

CHANGE IN TEACHING PRACTICE AT THE GRADUATE COURSE "ETHICS,  
VALUES AND CITIZENSHIP AT SCHOOL"

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**Abstract:** This paper presents some of the results obtained in a blended graduate course that aimed to train and educate São Paulo State teachers on issues of ethics and citizenship. The course "Ethics, Values and Citizenship in School" (EVC) was attended by 2350 education professionals distributed in 13 cities in the State of São Paulo. The course content was organized in four modules and its pedagogical model is based on the principles of Project Oriented Problem-Based Learning, grounded in the perspective of Design Thinking applied to education and supported by the concepts of interdisciplinarity, transversality and the use of multiple languages to approach its contents. The survey has a number of evaluative questions about the structure of the EVC, this paper will present specifically the results of the how the course provided qualitative changes in the teachers daily practices at school. Among the 610 teachers

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who answered this question, 95.5 % answered it positively. A total of 479 participants answered this question and 75.5 % of them responded affirmatively to it. Also, in its three editions the program had an acceptance that can be considered high: among the 477 participants that answered, 43.0 % evaluated as “good” and 49.5% as “very good”. The results indicate that the contents of citizenship and values in addition to the methodology used to develop collaborative projects has impacted the professional practice of the participants, who have incorporated the knowledge and methodology learned in the graduate course into their teaching practice.

**Keywords:** Teachers training, Problem Based Learning, interdisciplinarity, educational technology.

## **Introduction**

The course "Ethical Values and Citizenship in School" (EVC) started its first class in August 2010 and in December 2014 concluded its third edition. It is a specialization course, held in a blended mode, by a partnership of the Center for Social Support, Cultural and Education (NASCE USP LESTE), University of São Paulo (USP) and the Virtual University of São Paulo (UNIVESP).

The EVC course was attended by 2350 education professionals distributed in 13 cities in the State of São Paulo attended the EVC course. The course content was organized in four modules. Each module had three disciplines and a fifth module was dedicated to the development of the course's final term paper. In the first four modules two virtual courses were offered in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The contents were available in the form of video classes and reading materials.

In the VLE occurred the individual learning, as students watched the video classes at home in the moment of their choice. In addition, after watching the video classes they should formulate an individual portfolio to systematize their understanding of the discussed subjects using different kinds of language (visual, audio, textual, multimedia and hypermedia). This work allowed the tutor accompanies the learning progress of each student individually. This scenario is indicated by Coll and Moreneo (2010) as relevant and desirable in distance and blended courses.

The third course offered in modules one to four was called "Working with Projects" and was based on collaborative work developed by groups 5 to 7 students, who met weekly with a tutor, whose function was to guide the development of the collaborative project. The goal of this course was to engage students in the development a project whose theme should

address the content discussed in the two other courses offered virtually in the module. At the end of the project course, the students had to produce and deliver a scientific report using the Google Docs web tool. The choice of this tool relied on the fact that it allows text collective construction.

It is worth mentioning that the pedagogical model of the first edition of the course was based in the Project Oriented Problem-Based (POPBL) (Araújo & Sastre, 2009) methodological approach. This means that the learning process was organized around problems encountered in the reality of students. From the second edition of the course, the humanist methodology of Design Thinking (Plattner, Meinel & Leifer, 2012; Brown, 2010) was incorporated the proposal of the POPBL.

Design Thinking is a problem solving methodology that places the individual at the center of the process. It's a way to catalyze collaboration, creativity and the search for innovative solutions by empathic observation, rapid prototyping and different realities analysis (Nitzsche, 2011). Studies have shown that the use of this approach has achieved good results in the creation of innovative products, projects, models and services - in business organizations and educational institutions (Steinbeck, 2011).

Thus, in the EVC course an interdisciplinary perspective has been adopted along with a transdisciplinary approach, aiming to stimulate the dialogue between several fields of knowledge and to stimulate idea sharing in order to take a closer and more complex look at a particular reality or phenomenon. In addition, to develop collaborative projects using POPBL and Design Thinking, universal themes related to ethics and citizenship were proposed. In consonance with this perspective, students developed projects in schools from a given universal theme with the objective to respond to social problems that are a spine of education. This choice is fundamental in the believe that the traditional curriculum should be organized around universal themes, which turn out to play a central role curricular planning (Araújo, 2014).

Additionally, a universal theme allows the construction of knowledge in an alternative way, hence since classical antiquity the educational practices adopted is distant from real problems. In this sense, it is sustained that it is inadmissible that knowledge should only be accessible to a small portion of the population. In recent years, schools have welcomed social groups whose right to get an education have been denied for centuries. So one of the main challenges of today's schools is to deal with the students' socio-cultural diversity along with conflicting perspectives and ideas.

Therefore, to work with projects in the educational field has is considered an important educational strategy, because it allows to "[...] Articulate the scientific and every day's popular knowledge, allowing that scientific questions could be answered in the light of the students curiosities, needs and daily interests [...]" (Araújo, 2014). In fact, students assume protagonist role in knowledge production process since, through dialogue, they can learn from their colleagues who share a common interest: the problem that underlies the development of the collaborative project.

Based described assumptions, in the next section the method used to development this research and its main results are presented.

## **Method**

This paper is an enlargement of the article "Use of educational technology in teacher training for ethics and citizenship content: the blended Graduate Course 'Ethics, Values and Citizenship in School (Title in Portuguese: O uso de tecnologias educacionais na formação de professores para conteúdos de ética e cidadania: o curso de Especialização semipresencial em 'Ética, Valores e Cidadania na escola), published in volume 19 of the International Journal of Studies on Law and Education. In the original article, the data from EVC course second offer was presented. In this paper, however, we present the data obtained in the three versions of the course, maintaining the same approach.

At the end of each offering of the course, students were asked to answer an online evaluation survey about EVC that was available in the website Survey Monkey. The survey was composed by opened and closed questions. The instrument has a number of evaluative questions about the structure of the EVC, its courses and also some questions on the course impact on their professional development and production of knowledge, providing qualitative changes in the teacher's daily practices at school. Therefore, this paper will present specifically the results of this last item.

The main objective of this article is to present the evaluation survey results that focus on the contributions of EVC course content and methodology to transform professional practice of the participants teachers.

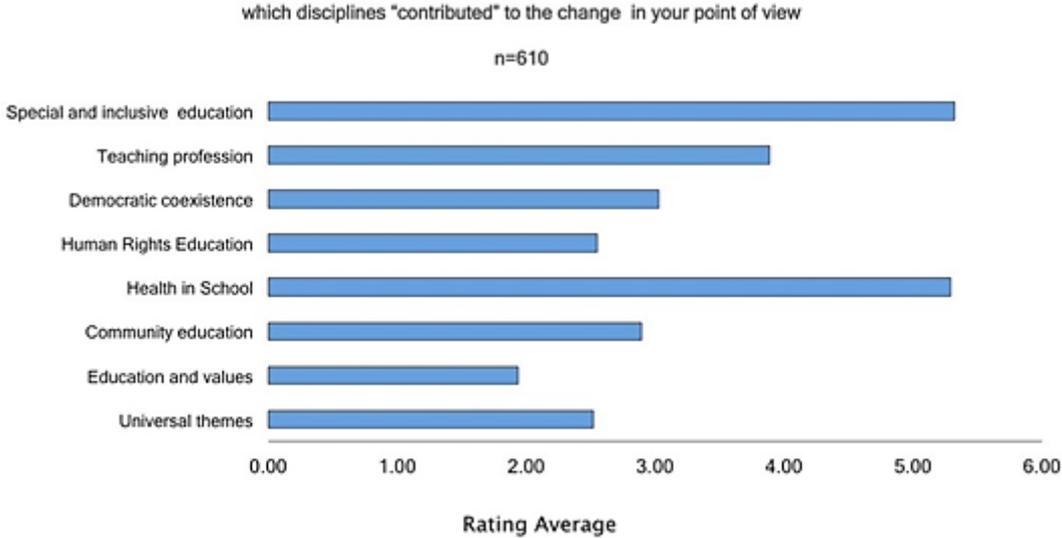
In fact, the data of the course evaluation survey of each of the offerings will be presented, adding up to 156 respondents in the survey applied on EVC first edition, 335 respondents for the second edition and 167 respondents for the program third edition. Hence, a total of 658 respondents who started to answer the survey.

**Results**

The participants profile analysis showed that 81% of the respondents are female and only 19 % are males. In addition, other relevant data is the type of educational institution in which they work: 83 % are professionals hired by public schools, 15% are hired by private schools and the remaining 2% are hired by other institutions such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGO).

One of the first questions that participants were asked is whether the EVC course contributed in some way to change their view about relevant issues that affect schools daily activities. Among the 610 teachers who answered this question, 95.5 % answered it positively.

Additionally, the participants were asked to identify which disciplines “contributed” to the change in their point of view. The answers of the teachers are presented in graphic 1. Furthermore, when asked about the disciplines that “most contributed” to the comprehension of contents in ethics, values and citizenship, participants were unanimous to answered "Special and Inclusive education" and "Health in School".



Graphic 1: The rating average of which disciplines "contributed" to the change in their point of view.

One of the final question focused on gathering data about what teachers had developed and modified in their professional practices by the influence of EVC training program, participants were asked this questions: " Were you able to implement a project on citizenship promotion and values building in your classroom or in your professional practice, as from the content covered in the EVC training program?" Of the 479 participants who answered this question, 75.5 % of them responded affirmatively to it.

When the participant answered "yes", he/she has invited to the state what project or activity was implemented in his/her practice. Thus, as indicated in Araújo, Garbin, Franzi,

Arantes and Silva (2015), the data analysis shows when contemplating the results of the three editions of EVC, the theme "School Assemblies" is the most recurrent among the teacher's answers. As you demonstrated the reports presented below.

One participant of the first edition of the training program, from Bertioga city, reports that she developed an Assembly project:

Since I studied this topic, I decided hold School Assemblies with more property. Since then, when I face a problem in the classroom, it is resolved in meetings with students that are organized to happen once a month. This allows the students to have a voice within the school, showing them that citizenship is much more than vote, but the possibility to have a say when problems need to be solved. I believe that 6 year old children can learn problem-solving methodologies using the dialectic principles, although in some Brazilian homes we there is violence. Therefore, the school is a privileged space for the implementation citizenship for early age students. Concomitantly, at the footnotes, we use books from the collection "Values for Children" printed by Cultural publisher. We work with the 1st Volume which deals with self-discipline, compassion, perseverance, respect, values. The 2nd Volume deals with values like honesty, work, tolerance and justice and 3rd Volume deal with generosity, loyalty, gratitude, trust and dignity. In these moments, after reading the stories, we talk and prepare a poster on the subject that remains exposed for a week. Then, the children can take ownership of these concepts and know how to act when they face difficulties encountered in interpersonal relationships, inside and outside the school.

In the second edition of EVC, a participant from Santos city, reported on the same subject:

We followed the (Design Thinking) process: hear, create and implement. We listen to students and teachers through interviews and we went back to the school several times create and then implement our project. Our group was prepared to be "immersed" in the reality studied and everything went according to our plan. The students that we investigated proposed solutions to the issues we detected. Through assemblies these students proposed a debate between two students and two teachers to discuss the use of mobile phones in the classroom. The debate was a democratic exercise.

Finally, a teacher from Ribeirão Preto city who participated in the third edition of the training program reports that: "In the ongoing planning for 2015 it has been establish the deployment of discussion forums, school assemblies and other actions that encourage youth participation".

In addition to the knowledge build on topics related to ethics and values, participants have also shown that they have sought to transform their classroom methodology. As mentioned earlier, EVC has in its methodological core based on the principles of Project Oriented Problem-Based Learning since the participants of the program were placed at the center of the teaching and learning process. It is possible to identify the influence of this principles in re-

ports given by a participant of EVC's second edition who is from Santos city: "I try to put the student as a protagonist of his own learning process in my everyday classroom practice. I think that the changes will happen gradually."

Yet, it is worth to share the report of a participant of the third edition of the training program, also from Santos city, who used the Design Thinking methodology in a social intervention project:

The social intervention project was applied in a state public school located in Santos city, with a high school 2nd year of group of students. The project articulated the methodological perspective of Design Thinking by focusing on human's desires as a base for development of solutions. In this sense, the project team "heard" the wishes and desires of the people investigated in an attempt to understand the personal, biological and cultural transformations that involve sexuality in adolescence. From the data collected the project group "created" a dialog and educational process that related education and new communication technologies in order to let young people participate in their own educational process, and create a democratic space for interaction among subjects in our school.

Participants' responses show that there is a quest to transform school environment, in fact, there is an urge to improve the teaching and learning processes as well the relationship with other colleagues:

I provided to my colleagues who teach sign language some Youtube addresses for support videos on special/inclusive education; I chose video lessons that would help the work of other professionals. I took them to the field of research and studied many other subjects. I also registered in other courses to learn more and attended the 6th USP-School Meeting which debated the theme Art in the month of July - visit to the Contemporary Art Museum (MAC) at USP and Ibirapuera". I learned many things and shared this knowledge to other teachers who work with Arts, Portuguese and History. These teachers are already scheduling museums trips for students and other cultural places like our teacher Maria Angela suggested. What I learned on exclusion and unethical practices will help me in an important way since I want them to be very far from my teaching practice.

A student from São Paulo enrolled in the course's third edition, also stated that he could share what he learned in the EVC program with your co-workers:

As school coordinator I managed share with a group of teachers, while participating in the EVC program, problems and reflections arouse from the teaching practice, modern and challenging concepts that led to the pursuit citizenship promotion and the value building in the school environment.

In addition to developing expertise in ethics and citizenship, the course also provided changes in the working methods of some educators while they found new ways to transform

their daily practices, whether in dealing with co-workers or their students in teaching practices.

Finally, from the reports and the answers of the students can identify the contents in ethics and citizenship offered to students, were lead in transforming the vision that education professionals have gained, after the start of the course. Importantly, the course, in its three editions the program had an acceptance that can be considered high: among the 477 participants that answered, 43.0 % evaluated as “good” and 49.5% as “very good”. Thus, only 7.5% considered the course as “bad” or “very bad”.

### **Final remarks**

This paper presented the part of the results obtained in the three graduate program in “Ethics, Values, and Citizenship in School”. The objective was to demonstrate, through the responses of the participants’ students in the online evaluation questionnaire, how the methodology and content of EVC training program contributed to a change in the practice of the participants.

From the results described, it was explicit as the course and its methodology, based on Project Oriented Problem-Based (POPBL) and Design Thinking, contributed to the transformation on the way these professionals faced their everyday problems that emerged in the school environment. These results demonstrate that EVC has a transforming effect on the participants. The teachers, principals, and educational coordinator who participated in EVC changed the way they think about education. While they prototyped, they could see better approaches to solving school problems, new ways to change their classrooms by introducing more practical and interactive activities (Araújo, Fruchter, Garbin, Pascoalino, & Araujo, 2014).

The insertion of school assemblies, with themes that involve ethics, citizenship and actions that encourage youth participation have emerged in these reports as the school breaks paradigms and seeks alternatives to change the teaching practice so it can improve the educational process. More than ever, this kind of initiative renders its coverage by education a multitude of things; the aim of education is to help students develop the intellectual tools and learning strategies needed to acquire knowledge that allows people to think productively about science, technology and social phenomena.

These results suggest that the course influence in the professional development of the teacher-students led to the production of knowledge and generated qualitative changes in their daily practices at school. Fundamental understanding of the issues discussed on EVC, espe-

cially how to frame and ask meaningful questions about various subject areas, contributed to basic understanding of learning principles that can help educators to become self-sustaining and lifelong learners.

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