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Civic learning outcomes: a step towards an inclusive higher education

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ABSTRACT

An inclusive education goes beyond the acquisition of discipline knowledge or skills. Inclusion is concerned with the participation and integration of all students (regardless of their intrinsic characteristics), helping them to develop civic competences. Civic and democratic values, equality and social justice became critical dimensions in this broader concept of education. This paper argues that the incorporation of civic dimensions, such as civic knowledge, civic skills or civic values in academic curricula could be an effective step towards more inclusive education. Specifically, this work intends to explore what civic dimensions are emphasised as a learning outcome in Portuguese higher education programmes. Adopting a qualitative methodology, typologies and incidence of civic learning outcomes were analysed and compared across three academic levels (first, second and third study cycles). The results provide a better understanding of what civic dimensions are stressed by institutions. All types of civic learning outcomes have been reinforced, defining civic values, civic skills and civic knowledge as expectable learning results. Both civic values and skills are well represented while civic knowledge is the less mentioned category. The enforcement of such civic dimensions is a valuable approach to enhancing education as a collective societal endeavour and as a common good.

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Introduction

Nowadays, individuals are confronted with a paradoxical and a complex world in which they are expected to deal with diverse and distinctive tensions (Billings and Terkla 2014). These recent trends demand renewed education practices to promote the skills and competences required by current societies and modern economies. In fact, ‘if the world is changing, education must also change’ (UNESCO 2015, 3). In this UNESCO report, the perspective of education as a global common good is emphasised. Education has to move ‘beyond literacy and numeracy, to focus on learning environments and on new approaches to learning for greater justice, social equity and global solidarity [...] cultural literacy [...] and sustainable development’ (UNESCO 2015, 3). Hence, beyond the

acquisition of discipline skills, competences or knowledge, education should ‘promote democratic principles and a set of values and beliefs relating to equality and social justice so that all children can participate in teaching and learning’ (Miles and Singal 2010, 11).

This new educational paradigm has been progressively integrated in education policies and practices. Over recent years, at the national and European levels, civic learning has become a priority for educational institutions. ‘Encouraging citizens, particularly young people, to actively participate in social and political life has been seen as one of the principal means to address these issues’ (European Commission 2012, 7), and the educational system has, consequently, been identified as a chief player in this aim. Thus, young people should be helped to develop social and civic competences, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, during their school education. Accordingly, the European Commission has launched several initiatives to support Member States to put this civic learning approach in practice. For instance, the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018 declared fostering active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity among all young people as one of its main objectives. In addition, in 2008, the European Commission launched an agenda for schools and for all educational institutions, reinforcing the improvement of competences for the twenty-first century in their students. Here, civic competences are understood as one of those key competences. Developing students’ independence and autonomy, the responsibility for their own learning, as well as their creativity and their intercultural and civic skills become an academic objective to be reinforced by educational institutions. In higher education in particular, the promotion and the development of civic-minded graduates is highly valued (Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle 2011; Denson and Bowman 2013; Torney-purta et al. 2015). Technical knowledge and skills are not sufficient to respond to global economic challenges (Garcia-Aracil and Van Der Velden 2008; Ananiadou and Claro 2009). As stressed by Torney-purta et al. (2015, 2), ‘employers in the 21st century are seeking to hire and promote individuals with knowledge of significant changes in society, intercultural literacy, ethical judgment, humanitarian values, social responsibility, and civic engagement’. In summary, higher education institutions play a relevant role as ‘focal points for shaping critical thinkers, problem solvers and doers’ (European Commission 2013, 13), capable of succeeding in a job or as a citizen in a community (Torney-purta et al. 2015). Hence, these civic dimensions (such as the respect for life and human dignity, equal rights, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity and shared responsibility for a sustainable future) should be embedded in the higher education curricular programmes, pedagogical methodologies, learning content and outcomes (Shephard and Dulgar 2015). Focusing on Portuguese educational policies, the 2001 Decree establishes ‘education for citizenship’ as an integral element of all curriculum areas, but only for basic and upper secondary education. At the higher education level, the decision about what typologies of learning outcomes should be promoted is an exclusive responsibility of each institution and is not a requirement in the quality accreditation process. Accordingly, to know if Portuguese higher education institutions are, effectively, retrieving these civic dimensions in their curricula, learning outcomes could be a significant tool to be explored. In fact, learning outcomes, defined as a statement of what a student should know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a learning task (Adam 2004), can be an excellent tool to understand what civic learning outcomes are stated by higher education institutions as their academic objectives. In general, this paper

aims to explore if students' civic development is understood as an expected learning outcome in Portuguese higher education practices.

Inclusive education, a global public good?

Based on the UNESCO (2015) and Deneulin and Townsend (2007) definitions, a common good is constituted by goods that humans share between them as civic values and other social virtues. A common good exists on the basis of the relationship between the members of a society. Accordingly, it cares about the goodness of the life that humans hold in common instead of an individual good.

Understanding education as a global public good requires a shift on the traditional perspective of learning (Shephard et al. 2015). This renewed notion of education stresses the collective dimension of education as a shared social endeavour (shared responsibility and commitment to solidarity). Aligned with a humanistic vision, this new perspective is concerned about peace, inclusion and social justice, oriented to 'sustain and enhance the dignity, capacity and welfare of the human person, in relation to others and to nature' (UNESCO 2015, 36). This definition is associated with an inclusive education perspective which underpins the notion as it is used in this paper (Nunan, George, and McCausland 2000). Beyond the acquisition of skills and knowledge, education should be concerned with civil society, citizenship and social justice, in which all individuals have equal opportunities to access and can be successful at school or university.

From a practical perspective, it requires that civic dimensions (such as the respect for life and human dignity, equal rights, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity or shared responsibility for a sustainable future) are embedded in the curricular programme, teaching methodologies, learning content and pedagogies (Shephard and Dular 2015).

Furthermore, education is central to developing the skills that people need to lead meaningful lives with equal dignity. A renewed vision of education should comprise critical thinking, independent judgment and debate as a way to create significant and valid knowledge for all people as part of a collective societal endeavour (Shephard et al. 2015). Here, higher education institutions play a relevant role as 'focal points for shaping critical thinkers, problem solvers and doers' (European Commission 2013, 13). Indeed, understanding education as an inclusive and common good entails accepting knowledge as inclusive, transparent and accountable for all. This means that education should be concerned not only with the accessibility of knowledge to individuals around the world, but also with the validation and transparency of knowledge acquired (European Commission 2013; UNESCO 2014)

Civic learning outcomes as a tool for an inclusive education

The concern with inclusion, transparency and accountability of knowledge between European countries and higher education institutions is a demand of the Bologna Declaration. All state members were encouraged to develop comparable criteria and methodologies as a tool to improve the quality assurance of higher education. The adoption of the qualification framework in the European Higher Education Area is one important tool for achieving comparability and transparency. Qualification frameworks describe the qualifications

of an education system and how they interconnect. They are composed of three cycles of generic qualifications (Bachelor's level – first study cycle, Master's level – second study cycle and PhD's level – third study cycle) with a different number of credits required. Generic descriptors for each cycle were defined based on the learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and is capable of doing at the end of a period of learning (Marouchou 2012). They are, generally, described in terms of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and understanding of what a student will achieve as a result of an educational experience (Adam 2006). In summary, learning outcomes are predictions of what learners would have gained as a result of learning. From a student perspective, a learning outcome explains what he/she is expected to be able to do and the criteria that will be used to assess him/her (Gallavara et al. 2008).

Conceptually close with learning outcomes, Dublin Descriptors define generic statements of typical expectations of achievement and abilities expected to be gained at the end of each Bologna cycle (Joint Quality Initiative Informal Group 2004). They are not prescriptive or exhaustive, and similar or equivalent characteristics may be added or replaced. Level descriptors also make explicit the learning outcomes associated with each level of qualifications (Bergan 2007). According to the level of qualification, Dublin Descriptors become more complex. For instance, communication skills become increasingly more complicated as the qualification level proceeds. In the first study cycle, students are expected to 'have the ability to [...] interpret relevant data to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues'. In the second study cycle, they are already expected to 'have the ability to integrate knowledge and reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments'. Finally, in the third study cycle, learners are expected to 'be able to promote contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society' (Joint Quality Initiative Informal Group 2004).

Learning outcomes could be differently categorised, focusing not only on technical skills and knowledge but also on civic attitudes and social values (Nusche 2008). These civic learning outcomes are composed of knowledge, skills, values and behaviours individuals need to be effective active citizens. As mentioned by Billings and Terkla (2014), an active citizen understands the obligation and assumes responsibility to improve community conditions, build healthier communities and address social problems. He/she also understands and believes in the democratic ideal of participation and the need to incorporate the contributions of every member of the community. Several studies have been developed using civic learning outcomes as a research topic (Denson and Bowman 2013; Billings and Terkla 2014; Bowman, Park, and Denson 2015; Shephard et al. 2015), focusing the multidimensionality inherent to the concept. For instance, Tufts University developed a conceptual framework to distinguish civic knowledge (intellectual abilities to engage in building democratic societies), civic skills (skills needed to an active citizenship through training or experience) and civic values (motivations, values and ethics to participate in building democratic societies). Each one includes a set of domains. Civic knowledge is measured by knowledge, comprehension, analysis and synthesis. Civic skills include planning/implementation, communication, leadership, cultural competency and evaluation. Finally, civic values refer to grounding, responding and committing. On the other hand, Rios-Aguilar and Mars (2011) performed an exploratory factor analysis to develop eight subscales of college student citizenship from the

Cooperative Institutional Research Program survey (Sax 2004). The results highlighted the relevance of academic engagement, community action, political orientation, social awareness, political attentiveness, self-awareness, community engagement and political action as dimensions of civic learning outcomes. Other dimensions, such as interaction confidence, interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, civic participation, civic duty, openness to diversity and curricular diversity involvement were also pointed out (Denson and Bowman 2013).

In summary, civic knowledge is related to the information individuals should know about the cultural and global contexts in which a community exists, the historical and sociological relevance of social movements and understanding how their political system is organised (Reason and Hemer 2012). Authors also stressed that civic knowledge in higher education tends to be discipline specific, depending on different knowledge areas.

In turn, skills such as ‘critical inquiry, analysis, reasoning/quantitative reasoning, gathering and evaluation of multiple sources of evidence, seeking, engaging, and being informed by multiple perspectives, written, oral, multi-media communication, deliberation and bridge building across differences, collaborative decision making and the ability to communicate in multiple languages’ could be understood as civic skills (National Task Force 2012, 4). These are required to ‘effectively participate in civic and political life’ (Kirlin 2003, 2). The Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency (2012) suggests that dimensions such as critical thinking, communication skills, the active participation in the public domain, the motivation to learn and self-directed participation in learning activities are also representative examples of civic skills. In addition, the development of creativity, innovation and autonomy skills were also strongly supported in civic education, particularly in the context of the creation and development of civic projects (European Commission 2008). Accordingly, students’ willingness to respond creatively to social challenges and their level of practical innovation became important civic skills to develop in educational contexts (Duffy 2013). More than being creative, being ‘morally creative’, in terms of vision, efficacy and responsibility (Haste 1993) provides the tools students need to be and to act as an active citizen. Some assessment tools provide a detailed description of personal and social skills related to civic skills. For instance, in the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire – CASQ (Moely et al. 2002), students are inquired about their (i) civic action intention, (ii) interpersonal and solving-problem skills, (iii) political awareness, (iv) leadership skills, (v) social justice attitudes and (vi) diversity attitudes.

Civic values include dispositions such as respect for freedom and dignity, empathy, open-mindedness, tolerance, justice, equality, integrity and responsibility to a common good (National Task Force 2012). Global Perspectives Inventory assesses how a student thinks, views themselves as a person with a cultural heritage and relates to those from different cultures, backgrounds and values (Braskamp, Braskamp, and Engberg 2013). There are three dimensions: the cognitive dimension examines knowing and knowledge, the intrapersonal examines identity and affect, while the interpersonal domain includes social responsibility and social interactions.

At last, civic behaviours range from voting to volunteerism, from dialogue between individuals around differences to solving public problems with diverse partners (Bowman, Park, and Denson 2015). Despite the apparent ambiguity between civic skills

and civic behaviours, it seems that skills are more related to ability, whereas behaviours involve skills or abilities in action (Reason and Hemer 2012). Several studies use civic behaviours as a research topic. Weerts, Cabrera, and Mejías (2014) tried to identify classes of students, based on professional, service, environmental, political, social, cultural, youth and community behaviours. Four classes of students emerged from the analysis: super engagers, social-cultural engagers, apolitical engagers and non-engagers.

In the theoretical framework adopted in the present study, civic knowledge, civic skills, civic values and civic behaviours are seen as nuclear dimensions of civic learning outcomes. This paper makes an assumption that enforcement of civic learning outcomes by higher education institutions could be an effective contribution to advocate education as a critical promoter to a global public good. Besides, education for the public good must instigate students to become more informed and active citizens (Billings and Terkla 2014) capable of acting in an interdependent world. Specifically, the present work intends to explore what civic learning outcomes are emphasised on the new study programmes submitted to quality accreditation in the Portuguese Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (A3ES agency). Qualification level was selected as an independent variable to evaluate civic learning outcomes in terms of incidence and content analysis.

Method

Procedure

Data analysis was performed in two stages using MAXQDA software (version 12). In the first step, a content analysis of learning outcomes was carried out, considering a random sample of proposals (4%) of new study cycles submitted to accreditation. This content analysis is data-driven. Qualitative data were analysed, trying to make hypotheses about what is 'in there' and defining what category best describes such information (Liamputtong 2013). A list of categories of civic learning outcomes emerges from the data. Secondly, based on this conceptual framework, a systematic lexical search was performed, considering the information of all proposals of the new study cycles. Here, categories obtained in the first stage were used as keywords. This technique is consistent with the theoretical thematic analysis approach, in which 'the researcher looks for themes with important messages inherent in the material' (Liamputtong 2013, 109), connecting them to the conceptual framework defined. In this stage, the number of incidences of stated civic learning outcomes mentioned on those curricula was assessed, contrasting qualification levels (first, second and third study cycles) and taking into account the number of total submissions for each one.

Measures

At the initial stage of the accreditation process, higher education institutions have to submit a request for previous accreditation of new study programmes (when institutions want to accredit a new study cycle) to the A3ES Agency. The aim of this agency is to ensure the quality of higher education in Portugal through assessment and accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programmes. The assessment process analyses the quality of specific activities – such as educational or research quality – within academic

units. On the other hand, the accreditation process determines whether an institution or a programme accomplishes threshold quality criteria and therefore certifies to the public the existence of minimum educational standards. The accreditation is valid for a 6-year period, taking into consideration whether it is a full or a conditional accreditation.

In the request for previous accreditation of new study programmes, institutions have to describe what ‘intended learning outcomes’ are expected to be developed by students at the end of the study cycle. Here, higher education institutions have to describe, in 1000 characters, the knowledge, skills and competences they intend to promote in their students. In this study, all the requests for previous accreditation of new study cycles submitted to A3ES, since 2009 until 2014, were analysed. Before 2009, the definition of LO was not an A3ES requirement in the accreditation process, and data obtained after 2014 is not yet available. The total number of programmes analysed corresponds to 1192. All these programmes have been accredited (without or with some conditions) and were analysed only once.

Results

All learning outcomes included in all the proposals of the new study programmes submitted to accreditation in A3ES from 2009 to 2014 were analysed. From the total of 1192 submissions, 63.2% correspond to master’s degrees, 21.8% to bachelor’s degree and 15% to PhD degrees (Table 1).

Table 2 displays results from the first step of data analysis, corresponding to content analysis of the answers obtained with the ‘intended learning outcomes’ question. A random of 4% of the total responses for each study degree was considered (bachelor: 10 responses; master: 30 responses; PhD degree: 8 responses). The number of incidences match the total of answers analysed (48), and are not differentiated by three academic levels.

A total of 20 categories emerged from the content analysis. Dimensions such as ‘autonomy’, ‘critical thinking/critical mindset’, ‘team work’, ‘ethical and moral values’, ‘lifelong learning’, ‘cultural diversity’, ‘social innovation’, ‘concern with scientific and social progress’ or ‘solving social problems’ were examples of civic learning outcomes.

Based on these preliminary results, a systematic lexical search was executed using these categories as keywords. Here, all learning outcomes mentioned in all 1192 requests to accreditation were considered. A differentiation between the three qualification levels (first, second and third) was taken into account.

Table 3 lists the number of incidences of civic learning outcome categories, differentiating the first, second and third qualification levels. Each content category is described using an example of the data coded. Percentages of the civic learning outcome categories in relation to the total numbers of documents from each cycle are also provided. These percentages allow for assessing the representativeness of each category for each subsample.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the sample.

Study cycle	Frequencies	Percentages
First study – Bachelor	260	21.8%
Second study – Master	753	63.2%
Third study – PhD	179	15%
Total	1192	100%

Table 2. Number of incidences for each category emerged.

Category	Number of incidences
Autonomy	33
Critical thinking/critical mindset	18
Team work	15
Concern with ethical/moral questions	14
Lifelong learning	14
Cultural diversity/multicultural	12
Social innovation	11
Concern with scientific and social progress	8
Solving social problems	7
Creativity	7
Communication to different audiences	6
Social skills	4
Sustainable development	4
Decision making skills	3
Entrepreneurship	3
Collaboration with community/community service	2
Citizenship/equality/democracy	2
Adaptability to new concept/contexts/social changes	2
Leadership skills	1
Concern with humans' well-being	1

Considering all the answers, 'team work/work in a pluralistic society', 'concern with ethical and moral questions' and 'autonomy' are the most cited categories. In turn, 'concern with humanity's well-being' seems to be the less relevant category (see Table 2).

Focusing on the answers obtained by each level of qualification, in the first study cycle the most representative categories are 'team work/work in a pluralistic society' (57.7%), 'concern with ethical and moral issues' (33.1%), 'autonomy' (21.1%) and 'critical thinking/critical mindset' (16.5%). 'Concern with scientific and social progress', 'solving social problems' and 'concern with humans' well-being' are not referred to. In the second study cycle, 'concern with ethical and moral issues' (36.1%), 'team work/work in a pluralistic society' (36.0%), 'innovation' (20.3%), and lifelong learning (15.9%) are the most representative categories, as well as 'autonomy' (15.4%). On the other hand, 'concern with humanity's well-being' is not mentioned and 'concern with scientific and social progress' is referred only twice (0.3%). In the third study cycle, 'concern with ethical/moral questions' (26.8%), 'team work/work in a pluralistic society' (22.3%), 'innovation' (21.1%) and 'autonomy' (11.7) are the most relevant categories. Noteworthy is the fact that 'concern with scientific and social progress' is a significant category, particularly for this specific academic degree comparatively to others (6.7% against 0% or 0.3%, for first and second cycles). 'Communication to different audiences' and 'social skills' are not mentioned as civic learning outcomes on this qualification level.

Results could be also rearranged in terms of these macro-categories: civic knowledge, civic values, civil skills and civic behaviours. Table 4 presents the incidences and percentages for each of these macro-categories. In general, civic skills are the most mentioned macro-category not only by the total sample (79.1%) and all academic degrees (first cycle: 83.2; second cycle: 78.4%; third cycle: 69.3%). The least mentioned category, for total sample and for all study cycles, is civic knowledge (1.7%; 0.8%; 1.7% and 3.8%, respectively). Focusing on the main differences by study cycles, civic knowledge is particularly relevant in the third cycle programmes. Civic values are mentioned, mainly, by the third and second cycle programmes. Civic skills are highly stressed by the first cycle programmes.

Table 3. Number of incidences, percentages and examples of civic learning outcomes by qualification levels and total documents.

Categories – Civic learning outcomes	Incidences and percentages by subsample			
	Total (%)	First cycle (%)	Second cycle (%)	Third cycle (%)
Team work/work in pluralistic society	461 (38.7)	150 (57.7)	271 (36.0)	40 (22.3)
e.g. Be able to create a positive working atmosphere (First cycle)				
Concern with ethical/moral questions	406 (34.1)	86 (33.1)	272 (36.1)	48 (26.8)
e.g. Be in accordance with strict ethical and deontological principles (Second cycle)				
Social innovation	228 (19.1)	37 (14.2)	153 (20.3)	38 (21.1)
e.g. To generate new tools, methods and strategies to foster social cohesion (Third cycle)				
Autonomy	192 (16.1)	55 (21.1)	116 (15.4)	21 (11.7)
e.g. To be able to reflect and to think by itself (Second cycle)				
Lifelong learning	158 (13.3)	30 (11.5)	120 (15.9)	8 (4.5)
e.g. To invest in personal and professional development through life (Second cycle)				
Leadership skills	124 (10.4)	34 (13.1)	82 (10.9)	8 (4.5)
e.g. To promote leadership skills in international context and teams (Third cycle)				
Critical thinking/critical mindset	118 (9.9)	43 (16.5)	69 (9.2)	6 (3.4)
e.g. To develop critical awareness perspectives (Second cycle)				
Creativity	90 (7.6)	27 (10.4)	54 (7.2)	9 (5.0)
e.g. To respond creatively to social problems (First cycle)				
Entrepreneurship	80 (6.7)	26 (10.0)	53 (7.0)	1 (0.6)
e.g. To develop innovative and entrepreneurial skills (First cycle)				
Citizenship/equality/democracy	63 (5.3)	8 (3.1)	44 (5.8)	11 (6.1)
e.g. To be capable to construct a critical and rational vision of society and to exercise a responsible citizenship (Third cycle)				
Adaptability to new contexts and social changes	59 (4.9)	24 (9.2)	30 (4.0)	5 (2.8)
e.g. To develop competences to adapt and to understand new social challenges (Second cycle)				
Decision making skills	50 (4.2)	9 (3.5)	38 (5.0)	3 (1.7)
e.g. To supply expertise to help student to make effective decisions in a context of global uncertainty (Third cycle)				
Cultural diversity/multicultural	42 (3.5)	5 (1.9)	31 (4.1)	6 (3.4)
e.g. To respect different traditions and religions (First cycle)				
Sustainable development	37 (3.1)	16 (6.2)	19 (2.5)	2 (1.1)
e.g. To integrate models and management tools to foster a sustainable development (Third cycle)				
Communication to different audiences	26 (2.2)	8 (3.1)	18 (2.4)	0 (0.0)
e.g. Be able to communicate (written and verbal) with different professionals (Second cycle)				

(Continued)

Table 3. Continued.

Categories – Civic learning outcomes	Incidences and percentages by subsample			
	Total (%)	First cycle (%)	Second cycle (%)	Third cycle (%)
Collaboration with community/community service	23 (1.9)	4 (1.5)	15 (2.0)	4 (2.2)
e.g. To boost knowledge students need to develop civic and community service projects (Third cycle)				
Concern with scientific and social progress	14 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.3)	12 (6.7)
e.g. To raise awareness on the relevance of academic expertise to social, cultural and technological progress (Second cycle)				
Solving social problems	7 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.5)	3 (1.7)
e.g. To raise up abilities and to develop innovative tools to solve social problems (Third cycle)				
Social skills	5 (0.4)	2 (0.8)	3 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
e.g. To develop social and interpersonal skills to deal with different persons, groups and communities (Second cycle)				
Concern with humans' well-being	1 (0.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.6)
e.g. To apply the most up-to-date scientific knowledge on humanity progress and on the improvement of population welfare (Third cycle)				
Total segments coded	1811	499	1132	189

Discussion

The main goal of the present paper was to explore what civic learning outcomes are mentioned on the proposals of new study programmes submitted for quality accreditation to

Table 4. Incidences and percentages of civic knowledge, values and skills by total of segments coded.

Macro-category	Category	Total	First cycle	Second cycle	Third cycle
Civic knowledge	Solve social problems	7	0	4	3
	Collaboration with community/community service	23	4	15	4
Total (incidences % by total segments coded)		30 (1.7%)	4 (0.8%)	19 (1.7%)	7 (3.8%)
Civic values	Concern with ethical/moral questions	406	86	272	48
	Lifelong learning	158	30	120	8
	Citizenship/equality/democracy	63	8	44	11
	Cultural diversity/multicultural	42	5	31	6
	Sustainable development	37	16	19	2
	Concern with scientific and social progress	14	0	2	12
	Concern with human well-being	1	0	0	1
Total (% by total segments coded)		721 (39.8%)	145 (29.01%)	488 (43.1%)	88 (46.6%)
Civic skills	Team work/pluralistic society	461	150	271	40
	Autonomy	192	55	116	21
	Leadership skills	124	34	82	8
	Adaptability to new contexts and social changes	59	24	30	5
	Entrepreneurship	80	26	53	1
	Creativity	90	27	54	9
	Decision making skills	50	9	38	3
	Communication to different audiences	26	8	18	0
	Social skills	5	2	3	0
	Social innovation	228	37	153	38
	Critical thinking/critical mindset	118	43	69	6
Total (% by total segments coded)		1433 (79.1%)	415 (83.2%)	887 (78.4%)	131 (69.3%)

the A3ES Agency. A distinction between the three qualification levels was also considered (from first to third study cycle). Generally, results reveal that, regardless of qualification levels, civic learning outcomes are well represented as a learning outcome in Portuguese higher education institutions. On one hand, to 'be able to integrate in international team work' and 'be in accordance with strict ethical and deontological principles' are examples of the most mentioned civic learning outcomes. The first correspond to the 'team work/work in a pluralistic society' category and the second to 'concern with ethical/moral questions'. On the other hand, 'concern with humans' well-being' is mentioned only by one case. This category could be described as 'the application of the most up-to-date scientific knowledge on humanity's progress and on the improvement of population welfare'.

Results also point out a distinction between qualification levels, not only in the categories mentioned by each one, but also in the category contents. Despite 'team work/work in a pluralistic society' being the category with the largest incidence number, it is only for the first study cycle that this category is effectively relevant. For the second and third study cycles, 'concern with ethical/moral questions' becomes the most important civic outcome. This result is aligned with the expected, if the Dublin Descriptors are taken into account. In fact, it is already expected to 'have the ability to integrate knowledge and reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments' (for the second study cycle) and to 'be able to promote contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society' (the third study cycle) (Joint Quality Initiative Informal Group 2004).

When focusing on category content, examples for each qualification level differ between them. From the first to third study cycle, civic learning outcomes become more complex and wide-ranging. What is expected for students in the third cycle is significantly different from students with lower qualification levels. For instance, a third cycle student is expected to 'integrate models and management tools to foster a sustainable development' (sustainable development category), whereas a first cycle student is expected to 'understand what is creativity' (creativity category).

Moreover, the 'concern with scientific and social progress' category is a more significant civic outcome expected for third cycle students comparatively to other qualification levels. These findings are also in line with Dublin Descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative Informal Group 2004). According to each qualification level, the abilities, skills and achievements which are required also change (Bergan 2007). What a student must be able to demonstrate, apply, gather and communicate becomes more complex and demanding as the level increases, which is applied too in the case of civic learning outcomes.

When comparing empirical data with Reason and Hemer (2012), the National Task Force (2012) or the Tufts University theoretical framework, an additional outlook of results emerges. As advocated, civic learning outcomes is a multidimensional concept, embracing civic knowledge, civic values, civic skills and civic behaviours. Thus, empirical data could be organised by these macro-categories. Civic knowledge could integrate 'knowing how to solve social problems' and 'understanding how to collaborate with the community and to know implement a community service'. Here, both categories are described (as evidenced by the examples aforementioned) in terms of knowledge and facts students should have to be able to solve and engage in social and community problems. On the other hand, civic values could be represented by 'concern with ethical/

moral questions', 'lifelong learning', 'citizenship/ equality/democracy', 'cultural diversity/ multicultural', 'sustainable development', 'concern with scientific and social progress' and 'concern with humanity well-being' categories. All categories correspond to civic values, dispositions or motivations to engage in and build more civic and developed societies (Braskamp, Braskamp, and Engberg 2013). In turn, 'team work/pluralistic society', 'autonomy', 'leadership skills', 'adaptability to new contexts and social changes', 'decision making skills', 'communication to different audiences', 'social skills', 'social innovation', 'critical thinking/critical mindset', 'creativity' and 'entrepreneurship' could be identified as skills needed for an active citizenship – civic skills (Kirlin 2003). Lastly, civic behaviours, understood as civic abilities and skills in action (Reason and Hemer 2012), are not represented in empirical data. Portuguese higher education institutions did not define or specify behaviours or actions, such as volunteer work, participation in a non-profit organisation, donating money or participation in political and social movements (Bowman, Park, and Denson 2015) as outcomes to be achieved by their students. Nevertheless, generally, results reveal that higher education institutions are reinforcing almost all dimensions of civic learning outcomes, defining civic values, civic skills and civic knowledge as expectable learning results. In addition, it is important to stress that civic skills are well represented in the sample, particularly for the first and second study cycles. Civic values are also highly mentioned, mainly for the second and third cycles. In contrast, generally civic knowledge is the less mentioned macro-category despite its relative representativeness in third cycle programmes. These potential inequalities in civic learning outcomes by study cycles are relevant in terms of curricula design. Hence, even though Dublin Descriptors give some relevance to civic learning outcomes, mainly in terms of reflection of social, scientific or ethical issues/responsibilities, Portuguese higher education institutions are already trying to transform reflection into practice. That is, more than simply reflect, students are expected to be able to work in a pluralistic society and to generate new tools, methods and strategies to foster social cohesion.

Some significant implications can be derived from this study as key indicators for policy-makers. Firstly, the role of higher education is particularly stressed as the foremost stage in the promotion of civic-minded students who will be future workers in the labour market. Reflecting about the purpose of higher education in the current social context is undeniable with the new social, cultural, economic and civic demands and challenges students are facing. Accordingly, education should support students (and future professionals) in dealing with these complex problems. To do so, education must move beyond technical knowledge and skills (UNESCO 2015). Civic values, skills, knowledge and behaviours need to be embedded in academic curricula, joining civic and academic learning. Secondly, the development of civic-minded students embodies a step toward a more inclusive education, making students more able to build a new and better inclusive society. When higher education institutions include civic dimensions as part of their mission, the bond between students' learning and students' civic development could become a reality, and a step toward a more inclusive education practices is made. In summary, this study provides a more comprehensive analysis of how civic learning is understood by academia and what civic learning outcomes are stressed by Portuguese higher education institutions. A further development of this study will be to extend the analysis to all learning outcomes proposed by higher education institutions, comparing the importance given to civic learning (in parallel with technical or discipline knowledge

and skills). Beyond academia, it would be interesting to ask labour market stakeholders and students about what civic competencies they think are particularly important for a more inclusive education and society.

In fact, today's students will be tomorrow's leaders. Thus, all the efforts undertaken today by higher education institutions to develop civic-minded students will be a step towards not only a more inclusive education but also a more inclusive society.

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