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CHAPTER 10

Civic Knowledge and Engagement: A Synthesis

SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS RELATING TO THE 1999 IEA CIVIC EDUCATION STUDY

- Students in most participating countries demonstrate knowledge of fundamental democratic ideals and processes and moderate skill in interpreting political materials. Their understanding, however, is often superficial or detached from life. About one-third of the students are unable to interpret a simple election leaflet, for example.
- Differences between countries in civic knowledge and skills are not as large as in cross-national studies in mathematics. There are no simple explanations for differences in countries' levels of performance in civic knowledge. The high-performing group includes some countries that have experienced massive political transitions during the lifetimes of these 14-year-olds, as well as other countries that are long-standing democracies.
- Within countries there is a substantial positive relationship between students' knowledge of democratic processes and institutions and their reported likelihood of voting when they become adults.
- Educational practices play an important role in preparing students for citizenship. Schools that operate in a participatory democratic way, foster an open climate for discussion within the classroom and invite students to take part in shaping school life are effective in promoting both civic knowledge and engagement. Many students, however, do not perceive this participatory climate in their classrooms or these opportunities in their schools.
- Teachers of civic-related subjects are largely favorable to civic education and consider it important for both their students and their country. Teachers in many countries believe that better materials, more subject-matter training and more instructional time would improve civic education.
- Young people agree that good citizenship includes the obligation to obey the law and to vote. In fact, most students report that they intend to vote when they are adults. However, it is the perception of many young people that their schools teach little about the importance of voting. When students perceive that their schools emphasize this topic, the proportion who say they are likely to vote increases.
- Except for voting, students are unlikely to think that conventional political participation is very important. The large majority of young people say they are unlikely to join a political party, consider writing a letter to a newspaper about a social concern or become a political candidate in the future.
- Across countries, students are open to less traditional forms of civic and political engagement such as collecting money for a charity and participating in non-violent protests or rallies. A small minority of students would be willing to participate in protest activities that would be illegal in most countries, such as blocking traffic or occupying buildings.
- Students are likely to get their major exposure to news through television, and in most countries they tend to trust that medium somewhat more than newspapers. The frequency of watching news programs on television is associated with higher civic knowledge in about half the participating countries. It is also related to students' projected likelihood of voting in nearly all countries.
- The trust in government expressed by youth is similar to adult attitudes in the different countries. The courts and the police are trusted the most, while political parties are trusted the least. Across countries, students have generally positive attitudes toward the political and economic rights of women and toward immigrants' rights.
- In about one-third of the countries males have slightly higher civic knowledge scores than females. Female students are much more likely than male students to support women's political and economic rights and rights for immigrants. Males are more willing to engage in illegal protest behavior activities than females. Females are more likely to collect money for and be involved with social causes.
- In almost all the participating countries, students from homes with more educational resources possess more civic knowledge, and in about one-fifth of the countries they are more likely to say they will vote.

The IEA Civic Education Study was initiated in the mid-1990s by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement to examine the ways in which young people are prepared for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in their societies, many of them undergoing rapid change. The preparation of young people for civic participation is a complex task. While the school has an important role, it does not stand alone in this process. Rather, it is nested within a set of systems and influences. The political culture includes political and economic values that influence young people's views; this culture increasingly is influenced by global processes. The practices of citizenship are absorbed and refined through experience in many kinds of communities and with the mass media. In this study we have examined several aspects of adolescents' experience. In looking at homes, our focus has been on the resources that families provide to foster literacy and educational achievement. In schools our focus has been on what the curriculum prescribes for students to learn, on the climate for discussions within classrooms, and on organizations important in the lives of students and their peers. We included many of the dimensions identified as important in the earlier case study phase of the research (Torney-Purta, Schwille & Amadeo, 1999).

In this chapter we will first examine the IEA Civic Education Study's overall accomplishments, next look at some country differences, and finally present a synthesis across chapters indicating reasons for optimism and for pessimism.

WHAT THE STUDY ACCOMPLISHED

The IEA Civic Education Study was massive, both in terms of number of respondents and in breadth of coverage. Nearly 90,000 14-year-olds in 28 countries were surveyed during 1999 on topics ranging from their knowledge of democratic principles to their trust in government. The analysis of this information has enriched our understanding of what youth know about democracy, citizenship, national identity and diversity, and addressed most of the policy questions with which we began the study. Although we cannot predict future behavior, we have gained a picture of some current beliefs and activities of young people, as well as their future intentions.

One of the study's purposes has been to point in a constructive way to some of the high points and low points of specific countries' experience with civic education for adolescents. We have investigated some of the potential predictors of knowledge and engagement within countries. Participating countries will issue national reports, and there will also be further in-depth international reports. It is our hope that the data (to be released in 2002) will be a resource to researchers cross-nationally to conduct additional analysis.

Civic education was not high on some countries' agendas in 1993 when we began the study. There is evidence that it has come to the forefront in many places, often as the process of consolidating democracy has intensified. We have developed tools that can be used across democratic countries to assess the major dimensions of young people's civic understanding, attitudes and engagement. Case studies formulated during Phase 1 identified in the participating countries a common core of content that focused on democracy, national identity and diversity. From this we developed the content framework

and then designed a reliable and valid test and survey of civic education. In collaborating with educators and researchers from 28 countries, we learned the importance of viewing citizenship as composed of several relatively independent dimensions. These dimensions include knowledge of fundamental ideas about democracy, skills in analyzing media communication, concepts of how democracy works, trust in government institutions, supportive attitudes toward rights for groups experiencing discrimination, and expectations of adult participation. Just as we identified and measured these different aspects of citizenship, we have also explored a differentiated set of conditions that might foster them. This work has taken us beyond country rankings based on the knowledge scores of youth. It has also taken us beyond much of the research on adults based on a limited set of attitudinal measures.

HOW STUDENTS RESPONDED IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

There were some areas of the instrument in which students' responses across countries were similar. In most areas, however, students in different countries demonstrated different patterns of performance (refer to Chapters 3 through 7). To depict these we have divided countries into three groups on each scale in the test and survey: (i) a group significantly above the international mean; (ii) a group not significantly different from the international mean; and (iii) a group significantly below the international mean. This analysis is summarized in Table 10.1 and will be discussed separately for civic knowledge, civic engagement and civic attitudes. Multifaceted patterns of strengths and weaknesses can then be identified.

Civic Knowledge

Students from a diverse set of countries score at each of the three levels *on civic knowledge*, the total score based on knowledge of civic content and skills in interpreting political communication. Those *countries significantly above the mean* are Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hong Kong (SAR), Italy, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic and the United States (column 3 of Table 10.1). This high-performing group includes countries with substantial traditions of democratic government and civic education and also countries that have experienced recent and major political transitions (in several cases within the lifetimes of 14-year-olds). The high-scoring countries seem to have in common educational systems that successfully promote reading literacy (although some countries with high literacy levels scored less well). The post-Communist countries that perform well include those that experienced transitions mobilizing considerable attention within the country. These countries were also able to organize school-based civic education programs relatively quickly after these transitions.

The countries *at the international mean in performance on civic knowledge* are Australia, Bulgaria, Denmark, England, Germany, Hungary, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. This group of countries is again diverse, and it includes several where deficiencies in civic education have recently been identified and new initiatives planned.

Table 10.1 Civic Knowledge, Civic Engagement and Civic Attitudes Across Countries

Country	Civic Knowledge			Civic Engagement				Civic Attitudes and Other Concepts						
	Content knowledge (subscale)	Interpretative skills (subscale)	Total civic knowledge	Conventional citizenship	Social movement citizenship	Expected participation in political activities	Confidence in participation in school	Economy-related government responsibilities	Society-related government responsibilities	Positive attitudes toward immigrants	Positive attitudes toward one's nation	Trust in government-related institutions	Support for women's political rights	Open climate for classroom discussion
Australia	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Belgium (French)	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Bulgaria	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Chile	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Colombia	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Cyprus	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Czech Republic	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Denmark	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
England	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Estonia	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Finland	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Germany	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Greece	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Hong Kong (SAR)	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Hungary	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Italy	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Latvia	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Lithuania	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Norway	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Poland	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Portugal	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Romania	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Russian Federation	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Slovak Republic	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Slovenia	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Sweden	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Switzerland	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
United States	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲

Source: IEA Civic Education Study, Standard Population of 14-years-olds tested in 1999.

▲ Country mean significantly higher than international mean.

▼ Country mean significantly lower than international mean.

The countries *below the international mean in performance on civic knowledge* are Belgium (French), Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania. This mixed group of Latin American, Western European, Baltic and other post-Communist countries has experienced considerable changes in government within the last 10 to 30 years. Belgium (French), Chile and Portugal tested relatively young samples, which may partially account for their position.

In looking at all these differences, we need to remember that the amount of variation between countries' performance on the total civic knowledge score is relatively small—more similar to that found in the IEA study of literacy than in IEA studies in mathematics (TIMSS and TIMSS-R). This finding suggests that the family, the community and the media are important sources of learning in addition to school-based civic education.

It is also possible to examine the two civic knowledge sub-scales separately (Table 10.1, columns 1 and 2). A look at the content knowledge sub-scale alone reveals that Hungary and Slovenia would be added to the high-performing countries mentioned in the previous section. If we look at skill in interpreting political communication, then it is evident that Australia, England and Sweden would be added to the list of high-performing countries mentioned in the previous section.

Although there are significant differences across countries in students' knowledge, there are also basic ideas associated with democracy on which there is consensus across countries. These areas of agreement can be identified by examining some of the items endorsed in all countries as part of *the concept of democracy*. There is consensus on the part of the average student across countries about the importance to democracy of free elections, civil society, lack of constraint on expressions of opinion, the rule of law and the presentation of different points of view in the press.

Both the data on knowledge and on concepts suggest that 14-year-olds in these countries grasp most of the fundamental principles involved in the ideal functioning of democracy, but in many countries their understanding is relatively superficial.

Civic Engagement

A second important dimension of citizenship is the students' interest and engagement in various types of participation in the different systems to which they belong.

First, it should be noted that these young people believe that good citizenship for adults includes the obligation to obey the law and to vote (see Chapter 4). Although there are considerable differences between countries, the obligations of loyalty to the country, serving in the military and working hard are also endorsed by the average student. Conventional participatory actions such as engaging in political discussion and joining a political party are relatively infrequently endorsed as important for adult citizens.

In the case of voting, we can look at both students' views and teachers' views of the extent to which the topic is discussed in schools. Teachers within a

country are more likely to say that they teach about voting than students are to say that they learn about voting in school (compare Table 7.1 with Table E.5 in Appendix E). This difference between students' and teachers' reports of a curricular focus on voting is especially striking in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Norway and Sweden. In these countries there is a difference of more than 30 percent between the proportion of teachers who say students have an opportunity to learn about voting and the lower proportion of students who perceive that they have had such an opportunity. Student respondents in seven out of eight of these countries (except Hungary) also have scores on concepts of conventional citizenship that are significantly below the international mean. (See Chapter 4.)

In contrast, there are some countries where voting and other conventional citizenship activities are thought to be relatively important by students: Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the United States (Table 10.1). Many of these countries have experienced dramatic political events during the last several decades, and all have made some recent efforts at highlighting or improving civic education.

Citizenship responsibilities relating to participation in social movement groups are very likely to be endorsed. Students in a wide range of countries support these activities in connection with environmental or community service groups. In previous studies the assumption was often made that conventional activities form the basic or minimum level of citizenship participation. To this cluster of activities the especially interested citizen might add membership and action connected to social causes. The 14-year-olds in this study seem instead to be primarily attracted by social movement groups and to place little emphasis on conventional participatory activities apart from voting.

Although these conventional participatory activities that citizens may choose to undertake are not frequently endorsed, other attributes traditionally associated with citizenship, such as patriotism or loyalty to the country and willingness to serve in the military, are rated as important in many countries.

It is easier to grasp some of the country differences in civic engagement by looking across scales. There are *four scales from the survey that deal with participation*, three with participation in the political or social system and one with school participation. These are (i) the concept of citizenship as involving conventional participation, (ii) the concept of citizenship as involving social movement participation, (iii) expected political activities as an adult, and (iv) confidence in the effectiveness of participation at school. Table 10.1, columns 4–7, summarizes for each country whether each of these four scores is significantly above, not different from, or below the international mean. Four of these columns (conventional citizenship, social movement citizenship, expected political activities, and confidence at school) relate to active participation.

In the following countries *three or four of these participation scales are significantly above the international mean*: Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania and the United States. Young people in these countries seem more willing than those in other countries to participate in several ways and at

several levels of the social and political system. This group includes both of the Latin American countries, the Southern European countries (with the exception of Italy), two post-Communist countries and the United States. This group, where civic engagement is relatively high, includes countries that perform significantly above the mean on the knowledge test (Cyprus, Greece, Poland and the United States), and also countries that perform significantly below the mean on the knowledge test (Chile, Colombia, Portugal and Romania).

In the following countries, either three or four of the participation scales are significantly below the international mean: Australia, Belgium (French), the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. Note that this group, where students appear less engaged in a civic sense, includes all of the Northern European countries except Norway and two of the post-Communist countries.

These countries where students are relatively low in civic participation do not have a common level of performance on the knowledge test; the Czech Republic and Finland score high on knowledge, while Belgium (French) scores low. The other countries in the group have knowledge scores near the international mean.

Already we can see that no single measure of citizenship can adequately represent the complexity of the performance and behavior of students in these 28 countries. Certainly, knowledge scores alone do not tell the entire story; neither does current or intended participation. Furthermore, the post-Communist countries that might have been expected a decade ago to have similar scores in this study show quite diverse patterns of performance in civic knowledge and civic engagement. Previous history of democracy, the organization of the Communist system, the way in which transitions took place, recent economic conditions, and initiatives toward civic education reform should be examined in attempting to understand these patterns. These findings suggest the importance of multiple indicators of civic education's success and of multiple routes in improving civic education.

Civic Attitudes

The attitude scales included in the study were varied—positive national feeling, trust in government-related institutions, support for the rights of immigrants and support for political rights for women. There are substantial similarities between the results for these 14-year-olds and the results for adult samples tested in the past decade using similar measures. For example, trust in political parties is lower than trust in institutions such as the national parliament, and substantially less than trust in courts and police (Chapter 5). To take another example of similarity between adults and young people, trust in government-related institutions is below the international mean in countries with short histories of democracy, especially the post-Communist countries. These young people already seem in many respects to be members of their countries' political cultures.

Trust in the media is also relatively low in most of the countries that are in the process of consolidating democracy. There are interesting patterns of differential trust when television, radio and newspapers are considered separately. For example, television and radio are trusted as much or more than newspapers as sources of news by these 14-year-olds in all countries except the United States (Chapter 5).

Those countries where trust in government-related institutions is low nevertheless tend to maintain relatively positive attitudes about the nation (Chapter 5 and Table 10.1). Only Estonia and Latvia are significantly below the international mean both on trust in government-related institutions and on positive attitudes toward the nation. There seems to be a reservoir of support either for the nation or for government-related institutions among young people in the large majority of these countries.

Concepts of the proper responsibilities of the government also show substantial similarity to results of studies with adults. For example, there is a high level of endorsement of government responsibilities for society-related matters such as providing education, and a somewhat lower level of endorsement for the government assuming certain responsibilities related to the economy. Respondents in Australia, Belgium (French), Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong (SAR), Norway, Switzerland and the United States are the least likely to believe that it is appropriate for the government to intervene in economic matters such as reducing income disparities, guaranteeing jobs and controlling prices (Chapter 4 and Table 10.1). Young people may be reflecting support for the free market that is part of the political culture of adults in their country.

In the area of endorsement of political rights and opportunities for immigrants and for women, there are, as Table 10.1 shows, relatively low scores in several countries facing economic difficulties. The scores on both of these scales are below the international mean in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic (Chapter 5). It is important, however, that the average 14-year-old even in these countries is more likely to have a positive than a negative attitude toward rights for both immigrants and women. There are gender differences in these scales that are more substantial than for any other measures in the instrument, with females having more positive attitudes.

The particular groups experiencing discrimination differ between nations (immigrants in many countries, but also racial, linguistic and religious groups, among others). There is a less ambiguous basis for examining attitudes toward groups experiencing discrimination within a nation or a small group of nations than internationally, and further analysis of these data is indicated.

GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM IN CIVIC EDUCATION

There are both positive and negative aspects of the civic knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes and activities of these adolescents surveyed just before the end of the 1990s.

On the positive side, students in some countries perform well when asked to demonstrate their understanding of the fundamental ideas and principles of democracy. However, if one moves beyond these basics, understanding appears to be superficial. Substantial numbers of young people, especially in some countries, fail to attain even this grasp. Among the most telling gaps are those dealing with understanding policy positions of potential candidates in elections.

Also on the positive side, students from some countries that have recently experienced major transitions following decades of non-democratic rule score in the top group on the knowledge test. High levels of literacy, national political cultures that moved in visible ways to support democratic institutions and efforts to reform curricula and train teachers may be among the reasons.

There is no simple and compelling explanation for the countries whose students appear in the top-scoring group, however. A number of countries in the middle- and low-scoring groups have recently recognized deficiencies in civic education and instituted programs of reform. These new initiatives did not take effect in time to be reflected in students' performance in 1999, but the IEA results can serve as benchmarks for future evaluations of programs in these countries.

Furthermore, on the optimistic side, this study shows that knowledge of content and skills in interpreting political information are valuable in themselves and also positively associated with young people's assessment of how likely they will be to vote as adults. The context in which this knowledge is imparted is important, however. A classroom climate in which the student is free to discuss opinions and different points of view is associated with both higher knowledge scores and with intent to vote in the majority of countries. This finding about the value of encouraging free discussion in the classroom has been replicated from the 1971 IEA Civic Education Study in a much more diverse set of countries.

Teachers report that recitation, textbooks and worksheets designed to transmit knowledge still form the predominant mode of instruction. In contrast, teachers' vision for civic instruction focuses on students discussing and being critical about information. They favor more subject-matter preparation, better materials and more instructional time to close this gap.

Civic engagement also shows a differentiated pattern. Students across countries show an acceptance of the rule of law in the importance they attach to citizens' obligation to obey the law. Young people in some countries appear ready to take advantage of several avenues for participation—conventional activities in the political system, social movement groups in the community and joining with others to solve problems in school. However, the more pessimistic view reveals in some countries a marked disinclination toward such participation and a lack of the necessary infrastructure for engagement.

Returning to the positive viewpoint, we see that the majority of students express a willingness to vote (especially when schools stress its importance and when they are knowledgeable about civic-related topics). In most countries, young people's views of political parties are relatively negative, however. In

place of giving allegiance to parties and to what many perceive as hierarchical political organizations ruled by an older generation, they are instead gravitating to social movements as the arenas in which good citizenship can be manifested. For example, many are willing to join voluntary groups to raise money or to assist the needy in their communities.

Environmental organizations are also popular in some countries. Youth may reject certain types of conventional political organizations, especially those that do not give a relatively immediate sense of feedback. Other research also suggests that young people want particularistic face-to-face engagement and not universalistic and more distant relations, in this case to government or political parties. It is impossible, however, to predict the long-term implications for society if there is a decline in conventional participation.

When we look at what makes a difference to students' scores within a country, it is clear that equipping young people with knowledge of basic democratic principles and with skills in interpreting political communication is important in enhancing their expectation that they will vote. School organizations such as councils and parliaments seem to play a small but positive role in preparing students for the responsibilities of adult citizenship. In some countries, young people seem ready to grasp new participation opportunities that are open to them. Conversely, in some countries, the infrastructure for this kind of participation appears to be lacking. Phase 1 of the study suggested that although a vision of skill-focused learning and participation in school governance is widely endorsed, concrete movement in this direction may be viewed with ambivalence. The idea that schools should be models of democracy is often stated but difficult to put into practice.

Young people are frequent consumers of the electronic media. The 14-year-olds who watch more news on television are both more knowledgeable about civic matters and more likely to say that they will vote when they become adults. Although newspaper reading is probably also a positive influence, these young people report that they are more likely to watch or listen to news than to read newspapers. In most countries, they also report more trust in news on television than in what appears in newspapers. On the pessimistic side, only a little more than half the students place much trust in media sources, and many are not interested in political news.

Support for opportunities for immigrants and for women's political rights is widespread, especially among females. In every country, however, a small number of young people would restrict opportunities for immigrants and for women.

A moderate amount of trust in governmental institutions is widely acknowledged as an important supportive factor for democracy. Young people in countries that have recently experienced political transitions express low levels of trust, but in most there is a reservoir of support in the form of positive feelings toward the nation.

Gender differences appear to be less sizeable than those found in previous studies. In some countries, when other factors are controlled, males are somewhat more knowledgeable about civic-related topics and females more

likely to expect to vote. A very substantial gender difference in support for women's rights continues to exist. In a substantial number of countries, females are more likely than males to support social movement involvement as important for adult citizens and to be willing to collect money for social causes. Males have more positive national attitudes in a number of countries and are more likely to engage in protest activities that would be illegal in many countries. Differences in both knowledge and engagement associated with home educational background and expected education are also significant.

Another positive finding of the current study is that teachers feel that civic education at this age level is valuable both for students' development and for that of their countries. They give a more positive picture of this process than that provided by the experts interviewed during Phase 1 of the study. Civic-relevant topics are often integrated into courses in history or taught as part of social science or social studies. There is no widespread sentiment for civic education as a separate subject, but neither is a totally cross-curricular approach without anchors to subject matter popular. Teachers are responsive to official curriculum, materials and authorities, but they also find their own materials and negotiate with their students about what is relevant to learn. On the negative side, good materials, subject-matter training for teachers and sufficient instructional time are seen as lacking in many countries.

Civic education across these 28 countries has many facets, among them civic content knowledge, skills in understanding political communication, civic engagement of several types, and attitudes of trust and tolerance. The average student in most countries has a base of knowledge and positive attitudes upon which to build. There is no single approach inside or outside school that is likely to enhance all of these facets of citizenship. A focus on didactic instruction, issues-centered-classroom discussion, students' participation in school councils or other organizations, education about the media, or community-based projects may enhance one outcome without influencing (or even at the expense of) others. The school is a valuable focus for a significant number of these activities, however, indicated by the extent to which school factors predict civic knowledge and engagement. Our hope is that individual countries will examine their own students' positions in relation to the various dimensions identified in this study, conduct further analysis and involve policy-makers, educators and the public in a dialogue about the ways that curriculum, teacher training and community involvement can better prepare young people for citizenship.