

La formación ciudadana como eje transversal en la formación técnica profesional

Civic education as a cross-cutting theme in technical and vocational training

Andrea Estefania Palomino Arias¹**Denny Milena Caicedo Hurtado¹****Ivonne Priscilla León Espinoza¹**¹Bolivarian University of Ecuador. Ecuador**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1241-7501><https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3868-1331><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6977-320X>**Email(s):**

aepalomino_a@ube.edu.ec

dmcaicedoh_a@ube.edu.ec

ipleone@ube.edu.ec

Received: August 3, 2025

Reviewed: September 06, 2025

Accepted: September 19, 2025

RESUMEN: En el presente artículo se analiza la formación ciudadana como eje transversal en el Bachillerato Técnico Profesional derivado de la persistente fragmentación entre la formación técnica orientada a la empleabilidad y la dimensión ética y social del ejercicio profesional. El objetivo es diseñar una estrategia pedagógica que integre las competencias técnicas, éticas y ciudadanas en este nivel educativo. Se adopta un enfoque mixto de alcance descriptivo–interpretativo. Se emplearon entrevistas semiestructuradas, guías de observación y análisis descriptivo de frecuencias. Los resultados evidencian fragmentación curricular, insuficiente preparación docente para transversalizar contenidos ciudadanos y débil articulación entre desempeño técnico y responsabilidad social.

Palabras clave: Formación ciudadana; Educación técnica profesional; Transversalización curricular; Ética profesional; Bachillerato técnico

ABSTRACT: This article analyzes citizenship education as a cross-cutting theme in the Technical-Vocational High School curriculum, stemming from the persistent fragmentation between technical training focused on employability and the ethical and social dimensions of professional practice. The objective is to design a pedagogical strategy that integrates technical, ethical, and civic competencies at this educational level. A mixed-methods approach with descriptive–interpretive scope is adopted. Semi-structured interviews, observation guides, and descriptive frequency analysis were employed. The results reveal curricular fragmentation, insufficient teacher preparation to mainstream civic content, and weak articulation between technical performance and social responsibility.

Keywords: Civic education; Vocational technical education; Curricular mainstreaming; Professional ethics; Technical high school

Introduction

In the contemporary educational landscape, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has established itself as a strategic component for economic and social development, as it focuses on strengthening workplace competencies, youth employability, and adaptation to

contexts of technological innovation. However, it is recognized that this instrumental orientation is insufficient—when it is not integrated with ethical, social, and civic education that enables responsible professional practice.

Various international organizations have noted that TVET cannot be limited to technical training but must contribute to the comprehensive development of individuals capable of exercising active, critical, and responsible citizenship (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022). In this sense, citizenship education serves as an indispensable cross-cutting pillar for integrating technical knowledge with democratic values, social commitment, and professional responsibility.

However, various studies warn that, in technical education institutions, the pressure to meet production standards and follow curricula geared toward employability can lead to the subordination of citizenship education to technical content (Martínez & Pérez, 2021). This tension is particularly evident in the final years of high school, when the emphasis on competency certification tends to displace critical reflection on the social meaning of work.

From a pedagogical perspective, it has been noted that the mainstreaming of citizenship education at this level cannot be limited to formal civics courses, but must be integrated into technical modules, professional internships, and institutional culture (Biesta, 2020).

In this regard, **it is recognized that the Technical High School, within the framework of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, constitutes a relevant setting for analyzing how technical training and citizenship education are articulated in practice**, using an institutional context as an empirical reference.

Given the above, the objective of this research is to design a system of training workshops aimed at integrating professional technical competencies and active citizenship through the mainstreaming of citizenship education in the technical baccalaureate.

Development

The research adopted a descriptive–interpretive qualitative approach aimed at understanding how citizenship education manifests itself and is integrated as a cross-cutting, theme in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. This approach allows for the analysis of pedagogical

practices, teachers' perceptions, and student experiences in the context of technical high school programs.

The choice of a qualitative approach responds to the nature of the phenomenon under investigation, which involves educational processes, pedagogical practices, teacher perceptions, and student experiences that cannot be reduced to quantifiable variables without losing their complexity. As Creswell (2018) argues, qualitative research is particularly relevant when the objective is to interpret meanings, understand specific educational contexts, and explore social processes in depth.

From an epistemological perspective, this study is situated within the interpretive paradigm, which assumes that educational reality is socially constructed and that knowledge emerges from the interaction between actors and their institutional context (Flick, 2015). In this sense, the descriptive–interpretive design allows for an analysis not only of what occurs in the realm of citizenship education but also of how and why certain practices develop in TVET.

In a second phase, **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with teachers and students, aimed at exploring their conceptions of citizenship education, its integration into technical subjects, and its relevance to vocational training. This type of interview allows for combining a basic structure with the flexibility necessary to delve deeper into emerging meanings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

In a third phase, **classroom and training activity observations** were conducted to identify pedagogical practices that demonstrated the mainstreaming of citizenship in technical education. These observations were recorded through systematic field notes.

Data Analysis: The information was analyzed through a **thematic analysis process**, following the phases of open, axial, and selective coding. Initially, relevant units of meaning were identified; subsequently, these were grouped into categories and subcategories linked to citizenship education, pedagogical practices, and technical training.

This procedure follows the inductive logic characteristic of qualitative research, in which categories emerge progressively from the data and are not imposed in advance (Flick, 2015). The use of specialized software ensured the traceability of the analysis and strengthened the rigor of the interpretive process.

The scientific research methods applied yielded the results presented below.

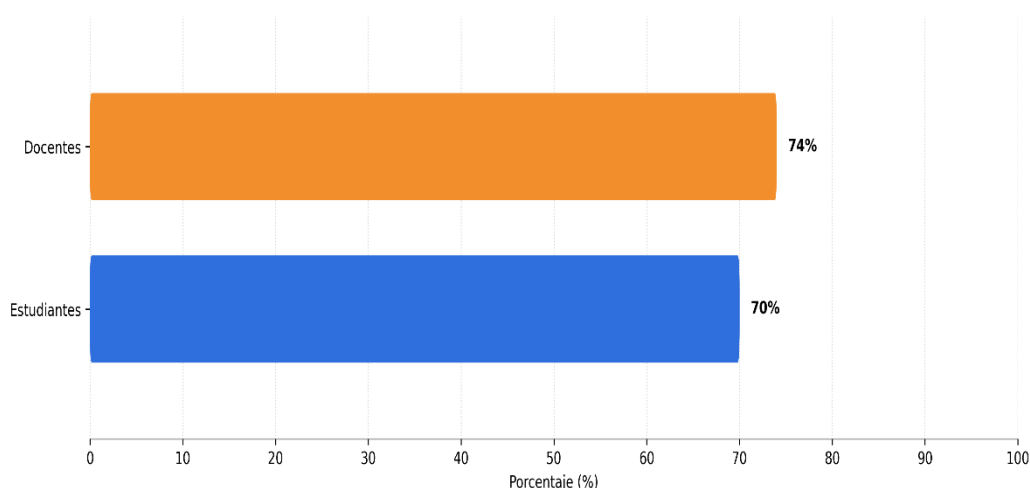
Analysis of the information collected through interviews and observations identified several findings that highlight structural issues in the mainstreaming of citizenship education in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, from both the student and teacher perspectives.

Seventy percent of students stated that citizenship education is primarily addressed in specific subjects and not in technical modules. Similarly, **74% of teachers** acknowledged that institutional curriculum planning does not provide explicit guidelines for integrating citizenship content into technical subjects.

Source: Prepared by the author

Gráfico 1. Fragmentación curricular de la formación ciudadana en EFTP

Percepción sobre dónde se trabaja la ciudadanía (asignaturas específicas vs. módulos técnicos).



Nota: La ciudadanía tiende a permanecer confinada a espacios formales (Pérez-Serrano y Sarrate, 2018).

Figure 1. Perception of where citizenship education is taught (specific subjects vs. technical modules)

77% of students stated that the priority of classes is focused on developing technical skills for competency certification. At the same time, **69% of the teaching staff** stated that the pressure to meet technical program requirements reduces the time allocated to ethical and civic reflection.

The predominance of the technical approach over comprehensive training, evidenced in the second finding, reflects a tension widely documented in the literature. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) notes that vocational training systems

subject to strong productive pressures tend to prioritize technical performance at the expense of civic and ethical competencies. From this perspective, the shared perception of teachers and students suggests that the curriculum operates under an instrumental logic that hinders the systematic incorporation of spaces for critical reflection.

Sixty-five percent of teachers reported not having received specific training to integrate citizenship into TVET contexts, while **60%** stated they lacked clear methodological strategies for addressing values, professional ethics, and civic participation within technical modules.

This tension is reinforced by teachers' insufficient preparation to mainstream citizenship education. The third finding confirms the argument put forward by García-Gutiérrez and Ruiz-Corbella (2021), who maintain that one of the main obstacles to citizenship education in vocational training is the lack of specific pedagogical training and methodological models applicable to technical modules.

From the students' perspective, **58%** indicated that their teachers rarely link technical content to social or community issues.

Sixty-two percent of students stated that they did not clearly identify how citizenship education relates to their future professional practice. Similarly, **55% of teachers** acknowledged that they do not always explicitly explain to students the ethical and social dimensions of the technical skills they teach.

From an educational perspective, this finding suggests that citizenship is not being developed as an integral part of the professional profile, but rather as a separate component unrelated to technical learning. Biesta (2020) notes that when education is primarily focused on performance and the acquisition of instrumental skills, the ethical dimension of professional practice tends to remain implicit or overlooked. In this study, this invisibility manifests itself in students' difficulty in recognizing the social significance of their future professional practice.

Despite the limitations noted, **85% of students** expressed interest in participating in activities that integrate citizenship and technical training. Likewise, **81% of teachers** expressed a willingness to implement a cross-curricular pedagogical approach, provided they have methodological guidance and institutional support.

Nevertheless, the high level of willingness among teachers and students to participate in a cross-curricular pedagogical approach constitutes a particularly significant finding. This result aligns with the observations of UNESCO (2022), which highlights the openness of TVET stakeholders to curricular innovations that integrate technical and civic competencies, provided they have institutional support and clear guidelines. The convergence of this willingness in both groups suggests that favorable conditions exist for the design of a practical approach with real viability.

Taken together, the findings confirm that the problem does not lie in a lack of recognition of the importance of citizenship education, but rather in the absence of pedagogical, curricular, and training mechanisms that enable its effective integration. From this perspective, the discussion reinforces the need to move toward a TVET model that coherently integrates technical competencies, professional ethics, and active citizenship, especially in the final years of the Technical Baccalaureate, when students' professional identity and life plans are consolidated.

Based on the identified findings, a system for mainstreaming citizenship education in the Technical High School is proposed, aimed at integrating technical competencies, professional ethics, and active citizenship. The proposal is designed based on needs common to Technical and Vocational Education contexts, using an institution as an empirical reference for its formulation.

Justification of the Proposal

The **pedagogical proposal aimed** at mainstreaming citizenship education in technical high school is justified by the urgent need to overcome the existing fragmentation between technical training and students' ethical, social, and civic education.

This situation is particularly concerning given that Technical and Vocational Education and Training aims not only to prepare a skilled workforce but also to develop individuals capable of practicing their profession with social responsibility, ethical judgment, and a commitment to sustainable development. In this sense, the absence of integrated citizenship education undermines the development of a professional identity that is mindful of the common good.

Likewise, the implementation of this proposal is relevant in the educational contexts of technical and vocational training, where students are at a decisive stage in shaping their life plans and defining their professional identity. Pedagogical intervention at this formative moment allows for a significant influence on the development of attitudes, values, and civic dispositions that will accompany the student in their transition into the workforce and society.

Theoretical Foundation of the Proposal

The rationale for this proposal is based on three central theoretical pillars: citizenship education, holistic education in TVET, and the experiential learning approach.

First, citizenship education is conceived not as an isolated subject but as a cross-cutting process that permeates the entire curriculum. Biesta (2020) argues that citizenship is not taught solely through normative content but is constructed through formative experiences that allow students to reflect on their responsibility toward others and toward society. From this perspective, mainstreaming citizenship into technical modules allows learning to be situated within real-world contexts of professional decision-making.

Second, the proposal is grounded in the holistic education approach characteristic of TVET. UNESCO (2022) notes that quality technical education must integrate technical skills, social competencies, and ethical values, avoiding training focused exclusively on productivity. In this vein, the integration of citizenship as a cross-cutting theme addresses the need to train professionals capable of understanding the social implications of their work and acting responsibly.

García-Gutiérrez and Ruiz-Corbella (2021) argue that citizenship education becomes effective when integrated into daily teaching practices and assessment processes, rather than being confined to marginal curricular spaces. This idea underpins the need to design workshops that directly influence instructional planning and the dynamics of the technical classroom.

Third, the proposal is grounded in the experiential learning approach. Kolb (2015) argues that meaningful learning occurs when learners reflect on their experiences and critically reinterpret them, thereby integrating conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal knowledge. Consistent with this approach, the proposed workshops prioritize case analysis, the resolution of ethical dilemmas, and the design of projects with social impact.

Finally, from the field of educational research, Creswell (2018) highlights that intervention proposals based on empirical evidence are more likely to generate sustainable changes, to the extent that they address real problems identified in specific contexts.

In this regard, the present proposal is grounded not only in established theoretical frameworks but also in the specific findings of the study conducted.

Proposed Activities: Workshop 1. Citizenship as a Component of the Professional Profile

Duration: 4 hours (2 sessions of 2 hours)

Specific objective: To encourage students and teachers to recognize citizenship as an integral part of professional technical practice.

Main techniques and activities: Guided brainstorming: participants are asked to express what they understand by “good professional.” This technique helps activate prior knowledge and allows for the identification of initial conceptions.

Analysis of short case studies: Real-life situations involving technical performance with ethical implications are presented. This technique fosters the development of critical judgment and awareness of the social impact of work.

Plenary discussion: Viewpoints are compared, and collective agreements are reached.

How it supports learning: These techniques allow participants to move from an instrumental view of the profession to a broader understanding of its social dimension.

Expected outcome: Participants are expected to explicitly identify the relationship between technical competencies, civic values, and social responsibility.

Workshop 2. Pedagogical strategies for mainstreaming citizenship in technical modules

Duration: 6 hours (3 sessions of 2 hours each)

Specific objective: To train teachers in the design of teaching strategies that integrate citizenship education into their technical subjects.

Main techniques and activities: Collaborative work in small groups: designing teaching sequences with a civic focus. This technique promotes the collective construction of knowledge and the exchange of experiences.

Peer review: Teachers analyze and provide feedback on lesson plans developed by other groups.

Microteaching: simulation of short lessons to put the designed strategies into practice.

How it supports learning: Collaborative work and microteaching allow teachers to move from theory to practice in a gradual and reflective manner.

Expected outcome: Teachers are expected to develop at least one lesson plan that explicitly incorporates objectives, activities, and assessment criteria for citizenship education.

Workshop 3. Professional Ethics and Responsible Decision-Making

Duration: 4 hours (2 sessions of 2 hours)

Specific objective: To develop the ability to analyze ethical dilemmas related to professional technical practice.

Main techniques and activities:

Study of ethical dilemmas: structured analysis of real-life problematic situations in the workplace. This technique promotes moral reasoning and argumentation.

Role-playing: simulation of decision-making situations. This promotes empathy and understanding of different perspectives.

How it supports learning: Applying these techniques allows for the integration of critical thinking, emotions, and values into professional decision-making.

Expected outcome: Participants are expected to demonstrate a greater ability to identify ethical conflicts and propose responsible solutions.

Workshop 4. Citizenship, Sustainability, and Community Development

Duration: 6 hours (3 sessions of 2 hours)

Specific objective: To promote an understanding of technical work as a practice oriented toward sustainable development and community well-being.

Main techniques and activities:

Project-based learning: designing technical proposals with social or environmental impact. This promotes the application of knowledge in real-world contexts.

Mapping local issues: identifying community needs related to each technical specialty.

Brief fieldwork: observation or interviews with local stakeholders.

How it supports learning: These techniques link technical training to the local environment, strengthening the sense of social relevance.

Expected outcome: Students are expected to develop a preliminary technical project aimed at solving a specific problem in their community.

Workshop 5. Final integration and design of cross-cutting pedagogical projects

Duration: 5 hours (1 session of 3 hours and 1 session of 2 hours)

Specific objective: To consolidate the integration of technical training and civic education through cross-curricular educational projects.

Main techniques and activities:

Design of integrative projects: development of classroom projects or pre-professional internships with a civic focus.

Sharing of experiences: presentation and discussion of the designed projects.

Participatory assessment: collective development of criteria for evaluating civic competencies.

How it supports learning: The application of these techniques allows for the integration of conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal learning into a concrete proposal.

Expected outcome: Each group is expected to design a cross-curricular educational project ready for implementation in the classroom or during practical training.

Validation of the proposal.

The pedagogical proposal undergoes a validation process through expert review, with the aim of assessing its relevance, coherence, and feasibility for application in Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Validation is carried out by three experts, selected based on criteria of academic training and professional experience. The experts hold advanced degrees in education, pedagogy, or related fields, as well as experience in technical education, civic education, or curriculum design, which ensures the suitability of the evaluation process.

A basic evaluation matrix is used for validation, structured around five key indicators, rated on a five-point Likert scale, where:

1 = Very low; 2 = Low; 3 = Medium; 4 = High; 5 = Very high

The indicators considered in the validation process are as follows (see Table 1):

Relevance: the degree to which the proposal meets the needs of the Technical High School and Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Relevance: how well the proposal aligns with contemporary pedagogical approaches and current demands for civic education.

Feasibility: the proposal's feasibility in terms of time, available resources, and teaching capacity.

Scope: the proposal's potential to have a cross-cutting impact on technical and civic education.

Foundations: consistency between the proposal, pedagogical principles, and the conceptual framework underpinning it.

Experts in technical education and civic education validated the proposal for its theoretical coherence, contextual relevance, and pedagogical feasibility, considering it suitable for strengthening civic education in the Technical High School.

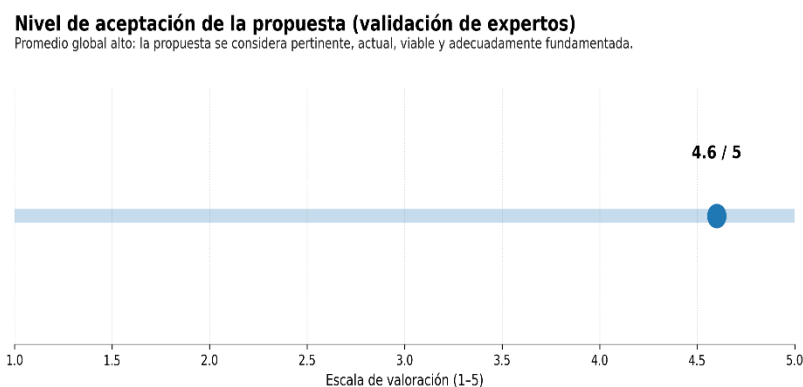
Table 1. *Validation of the proposal*

Indicator	Average Score
Relevance	4.6
Timeliness	4.5
Feasibility	4.4
Scope	4.6
Foundations	4.7
Overall average	4.6

Source: Prepared by the author

The validation reveals a **high level of acceptance of the proposal**, with an overall average of 4.6 out of 5, indicating that it is considered relevant, up-to-date, feasible, and adequately grounded for implementation in the Technical High School program. The qualitative observations made by the experts allow for minor adjustments related to the precision of some indicators and the clarity in the formulation of activities, strengthening the final consistency of the proposal (Figure 2).

Source: Author's own work



Ajustes menores sugeridos: precisión de indicadores y claridad en actividades.

Figure 2. *Level of acceptance of the proposal (expert validation)*

Conclusions

The theoretical and contextual review leads to the conclusion that citizenship education is an indispensable component of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, given that an exclusively instrumental preparation is insufficient to address the ethical, social, and environmental challenges of contemporary professional practice. Likewise, it is identified that the absence of a systematic integration of citizenship in the Technical High School weakens the construction of a socially responsible professional identity, based on an educational context considered as an empirical reference.

The results confirmed the existence of a persistent fragmentation between technical training and citizenship education, manifested in poor curricular integration, limited pedagogical preparation of teachers, and weak student awareness of the social significance of professional practice. This situation demonstrates that the problem does not lie in a lack of appreciation for citizenship, but rather in the absence of institutional and methodological mechanisms that would allow for its effective incorporation as a cross-cutting theme.

It is concluded that the proposal presents favorable conditions for contributing to the strengthening of civic education as a cross-cutting theme in Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Bibliographic References

Biesta, G. (2020). *Educational research: An unorthodox introduction*. Bloomsbury.

- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Flick, U. (2015). *Introducing research methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- García-Gutiérrez, J., & Ruiz-Corbella, M. (2021). Educación para la ciudadanía y formación profesional: desafíos para una integración curricular. *Revista de Educación*, 392, 89-112. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2021-392-478>
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Martínez, J., & Pérez, L. (2021). Formación técnica y ciudadanía en contextos latinoamericanos. *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Comparada*, 12(2), 45-63.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE). (2019). *Preparing our youth for an inclusive and sustainable world: The OECD PISA global competence framework*. OECD Publishing.
- Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Cultura, las Ciencias y la Educación (UNESCO). (2022). *Transforming TVET for successful and just transitions*.