

ACTive Citizenship Projects to Enhance Pupils' Social and Civic Competences

Proyectos de ciudadanía activa para mejorar las competencias social y cívica

**EUROPEAN FOUNDATION SOCIETY AND EDUCATION
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Contents

Introduction

1. Methodology
2. Baseline scenario
3. Teacher training
4. Implementation of the program
 - 4.1. Institutional, spatial, and time constraints and opportunities
 - 4.2. Students' abilities and past experience of citizenship education
 - 4.3. Toolkits and protocols
 - 4.4. The active citizenship projects
5. Impact of the project on the students and on the teachers

Conclusion

Introduction

This report presents the results of the qualitative evaluation of the ACT program in Spain. First, it describes the evaluation methodology, specifying the kind of sample of schools chosen, the research techniques applied, and the research materials obtained. Second, it presents the baseline scenario, emphasizing how citizenship is taught in the schools of the sample (and in Spain, in general) and some characteristics of the school climate that could be relevant in terms of citizenship teaching. Third, it analyzes how the teachers that took part in the initial training session evaluate it and shows the extent to which the teachers used the online mentoring along the course year. Fourth, in the main section, the report deals with the implementation of the program, discussing the institutional and time constraints and opportunities, the students' abilities and past experience with citizenship education, the use of the toolkits and protocols envisaged in ACT, and the development of the projects (highlighting their characteristics, the phases of development, the degree of student involvement, and the resistance elements present in the teachers and, especially, in the students). Finally, the report summarizes the main impacts that the ACT experience may have had both on teachers and on students, emphasizing the potential improvements in the latter's cognitive abilities and active citizenship attitudes.

1. Methodology

The sample of schools

In Spain, the selection of the schools that would take part in the ACT program took place as follows. The Ministry of Education sent letters to the principals of the schools. It was them, assumedly after consulting with the teachers in charge of the subjects in which the program would be applied, that wrote back to the Ministry forwarding their candidacy. After the right number of candidacies was met, and after the data on teachers and students to take part in ACT were collected, half the schools joined the group of treated schools, in which the program was to be implemented and half the schools joined the control group.

Our study was carried out in ten schools, chosen from the treated schools. All of them, as prescribed by the criteria for applying the program in Spain, were IES (Institutos de Educación Secundaria), or Secondary Education Schools, all publicly owned and financed.

All of the students participating in the project were enrolled in the 3th course of ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education), which means that according to their course-typical age they mostly turned 14 along 2018, though a substantial share of them, around a third, must have been older.¹

Our sampling aimed at getting as much diversity as possible regarding the following criteria: region, income per head of the city or town of the school, socio-economic level as perceived by the principal, immigration rate (as estimated by the principal), school size, rural or urban character, and the role in which the teacher acted (as teacher in charge of Ethical Values or as tutor of a group). Data on all those dimensions were available before designing the sample of schools, thanks to the school principals' answers to a questionnaire devised by the Spanish quantitative team and to their collection of local economic data for each school.

¹ In the class-year 2017-2018, 33.1% of the students enrolled in the 3th course of ESO in public schools were 15 years old or older. Ministry of Education, *Enseñanzas no universitarias. Alumnado matriculado. Curso 2017-2018*.

So, taking into account budgetary limits and the above-mentioned characteristics, the sample consisted of the following schools.

- Region: Madrid (4), Castile-La Mancha (3), Castile and Leon (1), Balearic Island (1), Murcia (1).
- Income per head of the school location: first quartile or lowest (2), second (1), third (3), fourth (4).
- Socioeconomic level: mid-low in comparison with the whole of Spain (2), similar to the whole of Spain (8).
- Immigration rate: second quartile (4), third (4), fourth (2). From a minimum of 7% of foreign students to a maximum of 53%.
- School size: first quartile (1), second (2), third (5), fourth (2). From a minimum of 457 students to a maximum of 1,279.
- Rural or urban (number of inhabitants of the city or town): first quartile (2), second (2), third (3), fourth (3). From a minimum of 4,000 inhabitants to a maximum of 3,200,000.
- Role of the teacher: Ethical values (8), tutor (2).

Research materials

The techniques applied were the following.

- Ten face-to-face interviews with school principals at the beginning of the project (October 18th to October 23rd).
- Ten face-to-face interviews with the teachers in charge of the program before they received training (October 18th to October 23rd).
- Ten phone interviews with the teachers after they attended the training sessions (November 5th to November 9th).
- Ten face-to-face interviews with the teachers at the end of the project (May 10th to June 6h).
- Ten focus groups with students at the end of the project (May 10th to June 6h). The participants were chosen by the teacher. Groups mostly consisted of four students (two boys and two girls).
- Class observations: 9 observations (2 in 5 schools, only 1 in the remaining school for late hour problems) in two waves so as to be able to observe different moments in the application of the program: first wave from November 29th to February 22nd; second wave from February 28th to May 27th.
- Teacher training observation (October 25th and 26th).

The interviews, training observations, class observations and focus groups followed scripts written by the Spanish qualitative team with inputs from other national qualitative teams. They were all carried out by one of the members of the Spanish team (Rafael López Meseguer). All of the interviews and focus groups were recorded (audio) and fully transcribed. The researcher took detailed written notes of class and training observations. All research materials were coded with AtlasTi by Rafael López Meseguer. The analysis of the materials was carried out by Juan Carlos Rodríguez.

We were also able to use the databases that contain the answers of the students and teachers of the treated and control schools to the baseline and end-line questionnaires. Both included questions of interest to the qualitative evaluation. We thank the quantitative team for letting us use the databases and for letting us give our input in devising some of those questions. Unfortunately, at the time of writing the Spanish report, Greek data were not available.

2. Baseline scenario

How citizenship is taught in the schools

Many teachers and principals think that the school can play a significant role in citizenship education. However, they usually claim that another approach would be required, either a transversal one and/or through a substantial subject. Yet, most of the teachers think that the students' families play a decisive role in their civic and moral education, so that some or many of them feel that they cannot do very much in this respect. Quite a few of the teachers also mention the role played by the peer group, either directly or through online social networks. They tend to share a strong prevention against these networks.

Most agree that the present way of teaching citizenship, centered upon the subject of Ethical Values, does not seem to meet these requirements. It involves just one hour (really, 50 minutes) per week, but its contents are many and difficult to cover along the course.

The subject is the latest incarnation of Ethics, a subject introduced in the seventies as an alternative to Religion (Catholic): secondary education students had to choose one or the other in several courses. Neither Religion nor Ethics were seen by teachers or students as part of the core curriculum, both enjoying a very low status. In Spain, this kind of subjects are called "marías", borrowing a colloquial term introduced among university students to refer to three subjects in the fifties and sixties (Physical Education, Religion and Formation of the National Spirit). An intermediate incarnation was Education for Citizenship (2006-2013), an obligatory subject which attempted to reinforce the transversal value orientations of all the subjects since the early 1990s.

The new subject also inherited the low consideration of Ethics and of these "marías" subjects. Proof of the low status of Ethical Values is that it is often used as a way to complete teachers' time dedication rather irrespectively of teachers' preparation. As a teacher said, "In many schools I have heard: 'I've got [Ethical] values, I am making the students watch a film', and that's all" (School 7). As one of the principals said, "the students label it: this is a 'maría', and then it's all over" (School 1).

Students in the 3rd course of ESO must choose between Ethical Values and Catholic Religion, which may have consequences in terms of the socio-cultural composition of the class. In schools with a substantial presence of Muslim (Moroccan) students, most of them will choose Ethical Values, which may induce a flight towards Religion on the part of some or many of the Spanish families. This may also happen if there is a significant share of students of gypsy ethnicity, as many of them may be Evangelical Christians.

Most teachers agree in their critiques of Ethical Values. The contents are too many and too wide for just one hour per week. They are too general, too theoretical, too bookish, though some teachers may be able to bring these contents nearer to the students' experiences.

Obviously, there are differences in the teaching style regarding this subject. In principle, teachers with less acquaintance with ethical or citizenship matters are more likely to follow the textbook to the letter as a guide, but other teachers (trained in Philosophy or History) are surely more prone to combine lectures (based upon the book or their own subject knowledge) with debates and, so to say, case studies. In general, as in most of the subjects, the teaching style must be a hybrid, but mostly teacher-and-textbook directed.

Yet, in the first interviews, many of the teachers claim that they try to flee from master classes ("clases magistrales") in which the teacher lectures and the students listen and take notes, and also from following the textbook too closely, and also that they make the pupils work (debate) in small or larger groups, develop their own ideas and share them with the rest of the students. The following quotes are clear enough in this respect.

"My aim is that the class is not entirely a lecture [clase magistral]. Sometimes they work in pairs, we make debates... the goal is to try to get them to participate more" (Teacher, school 1).

"I try to reduce lecturing [clase magistral] to a minimum... I really like working with projects, and, if possible, that they are interdisciplinary... I really like working with real material ... with news ... and then doing some kind of debate ... I have a website and I work with the materials that I upload... But first I almost have to teach them to speak in groups, which is complicated. If I can, I try to work with pairs, small groups, and then large groups" (Teacher, school 2).

"We work on the basis of textbooks, of which, almost by system, I usually move away... to encourage the activities [of the students] ... I try to give the students more protagonism ... I never lose sight of the thread of theme [we are dealing with], but it has to be driven by their concerns and above all by their dialogue" (Teacher, school 3).

"I am open to all [pedagogical techniques]: to any that [helps to] fulfill certain minimum goals [according to] the students' characteristics" (Teacher, school 4).

"I don't think that lecturing [clase magistral] works. Yes, I think there has to be an understanding ... of certain fundamental concepts ... But then ... First: listen to the kids' ideas. Generate debates in small groups, in larger groups, sometimes play role-playing games... watch movies and talk about them" (Teacher, school 5).

"I don't like lecturing [clase magistral]... you ask them a question, they reflect, they work in groups... that's how I've worked so far. They write what they think" (Teacher, school 7).

"[I prefer] active classes. We begin inductively: "Let's talk about such and such..." And then, the textbook, with its theoretical contents ... "All you have talked about is grounded upon...". But [students'] commitment has to come first" (Teacher, school 7).

"I don't like lecturing. Besides, these kids cannot keep attention for 50 minutes ... They work in small groups, debate ... and then share their ideas ... [There is also] some time for teacher lecturing, 5 to 10 minutes maximum" (Teacher, school 8).

"In class, after presenting a topic, [the students] work in groups so that they first debate in small groups, extract their own ideas or agree on certain things. Then you can have a whole-class debate... This is not like a social sciences subject: 'this was like that, full period'" (Teacher, school 9).

This sort of hybrid, mixed or eclectic methodology not leaning towards teachers' lectures is to a great extent corroborated by the answers of all the teachers that took part in the ACT project to the questions posed in the teacher questionnaire designed by the quantitative evaluation team (see table 1). As the table shows teacher lectures are the second least frequent practice, only above role-playing games or situational exercises. Working in small groups and whole-class

debates seem more preferred by the teachers. It seems that the Spanish teachers are the most used to non-traditional techniques (data not shown).

Table 1. In general, how often do you implement the following teaching practices with your classes?

	Never or almost never	Sometimes	Often	Always or almost always
Students working in small groups	4.9	21.3	57.4	16.4
Students' debate or whole-class discussion	1.6	24.6	54.1	19.7
Activities involving the use of ICT	0.0	31.1	42.6	26.2
Students vote to take a decision about the class	3.3	31.1	50.8	14.8
Students' oral presentation	3.3	32.8	49.2	14.8
Students performing research tasks	3.3	44.3	37.7	14.8
Teacher lecture	13.1	39.3	37.7	9.8
Role-playing game, situational exercises	14.8	49.2	29.5	6.6

N=56.

Source: teachers' end-line questionnaire.

As regards how the school as a whole deals with citizenship issues, it seems that most of the schools have developed and applied plans to deal with living together problems (violence among students, bullying, disruptive students, and the like). Several of the regional educational administrations have fostered these programs in the last years, but they may also respond to each school specific circumstances. Many of the schools are experimenting with approaches that include mediation as a strategy for conflict resolution. They train teachers and students to play a formal role of mediators. Principals are clearly satisfied with this approach.

School climate

All of this does not mean that principals think their schools have substantial living together or disciplinary problems. Only in one of the ten schools do they seem rather serious, which may have to do with there being a substantial share of student coming from "unstructured" and/or low economic status families. Neither do the principals or teachers in schools with a high percentage of foreign students see racist attitudes or behaviors as frequent among the "nationals". Yet many of them seem very alert towards what is happening to their students within the online social networks in which they participate. They also tend to share a strong prevention against the use of mobile phones at the school.

Some of the schools also have welcome programs for new students, most of which have just finished their primary education in another school and are joining a world of (much) older teenagers.

Finally, most, if not all, of the schools have signed agreements with local institutions so that representatives of the latter come periodically to the schools to give speeches on bullying, illegal drugs, the risks of online social networks, affective education, vial education, and the like. Most principals refer, approvingly, to actors such as policemen (National Police, Guardia Civil), but also people from the social services of the city council, the Red Cross and a variety of voluntary associations. The intensity of the collaboration with outside institutions varies across schools, with only a few of them keeping strong links with voluntary associations, and most following more standard patterns of relationships (with the police, the city council...).

So, most of those relationships involve some external actor coming to the schools and not the students acting outside the school, and do not usually deal with the fate of vulnerable people

outside the school, but rather with socially correct values (gender equality, gender diversity...) and specific adolescent problems.

3. Teacher training

All teachers took their training course in Madrid, in October 25/26th. The course took one and a half days. The trainers were four. Not all of them had previous experience with citizenship education training, and one had apparently no previous experience as teacher trainer. In fact, some of the teachers in our sample of schools complained that some of the trainers seemed not to master the subject (citizenship education) and/or the procedures about which they had to train the teachers. A couple of teachers also thought that some of the trainers lacked knowledge of how lower secondary education classrooms really work. One teacher remarked that the trainers did not seem to be part of the same team. Moreover, it seems that one of the trainers did not follow that closely ACT recommendations in her teaching. Two of them recognize not having had much time to prepare their interventions.

Trainers mostly got positive evaluations from the teachers, according to the survey prepared by the Ministry that they fulfilled after the training session. Yet evaluations were not very high: the mean score for the satisfaction with contents of the course translates into a 6.6 in a 0 to 10 scale, and into a 6.9 for the satisfaction with what was learned regarding citizenship education. These scores are very much in line with the mean scores on their satisfaction with the ACT project obtained through the teachers' end-line questionnaire (which translates into a 6.8 in the same scale).

Teacher training mostly covered all issues, in general. As seen by the teachers, the main weaknesses of training were its short-time, and that is was too long on general issues but too short on more ACT-specific issues. Teachers regarded the manual as useful, though they would have liked to have it before the sessions, and they complained about it being in printed form and not having been rightly paged.

Online follow-up was scarcely used. There were some initial problems with the Procomún platform, which were later resolved by transitioning to a Moodle platform. These problems, however, may have dissuaded many teachers from a frequent use of online counseling. In fact, 58% say that they have used it seldom or never. Besides, just 42% think that online help was very or completely useful. They mostly regarded the platform as a place to share experiences and not so much to get a more profound pedagogical training. In general, though, they valued the opportunity to be able to solve doubts with the Ministry of Education people.

4. Implementation of the program

4.1. Institutional, spatial, and time constraints and opportunities

Taking into account that the schools chose to take part in the ACT project, it was expectable that no big institutional constraints were to be met. Rather, the teachers mostly speak of favorable conditions. Some of them have benefitted from their schools' tradition of involvement with active citizenship matters. Others have received help from the schools "guidance department", and some have received help from voluntary associations active in the neighborhood. Help has also come from other teachers: 65% of the teachers say that other teachers, not involved in the ACT project, have helped the students implement it.

These favorable conditions do not mean that the teachers or the students were able to dispense with the official institutional channels or procedures required by certain activities or decisions,

such as those involving relationships with institutional actors in the environment of the school (it requires acting through the principal) or relationships with other classrooms. In any case, with two exceptions, the projects, as we will see, have involved no relationship with the environment, not even with the primary schools of the area, as was initially envisaged in one of the projects.

According to the teachers, the main constraint they faced in implementing the program was the character of the subject (Ethical values) within which most of the experiences took place (some used their tutoring time) and its status within the curriculum. Ethical values takes just one hour (50 minutes per week). Most teachers agreed that it did not allow for enough time to develop a project like ACT: one hour per week along not that many weeks, which can be fewer because of teacher absences (illness, other school obligations), holidays, and so on.

In fact, only 18% of the teachers surveyed through the end-line questionnaire thought that the time recommended for the project was enough—which, nonetheless, contrast with 31% of the French teachers and 50% of the English teachers sharing this opinion.

In general, time limits, rather than blocking the projects, led some schools to not fully complying with the plans. This shows that not every teacher dealt with time constraints in the same way. Some managed to finish the project, some did not. Some rushed their students, others managed to get them to spend extra time (afternoons) in the project. The same applies to the students: most of them worked in the project only in classroom time, but the most involved surely did substantial amounts of individual work at home and some collaborative work at the school in the afternoons.

Being a low status subject must have also impinged upon the degree of involvement of some / many of the students. The students usually pay much less attention to Ethical values than to other subjects that are more central in the curriculum, like Spanish language, Math and the like, especially in times of exams. In cases that spending (extra) time or effort in the project conflicted with those other subjects, many of the students resolved it favoring the latter.

4.2. Students' abilities and past experience of citizenship education

Many of the students must have taken the Ethical values subject in previous years. It had been working as an alternative to Religion since 2014, and all students both in Primary Education (6 to 11 years) and in the previous two years of Secondary Education (1st and 2nd courses of ESO) had to choose between one or the other. It should be presumed that most of them had taken this subject in four of five of their school years.

Regarding the abilities of the students to engage in learning practices more akin to a learning environment fitted to develop active citizenship attitudes and behaviors, we have the information provided by the teachers in their answers to the baseline questionnaire (see table 2).

In principle, it seems that these practices would be much more frequent among Spanish students than among the French or English. This would be, in part, the result of somewhat different pedagogical techniques.

According to the Spanish teachers, there are substantial proportions of students able to take initiatives or used to it. A third claim that most of their students, nearly all or all of them suggest class activities, but only one fifth of the English and one tenth of the French make that claim. In the same vein, more than a third of the Spanish teachers refer such a high level of initiative in terms of negotiating the goals of the class with the teacher, a proportion that is much lower

among the French and the English (both around one tenth). The differences are also obvious regarding the proposition of topics for class discussions.

The pattern of student behavior and attitudes seems not so variable among countries with regard to the question of dealing with the diversity of opinions. Wide majorities of teachers in the three countries claim that a majority of, nearly all or all their students know how to listen to and respect opinions even if different from their own, freely express their opinions even if different from those of the majority, and feel comfortable in class debates because they feel their views will be respected.

Table 2. In your lessons with this class, how many students... (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
... suggest class activities?			
None or hardly any	6.6	20.0	19.0
Some of them	60.7	70.0	61.9
Most of them	26.2	8.0	9.5
All or nearly all	6.6	2.0	9.5
... negotiate the learning objectives with the teacher?			
None or hardly any	23.0	38.8	61.9
Some of them	41.0	51.0	28.6
Most of them	26.2	10.2	9.5
All or nearly all	9.8		
... propose topics/issues for class discussion?			
None or hardly any	6.6	36.7	14.3
Some of them	37.7	46.9	57.1
Most of them	42.6	14.3	28.6
All or nearly all	13.1	2.0	
... know how to listen to and respect opinions even if different from their own?			
None or hardly any	1.6		
Some of them	26.2	14.3	9.5
Most of them	47.5	81.6	38.1
All or nearly all	24.6	4.1	52.4
... freely express their opinion even if different from those of the majority?			
None or hardly any	1.6		
Some of them	14.8	36.7	33.3
Most of them	52.5	55.1	28.6
All or nearly all	31.1	8.2	38.1
feel comfortable during class discussions because they know their views will be respected?			
None or hardly any	3.3		
Some of them	16.4	25.0	19.0
Most of them	42.6	66.7	47.6
All or nearly all	37.7	8.3	33.3
<i>N</i>	55	48/49	21

Source: Teachers baseline questionnaire.

So, it seems there was more room for improvement regarding taking initiatives (being active) than in getting used to a diversity of opinions, especially in France and England.

4.3. Toolkits and protocols

The implementation of the foreseen procedures was mostly as envisaged regarding the lesson plans, the random formation of students' groups, the voting procedures, the choice of the most voted project (sometimes blending it with elements of the non-chosen projects), and the setting-up of function-specialized groups. However, very few schools used the portfolio and they did not use it systematically.

According to the teachers' interviews the implementation of the procedures was mostly as foreseen, but their answers to the end-line questionnaire give a much more nuanced view.

Only 48% say that they stuck completely or quite a lot to the protocol proposed to them during the training as regards the preparation phase of the project, but this assessment is shared by 94% and 75% of the French and English teachers, respectively. Besides, 9% of the Spanish teachers recognized that they followed the protocol only a little or not at all (table 3).

Table 3. During the preparation phase, to what extent did you stick to the protocol which was proposed to you during the training? (percentages)

Not at all	1.9
A little	7.4
Moderately	42.6
Quite a lot	22.2
Completely	25.9
<i>N</i>	54

Source: teachers' end-line questionnaire.

Establishing small students' groups in the initial phase of the project was also quite generalized, but 15% of the teachers said they did not form them, which contrasts with the figure of 2% of the French teachers and not so much with a 10% figure for the English teachers. In most cases groups were formed randomly, but 12% of the teachers that formed groups said they established them in another way (only 2% of the French teachers and 6% of the English teachers chose to do so).

In sum, it seems that the protocols could have been more widely followed in Spain. Maybe the guidelines were not so clearly stated in the training sessions and/or the specific circumstances in the classrooms counseled not to apply the protocol so faithfully.

Almost all of the teachers (98%) stated that their students had voted to choose the project to be implemented. The project put into practice was then the one chosen by the majority of students, but sometimes it was blended with elements of the non-chosen projects. Function-specialized groups were set up, mainly not joined by students with previous friendship affinities.

One of the tools, the portfolio, did not work at all as expected. Three fifths of the teachers did not answer the question about the frequency of filling the portfolio, and among those that answered, 58% said that they used it never or a little. Neither the French nor the English teachers seem to have used it as envisaged.

4.4. The active citizenship projects

The projects and their degree of success

Table 4 collects the projects developed in our sample of schools, and details to which degree they were completed.

Table 4. The projects

<i>School</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Initial project</i>	<i>Results</i>
1 (Castile – La Mancha)	Cultural diversity (immigration)	Organization of an end of course cultural celebration	Successful
2 (Madrid)	Other (sexual harassment)	Awareness raising campaign among the younger secondary education students of the school about sexual harassment among teenagers: video published in social networks	Unsuccessful: the video was not completed and so there was no campaign
3 (Madrid)	Other (intimate partner violence)	Web forum for helping, counseling people affected by this violence	Mostly successful
4 (Castile & Leon)	Fighting discrimination (ethnic minorities)	Short theatrical play recorded in video to raise awareness in the school about religious and cultural discrimination	Unsuccessful: the video was not recorded
5 (Balearic Islands)	Other (violence among teenagers)	Several activities regarding violence among teenagers: survey on violence victimization for younger secondary education students, video denouncing school bullying, video denouncing adults' stereotypes on adolescents, questionnaire to discover sexist behaviors among students and writing and recording a rap about it	Mostly unsuccessful: no questionnaire on victimization, no video on bullying, no video on stereotypes, two dynamics with students instead of survey on sexist behavior, rap written but not recorded
6 (Madrid)	Fight against discrimination	Awareness raising campaign against discrimination involving presentations in the school, placards in the school and a video	Mostly unsuccessful: not all presentations were carried out, placards are not very visible, the final edition of the video was made by the teacher
7 (Castile – La Mancha)	Social inclusion (disabled people)	Petition campaign to get the local council to change the language used to refer to disability in its web page (functional diversity instead of disability)	Successful, though not all the students took part
8 (Castile – La Mancha)	Other (machismo)	Present <i>micromachismos</i> with real experiences (videos with “real” people interviews), powerpoints with information	Rather successful. Two videos but not with “real” people. One with student-actors playing roles in a story of a heterosexual couple from initial falling in love to the emergence of male to female violence. One denouncing machismo in today’s song lyrics.

Table 4. The projects

<i>School</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Initial project</i>	<i>Results</i>
9 (Madrid)	Other (alcohol consumption in teenagers)	Awareness raising campaign among the school students and nearby shops regarding the dangers of alcohol consumption in minors	Successful
10 (Murcia)	Other (environmental problems)	Environmental campaign in another (primary) school	Mostly successful, but activities in their own school, not in another
	Social inclusion (elderly people)	Intergenerational exchange in a retirement home	Mostly successful, but the exchange took place in the school, not in the retirement home (only one day)

The themes of the projects in our sample of schools covered the three categories considered in ACT: fight against discrimination (2), cultural diversity (1) and social inclusion (2). Yet seven of them did not fit clearly in these categories, dealing rather with aspects of violence among teenagers, gender relations, also among adolescents, and the dangers of alcohol consumption.

The projects were mainly related to the public of teenagers, and not necessarily from outside the school. Not directly dealing with adolescents' experiences were a project which involved a celebration of cultural (international) diversity in which families could take part; another clearly directed to raising awareness of the nuances of the language used to refer to disabled people, aimed at the general population of the town; and a third one which involved paying attention to elderly people living in nursing homes.

The products were mainly communication products (videos, plays, awareness raising campaigns). Image was the preferred tool, rather than actions involving real people with problems. Therefore, they do not look like the kind of experiences that can change the behavior of the participants, for instance by helping them to develop an *ethos* of compromise, of helping or caring for people in need. They mostly look like exercises in participation in a public debate that takes place mainly through audiovisual means. Indeed, one of the projects in which active citizenship was most evident (the students manage to contact and have a meeting with the mayor) also involved public discourse (changing the language about disabilities) and not helping others directly.

It looks as if the projects reflect the signs of the times. This was corroborated by the students themselves. Reflecting upon the origins of the projects they recognized that the problems involved (racism, discrimination, intimate partner violence...) were not common nor evident in their schools. Instead, they referred to problems that frequently appear in mass media messages. Of course, there were exceptions to this rule. Moreover, the choice of the projects was also influenced by schools' actors (teachers, counselors, the students' own experience), by the school tradition regarding citizenship issues, and by external actors (an external psychologist in the case of school 3).

The projects were not very ambitious: many consisted of just recording a video aimed at some very local, mostly school-level, distribution. In spite of this, not all of them were fully completed. In two of them, the students did not manage to record the main product, a video exemplifying in one case sexual harassment among teenagers and in another, sexual and/or cultural discrimination. In a third one, which involved a variety of means of persuasion on violence among teenagers, most of them were not carried out (a video on bullying, another on stereotypes, a rap, which was written but not recorded...) or were replaced by other techniques

(two dynamics with students instead of a survey on sexist behavior). In a fourth one, some of the foreseen presentations were not carried out, and the final edition of the main product, a video, was not made by the students but by the teacher. Most of the projects that could be considered a success involved some reframing in practice, which usually turned the projects into less ambitious endeavors: for instance, by not using real cases (real people) in a video and instead recording students acting, by celebrating the meeting with elderly people at the school and not at their nursing home, or by carrying out the activities at the students' own school and not in another, as was foreseen.

The clearly successful projects had to do, in one case (web page for counseling teenagers), with the school tradition of involvement in active citizenship causes, with a very entrepreneurial teacher, and with the influence of a speech given by an external psychologist; and in a second one (changing language on disability in the town council web pages), with a very entrepreneurial student, which had previous knowledge on the issues at hand. The rest of the successful projects did not seem to require anything special on the part of teachers or students.

In general, the teachers in the treated schools have mixed feelings regarding the completion of the projects. Half of them (50%) think they were successfully achieved quite a lot or completely, but 17% seem to believe they were not achieved, and 33% only assign the projects a moderate level of achievement (table 5). There are not big differences in the opinions of the teachers in Spain, France and England.

Table 5. Teachers: to what extent do you think that the project was successfully achieved? (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Not at all	5.6	4.1	10
A little	11.1	8.2	
Moderately	33.3	30.6	55
Quite a lot	27.8	24.5	30
Completely	22.2	32.7	5
<i>N</i>	54	49	20

Source: teachers' end-line questionnaire.

The views of the students are not directly comparable with those of the teachers. In Spain they tend to agree that the projects were successfully achieved (table 6). Again, there are not substantial differences in the distribution of opinions in the three countries.

Table 6. Students: agreement with "I think that the project was successfully achieved" (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Strongly disagree	4.2	6.7	7,2
Disagree a little	11.4	12.8	23,1
Agree a little	51.8	42.0	41,5
Strongly agree	32.7	38.5	28,2
<i>N</i>	624	703	277

Source: students' end-line questionnaire.

Phases: preparation, development, evolution

As we have already observed, the protocols were generally followed as regards the formation of random groups for choosing the project and functional groups for implementing it. So, the most voted projects were chosen and either kept as such or reformed at the teacher's initiative by including elements of the "losing" projects, so as to improve the involvement of the members of the losing projects groups.

In terms of re-appropriation of the projects by the whole class, variation was the norm. Sometimes students from all the original groups got involved, but other times the degree of involvement was clearly higher in the case of the students that sponsored the winning project.

In terms of the evolution of the projects, as we have observed before, the end result was nearly always different from the initial conception.

However, most of the Spanish teachers (82%) tend to think that the achieved project was completely or mostly similar to the initial one that was voted by the students, in line with large majorities of teachers in France and England sharing this opinion (table 7).

Table 7. Teachers: to what extent does the achieved project fit the initial one, as voted by students at the beginning of the year? (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Completely	27.8	32.7	15
Mostly	53.7	42.9	60
A little	16.7	22.4	25
Not at all	1.9	2.0	
<i>N</i>	54	49	20

Source: teachers' end-line questionnaire.

Students' involvement

Regarding the involvement of students, the main finding of our research points to a great variation across schools and across students. In some of the schools, student involvement was real and rather wide (never "universal"), which characterizes many of the groups with successful projects. Some of them, however, were carried to term because of a more intense involvement of a substantial minority (or slight majority of the students). Other schools were characterized by a clearly lower level of student involvement.

The results of the teachers' end-line questionnaire corroborate these findings. More than half of the teachers (56%) say that most of the students or all or nearly all were seriously engaged in the project, but 44% say that only some (35%), none or hardly any (9%) were seriously involved (table 8). Another measure of students' involvement is provided by the teachers' assessment of the time those students spent on the project outside the hours officially dedicated to it: only 36% think that this applies to all, nearly all or most of them. The opinions collected in table 8 tell a story of very similar students' involvement across countries, with the understandable exception of England as regards the time devoted to the project outside of official hours.

Table 8. Teachers: how many students in your class... (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Seriously engaged in the project in general?			
None or hardly any	9.3		
Some of them	35.2	45.8	45
Most of them	33.3	35.4	45
All or nearly all	22.2	18.8	10
Spent time working on the project, outside of the hours officially dedicated to it?			
None or hardly any	22.6	6.1	25
Some of them	41.5	63.3	70
Most of them	30.2	24.5	5
All or nearly all	5.7	6.1	
<i>N</i>	53/54	48	20

Source: teachers' end-line questionnaire.

In general, less school-oriented students tended to involve much less in the program (with some interesting exceptions), and more school-oriented students tended to involve more (again, with exceptions).

Sometimes, students with low grades found in group work an opportunity to apply practical abilities not usually taken into account in the official curriculum. More involved students carried out most of the practical work, but they had difficulties in leading other students, needing the teacher to carry on instructions.

Resistance elements

A large majority of the teachers in our sample had a very favorable attitude towards participatory methodologies of the kind tested in the ACT program, especially with regard to subjects like Ethical values.

Yet, not all the teachers took to the task of changing the classroom environment in the same way. Many of them had volunteered to participate in the ACT program, but at least one of them was new to the school and had to cope with a way of teaching she probably would not have chosen in the first place. In fact, she confided to us that she had ended the project exhausted, and that it would have been better if the project had been carried out by someone with experience in the methodology (school 6). Most of the rest began the projects with a very positive attitude and the will to do a good job, but one of them was incapable of surmounting the obstacles posed by a very difficult classroom (school 5).

Regarding the students' permeability to the new environment, there were two main attitudes and/or behaviors. On the one hand, some were sincerely permeable because they were interested in learning in any possible way or because they were self-disciplined enough, or because, seldom, they found a new way of doing things more akin to their aptitudes (such as practical abilities). Some may not like group work but nonetheless, because they are "good" students or because they prefer that any kind of work is well done, they try to make the projects succeed.

On the other hand, some students were opportunistically permeable: they adapted because so they could pass the grade with less effort and/or they could hide their lack of involvement among the many.

In Math or other subjects, you don't have the creative possibility of choosing your way. There they are: the blackboard, the curriculum, the exercises... In this case [ACT] you do nothing, but you have an advantage: there is no responsibility (...) because you don't have to tell your colleagues whether you are working or not (...) There is one student who just doesn't care what their classmates thought about him doing nothing. (Teacher, school 4.)

Their lower effort did not go totally unnoticed, but it was not easy either for the teacher or for their classmates to make them work harder.

This opportunistic permeability was not limited to those least dedicated students. Many were conscious that, de facto, the real effort demanded by the new way of doing things could be lower than that demanded by traditional classes. A great deal of time they just had to talk to each other about the issue at hand, not studying textbook materials or writing exercises. And they could also take advantage of those debates for conversations about matters totally unrelated to the project, as we could ascertain in a couple of class observations.

Some of the students of the best adapted to traditional methods (including individual evaluation) showed some reticence towards group work in which individual contributions are lost in evaluation, but nonetheless they were usually the most involved. Some found the new way of working very interesting or attractive, especially vis à vis master classes or, worse, just writing down what the teacher says.

I like projects, because we do not only ... write down [what the teacher says], do homework and things like that. It is more fun, because writing down what the teacher says is not fun at all. And I like helping people with things that empathize with you. (Student, school 5.)

[Group work] is better than working alone.

It's not boring.

In groups [things are] more dynamic. (Several students, school 10.)

The research has also uncovered some resistances to the implementation of the project, which fit into two main types: collective and individual.

On the one hand, in school 4 the students proposed to give up the project and go back to the traditional way of doing things. The teacher managed to persuade them to talk about it and decide to go on with the project through a vote. They finally resumed the project, though, as happened with other projects, it was not completed.

On the other hand, individual resistance was rather extended, taking several forms: shirking tasks, paying scant attention to other classmates or to their work, jokes, low implication, etc. We guess this is not that unusual in lower secondary education in Spain, but the new learning environment may have made these behaviors more likely or, at least, more obvious.

The role of sanctions and discipline

The attempted new learning environment implied in the ACT project faces also obstacles related to several kinds of students' inadequate behavior. In this regard, the most problematic is the existence, in several of the schools analyzed, of a substantial proportion of students who have

worked little or almost nothing. This results necessarily in little effects of the program on the low-effort students but also on the rest, who will be tempted to reduce their implication if not everybody works for the common goals of the project.

Obviously, behaviors or circumstances that obstacle any kind of normal work in the classroom, either traditional or project-oriented, also influence negatively on the application of the program: too noisy conversations, music played at a high volume, talking about things not related to the project at hand, paying no attention, etc. According to our class observations this kind of behaviors or circumstances were not that unusual, which is confirmed by the teachers' answers to several questions on the end-line questionnaire related to class disruptions (see table 9). However, it seems that the level of disruption was clearly higher in France.

In Spain, the degree of disruption in the class, as seen by the teacher, seems to be negatively related to the degree in which the project was achieved, mostly because of the mean lower level of achievement recognized by the teachers who reported a high level of disruption (in terms of less pleasant learning atmosphere, more students interruptions or higher level of disruptive noise), but this relationship is not observed in France or England (data not shown).

Table 9. Teachers. Agreement with statements about their class (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
When the lesson begins, I have to wait quite a long time for students to quieten down			
Disagree a lot	8.2	2.0	66.7
Disagree a little	32.8	20.0	23.8
Agree a little	50.8	40.0	9.5
Agree a lot	8.2	38.0	
Students in this class take care to create a pleasant learning atmosphere			
Disagree a lot	6.7		
Disagree a little	26.7	40.0	9.5
Agree a little	55.0	54.0	33.3
Agree a lot	11.7	6.0	57.1
I lose quite a lot of time because of students interrupting the lesson			
Disagree a lot	16.4	4.0	42.9
Disagree a little	42.6	18.0	28.6
Agree a little	32.8	38.0	28.6
Agree a lot	8.2	40.0	
There is much disruptive noise in this classroom			
Disagree a lot	16.4	2.0	47.6
Disagree a little	45.9	26.0	38.1
Agree a little	31.1	42.0	14.3
Agree a lot	6.6	30.0	
<i>N</i>	<i>55/56</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>21</i>

Source: teachers' end-line questionnaire.

In order to lower the level of disruptions and/or to get the students' more involved in the project the teachers have usually resorted to positive incentives, mostly by encouraging or congratulating them for a job well done. Some have chosen to keep evaluation at the individual level, so as to reward those who have really worked in the projects, and some have tried to reward that commitment with prizes.

Eight or nine of the thirteen students have pushed the project forward, but the rest just followed in the slipstream of the former... I have eventually taken that into account and judged it. I have sometimes recriminated them, letting them know that I did not see [this behavior] as just, that it was not normal... When I have arrived at this point, it's because

other kind of motivations have been fruitless... Now I am evaluating individually each portfolio... and it will reflect in their personal grades. (Teacher, school 7.)

This may have contributed to maintain their commitment, but it seems that the most important incentives for the most involved students was to be doing something different in which their initiative counted, and which was taking shape before their eyes.

We have not been able to observe direct sanctions, beyond telling students to quiet down or some reprimands for inadequate behaviors. Sanctions and other teacher interventions to maintain order or to get low effort students to work more may or not lead to a more authoritarian environment. Yet, as we could ascertain through some of our focus groups, the most involved students expect and welcome this kind of interventions, as long as they (or the students in general) cannot solve problems of discipline or insufficient effort just by themselves. They do not want to be totally left to their own devices: they expect at least a minimum of guidance and discipline coming from above.

I think that the role of the teacher is very present in the project, because...

In the sense that he is pulling us.

Yes, because though there are students that lead, [the less involved] will pay them less attention than to the teacher. (Three students, school 7).

It is not that some of us were not able to do anything. It is that they did not want to do anything. So, we sent them to the group in charge of collecting information. At least, this is something relatively easy.

There were too many of us in some groups, in video, for instance: a lot volunteered to join this group. But in other groups there were people in excess, but just because they were not doing anything. So... instead of us choosing groups, it might have been better that the teacher had assigned us to the groups, according to our skills. (Two students, school 8)

In one of our schools it seems clear that the teacher did not manage to exert the expected authority, probably for having to deal with a particularly problematic group—which translated in one of the most clearly unsuccessful projects (school 5).

5. Impact of the project on the teachers and on the students

On the teachers

Obviously, the program had to have some substantial effects in terms of the pedagogical relationship between teacher and students, at least in the short term. The program involved focusing teaching and learning upon a single pedagogical technique, in which students had to work in groups to decide which practical project they would carry on, self-select into functional groups, work autonomously in these groups, and try to get the project done, all with some teacher guidance but a low level of teacher intervention. Many of the teachers, as they recognized in our interviews and as they reflect in the answers to the end-line questionnaire, had already used techniques that implied more autonomous work on the part of the students, like project-work, but not as thoroughly, and always mixing them with more teacher-directed work.

Thus, the point of departure (teachers' practices and styles before the intervention) was a hybrid of "traditional" techniques, such as master classes, use of the textbook, a more or less close following of the details of the curriculum, exams and the like, and not so traditional techniques, like group work and debates.

The point of arrival was conceived as a sort of radical departure, which would have led to a pedagogical relationship almost exclusively centered upon self-directed practical learning and autonomous work. In reality, the point of arrival was another hybrid, a mix that consisted of a lesser presence but not absence of traditional techniques; less teacher intervention, but probably more than envisaged in the program; different types of teacher interventions; and more students' choice and autonomous work. Needless to say, this new mix varied substantially across schools, as this report has already hinted at.

Leaving aside the issue of the variable degree of involvement of the students across and within schools, the experiences ranged from a rather highly autonomous students' work in a few cases to some kind of autonomous work that required substantial teacher intervention.

As said above, teacher intervention did not take the form of master classes, exams, questions and answers and the like, but rather involved: general and specific orientation about the initial collection of projects and about the finally chosen project, influence in the decision of blending the winning projects with elements of the losing ones, influence in the setting-up of functional groups, supervision of the work done and to be done, solving students doubts, pressure to meet deadlines, proposing and/or deciding about extra work, reminding the students that they had to work autonomously, exercises of authority to keep order in the classroom, etc.

Below we collect some examples of these kind of interventions, which seems to characterize a majority of the teachers in our sample of schools.

It has not always been necessary for me to establish guidelines. It is true that, to elaborate the schematics [of the projects], for example, I reviewed them, gave [the students] some orientations and opinions. When they presented them, before the debate, I also told each group what I thought they could improve in order to better organize their speech, their proposals, justifications. (Teacher, school 1)

Each one of us put forward some ideas (...) which we told to the teacher. Yet the initiative of, let's say, begin to write down the minutes of the debate or things like that..., it was more like he was telling us what to do. (Student, school 1)

So, the interviews they have done are not especially relevant. I have always had to be on top of them, pressuring them to deliver, to show me the lists of questions, to talk with me about whether they were adequate or inappropriate... (Teacher, school 2)

The teacher has solved our doubts (...) The teacher said whether [the questions for the interviews] were ok or not. (Student, school 2)

I think that the only time I rallied them, was not really a reprimand, but almost was: "do not let it fall. It is a theme that you have chosen, it is a theme that you are doing, it is something that you are going to defend. Passivity is your enemy. Nobody else. Your enemy is not me. Obstacles are not set up by the school or the educational system, but your craving for sofa. Move! Do it but do it now. I am not going to be the one who does it for you. And it worked. That harangue worked. (Teacher, school 3)

It's they who act. I only propose ideas, make them see the problems, and set the pace. And that's all. (Teacher, school 3)

My role was that of guiding and insisting on them going on with their work (...) To this group that, as I told you, has not worked well, I gave ideas (...): work on songs, work on this or that (...) To the rest I insisted: come on, work, don't talk, don't laugh. Show me the questions you have written... (Teacher, school 4)

The teacher tried to let us organize ourselves, but she has played an important part, she has had to be on top of us. (Student, school 8).

He supervised what we were doing, and at the end of the class, he asked about what we had done and asked us to give him the information we had collected, and all that. (Student, school 9).

Sometimes, the tight time schedule has prevented the teacher to cultivate personal relationships with her students, as she had done in previous years:

"This year you have not listened to us (...)". And I say: "you're right, but I haven't had [time]". Besides, I've played the role of an ogre, of a witch: "Go on, go on, go on". I mean, such a beautiful project needs time. (Teacher, school 7)

In one of the cases teacher intervention went so far as not just to help giving the final touch to some of the products of the project, but to make these products herself. This happened in school 6: the teacher did the final edition of the video denouncing discrimination.

In fact, many of the Spanish students recognized in their answers to the end-line questionnaire a high level of teacher intervention in the tasks carried out by the students. Three fifths (62%) assessed it as very high or rather high, and less than a tenth (8%) thought that it had been low (table 10). It seems that the perceived level of teacher intervention was higher in Spain than in France or England, but substantial proportions of French and English students also claim that teacher intervention in their tasks was high.

Table 10. Students. Assessment of the degree of teacher intervention in the tasks carried out by the students (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Very low	4.3	9.9	15.4
Rather low	4.0	16.8	16.8
Middle level	25.0	29.2	37.9
Rather high	33.7	23.9	19.6
Very high	28.4	20.3	10.3
Don't know	4.6	-	-
<i>N</i>	624	607	214

Source: students' end-line questionnaire.

As seen, teachers usually tended to incite and "push" the students so that they stuck to the timetable. Sometimes they were very insistent in this regard, as many of them recognize. In spite of the teachers' encouragement, the completion of the project depended mostly upon students' effort, work and capacity for self-organization, which varied from school to school, with the degree of peacefulness of unruliness of the class, the degree of ambition of the project, time limits, and, as said at the beginning, the clash of the subject with the requirements posed by other subjects (mostly because of exams), the leadership capabilities of the teacher and/or the school tradition with this kind of projects.

Teacher interventions may have been consequential in Spain in terms of the success of the projects, maybe more than in England or France. This conclusion derives from our interviews with teachers and students, but also, more clearly, from a simple analysis of the students' end-line questionnaire data. As regards Spanish students, the belief that the project had been successfully achieved (measured by the percentage that strongly agreed with the statement) was probably more extended among those that reported a high level of teacher intervention than among the rest of the students (table 11). Neither in France nor in England is this association obvious.

Table 11. Students. Percentage who strongly agree that the project was successfully achieved according to the perceived level of teacher interventionism

	Spain	France	England
Teacher interventionism			
Very low	26.9	60.0	42.4
Rather low	20.0	44.1	25.0
Intermediate	20.0	33.9	22.5
Rather high	34.0	31.7	23.8
Very high	43.8	46.7	40.9
Total	32.7	40.3	28.2

Source: students' end-line questionnaire.

The degree of change in teachers' practices and their degree of "interventionism" depended on their previous teaching style, their views on student-centered practice, their capacity to manage the new environment, their interests, their previous experience with the subject, and, most significantly, on the type and/or behavior of students, which could be more or less prone to project work.

It is difficult to say whether the changes analyzed above contributed to establishing a new learning environment. To begin with, we are not sure whether any significant learning took place. In any case, the plausible influence of the experience in changing the learning environment of the school or of the subject under consideration (Ethical values) must have been very low. The changes took place in one subject (or one timeslot) among many, which does not necessarily fit with the rest, nor with the grading system or the diverse demands on students and teachers.

Yet, the experience can contribute to a new hybridization in the teaching style of the teachers that took part in the program. None of our interviewees will go on working the same way (only through projects and autonomous group work), but some of them claim they will use several of the learned techniques in the future. Against the full adoption of the new techniques likely go the teachers' perceptions of the requisites imposed by the official curriculum, their views of the students' predispositions towards the techniques, and the teachers' self-regard as not being totally ready to implement such a different way of teaching.

In our sample of schools, the level of teacher satisfaction ranged from total enthusiasm ("I had a great time. I have enjoyed it a lot, because I have learned, which I believe is a great prize for the teachers", school 3) to a certain desperation for not being able to carry out the project and for the obstacles to be surmounted, which had psychological consequences on the teacher ("the project has caused tension and anxiety in me", school 5). In the total number of schools that took part in ACT, the first kind of opinions were more frequent than the latter, so that, in general, the level of teacher satisfaction was medium to high: 52.7% liked completely or quite a lot participating in the project, and just 10.9% liked it a little or not at all (see table 12). If "not at

all” equals 0 in a 0 to 10 scale, and “completely” equals 10, with the corresponding values for the intermediate opinions, the mean level of teacher satisfaction in Spain was 6.76, which seems lower than the level in France (8.52) and similar to that in England (6.88).

Table 12. Teachers. Overall, to what extent did you like participating in this project? (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Not at all	1.9		
A little	9.3		5
Moderately	35.2	12.2	30
Quite a lot	24.1	34.7	50
Completely	29.6	53.1	15
<i>N</i>	54	49	20

Source: Teachers' end-line questionnaire

In Spain teachers' satisfaction seems to be associated mostly with the specifics of the implementation and the success of the projects, but also with certain predispositions of the teachers.² The strongest correlate of their satisfaction is their assessment of the degree in which the project was successfully achieved. In a second place we find their assessment of the degree of students' involvement, their perception of the degree in which the final project resembles the initial one, and their satisfaction with online help provided by the Ministry. But satisfaction is also related to how often they do implement a couple of teaching practices that involved more autonomous students' work: work in small groups, role-playing games. This suggests that previous teaching style is also a factor of teacher satisfaction regarding ACT.

On the students

In general terms, according to their teachers and to the students themselves, the students in our sample of schools liked to participate in ACT, though both recognize that there are differences between the most and the least involved students. These differences are probably reflected in the distribution of answers to a question in the end-line questionnaire on whether the student enjoyed participating in the project. A large majority (88.6%) shares a favorable opinion, for they agree a little or strongly with the statement “I really enjoyed...” (table 13). Yet, only 32.9% agree strongly. The levels of agreement with the statement were very similar in France and England.

Table 13. Students. Agreement with "I really enjoyed participating in this project" (percentages)

	Spain	France	England
Strongly disagree	4.9	5.1	7.2
Disagree a little	7.3	8.5	15.1
Agree a little	56.1	42.1	43.9
Strongly agree	31.6	44.4	33.8
<i>N</i>	629	708	278

Source: students' end-line questionnaire.

Obviously, our evaluation cannot ascertain long-terms effects neither in terms of the general or specific learning capabilities or knowledge of the students nor in terms of their civic competences. Yet, the interviews with the teachers and with the students suggests several ways

² We have calculated Somers D (a measure of the strength of association between ordinal variables) for the crosses between teacher satisfaction and a collection of questions. Somers D for the associations shown in the text are: project success (0.59), proportions of students really involved (0.43), the final project resembles the initial (0.43), satisfaction with online help (0.37), frequency of previously using the small groups technique (0.37), previously using the role playing technique (0.30). All of these coefficients are statistically significant at least at a 0.05 level.

of potential improvement. In any case, two caveats are in order. First, it was not very easy to get clear answers to the relevant questions, either from the teachers or from the students. Second, and more important, not all the students took part in the projects with the same intensity and interest, so that any effects, if they exist, will only be discernible among some, but not among the many.

Among the improvements that might have taken place in the learning abilities and the knowledge of the students, we have collected the following, as per some of the teachers' opinions—corroborated by some of the students' group interviews.

- There must have been some acquisition of group work techniques and abilities or dispositions, especially in terms of working with “non-friends”, that is, with students with whom they were not very close before the intervention. Mixing and working with non-friends has certainly improved their knowledge of their most immediate environment.
- There must have also been some improvement in autonomous work and, in particular, in responsibility assumption. Yet, at least in one school, the teacher thought that the students preferred an environment in which it was the teacher who could be, so to say, blamed for not having passed a student.
- There must have been some development of the students' abilities to talk in public and carry out orderly discussions.
- Finally, a couple of teachers mention the possibility that the students have got a better knowledge of the civic issues at hand, though none of the teachers claim that this will turn in an improved knowledge of civic issues in general. Those same teachers think that the students have got a better grasp of the relationship between what they are taught at school and the real world outside.

It is interesting to notice that these are also the kind of improvements that the teacher expected, as revealed by the second interviews, carried out immediately after they had taken the training course. Almost none of them mentioned capabilities or attitudes more directly related to the ACT program, or to its themes.

Regarding civic capabilities and attitudes, our research collected teachers and/or students' references (again, not necessarily systematic) to the following capabilities and attitudes.

- The students may have improved their capabilities and dispositions to listen to other people even when they have different opinions than one's own.
- They may also be more empathic towards other people in general as long as they had to talk to, listen to and cooperate with colleagues with which they had no previous friendship affinities.
- For the same reason, and thanks to the diversity of views in the classrooms, they may have more open minds after the ACT project, as they have had to get used to listen to opinions that could be very different from their own.

- As mentioned above the students may have some sensation that what happens in the school is related to what happens outside, and, in this sense, a somewhat better understanding of their own capabilities to help other people.

There was almost no mention to behaviors or to the learning of techniques that could be more fitting to the “active”, and central, component of the ACT project.

In our view it is unlikely that any of those changes in civic attitudes can be very profound, given that a substantial share of the students was not that involved in the projects and given the time limitations.

Conclusion

To conclude our report, we summarize some of the main findings of our investigation.

Baseline scenario

One of the main features of the baseline scenario had to do with the problematique of the Ethical values subject, which only receives one hour (rather 50 minutes) of teaching time per week, has too many contents, difficult to cover in such a short time, has a low status in the curriculum, and so it is often used to complete teachers’ time dedication irrespectively of their preparation. The teachers’ style in teaching this subject is hybrid, but, according to our interviews with them, they try to flee from master classes and the textbook.

Teacher training

Teacher training mostly covered all issues, in general. Trainers mostly got good evaluations from the teachers, but not very good. As seen by the teachers, the main weaknesses of training were its short-time, and that it was too long on general issues but too short on more ACT-specific issues. Online follow-up was scarcely used. Moreover, we have been able to ascertain that the previous work and qualifications of the trainers could have been much better.

The implementation of the program

Most teachers agree that the time allocated to the project was not enough: one hour per week along not that many weeks, which can be fewer because of teacher absences (illness, other school obligations), holidays, and so on. In general, time limits, rather than blocking the projects, led to not fully complying with the plans, but not always.

In any case, the implementation of the foreseen procedures was mostly as envisaged regarding the lesson plans, the random formation of students’ groups, the voting procedures, the choice of the most voted project (sometimes blending it with elements of the non-chosen projects), and the setting-up of function-specialized groups, mainly not formed by students’ previous friendship affinities. Yet, as they recognize in the end-line questionnaire, the Spanish teachers did not follow all those procedures so closely as the teachers of the other countries. Moreover, very few schools used the portfolio and when they used it, they did not use it systematically. This is something shared with the other participating countries.

The projects

Some of the themes of the projects fit with the ACT categories (fight against discrimination, cultural diversity, and social inclusion), but many of them did not clearly fit within them. Many

projects were mainly related to the public of teenagers, mostly from the same school. The products were mainly communication products (videos, plays, awareness raising campaigns), images rather than actions involving real people with problems. Very few of them involved contact with the world outside. It looks as if the projects reflect the signs of the times, but the choice of some of them were influenced by schools' actors (teachers, counselors, the students' own experience) and by the school tradition regarding citizenship issues. The projects were not very ambitious (many consisted of just recording a video with some very local, mostly school-level, distribution), but not all of them were fully completed. Only half of the teachers declared in the end-line questionnaire that the project was successfully achieved in a clear way.

Student involvement

The involvement of the students varied greatly both across schools and, especially, across students. It seems that in general terms only around half the students were seriously involved in the project.

Regarding the students' permeability to the new environment, there were two main attitudes and/or behaviors. On the one hand, some were sincerely permeable because they were interested in learning in any way possible or because they are self-disciplined enough, or because, seldom, they find a new way of doing things more akin to their aptitudes. On the other hand, other students are opportunistically permeable: they adapt because they can pass the grade with less effort, and they can hide their lack involvement among the many.

In general, less school-oriented students tended to involve much less in the program (with some interesting exceptions), and more school-oriented students tended to involve more (again, with exceptions). Sometimes, students with low grades found in group work an opportunity to apply practical abilities not taken into account in the curriculum. More involved students carried out most of the practical work, but they had difficulties in leading other students, needing the teacher to carry on instructions.

Some of the best adapted to traditional methods (for instance, to individual evaluations) showed some reticence towards group work for it diluted responsibilities and merits. Nonetheless they were usually the most involved. Some found it very interesting or attractive the new way of working, especially vis à vis master classes or just writing down what the teacher says.

The research has also uncovered some resistance to the implementation of the project, which fit into two main types: collective and organized (in one of the schools the students proposed to stop the project and go back to normal classes); individual, rather extended (shirking tasks, scant attention, jokes, low implication...), not that unusual in lower secondary education in Spain.

Impact on the teachers

The pedagogical relationship evolved from a hybrid (which we assume was more book and teacher-directed, though with substantial elements of "modern" techniques) to another hybrid (more student-centered; more autonomous students) with wide variation between schools and students. The point of arrival, however, did not exclude teacher interventions, even interventionism, in the work of the students. In fact, three fifths of the students declared in the end-line questionnaire that the degree of teacher intervention was rather or very high, a proportion substantially bigger than that observed in France or England. Of course, interventions were not the kind of interventions characteristic of more traditional styles of teaching, but interventions they were, mostly oriented towards pushing the students towards completing the project.

It is difficult to say whether these changes contributed to establishing a new learning environment. The changes took place in one subject (or one time slot) among many, which does not necessarily fit with the rest, nor with the grading system or the diverse demands on students and teachers.

The degree of change in teachers' practices depended their previous teaching style, their views on student-centered practice, their capacity to manage the new environment, their interests, their previous experience with the subject, and, most significantly on the type of students, which could be more or less prone to project work. No teachers say that they will go on working the same way, but some of them will use several of the learned techniques in the future.

A bit more than half the teachers clearly liked to participate in ACT, which reflects a level of satisfaction lower than the one observed in the rest of the countries. Satisfaction was mainly related to the fulfillment of the project and to the degree of implication of the students.

Impact on the students

A large majority of the students, as in the other three countries, enjoyed a lot or quite a lot participating in ACT.

Obviously, the study cannot ascertain long-terms effects neither in terms of the general learning capabilities of the students nor in terms of their civic competences. However, and in spite of the difficulties to get answers to the relevant questions, several issues were common in the assessment of the teachers and students regarding the former. There must have been some improvement in the capability and disposition to listen to other people even when they have different opinions than one's own; some learning of group work with "non-friends"; some improvement in autonomous work and responsibility assumption; some improvement in group-work techniques; and some development of the capabilities to talk in public and carry out debates.

Regarding the latter, the research collected teachers and/or students' references (not necessarily systematic) to: improvements in empathy towards the others as long as the students had to talk to, listen to and cooperate with colleagues with which they had no previous friendship affinities; some opening of their minds, as long as they got somewhat used to listen to opinions that could be very different from their own; some sensation that what happens in the school is related to what happens outside; and some sense of their own capabilities to help others.