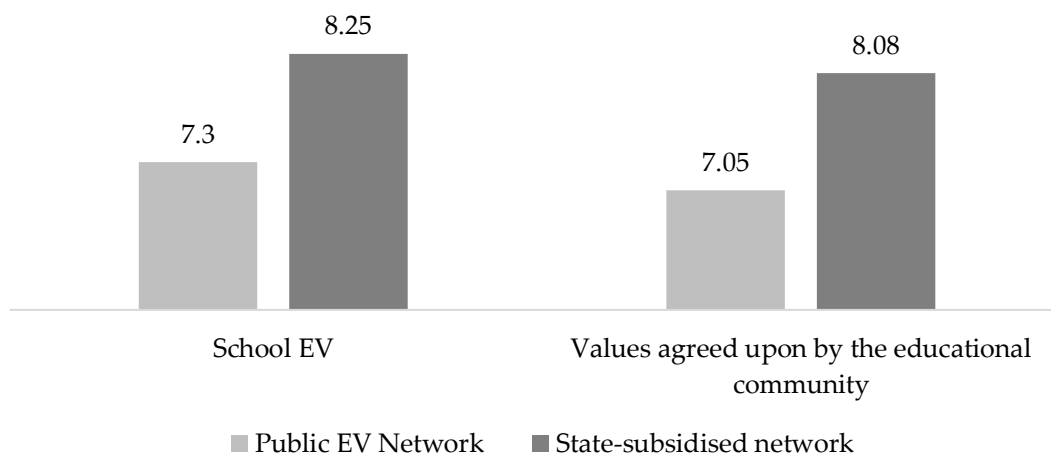

Figure 1. *Comparison of teacher assessments according to school network*

In addition, teachers at CAEF schools rate EV more positively at their schools (M=8.12; SD=1.34) than teachers at CBEF schools (M=7.69; SD=1.92). They also consider that the educational community knows, shares and practises the values that their school wishes to promote to a greater extent (M=7.93, SD=1.65) than teachers at CBEF schools (M=7.48, SD=2.09), although these differences are not statistically significant.

Good practices in values education (based on the level of school effectiveness)

A total of 27 inspectors and 24 management teams interviewed referred to EV as a factor in school effectiveness, with more than half of the information analysed coming from informants at CAEF centres.

The Coeducation Plan is the most frequently mentioned project in both high- and low-performing schools when discussing projects implemented in relation to EV. This plan includes strategies aimed at achieving coeducational schools with the goal of eliminating gender inequalities.

Another of the most frequently mentioned strategies is to consider EV as one of the main objectives of the Coexistence Plan. Through this document, schools specify the procedure to be followed to promote respectful coexistence both among peers and throughout the school community.

The third most frequently mentioned way of working on values in the classroom is through a Pastoral Project, a strategy linked exclusively to Catholic schools.

Another proposal mentioned is Emotional Education, a set of interventions aimed at developing students' emotional intelligence and social skills.

Table 6 shows the frequency of EV proposals from informants at CAEF and CBEF schools.

Table 6

Most frequently mentioned EV projects/strategies according to level of effectiveness

Level Effectiveness	Projects/ Strategies	Frequency/ No. of Respondents	Examples
CAEF	Coeducation Plan	25	*"I am in the co-education group and we follow a specific methodology for the prevention of gender violence..."* (4DIR31262).
	Coexistence Plan	18	*"...from that plan, an important basis is the whole issue of relationships, coexistence, and there are many aspects that have to do with values"* (4INSO34232).
	Agenda 21	14	*"...they are participating in Agenda 21, which is one of the areas that interests and motivates them and in which they take part"* (4INSO34232).
	Pastoral Plan	9	*"The school belongs to a group, Foundation X, which also promotes training at the management team level. I'm not sure about the different stages, but at the area level, in terms of ways of working, if we do work on values, the pastoral team, for example, does a lot of work and also coordinates a lot with other schools"* (4DIR35618).
	Emotional Education	5	*"We are working on emotional intelligence, that is, conscious emotional connection. We have given two people from the management team very powerful training"* (2DIR33000).
CBEF	Co-education	20	*"Well, we were among the first to participate in Nahiko*

Plan		*(Emakunde's co-education programme for the prevention of violence against women), we have always signed up for everything, we were among the very first"* (6DIR26554).
Emotional Education	13	*"Emotional Education is one of the keys to the centre, a project that we have now fully internalised"* (7DIR36630).
Coexistence Plan	12	*"I think they are addressing it, perhaps looking more at coexistence, not directly through values, but yes, yes"* (8INSO32714).
Pastoral Plan	11	*"I am in charge of all pastoral matters and social commitment, which includes pastoral issues, social commitment, environmental issues, Agenda 21... everything that has to do with values"* (6DIR26554).
Tutorial Action Plan	8	*"...values such as tolerance and empathy are also worked on in the tutorial sessions"* (8INSA37532).

In both CAEF and CBEF centres, the three values most highlighted by the informants are Equality, Environmental Conservation and Religious Values.

Good practices in values education (depending on the school network)

According to the informants, based on the network of the centre where they work, 38 participants from subsidised centres refer to EV, while only 15 from public centres do so. It should be noted that since the initial selection, the disproportion of centres according to the network has been notable.

Respondents from state-subsidised schools made more reference to projects such as Co-education Plans, the Pastoral Plan and Emotional Education. However, those from the public network highlighted Co-education Plans, the Coexistence Plan and participation in projects such as Agenda 21, a specific educational strategy for environmental sustainability.

Subsidised schools work more extensively on values such as Equality, Religious Values and Environmental Conservation, while those in the public network emphasise Equality, Environmental Conservation and Inclusion.

Discussion

Values education (VE) in primary schools in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (CAPV) can be considered another factor in school effectiveness, as noted in other studies that reveal an essential link between values education and academic excellence (Barba, 2007; Lovat, 2017a, 2017b; Moyolema-Ramírez et al., 2024; Roux and Dasoo, 2020; Watson et al., 2025).

It has been found, on the one hand, that teachers, management teams and inspectors at highly effective schools give a more positive assessment of EV at their school than those at low-performing schools and, on the other hand, that students at highly effective schools achieve a higher level of social and civic competence than those at low-performing schools. Therefore, students at highly effective schools show greater development of values, critical thinking, positive attitudes, and democratic values of social justice and respect for diversity. As Campbell (2019) states, well-designed civic education has significant and lasting effects on students' civic engagement. The achievement of this competence is related to the values education proposed in each school, understood as any school activity that explicitly or implicitly promotes the learning of values by students, as well as the process of fostering skills to promote particular values as individuals and as members of the

community. This conclusion confirms the existence of an interdependent relationship, already defined by Duc and Thi (2020) and Lovat and Toomey (2009), between values education and quality teaching.

The differences found in the level of social and civic competence between girls and boys reflect stereotypical behaviour based on gender, orienting girls, to a greater extent than boys, towards the development of social values (Carlo and Randall, 2002; Llinares, 2003; Morales, 2012; Yao et al., 2022). Furthermore, this would confirm that girls respond better to the demands of the school environment (Giota, 2002; Sorvoll and Wichstrom, 2003; Wigfield and Tonks, 2002).

Students at state-subsidised private schools achieve higher scores in this competency, and teaching staff rate values education more positively than their counterparts at state schools, which could be considered a consequence of the neutral stance that has long characterised state schools with regard to this type of education (Lovat and Toomey, 2009). Furthermore, this study would confirm the effect exerted by *peer groups* on the development of values *(*Miranda-Rochín et al., 2024; Muñiz and Suarez, 2012; Simonton et al., 2017), as public schools are the ones that bring together students with sociodemographic variables linked to a lower level of social and civic competence (Llera and Pérez, 2012; Murillo and Martínez-Garrido, 2018; Valiente, 2008).

Management teams and inspectors highlight the relationship between values education and some strategic plans currently being developed in the Basque Autonomous Community, such as the Co-education Plan, the Coexistence Plan and, in state-subsidised private schools, the Pastoral Plan.

This study has confirmed the importance of reaching a consensus and accepting the values to be worked on by both the school and families (Balduzzi, 2021; Puig, 2012; Zbar et al., 2003) and that, in addition to their introduction as content in the curriculum (Etherington, 2013), the involvement and commitment of students, teachers and families is required (Rossini and Peiró-i-Gregòri, 2015). Students arrive in the classroom equipped with certain values that cause them to filter the content proposed by schools in one way or another (Ortega and Mínguez, 2009).

The results reinforce the conclusions of various studies that call for the use of active and innovative methodologies to promote social and civic competence in the classroom (Fuentes-Moreno et al., 2019; Fuentes-Moreno et al., 2020; Hurtado-Torres et al., 2019; Rossini and Peiró-i-Gregòri, 2015; Salazar-Jiménez, 2019), such as addressing socially controversial issues and using technological teaching resources (Gillate et al., 2023a, 2023b; González and Mora, 2009) or political simulations, problem solving, case studies, and mock elections, which seem to improve political knowledge more in primary school pupils than in secondary school pupils, although they have a greater impact on the political interests and participation of secondary school pupils (Lundberg, 2024). Others, from different international educational contexts, also emphasise the need for specific interventions to improve the incorporation of civic education in primary schools (Rosli and Jamaludin, 2023; Yao et al., 2022) due to the crucial role it plays in shaping informed, active and responsible citizens who demand a critical civic education framework that fosters the ability of pre-school and primary school children to make their own decisions about which social justice issues are important and how they can be resolved (Swalwell and Payne, 2019; Yeung, 2024).

However, this research is a first approach to the study of values education in schools with high and low levels of academic performance in the Basque Autonomous Community and has several limitations that will be further explored in subsequent studies using the methodology employed.

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