

History and civic education in France

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Abstract

France, renowned for its extensive historical heritage and global influence, prompts inquiry into the effectiveness of its history and citizenship education in the present context. This paper investigates the interplay between history, geography, and citizenship education within the French school system throughout an examination of curriculum structure and content. The analysis covers the role of historical narratives in shaping national identity and civic values, and addresses the development of French education and contemporary challenges. Furthermore, it presents the main themes of the subjects and related issues, as well as the educational objectives of the curriculum.

keywords: French education system, history teaching, citizenship education

Introduction

Situated in Western Europe, France vaunts a rich history that spans millennia, characterized by cultural, political, and intellectual contributions that have left an indelible mark on the global stage. From its ancient Gallic roots to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, France has been a vessel of innovation, art, and political upheaval (Crouzet, 2013).

With a population of approximately 67 million people, France ranks as the second most populous country in Europe (World Bank, 2022). A significant portion of this population is engaged in education, with over 12 million students enrolled in various educational institutions, ranging from preschool to higher education (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, 2021).

The Prussian education system, developed in the early 19th century, was renowned for its emphasis on discipline, uniformity, and obedience (Ringer, 1979). It emphasized rote memorization, rigorous testing, and hierarchical classroom structures. The French education system, while influenced by Prussian ideas, has historically maintained a more knowledge-based approach, focusing on critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual ex-

ploration. (Krieger, 1957). Education in France is renowned for its emphasis on academic excellence, intellectual rigor, and egalitarian principles (Green, 2018). It is, similarly to the Prussian system, structured hierarchically, with a clear progression from primary to secondary education, culminating in the baccalauréat (often mentioned as “bac”) known as the graduation examination, which serves as the gateway to higher education. Central to the French education system is the concept of secularism, which guarantees the separation of religion from state affairs and fortifies the principle of equality in education (Cairns & Evans, 2020). When compared to other European systems, such as the more decentralized models found in countries like Germany or the more flexible and holistic approaches in Nordic countries like Finland, the French system is often seen as more traditional and standardized, that ensures a strong foundation in core subjects and a high level of academic attainment (European Commission, 2022).

French history serves as a rich framework for citizenship education, linking with the nation’s commitment to democratic principles and civic participation. From the French Revolution’s call for liberty, equality, and fraternity to the establishment of universal suffrage, key historical events have shaped French citizens’ understanding of their rights and responsibilities within society. Citizenship education in France emphasizes the importance of historical awareness in fostering an active and informed citizenry, drawing on historical narratives to promote values such as tolerance, solidarity, and civic engagement. Scholars argue that a deep understanding of French history not only provides context for contemporary social and political issues but also nurtures a sense of belonging and collective identity among citizens (Maitre, 2018; Cairns & Evans, 2020). The relationship between history teaching and national identity in France, focusing on the concept is the “grand narrative” (Maitre, 2018). The grand narrative refers to the overarching historical narrative that shapes a nation’s collective memory and identity. In the French context, this narrative often focuses on key events such as the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the construction of the French Republic. History education in France reinforces this grand narrative, emphasizing certain historical events and figures in order to foster a sense of national identity (Cairns and Evans, 2020).

Increasing diversity and social inequality resulted in recent reforms in citizenship education, including changes to the curriculum and pedagogical approaches, aimed at promoting greater inclusivity, critical thinking, and civic engagement among students in order to help them navigate and contribute to an ever more interconnected world (Cairns and Evans, 2020).

Conceptual Background

Education – as being one of the most important spheres of socialization – has a central role in bringing up people who are active members of democratic societies and conscious of their own actions (Anyon, 1981). Both educators and policymakers realized the need to reform education systems so that they respond to novel encounters of our everchanging environment. Both Adam Smith and Foucault concur that knowledge equates to power, although in different ways (Weinstein, 2019). Smith suggests that enhanced information empowers individuals to make more proficient decisions. Drawing from the Aristotelian tradition, Smith asserts that quality education and effective institutional guidance cultivate virtuous individuals and societies. Consequently, education enhances human capacities to distinguish the values considered acceptable by societies, both morally and interpersonally, thus playing a pivotal role in fostering democracy. Individuals internalize societal norms through the process of socialization, with education, particularly in schools, serving as a crucial agent by imparting specific values. Foucault's theory of education shares some parallels with Smith's perspective. Foucault contends that increased knowledge affords individuals greater choices, though he does not define knowledge as a mere accumulation of facts, rather he views it as an access to dominant discourse within a given social framework. Here, education goes beyond equipping individuals with skills and capacities for better life options, since it also aids in their acculturation, socialization, and familiarity with societal norms. Bourdieu argued that education contributes to the establishment of shared values and norms, thereby aiding in the development of a collective identity (Llored, 2022). This highlights the importance of history and citizenship education in providing students with perspectives, enabling them to learn from the events of the past, and offering a cultural viewpoint. These subjects also play a crucial role in identity formation, equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate their society effectively.

The notion of citizenship is complicatedly layered, with its interpretation varying from one nation to another, and it has undergone significant evolution over the years. Nonetheless, there are specific perspectives that allow for an examination of this term. Da Silva et al. propose that citizenship can be delineated into three dimensions: legal status, engagement in political processes, and a sense of belonging (M.C. da Silva et al.,

2019). Firstly, legal status encompasses the entitlement of individuals to specific social rights and obligations. These rights are intertwined with democratic institutions such as education, healthcare, and various freedoms. Secondly, political participation embodies both a democratic entitlement and a duty or responsibility simultaneously. Through engaging in political processes, citizens can exercise their legal status. This entails the ability to vote for representatives and parties that align with their preferences and priorities and to be able to be voted for as well. Lastly, citizenship fosters a sense of belonging that unites individuals within a society. This dimension is the most important from the educational point of view, since citizenship facilitates the cultivation of shared realities and values, fostering unity within a community, society or state. Citizenship education encompasses the teaching and learning processes designed to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active participation in democratic societies. It goes beyond traditional academic subjects, aiming to cultivate critical thinking, social responsibility, and a sense of civic duty among citizens. Through citizenship education, individuals develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, learn how to engage in civil discourse, and acquire the tools to address societal challenges collectively. Research suggests that effective citizenship education fosters democratic values, promotes social cohesion, and contributes to the development of informed and engaged citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Torney-Purta, 2002 & European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023). Therefore, it is recognized as a possible solution for fostering knowledge, building skills and encouraging behaviour that entail young people to be agents of positive change.

History education serves as a vital cornerstone in the academic curriculum, offering students a window into the past to understand the complexities of human civilization, societal progress, and the lessons learned from historical events. It provides a platform for critical thinking, encouraging students to analyse primary sources, interpret historical narratives, and engage in discussions about the significance of historical events (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Through the study of history, students gain insights into the cultural, political, and social contexts that have shaped the world they inhabit today (VanSledright, 2010). Moreover, history education fosters empathy and a sense of interconnectedness by exploring diverse perspectives and narratives (Seixas & Morton, 2013), ultimately contributing to the development of informed and responsible citizens capable of understanding and navigating the complexities of the modern world.

The French education system

Formal education in France begins at age three with optional attendance at preschool (ISCED 0) which is “pré-maternelle” (nursery) and “maternelle” (kindergarten). France has a longstanding tradition of pre-primary education. For the past twenty years, nearly all children aged three to six have attended “école maternelle.” Since 2019, pre-primary education has been mandatory. By age six, enrollment in school becomes mandatory. Primary school (ISCED 1) spans five years, from approximately ages six to eleven, followed by secondary education divided into two stages. During the first stage, “collège” (ISCED 2), students follow a unified curriculum until the age of 15. The curriculum covers four years for students aged eleven to fifteen, culminating in the “brevet des collèges”. Completion of lower secondary education is marked by the “Diplôme national du brevet” (DNB), although entrance to upper secondary level is not contingent on achieving success in the DNB. Specialization begins at the end of lower secondary education, where students are directed to either general, technological, or vocational lycées. Students attend lycée (high school) (ISCED 3) for the final three years, preparing for the baccalauréat (bac) qualification (Fulbright France, n.d. & European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023). Overall, formal education in France spans a total of 15 years from pré-maternelle through lycée (table 1).

Education level		Age range	Duration (in years)	Is history education mandatory?	Qualification
Pre-primary school	Pré-maternelle	3-4	1	no	none
	Maternelle	4-6	2	no	none
Primary School	École primaire	6-11	5	yes	none
Secondary School	Collège	11-15	4	yes	“Diplôme national du brevet” (DNB)
	Lycée	15-18	3	no	“Baccalauréat” (bac)

Table 1: Structure of education system in France (Based on the information available found on the website of the French Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport)

The French education system is overseen by the Department for National Education, Higher Education, and Research, operating within the framework established by the Parliament. Traditionally centralized, the State regulates curriculum details, teacher recruitment, training, and inspections, and serves as the primary funder of public education. Additionally, it subsidizes “private schools under contract.” Despite this centralization, decentralization efforts since the 1980s have granted local authorities a growing role in ensuring the system’s logistical functioning, including infrastructure maintenance, school transport, and the provision of educational materials (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

Historical roots of the French education system

The historical roots of the French education system trace back to the early modern period, with significant developments occurring during the French Revolution in the late 18th century. It was during this time that education in France underwent a transformation, marked by the implementation of compulsory education policies aimed at ensuring universal access to schooling. The “Jules Ferry Laws”, enacted in the 1880s, solidified the principle of compulsory education, making it mandatory for children between the ages of 6 and 13 to attend school. This legislation represented a pivotal moment in the democratization of education in France, laying the groundwork for the establishment of the modern educational system. The first schools in France were often associated with religious institutions, such as monasteries and churches, which provided education primarily to the clergy and the elite. However, with the rise of secularism and the separation of church and state, public schools emerged as the primary providers of education for the general population (Depaepe & Simon, 2003; Bancel et al., 2014).

Another significant milestone in the history of the French education system was the introduction of free education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The establishment of free, secular, and compulsory education represented a landmark achievement in the democratization of education in France, ensuring that access to schooling was not restricted by economic or social status (Depaepe & Simon, 2003; Bancel et al., 2014).

France’s education system is renowned for its rigorous academic standards and centralized structure, reflecting the nation’s commitment to providing equitable access to quality education. The system is characterized by its emphasis on comprehensive education from early childhood through higher education, with a strong focus on academic achievement and

cultural enrichment. At the heart of the French educational ethos is the principle of “laïcité” referring to secularism, which underpins the public education system and ensures the separation of religion from state affairs.

School funding and maintenance

France implements a centrally regulated curriculum, allowing for limited local modifications. State schools, which are free, co-educational, and secular, offer compulsory education from ages 3 to 16, organized into four cycles.

The state provides partial funding to most private schools, which are attended by about 20% of pupils. These subsidized private schools operate under a contract with the state and adhere to the state curriculum. Homeschooling is allowed only under strict conditions. Textbooks are designed, published, and distributed by private publishers, relying primarily on teachers as authors. The French state does not control these publishers. Consequently, the state sets pedagogical guidelines and curricula, and oversees the recruitment, training, and administration of school management and teaching staff in both public schools and private schools under contract with the state.

The education budget encompasses various components, including teacher salaries, infrastructure maintenance, and educational resources, aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students across the country. Additionally, a separate ministry, distinct from the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports, oversees institutions catering to children under the age of 3. This division of responsibility may hinder the formation of cohesive strategies across all early childhood education and care (ECEC) services (OECD, 2020). At 15, students are required to undertake the national school-leaving diploma, the brevet (DNB), after which they can progress to upper secondary education (lycée), vocational training, or technological education, culminating in the respective baccalaureate. Approximately 20% of students attend private schools, which receive partial state funding and adhere to the state curriculum through contractual agreements. Homeschooling is permitted under strict conditions. Private publishers, relying mostly on teachers as authors, develop, publish, and distribute textbooks independently, beyond the control of the French state (Bruillard, 2011).

Financial support for educational institutions primarily originates from public funds distributed through relatively transparent and cohesive mechanisms. Nevertheless, despite recent efforts, France still demonstrates a significant gap in per-student expenditure distribu-

tion between primary and secondary education, favouring the latter, as well as among various higher education institutions. While annual spending per pupil/student in tertiary education surpasses the OECD average in France, universities still face resource deficiencies compared to other higher education establishments (OECD, 2020).

In 2017, the French education system served approximately 15.2 million pupils, students, and apprentices, accounting for about 23% of the population. By 2022, domestic education expenditure reached 180 billion euros, or 6.8% of the GDP. In 2017, it was 154.2 billion euros, representing 6.7% of GDP (DEPP, L'Etat de l'Ecole 2023 in Eurydice, 2023).

While the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports holds overarching responsibility for setting educational policies and standards, local authorities play a crucial role in implementing and complementing these policies at the regional and municipal levels (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, n.d.). This decentralized approach allows local authorities to tailor educational provision to the specific needs, priorities, and cultural contexts of their communities. Local authorities are responsible for managing and maintaining educational infrastructure, hiring support staff, and allocating resources to schools within their jurisdiction. Additionally, they may have the autonomy to develop initiatives and programs to address local educational challenges and promote innovation in teaching and learning (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Thus, while the central government provides a framework for education policy and funding, local authorities contribute to the diversity and dynamism of the French education system, ensuring that educational provision is responsive to the unique characteristics of different regions and communities.

Social function and curriculum of the French school system

History, Geography and Citizenship education subjects mobilise history, geography, geopolitics and political science to provide students with the keys to understanding the contemporary world and provide students with skills that allow them to analyse the political system of democracy. (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, n.d.).

Textbooks in France constitute fundamental educational resources that are meticulously crafted to align with the curriculum guidelines established by the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, n.d.). These textbooks are typically produced by but not limited to Hachette Éducation, Nathan, Bordas, and Hatier principles. Efforts have been made in recent years to ensure that textbooks

incorporate inclusive and diverse perspectives, reflecting the multicultural society of modern France (Crouzet, 2013).

Teacher autonomy in France is a key feature of the education system, allowing educators a degree of freedom in designing and delivering instruction within the framework of curriculum guidelines established by the Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Sports (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports). While teachers are expected to adhere to prescribed learning objectives and standards, they have the flexibility to adapt their teaching methods and materials to meet the needs and interests of their students. This autonomy empowers teachers to employ innovative pedagogical approaches, tailor instruction to diverse learners, and create dynamic learning environments conducive to student engagement and achievement. In terms of teacher qualifications, individuals seeking to become teachers in France must typically hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification, complete a teacher training program at a university or teacher training institute (École supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation, or ESPE), and pass the required certification examinations (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Additionally, candidates are evaluated based on their pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and professional competencies to ensure they possess the requisite expertise to effectively educate and inspire students.

Concerning the key competencies, French education puts an emphasis on the development of digital skills, foreign languages, and science and technology. Cross-curricular activities and subjects aim to foster critical thinking, creativity, and civic education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

French students' digital skills are assessed and certified through the PIX certification at two stages: at the end of lower secondary education (grade 9) and upper secondary education. France also assesses digital competence through non-specific national tests during primary and lower secondary education to monitor the education system's quality rather than individual attainment levels. However, the assessment of digital competence through national tests is not very common across European education systems, particularly in primary and lower secondary levels (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

Content of history and geography curricula

History, together with geography, is taught in three cycles in French public education (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports). The curricula and time-

tables of the subjects taught are set at national level. The distribution of lessons between subjects depends on the class attended. In France, the numbering of classes decreases as students progress through the educational system. In primary school, in the third cycle (grade 6), 3 hours of history and geography are taught per week, while in the fourth cycle, moral and civic education are added to history and geography, amounting to 3 hours per week in grade 5, 4 and 3.5 hours per week in grade 3 (Service-public.fr.n.d. & Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports).

In Cycle 2 (students between 6-8 years old) there is no history education, and history as such is not mentioned in the curriculum for this cycle.

In Cycle 3, also addressed as *collège* or *6ème* (sixth class), where students are usually between 9-12 years, the curriculum includes a section on history education, and it mandates the topics to be covered. Students in this cycle begin to develop their understanding of time and space through history and geography, gradually and explicitly. At the end of this cycle, civic education is introduced, building upon the knowledge gained. These two courses deal with common themes and concepts, sharing tools and methods.

In Cycle 4, which includes “*5ème*” (fifth class), “*4ème*” (fourth class) and “*3ème*” (third class) students will gradually understand how the disciplines of history and geography allow them to accurately reflect the time and space of human societies and to understand a wide range of social phenomena. The teaching themes ensure that pupils explore the complexity of the historical development and geographical organisation of human groups.

In “*Première*” or so-called “*1ère*” (first class) and “*Terminale*” (final class), grades determine 40% of the final diploma grade, while the baccalaureate exam grade counts for 60%.

With the new curriculum, it is possible to take lessons as a subject (and history-geography is part of it) during secondary school studies, but not compulsory, meaning that if the student does not choose the subject as an optional extra, he or she does not have to take a history exam at the end of secondary school. In this case, a “*contrôle continu*” comes into play, i.e. all the marks obtained in the history class are taken into account.

This interdisciplinary approach helps students understand the interconnectedness of historical events and contemporary societal issues. Each cycle has specific topics for which the curriculum makes subtopic recommendations (table 2). For example, in Cycle 4 there are three topics for each year.

		6ème	5ème	4ème	3ième
History	1st theme	The long history of humanity and migrations	Christianity and Islam (6th-13th centuries), worlds in contact	The 18th century. Expansion, Enlightenment and revolutions.	Europe, the main battlefield of wars (1914-1945)
	2nd theme	Founding narratives, legends, beliefs, and citizenship in the ancient Mediterranean region in the 1st millennium BCE	Society, church and political power in the feudal West (11th-15th centuries)	Europe and the world in the 19th century (industrial revolution, conquests and colonial societies)	The world since 1945 (independence and the building of new states, the bipolar world during the Cold War and the consolidation and implementation of the European project, and issues and conflicts in the world after 1989)
	3rd theme	The Roman Empire in the ancient world	The transformation of Europe and its opening to the world in the 16th and 17th centuries	Society, culture and politics in 19th-century France (democratic development, the Third Republic, the position of women in a changing society)	French women and men in a re-thinking republic 1944-1947: rebuilding the republic, redefining democracy (the Fifth Republic, from the Republic of Gaulle to alternation and cohabitation, and new social and cultural issues, political responses)

Geography	1st theme	Life in a big city (metropolitan)	The demographic question and unequal development (population growth and its effects and the distribution of wealth and poverty in the world)	World urbanisation and globalisation (the geography of centres and peripheries)	The territorial dynamics of France today
	2nd theme	Life in a sparsely populated area	Management and renewal of limited resources (energy, water, food)	Transnational human mobility (the world of migrants, and tourism and its regions)	Why and how should the area be developed? (planning responses to the growing inequalities between French territories at all levels, as well as the French overseas territories)
	3rd theme	Inhabitants of coastal areas	Risk prevention, adaptation to global change	Spaces transformed by globalisation (the maritime world, the adaptation of the US territory to the new conditions of globalisation, and the dynamics of a large African geographical entity)	France and the European Union (the European Union, a new area of relationality and belonging, and France and Europe in the world)

Table 2: Subject content of history-geography in different educational cycles (based on the information available found on the website of the French Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport)

Overall, the French history and citizenship curriculum aims to provide students with a thorough understanding of historical events, their impact on modern society, and the development of civic responsibility. By integrating history with other related subjects and allowing for teacher autonomy, the education system ensures a holistic and adaptable approach to teaching history.

Content of Citizenship Education curriculum

Introduced in 2015 at all levels of primary and secondary education, moral and civic education helps students to become responsible and empowered citizens, aware of their rights but also of their duties. It contributes to the development of their critical faculties and to the acquisition of ethical behaviour. It prepares them to exercise their rights as citizens and makes them aware of their individual and collective responsibilities. This teaching contributes to the transmission of the values of the Republic to all pupils. In France, moral and civic education aims to develop a moral and civic culture and critical thinking, so that pupils gradually become aware of their responsibilities in their personal and social lives. Moral and civic education thus combines values, knowledge and practices.

The aim of moral and civic education is also to ensure that pupils freely and consciously accept the values on which the republic and democracy are based: common values based on dignity, freedom, equality - in particular equality between the sexes - solidarity, secularism, a spirit of justice and respect, and the fight against all forms of discrimination, i.e. the constitutional values of the French Republic, as enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 and in the Preamble to the Constitution of 1946. Moreover, moral and civic education within schools plays a crucial role in fostering education for national defence and security, along with media literacy, critical thinking, and the teaching of religious knowledge within a secular framework. This education empowers students to apply the values and principles they have acquired to comprehend various situations encountered both inside and outside the classroom, including boarding school experiences and school life in general. By providing opportunities for learning and reflection, moral and civic education encourages students to explore the foundations of interpersonal relationships in a democratic society, emphasizing the importance of individual commitment and decision-making for every citizen.

The first year of the secondary school moral and civic education programme broadens and deepens the second-year programme and contributes to the development of students' civic awareness. The programme associates a main theme to each of the three levels of public education: the "seconde" (second) class studies freedom, the "première" (first) class studies society and the "terminale" (final) class studies democracy. These three themes build on each other, allowing students to explore the meaning and scope of the values of the Republic.

The course is compulsory, but only once a week for 30 minutes. In addition, the structure of the course is flexible, it is up to the teacher to choose which of the topics he or she wants to discuss with the students. The program associates each of the three tiers of secondary education with a specific theme, and within each theme, two distinct areas are addressed (table 3). Teachers are tasked with designing their curriculum to encompass at least two of the suggested areas within each theme. The values, principles and concepts learned in moral and civic education are linked to people, thus creating a connection between contemporary events, places or problems. The selected pedagogical approaches, which include studies, presentations, and/or argumentative debates, are designed to foster deeper reflection among students. These teaching methods significantly contribute to the enhancement of oral communication skills, particularly through the practice of argumentation, facilitating the clarification of ideas and the articulation of reasoning to persuade others.

Additionally, to fortify the comprehension of values and principles, along with recognizing the challenges in their realization and the commitment required to uphold them, teachers may develop a "project of the year." This project can be conducted within the classroom or extended to activities outside, providing students with opportunities to explore various forms of engagement. Through its role in nurturing judgment, moral and civic education facilitates reflection on the various sources employed, including written texts, maps, images, artistic productions, films, music, and more, along with their creation, cultural significance, media utilization, and societal impact. This education exposes students to documentary research and its methodologies, acquaints them with the breadth and variety of media and modes of expression, and imparts lessons on complexity, autonomy, engagement, decision-making, and responsibility within the framework of the Republic. The annual theme is investigated through two avenues, each requiring coverage of at least two

suggested areas. To aid students in comprehending the concepts, the curriculum offers potential topics for them to delve into (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, n.d.).

	Main question	Related concepts	Possible educational objectives
Axis 1: Foundations and weaknesses of the social relationship	How are the foundations of the social cohesion weakening today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between general and particular interests • Commitment - Resistance • Inclusion - Exclusion - Rejection • Equality - Equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding information overload in social networks and the ability to select, recognise credibility and trustworthiness • Recognition and review of untruthful content: • Preparing for, acting on and protecting against the dangers of virtual communities and real communities as a mechanism of exclusion and harassment. • Avoiding lonely consumption practices and isolation. • Analysis and evaluation skills through the example of a city, a neighbourhood, a social group • Understanding social policies and care systems to question solidarity or adapt care. Possible fields of study: family policy; health policy; reducing unemployment; generational policy.

<p>Axis 2: Rebuilding social relations</p>	<p>How do the ways of recreating social relations determine the new model of society?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Justice, equality, fairness • Social reporting - solidarity • Individual and collective responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring new ways of exercising citizenship in France and Europe • Discover new ways of mobilisation and political participation, such as petitions, tribunes, local referendums, collectives • Learning about new systems of civic engagement (civic service, national and international) • Recognising contemporary bioethical issues • Learning about the development of the social and solidarity economy through examples • Environmental responsibility and understanding of the interaction between man and nature and the protection of women's rights • Study of public policies to promote social cohesion (social and territorial policies, promotion of equal opportunities, intergenerational relations), using examples in context
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Table 3: Themes discussed in the moral and civic education course (based on the information available found on the website of the French Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport)

Citizenship curriculum mentions the operation and levels and actors of the national legal system but does not specify them. Regarding the functioning of democratic state, such as rights and responsibilities (e.g.: elections, representation, active participation) the curriculum includes information on mobilisation and political participation like pe-

titions, tribunals, local referendum or collectives. Furthermore, the curriculum includes topics that cover clubs, associations, social networks, communities, popular universities, self-help networks and volunteering, as well as it unfolds tools of solidarity and engagement such as the internet and social networks and participatory mechanisms.

The syllabus mentions circular economy and addresses the issue of individual and collective responsibility along environmental themes. Furthermore, it touches upon the topics of environmental protection and biodiversity preservation. It deals with the relationship between virtual communities and real communities: individualism, self-image, trust, mechanisms of ostracism and bullying.

Concerning national identity, connection to the importance of patriotism or home defence it is worth mentioning that the curriculum includes information about civic service responsibilities and opportunities, both national and international. The Law of 27 October 1997 on the reform of the national service requires the national education system to provide national defence education (the National Defence and Citizenship Day is part of the secondary school curriculum). Secondly, the Nationality Law of 16 March 1998 also requires the education system to provide information on the principles of French nationality.

The curriculum focuses on interconnectedness, global or supranational citizenship (e.g.: EU citizenship) through covering new ways of exercising citizenship in France and Europe. Additionally, topics related to social and territorial policies, gender equality and equal opportunities, intergenerational relations are also reflected through the programme.

The course includes approaches that encourage media literacy focusing on criticising journalists and experts to spreading fake news and creating so-called alternative “truths”. The curriculum also addresses the information production challenges of social networks such as confirmation bias, filter bubbles; information overload and selection; credibility and trustworthiness. It aims at providing the pupils with tools to recognise conspiracy and revisionism.

Therefore, the overall aim of the subject is to help students develop critical thinking skills, including the ability to discern truth, analyse different types of documents, and handle information carefully while also teaching them how to communicate in a clear and respectful way, as well as the value of cooperation and participation in group projects.

History & Geography and Citizenship Education Examination in France

In France, the history and geography curriculum is typically integrated into a single subject known as “histoire-géographie” (history-geography), which is taught throughout secondary education. This integrated approach aims to provide students with a holistic understanding of the relationship between historical events and geographical contexts (Ministère de l’Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse, 2015). While history and geography are taught together, they are typically assessed separately in the French Baccalauréat examination, allowing for separate assessments of students’ understanding and proficiency in each subject (Ministère de l’Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse, 2015). During the examination, students may encounter questions that require them to draw on their knowledge of both history and geography to analyse historical events within their spatial and environmental contexts (Direction de l’Évaluation, de la Prospective et de la Performance, 2017).

Citizenship education, known as “enseignement moral et civique” (moral and civic education), is typically integrated into the broader curriculum and is not assessed as a separate examination in the French Baccalauréat (Ministère de l’Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse, 2015). Instead, it is taught alongside other subjects throughout secondary education, aiming to instil values such as democracy, human rights, and civic responsibility in students. While citizenship education is not evaluated as a standalone subject in the Baccalauréat examination, its principles and themes may be incorporated into assessment tasks within other subjects, such as history and geography (Ministère de l’Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse, 2015). For example, students may be asked to analyse historical events from a moral or civic perspective, or to consider the ethical implications of geographical phenomena.

Dilemmas

Addressing disparities in educational outcomes and fostering social and cultural diversity are pressing challenges within the French education system. The European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice report of 2023 sheds light on these issues, emphasizing the

persistent gap in academic achievement among students from different socio-economic backgrounds. This disparity underscores the need for targeted interventions to mitigate inequalities and promote educational equity. Moreover, the report underscores the importance of creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments within schools. Strategies aimed at addressing these challenges include implementing inclusive pedagogical practices, providing professional development for educators on diversity and inclusion, and developing curriculum materials that reflect the diverse cultural heritage of students (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023).

The 2020 OECD report on French education mentions disparities in educational outcomes among students from different socio-economic backgrounds as one of the most present challenges the French education system is facing. It emphasizes the need to strengthen teacher training and professional development, and the imperative to adapt to the changing demands of the globalized economy.

In a multicultural society like France, leveraging history and citizenship education to bolster national identity and patriotism poses significant challenges. The multifaceted nature of multiculturalism brings forth diverse perspectives on historical narratives, values, and identities, often leading to clashes and tensions within society (Cairns & Evans, 2020). The question of integration versus assimilation further complicates efforts to cultivate a unified sense of national identity. While integration emphasizes the co-existence of diverse cultural identities within a broader national framework, assimilation promotes the adoption of a dominant cultural identity, often at the expense of minority cultures (Maitre, 2018). This tension between preserving cultural diversity and promoting a unified national identity presents a delicate balance for educators and policymakers. Moreover, historical narratives themselves can be contested, with differing interpretations of past events shaping individuals' perceptions of national identity and belonging (Cairns & Evans, 2020). Navigating these complexities requires nuanced approaches that acknowledge and respect cultural diversity while fostering a shared sense of citizenship and belonging among all members of society.

Although citizenship education is not assessed as an independent subject in the Baccalauréat examination, its principles and themes may be integrated into evaluation tasks within other subjects, such as history and geography. When students are asked to analyse historical events or geographical phenomena from a moral or civic perspective, there is a risk of introducing subjective bias. Different individuals or cultures may have

varying moral standards and ethical views, which can lead to differing interpretations of the same event or phenomenon. This subjectivity can potentially obscure objective analysis and factual accuracy. This might lead to moral relativism, where all viewpoints are seen as equally valid, regardless of their factual or ethical basis. This can dilute the importance of distinguishing between actions that are broadly considered just or unjust. Complex historical events and geographical phenomena might be over-simplified when viewed, which might result in a reductive understanding that overlooks the multifaceted nature of such issues, including economic, social, political, and environmental factors.

Conclusion

Through the study of history (and geography), students learn to analyse past events, discern patterns, and comprehend the complexities of human behaviour over time and space. Lessons cultivate spatial awareness, map reading proficiency, and an appreciation for the interconnectedness of different regions and cultures by integrating historical and geographical knowledge. Citizenship education aims to provide students with a diverse range of skills essential for active participation in society and democratic processes. Emphasizing values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. The curriculum cultivates critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and civic responsibility. Citizenship education in France intends to foster communication skills, teamwork, and empathy, enabling students to collaborate effectively and navigate intercultural interactions.

In conclusion, the examination of history and citizenship education within the French education system reveals the complex relationship between curriculum, societal values, and pedagogical practices. France's rich historical heritage, coupled with its commitment to democratic principles, underscores the significance of these subjects in shaping the collective identity and civic engagement of its citizens. Therefore, the French education system, rooted in centuries of historical evolution and legislative reforms, embodies the nation's dedication to providing equitable access to education, while aiming to respond to modern challenges which resulted in disparities in educational outcome and the tension between national identity and multiculturalism.

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