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# BELIEFS, PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES ON CITIZENSHIP COMPETENCIES IN RURAL STUDENTS: BASIS FOR THE DESIGN OF A CONTEXTUALISED TECHNO-PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY

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## ABSTRACT

*Education in rural contexts faces particular challenges in developing citizenship competencies, which are exacerbated by standardised assessments that fail to capture the sociocultural realities of these territories. This study aimed to analyse perceptions and practices regarding citizenship competencies among rural primary school students as a basis for designing a contextualised techno-pedagogical strategy. A qualitative approach with a descriptive scope and an action research design was employed, developed in three phases: a diagnostic stage through focus groups with 319 students from 13 rural institutions in Siachoque, Boyacá; an intervention using the educational software Peaceful Resolution of School Conflicts; and an interpretive reflection phase through analysis with NVivo. The results identified 21 emerging categories grouped into four axes: cognitive and discursive processes, interpersonal relationships, self-regulation and self-perception, and ethics, justice, and coexistence. It is concluded that citizenship competencies in rural contexts are constructed from integrated cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions, where dialogue, empathy, and cooperation emerge as fundamental practices, demonstrating that contextualised techno-pedagogical strategies significantly strengthen peaceful coexistence and comprehensive citizenship education.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Citizenship Competencies, Rural Education, Action Research, Techno-Pedagogical Strategy, School Coexistence.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Ibero-America, problems related to social coexistence are frequent in several countries across the region. Violence indicators show a rate “four times higher than the global average” (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2022), with boys, girls and adolescents being particularly affected, with 75% experiencing physical violence between the ages of 2 and 4, mainly due to domestic violence and bullying (World Health Organization, 2022). In Colombia, the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences (2023) reported 2,366 cases of non-fatal injuries due to alleged sexual offenses, 1,908 cases of domestic violence in early childhood, 6,113 in childhood, and 10,713 among adolescents. Likewise, in rural territories, the violence derived from the armed conflict has generated psychosocial disintegration, the traces of which continue to impact the well-being of children and adolescents (Bernal *et al.*, 2020).

Education is a key resource for preventing and addressing these antisocial behaviours, as it transcends the school environment and engages the public in building a society grounded in democratic values, coexistence, and respect for diversity.

The Colombian Ministry of National Education (2004; 2010) established the *Basic Standards for Citizenship Competencies*, which aim to define the essential skills and knowledge required to promote the nation’s democratic development. These standards outline cognitive, emotional, and integrative competencies that seek to foster students’ active and reflective participation in social life. However, reports from ICFES (2012; 2019) indicate that the evaluation process remains focused on standardised cognitive tests, neglecting the emotional and integrative aspects that are essential for the peaceful management of conflicts.

This limitation has led to contradictions: evidence suggests that students identify with values of coexistence and inclusion, yet the same students report high levels of bullying and violence in their narratives (ICFES, 2012). Various studies have shown that the set of topics defined by the state influences students’ beliefs, opinions, and behaviours, reproducing disciplinary strategies aimed at educating “exemplary” citizens (Torres & Reyes, 2015).

Standardised assessments fail to capture in detail how students recognise, interpret, and practice citizenship competencies both in the school setting and in their everyday lives. This is reflected in the study by Mgqwashu *et al.* (2020), which highlights the influence of rural sociocultural conditions. Such

limitations render invisible the psycho-affective variables that shape socialisation and the way in which agreements are constructed within groups. Therefore, it is necessary to determine how rural primary school students recognise, interpret, and enact citizenship competencies in their daily realities, in order to understand their experiences beyond the outcomes of standardized testing.

Gaining deeper insights into the citizenship practices of rural students enables the design of pedagogical strategies that are contextualised, responsive to their immediate realities, and conducive to building inclusive, critical, and participatory communities (Tovar & Camacho, 2020). This research also seeks to connect the school with the community by incorporating the use of digital technologies as tools that enhance citizenship education through interactive and engaging environments (Paba-Medina *et al.*, 2020). In this sense, the study contributes both to academic knowledge and to educational practice by generating applicable insights for citizenship training and promoting techno-pedagogical proposals aligned with the needs of rural contexts.

The general objective of this study is to analyse, through an action research design, the practice and recognition of citizenship competencies based on the perceptions, beliefs, opinions, and behaviours expressed in the discourses of primary school students from public rural schools in the municipality of Siachoque, Boyacá, Colombia. This serves as an input for developing a techno-pedagogical strategy adapted to the rural context, within the framework of the *Orquídeas: Programa de Mujeres en la Ciencia - Convocatoria 948* (Orquids: Women in Science Programme – Call 948), funded by *MinCiencias*, Colombia.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the understanding of how citizenship competencies are developed in rural contexts and how digital technologies can contribute to and enhance their development. The Colombian rural school presents particularities related to socioeconomic, cultural, and geographical conditions that influence students’ civic formation. In this sense, it is essential to analyse the specific characteristics of rural education and the development of coexistence, democratic participation, and citizenship construction.

Thus, educational technology tools have made it possible to design new forms of techno-pedagogical strategies that foster more meaningful and inclusive learning. Current literature highlights the

importance of ICT as both mediating tools and spaces for the exercise of responsible and critical digital citizenship, while also serving as formative environments, especially in rural settings. This dual role reveals both the challenges and opportunities that arise in fostering citizenship education within these communities. Based on this premise, the theoretical framework is organized around two main axes: *citizenship education in rural contexts* and *educational technology and digital citizenship*, given that the study explores how digital resources can strengthen pedagogical practices oriented toward citizenship construction in rural school settings.

### 2.1. Citizenship Education in Rural Contexts

Rural Colombia represents a space of vast cultural, ethnic, and territorial diversity, directly shaped by educational dynamics and processes of civic socialisation. According to España-Eljaiek et al. (2023), rural communities have historically been affected by structural inequalities in accessing basic services, educational opportunities, and political participation. These conditions have shaped resilient community practices, yet have been marked by marginalization and a lack of infrastructure. Thus, citizenship education in rural contexts cannot be understood homogeneously, but rather in dialogue with the values, traditions, and organizational structures of each territory. This calls for pedagogical strategies that are sensitive to cultural diversity and the lifestyles of rural and indigenous populations (Ayerbe & Báez, 2023).

One of the main challenges faced by citizenship education in rural communities lies in school and community coexistence, which is influenced by factors such as domestic violence, economic deprivation, and the lingering effects of the armed conflict. As Rayón et al. (2022) point out, the rural school is both a space for socialization and a site where conflicts rooted in social precariousness and exclusion emerge. Therefore, developing citizenship competencies in these contexts entails strengthening peaceful conflict resolution, respect for diversity, and democratic practices that translate into meaningful experiences of coexistence.

Similarly, inclusion and participation constitute foundational categories in the fabric of the school community. According to Cebrián et al. (2025), rural schools play an integrating role, linking formal education with community and family knowledge, generating spaces for mutual recognition and social co-responsibility. However, this process faces limitations such as limited educational coverage, school dropout, and a weak connection between

national education policies and local needs. Citizenship construction in these communities requires viewing students not merely as recipients of content but as social actors capable of generating change within their immediate environment.

In conclusion, citizenship education in rural contexts demands a critical perspective that acknowledges, on the one hand, the structural barriers affecting these communities and, on the other, the potential they hold for strengthening their own processes of socialisation and democratic participation. The rural school, far from being a peripheral space, represents a fundamental arena for developing citizenship competencies that not only reflect local realities but also promote the formation of critical, participatory, and inclusive individuals in a diverse and unequal country such as Colombia.

### 2.2. Educational Technology and Digital Citizenship

The systematic use of ICTs has enabled a transformation in the teaching of citizenship by fostering new ways of interaction and participation across different social settings. According to Chattopadhyay (2025), ICTs should not be seen merely as instrumental resources but as environments that promote meaningful and collaborative learning. In the field of citizenship education, ICTs allow for the simulation of coexistence scenarios and collective problem-solving, thereby fostering an active and reflective form of citizenship. Moreover, the design of educational software can be a relevant means of contributing to the education of communities with limited access to in-person learning opportunities (Yang, 2023).

Within this framework of civic formation, the concept of digital citizenship has become a central axis for understanding contemporary citizenship education. As Stellmann and Song (2024) argue, it must encompass not only responsible access to technology but also the critical capacity to use it ethically, safely, and participatively. Digital citizenship includes dimensions such as online safety, media literacy, digital identity, and democratic participation through virtual spaces. Consequently, promoting digital citizenship in schools involves preparing individuals to understand the social impact of technology and to assume active roles in building more inclusive and democratic virtual communities (Vallès-Peris & Domènech, 2024).

Various techno-pedagogical experiences in rural contexts suggest that incorporating ICT can become an opportunity for educational equity and the

strengthening of citizenship. Ruiz and Gallagher (2025) highlight how technology-mediated projects in rural Colombian schools have increased students' engagement and participation in group activities. Likewise, Basri et al. (2025) found that context-adapted digital platforms and applications have enriched collaborative work and the integration of citizenship-related content that reflects local issues. These experiences show that the design of contextualised digital strategies not only enhances learning but, when combined with other school practices, facilitates the empowerment of rural students as social actors.

Educational technology and digital citizenship thus form a necessary conjunction that promotes civic education in rural schools. The use of ICT and educational software grounded in ethical and co-educational principles facilitates the transition toward an education that seeks to overcome inequality and foster the construction of more critical, democratic, and participatory communities. The inclusion of these tools in pedagogical projects adapted to rural realities is, therefore, a means of promoting citizenship from childhood with territorial relevance.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach, as it seeks to interpret social interactions related to coexistence and the learning of citizenship competencies within a rural school context. Such an approach enables access to meanings, perceptions, and behaviours from the participants situated experiences, while also acknowledging the real complexity of educational phenomena (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Accordingly, the purpose of the research is to respond to the characteristics, needs, and contributions of the studied context rather than to generalise the findings.

The study has a descriptive scope, aimed at characterising the coexistence practices, attitudes, and behaviours of students during different moments of the intervention: before, during, and after the techno-pedagogical implementation. As Bulbulia et al. (2019) point out, the descriptive method allows for the systematic recording of behavioural profiles and patterns without manipulating variables, which is particularly suitable for studies involving direct observation and interpretive analysis of changes resulting from different types of activities, thus enabling the observation of variations following the intervention.

The design is based on an action research approach, aiming to understand a specific

educational situation and to promote its transformation through a techno-pedagogical intervention. Following Elliot's (1993) model, a structured cycle of *diagnosis, planning, action, observation, and reflection* was developed. This process facilitated the analysis of student behaviours for the subsequent implementation of a software-mediated didactic strategy, aimed at strengthening citizenship competencies and peaceful conflict resolution.

#### 3.1. Study Unit

The study unit consisted of students from first to fifth grade of primary education, belonging to 13 rural educational institutions in the municipality of Siachoque, Boyacá. Due to the nature of the research, the unit included all 319 students enrolled for the 2025 academic year. Participants were selected according to the requirements of the qualitative approach (Hernández et al., 2014), and their participation was formalised through informed consent signed by their legal guardians.

#### 3.2. Techniques And Instruments for Data Collection

The data collection strategies were aligned with the qualitative approach, prioritising the interpretation of students' experiences regarding the teaching of citizenship competencies, conflict resolution, and school coexistence. Specifically, focus groups were used as the main data collection technique, and semi-structured questionnaires served as the primary instrument. These questionnaires focused on aspects such as conflict resolution, identification of citizenship competencies, and school and community coexistence. Prior to implementation, the questionnaires were validated by experts. Additionally, field notes were taken to record relevant events that occurred throughout the research process.

#### 3.3. Stages Of the Research Process

The research was conducted in three phases, articulated within the qualitative approach and the action research model, consistent with the purpose of characterising and strengthening citizenship competencies among students in rural educational institutions.

##### *First Phase: Contextual Diagnosis*

The initial stage involved an exploratory process through focus groups composed of students from first to fifth grade of primary education. This phase allowed for the interpretation of school coexistence

dynamics, the most frequent types of conflicts, and the mediation strategies used by students. The process fostered collective dialogue and the emergence of diverse narratives, revealing both strengths and gaps in the teaching of citizenship competencies.

### **Second Phase: Pedagogical Intervention**

Findings derived from the diagnostic phase served as the foundation for designing and implementing activities using digital educational resources. These activities were aimed at conflict resolution and the understanding of school rights and responsibilities, in order to enhance citizenship competencies through the use of technology-based tools that create opportunities for meaningful learning.

### **Third Phase: Reflection And Interpretive Evaluation**

Finally, an analytical and evaluative process was carried out on the narratives that emerged from the focus groups and the pedagogical intervention. Using the NVivo software, a coding and categorisation process was conducted to identify emerging content and to deepen the interpretation of results. This final phase also included a feedback stage with the school community, fostering collective reflection and consolidating learning experiences oriented toward strengthening coexistence and citizenship.

## **4. RESULTS**

This chapter describes the research findings concerning the characterisation of civic competencies in rural educational institutions within the municipality of Siachoque, Boyacá.

The information was collected using the focus group technique, with a total of fourteen sessions. The sociocultural setting, selection, and preparation for these groups involved boys and girls from first to fifth grade of basic primary education, with a mean

age between seven (7) and thirteen (13) years. Each session was recorded, transcribed, and systematised, resulting in a large corpus of responses that express the perceptions, experiences, and meanings students attribute to their daily practices of school and civic coexistence.

Subsequently, an analysis process was carried out with the support of the NVivo qualitative research software, which facilitated the coding of the units of meaning and the configuration of twenty-one (21) emerging categories. These categories were not imposed *a priori* but emerged from the interpretation of the students' discourses, in dialogue with the project's conceptual frameworks and the guidelines from ICFES on civic competencies (2019). The analysis progressed in three phases: first, the identification of significant segments in the transcriptions; then, the open and axial coding of these segments in NVivo, which allowed the organisation of information into thematic nodes; and finally, the construction of the emerging categories as integrating axes for the findings.

Accordingly, the presentation of results that follows is organised based on these emerging categories. Each category is accompanied by textual examples expressed by the students in the focus groups, which demonstrate how the participants' voices support the researcher's interpretation. This approach seeks to maintain the qualitative nature of the research and highlight the value of the meanings attributed by the children themselves to civic competencies.

The study's results are oriented towards fulfilling the stated purposes. Notably, the qualitative research software NVivo was used in the analysis process. The process began with the re-reading of all the content provided by the school stakeholders in the 14 focus groups conducted. Twenty-one codes were created, representing the Emerging Categories used to code the different emergent contents across the 14 focus groups. These categories were formed based on the content of the research project itself and the guidelines on civic competencies outlined by ICFES (2019) (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1: Emerging Categories from the Focus Groups.*

*Note: The Figure Illustrates the Main Categories That Emerged During the Development of the Focus Groups.*

#### 4.1. Definitions of the Emerging Categories

The glossary presented below (Table 1) has been

created based on the research project and the foundations provided by ICFES for the construction of Civic Competencies.

*Table 1: Glossary of Study Categories.*

Concept	Definition
Argumentation	Refers to the capacity to analyse and evaluate the expressions of others, anticipating the effects of a discourse, as well as interpreting the purpose of a communicative act, establishing relationships between arguments, and judging the reliability of different statements.
Associability	It is the capacity shown by children to involve their peers, utilising spaces, objects, and play.
Self-concept	Children are capable of defining themselves to others, stating their qualities, but also what they might consider to be their defects, and acknowledging that they possess them.
Self-control	Children refer to the containment of behaviour based on the understanding of situations and what is best for coexistence with other members of their environment.
Coercion	Refers to children feeling obligated to perform actions or behaviours with which they disagree, whether due to a principle of authority or the threat of physical or symbolic aggression.
Understanding	Alludes to the capacity of children to grasp a situation in a precise context, using basic principles of justice and equity.
Conflict	Children can easily perceive disagreements or difficulties present in communication, through the situation they are analysing.
Knowledge	This component refers to the conceptual and experiential information students possess regarding the rules and norms that regulate school coexistence and citizenship, including the provisions established in school coexistence manuals and the laws promulgated in the Political Constitution of Colombia.
Use of dialogue	It is the capacity of children to construct spaces for communicative interaction, where they use arguments and are capable of listening to other people in their environment.
Interaction	(...) the National Ministry of Education (MEN) of Colombia posits that civic competencies are consolidated as the central axis in the formation of integral individuals, providing the students with the necessary tools for coexistence, conflict resolution, and interaction within the community.
Interpretation	Based on key elements of what children see, they make inferences that allow them to understand the situations they experience, using definitions learned in their experiences with parents.
Multiperspectivalism	This component focuses on determining a person's capacity to understand a problematic situation from an analysis, therefore, it seeks for students to be able to interpret different controversial situations that occur in their daily lives and, through critical thinking and reflection, find the best solution.
Ethical orientation	For children, doing good, being fair, not harming others, involves an ethical conduct, which is also expressed as the treatment and consideration they wish to receive for themselves.
Systematic thinking	Refers to the capacity a person has to interact in society and identify different situations that can influence their daily life. It seeks for students to understand the factors associated with these situations from this component, and to identify possible solutions and how they can be applied in different scenarios.
Principle of authority	Children turn to the teachings or guidance of their authority figures to resolve situations in which they must make decisions with other members of their environment.
Principle of equity	At this point, boys and girls act in accordance with values that have been constructed in their vicarious learning, from the earliest contact with an ethical principle that allows them to announce or regulate their behaviour.
Reparation	It is the capacity of these boys and girls to realise their mistakes or faults and acknowledge them to others, using verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies, concrete object exchanges, or concessions in the interaction that favour coexistence.
Conflict resolution	Children are capable of advancing toward conceptual or practical solutions, following courses of action based on an experiential logic that they share with their environment.
Respect for difference	Children understand their particularities as part of a set of qualities that other members of their environment also possess.
Situational synthesis	It is explained through the conclusions that boys and girls can form, based on previous actions.
Emotional bond	It is the capacity of children to understand situations in which emotions come into play, as a central part of the interaction with others.

Note: Elaborated By the Authors.

#### 4.2. Analysis Of Cognitive and Discursive Process Categories

In the focus groups, students showed diverse forms of thinking that reflect incipient processes of analysis, interpretation, and construction of meaning. The emerging categories that grouped these manifestations were argumentation, interpretation, multiperspectivalism, situational synthesis, and knowledge. Collectively, these

dimensions show how children develop civic competencies related to the capacity to express their ideas, understand those of others, and reflect on the situations they face in school and family life.

Regarding **argumentation**, participants agree that expressing reasons and justifying their actions constitutes a way to be heard within the classroom. A fourth-grade student expressed: "When I say I don't agree, I tell the teacher why, so she understands what I

think". This suggests that children are not just repeating formulas, but are beginning to anticipate the effects of their words and validate their positions toward others.

**Interpretation** appears as a competency that allows them to read everyday contexts and attribute meaning to them. Several students emphasised that they better understand what is happening when they manage to put themselves in someone else's shoes. A third-grade boy affirmed: *"If my friend doesn't want to play, it's because he's sad, so I know it's not about me, but because of something that happened to him"*. This type of reflection shows how students use emotional and social cues to comprehend the behaviours of their peers.

In the category of **multiperspectivalism**, contributions emerged that reveal the capacity to consider more than one point of view in the face of conflicts or disagreements. Some children expressed that situations do not always have a single solution. A girl pointed out: *"When we fight, I think the fault is not just one person's, but both of ours, because we both did something to get angry"*. This type of statement demonstrates a process of openness toward critical thinking and the acceptance of a diversity of perspectives.

For its part, **situational synthesis** manifested when students integrated previous experiences to understand new situations. A fifth-grade boy commented: *"Once when we played soccer and pushed each other, I remembered that it had happened before too and we fixed it by talking, so now I did the same thing"*. Thus, the participants demonstrate that they return to past learning experiences to guide their present actions, configuring a reflective and practical thought process.

Finally, the category of **knowledge** was related to the recognition of norms and rules of coexistence, with both school and family. Students frequently alluded to the coexistence manual and the guidance from their teachers. A second-grade girl expressed: *"In school they say we can't push in line because everyone has to wait their turn"*. These affirmations show that children articulate normative knowledge with experiential living, consolidating basic civic references.

In summary, the analysis of these categories shows that the students' cognitive and discursive processes are constructed in permanent dialogue with their school and family environment. Through argumentation, interpretation, multiperspectivalism, synthesis, and knowledge of norms, the children configure a particular way of understanding and explaining their reality. These competencies,

although still developing, reflect a meaningful potential for civic education in rural contexts.

### 4.3. Analysis Of Categories: Interpersonal Relationships

The categories that emerged from the analysis of the responses provided by the participants in the focus group were: interaction, use of dialogue, respect for difference, and associability, which reflect how boys and girls construct bonds with their peers and with the school community. Their expressions indicate that coexistence is based on sharing spaces, recognising differences, and using dialogue as a tool for connection.

In relation to **interaction**, the students emphasised that moments of play and teamwork constitute the most significant spaces for interacting. A third-grade girl commented: *"I like to play with everyone at recess, because that way no one is left alone"*. This testimony reflects that children value interaction as a means of inclusion and of strengthening the sense of belonging.

The **use of dialogue** repeatedly appeared as a strategy for resolving disagreements or clarifying misunderstandings. The participants agree that talking is better than responding with violence. A fifth-grade student affirmed: *"When we get angry, the teacher tells us to talk and that way we understand what happened"*. These voices show how children begin to incorporate dialogue as a central resource in conflict resolution and as an alternative to impulsive reactions.

Regarding **respect for difference**, expressions emerged in which students recognise that their peers do not always think or act the same way they do. A girl pointed out: *"My friend doesn't play soccer because she doesn't like it, but we still talk during break"*. This type of statement evidences the acceptance of diversity as a basic condition for school coexistence.

Finally, **associability** was manifested in the students' ability to involve their peers in common activities. A second-grade boy expressed: *"If I see someone is alone, I invite them to play with us"*. In this way, it is observed that children not only participate but also actively promote the inclusion of others in collective spaces.

Together, these categories show that the students' interpersonal relationships are marked by the desire to share, the recognition of difference, and the construction of bonds through dialogue. Although these practices are still incipient, they reveal the importance that children attribute to coexistence and inclusion within the rural school, strengthening the foundations of a citizenship based on respect and

cooperation.

#### 4.4. Analysis Of Categories: Self-Regulation and Self-Perception

This section groups together the categories of **self-control**, **self-concept**, **emotional bond**, **reparation**, and **coercion**, which allow for understanding how boys and girls regulate their emotions, recognise their qualities and flaws, and manage situations where they must correct their behaviours or respond to imposed norms.

The category of **self-control** appeared strongly in the students' narratives, who expressed that containing anger or avoiding aggressive responses is important for maintaining harmony with their peers. A fourth-grade boy affirmed: *"When I get angry, I breathe and go somewhere else because if not, I'll start fighting"*. This type of response reveals an early learning about the necessity of managing emotions to favour coexistence.

**Self-concept** was recognised when the students spoke about themselves, alluding to positive characteristics and limitations. One of the female students stated: *"I'm good at reading, but I find math very difficult"*. The statement shows that children begin to elaborate an impression of themselves in which strengths and weaknesses are combined, marking an important step for their personal and civic development.

In the **emotional bond** category, the participants highlighted the significance of feelings regarding relationships with others. Several of them stated that sadness, joy, or anger entail a way of acting. A third-grade student expressed: *"If my friend is sad, I also get sad, because I care about how she feels"*. The testimony presented reveals that children establish a link between their emotions and those of others; empathy is produced as the basis for social interaction.

The process of **reparation** was situated within the narratives in which the students themselves explained how they recognise their mistakes and how they try to manage them. For example, a second-grade girl said: *"I hit my friend and then I said sorry, and when she fell behind in her work, I lent her my notebook"*. These phrases demonstrate that children are capable not only of identifying their mistakes but also of employing strategies to attempt to repair the damage done and restore the relationship with their peers.

Finally, **coercion** appeared in accounts where students indicated that, at times, they act due to the imposition of authority figures or fear of sanctions. A fifth-grade boy affirmed: *"You have to obey because if not, you'll get a bad grade"*. This type of statement reveals that obedience, although not always given

voluntarily, is also part of the regulatory dynamic in the school context.

Together, the analysed categories reflect that students are in the process of constructing forms of self-regulation and self-perception that influence their school and family life. Their expressions show a transition between obedience through imposition and the autonomous regulation of emotions and behaviours, which constitutes a fundamental aspect for strengthening civic competencies from an early age.

#### 4.5. Analysis Of Categories: Ethics, Justice, And Coexistence

This section presents the analysis of the categories understanding, principle of equity, ethical orientation, conflict resolution, principle of authority, and conflict, which evidence how boys and girls conceive justice, fair treatment, and coexistence in their school and family environment.

**Understanding** was one of the most recurrent categories. Students indicated that putting themselves in the place of others helps them understand situations and avoid problems. A third-grade girl commented: *"If my friend yells at me, I think he's angry about something else and not with me"*. This type of response shows a process of empathy and recognition that the actions of others are not always personally directed.

The **principle of equity** emerged when students spoke about justice and the importance of receiving the same treatment. A fourth-grade boy expressed: *"We all have to have the same opportunity to play on the court, not just the big kids"*. These statements reflect that children begin to identify situations of inequality and seek solutions that align with criteria of justice.

Regarding **ethical orientation**, the participants concurred that doing good and not causing harm is fundamental to coexistence. A fifth-grade girl pointed out: *"I don't want to hit anyone because I don't like being hit"*. These types of expressions show that children associate ethics with reciprocity and with the treatment they expect to receive from others.

**Conflict resolution** was presented as a daily practice. Several students indicated that dialogue and reaching agreements is the most adequate way to solve problems. A boy affirmed: *"When we fight over the ball, we talk and decide that some play first and then the others"*. This testimony reflects how students elaborate practical solutions based on shared experiences.

The **principle of authority** was evidenced in references to teachers and parents as figures who guide behaviour. A second-grade student expressed:

"The teacher says we shouldn't yell at each other, and that's why we try to speak softly". These voices show that authority is recognised as a guide for coexistence, although at times it is perceived more as an imposition than as guidance.

Finally, the category of conflict revealed that children easily identify the disagreements and tensions generated in the school environment. A 3rd-grade student noted: "*Sometimes we argue because we all want to be first in line, and then we agreed to take turns*". These narratives highlight that conflict is understood as part of school life, and also, as an opportunity to learn to coexist and respect shared rules.

Together, the categories in this block show that students intertwine values of justice, equity, and fair treatment with concrete practices of coexistence. The voices of the students show that conflict is part of their daily life, but that they aspire to resolve it with dialogue and understanding, whether motivated by their own reflections or by authority figures. The findings show that the construction of civic competencies in rural contexts is founded on incipient ethical learning that contributes to the formation of a culture of peace and respect.

The use of focus groups made it possible to access the students' voices and, based on their own accounts, understand how civic competencies are put into practice in the rural schools of Siachoque. The transcription and analysis of the fourteen meetings provided a broad overview of the perceptions and experiences of the boys and girls, who, through their narratives, exposed the learning, challenges, and tensions they encounter in their daily lives.

The use of the NVivo software was fundamental for the structuring and codification of the information, allowing for the emergence of twenty-one categories that were structured along four thematic axes. These axes—cognitive and discursive processes, self-regulation and self-perception, ethics, justice, and coexistence, and interpersonal relationships—constitute the analytical axes that integrate the findings and contribute to the understanding of how students construct notions of citizenship in school.

The voices of the participants have made it clear that civic competencies are not limited to being a normative component but are expressed in concrete practices: arguing and listening, recognising differences, regulating emotions, correcting

mistakes, and seeking solutions to conflicts. The children have brought dialogue, empathy, and equity to the fore as dominant values, but have also pointed out the reasons why norms are complied with more out of the imposition of authority than out of personal conviction.

In general terms, the results allow us to affirm that civic competencies in rural contexts are configured as dynamic processes that articulate cognitive, relational, emotional, and ethical dimensions. The results demonstrate that students possess a significant potential for the construction of a culture of coexistence and respect, while also leaving open a reflection on the pedagogical and social challenges involved in strengthening these competencies as from primary school.

#### **4.6. Second Stage Results: Design And Implementation of the Techno-Pedagogical Strategy**

The second stage of the research responded to a critical didactic necessity identified in the 13 rural educational institutions of Siachoque, Boyacá: the lack of contextualised pedagogical resources for the development of civic competencies in primary school students. The focus groups in the first stage showed that rural students face specific limitations: restricted access to up-to-date didactic materials, scarce availability of modern technological resources (digital literacy), and an absence of pedagogical strategies that link their daily realities with the learning of peaceful coexistence.

In this context, the design and implementation of the software "Peaceful resolution of school conflicts" was carried out exclusively for the project (see Figure 2), as a techno-pedagogical strategy adapted to the limited technological conditions of the rural context and the evolutionary characteristics of 314 students between 7 and 13 years of age, belonging to 13 rural educational institutions in the municipality of Siachoque, Boyacá. It is important to note that during implementation, digital limitations—such as poor connectivity and the use of obsolete equipment—were managed through contextual accessibility strategies. The educational software was designed to function entirely offline, allowing it to run without an internet connection. This technical decision was based on criteria of digital equity and operational resilience, facilitating autonomous access to content in rural environments.



**Figure 2: Prototype Of the Educational Software Implemented.**

**Note: The Figure Illustrates Sections of the Graphical Interface of the Peaceful Resolution of School Conflicts Software.**

The software integrated an interactive narrative that unified animated characters, school scenarios, and everyday conflict situations with a visually attractive and emotionally charged environment. The interface, programmed in HTML, CSS, and JavaScript, was intentionally designed to function on older computer equipment to guarantee ease of navigation and adaptability to the technological difficulties of the rural institutions themselves. This design decision was key because the institutions involved do not have modern computers which limits the use of more complex programs.

The instructional design was based on five thematic modules: 1) What is Conflict Resolution?, which included a ludic introduction with examples from daily life in the rural context; 2) Types of School Conflicts, with interactive representations of common problems, such as disputes, exclusions, or teasing; 3) Guidelines for Conflict Resolution, which explains specific steps, such as identifying emotions, listening to the other person, seeking agreements, and offering apologies; 4) Interactive Activities, which include virtual role-playing games, trivia, and simulations related to real-life issues; and finally, 5) My Commitment to Peace, a space for a personal record of commitments to peaceful coexistence.

The constructivist and experiential model of the software application allowed the students to adopt the role of an active agent in conflict resolution, which favours key civic competencies: empathising, dialoguing, cooperating, and respecting differences. As Hrytsenchuk *et al.* (2021) point out, it should be

noted that the development of civic competencies must be intentional, continuous, and contextualised, and this is guaranteed precisely because the software application makes possible the integration of digital technologies as mediators of significant learning.

The experience was carried out over six months with the participation of the 314 boys and girls from the 13 institutions in the rural location, which fostered fundamental transformations in the appropriation of civic competencies, as the transformation is evidenced by changes in attitudes and the implementation of skills that tend toward the development of peaceful coexistence.

From the first sessions, students began to show a remarkably positive attitude towards the proposed activities; the inclusion of multimedia elements and situated narratives favoured their interest, which was reflected in smiling faces and verbal and bodily communication that evidenced motivation and an active inclination for participation; this change in disposition towards learning made the class much more participatory and fun, thus favouring the development of civic competencies.

Regarding the strengthening of concrete competencies, there was a significant improvement in empathy and the recognition of the other. The social actors demonstrated, starting from the application phase, a greater capacity to consider the emotions and points of view of their peers, which was reflected in the presence of understanding behaviours in problematic situations and the reduction of aggressive behaviours. This change was

especially clear in the rural context where conflict resolution strategies lack structured pedagogical mediation.

The use of dialogue and assertive communication showed improvement in the implementation phase, as students expressed their differences with a spirit of respect, first listening actively and then speaking. This capacity, which was systematically worked on through the software's own activities, was transferred to real-life school coexistence situations, where exchanges of ideas were more fluid and empathetic.

Interpersonal relationships significantly improved throughout the six months of implementation. Conflicts between students decreased considerably, and behaviours of collaboration and mutual aid increased. Collaborative activities also made evident behaviours of peer support, recognition of others' capacities, as well as a distribution of responsibilities, which consolidated a harmonious environment of coexistence that not only transcended the use of the software but also permeated the dynamics of daily classroom life and other spaces in the school environment.

Collaboration and teamwork were strengthened transversally. The children developed skills for working together, and the importance of each group component, such as individual differences for learning, was valued. This strengthening of teamwork favoured the completion of the activities, among other things.

These transformations were systematically documented through the participatory observation technique, involving the researcher in the educational reality deeply capturing the emerging social dynamics. It was recorded that exchanges between students are distinguished by greater communicative fluency and empathy, which fosters academic development.

An important finding was that, despite the technological limitations evidenced by older computer equipment and low connectivity, the adapted design of the software allowed its adequate use in the 13 rural institutions. This shows that pedagogical relevance and cultural contextualization outweigh technological limitations when the strategy is precisely adapted to the needs identified collaboratively in the educational community.

In general terms, the implemented techno-pedagogical strategy had a positive impact on the appropriation of civic competencies in students from rural areas in the municipality of Siachoque, Boyacá, promoting the construction of democratic and

peaceful schools which are respectful of diversity. The results of this study show that it is possible to develop civic competencies in rural situations where technologies are scarce and limited, provided that the pedagogical strategies are culturally appropriate, didactically significant, and respond to the real needs of the students and the school.

#### ***4.7. Results Of the Third Stage: Reflection and Interpretive Evaluation***

The analysis of the focus group narratives and the pedagogical intervention, using the NVivo software, fostered the organization of a corpus of meanings regarding school coexistence and citizenship training. From this procedure, categories emerged that account for the students' interpretation of their daily experience, alluding to the importance of dialogue, empathy, emotional regulation, and respect for difference. These categories were not imposed *a priori*, but arose directly from the testimonies, which gave the analysis a genuine and contextualized character.

In the students' voices, it was reiterated that dialogue constitutes the principal tool for conflict resolution. A fifth-grade student expressed that "*when we fight over the ball, we talk so that everyone has a turn*", while a third-grade girl pointed out: "*I prefer to talk before shouting because that way we understand each other better*". These accounts illustrate how children recognise that conversing and actively listening to their peers favours the peaceful resolution of disagreements. Similarly, narratives linked to empathy appeared, as a fourth-grade boy affirmed: "*if my friend is sad, I also get sad, because I care about how she feels*". These expressions show that students are beginning to comprehend the emotions of others as part of school life.

The feedback of the results to the educational community was a crucial moment of this stage. In the socialisation sessions, students recognised themselves in the emerging categories and valued the learning achieved. Several expressed feeling proud of having improved their ability to apologise or to invite an excluded peer to participate in different school activities. For their part, teachers highlighted that the process allowed them to identify progress in the management of conflicts and the emotional self-regulation of the children, noting that the techno-pedagogical activities, by including videos, audios, and reflections on contextualized situations, contributed to generating calmer and more cooperative environments in the classroom, as well as a better appropriation of concepts related to civic competencies and school coexistence.

The collective reflection, in turn, facilitated the linkage of the findings with the implemented technopedagogical proposal. The community understood that the educational software helped develop competencies in teamwork and assertive communication insofar as it recreated school situations that are familiar to the students. This proximity to their context was fundamental in helping the children connect what was learned in the software modules with the dynamics of their real school life, thus producing a connection between digital mediation and the practices of daily coexistence that occur in their everyday school life.

In synthesis, the third stage of the process became a space for the collective interpretation and validation of the research findings, including the voices of the students and teachers in the analysis. The narratives highlighted that peaceful coexistence in the rural schools is not just the fulfilment of norms and duties, but that it is built day by day through concrete actions (dialoguing, apologizing, recognizing emotions, or sharing with others); that is, collective learning crystallizes the idea that civic competencies in rural contexts can be strengthened through participatory dynamics and, therefore, mediated by technologies adapted to contextual conditions, which in turn shows progress toward more just and inclusive school communities.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that the civic competencies of rural basic primary students are not limited to a set of imposed rules or behaviours, but emerge as a vital process, linked to the community, the way of living affectively, and the culture of the territory itself. This affirmation aligns with the position of Cabra Torres *et al.*, (2023), who maintain that the rural school is presented as a space where citizenship is formed from life and constructed through mutual experiences and recognition. The results show that children understand coexistence and social respect not as impositions, but as practices that give meaning to their relationship with others, confirming that civic education, in the context of the rural school, is a way of life and not just a school-based learning.

Along the same lines, the emerging categories associated with dialogue, empathy, self-control, and reparation account for a situated understanding of citizenship. Students showed that the use of language to manage conflicts and the capacity to recognise one's own and others' emotions constitute fundamental learning for coexistence. This finding is indeed consistent with the approach of Maldonado

and Barajas (2018), for whom empathy favours acceptance among peers and the growth of social relationships in childhood. In this way, civic education becomes evident in the internalisation of attitudes that allow the recognition of the other and emotional self-regulation as necessary conditions to achieve and sustain school peace.

The research also shows that the learning of civic competencies in rural spaces is manifested through the intertwining of the cognitive, emotional, and ethical, in congruence with the competence model proposed by the National Ministry of Education (2004; 2011a). Children do not simply identify rules, but also inquire about their meaning and the equity of their application, bringing into function an early understanding of justice in terms of social value. These results corroborate the need not only to confront teaching practices that favour obedience but also to advance toward a model of critical pedagogies focused on deliberation, argumentation, and critical thinking, as proposed by Ponce *et al.* (2020) when referring to education for citizenship as an ethical urgency for the 21st century.

The use of educational technologies, through the Peaceful Resolution of School Conflicts tool, segmented rural pedagogical practice, as the technopedagogical strategy was not perceived as merely instrumental, but led the student to participate in interactive experiences where conflict, cooperation, and respect were put into practice in each of the activities carried out. As Cabero and Valencia (2022) affirm, digital technologies thus become environments of mediation that improve the ways of learning and coexisting. The technological mediation in the present study implied that the student becomes an active subject, enhancing their ability to dialogue and enrich their forms of civic expression, even in situations with clear technological limitations.

From an analytical perspective, the technopedagogical strategy was also a space for the democratisation of knowledge, since the simple interface and the contextualised narrative allowed students to identify with the problems, converging on meaningful learning experiences close to their reality. This finding serves to corroborate what Paba *et al.*, (2020) established, for whom gamification and digital contextualization increase students' motivation and sense of belonging. In this way, the pedagogical use of technology was not only a promoter of civic competencies but also constituted a mechanism for educational equity in an attempt to compensate, through didactic creativity, the structural inequalities and the digital divide present

in rural educational institutions.

One of the most relevant contributions of the present study focuses on the social transfer of knowledge; the know-how, the learning, and the civic practices that emerge in rural settings constitute a fundamental input for rethinking how citizenship training should be conceived in urban environments. While in cities, programs are organised by the form of formal instruction and normative regulation, in the rural environment, citizenship is learned through cooperation, reciprocity, and the emotional bond with the community. This socially transferable knowledge illustrates that the knowledge and practices of the countryside can enrich urban pedagogies, favouring an education that is more empathetic than competency-based; or, as Freire (1997) would say, the knowledge that is constructed in contextual practice has an emancipatory value when it becomes shared knowledge and collective wisdom.

The results also suggest that digital citizenship must be understood as an extension of the citizenship that is lived and shared with the territorial context. Following Martínez - Bravo (2022), in this sense, digital literacy is not reduced to the mere management of technical tools, but also imposes the critical and ethical capacity to act responsibly in both virtual and face-to-face spaces. In this vein, the use of software and the techno-pedagogical activities helped strengthen the students' reflective thinking, allowing them to identify respectful and supportive behaviours in both the physical school and on digital screens. This fusion between local citizenship and digital citizenship constitutes evidence of the formative power of technologies when they are built from a cultural and pedagogical relevance; in this particular case, the situations presented in the software emerged from the dialogue of teachers, students, and researchers through the focus groups.

Finally, the emerging results of the research allow us to believe in the assertion that the formation of civic competencies in rural settings is, above all, a process of humanisation mediated by education. The children's voices show that peaceful coexistence is learned by talking, understanding, and acting with empathy. The techno-pedagogical strategy, when fostering experiences of collective reflection, takes part in favouring students to change imposed obedience for conscious self-regulation. In a country marked by inequalities and conflict, this type of learning is a concrete way of building peace from the school, where knowledge becomes social transformation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The research achieved its main objective: to characterize and understand the perceptions and practices of civic competencies in students from rural schools in the municipality of Siachoque, Boyacá (Colombia), demonstrating that citizenship training is constructed within the framework of daily interactions strongly situated in the life of the community. Through the three phases developed – diagnosis, techno-pedagogical intervention, and interpretive reflection – it was confirmed that rural education is a fertile setting for the promotion of democratic values, respect for differences, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, reaffirming the school's role as a space for social and cultural transformation.

From a conceptual perspective, the research findings allowed for the demonstration that civic competencies in rural children integrate cognitive, emotional, ethical, and relational dimensions that are manifested through the use of dialogue, empathy, self-regulation, and cooperation. This forms a more holistic idea of citizenship, which is not a list of prescriptive knowledge, but a way of living that develops from shared experience and the recognition of the other. The study thus contributes to broadening the understanding of contextualised civic education, since it demonstrates that civic learning in educational settings occurs through interaction, sensitivity toward the other, and the feeling of belonging to the community, rather than through normative teaching.

From the methodological and didactic point of view, the integration of the Peaceful Resolution of School Conflicts software was a significant experience of educational innovation in the framework of rural education. The design, which was adapted to the technical limitations of the rural environment, and the approach of presenting the situation through aspects of play in storytelling as an educational medium, allowed for the identification that technology can be an efficient resource for working on learning from an ethical perspective, such as respect or cooperation, and from the adaptation to what is significant. The applied techno-pedagogical strategy helped contribute to good school coexistence, but also allowed for the introduction of learning in terms of respect, cooperation, and justice. This corroborates that technology gains meaning only when a link is established with the reality of the context and the formative goals of the school.

In social terms, the research reaffirms the value of the knowledge produced in rural contexts, which can be considered a form of the social transfer of

knowledge. The practices of citizenship in rural territories, which are built from solidarity, co-responsibility, and dialogue, offer transferable learning for urban spaces, where a more individualistic or normative model usually predominates. Recognising the knowledge produced in villages implies democratising the construction of knowledge and validating local pedagogies. Social transfer, thus understood, acts as a bridge of educational reciprocity between different territories, promoting cognitive and cultural equity.

Finally, one of the points presented in the results of this study indicates an ethical and pedagogical projection that goes beyond the simple academic sphere, since the findings encourage the creation and

implementation of school policies and practices that strengthen citizenship, from a comprehensive and holistic education, making possible the articulation of the school, the family, and the community in the building of peace and coexistence, as well as continuing the construction and evaluation of a sustainable techno-pedagogical strategy that fosters digital citizenship and democratic participation, beginning from childhood. In conclusion, civic education, understood as a reflective and situated practice, is established in this study as a path for social transformation, through which language, empathy, and common knowledge are constructed as the foundations of a more just and human society.

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