Article

Challenges for European teachers when assessing student learning to promote democratic citizenship competences

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Highlights:

- There is a lack of resources and examples of good practice in citizenship education and relevant assessment tools for the teachers to transform and use in their practices.
- The teachers experience a lack of pedagogical approaches to work with designing learning activities to enhance normative changes and values relevant to citizenship education.
- Teachers experience a lack of time to foster student citizenship competence
- When personal opinions are at stake, some teachers find it difficult to give appropriate feedback to non-democratic values and attitudes.
- School systems' and parents' expectations of high-stakes summative feedback influence teachers' hesitation to perform formative assessment in citizenship education.

Purpose: This study investigates the challenges faced by European teachers when assessing student learning of democratic citizenship competences by asking about their experiences and opinions in their teaching practices.

Design/methodology/approach: Through focus group interviews conducted with the teachers, we investigate the underlying reasons for teachers' choices of using certain forms of assessment methods while excluding other methods. This paper presents the analysis of interviews with 82 schoolteachers from lower secondary schools in eight European countries (average 19 years of teaching experience) participating in an Erasmus + project

Findings: The teachers' responses uncover a need for teachers to be better equipped with relevant knowledge, tools and approaches to practice formative assessment to develop students' democratic citizenship competences. The current common understanding of the summative assessment of knowledge using simple and standardised tools poses one of the main challenges for teachers to use formative assessment methods.

Practical implications: The focus on summative assessment significantly limits the teachers' room to work on democratic citizenship competence. There is a need to strengthen this as a democratic citizenship education as a cross-curricular element in education, with an emphasis on formative assessment, to monitor and support students' democratic values and attitudes.

1. INTRODUCTION

In many European countries, diverse interpretations of citizenship education are embedded in a common overarching goal to facilitate young people in meeting and solving societal challenges. There is also a variety of definitions of the concept of democratic citizenship education embedded in European policy guidelines. In this study, democratic citizenship education is used as an umbrella concept of education aiming to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies Council of Europe (2018a). As the Eurydice Report 2017 (European Commission, European, Culture Executive, Sigalas, & De Coster, 2019) suggests, European countries differ in several aspects regarding how they organise citizenship education. Teaching practices are manifested differently in the national curricula including teaching approaches, teaching hours, school-based initial vocational education and training, general secondary education, establishing specific objectives and learning outcomes, and assessment.

However, an increasing number of countries have recently reformed their national curricula to organise citizenship education as a cross-curricular theme. The cross-curricular organisation increases the importance of democratic citizenship education by emphasising democratic values, skills, and action competence in all school subjects. This means that a mathematics teacher or an art teacher will be responsible to implement democratic citizenship in their subject teaching, which can be challenging for various subject teachers in practice. Table 1 presents the current school curricular structures of citizenship education in the eight European countries reported by institutions participating in the Assessment of Learning in Citizenship Education (ALiCE: Erasmus+ project[1]).

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Table 1. Current school curriculum approaches to citizenship education in eight countries

Country	Democratic citizenship education structure in curriculum
Belgium (Flanders)	Cross-curricular
Bulgaria	Cross-curricular + integrated in specific subjects + specific subject
Czech Republic	Integrated in specific subjects + specific subject
Italy	Cross-curricular
Lithuania	Cross-curricular + integrated in specific subjects + specific subject
Norway	Cross-curricular + integrated in specific subjects
Portugal	Cross-curricular + specific subject
Slovenia	Cross-curricular + integrated in specific subjects + specific subject

Note: information provided by ALiCE partner institutions

Most of these countries implement citizenship education as compulsory and use a plurality of approaches, including a cross-curricular structure, integrated subjects, and a specific subject. Hence, among the schools involved in this study, democratic citizenship education can be taught in separate school subjects, as an integrated element in the learning goals for other school subjects, and as a cross-curricular element in education. This covers the variety of citizenship education in different educational systems across Europe.

Nevertheless, two approaches to citizenship education can be found in current teaching practices. The first is adaptation-oriented citizenship where norms and values are prescribed and ought to be transferred through the direct instruction of the teacher (Leenders, Veugelers, & De Kat, 2008). The second is a more indirect and transformative approach, in which the students themselves construct meaning and are actively involved in societal topics. In this model, teachers encourage critical thinking and let students bring their own realities to the classroom and school. For example, when provided with an open and safe classroom environment, students gain citizenship competencies through discussing controversial social issues without the teachers' vision being imposed on them (Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal, & Dam, 2013). For teachers taking an adaptation-oriented approach (De Schaepmeester, van Braak, & Aesaert, 2022), it is 'safer' to discuss generally accepted values and avoid controversial and critical discussions in school.

With the increased emphasis on European schools' responsibility to foster students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values for democratic citizenship, there is an increased need to support teachers to develop relevant pedagogical skills and approaches to support and monitor student learning. Through good assessment strategies, teachers can contribute to the further development of democratic citizenship knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Martin, 2019). This has only recently received attention and remains under-researched (Daas, ten Dam, & Dijkstra, 2016; Kerr, 2002). A descriptive analysis of the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2009 teacher survey data from Belgium (Flemish), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, and Slovenia (See

Annex 1) shows that assessment is mainly used by teachers to provide feedback to students and to allow them to reflect on their own learning processes. Using student assessment results to improve their own teaching is the focus for most teachers globally. However, research in Latin American countries has shown that teachers' use of assessment results has a non-significant effect on students' civic learning outcomes (Treviño, Béjares, Villalobos, & Naranjo, 2017).

In Europe, teachers are generally inclined more towards summative assessment methods to assess democratic citizenship competences. Previous analyses of civic education studies (CIVED, 1999) have shown that written and oral examinations are the most used forms of assessment in 28 countries (see Table E.2 in (Torney-Purta, 2001). Our analysis of teacher survey data from the ICCS in 2016 (Schulz et al., 2018) indicates that oral examinations and written tests are the two most frequently used assessment methods by citizenship education teachers (Figure 1), followed by peer assessment, student observations and project work. Although current school learning assessment practices in general lean towards summative assessment, scholars argue that assessing democratic citizenship competence is more in line with formative forms of assessment for several reasons (Keating, Kerr, Benton, Lopes, & Featherstone, 2009).
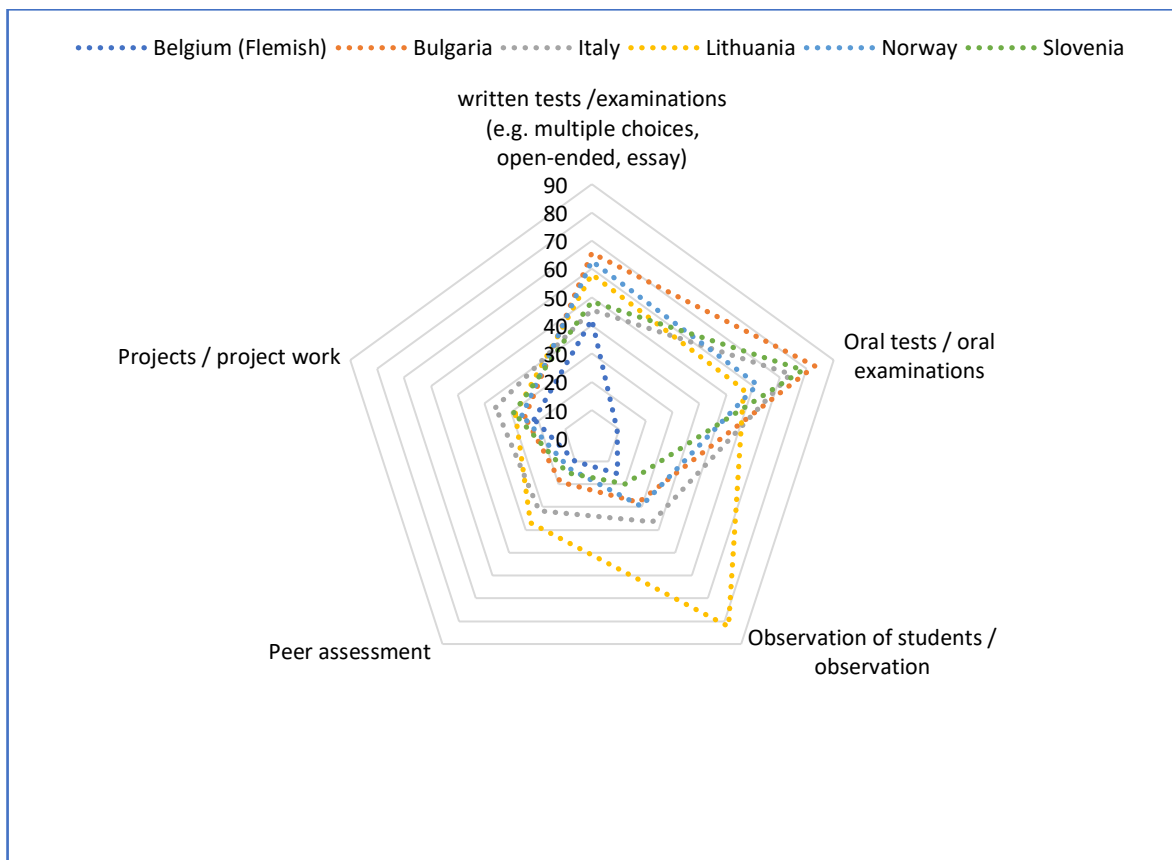
Figure 1. Percentages of citizenship education teachers' often-used assessment methods (Data source: ICCS 2016)

First, most assessments conducted in citizenship education focus mainly on knowledge (Veugelers & de Groot, 2019) and are given through written tests (shown in Figure 1). However, knowledge is only one of components of citizenship competence which alone cannot guarantee the active participation of the students (Hoskins, Huang, & Arensmeier, 2021; Komalasari, 2012) Whereas, in real life situations, active citizenship 'invariably involves the activation and application of an entire cluster of competences' (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 33), including knowledge, critical understanding, skills, values, attitudes. When assessing attitudes, teachers should pay attention to alienation in students who fail citizenship projects, as they may feel that they have failed 'as a citizen' (Keating et al., 2009). Motivating and taking students on the road to achieving citizenship competences is central to formative assessment. Second, formative assessment can avoid establishing a general prescribed norm or standard for citizenship, as is usually done with summative assessment (Daas et al., 2016). Pupils can then have a say in what they find important as young citizens, what they should learn and how they can be evaluated. Students are challenged to think about which attitudes lead to which behaviour and then to think about when certain behaviours are observable. Thus, they can work together with the teacher to discuss and create assessment methods. Third, formative assessment offers more opportunities for frequent feedback and self-reflection by students regarding the development of citizenship competences. It can also be embedded in a so-called 'meaningful context'. Pupils do not merely have to acquire knowledge and skills, but can themselves give meaning to citizenship by being an active part of the community (Lave, 1991).

As European countries' curricular on democratic citizenship competences vary to a large extent, there is not necessarily a common understanding among teachers of how to foster democratic values, skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Some teachers might focus more on what Sandahl (2015) refers to as *first-order concepts*, relating to factual knowledge about different societies and related terminology and concepts, while others may focus more on *second-order concepts*, analysing and understanding structures in societies (Sandahl, 2015). Ouakrim-Soivio and Löfström (2022) also refer to the term *third-order concepts* as coined by Spanget Christensen (2013) to describe self-reflection and student positioning in relation to the topic being studied, which Jarhall (2020) explains as more related to identity, positioning, and self-reflection (Ouakrim-Soivio & Löfström, 2022) and subjectification (Biesta, 2013). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) find answers to the question 'What kind of citizen do we need to support an effective democratic society?' in three major categories: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen.

Therefore, although the issue of operationalising competences in citizenship education has been an ongoing subject of debate among scholars from different pedagogical traditions (Ryen & Jøsok, 2021; Simpson & Dervin, 2019), this study will use the 'Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture' (RFCDC), established and agreed upon by the Council of Europe and the member states (Council of Europe, 2018a). The

framework, having been implemented in many European countries, includes 20 competences in the 'Butterfly model' divided into four broad categories: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge, and critical understanding. These competences have been the common reference used in all the teacher interviews conducted in this study to find answers to our research question: What are the common challenges in formative assessment in support of students' achievement of democratic citizenship competences among European teachers?

2 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

2.1. Theories and methods of formative assessment

Teachers' assessment strategies can contribute to the further development of citizenship knowledge, attitudes and skills (Martin, 2019). This has only recently received attention and remains under-researched (Dijkstra, Geijsel, Ledoux, Van der Veen, & Ten Dam, 2015; Daas et al., 2016; Eidhof, ten Dam, Dijkstra, & van de Werfhorst, 2016; Kerr, 2002). However, the connection between assessment and students' learning processes has been studied and theorised through different approaches. Assessment strategies aiming to promote students' learning are often categorised as formative assessment (Bennett, 2011; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Stiggins, 2005). Black and Wiliams emphasize formative assessment as 'the heart of effective teaching' (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In their framework, assessment is understood as 'that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities'. This information can be provided by the teacher and by students through a broad variety of assessment methods including self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher feedback, and tests. The formative element appears when the information is used to 'adapt the teaching to meet students' needs' (Black & Wiliam, 1998) and to 'promote, not merely judge or grade, student success' (Stiggins, 2005).

Wiliam and Thomson (2008) argue that good formative assessment processes must comprise three key processes, where teachers, peers, and students are all key actors: (1) establishing where the learners are in their learning, (2) establishing where they are going, and (3) establishing what needs to be done to get them there. This requires teacher proficiency to communicate clear learning intentions and criteria for success, to engineer effective classroom discussions and other learning tasks that elicit evidence of student understanding, to provide feedback that moves learners forward, and to activate students as instructional resources for each other and as the owners of their own learning (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008). On the one hand, teachers need to apply assessment practices where students can perform and develop multiple skills and that stablish a good fit between assessment methods and curriculum goals using reliable, fair, and valid assessment approaches (Koh, 2019, p. 2). On the other hand, the impact of formative assessment will depend on how this practice encourages the student to take responsibility for his or her own learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Following this, a trustful relationship between the

teacher and students will pave the way for fruitful formative assessment processes.

As the first step in Wiliam and Thompson's (2008) approach requires a diagnostic understanding of the students' performance, summative assessment practices are often incorporated within formative assessment as an interim written or oral test (Taras, 2005). While summative assessment emphasises assessing the product, formative assessment focuses more on the process of learning. In contrast to summative assessment, formative assessment emphasises continuous and self-regulating learning and provides opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). When focusing on how teachers can support students' learning processes, the two processes cannot be seen as separately operating parallel assessments. Thus, formative assessment processes are more like a continuum that requires personalised assessment for each student while summative assessment plays an important role in many education systems through external testing for accountability and to measure students' level of achievement (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Previous research has found that formative assessment can have a positive impact on students' learning when teachers provide the students with important domain knowledge and monitor the learning process through articulated reachable goals and steps (Bennett, 2011, p. 15) and when teachers provide the students with detailed feedback on how to improve when they are given challenging but manageable tasks (Hondrich, Decristan, Hertel, & Klieme, 2018) which can increase students' intrinsic motivation and self-esteem. However, there are challenges and hurdles that educators should be aware of when it comes to these formative assessment processes, on the questions of reliability and validity (Barrett, 2020; Bennett, 2011; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). If students' learning outcomes are assessed as valid, then the teacher has managed to accurately understand where in the learning process the student is – that is, their level of proficiency. However, this implies that the student has been able to provide the teacher with relevant data to make the right diagnosis of where the learner is in his or her learning process. This can challenge appropriate formative assessment processes; for example, students struggling with the language used in the educational context can pave the way for misinterpretations of the learner's achievement level (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015).

The reliability question is related to how the assessment process generates interpretations and conclusions about the learner's academic level and potential for learning in a stable and consistent way (Barrett, 2020). This questions if the learner will be able to provide the teacher with a real picture of their academic level and potential for learning more, which requires transparent and consistent ways of interpreting the student's proficiency by the teachers. However, this is not straight-forward, as mis-information, mis-interpretation, and mis-judgement may occur to call the reliability of the assessment into question (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). The reliability challenge can be met if teachers perform unbiased formative assessment, which can be facilitated by the use of rubrics with clear descriptors of students' performance; this approach can, to a large extent, overcome the reliability hurdle (Barret, 2020).

The local educational context is another factor that will interfere with the relation between teachers' performance of formative assessment and students' achievement. Local culture, policy makers ideologies, and historical and geopolitical contexts shape assessment practices (Koh, 2019). Bennett addresses this as the 'system issue' because the context influences both the role of summative and formative assessment in education, and the role of high stakes versus low stakes assessment (2011, p. 19), whereas external summative testing is considered by Black and Williams to be the most challenging hurdle for teachers to perform formative assessment. Such tests can lead the teachers to feel that they have to 'teach for the test' instead of following up on students' proficiencies irrelevant for such external testing (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Bennett argues that this challenge can be overcome when summative and formative assessment practices are 'consistent with accepted theories of learning, as well as with the socially valued learning outcomes' (Bennett, 2011, p. 19). However, students' values and attitudes are achieved not only through schooling, but to a large extent through family life and culture (Brunori, 2017). If schooling prescribes a fixed set of values as the right values, and these are in conflict with family values, the student can feel excluded (Gay, 2010).

2.2. Opportunities of formative assessment for democratic citizenship education

Despite the variety of methods available for the assessment of democratic citizenship learning, challenges remain as citizenship is considered one of the most complex twenty-first century skills to assess (Griffin & Care, 2014). It becomes even more challenging since citizenship education is structured across the curriculum and is taught across several subjects in school. On the one hand, this can encourage collaborative teaching and provide a solid and consistent way of assessing in school. On the other hand, this often requires a long process, as it needs to be clear who takes which responsibilities (Löfström & Grammes, 2020). In addition, the same way of assessing needs to be thoroughly discussed and explored within the teacher team. A usual practice of assessing citizenship knowledge is to assess memorised knowledge instead of the knowledge about the process behind that fact (Inkeri, Marko van den, Jan, & Arja, 2013; Odenstad, 2010). For example, when teachers assess the French, Russian, or Islamic revolutions, often the assessment focuses on the events during these revolutions rather than a discussion of what a revolution is in more general terms or a comparison of some of these revolutions (Alongi, Heddy, & Sinatra, 2016; Limón & Mason, 2002) Thus, students should be required to apply content knowledge. In addition, there is an avoidance of discussing civic values, and consequently, assessing this discussion (Malin, Ballard, Attai, Colby, & Damon, 2013). Allowing controversies in the classroom and utilising them as a pedagogical tool can encourage critical thinking, which is one of the underlying skills students need to understand and engage in citizenship. Nonetheless, teachers sometimes seem to be avoidant because of the fear of being accused of partisanship or politicisation (Ballard, Malin, Porter, Colby, &

Damon, 2015; Malin et al., 2013).

When assessing citizenship competences, it is important for teachers to consider which form of assessment matches the competences they set out to achieve. To do so, the teacher must be confident to try different assessment methods and know which methods align best with their learning goals. Daas et al. (2016) suggests how the following four assessment methods can be used for citizenship education: tests, portfolios, vignettes, and assessment through video games. All these forms of assessment have their own advantages and disadvantages, but it is desirable to combine them. Citizenship knowledge can, for example, be evaluated through a written test, while vignettes lend themselves to testing knowledge and attitudes. Assessing attitudes through vignettes has the advantage of less social desirability when assessing someone else positively or negatively based on a case study (Auspurg, Hinz, & Liebig, 2009). Assessment through video games integrates assessment into the game itself, allowing different aspects of students' competencies to be assessed simultaneously. This enables a focus on the learning process throughout and after the game (Ifenthaler, Eseryel, & Ge, 2012). Through a portfolio, students reflect on a personal experience related to citizenship. In addition to more traditional assessment methods, such as tests and questionnaires, Daas et al.(2016) indicate the benefits of a broader and meaningful application of other methods of formative assessment such as a portfolio which is important for an in-depth assessment of citizenship in all its aspects. However, this does not mean that summative assessment is excluded, as it can still be useful to map certain (knowledge) aspects of citizenship (Kerr, 1999).

Nevertheless, previous research has found teachers' positive experiences with formative assessment of citizenship education. For example, Kerr et al. (2009) conducted interviews with teachers from England, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. They conclude that teachers' formative assessment practices create 'exciting opportunities to assess not only the more traditional cognitive dimension (knowledge and understanding) of citizenship, but also the active dimension (skills and behaviours) and affective dimension (values and attitudes).' (Kerr et al., 2009, p. 88) In the following, we will show how our study can bring new insights to this view.

3   Data and method

The data for this study were collected between May and June 2022 through focus group interviews conducted by teacher educators and researchers from eight education systems in Europe participating in the ALiCE project. ALiCE partners include a broad geographical and demographical variety, as well as a broad variety of approaches used in citizenship education. At least three focus group interviews were conducted in each country. A semi-structured topic list, which is presented in Annex 2, was used to guide the discussion. As the data collection period was during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online through Zoom or Teams video meetings and recorded if the respondents agreed. If not, detailed notes were taken during the interviews to document the teachers' voices. It was decided to start the interviews by introducing the framework of the Council

of Europe on competences, skills, values, and attitudes connected to their approach to citizenship education (Barret, 2020; Council of Europe, 2018a). The aim of this was to ensure that all respondents shared a common understanding of the concept before we started questioning and that we based our study on educational policy relevant to all educational systems.

Table 2 presents an overview of the sample of participants recruited for the focus group interviews. A total of 84 secondary education teachers (of whom 21 were male) were interviewed either in groups or in individual interview sessions (27 sessions) across the eight countries. Most focus groups were small (between three and four persons) as the one-hour Zoom meeting duration is limited for discussion between more persons. The number of participants was even fewer in some cases if it was difficult to group the teachers due to their diverse time schedules. In the case of Bulgaria, the team made a choice to interview the teachers one by one to fully comply with each teacher's time schedule. The interviewed teachers had an average of 19 years of teaching experience with a minimum of two years and a maximum of 36 years. The teachers also had diverse profiles, with both cross-curricular citizenship educators (STEM and social sciences) and subject-specific citizenship teachers. Each country selected groups of teachers according to their country's citizenship education curriculum, and it was aimed to recruit experienced and dedicated teachers to gain insight into how this element of their proficiency was understood. National ethics regulations were followed, with informational letters and forms of consent signed by all participants.

Table 2. Overview of the teachers who participated in the interviews

Number of teachers	BE	BU	CZ	IT	LT	NO	PG	SL	Total
Teachers interviewed	9	6	19	9	14	10	8	9	84
Average years of teaching experience	17	14	14	21	25	12	30	18	19
Interview sessions	3	6	5	2	2	3	3	3	27
Female teachers	7	5	13	5	12	7	6	8	63
Male teachers	2	2	5	4	2	3	2	1	21
Social sciences & humanities teachers	7	4	17	9	12	7	2	7	65
STEM teachers	2	1	2	0	2	1	6	1	15
Arts teachers	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	4

Data from all focus group interviews were first synthetised into eight country reports, each of which summarised the main concerns, challenges, and opportunities that were discussed in each country. Country reports were written in English, based on initial data obtained in the respective countries' languages. Subsequently, the country reports were discussed among the partner team of each country. Hence, the reports comprised two types of different textual data: (1) relevant quotes from the teachers interviewed in the focus groups and (2) a summary of the interviews by each country's partner team. Consequently, the textual data were interpretations of how the teachers explained the

main challenges and problems of formative assessment in citizenship education. Hence, the teachers' voices were presented in the data from the local project partners' perspectives.

To gain insights into the challenges and problems faced by the teachers in formative assessment to promote democratic citizenship competences, frequency and strength were used as proxies to discover commonalities, patterns, differences, and similarities. By frequency, we mean topics that came up regularly in the data. By strength, we refer to statements that appeared to be of high importance to the participants. Hence, in accordance with the common procedure in content analysis, all data were coded (Gibbs, 2007), and further categorised inductively (Kerlinger, 1970), through the following process. First, we printed out all the national reports, cut the statements into different pieces, and re-grouped the statements. Next, statements expressing the same concerns were grouped and categorised together. The categories were named after the common features of the statement on challenges of formative assessing to promote democratic citizenship competencies. The communalities of the statements generated the following categories: pedagogical resources, teachers' understanding of citizenship education, teacher assessment practices and the issue of time, and the role of students' and parents' expectations.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Challenges of teaching for democratic citizenship competences

The most frequent challenge reported from the interviews is a lack of resources and examples of good practice in citizenship education and relevant assessment tools for the teachers to transform and use to fit their practices. The teachers also reported a lack of pedagogical approaches to work with learning activities to enhance normative changes and values relevant to citizenship education. The following teacher quotes support this:

'The main difficulty is the lack of textbooks and material related to the broad understanding of intercultural learning and for the purpose of intercultural education.'

'Arts and culture classes focus on intercultural learning, but there are no educational programmes or textbooks on the subject. It is my own responsibility to design the lessons, the programme, and the assessment tools.'

The second frequently reported challenge is a lack of time. The teachers reported two types of time limitation in citizenship education. The first is from schools where citizenship education is a cross-curricular topic, where there is a lack of time for cross-curricular collaboration with other teachers together with a lack of time set aside for cross-curricular activities. In countries where citizenship education is taught as a separate subject, as in Bulgaria, teachers see the usual 45 min a week for CE lessons as an 'insufficient number of lessons [...]. Teachers do not have enough time to deploy elaborated methods or to assess in practice acquired competencies.' The second type is a

lack of time set aside to develop good practices and possibilities to work across different subjects, as a reported in all country reports. One teacher said:

'One of my main goals is to work on youths' openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views, and practices. At school, we have only one forty-five-minute class per week of citizenship education.'

The third frequently reported challenge was teachers' lack of ownership of democratic citizenship education as a result of the cross-curricular structure of citizenship education. It appears that teachers of different subjects with a lack of cross-subject collaboration often have a weak understanding of their responsibility and sense of ownership to citizenship education, as they are from separate disciplinary domains. One Norwegian teacher said in the interview:

'To emphasise formative assessment on democratic citizenship competence will require a shift in my understanding of the core of my teacher proficiency. I understand my profession first and foremost as a subject teacher.'

3.2 Problematic issues in teachers' practices of formative assessment

Another topic highlighted in all of the focus talk reports is a concern about conducting an assessment of attitudes and values both professionally and transparently. Many teachers asked the 'how' questions: 'How to assess students' civic values and attitudes? How to assess (grade) citizenship attitudes objectively? Is that possible?' Some of the teachers' quotes are given below:

'The assessment of civic competences, unlike other subjects, can be subjective. In other subjects, there are objective criteria that make the assessment objective. In civic education, it is difficult to give an objective assessment of certain skills, knowledge, competencies that are related, for example, to taste, imagination, or other personal characteristics.'

'In the curricula the knowledge is in the focus, so they think it would be difficult to assess competencies such as empathy.'

'We talk about the description of the competences of citizenship, enhancing human dignity and human rights, etc., but in concrete terms, how can I give a numerical vote to the values of the person's personality?'

'Extremely strong stereotypes require more breaking down in order to activate the desire in students to do something beyond their understandings, interests and desires'.

When hot debate and personal opinions are at stake, some teachers find these learning activities challenging and try to avoid them because they find it difficult to give relevant feedback to non-democratic values and attitudes. These quotes reveal different aspects of concern when assessing values and attitudes. First, there is a concern about the validity question of assessment. This means a concern about unintended factors interfering with

the assessment, such as the personal relationship between the teacher and the student. The challenge highlighted by this teacher is also a concern about how to convey feedback on personal features in a formative and respectful manner. In addition, it can be seen as an expression of a need for teachers to gain experience in practicing formative assessment. In the category of teachers' assessment performance, we also found several comments indicating that teachers feel that they lack sufficient experience in formative assessment to monitor and support students' learning. The summary of the Norwegian report emphasises the phenomenon in this way: 'Assessment for learning is for some teachers closely connected to grading'. The Portuguese report summarises the interviews accordingly: 'Teachers need to further discuss the differences and possible relationships between formative and summative assessment in citizenship education.'

Another difficulty comes from the students' lack of motivation, an unwillingness or refusal to work on the topics of civil society, and resistance in understanding and applying certain values and attitudes. Furthermore, students' and parents' expectations of high-stakes summative feedback could also influence teachers' assessment method choice and hesitation in formative assessment. The country report from Bulgaria sums up the lack of students' motivation towards citizenship education and formative assessment in this way: 'Profiling in the second high school stage complicates the workload of fellow teachers, students do not find meaning beyond the minimum effort and assessment of the subject and topics of civic education.' Some teachers expressed a concern that neither students nor parents are motivated to receive feedback that is not relevant to their qualification. This challenge is linked to a more political aspect of the differences in views of the overall aims of education.

'Our educational system is more conservative and gives way to the summative assessment. This stands in the way of tracking the individual progress of each student.'

3.3 Opportunities of formative assessment on democratic citizenship competence

Regardless of the challenges and problems faced by teachers in teaching and assessing democratic citizenship competence, we also found some positive experiences among the teachers interviewed. Some teachers emphasised the importance of providing the students with situations and opportunities to experience democratic citizenship in their teaching. Other teachers emphasised the need to monitor the students' learning process over time:

'Democratic citizenship competences grow a lot throughout the school year; we must take into account students' evolution and make the evolution visible rather than one of several static moments of assessment.'

We also found possible solutions to tackle the time constraints for teachers and to strengthen the reliability of assessment. Assessment tools and instruments, such as rubrics and tables, were mentioned by the teachers in Belgium and Portugal as a possible and

time-efficient way to obtain an overview of the students' progress and levels of achievement. Some teachers seem to already have relevant information about students' formative processes because they regularly collect data for formative assessment from different situations that provide them with information of a diverse nature, namely the ones that come from students in action.

4. DISCUSSION

Two common challenges are revealed in our analysis. The first is at the system level: the inconsistency between high-stakes summative assessment and formative assessment in the enhancement of democratic citizenship competence. This challenge is linked to the overall aim of the education systems as a 'system issue' as highlighted by Bennett (2011), because teachers are constrained by the role of high stakes versus low stakes assessment and external summative testing, which is the most challenging hurdle for teachers in carrying out formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998). We have observed a similar tendency that teachers instead of following up on students' development of values and attitudes over time, find it simpler to teach for the high stakes summative testing. However, our study finds a tendency of avoidance by teachers in the assessment of values and attitudes due to the fear of their personal biases and of assessing student personalities instead of the learning process. This is in line with findings from previous studies, where teachers avoided the assessment of values and attitudes because of the fear of being accused of partisanship or politicisation (Malin et al., 2013). According to Kerr (2002), this is due to the common belief that it is not a task for education to assess citizenship competence and label young people as 'good or bad citizens'. This results in most teachers preferring formative assessment through interim knowledge testing, which can give the impression of an adaption-oriented approach common in citizenship education as observed amongst the interviewed teachers. This is in line with research by De Schaepmeester et al. (2022) showing that teachers from the Netherlands and the United States tend to approach citizenship education through their instruction and convey a conformist set of values and attitudes. However, approaching assessment in this manner mainly conceives of assessment as a function of qualification being an adaptation of relevant knowledge and skill that are first- and second-order concepts (Sandahl, 2015), rather than focusing on subjectification of students (Biesta, 2013) as self-reflection and their positioning in relation to democratic citizenship that is a third-order concept (Ouakrim-Soivio & Löfström, 2022).

The second challenge is at the level of teaching and learning democratic citizenship competence. Our findings reveal five interrelated issues that limit teachers' assessment practices to foster students' democratic citizenship competence: (1) available pedagogical resources, (2) teachers' sense of ownership of citizenship education, (3) teachers' assessment practice, (4) students' motivations and parents' expectations, and (5) the time available for citizenship education. A major challenge for teachers comes from students' lack of motivation, unwillingness, or refusal to work on the topics of civil society; or a

resistance to understanding and applying certain values and attitudes. Furthermore, parents' expectations of high stakes summative feedback could also influence teachers' assessment method choice and their hesitation in the use of formative assessment. These issues also relate to a lack of experience in the multidimensional concept of democratic citizenship competence which seems to present constraints for teachers. As students' reflexivity and self-regulation are important for their development of democratic citizenship, their more personal features can be approached more indirectly through formative assessment approaches of the third-order concept. These are strategies that the interviewed teachers seem not to have been aware of or familiar with.

To some extent, this study supports the conclusion of Kerr et al. (2009), in the way that formative assessment can support students' development of democratic citizenship competence. Nevertheless, our study also shows that undemocratic values and attitudes in the societal context of education, are not easily assessed by teachers. The possible way forward in these situations is to provide teachers relevant tools in support of their students experiencing democratic citizenship through relevant knowledge and skills so that teachers can monitor the students' learning processes over time.

5. CONCLUSION

The point of departure in this study is the need of formative assessment practice in promoting democratic citizenship competence in European schools. However, this study finds several layers of current challenges for teachers in performing formative assessment in their teaching of democratic citizenship. Strengthening democratic citizenship competences by formative assessment explicitly on attitudes and values appears to be 'dangerous waters' for teachers. They are concerned about their personal biases and of the school curriculum conveying political correctness rather than including students in discussion and experience of democratic citizenship. This is confirmed by Bennett (2011) and Duckworth & Yeager (2015), who point to the same challenges of reliability and validity in formative assessment. Meanwhile, some teachers have positive experience in fostering democratic attitudes and values through using more adaptive approaches to provide students with access to both important knowledge and the correct procedures to develop their individual insights and reflections around the relevant issues. In this way, assessment can support students' acquisition of 'second' and 'third-order conepts' (Ouakrim-Soivio & Löfström, 2022; Sandahl, 2015). As Bennett (2011) points out, learning processes of this nature can be broken down into clear steps, where the teacher has the opportunity to establish where the learners are, where they are going and what needs to be done to get them there.

The data seem to reveal a lack of experience in how such learning activities can be designed. Teachers state that they have too little time and find that this challenges their subject teacher identity. It is probably also about school culture and teaching traditions as well as a lack of insight into how formative assessment can support learning processes with in-depth knowledge and skills relevant in different domains. In this way, assessment

seems to be carried out where they can assess knowledge to a greater extent and where skills such as critical thinking or self-efficacy are involved. This is how assessment seems to be primarily used to support the development of the first-order concept. Teachers need to become familiar with conducting formative assessment processes where students experience training in crucial skills, acquiring meaningful knowledge and experience. However, if teachers' formative assessment work is to promote democratic citizenship competences, we find it relevant for future reaserch to investigate how high stakes summative assessments can be designed to assess this type of knowledge and skills. Formative assessment by teachers requires early, adequate, and open diaglogues with students so that the expectations of national authorities, parents, and school management will all play a role in design and practice.

As a concluding remark, we find it necessary to acknowledge the limitation in our study ofusing the RFCDC framework of Council of Europe as a common reference in the interviews has an advantage in allowing teachers to become familiar with democratic citizenship's various competences; however, it creates a mis-understanding that attitudes and values must be explicitly assessed in order to promote democratic citizenship. Our analysis shows that this appears to be a risky strategy.

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Annex 1. Percentages of teachers' responses to the question: Q18 'To what extent do you use the performance of your students on assessment tasks for the following purposes?' (Standardised error)

	Belgium (Flemish)	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Italy	Lithuania	Norway#	Slovenia
Providing feedback to your students	72.2 (1.5)	82.1 (1.5)	64.4 (1.3)	56.7 (1.3)	71.0 (1.3)	90.3 (1.9)	76.2 (1.1)
Allowing your students to reflect on their learning processes	54.2 (1.4)	76.1 (1.7)	37.0 (1.4)	70.1 (1.2)	67.3 (1.2)	67.6 (3.8)	55.9 (1.1)
Allowing your students to reflect on their behaviour	49.9 (1.6)	54.2 (2.3)	52.5 (1.5)	60.3 (1.1)	52.9 (1.2)	45.9 (4.3)	30.2 (1.0)
Identifying your students' learning difficulties	49.5 (1.3)	76.4 (1.6)	44.7 (1.3)	77.4 (0.8)	56.3 (1.3)	42.1 (6.3)	51.5 (1.2)
Providing feedback to parents	39.9 (1.8)	60.6 (2.0)	37.0 (1.5)	26.5 (1.0)	38.4 (1.3)	43.9 (4.0)	51.1 (1.3)
Illustrating learning objectives to your students	43.5 (1.9)	53.7 (2.2)	32.5 (1.4)	63.8 (1.3)	53.2 (1.3)	40.3 (2.9)	43.1 (1.3)
Planning future lessons	42.0 (1.4)	62.5 (1.8)	53.3 (1.3)	62.9 (1.0)	69.0 (1.1)	39.2 (4.0)	54.7 (1.1)
Improving your teaching	57.1 (1.9)	68.0 (1.7)	56.8 (1.3)	71.0 (1.1)	73.3 (1.1)	48.8 (3.3)	65.3 (1.0)

Note: # Response rate of teacher survey in Norway did not fulfil ICCS 2009 study sampling standard. Numbers in bold are the three highest percentages of teacher responses on 'to a large extent' in each country. Method: Descriptive percentage only using final teacher weight (TOTWGTT). Total number of teachers responding the survey= 13,810. Data source: ICCS 2009, (Schulz, Ainley, & Fraillon, 2011)

Annex 2: Topic list of ALiCE teacher interviews

1. A round of self-introductions—who are you: 1) Which subject(s) do you teach at your school? If more than one, what is your main subject of teaching? 2) How many years have you been teaching this main subject? 3) How many years have you been a teacher? (Can be maths teacher, science teacher, social science teacher, etc.) 4) How is citizenship competence teaching and learning organised in your schools?
    1. Is CE taught in your school as a) a cross-curriculum theme by all subject teachers, b) a topic integrated into several subjects, such as history, language, geography, or social science, or c) a single school subject?
    2. Does your school liaise with civil society organisations/non-profit associations (in Italy called the third sector) dealing with citizenship issues in the local area?
    3. Does your school collaborate with public authorities or political organisations and institutions dealing with citizenship issues?
    4. In the EC course taught in your school, is there any reference to European citizenship?
2. What do your students learn in your course/project about competences related to citizenship education? **Look for competence indictors on the page on citizenship competence (R3). You can focus on one or several indicators of values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge**.
    5. In your opinion, are some of the citizenship competences included in your subject teaching? Which ones? How do you teach them?
3. What difficulties do you encounter when teaching citizenship competences?
4. How do you assess learning within citizenship competences? Can you give us some examples? (Interviewers should make sure to gather the following information for the example, using follow-up questions such as those below when it is necessary):
    *   Which competence is the focus of this assessment?
    *   Which assessment methods do you use?
    *   When and why do you do this assessment?
    *   Do you use any existing tools for this assessment? If so, what tools?
5. Do you have experience/know of other colleagues using formative assessment that can be useful for teaching and learning citizenship competences? (This is a follow-up question ONLY when there is none or little mention of formative assessment from previous questions.)
6. What are the difficulties you encounter when assessing students' citizenship competences during your teaching? What would you need to implement formative assessment practices in your subject/CE course/project?
    *   What materials/tools/training would you need to develop formative assessment competences and apply them in your teaching?
    *   What possibilities do you see to improve your current assessment practices to make them more targeted to enhancing citizenship competence learning?

ENDNOTES

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