

Civics

“Civics”, recently introduced as school subject, not as a specialist teaching area, but as a way of illustrating the network of legal and institutional relationships in which children and young people, and with them, adults, are immersed, and which enable them to share in the community.

“Civics” looks at living together, starting with family relationships, then school, and embraces micro and concrete economic and social relationships. It then moves on to sports, religious, and educational groups, in which children and young people come together applying rules, and knowing the penalties.

The young see, albeit less directly, and rather vaguely in the background, a multiplicity of authorities: from the traffic warden to the fireman, the police officer, the judge, or the mayor; from the President of the Republic to the head of government, about whom they “know”, either through direct experience, or through a mere fleeting perception of things.

They live in variously ordered or challenged regional and social contexts, and know the difference between a well kept and a scruffy neighbourhood, a hospital that works and one that is not up to scratch, between a beautiful and elegant square and a street with heavy or dangerous traffic, a well-equipped school and another with problems, and in different contexts, between poverty and wealth. These are places where they see community life and where they perceive differences, but also inequalities.

“Civics” thus concerns areas where children and young people live, but on which attention, reflection and research have not yet been focused. These are fragmented and disconnected realities that “Civics” brings together, and through which children and young people discover and re-invent, sometimes with enlightening simplicity and depth, revealing in primis to themselves what they already “know”.

So “Civics” allows the discussion of rights and duties, community, freedom, justice, the legal system, the constitution, law, punishment, government, government spending, taxation, the common good, and pluralism, but without departing from the realm of direct experience.

Within these learning contexts, adults can teach a lot, and at the same time, can learn a lot, on equal terms.

Franco Fichera

Le belle tasse (*nice taxes*)