



# Lexical repertoire of teachers on democracy, citizenship and human rights

## *Disponibilidad léxica de profesores sobre democracia, ciudadanía y derechos humanos*

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### Abstract

The citizenship education has become a key axis of the Chilean Ministry of Education through Law 20,911, which can be understood from three dimensions: citizenship, democracy and human rights. The object of study is to analyze the lexical availability of teachers in relation to the concepts of Democracy, Citizenship and Human Rights. The research methodology is qualitative with a descriptive and interpretive design. The participants are thirty-six teachers of History, Geography and Social Sciences from the province of Arauco. The information was collected through semi-structured interviews, being processed in the Gephi program with the aim of studying semantic networks. The research results exhibit that the main vocabulary of teachers around citizenship is respect, right, duties and people, evidencing substantial differences in the vocabulary indicated in plans and programs about this particular center of interest. In relation to the comparison between human rights centers of interest of the citizenship plan and the teachers' conceptualizations, it is evident that the most representative words are respect, rights and equality, but to a lesser range the represented concepts are vindication, violation, constitution and grouping. Finally, Democracy presents such concepts as law, representation and respect and to a lesser range constitution, transition and responsibility.

**Keywords:** Citizen education, lexical availability, democracy, citizenship, human rights, teachers.

### Resumen

La formación ciudadana se ha transformado en un eje clave del Ministerio de Educación de Chile a través de la ley 20.911, que se puede entender desde tres dimensiones: ciudadanía, democracia y derechos humanos. El objeto de estudio es analizar la disponibilidad léxica del profesorado en relación con los conceptos de democracia, ciudadanía y derechos humanos. La metodología de la investigación es cualitativa con un diseño descriptivo e interpretativo. Los participantes son 36 profesores de Historia, Geografía y Ciencias Sociales de la provincia de Arauco. La información fue recolectada a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, siendo procesada en el programa Gephi con el objetivo de estudiar las redes semánticas. Los resultados de la investigación demuestran que los vocablos principales del profesorado en torno a ciudadanía son respeto, derecho, deberes y personas, existiendo diferencias sustanciales en los vocablos señalados por los planes y programas en este centro de interés en particular. En relación con la comparación entre los centros de interés de derechos humanos del plan de formación ciudadana y las conceptualizaciones del profesorado, se evidencia que los vocablos más representativos son respeto, derechos e igualdad, pero en menor medida son representados los conceptos de reivindicación, violación, constitución y agrupación. Por último, la democracia presenta como conceptos principales derecho, representación y respeto y en menor medida constitución, transición y responsabilidad.

**Descriptores:** Formación ciudadana, disponibilidad léxica, democracia, ciudadanía, derechos humanos, profesorado.

## 1. Introduction and state-of-the-art

The teaching staff of pedagogy in history, geography and social sciences (PHGYCS) have extensive training in the disciplines related to their profession, developing lexical availability and building teaching-learning processes which are appropriate to the educational contexts in which they work, and are also constantly involved in processes of curricular modifications that require an improvement in initial and continuing education, the most recent is the plan of citizen training and human rights of Law 20.911 (Ministry of Education, 2016).

Citizens' training plan refers that all institutes recognized by the State must promote the development of citizenship, ethics and a democratic culture at different educational levels to integrate and complement national curricular definitions, and specifically in 2020 it required the implementation of a citizen training course for 3° and 4° by the professors of History, Geography and Social Sciences.

Teachers must construct a lexical repertoire that can be understood in a communicative situation by teachers and students (López, 1996) and that links the interest or thematic information centers to be understood by all individuals belonging a specific social group (Gougengeim et al., 1956; Jiménez, 2017).

The national educational curriculum has promoted minimal citizen training in relation to key themes of citizenship such as democracy and human rights (Gerber, 2007; Muñoz et al., 2010; Reyes et al. 2013; Muñoz & Torres, 2014). This curriculum gap was evidenced by an International Citizen Education Measurement (ICCS) in 1999, where one-third of the test questions submitted by Chilean students concerned topics not covered by any academic program. Following this logic in the 2009 study, the results were similarly recorded in the previous study, showing serious shortcomings in the student body's citizenship training (IEA, 1999; 2009) and, therefore, in the training of the teaching

staff about citizenship, democracy and human rights.

The main modifications of the educational curriculum in the area of human rights and democracy have been in the subjects of history, geography and social sciences, thus it is necessary to re-state and strengthen the bounds between citizenship and the jurisdictional and national framework (Tobío, 2012). In this way, the objective is to promote in the student the recognition and application of citizenship status as an entity with a series of rights and duties that can be exercised in a daily basis (Sacristán, 2003), through which the student will develop a lexical repertoire, which, if not promoted properly, the student will not learn lexical terms such as citizenship, human rights and democracy (Michea in Lopez, 1996).

This research aims to describe the lexical repertoire of history, geography and social sciences teachers in relation to the concepts of democracy, citizenship and human rights, through the following question: Do teachers have lexical repertoire for the development of the concepts of democracy, citizenship and human rights? The latter are the conceptual and theoretical foundations from where citizen formation is based and built.

In this sense, citizen training will depend mainly on the preparation of professors who apply the program in the classroom (Lundgren cited in Muñoz & Garrido, 2014; Magendzo, 2004). Studies such as the one conducted by Bolívar (2007) have shown that citizen training is one of the less understood subjects, therefore it is necessary to investigate the educational process with the intention of overcoming the minimalist approach in the subject of civic education, since although the school is not the only institution that promotes citizenship, its role is crucial in this formative process.

Citizen education, as part of teaching, presents two approaches, a minimalist and a maximalist (Kerr, 2002). The first is related to civic education and is considered to be decontextua-



lized and restricted to superficial content, skills and attitudes as they develop as a disciplinary subject. The second perspective seeks to develop more extensive and rich knowledge, but with more complexity at the time of being evaluated or measured by encouraging the development of values, relationship with their experiences and active behavior around axes such as citizenship and human rights.

The second approach to citizen training:

(...) demands that the school system be addressed and experienced by students not only as part of their work in the different subjects, but it must also be present and encouraged in other spaces of participation and decisions present in school life, which allow the student to exercise practices related to the strengthening of citizenship and democratic coexistence. (MINEDUC, 2004, p. 3)

This now means not only fostering an idea of content, but developing skills, values and attitudes around cross-sectional learning objectives (OAT). This approach seeks to solve the logic of a mere transmission of memoristic knowledge (minimalist optics) to develop skills and attitudes that promote active democratic citizen behavior by students (maximalist optics).

In another theoretical axis, there is a discussion between the individual and collective sense of citizenship. On the one hand, the construction of values, ideas and behaviors comes mainly toward the individual entity, building an identity and behavior different from the collective. The latter involves a construction from the general to the particular, or individual, being the first entity the one that guides the citizen process in a community and democratic sense (Horrach, 2009). It is certainly not possible to present training as a duality, but it is needed to understand the epistemic extremes from which we can obtain an interpretation of educational practices by developing content related to citizen training.

### 1.1. Democracy, citizenship and human rights

According to Silva (1997) the concept of democracy can be understood as the choice to participate in a process, which is motivated by its own interests. In this way, citizen participation cannot be obliged to participate in other stimuli that are not specific to each individual.

Giraldo (2013) argues that the concept of participation emerged strongly during the decade of the 60-70 in the United States and later in Europe, under the logic of the Welfare State. Following this line, Pennock (2015) contextualizes and defines participatory democracy during the decade of the 60-70 in the USA and Europe, which led to direct democracy in various forms and levels at both national and international levels.

Therefore, we can say that “participatory democracy consists in the fact that citizens are the ones who make the decisions, without necessarily covering the whole of the decision-making processes, but in any case, a significant proportion of them” (Silva, 1997, p. 1), where the following democratic features are promoted: effective participation, equal voting, informed electorate, citizen control of the program and an open democratic process (Dhal, 2004). The difference between citizenship and citizen is noteworthy. The first refers to the legal status of an individual and the second refers to the basic unity of political-social status.

The main studies on citizenship are attributed to Marshall (1950). In his work *Citizen and social class*, Marshall establishes a division of time into three phases: civil, political, and social. The civil part originated in the eighteenth century with the arrival of civil rights; the political is reaffirmed in the nineteenth century with the arrival of political rights; and the social emerged in the twentieth century with public education, health care, unemployment insurance and pension-plan.



When these rights that are inherent in citizenship became more widespread, the class of citizens was also commoditized. Civil and political rights restricted to white men, owners and protestants were extended to women, workers, Jews, Catholics, black and excluded groups.

Kymlica and Norman (1994) say that interest in citizenship is fueled by political events and trends throughout the world: apathy of voters, resurfaced nationalist movements, tensions over the growth of a multicultural and multiracial population, dismantling of welfare states, etc.

Any definition of human rights is subject to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The first article of this record summarizes the basic argumentative axis of the remaining 29 articles. "Article 1: All human beings are born free in dignity and rights and, endowed as they are of reason and conscience, and must behave fraternally with each other" (1948, p. 1).

According to Zorrilla (2008), we must make a distinction between the foundations and the implementation of these rights. The difference is that its implementation lies in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but when referring to foundation, we refer to moral and political philosophical theories that are applied to society in general and its legal institutions, which seek to recognize and protect human rights (Martínez, 2008).

## 1.2. Empirical studies

In North America, Skinner and Bromley (2019) conducted research on school texts from more than 80 countries around the world, published between 1950 and 2011, to compare the progression of the study of human rights and citizenship. The result indicated that these concepts tend to be studied more in the area of history than in the area of citizen formation.

Moreover, it is evident that America's liberal and conservative ideologies base its citi-

zenship teaching on civic institutions, but those guided by critical ideology prefer to rely on social institutions, demonstrating that the ideology of the teacher has a strong influence on what he/she teaches and how he/she teaches it (Knowles, 2019).

Despite the ideological influence, a study of 148 higher education students in the southern United States indicated that both teachers and students are concerned about prioritizing global citizenship and developing cultural empathy, revealing their absence in the school curriculum (Andrew et al. 2019)

In the case of Australia, education is geared toward active citizenship, however, the curriculum limits teachers to teaching what it is to be a citizen, rather than how to be a citizen; it also ensures a unique and idealized way of being a citizen, evidencing a lack of connection between context/reality and student's learning (Ferguson-Patrick et al., 2019; McLeod, 2019). The teaching staff considers that discussing controversial and sensitive issues, such as terrorism, is a way of teaching students about citizen training and democratic practices, in order to prepare them to participate in an active and informed citizenship in society. However, most of the time it is not included in classes to avoid negative professional consequences or harm the sensitivity of their students (Bright & Weeden, 2019).

New Zealand seeks citizenship similar to that of Australia, however, one study indicated that, in both countries, there is a lack of emphasis on the considerations needed to be global citizens, noting that only those students who had school exchange experiences are better prepared (Borkovic et al., 2020).

A case contrary to the previous countries is the one experienced at the meeting between North America and Iberian America, i.e., on the borders between Mexico and the United States. In this area, teachers motivate their students to understand citizen training through their context, thanks to the social and transformative connectivity that it implies, since those who have



the power to define citizenship are the ones who have the control to demand (Montoya, 2020).

Other Ibero-American research shows that teachers conceive democracy as associated with participating in common projects, and teach it without relying on pedagogical theories, rather on its own experience, despite planning based on theories and school curricula (Plá, 2017), which results in little participation in projects, because schools are enabled with spaces for participation. But they do not teach democracy, causing little participation by students, teachers and representatives in democratic functions (Bambozzi et al., 2020). Thus, the need to develop new ways to promote learning and research on different educational topics is evident (Aldanada-Zavala et al., 2020).

A research carried out on 680 PHGYCS teachers and students from Argentina and Spain points to the existing educational interest in concretizing the concepts to properly develop a democratic school, through demands to the State or the Educational Community (Grau et al., 2019). In addition, institutions and teachers are highly politicized in their educational work when teaching citizenship and democracy (Aguilar & Velásquez, 2018).

Internationally, both teachers from North America and Iberian American countries demonstrate an interest in globalizing student citizenship and show a need to connect knowledge about democracy and citizenship with daily and contextualized practice.

At the national level, a study indicated that the faculty shows disagreements when recognizing the citizens' competences of its students, evidencing a lack of common judgment (Carrillo & Jurado, 2017). Gazmuri (2017) have obtained similar findings, evidencing that the line of the curriculum of History, Geography and Social Sciences is not yet clear, as it is defined by five ideologies that influence assumptions and interpretations that are performed by teachers, leading to obscure nuances, particularities and exceptions in the classroom.

Castillo et al. (2018), studied the citizen training of 216 158 students and obtained that the institutions where they studied influenced their participation and citizen training, despite all being ruled by the same curriculum. This is contradicted in an investigation carried out to future teachers at the time of entering the university, mentioning that there are no significant differences in their citizenship formation, but the students show no interest or understanding of politics, but they value democracy (Alegría et al., 2004).

In short, there is international and national evidence that indicates the existence of a curriculum managed at the central level, but at the classroom level it does not develop the guidelines emanating from government education institutes due to different variables, such as type of establishment, ideology, student interest and teacher training.

## 2. Methodology

This research is qualitative through a network analysis, developing a hermeneutical design (Flick, 2015) with a cross-sectional scope of the lexical repertoire of History, Geography and Social Sciences teachers.

The sample of the study was intentionally selected and is not representative (Bisquerra, 2009), and it is composed of 36 professors of Arauco, two men and 34 women coming from six different universities, and with two to 33 years of experience in Chile's public, subsidized and paid private education systems.

The collection of information was done through semi-structured interviews (Ortiz, 2007), in which reagents were presented around three conceptual dimensions: democracy, human rights and citizenship. Questions were created from previous theoretical categories. During the interview, the technique of counter-question is applied once the interviewee has answered (Valles, 1999). These interviews were conducted in an office provided by the authorities of each





of the institutions. They were recorded in audio and then transcribed in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

The analysis plan refers to the use of the Gephi version 0.9.1 free-code program, first describing the overall repertoire lexicon index by topic of interest, and providing the relative and cumulative frequency of each lexical word. In addition, the GEPHI program was used to describe the frequencies of lexical repertoire of teachers around the dimensions presented above.

The concepts associated with the topics of interest studied were extracted in three steps.

First, the units related to our topics of interest were analyzed in relation to the plans and programs of study (see Table 1); then the concepts identified within the study sample were extracted, and finally, topics of interest and programs were related to the topic of interest of teachers.

### 3. Results

Topics of interest regarding plans and programs can be presented through the following 24 concepts distributed as follows:

Table 1. Topics of Interest on Democracy, Citizenship and Human Rights of the plans and programs of the Ministry of Education

Democracy	Citizenship	Human rights
Participation State Representation Constitution Rights City Dictatorship Transition Respect	Participation Rights Duties Respect Constitution Representation Responsibility	Rights Respect Alienness Violation Group Defense Constitution Revindicate

Source: Own elaboration based on MINEDUC Plans and Programs.

In conducting the study, the study participants presented a variety of concepts related to

each topic of interest, which can be observed in Table 2 and which are described as follows:

Table 2. Description of words of the topic of interest of citizenship, democracy and human rights

Citizenship			Democracy			Human rights	
Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2
Respect Right Duty People Society Community Country Right Nationality Laws	Opinion Family Cooperation Education Organisation City Spaces People Norms Identity Democracy Obligations	Republic Elections City Voting Behavior Tolerance Values Responsibility	Respect Equality Freedom People Tolerance	Health Identity Diversity Education Work Empathy Life Democracy Rights	Expression Justice Nationality Prisoners Missed Violation Dignity Universal Protection Family Duty Love	Freedom Tolerance Rights Respect Right Expression Opinion Equality Voting	Education Justice Participation Duties Government Citizenship

Source: Own elaboration based on MINEDUC Plans and Programs.



In the topic citizenship, it is possible to identify a distribution of important and concentrated concepts in group 1, demonstrating certain homogeneity in the conceptual perception of teachers when discussing the concept of citizenship, and a great number of concepts with a high frequency between group 1 and 2, which have more representation toward an individual and collective vision of citizenship, but leaving aside the political representation present in civic responsibility.

The topic democracy presents the highest repetition degree of words, which can be easily interpreted by teachers when speaking about the concept of democracy, but there is an individual-time tendency role of democracy regarding a state-institutional vision of democracy and its historical vision (transition-dictatorship).

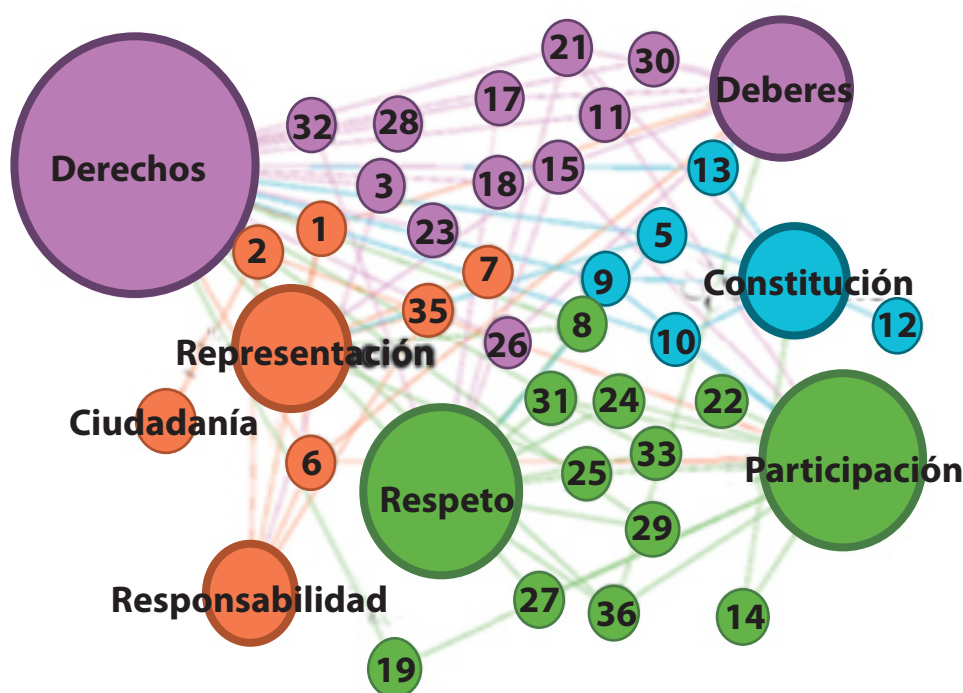
Regarding human rights, three large groups of lexical repertoires can be observed, presenting more heterogeneity in the presentation of words, with no agreement, in most of the

cases, on the concepts that can represent human rights, i.e., the topic is still not clear, being described through multiple words representing an individual and collective vision passively, and by not presenting words related to collective action movements or civil groups around human rights.

Depending on the formation of topics of interest of people interviewed, it can be described that the concept of democracy presents more repetition of key words, unlike the concepts of citizenship and human rights, which present more diversity and less understanding around the main concepts associated with each topic of interest in the study.

After identifying the topics of interest of plans and programs associated with the Citizen Training Plan (Table 1) and the interviews of the participants (Table 2) a comparison was made between the topics of interest of plans and programs of MINEDUC with the conceptualizations described by the faculty.

Figure 1. Relationship between human rights and the plans and programs of citizen training



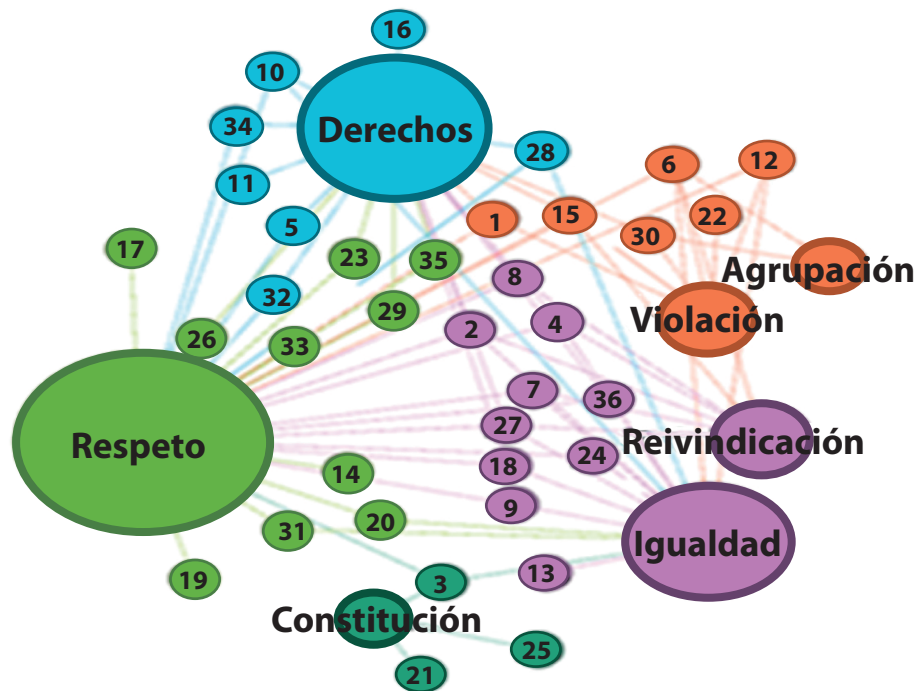
Source: Own elaboration.



Depending on Figure 1, it is possible to point out that the main words of teachers around citizenship are right, respect, duties and people, with important differences in the words indicated by the plans and programs in this topic (see Table 1 and Figure 1, respectively). In addition, if we relate the lexical repertoire of teachers to the concepts presented by the plans and programs, we observe that rights, participation and respect are the most named, and there is a clear decrease in the term citizenship, responsibility, constitu-

tion and representation. Thus, the faculty represents citizenship primarily as an act of individual action, where the basis of the individual's rights prevails, while respecting the possible actions of other citizens, but the importance of the citizen's duties and the responsibilities associated with it decrease. It is also possible to point out certain prejudices present in relation to the constitution and representativeness, which have been constantly criticized in the last two decades by civil society.

Figure 2. Relationship between human rights and the plans and programs of citizen training



Source: Own elaboration.

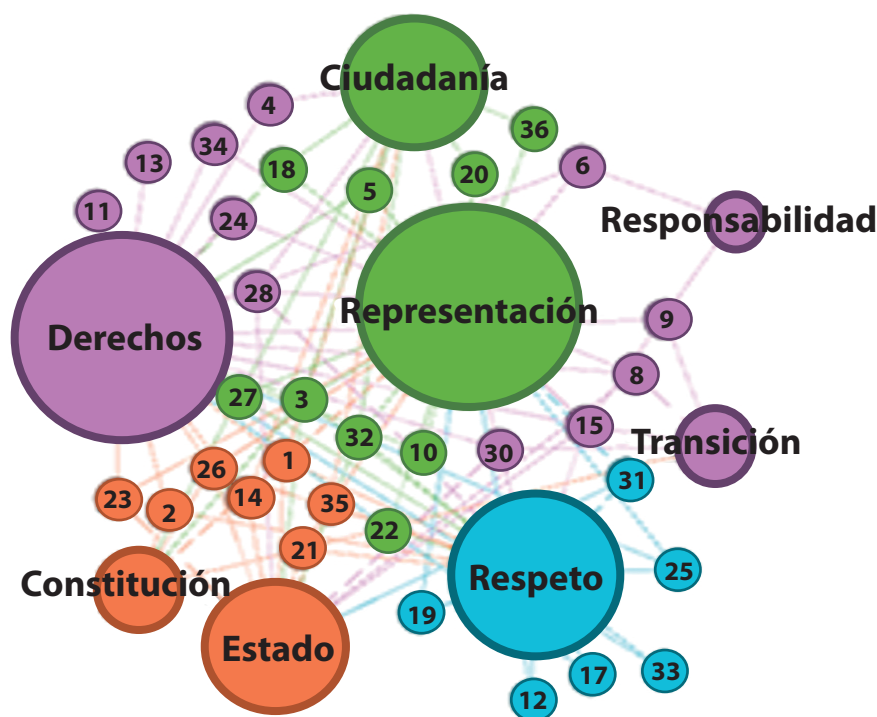
In relation to the comparison between the topics of human rights of the citizen training plan with the conceptualizations of the participants (see Figure 2), it is evident that the most representative words are respect, rights and equality, but the concepts of claim, violation, constitution and grouping are represented to a lesser extent. This may be because practices in the classroom are not aimed to work on the contents related to the

military dictatorship and its effects on the construction of Chile's democratic process, promoting the construction of a concept of universal human right but without being applied to the Chilean context. Grouping, as representation of active collective entities, is an important element which is not greatly represented in any topic of interest, being interpreted a characteristic of Chilean society of presenting a low relation among its citizens.





Figure 3. Relationship between democracy and the plans and programs of citizen training



Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, democracy (see Figure 3) presents concepts such as law, representation and respect, and to a lesser extent constitution, transition and responsibility. This logic present in the distribution of teachers' words can be understood as a negative perception of the democratic process, which has failed to meet the democratic needs of the population and especially of the study participants who do not directly link democracy to a transition process in our country, being devoid of responsibility on the part of representatives, and of a constitution that guarantees civil society.

In this way, we can say that lexical repertoire on the different topics does not present a strong connection and does not represent the concepts presented by the plans and programs of the Ministry of Education of Chile; this means that the teaching of the citizenship training of the educational institutions under study is based on the experience and prejudices of the teachers in the field of democracy, human rights

and citizenship. The only concept that has more relationship is democracy, showing more relation between what is proposed by the Citizen Formation Plan and what is conceptualized by the study participants.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The school has transformed into an institution that demands "equality production," whether from an opportunity perspective or recognition of diversity (Garrido, 2011). In this way, teachers are seen as promoters of behaviors and attitudes in the school setting, which will be used by the students in their present and future.

The research process shows that there is a tendency in the frequency of the topics of interest to conceive these topics from a personal experience rather than an academic experience. These results are related to the research carried out (Alegría et al., 2004; Bolívar, 2007; Muñoz &



Garrido, 2014) which indicate that citizen training is one of the subjects with a lesser degree of understanding and conceptual management. In addition to promoting a curriculum interpreted from their experiential experience, and an academic experience to a lesser extent.

These evidences show that there is primarily a minimalist approach to teaching citizenship education (Kerr, 2002) which aims at a conceptual review of the contents, without deepening on citizen behavior or practices from the classroom. This reality contradicts the points made by MINEDUC (2004) which demands that the school system encourages citizen participation in its educational practices through fundamental transversal objectives (OFT) and fundamental vertical objectives (OFV).

In this way, based on the results of the topics of interest, especially the human rights and the points made by Muñoz and Garrido (2014), a great diversity can be highlighted in the type of training received and in the understanding of the ideas that teachers have about what it is to form citizens in the school due to different educational training programs and the educational period in which pedagogy studies are framed.

This will affect the degrees of citizenship development (Bolívar, 2007; Kerr, 2002), where the topics focused on curriculum and schools with minimal development are prioritized, both in content and in a community sense of citizen training, leaving aside development degrees such as progressive centers and community centers that promote citizenship in terms of school and community development, and centers little related to the subject, but “(...) with opportunities for civic responsibility” (Bolívar, 2007, p. 161).

Therefore, according to the axes presented by Horrach (2009), it can be affirmed that teachers do not promote an individual axis nor a collective axis of citizenship, but this axis is developed by other structural aspects of society by fostering an experiential logic of the interpretation of the curriculum with strong rote

elements in the teaching and learning process of citizen formation.

Another element to consider is the historical-political trajectory of Chile, which has had consequences in historiography and in the process of teaching history (Henríquez, 2014), being directly responsible for the curricular reduction of citizen training and the experiential interpretation of the school curriculum by teachers, which is observed in the differences between the frequencies in the networks of topics of interest of the PHYGS and the topics of interest of plans and programs of the Ministry of Education of Chile.

Citizen training mainly depends on the preparation of their teachers, since teachers are the ones who ultimately understand and apply the curriculum (Muñoz & Garrido, 2014), promoting the development of attitudes, content and skills around the civic responsibility from a local scale (Oyarzún-Maldonado & Soto-González, 2020).

In conclusion, citizen training has become a key element in the updating of Chile's educational curriculum in relation to the area of History, Geography and Social Sciences, not only because of an educational need but also because of historical and political issues.

The local results of the study point out that the teaching of citizenship formation is based on the experiences of the teacher who interprets the curriculum from his/her experiential knowledge, and not from a disciplinary knowledge. The results of the research are related to the empiric knowledge around the subject, where topics of interest and their respective linguistic repertoire of teachers are not fully related according to the topics of interest of plans and programs, in which the most related topics are citizenship and democracy, but the one with the greatest difference is human rights, where there is no clear relationship between what was expressed by the study participants and the plans and programs of MINEDUC.



Hence, the need to modify the academic program of initial formation of PHYGS at the national level, where the development of content, skills and attitudes in a vertical and transversal sense is encouraged by future teachers.

There are, of course, unresolved questions such as: Does PHYGS know its disciplinary knowledge of citizen training? And will there be a process of curriculum reform by MINEDUC to modify this teaching reality around citizen training? Education will not answer our doubts; thus, it is necessary to deepen other disciplines such as economics and politics in order to be able to respond to our concerns.

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