



Strategic leadership in the construction of a Whole-School Approach for Citizenship

PhD student:

Francesca Fioretti, f.fioretti@lumsa.it

Tutor LUMSA:

Professor Gabriella Agrusti, g.agrusti@lumsa.it

Tutor UCP:

Professor Ildia Cabral, icabral@ucp.pt

The concepts of “citizenship” and “education” are deeply interconnected: the formation of human being flows into the formation of citizen (Carta and Secci, 2010) as a member of a socio-cultural and environmental context in continuous evolution. Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) has grown in relevance in schools (Losito, 2014), in response to cultural trends that have questioned civic coexistence, nationality, and citizenship (Losito, 2021). Unlike Civic Education, which is based on knowledge and rights exercise, CCE focuses on the notion of democratic community, based on respect for personal and intercultural differences (Fraillon et al., 2014; Bombardelli and Codato, 2017; Sciolla, 2021), comprising attitudes, values, and beliefs about a citizen’s juridical status, individual engagement, citizenship identity, and a sense of belonging to many levels of society, from local to national to supranational (Agrusti et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is a school’s task to provide students with the fundamental competencies for active citizenship. The *Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union* (2006) lists social and civic skills as key personal and intercultural competences, as they allow active participation in social life (Annex, 2006). This is also confirmed by the *New Vision for Education*, drafted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2015, where cultural and civic competences are included among the foundational literacies. This document offers a change of perspective as, differently from before – when those skills were supposed to be achieved ideally at the end of the educational path and were considered to be prerequisites for the working world – now they represent the starting point for the development of 21st Century competences (WEF, 2015). Additionally, the Council of Europe published the *Reference Framework of Competences for a Culture of Democracy* (2018), outlining the twenty critical competencies of democratic citizenship required for the formation of active, participatory, and responsible citizens (Council of Europe, 2018; Pasolini, 2021).

The *Guidelines for Citizenship and Constitution (Linee di indirizzo per Cittadinanza e Costituzione)* adopted by the Lombardy Region in February 2014 define citizenship as «a spiritual, cultural, psychological, and relational dimension, that develops through the feeling and awareness of one’s own identity, dignity and sense of belonging to one or more relational and institutional contexts» (Annex 2, 2014, p. 16). Therefore, CCE supports integral human development, especially regarding the social fundamental principles that guide students’ lives as future citizens, by fostering positive relationships between people and building a democratic learning environment (Rosati, 2017), which is marked by respect, communication, equality, justice, and participation in school life. The teacher’s role is crucial in this process because they must not only guide the students in knowledge construction but also improve the process of developing their critical consciousness through the values of civil coexistence and collaboration (Sicurello, 2016).



In the Eurydice Report (2017), CCE refers to not only classroom teaching and learning of civic-related topics but also the practical experience gained through school and community activities designed to prepare students for their role as citizens in a democratic environment. In this setting, the school becomes a potent vehicle for what has been called the “hidden curriculum” (Alsubaie, 2015): schools are concerned with teaching values, ethics, and cultural norms in addition to imparting information (Berlach, 1996). As a result, citizenship education has not received, across European countries, the same level of integration into national curriculum as conventional topics; specifically, Eurydice (2017) identifies three different approaches for the integration of CCE (Eurydice, 2017; Panizza, 2019; Damiani, 2021): as a cross-curricular theme; as a theme integrated into other subjects, especially with the Human Sciences; as a separate subject, that identifies specific aims. It has been noted that in most European education systems, a mix of the integrated and cross-curricular approaches is primarily employed (Eurydice, 2017). This type of approach expresses the belief that CCE is the result of a variety of processes that occur in many settings, rather than being restricted to classroom teaching (Schulz et al., 2016).

Italy and Portugal are two nations that adopt a cross-curricular approach to CCE, sharing the same belief that it is a key component in creating engaged and conscientious citizens. In spite of sharing similar educational visions, Italian and Portuguese documents decline citizenship education in different ways. The Italian *National Indications for the curriculum of kindergarten and first cycle education (Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione)* of 2012 define citizenship as the value horizon that frames the teaching action, in order to combine the processes of teaching-learning and education to become conscious and active citizens; additionally, the transversal teaching of CCE has been reinforced by the Law n. 92/2019 and the following National Guidelines (2020), that define CCE's general aims but not specific objectives, in accordance with the principle of school autonomy (Eurydice, 2017). Unlike in Italy, in Portugal the new *National Strategy for Citizenship Education* of September 2017 (Decree no. 6173/2016, published in the D.R., II.a Series, no. 90, of 10 May 2016) introduced “Citizenship and Development” as separate subject in the second and third stages of general education (from 5th to 9th grade), keeping it as a cross-curricular area in the rest of the general education pathway (National Strategy, 2017) and setting out specific learning objectives (Eurydice, 2017).

A more in-depth analysis of Italian and Portuguese educational policies would show a better picture of the complexity of these two national contexts, focusing attention on the significance given by both countries to the participation of school community in promoting citizenship education. In particular, the Italian Law n. 107/2015 (known as *La Buona Scuola*) introduced a global and integrated approach, highlighting the role of schools in relation to the acquisition of social, civic, and intercultural skills for all levels of education through the collaboration with families and local community in order to promote students' active participation in the society (Eurydice, 2017; L. 107/2015). In the same way, the Portuguese *National Strategy* (2017) emphasizes that the school should operate on the basis of citizenship principles, like equality in interpersonal relations, respect for human rights, and democracy, thus implementing the students' social and civic competences through real-life experiences inside and outside the institution. In accordance to the idea of «Citizenship Education as the mission of the whole school» (National Strategy, 2017, p. 6), the institutional approach advocated by Italy and Portugal is the Whole-School Approach but, while Italy describes in its documents the general aspects of this approach without ever calling it directly, Portugal declares it publicly and defines its characteristics.

The Whole-School Approach (WSA) is currently the most advanced practice to achieve the goal of multidisciplinary, integrated, and participatory citizenship education (European Commission, 2015; Eurydice, 2017; National Strategy for Citizenship Education, 2017; Mathie et al., 2022), as students may investigate, understand, and experience democracy and human rights principles in a secure and peaceful setting (Council of Europe, 2018). However, only a few clear WSA definitions and models related to CCE are available in the literature (Hunt and King, 2015). Van Driel and Darmody (2016), picking up on Lavis’s idea (2015), refer to the Whole-School Approach as «a holistic approach in a school that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behavior and well-being, and provide conditions that support these» (Van Driel and Darmody, 2016: 28). In this view, the concept of “strategy” appears as a series of decisions and activities made to attain medium-to long-term goals tied to a specific school vision (Davies, 2006; Davies and Davies, 2006; Davies and Davies, 2010). The strategic construction of WSA requires deep reflection on the school’s educational goals and how to achieve them through concrete classroom and school interventions. The Whole-School Approach Flower Model by Wals and Mathie (2022), depicted in Figure 1, provides a comprehensive and systematic view of the school by taking into account important elements of the educational system at the same time: curriculum; pedagogy and learning; institutional practices; professional development; community-connections. All parts of the model are involved in realizing the school’s educational vision, which involves the coordination of the entire school community.



Figure 1 The Whole-School Approach Flower Model with its 6 key components (adapted from Wals and Mathie, 2022). Source: Mathie, R. G. and Wals, A.E.J. (2022). Whole School Approaches to Sustainability: Exemplary Practices from around the world. Wageningen: Education & Learning Sciences/Wageningen University. 109 pages. <https://doi.org/10.18174/566782>.

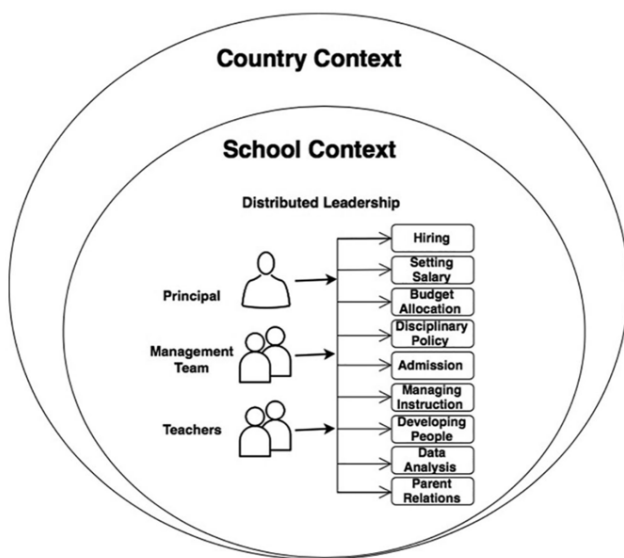


Figure 2 Conceptual framework of distributed leadership. Source: Liu, Y. (2020). Focusing on the practice of distributed leadership: The international evidence from the 2013 TALIS. *Educational administration quarterly*, 56(5), 779-818.

As emerged in this model, school leaders – such as principals and teachers – have a significant impact on how effectively a school system operates (Ibrahim et al., 2018), as they have the task of creating an inclusive and democratic learning environment by providing students with opportunities to realize active and participative citizenship (Quong and Walker, 2019; Khurniawan et al., 2021) and to promote well-being (Lavis and Robson, 2015; Elfrink et al., 2017; Goldberg et al., 2019). It seems clear that, to realize an effective WSA, leadership must be distributed to the whole school community, rather than being exclusively under the control of the principal.

Distributed leadership (DL) (Figure 2) is presently the most widely accepted school leadership model and it is based on a synergic relationship between the principal, the school staff and the contexts (Liu, 2020; Hickey et al.,



2022) and requires a strategic and intentional distribution of leadership and management responsibilities, although research field on this aspect are incomplete (Liu, 2020).

Thus, the concept of “strategy” appears again as the most significant component of any leadership (Davies and Davies, 2006) and managerial activity (Eacott, 2008). Eacott (2006) defines strategic leadership (Figure 3) as a strategic behavior related to the initiation, development, implementation, monitoring, and assessment of strategic actions inside an educational institution, while taking into account the availability of physical, economic and human resources. Despite its importance, research on strategy in the field of educational leadership studies is lacking (Eacott, 2008; Eacott, 2010; Carvalho et al., 2021).

The main goal of the study is to describe different profiles of strategic leaders and their related behaviors in school management finalized to successfully implement WSA, taking into account the different socio-political contexts wherein principals and teachers operate in order to foster the development of students’ civic and citizenship competences. The research project will be based in Italy and Portugal due to the similarities previously mentioned both in the CCE’s educational general aims and in the school’s organizational structure. Specifically, the constructs examined in the study will be: leadership (strategic leadership and distributed leadership); Civic and Citizenship Education outcomes (knowledge, attitudes and behaviors) through an analysis of *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016* main survey conducted by the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)* (Schulz et al., 2016; Schulz et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2018; INVALSI, 2018; Losito et al., 2018); and Whole School Approach for CCE teaching (institutional practices, curriculum, learning environment, learning process, professional development of all staff).

Three fundamental research questions underpin the present project:

- How could an effective strategy for constructing a WSA be developed in order to improve students’ citizenship competences?
- What is the strategic role of principals and teachers in this process?
- Could it be possible to define strategic leaders’ profiles?

To address these questions, an embedded multiple-case study with exploratory purposes (Yin, 1984; Trinchero, 2002; Cohen, 2007; Yin, 2009) will be carried out in 8 lower secondary schools – 4 in Italy and 4 in Portugal – aimed at studying principals’ and 8th-grade-school teachers’ strategic and distributed leadership. To this end, with different techniques, various members of the school community, such as principals, teachers and relevant informants (non-teaching staff) will be involved in the study. The 8 case studies will target schools in various areas with different organizations, in order to underpin external validity, and the following tools will be used:



Figure 3 Core dimensions of strategic leadership. Source: Carvalho, M., Cabral, I., Verdasca, J. L., & Alves, J. M. (2021). Strategy and strategic leadership in education: A scoping review. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 6).



- principal's interview and direct observation, with the purpose of data collection about the organization of the school, the educational objectives, the school team's participation in the governance, and resource use;
- online questionnaires for school teachers and classroom's direct observation of some of them selected on a voluntary basis, in order to collect data related to the organization of learning environment, school curriculum, use of teaching methodologies for the improvement of citizenship competences; and
- follow-up focus groups with 6-7 teachers and non-teaching staff selected on a voluntary basis.

The present study intends to examine the relationships between educational institutions and the local community, by identifying and describing excellent organizational and instructional practices, in order to guide students in developing social competencies for lifelong learning. CCE requires a comprehensive and integrated learning process through the creation of a supportive environment for active citizenship that embraces the territory in order to create a sense of belonging to the community.

References

- Agrusti, G., Gabusi, D., & Schirripa, V., (2021). *Educazione civica, cittadinanza e democrazia. Un'agenda per la scuola. Volume 1*, Scholè.
- Alsubaie, M. A. (2015). Hidden curriculum as one of current issue of curriculum. *Journal of Education and practice*, 6(33), 125-128.
- Bombarelli, O., & Codato, M. (2017). *Country Report: Civic and Citizenship Education in Italy: Thousand of Fragmented Activities Looking for a Systematization*, «Journal of Social Sciences Education», 16(2).
- Carta, A., & Secci, C. (2010). Tempi, modi e prospettive dell'educazione alla sostenibilità: paradigmi della cittadinanza. *Tempi, modi e prospettive dell'educazione alla sostenibilità: paradigmi della cittadinanza*, 225-240.
- Carvalho, M., Cabral, I., Verdasca, J. L., & Alves, J. M. (2021). Strategy and strategic leadership in education: a scoping review. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 6).
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (Sixth). Oxon: Routledge.
- Council of Europe (2018). *Reference framework of competences for democratic culture. Volume 1: Context, concepts and model*, Strasbourg. Retrived from <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008318-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-1-8573-co/16807bc66c>
- Damiani, V. (2021). L'educazione civica e alla cittadinanza in Europa. *Scuola democratica*, 12(speciale), 29- 42.
- Davies, B. (2006). Processes Not Plans Are the Key to Strategic Development. *Manag. Educ.*, 20(2), 11–15.
- Davies, B. J., and Davies, B. (2006). Developing a Model for Strategic Leadership in Schools. *Educ. Manag. Adm. Leadersh.*, 34(1), 121–139.
- Davies, B., and Davies, B. (2010). The Nature and Dimensions of Strategic Leadership. *Int. Stud. Educ. Adm.*, 38(1), 5–21.
- Eacott, S. (2006). Strategic leadership: An educational leader imperative. *Perspectives in Educational Leadership*, (7).
- Eacott, S. (2008). Strategy in Educational Leadership: In Search of unity, *J. Educ. Admin.*, 46(3), 353–375.
- Eacott, S. (2010). Strategy as Leadership: an Alternate Perspective to the Construct of Strategy. *Int. Stud. Educ. Adm.*, 38(1), 55–65.
- Elfrink, T. R., Goldberg, J. M., Schreurs, K. M., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2017). Positive educative programme: A whole school approach to supporting children's well-being and creating a positive school climate: a pilot study. *Health Education*.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017. *Citizenship Education at School in Europe - 2017. Eurydice Report*. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union.
- European Commission, (2015). A whole school approach to tackling early school leaving. *European Union*.



- Fraillon, J., Schulz, W., Nixon, J., & Gebhardt, E. (2014). *National assessment program: civics and citizenship years 6 and 10 Report 2013*.
- Goldberg, J. M., Sklad, M., Elfrink, T. R., Schreurs, K. M., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Clarke, A. M. (2019). Effectiveness of interventions adopting a whole school approach to enhancing social and emotional development: a meta-analysis. *European Journal of psychology of Education*, 34(4), 755-782.
- Hickey, N., Flaherty, A., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2022). Distributed Leadership: A Scoping Review Mapping Current Empirical Research. *Societies*, 12(1), 15.
- Hunt, F., & King, R. P. (2015). Supporting whole school approaches to global learning: focusing learning and mapping impact.
- INVALSI (2018). *L'indagine IEA ICCS 2016: i risultati degli studenti italiani in educazione civica e alla cittadinanza* (last seen: 16.05.2022)
- Khurniawan, A. W., Sailah, I., Muljono, P., Indriyanto, B., & Maarif, M. S. (2021). The Improving of Effectiveness School-Based Enterprise: A Structural Equation Modeling in Vocational School Management. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 10(1), 161-173.
- Lavis, P., & Robson, C. (2015). *Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and college approach*. Public Health England.
- Legge 20 agosto 2019, n. 92 "Introduzione dell'insegnamento scolastico dell'educazione civica". Retrived from <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it>
- Liu, Y. (2020). Focusing on the practice of distributed leadership: The international evidence from the 2013 TALIS. *Educational administration quarterly*, 56(5), 779-818.
- Losito, B. (2014). Educazione alla cittadinanza, competenze di cittadinanza e competenze chiave *Scuola democratica*, (1), 53-72.
- Losito, B. (2021). Educazione civica e alla cittadinanza. Approcci curricolari e didattici e ambienti di apprendimento. *Scuola democratica*, 12(speciale), 189-201.
- Losito, B., Agrusti, G., Damiani, V., Schulz, W. (2018). *ICCS 2016 European report: young people's perceptions of Europe in a time of change*. Springer
- Mathie, R. G. and Wals, A.E.J. (2022). *Whole School Approaches to Sustainability: Exemplary Practices from around the world*. Wageningen: Education & Learning Sciences/Wageningen University.
- MIUR (2012). *Indicazioni Nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo di istruzione*. Firenze: Le Monnier.
- MIUR (2020), *Linee Guida per l'insegnamento dell'educazione civica*. Retrived from <https://www.istruzione.it>
- Mogren, A., Gericke, N., & Scherp, H. Å. (2019). Whole school approaches to education for sustainable development: A model that links to school improvement. *Environmental education research*, 25(4), 508-531.
- Quong, T., and Walker, A. (2010). Seven Principles of Strategic Leadership. *Int. Stud. Educ. Adm.*, 38(1), 22– 34.
- República Portuguesa (2017). *National Strategy for Citizenship Education*, Decree no. 6173/2016, published in the D.R., II.a Series, no. 90, of 10 May 2016. Retrived from <https://cidadania.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/pdfs/national-strategy-citizenship-education.pdf>
- República Portuguesa (2017). *Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling*. Retrived from <https://cidadania.dge.mec.pt/sites/default/files/pdfs/students-profile.pdf>
- Rosati, N. (2017). *Metacooperative learning: percorso di ricerca e didattica nella scuola dell'infanzia*. Anicia.
- Scheerens, J. (2011). Indicators on informal learning for active citizenship at school. *Educational assessment, evaluation and accountability*, 23(3), 201-222.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G. (2016). *IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 Assessment Framework*. Amsterdam: IEA.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G., Friedman, T. (2018). *ICCS 2016 international report. Becoming citizens in a changing world*. Springer.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Cox, C., Friedman, T. (2018). *Latin American report 2016: young people's views of government, peaceful coexistence, and diversity in five Latin American countries*. Springer.
- Schulz, W., Carstens, R., Losito, B., Fraillon, J. (2018). *ICCS 2016 Technical Report*. Amsterdam: IEA.
- Sciolla, L. (2021). *Il contributo delle scienze sociali allo sviluppo dell'educazione civica e alla cittadinanza a scuola*, «Scuola democratica», 12(speciale), 297-304.



Sicurello, R. (2016). Educazione alla cittadinanza: significati, linee di ricerca, finalità e pratiche didattiche. *Foro de Educación, 14*(20), 71-103.

Trincherò, R. (2002). *Manuale di ricerca educativa* (pp. 1-432). Milano, Italy: Franco Angeli.

USR Lombardia, Linee di indirizzo per Cittadinanza e Costituzione Protocollo MIUR AOO DRLO RU 2164 del 12/02/2014. Retrieved from <https://usr.istruzione.lombardia.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/linee-guida-di-CC.pdf>

Van Driel, B., Darmody, M., and Kerzil J. (2016). Education policies and practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU. *NESET II report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

WEF (2015), *New Vision for Education*. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf

Woods, P. A. (2015). Distributed leadership for equity and learning. *Revista Lusófona de Educação, 30*(30).

Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*, SAGE Publications, Unites States of America.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (Vol. 5). sage.