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**Atas do VI Seminário Internacional  
Vulnerabilidades Sociais e Saúde  
“Percursos Migratórios e Cidadania Global -  
diversidade e (des)igualdades”**

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## **Global Citizenship in Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Social Transformation and Sustainability**

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### **Abstract**

This article addresses the theme of Global Citizenship in Education, focusing on the challenges and opportunities for promoting social transformation and sustainability. The research problem revolves around understanding how the formation of global citizens can contribute to societal transformation and the promotion of sustainable practices. The methodology adopted was a case study at the António Arroio Artistic School, using a qualitative and quantitative approach. Surveys were applied to students and interviews were carried out with teachers, analysing the results in light of comparative studies. The main findings indicate divergences between the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the priority areas of Education for Citizenship, highlighting the importance of values such as a social transformation and sustainability. Furthermore, the cross-disciplinary nature of the Citizenship subject in school was evident, emphasizing the relevance of an interdisciplinary approach. It is concluded that promoting Global Citizenship in education can be an effective strategy for addressing issues of social transformation and sustainability, underscoring the importance of integrating global values and competencies into the school curriculum.

**Keywords:** Education, Global Citizenship, Social Transformation, Sustainability

### **Resumo**

Este artigo aborda o tema da Cidadania Global na Educação, com foco nos desafios e oportunidades para a promoção da transformação social e da sustentabilidade. O problema de investigação gira em torno da compreensão de como a formação de cidadãos globais pode contribuir para a transformação da sociedade e a promoção de práticas sustentáveis. A metodologia adotada foi um estudo de caso na Escola Artística António Arroio, com recurso a uma abordagem qualitativa e quantitativa. Foram aplicados inquéritos aos alunos e realizadas entrevistas aos professores, analisando os resultados à luz de estudos comparativos. Os principais resultados indicam divergências entre as percepções de professores e alunos relativamente aos domínios prioritários da Educação para a Cidadania, destacando-se a importância de valores como a transformação social e a sustentabilidade. Para além disso, foi evidente o carácter transversal da disciplina de Cidadania na escola, enfatizando a relevância de uma abordagem interdisciplinar. Conclui-se que a promoção da Cidadania Global na educação pode ser uma estratégia eficaz para abordar questões de transformação social e sustentabilidade, sublinhando a importância da integração de valores e competências globais no currículo escolar.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação, Cidadania Global, Transformação Social, Sustentabilidade

### **Introduction**

Citizenship Education aims to train citizens capable of contributing to Sustainable Development, considering its different dimensions (economic, social and environmental) and guaranteeing a balance between present needs and those of future generations (ENEC, 2017). In this context, schools play a fundamental role in promoting quality education that develops the skills, values and attitudes needed to make informed decisions to understand and face the challenges of the contemporary world (Carvalho, 2018). Therefore, Global Citizenship is an approach that emphasises the global dimension of Citizenship Education and the impact on

policies, teaching and learning.

Considering António Arroio Artistic School as the object of this study, this research aimed to analyse how Global Citizenship Education is approached and understood by students, as well as to investigate possible influences on the adoption of behaviours and attitudes as global citizens. Therefore, the research objectives are as follows: i) to understand the school's teaching methodology in the field of citizenship education and how it relates to sustainable development and the concept of global citizenship; ii) to find out the students' perspectives and opinions on the activities and projects developed by the school; iii) to assess the extent to which these initiatives contribute to greater awareness and/or participation in society.

The research problematisation focuses on the following questions:

- 1) Can we train people who care about the world and make a difference in society or their environment?
- 2) What role does the school play in Education for Global Citizenship, considering the development of skills and values to understand the challenges of a globalised world and a climate of uncertainty regarding Sustainable Development?

In this context, this study takes as its starting question:

- Considering the compulsory nature of Citizenship Education in school curricula, how are the themes internalised by students, and what influence can it have on their behaviour as global citizens?

This paper is structured in four parts. It starts with the Introduction and Literature Review and then it is presented the Research Methodology. The third and the fourth parts are dedicated to the Discussion of Results and Conclusions.

## **1. Literature Review**

In an increasingly globalised world, issues such as climate change, sustainability, interculturality, gender equality, identity and participation in democratic life are at the heart of the global debate inherent in the development processes of societies. In view of these factors, the concept of development is one that motivates people and societies to change and improve, insofar as it makes it possible to measure and compare their level of progress and well-being (Sen, 1999). It is therefore not just about economic growth, but also about the expansion of freedom, realised in what people want and what allows them to develop their capacities. Essential to its realisation are institutions that promote and protect freedom and individual well-

being, such as democracy, human rights, education and the media (Sen, 1999). Indeed, this concept meets the growing need for societies to adapt to contemporary and emerging challenges, making it pertinent to analyse individuals' perceptions of development issues and their role as citizens, taking on the fate of the planet as their own, considering that the contemporary citizen is a “citizen of the neighbourhood and the planet” (Mesquita et al., 2017: p.82).

To understand this connection, it is necessary to recognise the different dimensions of the concept of citizenship as a relationship between the individual and the state, based on mutual rights and duties, but at the same time, as a continuous and dynamic process that depends on the awareness and action of citizens to guarantee and extend their rights and duties (Cardona, 2007). Definitely, the global citizen is often described as someone with ‘a complex and pluralistic identity’ (Pashby (2011:437) cited in Coelho *et al.*, 2021) in line with the following profile drawn up by OXFAM<sup>26</sup> in 2006: (i) an active person with an awareness of global issues and the increased global connectivity between countries and people; (ii) who respects and values diversity; (iii) whose global awareness is associated with a sense of belonging to a global community that goes beyond the country of birth or residence; (iv) who promotes responsibility and commitment to local and global realities and a critical understanding of the personal role in the global arena; (v) and thus converts these principles into their daily life choices, for example through responsible and ethical consumption (Coelho *et al.*, 2021). In this respect the concept of Education for Global Citizenship is presented with various meanings, uses and scope, with a strong link to the so-called ‘Educations for’, such as: ‘Education for Sustainable Development’, ‘Education for Human Rights’ or more specifically, ‘Education for Citizenship’, whose practices in Portugal are carried out in schools. In fact, we recognise the role and relevance that education and schools have in this area for young people in secondary education, taking into account the challenges of the societies in which they live and the world that surrounds them, the content of which is covered in Citizenship Education subjects (Gonçalo da Silveira Foundation, 2018).

Considering the concepts above-mentioned, citizenship might be understood as a continuous and dynamic process of recognising and exercising rights and duties (Cardona, 2007), implying responsible action committed to the well-being of the community (local and global). In addition, the latest research has emphasised the importance of inclusive leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour in addressing global challenges. In this way, education

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<sup>26</sup> OXFAM - British confederation of 21 independent charitable organisations dedicated to fighting poverty in the world, founded in 1942, cited in Coelho *et al.*, 2021

plays a crucial role in developing global citizenship values and preparing individuals to effectively tackle environmental issues. For example, integrating climate change into school curricula may help students to develop a deep understanding of the causes and their consequences, fostering skills such as critical thinking and empathy, which are necessary for global citizenship (Dawson *et al.*, 2022). This form of citizenship goes beyond traditional borders and national affiliations, emphasising a global-level commitment to environmental sustainability (Biresselioğlu *et al.*, 2022). Also, energy citizenship, which includes climate activism and grassroots campaigns for renewable energy, highlights the role of individuals in propelling the transition towards sustainable energy practices (Jansma *et al.*, 2023). Within this framework, Sustainable Development serves as a guiding principle for the actions and choices of global citizens, who seek to promote a balance between economic, social and environmental development, respecting diversity and human rights. In curricular terms, Citizenship Education is formally one of the mandatory areas of the Portuguese primary and secondary school curriculum and is duly framed in specific legislation, namely the National Strategy for Citizenship Education<sup>27</sup>. In brief, global citizenship is a multifaceted concept that involves awareness, empathy, and a sense of responsibility towards global issues like climate change. Educating individuals about global citizenship and enhancing their awareness and sense of responsibility are vital steps towards achieving effective and inclusive solutions to global challenges.

Given the context of the António Arroio Artistic School, as a privileged space to explore the practices and perceptions surrounding Education for Global Citizenship, it should be a studying field that would be able to contribute to the reflection and deepening of this crucial theme in the contemporary educational context. The António Arroio Artistic School is an institution dedicated to technical education and applied art founded in 1919. In 1934, the school was restructured, and four courses were subsequently introduced: artistic production, audiovisual communication, communication design and product design. More recently, the teaching of the scientific-humanistic Visual Arts course was introduced<sup>28</sup>. The educational project proposes that artistic activity be understood as a context for the training of students, and one of its main objectives is to promote the success of each student<sup>29</sup>, valuing diversity and making inclusion and differentiation regular practices in school life. It should be noted that like other educational

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<sup>27</sup> Education for citizenship is based on the National Strategy for Education for Citizenship, which is part of the proposal drawn up and presented to the Portuguese government in January.

<sup>28</sup> source: <https://www.antonioarroio.edu.pt/historial-da-escola/>

<sup>29</sup> source: <https://sites.google.com/antonioarroio.edu.pt/relatorioplanoanual2122-aa/inclus%C3%A3o>

contexts, the António Arroio Artistic School has students from different backgrounds and nationalities, possibly in line with the global increase in the presence of foreign students in the school systems of the different OECD countries (from 9.4% in 2006 and 10% in 2009 to 12.5% in 2015 and 13% in 2018 (Oliveira, 2023). In this way, creation and communication are seen as elements that play a fundamental role in understanding, expressing and interacting with others and the surrounding environment<sup>30</sup>.

## 2. Research Methodology

The research for this paper was based on a case study of the António Arroio Artistic School. The exploratory case study involved the participation of students and teachers, recognising the particularities of this art school.

For data collection, three methods were considered: document analysis, questionnaires applied to 33 students and structured interviews applied to 4 teachers. The documentary analysis consisted of reviewing relevant documents, such as project reports developed by the António Arroio Artistic School.

This stage was fundamental to understanding the teaching methodology adopted by the school within the scope of Citizenship Education, specifically in terms of the pedagogical model, in which some good practices stand out (within the framework of the Project and Technologies curricular component), such as the adoption of a project-based teaching methodology and multidisciplinary combined with collaborative work between teachers.

The questionnaires were adapted from research of Carvalho (2018) to meet the specific objectives of this research. Electronic questionnaire model was chosen, given the convenience of publicising it to the participants and filling it in via digital means (using Google Forms). With the aim of the case study and the choice of sample, it was left to the school's discretion to identify three 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes (classes Q, P and O). The questionnaires, which were anonymous and confidential, were available for completion between May and June 2023. From the interviews with the teachers, the aim was to obtain valuable qualitative insights into the school's pedagogical approach, the integration of global citizenship into the curriculum and the teachers' perceptions of the impact of these educational practices on the students. In this context, the interviews were sent to the teachers individually by email and returned by the same means.

To analyse the information collected, we opted for a descriptive analysis of the data, which made it possible to describe the characteristics of the participants and examine the distribution

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<sup>30</sup> source: [https://www.antonioarroio.edu.pt/docs/Diversos/ProjetoEducativo\\_2018\\_2021.pdf](https://www.antonioarroio.edu.pt/docs/Diversos/ProjetoEducativo_2018_2021.pdf)

of the values of the main variables, based on the research questions. A content analysis was carried out on the open questions in the questionnaire and the interview, considering that this is a set of techniques that allows communications to be studied, describing the messages and indicators that help to understand the circumstances and effects of those who produce or receive them (Sousa & Santos, citing Bardin, 2020). Based on Bardin's (1977) categorisation, the content analysis of the interviews can be cross-sectional, based on the analysis of each theme-object and transposed onto an evaluation form or grid, and the technical support of the MaxQDA software was used to carry this out. Data collection took place in the third term of the 2022-2023 school year, more specifically between May and June 2023, which coincided with the completion of schoolwork, assessments and preparation for national exams.

According to the literature in this area, a case study is a form of examination that analyses a social phenomenon in depth and detail. This phenomenon can involve a person, a group, a family, a community or an organisation. The aim is to understand how it manifests itself, what its factors and consequences are, and how it develops over time (Fortin, 2009). To reduce the sampling error (difference between the values obtained for a characteristic in the sample and the values obtained for this characteristic in the entire population), the non-probabilistic sampling method was adopted by rational choice of the researcher, since it uses a method of selecting participants or elements that is not based on probabilities or randomisation.

In terms of sample size, given the qualitative nature of this study and the fact that it is a homogeneous population, a small sample can be considered sufficient (Fortin, 2009). To this end, it included 4 teachers and three 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes, with a total of 33 students responding to the surveys. The classes had an average of around 27 students each. The analysis of the results was carried out in an integrated way, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data collected was analysed statistically and content-wise, allowing for an in-depth interpretation of the information obtained.

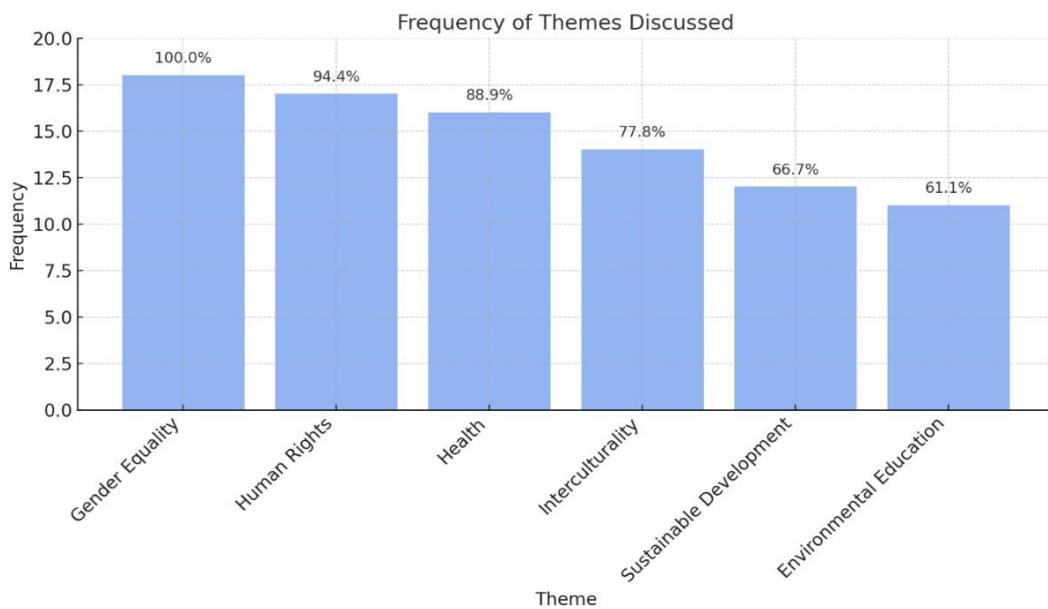
### **3. Discussion of Results**

#### **3.1 Students Findings**

The following findings emerged from the questionnaires applied to the students:

- 1) Of the themes identified by the students, all (100%) address gender equality in the family context, which reveals an awareness and sensitivity to the importance of promoting equality between men and women in society. Human rights (94.4%) are also covered a lot. As far as health is concerned, it is also one of the most covered

topics, considering its different dimensions (mental health, diet, physical activity, addictive behaviours), which are issues also worked in the school context. The results obtained in this study are presented in Graphic 1. Research by Looze et al. (2017) indicates that adolescents have greater life satisfaction when they live in countries with high levels of gender equality, compared to countries with low levels of gender equality, regardless of individual and national economic difference. Although, some people still believe that gender equality is a women's or girls' issue, this study clearly shows that also boys' benefit from higher levels of gender equality in society. The association between gender equality in society and adolescents' life satisfaction takes into account the perception of social support in the context of family, peers and school.

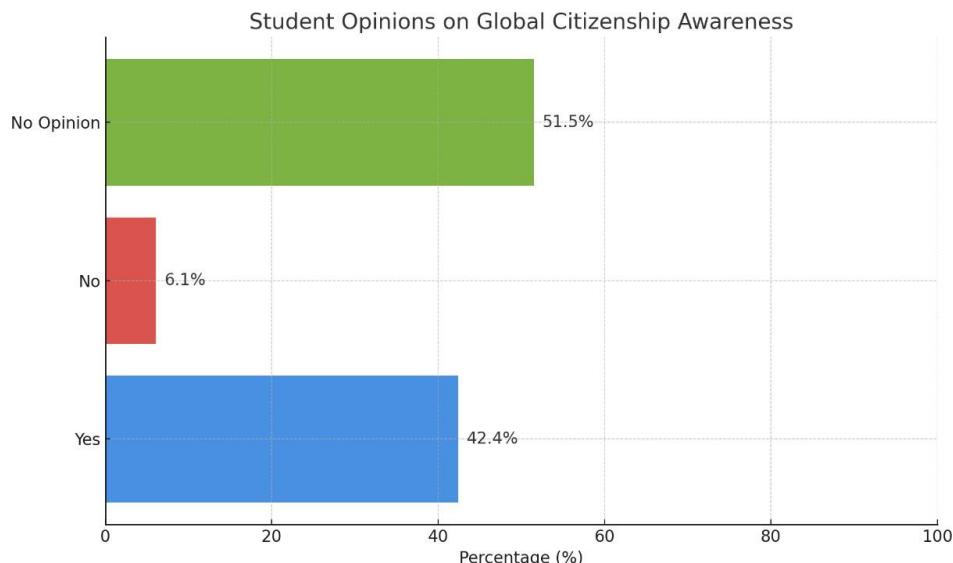


**Figure 1. Themes identified by the students**

Source: Own elaboration

2) The students identify various values and attitudes that they consider most relevant to improving society, considering what they learn about Citizenship Education, namely respect for the diversity of opinions, cultures and lifestyles that exist in the world, tolerance and the promotion of social justice. However, when asked about the concept of Global Citizenship itself, which involves mobilising for social transformation, adding value to the community, creating bridges between the local and the global, the majority had no opinion (51,5%), showing a lack of knowledge or interest in the subject, despite recognising its relevance (see Graphic 2). Similarly, Rivera et al. (2013) study highlighted the positive impact of education on students' awareness of the significance of promoting gender equality. In summary, all these studies underscore the need for comprehensive education on Global Citizenship to bridge the gap in students' knowledge and interest in

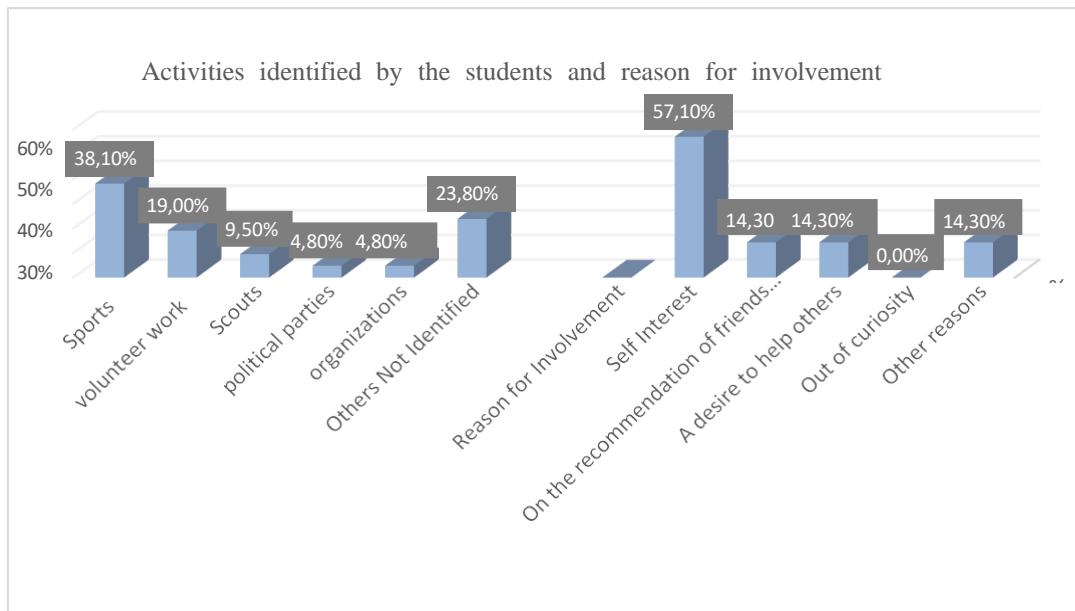
mobilizing for social transformation and promoting community engagement on a global scale.



**Figure 2. Students' opinion on Global Citizenship Awareness**

Source: Own elaboration

- 3) A significant percentage (57,6%) of students don't take part in social activities or take an active part in their community, but they do try to apply it in their daily lives, whether through research on the subject or through their attitudes towards others and in terms of adopting more sustainable habits, highlighting concerns about social and environmental inequalities and the need to share information on the subject. Despite such a significant percentage of students not taking part in activities, they nevertheless identified a range of activities and reasons for getting involved, as shown in Graphic 3. The adoption of sustainable behaviours, such as sustainable travel and tourism practices plays a crucial role in addressing environmental concerns and promoting sustainability (Canto et al., 2021; Gomes & Lopes, 2023). Psychological barriers, particularly related to sustainable dietary patterns, have been identified as a key area for further research to understand and overcome obstacles to sustainable behaviour adoption (Lourenço et al., 2022). In conclusion, the synthesis of these references underscores the interconnectedness of social, environmental, and health issues, highlighting the importance of addressing social determinants, especially the need for greater participation in social or community activities and the adoption of sustainable habits.



**Figure 3. Activities identified by the students and reason for involvement**

Source: Own elaboration

- 4) Regarding the school's contributions, the students have different opinions on how the topics are approached in class, with a significant proportion considering that the approach in class is adequate, showing satisfaction with the content and methodologies adopted. It should be noted that they also identify improvements to be made in this area, especially about a less theoretical and more practical approach, covering topics with which they identify. This research has shown that school satisfaction is closely linked to attendance, academic performance, and their psychological well-being. Moreover, and in accordance with Yam (2022) the relationship between school satisfaction and psychological well-being highlights the mediating role of happiness at school, emphasizing the importance of a positive and fulfilling educational environment for students' overall well-being and academic success. These findings corroborate our study, in that student satisfaction with the educational experience, including content and methodologies, is essential for promoting positive outcomes in terms of academic performance, attendance and general well-being. Students' opinions on the approach to topics in class, their satisfaction with the content and methodologies adopted, and their identified areas for improvement reflect the significance of considering student feedback and enhancing the educational experience to meet their needs and expectations.
- 5) In terms of students' interest in the themes included in Citizenship Education, there is a preference for specific themes such as Education for Health and Sexuality, Education for Gender Equality and Education for Human Rights. Research by Castro et al.

(2018) underscores the positive association between comprehensive sexual education exposure and improved sexual and reproductive health outcomes among high school students in Mexico. This highlights the importance of integrating comprehensive sexual education components into school curricula to enhance students' understanding and promote positive health outcomes. Regarding Education for Gender Equality the study by Li et al. (2023) identifies the importance of establishing gender equality consciousness in schools through various activities and curriculum design to promote gender equality education effectively. In addition, Nurjanah (2024) recommends integrating gender equality into civics textbooks to defend the principles of human rights, more specifically to promote equality in gender roles in order to create fair gender relations among students. These references collectively emphasize the significance of incorporating Education for Health and Sexuality, Education for Gender Equality, and Education for Human Rights into school curricula to empower students with essential knowledge and skills to navigate complex societal issues and promote a more inclusive and equitable society.

- 6) Considering that the research was centred on the context of an Art School, the students associate it with the promotion of new ideas and an educational context open to diversity, and the majority believe that art can raise awareness of citizenship issues more easily. The conclusion is that art can be a mean of interpretation and social transformation. In the study conducted by Costandius (2010), in the context of university education in South Africa, he concluded that art can be an effective means of addressing sensitive issues because it works on a symbolic and metaphorical level, involving participants and encouraging a diversity of interpretations. In this way, art education can be a useful tool to promote learning about social responsibility and citizenship. In addition, Silva (2021), analysing the context of a Portuguese artistic and professional school, reinforces the importance of artistic education in the construction of critical thinking, as it enables questioning, investigation and permanent analysis of the world around us, encourages the crossing of various fields of knowledge and gives students the chance to express themselves about their learning. There is thus a student/school reciprocity that takes place in a context of sharing feelings, thoughts and actions, enabling the student to discover themselves as a person and the school to present itself as part of a process of social and school intervention.

### **3.2. Teachers Findings**

Teachers have shown that they understand citizenship as a dynamic, multidimensional and transformative phenomenon. Regarding the values promoted by the school, both students and

teachers identify common aspects such as respect for others, responsibility and tolerance.

Among the activities carried out in the teachers' subjects, they were generally successful and valued by the students. Regarding student participation, only one teacher felt that students were more participative and more aware of the importance of developing peer projects with a social and human foundation.

In this research and from the teachers' perspective, the concept of Global Citizenship is interlinked with the values of Citizenship Education, namely the adoption of active citizenship in favour of the common good, interculturality and respect for others.

Among the activities carried out in the teachers' subjects, generally they have been successful and valued by the students. As far as student participation is concerned, there has been no increase in participation since the implementation of the Citizenship Education Project, nor has there been any change in their attitudes, perceptions or behaviour. In this context, Carvalho (2018) points out in her study, that teachers and students have different opinions on the importance of each thematic area of citizenship education, emphasising the need for a subject dedicated to these topics so that it is not delegated to the background. Considering what should be developed in schools regarding Citizenship Education, the teachers put forward the following suggestions:

- Depening interdisciplinarity ("Often very interesting actions are developed that end up not having the desired impact because they are too dispersed.");
- It is necessary to create the conditions for teachers to work more as a team in order to plan and implement interdisciplinary;
- Choosing themes that meet the concerns of students, providing a space to reflect on issues of the contemporary world;
- Focus on themes related to active citizenship, political participation and economy;
- Promoting the theme of Citizenship and Development in initial and continuing teacher training.

The teachers also mentioned the importance of deepening interdisciplinary projects that promote a more integrated approach to Global Citizenship issues. In this way, teachers demonstrated a vision of the school as an educational agent that should reinforce the creation of knowledge in the school context but also establish a link between learning and the surrounding environment. The integration of interdisciplinary projects in education is increasingly recognised as a vital approach to promoting Global Citizenship among students. From this perspective, other studies emphasise that interdisciplinary teaching involves the amalgamation of methods from various disciplines to provide comprehensive learning

experiences (Bolat & Karakuş, 2017). It is an essential approach for a holistic understanding of complex global issues, as it encourages students to make connections between different fields of study and apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios. In turn, the findings of Fidalgo-Neto et al., (2014) observed that teachers believe that schools often lack the necessary conditions to implement interdisciplinary practices effectively, which can hinder the development of integrated curricula that address Global Citizenship issues.

### **3.3. School Context**

The inclusive nature of the school, the organisational climate characterised by a culture of respect for differences, the positive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers and the existence of adequate human and technical resources that facilitate the implementation of activities and projects, including those developed under the theme of Education for Citizenship, stand out. Compared to mainstream education, the school's educational model has several positive aspects related to the students' adherence to the work carried out. Bernardo et al. (2022), analysing the global citizenship competences of students in the context of education in the Philippines, stresses that despite not being developed or implemented, the global citizenship competences of young students develop gradually in the first years of school.

In terms of comparative analysis with other studies (Costandius, 2010; Carvalho, 2018; Gonçalo da Silva Foundation, 2018; Bernardo et al., 2022), similarities can be identified in the results obtained, namely a convergence in relation to the importance of the transversality of the area of Citizenship in the different subjects, the valorisation of Art as a means of raising awareness and expressing Citizenship themes, the positive influence of initiatives in promoting a more tolerant, inclusive school climate and the dynamization of initiatives that promote interaction between teachers and students.

## **Conclusion**

In the context of the results obtained from the students, we can conclude that they address citizenship issues with some regularity in the family context, particularly those related to gender equality, human rights and health issues, and that these issues are also dealt with in the school context. Students identify various values and attitudes that they consider most relevant

to improving society, considering what they learn about Citizenship Education, namely respect for the diversity of opinions, cultures and lifestyles that exist in the world, tolerance and the promotion of social justice.

The teachers demonstrated an understanding of citizenship as a dynamic, multidimensional and transformative phenomenon. From the activities carried out in the teachers' subjects, they have generally been successful and valued by the students. In terms of student participation, there has been no evidence of greater participation since the Citizenship Education Project was implemented or of changes in students' attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, which could be understood as something inherent on the one hand, and on the other hand, this assessment needs more time to assess any concrete repercussions.

Considering the research objectives, we can conclude that the methodology and themes addressed by the António Arroio Art School in the context of Citizenship Education are characterised by a transversal and interdisciplinary approach, materialised in the development of activities and projects by the various disciplines.

As this is an Art school, the students associate it with the promotion of new ideas and an educational context open to diversity, and the majority believe that art can more easily raise awareness of citizenship issues. The conclusion is that art can be a means of interpretation and social transformation. The school's inclusive nature, the organisational climate characterised by a culture of respect for differences, the positive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers and the existence of adequate human and technical resources that facilitate the implementation of activities and projects, including those developed under the theme of Education for Citizenship, stands out.

However, there are also aspects to be improved in terms of Citizenship Education projects and activities, namely creating conditions to promote greater teamwork, promoting inter-institutional partnerships and implementing interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects. In terms of Citizenship Education themes, there are some suggestions for improvement, namely focusing on themes related to active citizenship, political participation and the economy and others that address the concerns of students, as well as promoting initial and continuing teacher training in the field of Citizenship and Development.

Considering the starting question of this research, we can conclude that, based on the sample and data collected from the students of the António Arroio Artistic School, they recognise the values and importance of Citizenship Education, and only some of them identify with the concept of Global Citizenship, some of them identify with the concept of Global Citizenship

and therefore apply it in their social and community contexts, using digital tools to learn and communicate, in their interpersonal relationships and in adopting more sustainable habits and behaviours.

The main limitations of the study were the restricted period during which the research instruments (surveys and interviews) were used, because it took place towards the end of the school year, coinciding with the preparation phase for the 11th grade exams and assessments, which brought an additional workload for teachers and students, and which may have conditioned the degree of participation in the surveys.

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