

# Assessment of active citizenship: Defining the conceptual framework

Avaliação da cidadania ativa: Definição da estrutura conceitual

Évaluation de la citoyenneté active: Définition du cadre conceptuel

Ekaterina Enchikova\*, Tiago Neves & Pedro D. Ferreira

CIE – Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Educativas, Faculdade de Psicologia  
e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal.

**Abstract:** Active Citizenship (AC) is a complex and multidimensional notion that encompasses related constructs, such as civic and political engagement, civic competency, citizens' identity, democratic values, among others. However, different studies offer different models of AC, focusing on specific aspects of it. In this paper, we focus on the research instruments used in the large international studies of AC, as they reflect how the constructs are understood and interpreted by different authors. This paper reviews the frameworks and the surveys of seven studies of AC to elaborate a comprehensive conceptual framework that incorporates different dimensions, signposts the main domains, and defines the relationships between them. This paper elucidates the current views on the operationalization of AC and can be used not only to develop instruments for future AC assessment, but also to provide a context for better understanding and interpreting current studies.

**Keywords:** active citizenship, assessment, conceptual framework

**Resumo:** Cidadania Ativa (CA) é uma noção complexa e multidimensional que engloba construtos relacionados, como engajamento cívico e político, competência cívica, identidade dos cidadãos, valores democráticos, entre outros. No entanto, diferentes estudos oferecem diferentes modelos de CA, enfocando aspetos específicos da mesma. Neste artigo, enfocamos os instrumentos de pesquisa utilizados nos grandes estudos internacionais de CA, pois refletem como os construtos são compreendidos e interpretados por diferentes autores. Este artigo revisa as estruturas e as pesquisas de sete estudos

\* **Correspondência:** [enchikova@gmail.com](mailto:enchikova@gmail.com)

de CA para elaborar uma estrutura conceitual abrangente que incorpora diferentes dimensões, sinaliza os domínios principais e define as relações entre eles. Este artigo elucida as visões atuais sobre a operacionalização da CA e pode ser usado não apenas para desenvolver instrumentos para avaliação futura da CA, mas também para fornecer um contexto para melhor compreensão e interpretação dos estudos atuais.

**Palavras-chave:** cidadania ativa, avaliação, quadro conceitual

**Résumé:** La citoyenneté active (CA) est une notion complexe et multidimensionnelle qui englobe des constructions connexes, telles que l'engagement civique et politique, la compétence civique, l'identité des citoyens, les valeurs démocratiques, entre autres. Cependant, différentes études proposent différents modèles de CA, en se concentrant sur des aspects spécifiques de celui-ci. Dans cet article, nous nous concentrons sur les instruments de recherche utilisés dans les grandes études internationales de la CA, car ils reflètent la façon dont les construits sont compris et interprétés par différents auteurs. Cet article passe en revue les cadres et les enquêtes de sept études sur la CA pour élaborer un cadre conceptuel complet qui intègre différentes dimensions, indique les principaux domaines et définit les relations entre eux. Cet article élucide les points de vue actuels sur l'opérationnalisation de la CA et peut être utilisé non seulement pour développer des instruments pour une évaluation future de la CA, mais aussi pour fournir un contexte pour une meilleure compréhension et interprétation des études actuelles.

**Mots clés:** citoyenneté active, évaluation, cadre conceptuel

## Introduction

The discussion around Active Citizenship (AC) has developed throughout the last decades (Benn, 2010; Ranson, 1988), and it has increased recently due to political and social challenges, such as globalization (Kovalchuk et al., 2019), rise of authoritarian views and populist politics (Mccarthy, 2019), and political disinformation campaigns, aka “fake news” (McDermott, 2019). In this study, we understand Active Citizenship as an inherent part of citizenship, which focuses specifically on personal engagement in it. Is currently deemed crucial for healthy democratic societies since it ensures the legitimacy of political institutions and helps to hold governmental institutions accountable for the citizens' well-being (Barrett & Zani, 2015). In this context, civic education has become an important part of the school curriculum, and, as such, its assessment is of interest to educational studies.

To be sure, the conceptual understanding of AC has emerged in citizenship studies; evolved over time (Lister, 2003; Powell, 2002; Turner, 1990) and given rise to different perspectives. These

different understandings frame the research that is conducted and have a strong impact on the results obtained. Historically, the studies of AC have focused very much on formal political participation, which has always been the main concern for politicians and therefore often placed at the centre of research (Parry et al., 1992). However, formal political participation is only one way of being an active citizen. Many researchers currently speak of non-formal or non-conventional political and civic participation (Kennedy, 2007; Menezes, 2003; Zukin, 2006). As stated by Stevenson et al. (2015, p. 194):

In the past two decades there has been a general movement away from research focused exclusively on the legal status, rules and regulations of citizenship towards research focused more broadly on citizenship as constituted in the routines and practices of daily life, in the meanings of interactions and the dynamics of identities.

Participation in community life, protests and demonstrations, volunteering, charity, membership in local social groups: these types of behaviour were overlooked before but are nowadays recognized as an inherent part of AC. Moreover, the conceptual understanding of AC tends to expand and include new types of activities, such as online participation (Barrett & Zani, 2015). Some authors suggest focusing on the personal characteristics to understand the nature of AC. As described by Barnes et al. (2004, p. 188):

Rather than focus on the dynamics of membership, the psychological study of citizenship has focused on identifying the personal characteristics that differentiate those who participate in political or other citizen affairs from those who do not, i.e. they appear to be asking the question “who is the citizen?”.

Thus, they suggest considering a psychological side of AC, which refers to personal traits, ideas, beliefs and attitudes that support one’s personal ability to participate in civic and political life. This approach aims to locate the basis of citizen behaviour within the subject (Antonini et al., 2015; Haste, 2004). However, since some features might have not only psychological, but also social origin, we decided to use the term “dispositions” further in this article.

As Isabel Menezes (2003, p. 431) mentioned, “Even a brief analysis of the field of citizenship theory reveals that citizenship is far from being a consensual, fixed-meaning concept”. Moreover, the number of concepts and dimensions of AC tends to expand into new areas. In the article “Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology”, Ekman and Amnå (2012) introduce the new concept of “latent” forms of participation. In a more recent paper, Martyn Barrett and Ian Brunton-Smith (2014) call for integrative multi-level models of active citizenship, which should consider the psychological characteristics and social environment, as well as demographic and national context. They claim that “The further elaboration of such theories is likely to require substantial collaboration between political scientists, sociologists and psychologists” (p. 16).

Thus, there is a plurality of different approaches and conceptual models to AC, and a lack of consensus between them. In this paper, we seek to find the common ground between different approaches and to define the core elements that recurrently emerge in different studies. To do so, we will revise the frameworks and surveys used in recent, international studies and try to create a common framework for the future studies.

This paper is organized into five parts. In the conceptual framework, we present and discuss different approaches to AC, the dimensions and indicators used in different studies and the differences between these models. Here, we also argue the need for reviewing and organising the field of AC and state such endeavour as the goal of the present paper. In the “Methods” section, we discuss the criteria used to select the studies for this review and its goals. The next section, titled “Studies in review”, offers a brief overview of each study and describes their methodology. In the “Results” section, we describe the dimensions identified in the studies and indicate their distribution across the studies. Finally, the “Discussion” section describes the main findings, their relevance to the current discussion of AC and their application for future research in this area.

## **Conceptual framework**

As mentioned in the introduction, AC is a complex and multidimensional concept, the operationalization of which is strongly connected with the context of the study. Given the focus and nature of this paper, it is important to make two things clear right from the start. First, that contrary to what is usual, this section is not dedicated to elaborating the authors’ conceptual framework on the topic under study (in this case, AC). Indeed, that would conflict with the very purpose of this paper, which is to identify and discuss the conceptual frameworks that have been used in recent international studies on the topic. Our goal is not to say which is the best or more adequate framework, namely by comparing it with our own; instead, our purpose is to reveal, through an empirical and inductive approach, how the field of AC is being framed through major international studies. Second, while we do acknowledge that AC and civic and political participation do not mean exactly the same (for example, AC is built on or depends on levels of civic and political participation), the inductive, empirically based approach in this study enables us to take them as synonyms. Indeed, AC is observed through practices of civic and political participation, and our focus is precisely on such assessment. This being said, it is naturally indispensable to present a broad picture of the field of AC, namely to be able to make sense of the differences in the theoretical approaches of the studies considered in this paper.

A review made by Ribeiro et al. (2017) shows that there are several approaches to theorizing AC: the orthodox view, which claims that civic and political participation is always positive; the

broad view, which underlines the multidimensional nature of civic and political participation; the qualitative view, which stands in opposition to the orthodox view and shows that civic and political participation is not always good; and the nonconformist view, that urges to redeem the political dimension of participation. This paper shows how each approach rests on different theories and focuses on different elements of AC. When it comes to quantitative studies, this plurality of theoretical understandings of AC is reflected in the existence of a diversity of models that inform the surveys designed to collect the data. With the focus on the educational field, there is a plurality of frameworks in operation. To demonstrate this point, Table 1 gives a brief overview of six different models and their dimensions. Dimensions of “knowledge” and “skills” are represented in all the frameworks, but there is no consensus on the other components. The European Parliament proposed a framework that includes “attitudes” in addition to “knowledge” and “skills”. The Council of Europe added both “attitudes” and “values”. Keating’s (2014) model includes only “values”. Doğanay (2012) aggregates “values” and “attitudes” into one dimension called “dispositions”. Ten Dam et al. (2011) suggest keeping “attitudes” and replacing “values” with “reflections”. Hoskins et al.’s (2015) model includes both “values” and “attitudes”, and adds “social justice” to them. This shows that, despite the similarities, different studies operate within different frameworks and there is no consensus on the operationalization of the construct.

TABLE 1  
**Comparison of different frameworks of citizenship education**

Framework	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes	Values
European Parliament <sup>1</sup>	V	V	V	–
Council of Europe <sup>1</sup>	V	V	V	V
Doğanay, 2012 <sup>2</sup>	V	V		<i>Dispositions</i>
Ten Dam et al., 2011 <sup>3</sup>	V	V	V	<i>Reflections</i>
Keating, 2014 <sup>4</sup>	V	V	–	V
Hoskins et al., 2015 <sup>5</sup>	V	V	V	V + <i>Social Justice</i>

Based on <sup>1</sup> Eurydice Report, 2017; <sup>2</sup> Doğanay, 2012; <sup>3</sup> Ten Dam et al., 2011; <sup>4</sup> Keating, 2014, <sup>5</sup> Hoskins et al., 2015.

While theoretical reflections can be more argumentative, quantitative models need to be specific and organized. That is why – we argue – a review of quantitative instruments can provide a better image of the dimensions and concepts connected with AC. There have been multiple attempts to organize the conceptual framework of AC. The Active Citizenship Composite Indicator (ACCI), created by Hoskins and Mascherini (2009), is an example of such an attempt. Using the

data from existing sources (European Social Survey and Eurostat), they defined the relevant indicators and organized them in four dimensions: Democratic Values, Community Life, Representative Democracy, and Protest and Social Change. It is easy to notice that these dimensions can overlap. This situation is similar to other composite indicators created by other researchers. For example, Abs and Veldhuis (2006), in their paper for the CRELL-Network, identified four types of citizenship: political, social, cultural, and economic. They also suggested that a European and/or global dimension can be added to every type. These dimensions can easily overlap, and it can be problematic to use them in practice. In their paper, they also identified five groups of indicators of AC: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and identity. Each group includes a long list of relevant indicators; however, some of them can intersect, such as democratic attitudes and democratic values. This problem exists in other composite indicators as well, the main reason for that being that the classification is based on several different characteristics. They combine “psychological” (e.g., values and attitudes) and “thematic” classifications (e.g., democracy or justice). Thus, for this review we decided to simplify the structure and to focus on the thematic side of classification, as reflected in our conceptual map (see Figure 1).

In addition to studies producing composite indicators, there are studies that review assessment instruments. The most complete review of assessment instruments was undertaken by a team of researchers from the Educational and Testing Services (ETS, 2015): they described and compared frameworks, definitions, and assessments of AC related constructs from approximately 30 projects (Torney-Purta et al., 2015). This review offers a detailed description of AC related constructs and a framework for future assessment. It describes two key domains: civic competency and civic engagement. There are three dimensions within civic competency (civic knowledge; analytic skills; and participation skills), and three dimensions within civic engagement (motivations, attitudes, and efficacy; democratic norms and values; and participation activities). This classification offers a clear hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, it is mostly based on educational studies, particularly from the United States of America. As such, it ignores large international social science studies like the ESS, the World Values Survey (WVS) and the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). Therefore, the ETS review is suitable for educational studies in the USA but may not be adequate for social science studies in Europe.

Marga de Weerd et al. (2005) reviewed several international studies (ESS, WVS, Eurobarometer, CivED and PISA) regarding the availability and quality of AC indicators. The main goal of this study was to search for reliable and available indicators of AC to be monitored by the European Commission. In a nutshell, the relevant indicators were organized in five groups: knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and culture in education. The authors also checked the availability of these indicators in the studies analysed, creating a map of available indicators for future monitoring.

Inspired by these studies, we will review seven large international studies of AC to create a map that can be used to navigate the conceptual field. In this review, we will include new versions of the international survey studies and also studies focused specifically on AC. We seek to offer a global conceptual framework of AC based on the most influential contemporary studies. Such a taxonomy will hopefully be instrumental in locating particular concepts in the wider picture and assist in the development of future studies on AC.

## Method

In this paper, we reviewed the frameworks of different studies of AC to identify the common areas and the conceptual bases for assessing it. To be included in this review, the studies needed to meet the following criteria:

- (1) be focused on active citizenship, civic and political engagement or related constructs;
- (2) include a multi-dimensional theoretical framework;
- (3) include quantitative survey data;
- (4) have an international scope, including several countries;
- (5) have published materials available for analysis (questionnaires and/or technical reports).

Based on these criteria, we selected seven large international studies of AC. The biggest challenge was to find technical reports and questionnaires for the analysis, since these materials are not always published. However, for the large international studies, such technical information can be found on their websites. In some cases, we had to contact the authors directly to obtain the necessary details.

A comprehensive depiction of each study includes the name of the project, the years and the countries it was conducted in, and a description of the sample. Whenever the study comprises several waves of data collection, we focused on the last available wave, as it would represent the most recent update to the conceptual framework. For the framework review, we worked with technical reports and questionnaires to examine their structure, content and formats. We focused on the operational definition of AC and related constructs included in the theoretical framework of each study. In each case, we identified the dimensions included in the studies and the method used to measure them.

The goal of this paper is to create an aggregated assessment framework of Active Citizenship based on the data analysed. For this, we compared the models of AC presented in these seven studies and sought to:

1. identify the relevant concepts and dimensions for AC measurement;
2. create an aggregated multi-dimensional conceptual map;
3. check the availability of these dimensions in different surveys.

The results were organized into a comparative table that can be used to navigate the reviewed frameworks and to offer a bird's-eye view of the conceptual field. As a result, we produced guidelines for the future international assessment of AC, including examples of the most relevant indicators and their operationalization.

### **Studies in review**

In this paper, we reviewed the conceptual frameworks and the quantitative questionnaires of seven international large-scale studies of AC. Though there were more studies on this theme, we decided to focus on the largest and most influential studies of the last years to highlight the most important trends in the assessment of AC. We decided to exclude smaller studies because they are often focused on specific, narrower aspects of AC and we wish to portray a broader picture. The selected studies offer a complex and multi-dimensional view of AC and provide sufficient materials to examine it. For this review, we used theoretical frameworks, questionnaires and the final reports of these studies. We reviewed the following studies:

1. European Social Survey (ESS)
2. World Values Survey (WVS)
3. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency: Youth participation in democratic life (EACEA)
4. International Social Survey Program (ISSP)
5. Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation (PIDOP)
6. Constructing AcTive CitizensHIp with European Youth: Policies, Practices, Challenges, and Solutions (Catch-EyoU)
7. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

*European Social Survey* (ESS) is an international research project that investigates attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns in different countries across Europe. It has been conducted every two years since 2002 and includes six core modules that repeat in every round as well as a rotating section. The study includes up to 38 countries. The sample includes country residents, regardless of their citizenship or nationality, aged over 15 (Thomassen, 2011). The questionnaire



includes 19 topics, some of which strongly related to Active Citizenship (e.g., media and social trust, politics, immigration, justice, democracy, citizen involvement). For this review, we will focus on the “Politics” topic of the ESS questionnaire, which is the core topic and repeats in every wave. We will also add scales from the 2002 wave, which included “Citizen Involvement” as a rotating section of the questionnaire.

*World Values Survey* (WVS) is an international research project that covers almost 100 countries worldwide. The data have been collected since 1981. The sample targets people above 18, regardless of their nationality, citizenship or language. The respondents are interviewed face-to-face in their homes and the sample is randomized at the household level, where all households are randomly chosen based on multi-stage territorial stratification to form a national representative random sample. The national minimal sample size is 1200 respondents. The questionnaires are developed based on the suggestions from scientists and social organizations around the world, as well on the results of previous waves. WVS-7 questionnaire includes 290 questions in 14 thematic sub-sections. Not all these thematic sub-sections are related to AC and, for this review, we will focus on the most relevant topics.

*Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency: Youth participation in democratic life* was an EACEA project that studied participation of young people in democratic life (Cammaerts et al., 2013). The study used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection: mass survey, secondary data analysis, documentary analysis, participation experiments, interviews, and focus groups. For this review, we will focus on the quantitative part of EACEA, specifically on the survey design. The survey was conducted in seven European countries in 2011. The sample included 7201 respondents divided into two categories: pre-voting age (15 to 17 years old) and young voters (18 to 30 years old). In contrast to many other international studies, where the data were collected in educational institutions, the EACEA study was conducted over the internet.

*International Social Survey Program* (ISSP) is a collaboration between researchers from 45 countries, who have conducted annual studies on important social topics since 1983. Each year, the team selects a topic that is relevant and meaningful for all participating countries. The project uses pre-existing social science projects from participating countries to add a cross-cultural perspective to them. Not all the topics are related to AC, and the most relevant studies are Role of Government (1985, 1990, 1996, 2006, 2016), National Identity (1995, 2003, 2013), and Citizenship (2004, 2014). Though these studies are not focused on the measurement of AC, they include relevant constructs. For this review, we will focus on the 2014 Citizenship Module, given that it is the most relevant and most recent study (Scholz et al., 2017).

The ISSP 2014 Citizenship Module was conducted in 34 countries. On average, samples included around 1500 respondents per country and targeted adult population (18 years and older).

The ISSP 2014 Citizenship Module questionnaire included 15 topics, each topic was represented by 1-9 questions in the survey, which included 62 questions about citizenship in total. Many of these questions were adopted from the ISSP 2004 Citizenship Module and some of them can be found in other modules as well. The survey also includes questions about personal information and social context.

*Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation (PIDOP)* was an international project that studied the processes connected with democratic ownership and participation in nine European countries in 2009-2012. The project included eight work packages to study active citizenship from different angles, including qualitative analysis of current policies, the political theory of participation, and psychological theory of participation (Barrett, 2012; Barrett & Zani, 2015). For this review, we will focus on the empirical part of the project and specifically on work package 6: collection and analysis of new data on political and civic participation. The data collection took place in 2010-2011. The questionnaire for this study was designed to target a broad range of AC variables, especially those not included in the other studies. The sample included two age groups, a younger group of 15- to 18-years old and an older group of 19- to 26-years old; the data were collected predominantly in schools and educational institutions and included more than 8000 participants.

*Constructing Active Citizenship with European Youth: Policies, Practices, Challenges, and Solutions (Catch-EyoU)* was an international study of Youth Active Citizenship conducted in eight European countries. This study was a successor of the PIDOP study, and it inherited some of its design features. Like PIDOP, Catch-EyoU included several work packages on different aspects of AC, bringing together methods from different disciplines. The major goal of the study was to identify the ways in which different forms of youth active engagement can be affected by psychological, developmental, macro social and contextual factors. For this review, we will focus on the work package 7: processes in youth's construction of active EU citizenship. This package implemented a longitudinal design and conducted a survey to collect the data about the processes influencing the societal and political engagement of young people. The data were collected in two waves: the first wave was held in 2016-2017 and one year later, in 2017-2018; the questionnaire was administered to the same respondents to capture their changes over the year. The sample included two age groups: the younger group included people from 16 to 19 years old, and the older group included people from 20 to 26. The data were collected predominantly in schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions.

*The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)* is an on-going international comparative research of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The assessment framework is strongly based on the IEA CIVED survey of 1999. The study

is designed to enable monitoring trends in civic knowledge and engagement over the years. For this review, we will focus on the 2016 assessment framework since it includes the majority of test and questionnaire material from the previous studies as well as the new material. In 2016, the study involved 24 countries, and the sample included students from the 8th grade, 13.5 years old on average. In 2016, ICCS gathered data from more than 94,000 students worldwide, including more than 53,000 students in 14 European countries.

The purpose of ICCS “is to investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in a range of countries in the second decade of the 21st century” (Schulz et al., 2016). The assessment framework was designed to test students’ knowledge and conceptual understanding of AC, as well as their attitudes and behaviors. It also collects contextual data about the organization and content of civic and citizenship educational curriculum, teacher qualifications and experiences, teaching practices, school environment, and home and community support. However, the study is mostly focused on civic and citizenship education and its implementation in the school curriculum.

The ICCS 2016 Civic and Citizenship Framework is organized around four content domains: (1) Civic Society and Systems, (2) Civic Principles, (3) Civic Participation, and (4) Civic Identities. These are represented in two cognitive (knowing, and reasoning and applying) and two affective-behavioral dimensions (attitudes and engagement). The intersection of the four content domains and the four representative domains results in 16 combinations, each of which marking a dimension of AC that can be measured as a scale. Thus, the ICCS framework brings together the manner and the matter of AC, describing not only the content of AC but also the form of how it can be observed.

This review includes two types of studies: general sociological studies with a part of their questionnaire focused on AC issues (ESS, WVS, ISSP), and the studies focused specifically on AC (EACEA, PIDOP, Catch-Eyou and ICCS). There is much in common within the structures of modern studies of AC. In this paper, we analysed these similarities to aggregate them into a common framework.

## Results

Based on the review of the theoretical frameworks, we created a conceptual map of AC, presented in Figure 1. This map signposts the main dimensions and concepts related to AC. All related concepts can be organized into three general domains: (1) Competency; (2) Dispositions and (3) Behavioural engagement. These three domains are interconnected and therefore support and facilitate each other.

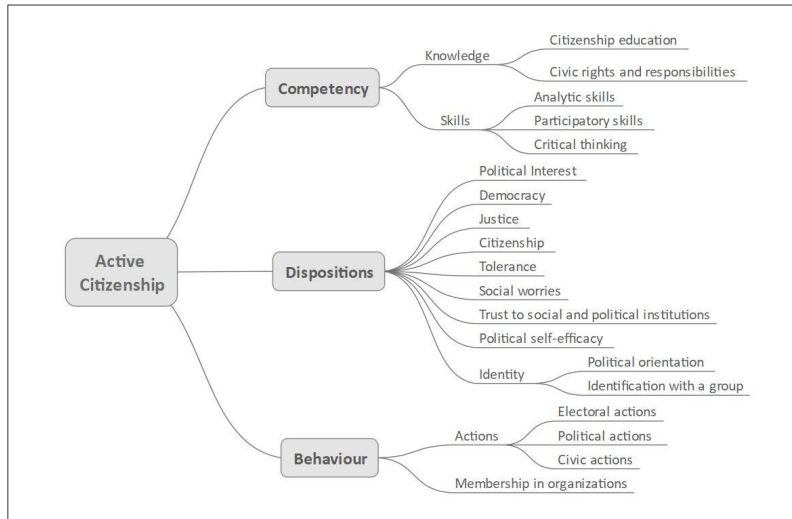
The “Competency” domain includes the factors connected with civic competencies, such as civic and political knowledge and skills. These competencies are often understood as a necessary antecedent of political actions. Therefore, many school citizenship education programs are predominantly focused on the development of these competencies. Thus, this domain can often be found in educational studies, where it is assessed by cognitive tests. Such tests measure the degree of students’ familiarity with civic and political concepts, as well as their ability to implement this knowledge in practical situations. Such tests are often developed based on a school program and therefore limited to the local institutions. There is a lack of global international studies in this domain, the only solid example being an ICCS study. Therefore, this domain is not well represented in this review.

The “Dispositions” domain represents the inner side of civic and political engagement and includes latent psychological characteristics, which are usually measured by self-report questionnaires. These characteristics represent the personal level of political interest, personal values, level of trust in social and political institutions, self-perception of respondent’s efficacy in political and social challenges, political orientation and preferences, self-reported identification with the social group or nationality, personal worries, plans for the future and attitudes towards various social and political issues. While not observed directly, these characteristics define active citizens and constitute the intrinsic ground for civic and political behaviour, represented in the third domain.

The “Behaviour” domain is represented by membership of social and political organizations, several electoral actions (such as voting or participation in the elections), civic actions (such as participation in charity, volunteering, discussions and activism) and political actions (such as participation in demonstrations and protests, signing petitions, boycotting, working for political campaigns and other). Though behavioural engagement is the most visible part of AC and can be observed directly, in international studies it is often studied through self-report. Although statistics on electoral participation or organizational membership can be obtained through other sources, researchers are interested in linking these data to individual characteristics, and therefore use surveys and questionnaires to collect them.

Together with the abovementioned domains of AC, researchers also collect contextual information to test the links between AC and other variables. Though these characteristics are not considered a part of AC, they play an important role in every study, providing additional context information and supporting the research.

FIGURE 1  
Conceptual map of Active Citizenship



The review of the abovementioned seven international studies showed that not all the concepts are represented in all the studies and that the set of concepts used varies according to the focus of the study. Next, we will describe the concepts related to AC and their definition in various studies.

The *Knowledge* dimension is a part of the “Competency” domain and represents the respondents’ ability to recall or recognize AC definitions, concepts, and key properties. It is often measured by multiple-choice questions where the respondents are asked to pick the correct answer(s). This dimension is present in the ISSP, PIDOP and ICCS studies and, additionally, AC knowledge is often assessed on a school level as a part of civic education curricula. Including this dimension into international assessment can be more challenging, since the concepts students are expected to know should both be generalized across countries and correspond to the national context. To address this issue and to expand this section, the ICCS suggests regional modules to target regionally specific knowledge.

The *Skills* dimension is a part of the “Competency” domain. It represents the respondents’ ability to apply knowledge and to act in particular situations. This dimension can include participation skills, analytical skills, and critical thinking. It refers to the ways in which respondents process information, interpret and analyse it, justify their reasoning, solve problems, and make decisions. In our sample, the ICCS study is the only one that includes tasks of this type. It is

very challenging to measure this dimension because it requires complex tasks that can serve as indicators of the examined traits. It is measured by open-ended questions where respondents can demonstrate their reasoning and analytical skills. In some cases, skills can be measured through practical cases where respondents are expected to act on a given situation; however, such type of assessment is very labour-intensive and time-consuming and therefore can hardly be applied in large-scale international projects.

The *Political* interest dimension belongs to the “Dispositions” domain and marks the respondents’ personal interest in political issues. It is normally measured by a Likert-type scale where the respondent is asked to indicate the degree of interest in different political matters or in politics in general. The options vary from “not interested at all” to “highly interested”. Sometimes respondents are asked about their interest in specific social and political issues and their general level of interest can be calculated based on these indicators. It is the only “disposition” dimension to appear in a very similar manner in all the studies considered here.

The *Democracy* dimension belongs to the “Dispositions” domain and represents the respondents’ values, opinions, and attitudes towards democracy. The concept of democracy is an important part of AC and appears in almost all studies, albeit in different forms. In Catch-Eyou, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the given statements; this approach highlights the personal agreement and acceptance of democratic ideas. In WVS, respondents are asked about the importance of democracy in their lives and this approach gives more information about personal values. In ESS, they are asked about their satisfaction with democracy. In ISSP, respondents give their opinion on how well democracy currently works in their country, compare it to 10 years before and give their opinion about the future. In all these studies, Likert-type scales are used. In contrast, EACEA applies a different approach: it uses open-ended questions and asks respondents to name three words associated with democracy. Thus, in all these studies, we can find questions about democracy, whether it is a personal opinion, attitude or value. In some cases (Catch-Eyou), questions about authoritarian practices were added as opposed to democracy.

The *Justice* dimension belongs to the “Dispositions” domain and marks the respondents’ perceptions of fairness and righteousness. In some cases (PIDOP, ICCS), the focus is on the perception of discrimination and the personal experiences of discrimination. In ISSP, the focus is on the actions against unjust situations. The ESS 2010 has a module focused on the perceptions of justice in society; however, it is focused mostly on justice in the context of the police and the courts. The ideas of justice can also be reflected in other dimensions, such as democracy, and citizenship dimensions can include questions about some aspects of them being just or unjust.

The *Citizenship* dimension belongs to the “Dispositions” domain and marks respondents’ ideas about citizenship and attitudes towards it. In ISSP, this dimension is focused on the

importance of citizens' rights, and respondents are asked about the importance of different rights. In ICCS, the focus is on the perceptions of good citizenship and respondents are asked what actions they consider important to be a good citizen. Catch-Eyou used a similar approach: respondents are asked what actions are important for being a good citizen. The first round of ESS, in 2002, included a module on Citizen Involvement, which involved, among others, a part about the ideas of "being a good citizen". Thus, this dimension refers to notions of what being a good citizen means and is measured through Likert-type questions where the respondent is asked to indicate the importance of different features for good citizenship.

The *Tolerance* dimension belongs to the "Dispositions" domain and represents the respondents' tolerance to and acceptance of diversity. In most cases, it refers to the acceptance of cultural diversity and tolerance towards immigrants and refugees. In ISSP, respondents are asked if public meetings of particular groups should be allowed or banned. In Catch-Eyou, respondents are asked to agree or disagree with statements about immigrants and refugees. In WVS, tolerance is assessed by a question where respondents are asked about groups of people they would not like to have as their neighbours. In ESS, this dimension is well represented, and the questionnaire includes many questions about attitudes towards immigrants, refugees, and minorities. In PIDOP, the focus is on the rights of ethnic minorities and their discrimination. Yet, ICCS is the study where the tolerance topic is more fully developed; here, respondents are asked about their attitudes towards gender rights, equal rights for immigrants, ethnic and racial groups, attitudes toward homosexuality and their acceptance of diversity. In most cases, tolerance is measured by Likert-type questions where respondents are requested to agree or disagree with given statements. The questions can be focused on the respondents' attitudes (ICCS, ESS), opinions (ISSP), or beliefs (Catch-Eyou and PIDOP) and, in most cases, these questions also translate respondents' values and dispositions.

The *Social worries* dimension represents the worries and concerns of the respondents. This dimension is not very common and was observed only in four studies. In ICCS, it is represented as perceptions of threats to the world's future. In Catch-Eyou, this dimension marks the areas that bring worries to the respondents (economics, politics, or refugees) and helps define what areas trouble them more. In WVS, respondents are asked how much they worry about different future hypothetical situations. The intensity of these situations varies from losing a job to a terrorist attack or civil war. Many ESS modules collect information about the respondents' worries. The focus depends on the thematic of a particular ESS round and can include questions about personal safety, criminality, economics, politics, social problems, climate change, and others. The questions normally have a Likert-type format where respondents are requested to rank the intensity of their worries.

The *Trust in institutions* dimension represents the degree of respondents' trust in social and political institutions. This dimension can be found in almost all the reviewed studies; however,

the focus of trust can vary. The reviewed studies include questions about the general level of trust (“most people can be trusted”) and personal trust in various social groups (family, neighbours, strangers, etc.). In addition, people can be asked to indicate their trust in the national government, European institutes, various social institutions, police, courts of justice, schools, mass media and other sources of information. The set of indicators varies in different studies. The questions have a Likert-type format and the respondents are asked to indicate the degree of trust in each case.

The *Efficacy* dimension belongs to the “Dispositions” domain and represents the personal perception of respondents’ efficacy in dealing with social and political issues. Sometimes, this dimension refers to the perception of personal abilities (Catch-Eyou: “I am certain that I can accomplish my goals”). In other cases, this dimension refers more to the political efficacy of certain actions (EACEA: “Indicate the three forms of action which you believe would be the most likely to have an impact on government decisions”). Self-efficacy can also be understood as the personal capacity to perform certain actions (ICCS: “Speak in front of your class about a social or political issue”). There are several concepts connected with efficacy, such as personal empowerment, political alienation, political efficacy and self-efficacy (Catch-Eyou). This dimension was more fully explored in the PIDOP project, where it is divided into several aspects: perceived effectiveness of participation, barriers to participation, internal efficacy, external efficacy, collective efficacy of age, ethnic and gender group.

The *Identity* dimension belongs to the “Dispositions” domain and represents personal identification with a given social group. In most cases, it is defined as identification with the respondents’ nationality and/or the European Union (Catch-Eyou, PIDOP, ESS). However, other types of identity are also studied, such as identification with an ethnic, religious, gender or age group (PIDOP, ESS).

The *Political orientation* can also be considered a part of personal identity and can be defined as left-right political orientation (PIDOP, ESS, WVS), attachment to political parties (ESS, WVS) or political ideology (ISSP). Likert-type questions can be used when respondents are asked to define the strength of their identification with a given social group. Alternatively, respondents can be offered to select their political preferences from a list of parties or political candidates.

*The Membership in organizations* is a part of the “Behaviour” domain. Though membership by itself does not necessarily lead to civic and political participation, it is an important prerequisite for it and can be considered an action in itself. This dimension is often represented by a list of organizations, and respondents are asked to mark those with which they have been involved. The typical list often includes political parties, trade unions, labour unions, religious groups, environmental associations, charity groups, sport and entertainment organizations (WVS). When the study is focused on the youth population, the list can be complemented with student and youth organizations (Catch-Eyou, PIDOP, ICCS). In some cases, respondents are asked about



their current status in the organization, and to indicate their level of activity in the organization (PIDOP, Catch-Eyou, WVS).

The *Participation* dimension is the main component of the “Behaviour” domain and includes questions about civic and political actions that respondents have undertaken recently (or consider undertaking). This dimension is represented in every study and is often the main focus of the research since actions are the most visible and most socially influential part of AC. Participation can be civic or political, depending on the types of actions. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish one from the other because some actions can be both political and civic. However, we attempted to distinguish them and indicate actions as civic whenever they do not have a direct impact on politics. In some cases, civic and political causes are indicated together in one question (PIDOP, Catch-Eyou). Though electoral actions can be considered part of political participation, we identified them as a separate group, since they are often located separately in the questionnaires. Civic and political actions are typically represented by a list of activities where the respondents are asked to mark the actions they have undertaken recently (in the last 6-12 months) and the frequency of these actions. In some cases, respondents are asked about the possibility of being involved in these actions in the future (PIDOP, ICCS, WVS, EACEA). Sometimes, respondents are also asked to evaluate their effectiveness (PIDOP).

The *Civic action* dimension targets the civic society and focuses on activities that seek to improve the current social situation. Signing a petition is the most common indicator of such type of action (ESS, WVS, Catch-Eyou, EACEA, ISSP). Other common indicators are volunteering (Catch-Eyou, EACEA, ICCS, PIDOP) and charity (Catch-Eyou, EACEA, PIDOP). Some studies also pay attention to online actions and ask whether respondents discussed social issues online, shared information with friends or joined social groups on social media (Catch-Eyou, PIDOP).

The Political action dimension targets the political system, politicians and political institutions and focuses on activities that seek to improve the current situation through political means. The most common indicators are boycotts (ESS, ISSP, PIDOP, WVS, Catch-Eyou, EACEA), working for a political party (Catch-Eyou, ESS, ICCS, PIDOP), participation in a demonstration (Catch-Eyou, ESS, ISSP, WVS, EACEA), trying to contact a politician (Catch-Eyou, ESS, ISSP, EACEA). Less common indicators are the attendance of political meetings (ISSP, PIDOP), wearing a political symbol (Catch-Eyou, PIDOP), and internet-based political actions, such as political discussions in social media (PIDOP, Catch-Eyou). Some studies also collect information about illegal political actions, such as unlawful protests, violent protests, graffiti and occupation of public spaces (ESS, PIDOP, Catch-Eyou).

The *Electoral action* is an act of participation in elections, such as voting for a political candidate/party or standing as a candidate. In the most general case, respondents are asked if they have voted in the last elections or have an intention to vote in the next ones (ESS, WVS,

Catch-Eyou, PIDOP, EACEA). In some cases, local and national elections are distinguished (Catch-Eyou, EACEA, ICCS, WVS). In European studies, it is common to separate national from European elections (Catch-Eyou, EACEA). Studies oriented towards the youth population include questions about the intention to vote when the respondent becomes eligible (Catch-Eyou, ICCS). Some studies include an additional section where respondents are asked to indicate the political parties they vote for (ESS, WVS, Catch-Eyou).

The *Context* variables do not belong to the AC dimensions but serve to explore the broader picture and the role of AC in personal life and in society.

As was made clear above, dimensions and categories are not represented identically in the studies reviewed. The summary is given in Table 2, where all the represented categories are marked with a “V”. In this table there are many empty spaces, which shows how studies are different from each other and how they focus on different aspects of AC.

TABLE 2  
Representation of categories and dimensions of AC in different studies

Categories		ESS	WVS	EACEA	ISSP	PIDOP	Catch-EyoU	ICCS
<b>Competency</b>	Civic and political knowledge				V	V		V
	Civic and political skills							V
<b>Dispositions</b>	Political Interest	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Democracy	V	V	V	V		V	V
	Justice	V			V	V		V
	Citizenship	V			V		V	V
	Tolerance	V	V		V	V	V	V
	Social worries	V	V				V	V
	Trust in institutions	V	V		V	V	V	V
	Efficacy			V	V	V	V	V
	Identification with a social group	V				V	V	V
	Political orientation	V	V		V	V		
<b>Behaviour</b>	Membership in organizations		V			V	V	V
	Participation (general)	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Civic action	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Political action	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
	Electoral action	V	V	V		V	V	V

(continued)

(continued)

Categories		ESS	WVS	EACEA	ISSP	PIDOP	Catch- -EyoU	ICCS
<b>Context</b>	Personal	V	V				V	V
	Family	V		V				V
	Peer	V		V				V
	School						V	V
	Religion	V	V			V		V
	Mass media	V	V	V	V		V	V
	Other social	V	V	V	V	V	V	V

## Discussion

Although there are at least three different schools of thought on civil society, namely Putnam, Keane and Habermas', as described by Edwards (2009), when it comes to empirical assessments, the surveys do not have an explicit theoretical rationale. Rather than refer to a specific theory, they are often designed based on previous surveys (e.g. many surveys refer to CIVED study of 1999). Therefore, some scales and questions migrate from one study to another. At the same time, the plurality of theoretical approaches and the lack of structural framework may encourage researchers to introduce new concepts and to test new models of AC.

We considered the critiques of the previous theoretical models of AC and the proposed map of AC is designed to answer those challenges. First, the map was created based on the empirical material of different research frameworks. This means we did not use any specific theory to explain everything, but rather analysed how AC is understood in different studies and tried to find a common ground to all of them. Thus, we worked with the survey frameworks to create an aggregated conceptual map. Second, we were looking for parsimony and therefore removed all repetitive or ambiguous elements. We sought to keep it simple, but thorough and comprehensive. We noticed that other frameworks often combine "psychological" and "thematic" classifications, which leads to redundancy. To avoid it, we focused on the thematic side and marked the main topics related to AC. Finally, we kept the map flexible and open to future changes. New forms of civic and political engagement appear every day and they should not be ignored. That is why we did not look for an accomplished and closed model, but rather kept frugality and openness in sight; this is why our model can, we believe, be adapted to different studies and contexts. The proposed map can be used to orient future research of AC and help to create survey instruments to operationalize it from different angles.

We have also checked the availability of the identified dimensions and categories in different surveys. We discovered that the breadth of the studies varies a lot: while some studies use a broader understanding of AC (ICCS), others focus on particular elements (WVS). There is more consistency in the behavioural domain of AC, and all the reviewed studies include questions about civic and political participation. These questions create the core of the AC construct and are often used as its representation. The dispositions domain is also well-represented in all the studies, but there is less consistency. Studies sometimes highlight different topics and ignore others. This shows that there is no consensus about this facet of AC, and we have yet to find which dimensions are fundamental for AC and which are secondary. There are some strong contestants for that challenge: political interest is represented in all studies; democracy, tolerance and trust in institutions are next to it. However, we believe that it is important to include as many dimensions as possible in future research because that is the only way to test their relevance and elaborate a more complete picture of AC. Also, we have noticed that the competency domain is poorly represented in international survey studies. This can be partially explained by the technical difficulty of such tests and the costs involved in applying them. It is more expensive to create a cognitive test and to apply it, and students are less motivated to participate in such evaluations as well. Thus, it is understandable why the cognitive domain remains mostly confined to educational monitoring programs. However, without it, the interpretation of AC will not be complete. Thus, we advocate for including the cognitive domain in future surveys, at least at some basic level.

By focusing on the elements through which a concept is actually assessed in empirical research rather than on the elements that are identified and discussed in abstract terms in the theoretical literature, our study highlighted the fact that major international studies of AC do not follow specific theoretical strands, resorting instead to an amalgam of theoretical references and the experience gained from designing previous surveys. This poses quite clearly the problem of the relationship between theory and empirical research in the social sciences, showing that it cannot be taken for granted. As such, it brings into question the role played by theory in major international studies of AC, which undoubtedly play an important role in defining the field.

There are limitations to this work, as there are relevant variations in the quality of the information available. While some studies publish all the blue papers, reports, questionnaires and databases, others are not so open, and we only had a final report to work with. As a result, we had to take responsibility for interpreting the documents and to judge their meaning. When it was possible, we worked with the questionnaires and operated with single questions; otherwise, we were left to work with the final reports and interpret them. Even though we followed the same interpretive logic in every case and approached the material with the same robustness, we should notice that the results are still based on our interpretations and reasoning. In our defence,

we remind that the proposed map remains open and flexible to changes. It does not represent the final answer to all the questions. Instead, it should be taken as a navigation system for future research, not more than that. We hope it will help future research to create better assessment instruments and to approach the conceptual field of AC with more efficiency and consistency.

## Conclusion

Quantitative research in education relies heavily on surveys and scales. If, in other disciplines, the matter of assessment is well-defined (such as the knowledge of subject and the capacity to solve specific tasks), in the area of citizenship education we face the challenge of developing not only students' knowledge and skills, but also the dispositions and the behaviour of active citizenship. In this case, assessment instruments should include the relevant scales to cover these domains.

The paper explores how the concept of AC is measured and understood in major international studies. As a result of this, our study reveals that AC means different things in different studies. To be sure, these are not contradictory things, but nonetheless they are different and sometimes do not have much overlap. This indicates that the meaning of AC cannot be taken for granted either. This is important for the development of new studies in this area, as well as for the interpretation of the results of the existing ones. This study shows not only the differences between the major international studies, but also the similarities and the areas of overlap, it helps to create a general vision of the field and to locate the specific results within this frame. At the same time, this study is relevant to the educational area. It shows the specifics of the AC research in education, such as a focus on the competencies of the students and a tendency to include extra scales to address this area. It helps to collocate the methodology and the results of the educational studies with the sociological studies and shows the specifics of each area. Thus, this study helps to develop a critical view of the field and shows that every study should be understood and interpreted regarding its context and goals.

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