

DEMOCRACY: CHALLENGES IN CHILEAN EDUCATION

DEMOCRACIA: DESAFIOS NA EDUCAÇÃO CHILENA

DEMOCRACIA: DESAFÍOS EN LA EDUCACIÓN CHILENA



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How to reference this paper:

ROJAS, O.; MALDONADO, J., VIVAS, A.; MOTA, K.; MARTÍNEZ, M. Democracy: challenges in Chilean education. **Nuances: Studies on Education**, Presidente Prudente, v. 36, n. 00, e025020, 2025. e-ISSN: 2236-0441. DOI: 10.32930/nuances.v36i00.11347



| **Submitted:** 15/10/2025

| **Revisions required:** 05/11/2025

| **Approved:** 25/11/2025

| **Published:** 24/12/2025

Editor: Prof. Dr. Rosiane de Fátima Ponce

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ABSTRACT: Democracy in Chilean education is reflected in the inclusion of content, its progression across educational levels, an interdisciplinary approach, the promotion of democratic values, and an emphasis on civic participation. These aspects are fundamental to the development of informed, critical citizens committed to building and consolidating a democratic society in Chile. This study used a detailed review of the Chilean National Curriculum as a methodology, capturing the course, subject objectives, and content taught in Chilean primary and secondary schools, systematizing the data in an analysis matrix. Civic education is essential for imparting knowledge about democratic principles, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the functioning of democratic institutions. Therefore, educational institutions are responsible for promoting pedagogical actions conducive to fostering participation, integration, identity, and the ownership and internalization of rights.

KEYWORDS: Democracy. Challenges. Education.

RESUMO: A democracia na educação chilena reflete-se na inclusão de conteúdo, na sua progressão entre os níveis educacionais, em uma abordagem interdisciplinar, na promoção de valores democráticos e na ênfase na participação cidadã. Esses aspectos são fundamentais para o desenvolvimento de cidadãos informados, críticos e comprometidos com a construção e consolidação de uma sociedade democrática no Chile. Este estudo utilizou uma revisão detalhada do Currículo Nacional Chileno como metodologia, sistematizando o curso, os objetivos das disciplinas e o conteúdo ministrado nas escolas de ensino fundamental e médio em uma matriz de análise. A educação cidadã é essencial para transmitir conhecimento sobre os princípios democráticos, os direitos e responsabilidades dos cidadãos e o funcionamento das instituições. Portanto, as instituições educacionais são responsáveis por promover ações pedagógicas voltadas ao fomento da participação, da integração, da identidade e da apropriação de direitos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Democracia. Desafios. Educação.

RESUMEN: La democracia en la educación chilena se refleja en la inclusión de contenidos, la progresión de estos a lo largo de los niveles educativos, el enfoque interdisciplinario, la promoción de valores democráticos y el énfasis en la participación ciudadana. Estos aspectos son fundamentales para la formación de ciudadanos informados, críticos y comprometidos con la construcción y consolidación de una sociedad democrática en Chile. En este estudio se utilizó como metodología una revisión detallada del Currículo Nacional chileno y sistematizar en una matriz de análisis el curso, los objetivos de la asignatura y los contenidos abordados en establecimientos educativos chilenos. La educación ciudadana es esencial para impartir conocimientos sobre los principios democráticos, los derechos y responsabilidades ciudadanas, y el funcionamiento de las instituciones democráticas. Por consiguiente, las instituciones educativas deben garantizar el impulso de acciones pedagógicas orientadas a fomentar la participación, la integración, la identidad y la apropiación de los derechos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Democracia. Desafíos. Educación.

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping and evolving society. It acts as a constant agent of change, molding social interactions and preparing individuals to participate actively and meaningfully in their environment. In doing so, it strengthens social capital and provides the necessary tools to establish governance systems that prioritize the interests and rights of individuals (Anaya-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2016). From this premise, it is essential to understand that education not only transmits knowledge but also influences how values and norms governing life in society are structured. Therefore, education serves as a strategic means of shaping both individuals and society as a whole, thus contributing to the construction of the social development project.

In this sense, civic education and education for democracy are established as fundamental principles in current educational systems. In a world characterized by the dynamism of information, the diversity of voices, and universal challenges, educational institutions have a commitment to develop knowledge, capacities, and skills that enable to help young people integrate in an active, critical, and responsible way into the appreciation of democracy. Recent international research indicates that, at the same time, basic civic knowledge, skills in debate, conflict resolution, and active participation are essential aspects for the well-being of contemporary democracies.

The findings from the most recent round of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), cited by Sala *et al.* (2021) confirm the central role of schools in preparing young people to exercise their citizenship. This study provides comparative evidence on the attitudes, levels of civic knowledge, and modes of participation of secondary school students in various educational systems, emphasizing the importance of connecting knowledge with deliberative practices and real-life experiences of participation within the school setting (Pereyra, 2023). International findings indicate that the formal existence of curricular goals does not always result in applied civic skills, highlighting the need to examine not only official documents but also the pedagogical circumstances that make the experience of being a citizen possible.

The importance of this approach is confirmed by global entities such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has emphasized the creation of educational experiences that cultivate student agency through participatory methodologies, cross-disciplinary projects, and a strong connection to the community. International analyses demonstrate that educational policies that integrate curriculum renewal with ongoing teacher

training and the assessment of civic competencies are more likely to achieve a lasting impact. The quality of civic education depends not only on official content but also on teacher training and the organization of school spaces to foster deliberation and collective action.

Simultaneously, the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) agenda, promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), provides a broader framework that links citizenship learning with principles of social justice, human rights, and global responsibility (Pereyra, 2023). GCED establishes not only cognitive goals but also dispositional ones—being responsible for the planet, showing empathy, and respecting diversity—which require transformative pedagogical methods and school experiences that expose students to the complexities of the real world.

This context constitutes a relevant international framework for Chile. The tension between the emphasis on academic achievement, assessed through standardized tests, and the need to consolidate civic and deliberative skills that support democracy in situations of profound school segregation and inequality is a common phenomenon in other Latin American nations, including Chile (Morales *et al.*, 2020). The observational standards provided by international evidence are useful for document analysis: not only detecting the appearance of civic education objectives within the curriculum, but also the pedagogical guidelines, evaluation criteria, and auxiliary resources that facilitate their implementation in school practices.

Indeed, current international literature provides a theoretical and practical perspective for assessing whether curricula are designed and institutionally supported to foster a dynamic, critical, and empathetic democracy. As various studies show, civic education is often reduced to normative pronouncements with no practical impact. Consequently, the democratization of education has been a relevant topic on the political and social agenda for decades. Although significant progress has been made, major challenges remain that require urgent attention.

This study is the product of an analysis of the content of Chilean curricula, examining whether these programs are sufficient for the formation of citizens and whether this content is adequate to address the challenges of Chilean education within the context of democracy. This leads to the objective of analyzing democracy as a challenge in Chilean education, through a review of the basic education curricula.

Democracy

Democracy worldwide can be defined as a political system in which power resides in the people and is exercised directly or indirectly through participation in free and fair elections and political decision-making processes. This general definition is supported by numerous experts and academics.

According to Casas (2018), the evolution and challenges of democracy in Latin America and Europe have followed different trajectories due to their unique historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts. This evolution and these challenges, specifically in Latin America, involve democratic transitions since the 20th century. Many Latin American countries experienced the transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems. These processes were marked by popular struggles, social movements, and international pressures, coupled with cycles of democracy and authoritarianism (Munck, 2020). Although challenges remain, several Latin American countries have managed to consolidate their democratic systems, strengthening democratic institutions over time.

The evolution and challenges of democracy in Latin America and Europe have followed different trajectories due to their unique historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts (Casas, 2018).

In Latin America, this evolution involved democratic transitions starting in the 20th century, as many countries moved from authoritarian regimes to democratic systems. These processes were marked by popular struggles, social movements, and international pressures (Novoa *et al.*, 2019). Coupled with cycles of democracy and authoritarianism (Munck, 2020), and despite persistent challenges, several Latin American countries have managed to consolidate their systems and strengthen democratic institutions over time.

In the case of Europe, this evolution centers on a democratic history dating back centuries, though interrupted by periods of authoritarianism and political conflict. This was evident after World War II, which saw a wave of democratization and institution-building, particularly in Western Europe. Furthermore, the expansion of the European Union has promoted democratic consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Western Balkans (Pereyra, 2023; Casanova, 2020).

When comparing challenges, Latin America and Europe differ; in the former, corruption remains a major obstacle to democracy in the region, undermining trust in democratic institutions and hindering economic and social development. This is compounded by persistent

socioeconomic inequality, an obstacle to political inclusion and equitable representation (Rojas, 2019). Similarly, violence and organized crime pose a threat to democratic stability in several countries of the region, affecting citizen security and undermining the rule of law.

Conversely, in Europe, challenges have centered on the rise of populism and nationalism, generating political tensions and hindering democratic values such as tolerance and diversity, coupled with the economic and migration crises and the impact of Brexit, creating significant challenges for European integration and solidarity among the member states of the European Union (EU) (Talvi, 2020). Likewise, they face these challenges related to governance, the effectiveness of democratic institutions, and the political participation of citizens.

Consequently, while both Latin America and Europe have experienced significant progress in democratization, each region faces unique challenges in consolidating and strengthening democracy. Addressing these challenges requires a continued commitment to democratic values, as well as tackling structural problems such as economic, social, environmental, political, and educational issues.

Democracy in Chilean education

Democracy in Chile has undergone a complex evolution from the end of the military dictatorship to the present day. While significant progress has been made in terms of democratic institutions, important challenges remain to be addressed in order to strengthen democracy and ensure greater inclusion and equity in Chilean society.

Hence, Chile has a democratic institutional framework established in its Constitution, which was promulgated in 1980 during the military dictatorship and has been subject to reforms since the return to democracy in 1990. This framework establishes the separation of powers, guarantees respect for human rights and establishes a presidential system of government (García-Pérez; Montero, 2018). Furthermore, the system includes various political parties representing a wide range of ideologies and political views.

Over the years, there has been a rotation of power among different political coalitions, demonstrating the political competition and diversity within the Chilean political system. While progress has been made in terms of access to information and participatory mechanisms, such as citizen consultations and plebiscites, challenges remain regarding the effective and representative participation of all sectors of society.

In this vein, Contreras and Montecinos (2019, p. 180, our translation) state that “democracy is a political system based on the active and equitable participation of all citizens in decision-making processes that affect the community as a whole.” From this perspective, in the Chilean educational context, democracy refers to the inclusion of all members of the educational community in decision-making processes that affect the school. In this regard, Marshall (2020, p. 270, our translation) considers:

Democracy is a political system in which power is exercised, controlled, and limited by the people, through institutional mechanisms that ensure free and fair participation in political decision-making, as well as the protection of fundamental rights and individual freedoms.

In other words, democracy plays a fundamental role in the educational process because it encourages student participation in their own learning and in decision-making within the school community, empowering them to take responsibility for their own educational process, developing leadership skills and active citizenship from an early age.

Democracy promotes tolerance and respect for the opinions and differences of others. By fostering an inclusive and pluralistic environment, students are taught to value diversity and resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively, preparing them to participate actively in civil and political society. Through learning concepts such as human rights, social justice, and electoral processes, the skills necessary to be informed and engaged citizens are cultivated (Novoa *et al.*, 2019).

Furthermore, it fosters critical thinking by encouraging learners to question, analyze, and evaluate information independently. This helps them develop a deeper understanding of social and political issues, as well as make informed decisions based on evidence and reason. Both educators and students are accountable for their actions and decisions. This promotes transparency, honesty, and personal responsibility—essential elements for the effective functioning of any democratic system.

In this vein, within the Chilean context, Rojas (2019, p. 47) addresses how “democracy in education implies the creation of spaces for dialogue and deliberation where opinions are respected and the participation of students, teachers, parents, and guardians is promoted.” This means that democracy in education translates into the implementation of mechanisms that allow for integration and respect for the diversity of opinions within schools.

According to Anaya-Rodríguez and Ocampo-Gómez (2020, p. 16, our translation), “democracy in the Chilean educational sphere seeks to promote the development of civic skills

in students, such as critical thinking, tolerance, and respect for the rights of others.” This implies that democratic education in Chile aims to form responsible citizens committed to building a more just and equitable society.

Consequently, one of the most pressing challenges in Chilean education is inequality in access to and quality of education. While the country has made progress in expanding educational coverage, profound gaps still exist between public and private educational institutions. High-income schools have greater resources and access to advanced technology, while many public schools struggle to provide a quality education due to a lack of adequate funding (García-Pérez; Montero, 2018).

This disparity in educational quality perpetuates social inequality and limits opportunities for those from more vulnerable backgrounds. A full democracy must guarantee access to quality education as a universal right for all citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic origin.

Another crucial challenge in Chilean education is inclusion, aiming to eliminate the barriers that prevent students with disabilities or special needs from accessing quality, inclusive education (Fuentes; Lovera, 2020). The lack of resources and training for teachers, as well as the lack of adequate infrastructure, are obstacles that must be overcome to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and develop their talents. Inclusive education not only benefits students with disabilities but also enriches the educational experience of all students, promoting a culture of respect, empathy, and understanding.

In this sense, democracy in Chile must address the need for curricular reform and a pedagogical approach more aligned with the demands of contemporary society. It is essential to foster an education focused on developing skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Likewise, incorporating relevant and current topics, such as civic education, human rights, and the environment, will contribute to forming citizens who are aware of and committed to society (García-Pérez; Montero, 2018). The participation of teachers, students, and parents in defining the curriculum and in educational decision-making is essential to ensure that education is meaningful and relevant to students’ lives.

Likewise, teachers are key actors in the education system and play a fundamental role in the formation of informed and responsible citizens. However, the professional development and recognition of teachers in Chile face challenges. It is necessary to improve working conditions, provide opportunities for ongoing training, and acknowledge the significant impact teachers have on the lives of their students. Greater investment in teachers’ professional

development will help raise the quality of teaching and, in turn, benefit all of society (Olivo, 2017).

Contents of curricular programs in Chilean education

Through an analysis of the contents of the curricular programs, it is observed that, in the cycle from 7th grade to 2nd year of high school, the aim is for students to learn about the historical development of the foundations on which current representative democracy is based, and to recognize that this system is the form of political organization and social coexistence that best safeguards the fundamental rights of men and women, and allows respect for human rights.

According to the curriculum, students are expected to understand that democracy is a constantly evolving political and social system, susceptible to both progress and setbacks, both internationally and nationally. In this sense, it is important that they understand that democracy is built daily and that, while it can be improved, it is also exposed to various situations that put it at risk (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2019).

In addition to the above, students are expected to demonstrate mastery of human rights and the principles upon which they are based, and to recognize themselves as subjects of law. They are also expected to recognize that Chile is governed by the rule of law, which ensures respect for and protection of human rights. Along these same lines, students are expected to deepen their knowledge of the institutions that make up our political and social organization, to understand the different ways they can participate in them, and to appreciate their importance for the development of a democratic society (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2019).

Furthermore, the development of values and civic skills is fundamental in order to promote the formation of students committed to the common good, the democratic system, and respect for human rights and diversity, capable of peacefully and constructively resolving conflicts through dialogue, argumentation, and the exchange of ideas.

While public policies have succeeded in increasing compulsory schooling and higher education enrollment, as Talvi (2020), an expert on the region, points out, recent economic growth has masked existing shortcomings in education systems. These shortcomings pose a significant threat to the continent's long-term economic prospects, as well as to social stability, the fight against poverty, and social inclusion.

On the other hand, an examination of democracy in the region reveals that several significant shortcomings persist. These include a crisis of representation, institutional weakness, inequality, corruption, a fragile rule of law, high levels of citizen insecurity, and threats to freedom of expression. These challenges underscore the ongoing need to strengthen democratic structures and address the numerous areas that remain unresolved in order to achieve more just and equitable societies in Latin America.

Civic education in the governments of Chile

Civic education is a fundamental pillar in strengthening a democratic system, as this training is essential for having active and participatory citizens. Achieving this goal requires the participation of the education system, the quintessential space for civic education (without diminishing the responsibility of other entities such as family interaction). According to Blancas (2018, p. 26, our translation):

Any educational process that seeks the integral development of the individual through knowledge, skills and abilities, oriented towards working life or any other purpose should consider the development of the political dimension in terms of the responsibility of living in society and governing it.

In Chile, the concern for and implementation of civic education as a curricular activity with its own objectives and content emerged in the 1980s. Thus, under the Pinochet regime, civic education was seen as a tool to indoctrinate students with the regime's ideology. In 1980 and 1981, the military dictatorship changed the existing curriculum, re-establishing Civic Education as an independent subject, under the name Civic Education and Economics in the first and second years of secondary school, with three hours per week. The purpose was to impart knowledge about the new Political Constitution of the State, the functioning of the political and economic system, and fundamental rights. However, in 1984, this subject was split into two: Civic Education in the third year of secondary school, and Economics in the fourth year, both with two hours per week (Mercado; Pinochet, 2021).

However, after the return to democracy in 1990, the curriculum was reformed, and civic education became a subject focused on developing critical thinking, democratic values, and active citizenship.

In 1998, for the second time in the 20th century, Civic Education disappeared as a separate subject, but the concept of Citizenship Education was incorporated throughout the entire school curriculum. The new curriculum framework for secondary education, which began to be implemented in the First Year of Secondary Education in 1999, broadened the concept of civic education, from knowledge about the State and the political system, to that of citizenship education, including not only knowledge, but also information management skills, thinking skills (critical reflection, the ability to formulate opinions), and attitudes consistent with a democratic regime, such as pluralism, respect for others, and appreciation of human rights.

Thus, civic education was removed from the curriculum due to differing interests and priorities, leaving a gap in the formation of responsible and active citizens in the country. The concept of civic education was applied across the entire school curriculum, beginning its implementation in 1999 in the First Year of Secondary Education (*1º Medio*), seeking to impart knowledge about the State and the political system, as well as information management skills, appreciation of pluralism and human rights.

Under the presidency of Ricardo Lagos (2000–2006), he implemented the Curriculum Reform, which introduced changes to the school curriculum to include civic education content. The goal was for students to acquire knowledge about Chile's political history, citizens' rights and duties, and the functioning of the political and electoral system. He also promoted the strengthening of civic education in schools, seeking to reinforce the teaching of civic and citizen values in educational institutions and promoting the active participation of students in matters of public interest.

During Bachelet's administrations (from March 11, 2006, to March 11, 2010, and then from March 11, 2014, to March 11, 2018), reforms were implemented in civic education to improve its quality and incorporate civic content into the school curriculum. The aim was for students to acquire knowledge about Chile's political history, citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the workings of the political and electoral system.

Since then, various sectors of civil society have advocated for the reinstatement of civic education in the school curriculum. In recent years, the government has launched initiatives to promote civic and constitutional education, recognizing the importance of educating citizens to be critical thinkers, engaged citizens, and committed to their country.

The Piñera administrations (March 11, 2010 to March 11, 2014, and then from March 11, 2018 to March 11, 2022) emphasized civic education as part of their efforts to improve the quality of education in Chile. The government views civic education as an important tool for

promoting democratic values and social cohesion, and as a means to develop engaged citizens prepared to participate effectively in Chilean civic life. Therefore, civic education has followed different paths, depending on the ideology and interests of the government in power. However, today there is a consensus on its crucial role in the formation of active and responsible citizens (Fuentes; Lovera, 2020).

Methodology

This research was documentary and reflective in nature, according to Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018, p. 129, our translation), “a type of study based on the collection and analysis of information available in written documents, such as books, articles, reports, historical records, among others.” That is, the researcher does not simply collect information, but also critically analyzes the data obtained. This involves questioning, interpreting, and comparing different sources of information in order to arrive at well-founded conclusions and generate new perspectives on the topic at hand.

Therefore, documentary-reflective research combines the systematic collection of information with a process of critical reflection, allowing the researcher to generate new knowledge and deepen their understanding of a specific topic. Thus, the current research involved a review of the content of curricular programs, examining whether they are sufficient to prepare citizens to face the challenges of Chilean education within the context of democracy. This included identifying the subjects that teach material related to democracy and determining if these subjects are adequate to meet the demands of contemporary society.

The research procedure consisted of a detailed review of the Chilean National Curriculum and systematizing, in an analysis matrix, the course, the objectives of each subject, and the contents delivered in Chilean schools and high schools that made reference to democracy. Once the information was obtained, it was shared with a group of expert teachers to identify the scope of the content and verify if it meets the requirements of the children and young people of the country.

Results

Based on the findings and comparing the information with the literature review, it is possible to affirm that the content is sufficient for Chilean students to receive a solid education regarding democracy, given that the content has a strong coherent thread from first grade onward in subjects such as History, Geography, and Social Studies, specifically within the civic education component. In eighth grade, some aspects of democracy are presented in the language arts curriculum, such as valuing the possibilities offered by spoken and written discourse for participating proactively, knowledgeably, and responsibly in the life of a democratic society.

For the 3rd and 4th years of secondary school, the general education curriculum is structured around the theme of Chile, the Latin American Region, and the Global World, and within the science and humanities track, around the theme of historical understanding of the present. Furthermore, this science and humanities track also includes a subject called Language and Literature, with its focus on Participation and Argumentation in Democracy. This subject addresses topics designed to help students develop a critical understanding of texts circulating in digital communities, enabling them to identify cultural conventions, ideologies, and beliefs present both in the content and in the use of multiple codes, as well as the ethical issues associated with creating and disseminating information (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2019).

On the other hand, they apply these skills when they investigate; particularly, when they select information according to criteria of quality, relevance, and truthfulness; when they understand and process that background, and when they transform it to include it in other texts that communicate investigations. Although the aforementioned contents are more of an argumentative nature, they have to do with an attitude of democracy and citizen participation (Ministry of Education of Chile, 2019).

In general, presenting civic education as an unfinished task implies that it must reach diverse sectors of the population, not just be the responsibility of municipal schools and the final years of education. Increasing participation is necessary to safeguard democracy, and this requires “educating in civic values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, active respect, and dialogue” (Cortina, 2017, p. 45, our translation). These values must be integrated throughout the education of every Chilean, because reducing civic education to instruction and the delivery of information regarding the structural framework of the State and the Government diminishes the importance of this aspect in the formation of citizens.

Finally, the lack of civic education results in a generational disconnect from politics, diminishing its impact; “this is because what has been emphasized is individual achievement in a consumer society, which has led to associating well-being with material possessions, coinciding with high levels of insecurity and distrust of others” (Mardones, 2018, p. 74, our translation). This indicates that the emphasis on individual achievement in a consumer society can lead to a perception of well-being linked exclusively to material things, which in turn can fuel insecurity and distrust of others. To address these problems, it is important to foster values of democracy, solidarity, empathy, and collaboration, as well as work to reduce socioeconomic inequalities and promote a culture of trust and mutual cooperation.

Conclusions

Education is a fundamental pillar for strengthening democracy in Chile. To overcome the challenges facing Chilean education, it is necessary to address inequality in access to and quality of education, promote inclusive education, and adapt the curriculum and pedagogical approach to the needs of the 21st century.

Building a quality and equitable education system requires a strong commitment from the State, society, and all stakeholders involved in the education system. Only through collaboration and joint effort can we achieve an education that fosters critical, responsible citizens committed to building a strong and just democracy in Chile.

Therefore, establishing democracy in the classroom requires implementing pedagogical practices that foster participation, dialogue, conflict resolution, and mutual respect among students. By adopting a democratic approach in their daily work, teachers can significantly contribute to the development of active, critical citizens committed to democratic values in society. Democracy cannot thrive without informed and engaged citizens. Therefore, civic education is essential for imparting knowledge about democratic principles, citizens’ rights and responsibilities, and the functioning of democratic institutions. Consequently, educational authorities are responsible for promoting pedagogical actions that foster participation, integration, identity, and the understanding and application of rights and duties within a democratic framework.

In reviewing the curriculum, there appears to be an effort to include aspects related to democracy in subjects from the early years of basic education through higher levels. This

content encompasses diverse areas such as History, Geography, Social Sciences, and Language, suggesting continuous exposure to democratic concepts throughout formal education.

Regarding the challenges in Civic Education, despite the inclusion of content related to democracy, it is argued that civic education remains an unfinished task in Chile. The need to broaden its reach to encompass all sectors of the population, rather than limiting it to certain educational stages or types of schools, is emphasized. Furthermore, it is suggested that civic education should not be limited to instruction on governmental structures, but should incorporate values such as freedom, equality, solidarity, and dialogue, which are fundamental for the formation of active citizens committed to a democratic society.

Regarding the generational disengagement from politics, the lack of civic education contributes to young people's alienation and their perception of well-being as centered on material accumulation. This generational disconnect can fuel insecurity and distrust of others, highlighting the importance of fostering democratic values from an early age to cultivate a culture of trust and mutual cooperation in society.

Improving democracy within the educational context in Chile and other countries requires a comprehensive approach that addresses not only educational aspects but also the social, political, economic, and cultural challenges that affect the development of an active citizenship committed to democratic values. This implies structural reforms in the education system that promote inclusion, equity, and civic participation at all levels of education.

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CRediT Author Statement

- ☐ **Acknowledgements:** We thank the Central Plateau Association, the Brazilian Central-West Union, and UNASP for their support of this research.
 - ☐ **Funding:** Central Plateau Association and Brazilian Central-West Union.
 - ☐ **Conflicts of interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.
 - ☐ **Ethical approval:** The study was approved by the UNASP Research Ethics Committee. Approval number: 5,265,025; CAAE: 55831922.9.0000.5377.
 - ☐ **Data and material availability:** The data and materials used in this study are available for access.
 - ☐ **Authors' contributions:** Alzira Luciana wrote the theoretical section and collected and analyzed the data. Helena Viana wrote the theoretical section, conducted the statistical analysis, edited the manuscript, and performed the final proofreading. Alceli Ribeiro contributed to the theoretical framework and provided suggestions regarding data presentation. Dayse Neri de Souza contributed to the methodological section and carried out the final revision of the manuscript.
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Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação
Proofreading, formatting, standardization and translation

