



Citizenry Education within Early Childhood Scenarios: An Experience with Community Mothers

CITIZENRY EDUCATION WITHIN EARLY CHILDHOOD SCENARIOS: AN EXPERIENCE WITH COMMUNITY MOTHERS¹



La formación en ciudadanía en escenarios de educación inicial: una experiencia con madres comunitarias

A formação em cidadania em cenários de educação inicial: uma experiência com mães Comunitárias

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Arly Adriana Rodríguez Huesa
(Colombia)
Magíster en Educación
Universidad Santo Tomás
arlyrodriguez@usantotomas.edu.co

Rita Flórez Romero (Colombia)
Magíster en Lingüística
Universidad Nacional de Colombia
rflorezr@unal.edu.co

Diana Paola Gómez Muñoz (Colombia)
Magíster en Educación
Universidad Nacional de Colombia
dpgomez@unal.edu.co

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the education provided by community mothers in Bogotá to children in early childhood. In order to do this, we organized focal groups with 27 community mothers that belong to the technical program in Comprehensive Assistance in Early Childhood belonging to the National Service of Learning (SENA for its name in Spanish.) We established three categories for the analysis: participation, autonomy, and watching thought. We visited the Community Home Agrupado Domingo Savio located in Santafé, and from this exercise, we obtained three new categories: community mothers' citizenry, moral judgement, and conflict resolution, which enabled enhancing the analysis. Among the results, we include the importance of considering these children as valid interlocutors and understanding them as political subjects. We also observed that the teachers, due to their gender, bring elements to understand the citizenry of the youngest children and that the training offered by

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RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza la formación ciudadana que brindan las madres comunitarias de Bogotá a niños y niñas de la primera infancia. Para ello, se organizaron grupos focales con 27 madres comunitarias que hacen parte del programa Técnico en Atención Integral a la Primera Infancia del Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA). Se establecieron tres categorías para el análisis: participación, autonomía y pensamiento cuidante. Se realizó la visita al Hogar Comunitario Agrupado Domingo Savio de la localidad Santafé, y en este ejercicio emergieron tres nuevas categorías: ciudadanía en las madres comunitarias, juicio moral y resolución de conflictos, lo cual permitió ampliar el análisis. El estudio arroja entre sus resultados la importancia de concebir a los niños y las niñas de la primera infancia como interlocutores válidos y comprenderlos como sujetos políticos. Además, se observó que las educadoras, desde su condición de género, aportan elementos para comprender la ciudadanía de los más

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RESUMO

O presente artigo é o resultado do projeto de pesquisa Filosofia latino-americana atual, na linha de filosofias nativo-americanas, o qual desde uma análise hermenêutica sobre cosmovisões indígenas, em especial no que se refere ao seu pensamento e administração da justiça comunitária, se faz um paralelo com a vivência da justiça desde o direito positivo. Argumenta-se que não é equivalente dizer "um de nós cometeu um delito" a dizer june ja ke "nitiki jta" atik jmul (um de nós cometemos o delito) em idioma maia-tojolabal, pois, embora ambas frases se referem ao mesmo acontecimento, a sua vivência é muito diferente. O olhar a esta "justiça nosótrica" como um aporte para a paz está enquadrada no contexto de um mundo violento, injusto e desigual, como o que vivemos, com um passado que tem-se invisibilizado e um futuro enganador.

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SENA has a positive impact on the redefinition of their citizenry, which represents an influence on the civic education promoted.

pequeños y que la formación que brinda el SENA ha tenido un impacto positivo en la resignificación de su ciudadanía, lo cual supone una afectación en la orientación ciudadana que promueven.

Keywords: Citizenry, early childhood, community mothers, participation, autonomy, watching thought, conflict resolution, moral judgement.

Palabras clave: Ciudadanía, primera infancia, madres comunitarias, participación, autonomía, pensamiento cuidante, resolución de conflictos, juicio moral.

Palavras chave: cidadania, primeira infância, mães comunitárias, participação, autonomia, pensamento cuidante, resolução de conflitos, juízo moral.

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INTRODUCTION

Promoting citizenship education and participation from early childhood is crucial to the extent it makes it possible to build environments where children are heard and taken into account by adults, who must recognize that from the beginning of their lives, children create a language to manifest their desires, their fears and their understanding about the world and should be entitled to express them. Society must therefore recognize the need to build environments for their development that allow them to create and recreate their own identity in a proactive and participatory manner while being considered by adults as valid and legitimate political parties to the extent they are the subjects of rights.

This understanding of childhood emerges from the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, which recognizes boys and girls as subjects of rights and as a fundamental social group in recognition of new social emergencies that make visible their right to participate in society.

Colombia ratified this Convention in the 1991 Constitution, due to which the issue of early childhood has been given more attention and priority over time. However, different institutions and people from all sectors of society have urged the State to develop more effective actions only during the last decade. One of these actions led to the formalization of the 2007 Conpes Social Document, titled *Colombia for Early Childhood*, which was the first public policy in the country's history directed at this population group (Torrado, 2009).

The policy establishes 10 lines of action that include the *Technical Guidelines for Participation and the Exercise of Citizenship in Early Childhood* (Intersectoral Commission for Early Childhood, 2012). These *Guidelines* are significant to the extent they promote the realization of the set of rights for boys and girls and constitute one of the foundations of the comprehensive care policy advanced by the country within the *Strategy of Comprehensive Early Childhood Care* (Intersectoral Commission for Comprehensive Early Childhood Care, 2014).

The focus of this research is analyzing how citizenship education is provided to children to show how the proposals of these *Guidelines* are being put into practice. To achieve this purpose we did some work with community mothers to characterize their understanding of the notion of *citizenship* and the relationship of these social constructs with their teachings in this subject.

Early childhood is understood here as the population group that includes children from ages 0 to 6, a crucial period in human development to the extent the foundations of cognitive, emotional and social development are structured at this time and are later perfected in subsequent stages of development (Law 1098 of 2006).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CITIZENSHIP

Approaching the concept of citizenship is crucial to understand how it is interpreted in this work. Modernity conceived citizenship as an ethical-political notion in which human beings are recognized as subjects that participate with the same rights and duties as members of a society.

The current concept of citizen entails the reconfiguration of different historical facts, such as those given in the 17th and 18th centuries at the time of the French, English and American Revolutions and the birth of capitalism as a product of the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment. One of the most important events related to this notion was the birth of a new political community: the modern national State as an institution whose responsibility is to defend the life, integrity and property of its members.

The modern national State allowed the concept of citizenship to reach its current form: citizens are nationals of a country, and this is the legal status whereby a person belongs to a State that has been recognized as such.

According to Cortina (1997), citizenship constitutes the *raison d'être* of civility, fostered by the fact that citizens share an ideal of justice and a sense of belonging to a community. Shared values are the minimum principles of justice that a pluralist society is not willing to give up on. Citizenship in addition entails mediation to the extent it integrates the liberal demands of justice and the demands of belonging to a community. It means the equality of citizens in a dignified life and their willingness to engage in public affairs. Therefore, citizenship means the recognition by the State of its members and their adherence to common projects. Only those who know they are recognized by a community can feel motivated to actively participate in it.

In short, citizenship implies participation, the recognition of freedom and rights of an individual by society in all spheres and the sense of belonging

to a community, which makes it possible for said individual to develop independently. However, this process requires education, understood as a condition that brings about the transition from natural life to civilian life. Citizenship must then be recognized in all its dimensions: political, social, economic, civil, intercultural and cosmopolitan.

CITIZENSHIP AND WOMEN

Given the interest in establishing a relationship between the conception of citizenship of community mothers and how they educate children in their early childhood period in this regard, it is necessary to make the following clarifications.

First, for the modern political project it was clear that men and women were associated with different moral projects, norms and values, and that male virtues are structured around justice and rights, while female virtues are aimed towards care and responsibility. The first project could be executed in the public sphere, while the second, on the other hand, was confined to the private sphere and the home, thereby excluding women from the political arena (Pateman 1986, cited by Mouffe, 1992, p. 7). If we look at the historical evolution of women's citizenship, there is evidence of exclusion in issues such as democratic participation, due to which it is easy to understand how many of the mothers, as women, said they did not feel sufficiently recognized by a State plagued by a patriarchal culture that has excluded and made women invisible.

Second, even though the study did not delve into the struggles that feminism has had to face in the establishment of a more inclusive conception of citizenship for women, it was necessary to expose

some of the considerations of feminism inasmuch as they provided tools to understand which natural aspects of women confined to the private sphere play a fundamental role in the public sphere and provide elements that should be taken into account in offering citizenship education to children in their early childhood period.

Indeed, some authors such as Mouffe (1992), Ruddick (1989) and Elshtain (2006) agree with Gilligan (1985), who compares the feminist “ethics of care” to the male and liberal “ethics of justice”. They defend a set of values based on the experience of women as women against liberal individualistic values; the experience of motherhood and caring for their families in the private sphere.

These authors point out that there is a feminine morality as a different form of moral reasoning and a source of authentic and valuable moral intuitions that should be made visible. However, if being a citizen requires participation in social and public life, which implies adopting a moral point of view, this moral point of view could be determined by gender and should have an impact on the way in which the subject takes on being a citizen (Palma & Pizarro, 1997). If so, it could be affirmed that if there is such a determination, it could have an effect on how the subject of citizenship is instilled in boys and girls. The following study illustrates the points made above.

Singer and De Haan (2008) analyzed certain socialization processes in early childhood and claim that one of the main tasks of educators is to ensure that children feel safe and valued, that they feel comfortable in the group and create a ‘culture of tenderness’ (Singer and Hännikäinen, 2002, cited by Singer and Hann, 2008, p. 115) based on the

ethics of care proposed by Gilligan (1985). This approach arose after observing how the educators subject of the study responded to the conflict resolution processes of children (which will be discussed later). During the study, they could distinguish three roles among the educators:

1. The protector, who ensures that all children feel safe and have positive relationships;
2. The authority, which deals with values and norms, establishes rules and agreements with children and when necessary, intervenes to remind them;
3. The mediator, who helps children find solutions together, restores relationships and in general, fosters the development of social skills (p.125).

CITIZENSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Education is fundamental for teaching citizenship. However, given the political, social and cultural crises of our world and the economic transformations resulting from capitalism and globalization, society saw the need to think about and resignify educational models and notions like citizenship and childhood. Childhood is now identified as a specific social group and not only as a stage of preparation for adult life or for the future of society. For this reason, we are having discussions on the conception of childhood that considers boys and girls the subjects of political rights or, in other words, that recognizes the possibility of a *de facto* citizenship for childhood and not as something to be achieved later on (Garzón, Pineda y Acosta, 2004, p.8).

At this point of the inquiry, we had to ask ourselves the question: is it possible to speak about citizenship in early childhood? In this regard, Pineda (2004) states that children are social beings who experience all the contradictions of the contexts they live in from a very young age and therefore require clarity on the concepts and images they have to deal with stumble daily from the very

beginning. Conceiving children as “pure”, unpolluted beings and in a certain way alien to their social context is very biased since it ignores their intellectual curiosity, reasoning abilities, perception skills and the way their physical disabilities and the limitations of their intellect are offset by heightened skills for social interaction.

Citizenship skills and abilities in children therefore require strategies for continuous construction, which must be developed in their daily activities (school, home, park, neighborhood, city...). These skills require spaces that promote participation, reflection and the implementation of their condition as citizens as claimed by Hart (2005) about boys and girls:

they learn to think about their own actions in order not to act hastily; to act in accordance with their own rights and those of others and in collaboration with others (solidary thinking); to evaluate their own actions constantly; to act in accordance with what they believe is right, and then reflect once again, not only for themselves but with others. It is an increasingly complex process in which skills and responsibilities are intertwined (Conversation with Roger Hart, s.f).

These considerations, which could only be conceived for the adult world, remind us of Kant’s three maxims (2006): think for yourself, think from the perspective of others and always think consciously.

Based on this concept, we can conclude that there are three important aspects in citizenship education: participation, autonomy and caring thinking. Each notion is explained below.

his or her opinion and for that opinion to be taken into consideration in all matters concerning him or her. According to Zamora:

This is no longer a question of goodwill (I am going to listen to him or her); it is a right, a conventional right and a constitutional right. It is the newest right proposed by the Convention and probably the most difficult. Because taking into consideration the interests of the child does not have to do with right to be heard but rather with a conception of society where children, as human beings in their own right are entitled to express themselves and for their opinions to be considered (cited by Estrada, Madrid-Malo and Gil, 2000, p.23).

Hart (1993) defines participation as the ability to make decisions that are recognized by the social environment and that affect one's life or the community in which one lives. Child participation means “collaborating, contributing and cooperating for common progress” as well as generating self-confidence and a principle of initiative in children and young people. In addition, participation makes children social subjects with the ability to express their opinions and decisions in matters that directly concern them within their family, their schools and society in general. Similarly, children's participation should never be conceived as the simple participation of boys, girls and young people, but rather a permanent relationship with adults (intergenerational dialogue) and a process of mutual learning for both children and adults (Apud, s.f.).

Most of the documents we reviewed on the topic of children’s participation refer to the metaphor used by Hart (2001) known as the ladder of children’s participation to explain how adults can support the involvement of boys and girls in participatory processes, ensure they are not manipulated, achieve participation models and structure genuine strategies (Intersectoral Commission for

Comprehensive Early Childhood Care, 2012) (figure 1).

Figure 1. Hart Ladder of children's participation (2001)



Hart (2001) states that in the first rungs there is no real participation by children, but that it does happen in subsequent rungs:

Rung 4. Assigned but informed: this is the first level of actual participation. In this rung, children act on a voluntary basis according to the proposals of adults because they have created spaces for communication in which activities are explained to children. In this case boys and girls understand the purpose of the activity they will perform because they know who made the decisions about their participation, they know they are deemed to be important and not merely decorative and they volunteer for the project.

Rung 5. Consulted and informed: projects in which children work as consultants for adults are considered to entail a higher level of participation because the opinions and proposals of boys and girls are taken into account. For this reason, adults see the need to build strategies to effectively listen to boys and girls.

Rung 6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with boys and girls: even though adults initiate projects at this level, decision-making is shared with boys and girls. This collaborative and cooperative work can be developed because adults give children the chance to contribute their creativity, imagination, style and proactive capacity in the interaction with adults for the development of the proposed work.

Rung 7. Children lead and initiate action: in rung 7 projects are initiated and directed by boys and girls. Here adults need a change of attitude aimed at recognizing and legitimizing children as subjects of rights, believing in their ability to decide and act based on their own initiatives and be willing to provide support in the process of growing up.

Rung 8. Initiated by children, decisions shared with adults: this last step is characterized in the fact that projects are led by children and decisions are shared with adults. In order for this higher level to be reached within the participation process, adults need to be able to identify the needs of the children and provide the relevant conditions so that they can develop their full creative potential.

It should be noted that social participation is an essential human right of every person and a society can only be considered democratic when all its citizens participate and are included in it to ensure fulfillment of their rights. Levels and forms of participation will depend on the place occupied by boys and girls in their social group (Estrada, Madrid-Malo and Gil, 2000).

In summary, the participation and exercise of citizenship is connected to the development processes of children in early childhood and as such to parenting patterns, early education processes and

the individual and collective conceptions of childhood. The consideration of children as valid parties by adults will make it possible to foster the abilities and potential necessary for their participation.

Autonomy

One of the most representative achievements of children towards the end of the first year and much of the second is autonomy, which emerges in that transition from babyhood to childhood to the extent they cease to be fully dependent. It is a time of great achievements: their first steps, the ability to communicate and to solve problems, as well as communication and the beginnings of language. With this, they gradually begin to live their freedom as autonomous people.

However, we cannot talk about citizens without their recognition as autonomous and free beings. For this reason, people who support a child should favor the opening of spaces for discoveries and achievements because this paves the way for the development of their autonomy. In fact, children around the age of two show greater interest in doing things for themselves and sometimes do not want the help from the adults around them. This sense of autonomy shows the trust that the little ones have in their own ability and thus take the risk to make decisions even though they still require the support of adults.

affections, ideas and feelings, due to which they feel the need to explore and investigate the physical environment, to make decisions and to do things for themselves. These changes are the beginning of the development of their autonomy, the construction of their self-esteem and the definition of their personality.

This process of development and construction of autonomous beings is fundamental to ensure that boys and girls can make decisions and express their points of view in a given situation. In fact, autonomy understood as a biological tendency is closely related to self-esteem and happiness, such that an autonomous person is aware of the possibility of conceiving and dreaming projects with the confidence that he or she can carry them out.

Transferring this reflection to the sphere of early childhood means that educators must instill among young people the idea that their lives have meaning and that they are valuable to build foundations to allow them to dream of their own life projects, knowing that their lives have meaning and purpose.

Caring thinking

Lipman (1998) developed the concept of caring thinking to the extent reasoning and moral judgment makes sense if they refer to the concern for oneself, for others and for the world. This author relates his reflections with Heidegger's concept of care or cure, by defining it as an authentic way of being in the world and of relating to the environment and to others (Lago, 2006). Lipman's contribution is to consider that care, in addition to being an emotional or affective activity, is a cognitive and reflective act to the extent it

involves the performance of cognitive operations such as seeking alternatives, discovering or inventing relationships, establishing connections between connections and contrasting differences. These actions are carried out when every person inquires about his or her relationship with the world and with others.

Lipman (1998) affirms that when a person engages in caring thinking, he or she pays attention to what he or she cares about, thus giving it value to the extent it entails a judgment of that person and his or her actions and behaviors and about the world that surrounds him or her as a signal of commitment to the person and the environment. This concern for one or the other supposes a concern for oneself or in other words, self-care. For this reason, caring thinking is fundamental for the construction of citizenship because it is social in nature (at this point it breaks with Heidegger's considerations and becomes more Foucauldian) insofar as it has to do with being aware of oneself through others, through interactions with others and with the environment; it is an active awareness of the person to the extent he or she is "concerned about" it and tries to take care of it, transform it or, in other words, project itself in others and in the other (Lago, 2006).

This consideration of oneself, of others and of the other, a characteristic of caring thinking is important for instilling citizenship and, therefore democracy. We wanted to establish a relationship between Lipman's considerations on caring thinking and the Nussbaum's approach (2010) to understand how the implications of this kind of thinking would be related to actions performed by citizens.

The author affirms that global citizenship requires the development of three abilities: the ability for self-examination (*self-awareness*), the ability to see oneself as a human being that is connected to others (*self-awareness through others*) and the ability to cultivate narrative imagination (*being concerned about*).

The ability for self-examination leads to an exercise in self-reflection and the construction of critical thinking about the world of life. The second ability implies the possibility of seeing oneself in relation to others, which entails transcending cultural boundaries insofar as it is directed towards the ethics of taking care of the world and of others. The third ability is narrative imagination, which implies the feelings of empathy, of putting oneself in someone else's shoes to value the meaning of their feelings, their desires, projects and achievements.

Given the above, it is possible to affirm that caring thinking is fundamental for the process of citizenship education because it involves the three considerations discussed by Nussbaum (2010) to the extent this way of thinking makes the subject reflect about his or herself and make an assessment of what is valuable for others, *respectful thinking*, think about what is being valued as beautiful, *appreciative thinking*, think about what is considered virtuous, *admiring thinking*, think about what is sentient, *considerate thinking*, think about what should be supported, *encouraging thinking* and think about suffering, *compassionate thinking* (Lipman, 1991).

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF STUDY

The analysis conducted in this research is based on multiple case studies. We used a qualitative, descriptive and interpretive approach focused on the generation of comprehensive knowledge about the conception of citizenship of community mothers and their relationship with the process of citizenship education in early childhood based on a hermeneutical perspective.

INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURE

We used a focus group formed by 27 community mothers from the district of Santafé. The debates in this discussion group were guided by questions drafted beforehand as well as some interviews with the purpose of exploring citizenship education in early childhood through the categories under analysis: participation, autonomy and caring thinking.

The research was conducted based on three aspects: first we conducted focus group sessions with the community mothers who were in the process of receiving training in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care. Second, we visited the Domingo Savio Integrated Community Home to observe and identify situations related to the questions under study: How do community mothers provide citizenship education? What is the point? Is it possible to speak about citizenship in early childhood? This inquiry was guided by the respective field diary. New categories of analysis emerged during the dialogue and observation process that made it possible to broaden the concept of citizenship education in boys and girls. Third, we conducted an analysis of the emerging concepts: citizenship in community mothers, conflict resolution and moral judgment.

On the other hand, one of the most important inputs in the research was the Associate's Degree in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care offered by the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) completed by four community mothers of the Domingo Savio Integrated Community Home in 2012, because it recorded the activities aimed at citizenship education in the community home under study and thus constitutes an important source of information on the pedagogical practices applied by educators.

PARTICIPANTS

The group under study was made up of 27 community mothers who are part of the Associate's Degree in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care offered by SENA. Four of these mothers had already completed the program in 2012. These mothers reside in the district of Santafé. The institution under study was the Domingo Savio Integrated Community Home.

CATEGORIZATION

We organized the information we collected based on three categories of analysis arising from the theoretical contextualization of citizenship. We interpreted the stories based on these analytical units, understood certain aspects of the observations and revised the components of the "Associate's Degree in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care" offered SENA, which became significant notions for understanding the results obtained. Three other categories emerged during the course of the investigation, which broadened the scope of the analysis conducted.

RESULTS

The activities carried out by the mothers consistent with the elements of analysis are described below.

ACTIVITIES THAT ACCOUNT FOR PARTICIPATION

In terms of this category, community mothers were asked about the activities they developed for providing this type of education. The results showed, on the one hand, that there were activities in which the degree of participation of boys and girls was not entirely genuine according to the description of the degrees of participation proposed by Hart (1993). Here are some of these activities:

Rung 2. We organized an activity for Family Day where the boys and girls had to dance, sing a song and put on costumes. They were scared at first but we encouraged them by clapping and the kids started dancing; everything went well and the parents liked it (community mother 4).

Rung 3. At the community home we are working on participation through the election of a class president or by choosing a boy or a girl to represent the class or the school (community mother 2).

During these activities children displayed a certain degree of passivity even though they participated. There were no spaces opened for the children to express themselves more and share their opinions and perceptions. Other activities on the other hand favored a greater role for the children and gave them the opportunity to make decisions even though participation was not entirely effective:

Rung 4. The activity had to do with taste, we gave them a lemon and then honey; some of the children made faces, but came back so that we could give

them more lemon. As they are children aged one to one and a half, they smiled at the reactions of the others and then ran away [...] everyone participated in the end. In this activity, the little ones decided if they wanted honey or lemon and observed and commented on the reactions of the others (community mother 8).

There were activities that did foster the genuine participation of the children and that also brought about the development of critical, caring and solidary thinking. One of these activities is described below:

Rung 8. At this level we worked on the subject of hospitals and health centers of our district... they children painted a mural where they expressed what they liked and what they did not like about these places. For the mural with the things they did not like, they painted an ugly, dirty hospital with walls in poor condition. In addition, they prepared a performance of *The Pinocchio Song* in reference to the old hospital where Pinocchio is poorly taken care of and to express their bad experiences of doctor's appointments. The children represented the hospital they wanted. We had previously visited the Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Hospital and the BCU [Basic Care Unit] of the Lourdes Hospital where they had contact with the different professionals who told them about the services to which boys and girls are entitled. Later, once we came back to the community home we did a role-play game where they played the roles of the doctor, the nurse, the security guard, the mothers and fathers and themselves as patients (Room A2, Domingo Savio Integrated Community Home with the active collaboration of the children from the Niños Soñadores Home).

ACTIVITIES THAT ACCOUNT FOR AUTONOMY

During the focus group, the majority of the community mothers said that they believe that art and play are fundamental to strengthen the autonomy of the children they are responsible for because all children, from the youngest to the oldest, have the opportunity to explore, investigate, ask, be proactive, make mistakes and correct and make decisions in these subjects.

However, during the visit to the community home we saw something different: that the teachers provide the education needed to think independently based on construction of normative thinking. The rules to be followed by the children in the community home are communicated at the beginning of the year but are constantly being reinforced in the interactions with the children.

Although autonomy does not only mean to follow the rules since it implies an ability to discern what is right or wrong, we saw that from the standpoint of the assimilation of rules that community mothers ensure that boys and girls have a clear idea of what to do, how to do it and feel confident enough to collaborate in the tasks they are entrusted with. Although the educators always keep an eye on the children, they let them solve their problems (eating on their own, reaching for a chair, organizing the dishes, putting the toys away, leaving their personal things where they belong, from the youngest ones aged one to the oldest, aged five) and thus strengthen the exercise of autonomy.

ACTIVITIES THAT ACCOUNT FOR CARING THINKING

During the Associate's Degree in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care offered by SENA, community mothers receive training aimed towards the promotion of health, nutrition, healthy living practices and the prevention of diseases of children up to six years old in accordance with public health guidelines. For this reason, several of the testimonies aimed at knowing how they taught the subject of care had to do with this aspect. Community mothers work in the promotion of the ideal interaction with themselves, with others and with nature, as evidenced in the following activities.

"On taking care of others". During our visit to the community home we saw how the community mothers tried to ensure that the older children kept an eye on the youngest. For example, on the day of the dance everyone was following this instruction given by the educator: "The oldest must choose a baby as their partner", or while they were playing: "Let the youngest ones pick their toy first". The repeated instructions aimed at taking care of the youngest ones have led the older children to moderate their behavior so as not to hurt them and to have their own initiatives to protect them. A two-year old told the teacher: "Look, another baby wants to leave", pointing at a crawling baby and closing the pen.

In terms of taking care of the other, many of the activities carried out by community mothers are aimed at protecting nature and their immediate surroundings as well as devising activities related to orientation and traffic regulations, which it is a challenge given that, as posed by Tonucci (1991) cities have become a place for cars which hinders the right of children to use city spaces in freedom

and in safety. In fact, most urban spaces are hostile to children.

EMERGING CATEGORIES

Citizenship in community mothers

One of the interests explored in this study focused on investigating the conception of citizenship that community mothers have and see its impact in the education they offer to children in this regard. The theoretical references state that the gender of community mothers affects the way in which they assume their own citizenship, which is why, on the one hand we asked them what they thought about citizenship and on the other hand, to make them reflect a little more, we discussed the subject of their rights. The results of this inquiry were quite interesting and will be described below. Table 1 contains the answers given by community mothers in descending order when they were asked about what identified them as citizens.

Table 1. Responses from participants about what identified them as citizens

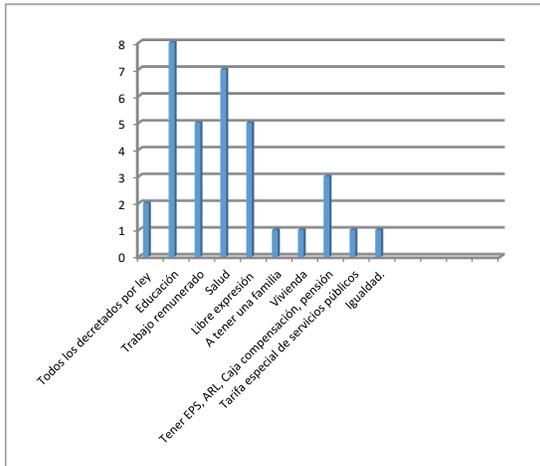
Belonging to a community, culture, country
Having a name
Having a nationality
Having an ID
Having duties
Having a family
Having rights
Participating in something
Having a paid job
Being able to vote
Having an identity
Paying taxes

However, one of the problems for the non-recognition of the right of citizenship in its legal, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions by most people is linking the status of citizen to having a name, an ID or belonging to a country. The responses of the community mothers were inclined toward these aspects. Others such as the right to vote, which turns out to be a fundamental component of the exercise of citizenship because it represents genuine political participation, was not sufficiently taken into account.

This was significant to understand the education they provide to children, because if they are not sufficiently empowered to be citizens to the extent citizenship goes beyond these elements as a value that should be part of the education of every person to strengthen political coexistence according to Cortina (1997), how can they provide effective citizenship education if they do not have it themselves?

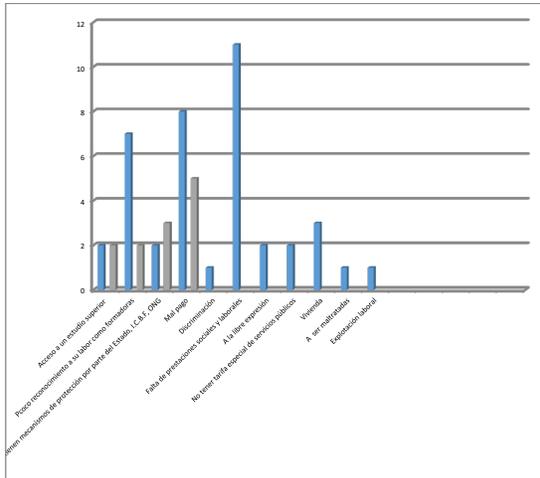
On the other hand, when asked about how they live their condition as citizens, we found that their actions as community mothers in some cases is not very different from their private roles as mothers, wives and housewives, which has an effect on their autonomy. In the work done with the educators, we observed a certain fear in expressing their opinions or defending them. Some mothers stated that their husbands did not support them in terms of the program they were completing at SENA since it was difficult for them to admit that their wives were better prepared than them. Some of the community mothers were even forced to withdraw for this reason. We then decided to inquire about the rights that they believe have been recognized to them (figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Rights recognized by community mothers.



Note: Education refers to primary and secondary education.

Figure 3. Rights of community mothers that have been violated



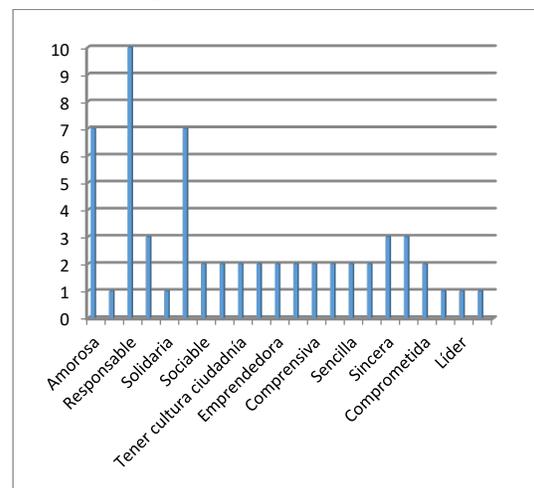
As shown in figures 2 and 3, a high percentage of community mothers said that their fundamental rights to a better life are not being recognized. This situation interferes with a better work environment, as many said that their work should be recognized more, while others claimed that if they received an offer for another job, they would

not hesitate to leave (it was mainly the younger mothers who made this claim).

Others said that they took the job because they thought it was attractive at the time, driven by a need to make money but not by a personal conviction of wanting to work with children. These and other considerations should raise an alarm because the emotional burden of this work leads to stress, frustration and dissatisfaction and in turn affects the work they do with boys and girls. We then need to ask the question: how do they manage to speak about rights to children when they themselves are not sufficiently recognized as subjects of rights by the relevant government bodies?

On the other hand, when we inquired about how they thought they provided citizenship education, their comments had to do with the ethics of care rather than ethics of justice (figure 4).

Figure 4. Indicators of citizenship of community mothers from the standpoint of ethics of care



According to these records, to the extent educational agents resignify the conception they have about their own citizenship they will have greater tools to educate the children under their

care, just as not doing so will have a negative impact on this process. In fact, if a person who plays the role of educational agent does not feel fully recognized with the right to participate then how will he or she provide citizenship education? Or if he or she ignores his or her own rights and feels that some are being violated but does not seek protection and enforcement, how will he or she provide education in autonomy or in the consideration of a political subject?

It is important to point out that the records showed that the mothers provide education in citizenship based on characteristics related to their gender, which would make it seem like they are educating based on the ethics of care.

It is therefore relevant to pay attention to these tools offered by teachers as women because they recreate the idea of instilling socialization from a culture of tenderness. This research tries to point out that this affection and a greater sensitivity are a component that has not been fully taken into account when considering the best way to provide citizenship education by paying attention to rational discourses serving a logic of liberal justice.

Conflict resolution

We arrived at this category during our inquiry in terms of how community mothers provide citizenship education when they said that one of the disadvantages that arises in the course of their had to do with the difficulty in solving problems between themselves. This affects the children to the extent they do not always work collaboratively and misunderstandings often occur. We then examined the type of conflicts that may arise under the premise that one of the virtues of community

life is the ability that citizens have to reach agreements with the purpose of favoring equality, understood as the recognition of others based on their differences to ensure peaceful coexistence. For this reason, not knowing how to reach an agreement significantly affects citizenship education.

This analysis was carried out in response to the following relationships and conflicts that arise among community mothers:

1. *Community mothers*: the main causes of conflict among community mothers include the following:
 - a. Lack of communication and understanding: “Errors are not accepted, some have confrontational attitudes because they don’t respect the ideas of their colleagues (community mother 23).
 - b. Lack of a good image of authority. “Sometimes there are disagreements with the leaders of the associations because they do not know how to listen, they are intolerant and want things to be done their way” (community mother 13).
 - c. Lack of motivation for work. “There are unjustified leaves of absence that affect the work with the children because children cannot identify their teachers” (community mother 8).
 - d. Lack of solidarity and recognition by others. “Some work for their own benefit and not that of others” (community mother 14).
 - e. There is lack of compliance and commitment to the tasks assigned by some of the community mothers.

However, it is often the case that teachers teach conflict resolution but rarely reflect on how they themselves handle conflict in their lives. Teachers provide a structure that educates children but is not always effective. A good alternative would be for educational agents reflect and discuss the problematic situations that appear in their own lives during times of conflict. Teachers, parents and the community in general must face this challenge to learn to solve conflicts (Hart, 2005) for a more effective teaching from the standpoint of experience rather than discourse.

2. *Community mothers, parents:* Community mothers affirmed that the conflicts they have with parents are caused by:

- a. Lack of communication between parents and their children.
- b. Lack of parenting guidelines.
- c. Lack of quality time with children.
- d. Aggressive families or parents who use psychoactive substances.

Community mothers made extensive reference to the lack of responsibility of some parents regarding their children's education in addition to their intolerance and disrespect. Even though all families experience tensions, they must represent the first opportunity to learn about how to resolve them; parents should help their children develop the ability to solve, agree, respect, collaborate and comply. For this reason, it is crucial to work with families in terms of citizenship education in early childhood to put this knowledge into practice in the daily life of children.

3. *Conflicts among children:* When we made questions in this regard, it was striking to see that community mothers only mentioned the following causes for the problems that arise among children:

- a. Selfishness: "They often fight for toys, they don't want to share them" (community mother 6).
- b. Racism: "A black boy came and at first they did not want to play with him. We had to talk to the children so that they would accept him" (community mother 8).
- c. Discrimination: "We have discrimination with some of the children have a disability, so we work with them on the importance of accepting and respecting their disabled classmates" (community mother 21).

It should be noted that the presence of conflict in the socialization processes of early childhood could also be moments of great learning. For this reason, since no other sources of conflict were mentioned we believe that these processes are not being observed in sufficient detail and community mothers therefore cannot see that children have the ability to reach solutions and agreements as noted by Singer and De Haan (2008) and do not reinforce it.

In effect, the way children act during conflict is essential for citizenship education. For this reason, this ability for conflict resolution, which differs from the way adults, act always looking to take revenge and retaliate should be further encouraged. Adults need to pay more attention to children's socialization processes to find tools that could contribute to citizenship from children's logic.

Moral judgment

Moral development is one of the most important processes in childhood, in which adults play an important role in approving and disapproving the child's behavior and the source and the paradigm for the construction of the child's values. On the feelings they experience and the effects of their behaviors, the children build the family and social framework they find themselves in (Winnicott, 1975).

Community mothers guide this education process towards learning about socialization, knowledge of the rules and values of culture and family, which supports the creation of moral criteria among boys and girls. Community mothers provide an education in moral judgments based on criteria that set the limits on behavior. This process was evidenced in each of the activities described, and the way in which girls and boys participate will promote the development of their abilities for criticism and ethical, moral and civic assessment.

Community mothers believe that teaching respect for moral values in boys and girls is fundamental because humans are recognized as the creators of these values. Belonging to the Associate's Degree in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care program offered by SENA has allowed them to see that this knowledge is more meaningful for children from the standpoint of experiential learning and not from the values repeated in a classroom. This knowledge is learned in day-to-day activities and in relationships between them and community mothers, due to which it is dangerous to engage in a dogmatism that seeks to instill a set of predetermined values. This knowledge should be

aimed at developing the ability of good judgment in moral issues, which involves promoting good moral reasoning and the ability to analyze the situations children can be exposed to, to help them broaden their feelings and emotions consistent with the situations they live in and develop a special sensitivity to put themselves in someone else's shoes whenever they face a dilemma or a conflict.

Considering minors as moral subjects is not defined from the point of view of responding to certain demands posed by society (parents, teachers and other authorities) or an external morality, but rather mainly with respect to their possibilities within an autonomous morality constructed from their own exercise in reflection and ethical understanding of the world they are part of.

DISCUSSION

We will make some observations in this section on the importance of providing an education in conflict resolution and moral judgment to favor the process of citizenship education. It should be noted that it is normal for conflicts to arise among children, such as when they share the same toy or tease each other, because each child wants or discovers something different and sometimes gets very angry at the other.

Basically, conflicts among children aged two and three are caused by the following factors (Singer and De Haan, 2008, pp. 95-96):

1. Wanting to be left alone.
2. The insistence of wanting to participate in something.
3. Conflicts related to ideas about the game.

Each of these situations is a valuable space for teaching civic education. In fact, the conflicts that arise from the desire to be left in peace give children the opportunity to internalize some basic moral principles: they should leave the other alone if he or she so wants it. Children must learn to respect both the psychological space and the physical territory of others and learn to determine how far their freedom goes before the other child's freedom begins.

The insistence of participating in something, according to Singer and De Haan (2008) implies knowing how to use the appropriate social skills rather than a mastery of social rules since the boy or the girl will have to find the best way to participate; roughly half of the attempts to participate in others' games fail and are rarely successful the first time, and as a general rule children can only participate after one or two failures. To increase the possibilities of participation children will have to use forms of persuasion such as imitating the game, offering an object that fits the game, smiling or embracing the other child.

In accordance with the above, conflict resolution represents an opportunity to provide citizenship education because boys and girls can be taught fundamental principles for a democratic life in these situations of conflict: learning to manage their freedom, recognizing rules of coexistence, taking into account the opinions of others, managing opposing interests and participating in the community.

As stated by Singer and De Haan (2008) this learning begins with children aged one to three years old. When a child lives with fourteen others

of the same age, the possibility for conflicts of interest, needs or opinions to arise is constant, whether to see who keeps the fire truck, or who can be part of the game. In addition, groups of children of this age do not have many things available and they can learn the importance of sharing with others. Children who are learning to walk also learn to decide on such essential matters as whether to admit or exclude another from the game. They learn to take others into account; when they are asked to play by turns they are able to put themselves into someone else's shoes, to handle differences and to connect with others.

In this work we understand moral development as the path the child goes through as of the acquisition of heteronomous morality (impositions from outside) to autonomous morality (personal conviction), which allows him or her to become aware of his or herself and of others, decide how to act and assess his or her influence in the community.

Since moral development is crucial for the ethical and political education of children, it is important to know and understand the spaces for socialization that are created among peers, as well as the circumstances of their development, their origin, their particularities and their family and social identity to instill patterns that make boys and girls capable of collectively constructing social norms as well as rationalizing and justifying them. The area par excellence to educate independent people is daily life (Estrada, Madrid-Malo and Gil 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

The most important aspects of the Policy for Early Childhood in Colombia include giving a priority to

the construction of strategies to guarantee the integral development of children. The commitment to favor the participation and exercise of citizenship stands out within this legal instrument to ensure that children as active citizens become aware and demand the fulfillment of their rights. This is significant, because as claimed by Baratta (cited by Acosta and Pineda, 2007) the question of democracy has to do with the possibility of admitting the citizenship of boys and girls.

Unfortunately, the needs and potentials of childhood are not sufficiently known and recognized by the community in general and by the political class in particular. It is therefore a priority to work for children in communities and with leaders, employers and all social sectors to make children visible as developing beings who need the solidarity and support of the adult community.

Citizenship and participation are potentially present in all activities carried out by children and it is the adult's role to turn them into an act. The most important work that needs to be done has to do with changing the adults' perception of boys and girls. It is important to make them even more visible and to recognize them subjectively as a source of human wealth. Tonucci (1991) argued that if there were more children in the streets, cities would be more peaceful because the adults tend to moderate their actions in their presence. Today's world requires, on the one hand thinking about new forms of citizenship for the construction of more inclusive societies, and on the other paying attention to the socialization of young children to build more democratic and more humanizing societies.

Denying children the right to participate and being informed and expressing themselves as to what concerns them, as well as ignoring their capacity to contribute ideas goes against the principles of democratic education and generates distrust, indifference, incomprehension and lack of commitment to the community in which they live, which limits the conditions that would allow them to recognize and appropriate fundamental elements for the development of their autonomy.

It could be said that there is a relationship between the way community mothers conceive their citizenship and the education they provide to boys and girls. Thus, it is necessary to recognize their contributions to the construction of citizenship in early childhood from the perspective of the ethics of care because they enable the construction of a "culture of tenderness" (Singer and De Haan, 2008) based on trust, affection and the positive treatment that they offer the children under their care, which favors the development of tools to recognize and take care of others (Nussbaum, 2010).

Community mothers help instill moral emotions such as compassion, empathy, reciprocity, sensitive reflection about the suffering of others, the feeling of vulnerability and the ideal of a mutual need, which are quite significant for more democratic and human societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although the training provided by SENA has had a positive impact on the community mothers, it is necessary to continue supporting their education processes so that their achievements in the Associate's Degree in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care

have a greater impact in children. We recommend the certificate received by community mothers to be considered valid at universities so that they can complete professional programs. This recognition, like that of other rights should be a priority on the part of the State since failing to do so would affect the work they do with children.

2. It is necessary to build a culture that understands boys and girls as citizens: each of the institutions working with early childhood should be aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which text should be published in visible places in day care centers to inform the entire community and especially the children themselves with the purpose of opening spaces for dialogue and reflection.
3. Children should be given a space for greater dialogue, to listen and interact with each other, have discussions and develop collaborative learning.
4. Citizenship education in early childhood has implications that go beyond the space of the community home to the extent all children should live in a safe and peaceful city. If children are to be considered citizens, society should make them feel as such, which is achieved with the fulfillment of their rights. The city must be a public home; this would allow children to want to become part of the city's projects because they know that the city takes them into consideration, which leads to a sense of belonging, a condition of the moral virtue of civility (Cortina, 1997).

The autonomy and self-esteem of children are affected if they do not have spaces to participate where they are given the opportunity to talk, communicate, play, have fun, raise objections and describe their tastes and live safely: "The city has lost the children, and the children have lost the city" (Tonucci, 1991).

5. Children's expressions have to be made visible, day care centers should have spaces where their questions, needs, fears, tastes, dreams, joys, what makes them cry, sigh and smile are all taken into consideration. This should be read by everyone and especially by the parents, so that they see the argumentative, logical and inferential abilities that children have as well as their artistic resources, which can lead to changes in the perception towards the children and the parents can begin asking the right questions.
6. Citizenship education in early childhood should be directed towards a life project for boys and girls. Community homes and day care centers should cultivate this idea of a project among children to strengthen their self-esteem to the extent they are made aware that their lives have meaning and that their purpose is to build and do things to contribute to their environment.

Instilling "the purpose" of what is done with children should be a priority. If the Greeks cared so much about the cultivation of moral virtues it was because their purpose and meaning was to achieve happiness.

7. One of the dimensions of citizenship is multiculturalism, due to which community homes should schedule more activities aimed at recognizing others based on the traditions and customs of different ethnic groups. This ensures an effective education from the standpoint of difference.

8. Efforts should be made to strengthen moral education from childhood. Children formulate moral judgments according to their social realities (apparently we are always working in the perspective of what to do for children and not with children).

9. We need a new conception of the child-agent relationship. Relationships between teachers, caregivers, adults and boys and girls have been historically asymmetric, due to which the notions of power and authority should be resignified. For example, adults “have the right” to use the telephone, children do not; to speak badly of others, not to be collaborative, to have a bad temper, not to fulfill promises and not to respect others’ right to speak. This could seem authoritarian to children, such that adults should be consistent with what they do if they want to favor the exercise of participation and citizenship. Therefore, there is a need to build a transdisciplinary project for each and every one of the activities taking place in community homes in a context that forges more symmetrical relationships.

10. An important issue for citizenship education, as noted by community mothers, is self-care, because it makes it possible to:

- Recognize ourselves as human beings (there would be more equitable societies).
- Taking care of others and of the other (fundamental condition of citizenship).

We live inside our bodies and it is through our bodies that we reveal ourselves to others. In addition to promoting sports and artistic expressions for making children more aware of their bodies, it would be great to offer children internal experiences for that purpose. In addition, devising silent sessions to make them hear their own voice, make them recognize that humans feel anger but that we must know how to handle it, that we cry, that we are afraid, we get bored, we doubt... In the end, it is about processes that make it possible to cultivate children as human beings.

11. Play is a fundamental aspect of citizenship in childhood. Children must play because that is where they truly learn how to be citizens as long as they are in constant socialization with others. It is therefore essential to let children play and have free time, which will allow them to get to know themselves and others better.

12. Citizenship and participation are potentially present in all activities carried out by children and it is the adult's role is to turn them into an act. The most important work that needs to be done has to do with changing the adults’ perception of boys and girls. It is important to make them even more visible.

The challenge is to build a society where children have a voice and a face. The history of Colombian society is based on subjects who were not educated as citizens and who have

violated and disrespected their own rights and the rights of others, whose souls did not have the idea of a life as individual subjects or as a country. It is therefore crucial to provide an education in this regard to achieve a fairer, freer and happier society based on logic not contemplated by modernity: the logic of childhood.

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