



Civic education in a new post-democratic context: The need to revitalize a dialogic and cooperative pedagogy for global citizenship

Vicent Gozávez¹ · Javier Gracia Calandín²

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Abstract According to the latest reports by international evaluation organizations, new forms of political dynamics in democracies are emerging globally that, paradoxically, endanger the very development of democracy: the rise of populism and social and political polarization, new forms of democratic authoritarianism, and, consequently, the risk of autocracy that endangers liberal democracy. This new scenario is also known as post-democracy, based on Crouch's (2004) categorization. In this context, this article advocates revitalizing civic education based on a participatory and deliberative model of democracy through pedagogical proposals to rethink the fundamental values of democratic citizenship. The discussion is organized around pedagogical methodologies and approaches that aim to reinforce individuals' sense of citizenship through cooperation, deliberation, and solidarity. These strategies seek to consolidate the ethical and civic values of democracy in an intercultural and global context such as ours by countering the dangers of social fragmentation, the appeal of authoritarianism, and the withdrawal of identity that characterize post-democratic world trends.

Keywords Civic education · Democracy · Polarization · Authoritarianism · Ethical values · Global citizenship

✉ Vicent Gozávez
Vicent.Gozalvez@uv.es

¹ Department of Theory of Education, University of Valencia, Av. Blasco Ibáñez 30, 46010 Valencia, Spain

² Department of Philosophy, University of Valencia, Av. Blasco Ibáñez 30, 46010 Valencia, Spain

The new post-democracy scenario as a manifestation of the current crisis of democratic systems

The first task in establishing an educational programme in the field of citizenship or civic education is to begin with a current and nuanced understanding of the challenges we face in the field today. So, before prescribing any interventions, we need to develop a thorough and accurate diagnosis. If we had to describe or diagnose our time from a political point of view, we would have to examine two phenomena. First, the advance and spread of democracy, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, as captured in Huntington's (2002) analysis known as the three waves in the democratization of countries. And second, the emergence of *post-democracy* in the twenty-first century, which opened a way to question the optimism about democratic progress. The concept of post-democracy was initially formulated by Crouch (2004) to describe the obstacles that the author identified in democratic systems due to the strength or power of economic agents (both national and international corporations). Here, we propose revisiting Crouch's concept in relation to the new powers and phenomena emerging within the democratic landscape. To speak of post-democracy today, as we understand it, does not mean affirming that we are in a period of rejecting democracy, but rather in a moment of crisis for this form of government, due to the irruption of new trends and processes that contribute significantly to the weakening or deterioration of its quality.

We are talking about processes or trends that: have already been verified by numerous political scientists; form part of the current political situation at the international level; and have been reported by institutions and reputable organizations that have been evaluating the quality of democracy. Some of the research that supports this reality of the weakening or crisis of democracy (which, therefore, endorses the advance of what we call post-democracy) includes the Freedom House Institute report (2022), the Democracy Report of the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg (2022, 2024), and the influential Democracy Index (2021) published by the British magazine *The Economist*. In the same vein, numerous publications warn of the deterioration of democracy (Runciman, 2018), the decline of democracy (Applebaum, 2020), or even the death of democracy in some countries (Levitsky & Ziblath, 2018), obscured by new forms of authoritarianism (Frantz, 2018; Frankenberg, 2020).

In short, numerous current indicators reveal the rise of various forms of autocracy and authoritarianism across the world. This is expressed, for example, in the strengthening of populist nationalisms; the weakening of the division of powers (executive, legislative, and judicial); new forms of media manipulation following the irruption of social networks; the blaming, stigmatization, or even criminalization of immigrants and social minorities, as evidenced by hate speech, often accompanied by a disregard for deep economic and social differences; and, ultimately, the emergence of pseudo-democratic governments paradoxically boosted by democratic electoral systems.

However, it is appropriate to start at the beginning, with the concept of post-democracy that appeared at the beginning of this century, and turn to the work of the author who coined it: Colin Crouch. Only from there can we begin to analyze the current variants or derivations of post-democracy and diagnose the causes of the crisis of citizenship, at least in a global or intercultural sense, to subsequently articulate educational proposals or countermeasures to stop the advance of post-democracy.

Post-democracy as a current crisis of democracy

In our article, we use the concept of post-democracy, initially coined by Colin Crouch (2004), to refer to the current crisis of democracy. Yet, according to its original meaning, post-democracy refers to democratic deterioration in the face of the influence of large corporations and multinational economic powers (Crouch, 2004). Currently, the deterioration of democratic systems is due to a crisis from within democracy, a crisis that concerns the very conceptualization and functioning of democracy. Thus, we are currently witnessing a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, the scope of democracy has extended worldwide, as authors such as Pinker (2018) report with some optimism when analysing the advance of the ideals of the seventeenth century (Enlightenment) in our time; on the other hand, and despite the increase in the number of countries with democratic elections, democratic quality levels are generally worsening according to more demanding indicators (V-Dem Institute, 2022; Democracy Index, 2021).

Ultimately, these international indicators show that the health of democracy has deteriorated in a very perceptible way. Doubts about the legitimacy of elected representatives frequently arise, as indicated by low voter turnout rates, and a crisis of confidence in democratic institutions and politicians is evident. Of course, the weakening elements of the *demos* denounced by Crouch (2004) persist, but to this we can also add the growing ability of large multinational corporations to control public opinion by monopolizing social communication networks and technologies. In a new global scenario, in which information continues to be power, the manufacture of consent (Camps, 2004) acquires new forms of expression revealing the crisis of representation (Greppi, 2012). In times of *big data*, where digital data mines are used and exploited by political, economic, or media powers, talking about free plebiscites may even seem like a joke, and one in bad taste. Added to this is the advance of artificial intelligence, with its potential to manage or manipulate information on the basis of its detection of society's tastes, preferences, phobias, philiias, and vulnerabilities, which can strongly influence voters' decision-making processes (Whittle, 2021; Conill, 2023).

From this hypothesis—that the split between logos and ethos translates into an instrumentalization of reason—another key assumption in our discourse is derived: a concept of democracy as a mere electoral mechanism for the appointment of the elite of representatives to government. Democracy as a simple system of alternation of elites according to the game of proportionality in the vote admitted in each country. Crouch himself already observed that, behind the post-democracy idea, there lies a model of 'elitist liberal democracy', one that also gives wide latitude to pressure groups and companies, so that they can operate freely with practically no interference in the market economy (Crouch, 2004).

This way of defining and deploying liberal democracy in an elitist key has been radically questioned since the last century; that is, from within its very roots or core meaning. Criticism comes from all those proposals in favour of a more participatory and deliberative model of democracy (Dahl, 1989; Schmitter, 2002; Macpherson, 2003; Cortina, 2008), proposals which we support among other reasons because of the value they give to citizenship education as a fundamental dimension of democracy, understood as a 'way of life' (Dewey, 1927/2004). This new model of civic education is especially decisive in a global context, which democratically demands the development of global citizenship in the face of new global challenges (Bosio, 2024) from a civic, deliberative, and critical perspective, rather than from a banking model of education.

However, not all participation in public life necessarily corresponds to the deliberative democracy model. In addition to the post-democratic model akin to elitism, which ultimately considers democracy to be a mere mechanism for electing representative elites (Lippmann, 1922/2003), new forms of populism have emerged (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), a phenomenon that has been described by numerous political scientists and associated with the development of pseudo-democratic *authoritarianism* (Levitsky & Ziblath, 2018), and ‘illiberal democracy’, a term initially coined by Zakaria (1997) that helps to better understand the risk of post-democracy to which we refer. Illiberal democracy, together with populism, means undermining the foundations of liberal democracy using democratic resources, such as plebiscites, but in favour of an elite capable of configuring majorities, and with consent from instruments such as control of the media and of powers such as the judiciary or the legislature. The network society that Castells (2006) spoke of, where digital communication and social networks are key factors in shaping public opinion, is used at the service of this digitally shaped populism, in which *big data* and social networks are instruments for manufacturing consent based on the massive propagation of hoaxes, of half-truths, or blatant falsehoods. This phenomenon also contributes not only to the fragmentation and polarization of public opinion, but also to the creation of digital niches (Gozá́lvez et al., 2019).

Post-democracy refers to the historical imposition of a model of democracy that is both elitist and populist, and certainly not deliberative, but ‘performative’, if anything. In other words, a form of democracy in which the key is not calm public discourse grounded in respect and strength of argument, but on *performance*, in gimmicky staging, using words and images to mobilize public sentiment, often detached from the common good. Such representation and staging obey marketing—and now also neuromarketing—criteria to benefit the power group or the party that aspires to it. When using the term *performative* in the sense of Austin (2016) or Barthes (2002), ‘performative democracy’ is one in which linguistic representations or expressions (not so much arguments, we would add) have the power to transform reality. It is what allows us to declare ours the age of ‘post-truth’, a time of staged and gimmicky emotionality in politics, shaped by exclusionary rhetoric, as Ham-eleers (2018) characterizes populism; it is a reason to take a notarial record of our political and social reality and, at the same time, to continue forging this new reality by legitimizing it in some way.

Populism and authoritarianism as keys to post-democracy

Not all forms of populism can be observed in what we call post-democracy—in autocratic or totalitarian regimes, it can be one of their forms of legitimation, in addition to the direct use of coercion and force. We can also agree that populism is assiduously present in democratic systems (Forti, 2021). However, we understand that when populism is solidly rooted in democracy, by transforming reason and public opinion into a populist communicative aggregate, then we can already suspect that democracy is sliding irremissibly towards post-democracy. Now, what do we mean by ‘populism’? Undoubtedly, this is a concept that is difficult to concretize, and one with numerous definitions (Ylarrri, 2015). In our argument, we start with the definition of Jagers and Walgrave (2007), according to which populism is above all a specific style of political communication, and one which, according to these authors, has been observable in European far-right movements since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This style is characterized by arguments that appeal to people, the supposed people, or a people of a country who (also supposedly) think in a homogeneous way

and share common traits with other groups, normally portrayed as strangers or simply as threats.

Populism supposes, in this sense, a discourse, a communicative style that appeals to ‘the people’ by exalting a closed ‘we’ that must unite under a leader (or a party) capable of facing the dangers supposedly posed by external threats or perceived internal enemies (e.g., immigrants, sexual minorities, political opponents, manipulated majorities, a corrupt establishment). Hence, we can even speak of the anti-establishment and visionary bias of populism. In relation to post-democracy, the strength of the populist communication style is such that authors like Rosanvallon (2020) consider ours to be the century of populism: a political style that (1) knows how to channel many people’s anger, frustration, and resentment, which presents itself as the only solution to serious social problems, and (2) knows how to use media resources to spread its discourse, sometimes of hate, in a time of crisis of truth, of modern ideals, or of well-defined ideologies to the right or left of the political spectrum.

However, the danger of populism for democratic health becomes more evident when it is used in the service of authoritarianism; that is, when populist rhetoric underpins powers of dubious democratic manufacture in democracy. Indeed, the political and social phenomenon that we are describing, that of post-democracy, supposes a crisis of democracy when it merges populism and authoritarianism, giving rise to the confusion of executive power with judicial and legislative powers (Puddington, 2017); when the media and social networks in a nation are controlled to destroy the political adversary; when public deliberation is restricted in favour of staging and imaging coups (in what we call ‘performative democracy’); when distrust of freedom and diversity is sown for the sake of security, and security is only understood in terms of the reinforcement of identity and the exclusion of ‘the others’; and, above all, when the entire political and media machinery works at the service of an authority figure or an unquestionable leader. It concerns authority that, while democratically elevated to power, remains in place by destroying the very political and axiological foundations of democracy, from the separation of powers to human rights.

However, and this is our thesis, power relations in democracy are not absolute. Because of this, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of argumentation grounded in respect and plurality, as well as the importance of the redistribution of powers and responsibilities—that is, of freedoms—in a process of *democratic revitalization* in which education plays a crucial role.

Civic education based on dialogic, cooperative, and solidarity pedagogies to revitalize the fundamental values of democratic citizenship

In its 2021 report *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*, UNESCO recognized ‘democratic backsliding and growing polarization’ as features of the disruptions and transformations that have emerged in various parts of the world in recent years. In this way, ‘the breakdowns in civic discourse and growing infringements on the freedom of expression all have great consequences for an education rooted in human rights, citizenship, and civic participation at local, national, and global levels’ (UNESCO, 2021, p. 39). Indeed, the rise of supremacist ideals, to the detriment of plural identities, dialogue, and understanding, has a high social cost and challenges education in a very direct way to see how it is possible to reimagine a future together in which cooperation and solidarity progressively gain prominence. In this regard, the UNESCO report points out the

need to renew education by analysing the best pedagogical and educational traditions that will help us to shape the interconnected futures of humanity and the planet. The proposal is to promote cooperative and solidarity pedagogies to revitalize the fundamental values of democratic citizenship. The report offers principles for dialogue and action that are certainly very guiding for education. So, we will dwell on some of the ethical and democratic values that underpin these educational approaches.

Based on the UNESCO report (2021), and in response to the post-democratic crisis, in this article we advocate for citizen education that deepens, from dialogic and cooperative methodologies, the axiological foundations of democracy in a deliberative sense, and that promotes the development of citizens as free agents capable of determining their own lives, of conversing about the common good, and also of their projects of self-realization or personal and social flourishing (Nussbaum, 2012; Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015). Such an education serves as a pillar of democratic health, grounded in deliberation, and aims to ensure that citizens do not settle for a passive role or, in any case, become reactive to a communication and media system dominated by national or global elites (such as large corporations, hermetic political parties, business conglomerates, technocrats, and the shapers, or deformers, of public opinion).

Hence the need to revitalize fundamental democratic values through education (in the broad sense): freedoms based on plurality and respect, personal and social responsibility, equality and equity, solidarity and, of course, dialogue and public deliberation held in appropriate conditions (Gracia & Gozá́lvez, 2016); a revitalization to which, we insist, moral and civic education in democracy decisively contributes. To this end, the first educational task has to do with language and the revision of images and social representations. As such, it is important not to limit the concept of 'freedom' to that of economic or market freedom; it is necessary to recover the original meaning of civic freedoms for participation, moral autonomy, and human development (Bernal et al., 2019).

Educational revitalization of democracy also involves reconciling the value of freedom with equal dignity and equity (redistribution of resources, equal access to decent social benefits, equal opportunities; in short, social justice) (Blum, 2014; Piketty, 2020). Not only freedom, but equality, are fundamental values of democracies that cannot be relegated to the background. It is not a question of equality blind to social and cultural differences, because this would lead to inappropriate equalization and homogenization for democratic regimes in which plurality and respect for cultural diversity prevail. The equality that serves as the foundation of ethics education is an equality that is complemented, in turn, by the value of difference (Gracia, 2020) because it is an equality of basic freedoms; an equality of rights; but, above all, an equality founded on the main foundation of ethical education, which is none other than the dignity of every human being. It is precisely the recognition of the equal dignity of each and every person that allows us to recognize differences, without this leading to unfair treatment. For this reason, one of the main tasks of education for global citizenship in an intercultural key is to be able to distinguish between unjust inequalities that must be eradicated and enriching differences that should, on the contrary, be promoted (Gracia, 2022). This allows us to speak of plural and dynamic identities that make dialogue, joint action, and common knowledge possible.

Therefore, far from thinking that freedom and equality contradict one another, from the civic education perspective both come in the form of equality in fundamental freedoms. It is precisely the populism and authoritarianism characteristics of post-democracy that violate freedom, and in doing so they also eliminate equality. The freedom defended by liberal democracy is the freedom of each and every citizen, and it is the condition of citizenship that places them on an equal footing when it comes to rights and freedoms. In the face of

the different forms of homogenizing collectivism, the recognition of the freedom of all individuals is key to preserving the equal dignity of everyone, who are not only respected, but recognized as free beings capable of dissenting from majority opinion and, of course, within the frameworks established by respect for human dignity.

Thus, misunderstood freedom of expression (without limits or restrictions) degenerates into forms of expression that stigmatize and degrade certain people or groups that have traditionally been discriminated against. A sadly current example of this is the hate speech that is uttered against different minorities, which has exponentially grown with the arrival of social networks (ECRI, 2016; Gracia & Suárez Montoya, 2023).

It is essential to eradicate hate speech in order to promote truly democratic and pluralistic societies (Isegoría, 2022) because hate speech attacks one of the fundamental pillars of democracy, namely respect for the diversity of perspectives, identities, and ways of life. In this regard, one of the main educational challenges is to foster respect for this diversity through education. To do so, it is necessary to know how to recognize the limits to freedom so that it does not become self-destructive (i.e., unlimited freedom, freedom freed from itself). This implies not only acknowledging that one person's freedom ends where another's begins, but also that freedom is an exercise of respect (and not of mere permissiveness fed by indifference) that implies the reciprocal recognition of the other as a subject capable of self-determination, who is, in turn, part of the same political community. For this reason, when education for global citizenship in an intercultural framework refers to tolerance, it must be understood as the active respect that emerges from mutual recognition of equal dignity and shared fundamental rights.

We argue in favour of an education for critical global citizenship that is capable of overcoming the biases of an ethnocentric vision and the dangers of a postcolonial mentality. It is not a question of educationally reinforcing the worldview of the 'Global North', but of opening our gaze to cultural proposals in all their richness. It is also necessary to recognize the dark side of European modernity, which was able to reconcile the proclamation of rights with the exploitation of human beings and resources, exploitation on which economic development was built and which, paradoxically, laid the foundations for liberal democracies (Pashby & Da Costa, 2021).

Yet, phenomena such as autocracy, populism, and polarization are also expanding and global (V-Dem Institute, 2024). In the face of these phenomena, we need to foster both a critical and intercultural citizen perspective by assuming the possibility of sharing fundamental values that serve as a reference to combat new and old forms of exploitation or domination. The values of global citizenship cannot deny diversity. These values are a requirement for cultural diversity to expand in all its splendour in a legitimate way. Identifying these values exclusively with the West is somewhat questionable because in different cultural contexts, a similar ethical and axiological core has been defended outside of a strictly Western mentality (Hountondji, 1985). Perhaps the most significant example is the Manden Charter, one of the oldest constitutions in the world (dating from 1235), albeit mainly in oral form. This normative or value charter contains a preamble of seven chapters advocating social peace in diversity, the inviolability of the human being, education, food security, the abolition of slavery by razzia (or raid), and freedom of expression and trade. It took place in Mali, Africa, while Europe was still devastated by intolerance and religious wars, and it is considered one of the clearest antecedents of the Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO, 2009).

At this point, we could say that intercultural, deliberative, cooperative, and dialogic pedagogies are theoretically constructed in the face not only of pedagogical models of narcissistic, possessive, and competitive individualism, characteristic of a certain modernity

(Taylor, 1992; Macpherson, 2011), but also of pedagogies related to populist collectivisms, which are seeds of polarization and emotivist behaviours. At both extremes, dialogue and deliberation are truncated.

According to Han (2012), in a society of fatigue, the different other is seen as a germ from which one must immunize oneself. It is worth asking, with Žižek (2020), whether, in the ‘desert of the viral’, beyond the apparent solidarity in the fight against coronavirus, we are witnessing a new ideological battle where paranoid individualism reappears hand in hand with the virilization of the other, the result of the massification of individuality promoted by media and constant consumption of information. This digital swarm is exploited by populisms and autocracies of various stripes to exacerbate tempers and stoke hatred, and gives rise to what Nussbaum (2019) has called the ‘monarchy of fear’ in the politics of exclusion context.

Civic education must confront these forms of ‘virilization of otherness’ (Han, 2012), which consist of understanding the different other as a threat and lead to withdrawal into one’s own identity. Yet, it should proceed with caution so as not to fight hatred with hate, because hatred is a highly contagious virus and, given its virulence, can end up destroying respect, cooperation, and solidarity. Thus, one of the main precautions to deal with hate speech is not to let oneself be infected by hatred. As Emcke (2017) rightly points out:

Hatred can only be fought by rejecting its invitation to contagion. Those who try to face it with more hatred have already allowed themselves to be manipulated, approaching what those who hate want us to become. Hatred can only be fought with what escapes them: attentive observation, constant nuance and questioning of oneself (p. 19).

This is precisely what the pedagogy of dialogue, grounded in the Habermasian theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1987/2018), based on meaningful learning from attentive listening to the other, and active respect for different voices and alternatives, aims to develop. For this reason, and more than ever, the invitation to dialogue in learning processes, which must be implemented in the various democratic society contexts, is more pertinent and necessary. As dialogue implies reasoning, it does not, therefore, incur, in the manipulation of emotions, a strategy of authoritarian populism. In it, a joint deliberation must be sought to discern the best options; therefore, its foundation is not particular states of mind, but joint argumentation that is capable of recognizing the part of truth of all interlocutors by, therefore, leaving the trench of prejudices that stigmatize and the pretension of wanting to be right in everything.

Of course, emotions are part of dialogue. Feelings such as compassion have an enormous ethical significance. Yet, unlike emotivism, which seeks to express emotions and make them the determining factor, dialogue confers an axiological charge on certain emotions *in the light of practical reasoning* and (explicitly or implicitly) includes a criterion of validity to regulate behaviours. Anything that nullifies the reasoning capacity of one of the interlocutors, or prevents one listening to the other, or degenerates into manipulation, is not dialogue. When talking about dialogue in the civic education field, special care is taken to overcome particular (or generalized) moods to sharpen critical and self-critical thinking. Judgements themselves are certainly a starting point, but the goal is the joint search for truth and knowledge. Care and trust, as UNESCO (2021) points out, are key to this purpose. Dialogic learning itself affects the conditions for communicative interaction that favour knowledge, cooperation, and positive interpersonal relationships, where the exploration and analysis of the emotional world are key components in these processes, but which,

for this reason, do not separate emotions from the reasons on which it is possible to build intersubjectivity.

These are the pillars for the educational construction of global citizenship and are of a necessarily cosmopolitan perspective that must not be abstract but should be rooted in the immediate reality of each person. In this sense, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2023) outline five specific challenges and provide suggestions for addressing them in the current ‘glocal flow’ context in which global and local dynamics intertwine. Each response to these challenges concludes in global citizenship education (GCE), which should prepare young citizens to be able to enter the space of flow and to improve their lives, and to also make the world a better place. Furthermore, ‘GCE should teach them to empathically and hospitably reach out to foreigners (migrants, fellows, “GC-pilgrims”) and to pave the way for them to also make the best of the opportunities that the flow offers, albeit not in the countries of their birth’ (Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2023, p. 261). According to these authors, the demographic and cultural flow in the world should be regarded as offering a valuable pedagogical instrument towards promoting a Freirean dialogue about this relationship.

According to Bosio (2024), an ethical GCE framework must be grounded in critical, cosmopolitan, humanistic, value-creating, and transformative principles. Guided by those principles, ethical GCE goes beyond the banking model of education by emphasizing a global ethic (Bosio et al., 2023). An ethical GCE is inclusive, ethically reflective, and socially responsible. Significantly, the ethical GCE advocates for social responsibility, justice, human rights, and glocal sustainability. Through further theoretical advancement and the development of implementation strategies, this framework offers potential for future research and evaluation of the intricate processes of teaching and learning in GCE, particularly from a values-based perspective.

Proposals for deliberative and cooperative pedagogy in the face of post-democracy

Based on all the above, we can synthetically establish some educational proposals to counteract the effects of post-democracy within the framework of a deliberative and cooperative pedagogy, which is especially significant for educators, policy-makers, and scholars in democratic and citizenship education.

1. First, the techno-communicative dimension of post-democracy constitutes one of its decisive elements, given the use of new digital media, big data, and social networks in a new type of ‘manufacture of consent’, through the mass dissemination of hoaxes and falsehoods, which destroys the possibility of dialogue, and favours the fragmentation and polarization of public opinion (Gozálvez et al., 2019). In this sense, the first proposal is to promote methodologies for media education in the classroom, specifically techniques for fact-checking news that circulates on social networks; and the common detection of hate speech, and dialogue about its effects, its causes, and its deactivation in public discourse.

2. Second, educating in democratic citizenship (slowing down the advance of post-democracy) leads directly to education for global citizenship based on dialogue and intercultural cooperation as a vaccine against the post-democratic identity retreat. From there, it is worth picking up the baton of the pedagogical renewal movements that have opted for new approaches and methodologies, such as *dialogic learning*, *service learning*, *project-based learning*, *cooperative learning* and, *learning communities* (Flecha, 2015). These methodologies impact learners’ active role, which goes beyond the scheme of instructional

or banking education (Bosio, 2024), and is based on interaction, on values-based education, and on the meaningful construction of knowledge (Gargallo & Pérez, 2021) by revitalizing the relationships between individual and community, now a global community that invites a new cosmopolitan citizenship model (Santos Rego, 2013; Cortina, 2021).

3. Third, in the face of polarization and the withdrawal of identity, ethical civic education promotes *dynamic* and *plural identities*. Dynamic identities because identity itself is something dynamic; that is, it arises from the recognition conferred on us by the ‘significant others’, and is always gestated in dialogue with them (Taylor, 1992). Plural identities because neither individuals nor (even less so) societies are destined to have a single absolute and closed identity (Gozávez, 2023), even though certain political, nationalist, or religious discourses fuel policies of exclusion and the presumed only official identity. In the face of post-democracy, it is critical to incorporate teaching and learning methods into classrooms that adequately contemplate and manage cultural diversity in multicultural environments by making the most of academic spaces for knowledge of other realities, perspectives, and worldviews, with respect for difference, but without losing sight of the critical capacity based on the fundamental values of a democratic constitution—that is, with the ethical and pedagogical references for the construction of global citizenship: social responsibility, justice and human rights, and glocal sustainability (Bosio & Schattle, 2023). Educational methodologies based on participation, interactive groups, and dialogic gatherings have proven their effectiveness in promoting social responsibility and the inclusion of marginalized students (Flecha, 2015; 2023) and, as such, we understand that they are valid strategies to stop the advance of post-democracy, an accomplice of a competitive, individualist, and neoliberal educational system.

4. Finally, and as UNESCO (2021) recalls, solidarity pedagogies have helped to overcome oppressive regimes by promoting educational work focused on understanding, empathy, and cooperation to learn to heal wounds of injustice. Dialogic pedagogies walk precisely along the same line because their aim is to solve problems from cooperation and collaboration, which treasure and sustain diversity. ‘Expansive solidarity’ is the result of educating in dialogue to overcome divisions and to return to the common denominator of dignity and human rights.

This solidarity must not be misunderstood. It finds its ethical value when it is placed in favour of the most disadvantaged in society (minorities traditionally discriminated against, people with special educational needs), is sensitive to the suffering of the most vulnerable, and activates the potential of children, young people, and adults to undertake a new joint future.

Conclusions

In this article, we analyse the crisis of democracy worldwide, a phenomenon that we identify as *post-democracy*. Post-democracy entails the weakening of the key springs of democracy, such as the separation of powers or fundamental values like freedom linked with equality. We also establish the close link among post-democracy, authoritarianism, and populism. This phenomenon urgently requires an educational response. Based on the recent UNESCO report (2021), in this paper we lay the theoretical foundations for profoundly democratic civic education as an antidote to post-democracy, and based on the reactivation of dialogic, cooperative, and solidarity pedagogies. These pedagogies reflect

the trajectory of renewal movements that affect the learner's active role, based on methodologies such as dialogic learning, cooperative learning, service learning, or learning communities.

Furthermore, there can be no authentic democracy without interculturality, and the education that we defend herein as a brake on post-democracy is based, in this sense, on open dialogue founded on diversity and solidarity, and within the intercultural pedagogy framework. The pedagogical approach of intercultural cooperation enriches education for global citizenship by promoting dialogue and interaction between students from diverse backgrounds and cultural worldviews, by overcoming ethnocentric and nationalistic conceptions (Portera, 2023). To learn to live democratically, it is necessary to base education on a concept of citizenship that integrates pluralism and ethnic, linguistic, religious, and political complexity; one that does not promote division, but multiple belongings, by humanely facing conflict.

The first task when laying the educational foundations for a world like ours is to make a good diagnosis of the present. Accordingly, this article delves into the risk to liberal democracies, which can be subject to a collapsing political situation that combines democratic elections with authoritarian and populist governments, and with the capacity to deteriorate fundamental civil liberties, respect for minorities, or the fundamental principle of equal dignity of members of such minorities. This post-democratic scenario, in which a new digitally expansive populist authoritarianism (Frantz, 2018) is erupting, poses new educational challenges worldwide. This scenario consumes democracy from within by curbing pluralism, abolishing the criticism, annulling the counter-powers of supervisory institutions, criminalizing minorities and alternative media and, in short, preventing a considered deliberative public opinion after undermining the ethical-civic values of democracy.

Liberalism (liberal democracy) has played, and currently plays, a significant role in the fight against tyranny, discursive dogmatism, and absolutism of all kinds. In our article, we insist on defending the value of equality, a value that cannot be eliminated from the genetic structure of democracy based on a simplistic identification of this value with communism. Paradoxically, the pulse of civil liberties is weakened, even in the countries that do not defend social protection and equality in the real use of freedoms; that is, in countries that are formally democratic or with apparent or low-quality democracy. This is where the simplistic use of language and images comes into play, used to a notable degree to manufacture consent. This is where post-democracy becomes performative democracy linked with populism and authoritarianism.

Dialogic, cooperative, and solidarity pedagogies are more necessary than ever as a response to post-democratic, encapsulated identities, closed to intercultural dialogue and fuelled by polarization, and as an educational antidote to the exclusionary identities that generate divisions and destroy pluralism and respect for social and cultural differences. The withdrawal of identity is inspired by supremacist ideologies that see members of other groups as a threat, and certain rejection is focused on them that admits a range of shades, such as antipathy, contempt, resentment, fear of aversion, phobia, abomination, and animosity, as in hate speech.

By contrast, in a pluralistic and intercultural society, to the extent that we interact with a diversity of people and they contribute to social development, we forge a mixed, complex, and plural way of being and life (Gracia, 2022). In a society rooted in democratic values, such as freedom, equality, respect, and dialogue, plural and dynamic identities must be promoted, starting with education.

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Vicent Gozá́lvez is Professor in the Department of Educational Theory at the University of Valencia (Spain) and holder of the UNESCO-UV Chair Global Education in the Mediterranean: Studies for Peace, Interculturality, and Sustainability. He is a researcher and educator in the fields of philosophy of education, citizenship education, intercultural pedagogy, and media education, and has published books and articles in leading academic journals.

Javier Gracia Calandín is Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Valencia (Spain) and holds a European Doctorate with an Extraordinary Doctoral Award. He has published more than 100 articles in specialized research journals and book chapters with prestigious academic publishers, and has coordinated four books on civic ethics education. He has participated in and led several educational innovation projects focused on global citizenship education. He is currently the coordinator of the Network for Educational Innovation in Philosophy (RIEF, in Spanish).