

Chapter 2

Citizenship, Social Exclusion and Education in Latin America: The Case of Brazil



Mylene Santiago and Abdeljalil Akkari

Abstract Latin America's first encounter with the rest of the world happened over five centuries ago as a result of the European colonial conquest, characterized by the slave trade and the domination and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples. It was not until the late nineteenth century that Latin American Nation-States emerged in the quest for freedom, equality and access to citizenship. However, political instability and lengthy military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1970s provided limited and fragile access to citizenship.

First, this chapter analyzes the current state of education and citizenship in Latin America, after three decades of a gradual return to democracy. Our analysis suggests that citizenship is an unfinished agenda throughout the region. Minorities such as Afro-descendants and Indigenous Peoples have limited access to citizenship due to the social and educational exclusion they experience. Second, we review the main debates related to global citizenship and analyze how the concept of global citizenship is constructed in core education policies and curricula in Brazil. We conclude by examining the uncertain prospects of global citizenship education in Brazil and in the larger Latin American context.

Keywords Social exclusion · Minorities · Inequality · Quality education

M. Santiago (✉)
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

A. Akkari
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences,
University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland
e-mail: abdeljalil.akkari@unige.ch

Introduction

To contextualize our work, it is important to understand that the definition of Latin America is above all a political concept that does not limit itself to a specific geographic, cultural or economic area. This concept, rooted in the colonial past (Farias 2015), has evolved over time and refers to a set of cultural, ethnic, political, social and economic characteristics.

In the sixteenth century, Latin American countries were colonized and exploited by the Spanish and Portuguese who imposed European culture, dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their land and resources, and imported African slaves. In other words, the increased prosperity of the European colonists was directly linked to the impoverishment of Latin America (Galeano 2012).

Latin American countries only achieved independence in the nineteenth century after a long struggle against colonial powers. Following the decolonization and the establishment of pluralistic and relatively democratic political systems over the last 30 years, citizenship has been problematized, initiatives have been put forward and new institutions have been created to ensure effective access to citizenship for most of the population.

However, the post-colonial era has not resolved the social issues and persistent social inequalities, perpetuating the historical social exclusion of Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples and rural populations. Indeed, modern history has revealed that the citizens of today's post-independent Latin American countries have always been subject to colonization, domestication and cultural and social domination, but the extent varies depending on their ethnic and social backgrounds.

Consequently, a process of decolonization still remains necessary in Latin America to overcome historical traumas and honor the social debts towards the excluded. Latin American has indeed a historical debt towards its citizens and remains today one of the most unequal regions in the world. In this respect, the challenges related to human rights and inequality entail a need to rethink social justice epistemologies and pedagogy for social justice in Latin America.

Undoubtedly, colonial heritage is still present and can be seen in the educational system that serves the interests of the dominant classes (Fernandes 2005). Concerned more with their economic enrichment and the preservation of their privileges, the elites of Latin American countries play lip service to the effective importance of education for citizenship. Evidence of this is the fact that the right to education has not yet been absolutely guaranteed in most countries that have suffered colonization (Cury 2002).

It is therefore evident that a radical reform of the educational system, capable of promoting social, political and economic rights and providing access to quality education is needed in order to foster democratic and active political participation of citizens (Farias 2015). Access to education opens a way to self-construction and allows individuals to make informed choices. In this respect, the right to education is an opportunity for citizen growth, a path to differentiated options and a key to growing self-esteem (Cury 2002).

Education and citizenship have always been intertwined, with education in Latin America being a tool to shape its citizens. In Brazil the right to vote was, until recently, limited to the literate. In order to better understand the links between education, citizenship and social exclusion in Brazil, this chapter will focus on Afro-descendants and Indigenous peoples whose access to citizenship is hampered by the return of authoritarianism, both politically and morally, and by social exclusion that prevents them from fully exercising their social, political and educational rights. It is hoped that in the future, a more equitable access to education will allow citizens to exercise their political rights in an informed and responsible manner. Furthermore, access to quality education may provide opportunities for social mobility, help overcome poverty and reinforce social cohesion.

Education: A Pillar of Citizenship and Democracy

Education is recognized as a fundamental right in all Latin American legal systems. In Brazil, Article 6 of the 1988 Federal Constitution states that education is a social right because it enables men and women to have the material conditions essential to true equality. Over the last 30 years, the universalization of the right to education has been gradually assured across most of Latin America and represents a significant step forward in the quest for democracy.

Education plays a fundamental role in educating people and empowering them to fight for democracy and their fundamental rights. In this respect, the meeting of the Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by UNESCO in Cochabamba from March 5–7 2001 at the VII Session of the Regional Intergovernmental Committee of the Major Project for Education (PROMEDLAC VII), recognized that without education, human development is impossible. It is evident that education alone cannot eliminate poverty or create the conditions necessary for sustained economic growth or general ‘well-being’. However, it is the basis for personal development and a determining factor to ensure equal access to opportunities for a better quality of life (UNESCO 2001).

The right to Education is one of many social rights but education is a key indicator that reveals the level of social and cultural development as well as economic potential. In other words, no country can be considered socially developed without having good educational standards. A study conducted by Dias et al. (2017) suggested that Latin America’s PISA low ranking score has negative consequences for labor productivity, innovation (new patents) and technological development, resulting in low rates of economic growth.

Although there is still a long way to go, Latin American countries have strived to improve the quality of education and have adopted educational policies to achieve this goal. For example, measures have been taken to ensure the universal provision of public education and to increase educational expenditure (in absolute terms and as a percentage of GDP). This has resulted in a significant reduction in socioeconomic and performance inequalities between schools. Brazil and other countries

such as Mexico and Argentina have also adopted decentralization policies, adapted teaching practices and curricula to local realities, invested in the modernization of infrastructures and supported literacy projects (Dias et al. 2017).

Despite these significant efforts, inequality between ethnic groups remains a major social issue. Gentili (2009) underlines that Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples and individuals who have not yet reached the age of their majority are most likely to be poor in Latin America or the Caribbean. In Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico and Paraguay, Indigenous and Afro-Latino communities experience poverty at twice the rate of the white population (Gentili 2009). For this reason, Silveira and Nardi (2014) argue that the concept of race is relevant when analyzing power relations in this context. What distinguishes black and white groups in Latin America cannot be assigned to cultural differences but rather to a relationship based on exploitation, domination, discrimination and privilege.

Afro-descendants in Latin America make up approximately 30% of the total population, which is equivalent to almost 120 million people. However, the data available is often imprecise and outdated since Afro-descendants constitute only a small minority of the overall population in many countries. This is not the case in Brazil which is home to the largest Afro-Latin American community (65% of Afro-descendants in Latin America are Brazilian), representing the largest black population outside Africa (Oliveira 2010; Correio Nagô 2017). The numbers are even increasing as the percentage of people that identify themselves as black in Brazil, has risen from 7.4% to 8.2% between 2012 and 2016. At the same time, the population that refers to themselves as *pardos* (with a mixed black and white ethnic ancestry) increased from 45.3% to 46.7%. In contrast, the number of Brazilians that identify themselves as white fell from 46.6% to 44.2% during the same period (IBGE 2017).

In terms of educational opportunities, systemic inequalities have intensified discriminations and the exclusion of Indigenous and Afro-Latin groups (Gonçalves e Silva 2004). As evidenced by several studies and research, Gentili (2009) argues that pedagogical and curricular discrimination maintain and perpetuate educational racism. Indeed, constant and tenacious segregation reflected in the quality and quantity of educational opportunities for Indigenous and Afro-Latin populations have meant that educational apartheid has become more complex. In other words, the probability of being excluded from school or having access to deeply degraded educational conditions goes up exponentially for Afro-descendants and Indigenous Peoples born in any Latin American or Caribbean country. These inequalities between ethnic groups have forced the Brazilian government, among others, to adopt affirmative action policies.

Unlike other Latin American countries, Brazil introduced entrance exams to limit access to higher education. In the most prestigious universities, the application process is highly competitive and selects only a small number of students. As a result, most students who enter these institutions belong to a well-educated elite and have benefited from private education that better prepared them for the entrance examinations. To address this inequality, affirmative action measures have been implemented to help reduce social disparity and to facilitate access to higher education for Afro-descendants, *pardos* and Indigenous Peoples from low income households who are more likely to be excluded from higher education and the labor market.

The quota policy law 12.711/2012 in Brazilian's public higher education requires a minimum of 50% of undergraduate places in federal higher education institutions be reserved for students who have graduated from public high schools. Furthermore, within this quota, 50% of the vacancies must be reserved for students from low-income households. Quotas also exist for students that identify themselves as Afro-descendants, *pardos* and Indigenous reflecting the ethnic makeup of the local population of the State or Federal District.

In order to reduce the process of exclusion in Brazil, specific affirmative action policies have also been implemented by the Indigenous Student Support Program in higher education institutions to increase Indigenous student enrollment in higher education; help Indigenous students achieve good academic performance and provide them with access to graduate education; ensure permanence and increased efficiency; change institutional policies and community involvement; strengthen recognition and respect for cultural diversity in the university community; link Indigenous students to their communities through social service and the diffusion of culture; and promote research projects on Indigenous issues (Linhares 2010). In this respect, combating exclusion constitutes a means of promoting citizenship, which refers to the right to participate in society and enjoy essential benefits, in particular, the right to access all levels of education including higher education.

While countries may address issues regarding social and educational exclusion differently, the need to develop policies to support equal opportunities is present throughout Latin America. For example, although statistical data from the National Population Council (CONAPO) shows that, in absolute terms, the largest Indigenous population is located in Mexico, they are nevertheless marginalized because of their culture, linguistic practices, ethnicity and religion.

Undeniably, access to education has improved in Latin American during the last three decades. However, it seems important to emphasize that the universalization of education does not imply true democratization. In almost all Latin American countries, private networks for the elite exist in parallel to public networks for the working classes (Akkari et al. 2011). The obvious problem is that the quality of instruction offered by private institutions far exceeds that of state-run educational institutions. In this respect, the generalization of access to basic education paradoxically produces exclusion and separation since quality is not ensured.

Furthermore, it is important to note that today's Latin American societies and educational systems do not guarantee access to full citizenship for all. After having made real advances following the return of democracy in the early 1980s, Latin American countries are currently witnessing a decrease in democratic spaces in society and school. This decline is linked both to the rise of authoritarian regimes and to an erosion of tolerance toward minorities encouraged by conservative religious movements. Therefore, we believe global citizenship education (GCE) programs must include strategies to empower invisible and excluded citizens to become 'emerging' citizens. Schools are faced with a delicate and multi-faceted mission to overcome the economic, political, cultural, ethnic, and gender subordination experienced by the excluded and break the self-reinforcing dynamic in which exclusion and invisibility are mirror images that reinforce mutual consequences (UNESCO

2018). In this context, GCE needs to be linked to national citizenship education, human rights issues and the fight for social justice. It is also important that it recognizes political, civic, economic, social and cultural rights as indivisible and interdependent.

Democracy and Citizenship

According to Hernández (2006), the concept of democracy implies an articulation of the political and social dimensions of citizenship. A distinction can be drawn between civic citizenship that involves access to fundamental rights guaranteed by the State (De Carvalho 2008) and political and social citizenship often claimed, gained and earned through social struggles (Hernández 2006). These social struggles aimed at combating exclusion, ensuring legal and political rights for all minority groups and achieving a better distribution of power and wealth, in turn strengthen civil society by promoting citizen participation in public affairs and encouraging involvement of citizens in local communities. Far from the ideal of equal democracy, contemporary “democratic regimes” in Latin America remain linked to authoritarian states that do not guarantee civic citizenship and where poverty, exclusion and marginalization prevent the attainment of fully-fledged political and social citizenship. In order to move towards democratic governance and ensure the inclusion of minorities, schools must therefore fulfill their mission to foster civic culture based on participatory citizenship projects.

Marginalized civil societies not only prevent all citizens from enjoying public goods, they do not provide the conditions that will encourage their empowerment. In this sense, facilitating the participation of citizens in the formulation of public policies through the opening of communication channels that guarantee access to information may be an important measure to help expand the democratic process in Latin America. Sharing the benefits of economic growth and social and political development is also crucial. As confirmed by Hernández (2006), citizen participation requires simple and direct mechanisms, effective means of communication and appropriate decision-making processes of all economic, political and social agents. Coordination and horizontal communication with citizens allows the creation of a complex network that facilitates democratic participation in decision-making and the implementation of public policies. Citizen participation requires the opening of new spaces involving all social and political actors, including the excluded, in decision-making, formulation and implementation of public policies (Hernández 2006).

Yet in recent years, Latin America has experienced a heavy bureaucratic apparatus aimed at reducing citizens to mere consumers. In this context, citizens participate little or are indifferent to political matters, and do not contribute to the creation of a social identity that forms the basis of democracy. Thus, the promises of solidarity and social identity are weakened, and the processes of democratic legitimacy and accountability are eroded.

Furthermore, although globalization cannot be blamed for all the troubles in the region, we need to include it in the debate. According to Amar (2017), the tragedy

of Latin America at the beginning of this century should not go unnoticed because of the morally unacceptable conditions in which more than half of the population lives. Despite the incredible advances in science and technology, few benefit from wealth, perpetuating historical exclusion and inequality. The new globalized reality has so far meant only increased poverty for Latin America (Amar 2017).

The percentage of people living in poverty in Latin America is extremely high – almost 170 million live in poverty and more than 70 million in extreme poverty. Between 2008 and 2014, these rates fell and then leveled off. Nevertheless, several Latin American countries such as Chile and Brazil have recently elected right-wing political parties that aim to remove most social programs and safety nets, the impact of which is predicted to be devastating.

In a context faced with ongoing exclusion and poverty, it is necessary to reaffirm that education is the social investment with the highest rates of return, both for individuals, social groups and for the country. In addition to the investment in human capital, Amar (2017) stresses the importance of citizenship building and believes that in Latin America, the ultimate goal of education should be to foster citizenship and promote the exercise of power within democratic ideals.

Latin American education faces the challenge of constructing new policies, not only through increasing quantitative opportunities, but also by providing conditions for new pedagogical processes. Rethinking education that is less linked to an instrumental vision of technological progress will allow a true democratization of society with intellectual values and ideals that are more politically and culturally sound. In this respect, political decolonization and new educational alternatives are necessary to overcome colonial traumas and decolonize minds. This resonates with Amílcar Cabral's and Paulo Freire's idea that education represents the best means of overcoming the barriers that underpin political domination (Romão and Gadotti 2012).

It appears evident that conservative and elitist governments are reluctant to unlock the full potential of schools to form active and responsible citizens capable of building a more just and egalitarian society in which different cultures and a plurality of epistemological knowledge coexists. In this respect, Nieto (2018) seeks to promote a decolonial approach to citizenship education:

Decolonial theory invites us to challenge the false universalism of global discourses in democratic citizenship education by tracing how the 'Others' of the (global) world – the displaced and dispossessed, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous and diasporic populations, the 'under-developed', 'Third world' and 'rogue' regions – are products of imperial capitalist development tied to long historical trajectories of colonial mentalities of governance, including those fostered by educational discourses of development and democratization (p. 435).

Regarding the plurality of knowledge, we propose to examine Santos' (2007) idea of the ecology of knowledge. In an effort to contrast hegemonic culture, the author proposes an educational project that would allow people to overcome political, social and epistemological challenges and contribute to the inclusion of all knowledge that has been marginalized throughout history. This idea is linked to Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed in which "learning from the South using a Southern epistemology" represents a catalyst to understand and recognize the

plurality of heterogeneous knowledge, and the sustainable and dynamic interactions between them without compromising the epistemological autonomy of countries with a history of colonial exploitation. The ecology of knowledge is based on the idea that real knowledge is a “network of knowledges”.

What does the ecology of knowledge have to say about GCE in Latin America? Humanity faces the challenge of establishing new forms of cooperation and democratic social organization that integrate cultural diversity into an ecology of knowledge (Santos 2006) and develop a just and ecologically sustainable relationship with the environment. This perspective clashes with consumer frenzy and competitive commercial relations that are responsible for aggravating poverty in exploited countries.

In this context, we believe that the re-appropriation of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire 1987) is a plausible approach to GCE that could potentially lead to what Freire (1996) described as Pedagogy of Autonomy. By recognizing the world as unfair, this approach could offer hope for change. Perhaps the main legacy we could wish for Latin America is to move from the historical exploitation of its natural resources and people to an example of environmental sustainability and citizenship for the world. However, in order to achieve this, GCE cannot ignore the consequences of globalization in Latin America and the complex relationship between preparation for the labor market and the exercise of citizenship (Magalhães and Stoer 2003).

Global Citizenship Education: From National Curricular Parameters to Human Rights Education

The main limitation on the implementation of GCE in Brazil is the selective, segregated and highly competitive school system. The current educational model, rooted in the project of modernity which was imposed on Latin America, is inherently oriented towards a reductionist view of progress that is linked to industrial development, Western civilization and scientific positivism (UNESCO 2018).

The contemporary world has undergone major transformations that have brought new challenges for citizenship, which in turn seeks new spaces for action and represents a significant step towards ensuring better living conditions for all. According to Cury (2002), the right to school education is one of those spaces that will always be relevant since education is a fundamental dimension of citizenship, and, as such, is indispensable for active citizenship participation in social and political spaces. As pointed out by Marshall (1967) and Cury (2002), when the State aims to accomplish its mission to educate all children, it has in mind to inculcate a sense of citizenship.

Furthermore, the right to education is a step towards the right to diversity. In the Brazilian context, the Constitution of 1988, Articles 205 and 206, states that:

Article 205: The promotion and encouragement of education as a right and the duty of the State to prepare for the exercise of citizenship as well as providing qualifications for work.

Article 206: The teaching will be based on the following principles:

1. Equal conditions for access and duration of schooling;
2. Freedom to learn, teach, research and disseminate thought, art and knowledge;
3. Pluralism of ideas and pedagogical conceptions, and the coexistence of public and private educational institutions;
4. Free public education in official institutions;
5. Democratic management of public education, according to the law;
6. Guarantee of quality standards.

The dialectic relationship between the right to equality and the right to difference in schools is not a simple equation. On the one hand, equality as a principle of citizenship calls for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and inequality related to gender, social, ethnic or religious backgrounds. On the other hand, respect for diversity cannot subsist without considerations of equality.

In Brazil the National Curricular Parameters (PCN) were developed in 1997 by the Federal Government and aimed to guide educators through the standardization of some fundamental factors concerning each discipline and to provide students with the basic knowledge necessary for the full exercise of democratic citizenship. In addition to the disciplinary contents, the PCNs proposed crosscutting (transversal) themes that comprise six areas:

- (1) Ethics (mutual respect, justice, dialogue, solidarity); (2) Sexual Orientation (body, sexuality, gender relations, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases); (3) Environment (nature's cycles, society and environment, environmental management and conservation); (4) Health (self-care, community life); (5) Cultural plurality (cultural plurality and the life of children in Brazil, constitution of cultural plurality in Brazil, cultural plurality and citizenship); (6) Labor and Consumption (labor relations, labor, consumption, environment and health, mass media, advertising and sales, human rights, citizenship).

Some of the principles related to GCE are included in the Brazilian National Parameters for Education (Brasil 1997): (1) build tools to understand social contexts and to participate in large and diversified social and cultural interactions that are the basic conditions for exercising citizenship in a democratic inclusive society (2) take into consideration issues related to globalization, scientific and technological transformations and a discussion of society's ethical values.

The integration of transversal themes in the curriculum can be seen as progress made in educational systems regarding the inclusion of important social themes and the commitment to building citizenship. Given the central role of education in fostering citizenship and democracy, we consider it relevant, at this point, to present an educational project based on human rights education. In 2012, the Ministry of Education established the National Guidelines for Human Rights Education (HRE) to be observed by the Brazilian educational system and educational institutions (Brasil 2012).

The concept of Human Rights Education is treated as a fundamental right. The right to education, with the purpose of promoting education for change and social transformation, is based on the following principles:

- (1) Human dignity; (2) equal rights; (3) recognition and appreciation of differences and diversities; (4) state secularism; (5) democracy in education; (6) transversality, experience and global reality; and (7) socio-environmental sustainability (Brasil 1997).

We believe that the establishment of such principles should ensure the rights, already prescribed by the Constitution, be transformed into subjects to be taught and practiced in educational spaces within a systematic and multidimensional process. To integrate the subject of rights we articulate the following dimensions:

- (1) Comprehension of historically constructed knowledge of human rights and its relation to the international, national and local contexts; (2) Affirmation of values, attitudes and social practices that express the culture of human rights in all areas of society; (3) Forming a citizen conscience present at cognitive, social, cultural and political levels; (4) Development of participatory methodologies and collective construction, using contextualized languages and teaching materials; and (5) Strengthening of individual and social practices that generate actions and instruments for the promotion, protection and defense of human rights, as well as reparation for violations of rights (Brasil 1997).

In order to underline the importance of Human Rights Education founded on a transversal model, the guidelines recommend that it should be considered in the construction of the political-pedagogical projects for schools, institutional development plans, pedagogical course programs of higher education institutions, teaching and learning materials, models of teaching, research, and the various evaluation procedures. Accordingly, Human Rights Education should inform initial and continuous training and be a compulsory curricular component in the courses destined for educational professionals.

Another relevant aspect to be considered is the prescription that educational systems and research institutions in the field of Human Rights and Human Rights Education should promote and disseminate successful studies and experience, create policies for the production of didactic materials and promote human rights extension actions, in dialogue with those experiencing social exclusion and the violation of their rights.

This importance given to human rights within the Brazilian context matches the current trends in international educational policies.

The Incheon Declaration, adopted by the International Education Forum in 2015, set out to reaffirm the vision of the Education for All global movement launched in Jomtien in 1990 and reiterated in Dakar in 2000. The commitments towards quality education included the need to respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and education for global citizenship. The declaration stipulated that by 2030: all students should acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development through ESD and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, enhancement of cultural diversity, and the contribution of culture to sustainable development (UNESCO 2015).

Although the concept of global citizenship is a recurrent theme in international documents, it has yet to be elucidated how Latin American countries can adopt the concept, as recommended by the world education agenda.

In Latin American politics, conservative political regimes have emerged and postponed the implementation of proposals aimed at broadening the democratic debate and building citizenship in each country. Global citizenship in the current socioeconomic and political scenarios of Latin America can represent a real revolution in terms of resistance to the pressures of exclusion and increasing inequalities. The conception of citizenship, promoted by international organizations, involving questions of equity, collective participation and rights has shifted to include concerns for adaptation to the global world, social cohesion and individual responsibility while downplaying forms of youth participation and ignoring the unequal structures of power affecting the implementation of coexistence-oriented curricular reform (Nieto 2018).

Regarding environmental issues, for decades Brazil has played a prominent role in the international climate change arena. Host of the Eco '92 conference, Brazil was the birthplace of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Twenty years later at the Rio+20 conference, the country helped bring the Agenda 2030 discussions to life, paving the way for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In 2017, the Brazilian environmental defender, Antonia Melo received the Soros Foundation Award for Environmental and Human Rights Activism for her dedication to justice and reparations for the Indigenous communities affected by the Belo Monte Dam. Those working on the frontline of environmental protection and the environmental rights of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil nevertheless face escalating violence at a time when biodiversity loss has reached alarming levels.

Furthermore, the new Brazilian government plans to pull out of the Paris Agreement and relax environmental regulation in order to stimulate economic growth, which will have potentially dramatic consequences for the preservation of Indigenous land and the environment.

Conclusion: Uncertain Prospects for Global Citizenship Education in Latin America

The prospects for GCE in Latin America seem uncertain for several reasons. First, the gradual democratization of the region that began approximately 30 years ago still remains unfinished. While all Latin American citizens theoretically enjoy political rights, social exclusion prevents many inhabitants of the continent from effectively exercising their political, social and educational rights. The way the region fits into neoliberal economic globalization produces social exclusion. In addition, the wave of right-wing political parties gaining power jeopardizes the maintenance of public programs fighting social inequalities. Consequently, the prospect of peaceful national citizenship, open to the world and to global ecological issues seems remote.

Second, the separate schooling of children from the privileged classes and under-privileged classes (public and private education) makes it difficult to organize educational projects promoting “coexistence”. Residential segregation is also reflected in school segregation, reinforcing inequality.

Third, Latin American societies and schools are experiencing a high level of urban and rural violence. With this backdrop, promoting a culture of peace driven by GCE appears to be an unattainable utopia.

However, GCE in Latin America may have a promising future if linked to human rights issues and the Freirean approach to critical pedagogy (Schugurensky and Madjidi 2008). In this sense, it is important to include political projects in citizenship curricula in order to bring about changes in policies, institutional practices and culture. As stated by Paulo Freire: education alone cannot transform society but society cannot change without it (Freire 2000).

Finally, an understanding of the processes of independence and identity formation of Latin American states is essential for the interpretation of GCE on the continent. As the Uruguayan writer Ernesto Galeano questioned:

What will the Latin America destiny be like? Are we going to be a caricature of the North? Are we going to be like them? And are we going to create a different world and offer the world a different world? (Sant and González Valencia 2018, p. 79).

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