

Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries

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Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen

**Judith Torney-Purta, Rainer Lehmann,
Hans Oswald and Wolfram Schulz**

With a chapter by **Bruno Losito and
Heinrich Mintrop**



The International Association for the
Evaluation of Educational Achievement

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	9
Chapter 1 Introduction to the IEA Civic Education Study	11
The study within the context of IEA and the participating countries	14
The two phases of the IEA Civic Education Study	16
Theoretical frameworks guiding the design	20
Policy and research issues in the IEA Civic Education Study	22
Summary of aims of the study and influences on it	25
Chapter 2 Instrument Development, Sampling, Testing and Quality Control	27
Highlights relating to methodology	28
Framework development during Phase 1	28
The process of test and survey development during Phase 2	30
Sampling, testing and scaling during Phase 2	33
Summary of analysis	38
Guide to the presentation of data found in Chapters 3–7	38
Summary of methods	39
Chapter 3 Knowledge of Content and Skills in Interpreting Civic Information	43
Highlights relating to civic knowledge	44
Civic knowledge in the 1999 IEA instrument: how it was measured	46
Sample items and their results	46
Estimation of item difficulties and student abilities	51
Civic knowledge across countries	54
Distinguishing between content knowledge and interpretative skills	58
Gender differences in civic knowledge	62
Home literacy resources and civic knowledge	65
Summary	67
Chapter 4 Students' Concepts of Democracy, Citizenship and Government	69
Highlights relating to civic concepts	70
Concepts of democracy	71
Concepts of citizenship	77
Concepts of the responsibilities of government	83
Summary	89

Chapter 5	Students' Attitudes toward the Nation, the Government, Immigrants and Women's Political Rights	91
	Highlights relating to civic attitudes	92
	Trust in government-related institutions and the media	93
	Positive attitudes toward one's nation	98
	Positive attitudes toward immigrants	101
	Support for women's political rights	106
	Summary	111
Chapter 6	Students' Civic Engagement and Political Activities	113
	Highlights relating to civic activities	114
	Political interest and exposure to political news	114
	Expected participation in political activities	118
	Summary	127
Chapter 7	Students' Views of Opportunities for Civic Engagement in Classrooms, Schools and Youth Organizations	129
	Highlights relating to schools and civic education	130
	Relation of this area to the study's design	130
	Confidence in the effectiveness of participation at school	131
	Students' views of their learning	135
	Open classroom climate for discussion	137
	Participation in civic-related organizations	141
	Summary	143
Chapter 8	A Model for Explaining Students' Civic Knowledge and Engagement	145
	Highlights relating to the correlates of civic knowledge and engagement	146
	The model	147
	Summary	155
Chapter 9	The Teaching of Civic Education	157
	<i>Bruno Losito and Heinrich Mintrop</i>	
	Highlights relating to teaching civic education	158
	The sample	158
	Subject-matter background and confidence to teach civic education	159
	Civic education instruction	161
	The institutional framework of civic education	166
	Views of citizenship	170
	Summary	171

Chapter 10 Civic Knowledge and Engagement: A Synthesis	175
Summary of highlights relating to the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study	176
What the study accomplished	177
How students responded in different countries	178
Grounds for optimism and pessimism in civic education	183
Appendices	187
A: Examples of items from the civic knowledge test	188
B: Item-by-score maps for scales reported in chapters 5 through 7	195
C: Classical psychometric indices (selected)	208
D: Standard deviations of total civic knowledge	210
E: Teachers' reports	211
References	217
Acknowledgments	229

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, known as IEA, is an independent, international consortium of national research institutions and governmental research agencies, with headquarters in Amsterdam. Its primary purpose is to conduct large-scale comparative studies of educational achievement with the aim of gaining more in-depth understanding of the effects of policies and practices within and across systems of education.

FOREWORD

In 1994 the General Assembly of IEA decided to undertake a study on civic education. It was not the first time that IEA had focused on this issue. As early as 1971 it had taken its first look at civic education, in the context of the so-called Six Subject Study. But the decision, in 1994, to look again at the subject was a sound one given the huge changes by then facing many countries as a result of the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The considerable task of establishing or re-establishing democratic governments in a number of countries highlighted even more the need to develop citizenship and the role that educational systems could play in meeting that aim. Assessing civic education was important not only for those countries, however, but also for societies with long-established democratic traditions. In general, it could be said that changes in the political, social and educational scenes of many countries suggested the timeliness of this new study, particularly in terms of its potential to make a substantial contribution to an understanding of these changes.

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) was, and is, in an excellent position to make such contribution. It was founded in 1959 for the purpose of conducting comparative studies focusing on educational policies and practices in various countries and educational systems around the world. Since that time, it has completed a significant number of studies in different subjects, as varied as reading literacy, mathematics, science, pre-primary education, and information and communication technologies in education or languages, among others. With its nearly 60 member countries, its Secretariat located in Amsterdam and a number of interconnected research centres in all continents, IEA is in a very sound situation to produce cross-country comparative studies that are based on rigorously collected and analysed data.

In 1994, the IEA General Assembly approved the Civic Education Study as a two-phased project. The aim of Phase 1 was to collect extensive information describing the circumstances, content and process of civic education in participating countries. In doing this, IEA summarised what country experts considered 14-year-old students should know about a number of topics related to democratic institutions and citizenship, including elections, individual rights, national identity, political participation and respect for ethnic and political diversity.

The results of Phase 1 were presented in *Civic education across countries: Twenty-four national case studies from the IEA Civic Education Project*, a book that received wide recognition among researchers, practitioners and policy-makers. Its 24 national case studies were written mostly by National Research Coordinators, and also took into account opinions expressed by National Expert Panels.

The information collected in Phase 1 was also used for preparing Phase 2. This second part of the project consisted of a test (keyed cognitive items) and a survey (un-keyed attitudinal and behavioural items) administered in each participating country to representative samples of about 3,000 students in the modal grade for 14-year-olds. A questionnaire was also administered to civic-related teachers and to school principals. Data were collected in spring 1999 in most of the participating countries.

This current publication, *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries*, presents the first results of Phase 2 of the study. It follows a style similar to that traditionally used by IEA, and it complements the more qualitative approach of the first volume by reporting quantitative information from the tests, surveys and questionnaires. Together, the two publications provide a complete and remarkable picture of civic education policies, practices and results across countries in the late 1990s.

Having identified and discussed the outcomes of our respective countries in an international context, we know that the time has arrived to pay special attention to the factors that merit consideration and possible action. Wise action requires a deep knowledge of the field. The comparative view helps us set our reflections in a context that allows us to interpret and to explain. In this manner, the value of an international approach can be truly realised. It is this realisation that is exactly the kind of contribution IEA can make to the development of education and educational systems. In the end, our activities can only be justified if they contribute to the advancement of societies made up of better-developed individuals.

IEA is particularly grateful to the following organisations, which are the major contributors to the international overhead of Phase 2 of the study: the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG or German Science Association) and the William T. Grant Foundation of New York. As in all IEA studies, individual participating countries also provided funding.

Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries represents the results of initiatives developed by the International Steering Committee of the study and by the National Research Coordinators and National Experts. Special thanks should necessarily go to the International Steering Committee and the International Coordinators, Professor Judith Torney-Purta (University of Maryland) and Professor Rainer Lehmann (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin). As the leaders of this study, they have provided its special spirit, and so deserve our recognition and thanks.

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