

Patterns in the Civic Knowledge, Engagement, and Attitudes of European Adolescents: The IEA Civic Education Study

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Introduction

Civic education and its role in democracy have a new place on the agendas of many European countries. Increasing globalisation economically and politically, along with threats to the traditional bases of citizenship, increasingly complex political issues such as environmental or immigration policy, and the fading of well-accepted narratives of country or State to which people can relate their own goals are amongst the reasons. The diminishing bonds with traditional social groups have given people more freedom of choice but seem to have led to declining 'social capital' in both Europe (van Deth *et al.*, 1999) and North America (Putnam, 2001). The tragic events in the last four months of 2001 brought new challenges to the sense of national security in many countries.

Many observers emphasise distinctions between the older and the newer democracies, but there is no compelling reason to think of them as having completely different sets of problems related to civic education. In Eastern and Central Europe, issues relating to citizenship have become more urgent as major political and economic changes have been implemented. The formal and informal political socialisation of previous generations has often been seen as a challenge. Plasser, Ulram and Waldrauch (1998) delineate several tasks as part of democratic consolidation, among them preparing the citizenry for political practices and attitudes, and stabilising and anchoring political institutions in all areas of society. This suggests an important role for civic education. Reforms of education for citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe have often required massive changes in the educational system, including large-scale hiring and preparation of new teachers (Losito & Mintrop, 2001).

In Western Europe, the issues are somewhat different but related. The older democracies face diminishing levels of conventional political participation, especially low rates of voting, declining party attachment and political disinterest among young people. They generally want to refresh or rejuvenate democracy and its appreciation by adolescents, usually by targeted rather than massive or system-wide reforms. Although civic education, as it attempts to build civic engagement, is especially important to educators in the older democracies, they also emphasise the role of civic knowledge, which may not be providing an adequate basis for the appreciation of democracy and for engagement.

Those in both groups of countries share concern about the government's political legitimacy. Norris (1999) differentiates support for the country as a political community from support for the regime's principles or for its institutions and their performance. One might, for example, feel positively about oneself as a Finn or Czech and be supportive of democratic principles, while at the same time expressing negative attitudes about the current performance of governmental leaders in Finland or the Czech Republic. Sense of trust in political institutions is important but complex. It is a delicate balance: too much trust on the part of citizens is sometimes thought of as a bad thing, as it may result in citizens taking successful government for granted, but widespread cynicism is not ideal either.

Trust can be both a result of and a contributor to a country's political stability. The sense of trust has been found to be low among adults in the post-Communist nations (Inglehart, 1997), but this is nuanced. In most countries, the great majority would not want to see the former Communist regime restored or the current Parliament disbanded. However, nostalgia exists for the economic and social welfare practices of the Socialist period (Plasser, Ulram, & Waldrauch, 1998; Matrai, 1999).

Much theorising about democracy has been concerned with the legitimacy of and participation in national governmental institutions at some distance from the average person. Concerns for civil society and the community bring the points of contact to a more local level, which some feel may make it more attractive to young people. It is not yet clear, however, how the various factors involved with formal governmental institutions, the economic situation, and civil society will come together in influencing the next generation across Europe.

The First Phase of the IEA Civic Education Study

In the early 1990s, many educators were aware of these issues, but there was little if any empirical evidence about the dimensions of the problem or possible directions for policy or practice. Thus, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (a comparative education association of nearly 60 member countries with headquarters in Amsterdam) began the process of conceptualising the subject area of civic education with the goal of developing a measuring instrument and conducting a test and survey of young people. The purpose of this article is to describe the similarities and differences in knowledge, engagement, and attitudes, using data from the 23 European countries that participated in Phase 2 of the IEA Civic Education Study. A final section will deal with future analysis and implications.

The first phase of this study aimed at describing the expectations which countries had for adolescents' preparation for citizenship and obtaining consensus about a common core of content with respect to the fundamental principles of democracy and citizenship that might be assessed across the approximately 30 countries expressing interest in the study. Lengthy case studies on the expectations concerning learning about civic-related subjects by 14-year-olds were formulated in each participating nation (Torney-Purta, Schwillle & Amadeo, 1999). The following European countries were represented: Belgium (French-speaking), Cyprus, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, and Slovenia. Non-European countries represented in this

volume were Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Hong Kong, and the US. There was a consensus about a core set of expectations for civic education. The issues identified above — knowledge about democracy and its principles, sense of engagement and willingness to participate, legitimacy or attitude of trust in government, and attitudes about the rights of various groups to participate — were all discussed in these case studies and formed the basis for the test and survey which make up Phase 2 of the IEA Civic Education Study.

The octagon model (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999, p. 18) used to frame the IEA Civic Education Study was inspired in part by contemporary psychological theories on the ecological approach to studying development (Bronfenbrenner, 1988) and the situated cognition theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The model captures the dynamic relation between the individual and societal levels. In its centre is the individual student, surrounded by public discourse or discussion of the goals, values, and practices related to civic education. This discussion influences the individual student through face-to-face everyday contact with the family (parents, siblings, extended family), the school (teachers, administrators, the intended curriculum and participation opportunities), the peer group (as it functions both in and out of school) and neighbours (including youth and community organisations). In addition to these face-to-face relationships, there is also the impact of television and other media. The emphasis in the IEA Study was on the school and the peer group (especially as it functions in school organisations and classrooms). The outer octagon circumscribing these processes includes institutions, processes and values in domains such as politics, education, and economics. It also includes the position of the nation within its region and the world. Laws and formal legal institutions are only one facet of this structure.

Again operating pragmatically, the IEA researchers did not prejudice the results by predicting either that the European countries would be highly similar to each other or that they would be grouped neatly into older and newer democracies.

The Second Phase of the IEA Civic Education Study

Design of the Test and Survey and Findings on Civic Knowledge

Incorporating material from the Phase 1 case studies, the IEA Civic Education researchers engaged in a 5-year process of development involving research coordinators from more than 20 countries and two pilot tests to arrive at an instrument that would be suitable for group administration in different countries, that was at an appropriate reading level, and that contained clearly formulated items for translation into 20 languages.

These testing materials were elaborated during meetings among National Research Coordinators and shaped by a process of voting on the topics and questions to be included. They concentrated on three core domains: Democracy, Democratic Institutions, and Citizenship; National Identity; and Social Cohesion and Diversity. These domains were elaborated into a Content Framework for the test and survey by illustrating the points with quotations taken from the national case study documents. The framework contained many of the topic areas recognised as important in debates about building, consolidating, and maintaining

democracies. For example, the first domain included incentives to participate in democracy, problems in transitions of government from non-democratic to democratic, characteristics and functions of elections and parties, citizens' rights, civic duties and obligations, the role of organisations or associations such as those thought of as part of civil society, and the political implications of economic issues. There were relatively few substantial differences of opinion about what should be included in the framework except on the role of items dealing with economics. Some National Research Coordinators thought that these topics had no place in a test for 14-year-olds, while others saw their relevance. As a result of the votes taken in this group, items about economics were not included in the test for the lower secondary (14-year-old) population but were placed in the test for the upper secondary age group tested later in 16 countries (Amadeo *et al.*, 2002).

This framework formed the basis for constructing the test of 38 items measuring civic knowledge and skills in interpreting political information (and may be found in the Appendix of Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). The National Research Coordinators decided that only about half the testing time should be devoted to questions with right and wrong answers, however. Thus, the IEA instrument included a measure of concepts of democracy (understanding of threats to democracy as well as positive or strengthening attributes), concepts of the good adult citizen, and concepts of the social and economic responsibilities of government (as well as a variety of attitudinal scales and items about the intent to participate in various civic and political behaviours).

Selected from a pool of about 140 items, the knowledge test included 38 items measuring content knowledge (in the domains described earlier). This test was developed with Item Response Theory or IRT scaling and is a psychometrically strong instrument with few item-by-country interactions. Twenty-five of these test items were designed to measure content knowledge, while 13 measured skills in interpreting civic information (e.g. a political leaflet, political cartoons, a mock newspaper article).

The test and survey were administered in 1999 to nationally representative samples of students in the modal grade for 14-year-olds (totalling 90,000 students). IEA Standards for sampling, translation, and testing were met (Martin, Rust, & Adams, 1999). The 23 European countries that participated in Phase 2 were Belgium (French-speaking), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, and Switzerland. The report of Phase 2 (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001) presents the results in a series of figures that details the position of each country's students as 'significantly above', 'at' or 'below' the international mean. Figure 1 summarises these results for some of the measures under each of the three categories. These 'international means' are based on all 28 participating countries (including Australia, Chile, Colombia, Hong Kong, and the US which are not the focus of this article). Note will be made in the text when the performance of these countries should be taken into account for a particular item or scale.

This section will outline similarities and differences among countries in average performance on the IEA test and indicate the factors within countries that are associated with high and low performance. The 38-item test of knowledge showed a range of performance among the European countries but did not divide

them neatly into Central and Eastern European countries and Western European countries (see a summary in Figure 1). Amongst the countries with high knowledge performance (above the international mean) were three post-Communist countries: Czech Republic, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Four post-Communist countries — Bulgaria, Hungary, the Russian Federation and Slovenia — scored at the international mean. Four post-Communist countries appeared in the lowest category, with performance below the international mean. They were Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania. The lowest performing students were from Colombia.

Diversity in overall knowledge test performance also characterised the Northern and Southern European countries, with five countries (Finland, Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Norway) in the group above the international mean and five countries (Denmark, Germany, England, Sweden, and Switzerland) in the middle group that was not significantly different from the international mean.

Country	Civic Knowledge	Civic Engagement		Civic Attitudes		
	Total Civic Knowledge	Conventional Citizenship	Expected Participation in Political Activities	Trust in Government-related Institutions	Positive Attitudes Towards Immigrants	Support for Women's Political Rights
Belgium (French)	▼	▼	▼			
Bulgaria		▲		▼	▼	▼
Cyprus	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Czech Republic	▲	▼	▼	▼		
Denmark		▼	▼	▲	▼	▲
England		▼	▼		▼	▲
Estonia	▼	▼		▼	▼	▼
Finland	▲	▼	▼			▲
Germany		▼	▼		▼	▲
Greece	▲	▲		▲	▲	
Hungary			▼		▼	▼
Italy	▲	▲	▼		▼	
Latvia	▼		▲	▼	▼	▼
Lithuania	▼	▲	▼	▼	▼	▼
Norway	▲	▼	▼	▲	▲	▲
Poland	▲	▲	▲		▲	
Portugal	▼	▲	▲	▼	▲	
Romania	▼	▲	▲			▼
Russian Federation		▼		▼		▼
Slovak Republic	▲	▲	▼	▲	▼	▼
Slovenia		▼		▼	▼	
Sweden		▼	▼		▲	▲
Switzerland		▼	▼	▲	▼	▲

▲ Country mean significantly *higher* than international mean.

▼ Country mean significantly *lower* than international mean.

Source: Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H. and Schulz, W. (2001) *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries*.

FIGURE 1. Civic Knowledge, Civic Engagement and Civic Attitudes Across Countries

Portugal and Belgium (French-speaking) scored below the international mean. In both these countries, problems with the grade or age of students sampled may have led to difficulties. The Belgian students, for example, were the youngest in the sample (mean age 14.1 compared to an international mean age of 14.7).

Although the two subscores for Knowledge of Democratic Principles and Skills in Interpreting Political Communication were highly correlated at the student level, there were nevertheless differences in patterns of performance between countries. Students in several countries scored in a similar way on the subscales. For example, those in Poland, Finland, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, the Slovak Republic, and Norway performed well on both the content and the skills subscales. In contrast, students in England, Sweden and Switzerland performed at or above the international mean on the skills subscale but below the international mean on the subscale measuring content knowledge (i.e. knowledge of fundamental democratic concepts and principles). This pattern was reversed in three of the post-Communist countries — the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia — where the students performed above the international mean on content knowledge and at the international mean on skills in interpreting political information (see Figure 3.6 in Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001). This suggests a possible difference in curricular emphasis and will be further discussed.

An important next step was to identify the factors associated with higher civic knowledge performance within each of the participating countries. A few examples of countries with interesting patterns will be discussed (they are presented here as speculations requiring further analysis for their confirmation or disconfirmation). Table I presents a brief summary of the modelling analysis which identifies factors associated with high performance in each of the European countries. The first important point is that the measures of home educational resources and expectations for the number of years of further education were the most powerful predictors in all of these countries. In the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia, the standardised regression coefficients associated with expected education indicate that this variable is a more powerful predictor of civic knowledge than any of the other home and school variables (see Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001, Chapter 8). These are the same three countries where the previous analysis showed that content knowledge of civics (the understanding of the meaning of democratic principles and concepts) was above the international mean while the score on skills in interpreting political communication was only at the international mean. Speaking speculatively, it seems that some of the post-Communist countries have succeeded very well in educating students to understand democratic principles, especially those bound for university education. Their success in transmitting the skills necessary to analyse political communication and with less able students has been more modest. This is corroborated by the case study material gathered during Phase 1, in which the academic understanding of democracy was an especially prominent theme in countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia.

Home literacy resources are also an important predictor found in Table I, suggesting that knowledge and skills are more successfully transmitted to students who come to school well prepared to learn. The process is somewhat less successful for students whose homes lack educational resources. This is especially true in England and Germany (corroborated by a comparison between scale scores by levels of home literacy, found in Table 3.1 of Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001).

TABLE I: Within Country Predictors of the Civic Knowledge Score for 23 European Countries

Expected years of further education (+ predictor in 23 countries)
[especially important in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia]
Home literacy resources (+ predictor in 23 countries)
[especially important in England and Germany]
Spend evening with peers outside the home (– predictor in 20 countries)
[especially important in England and Estonia]
Open climate for classroom discussion (+ predictor in 18 countries)
[especially important in Denmark and the Russian Federation]
Frequency of watching television news (+ predictor in 13 countries)
Female gender (– predictor in 10 countries)
Participation in student council (+ predictor in 9 countries)

Notes: Squared multiple correlations ranged from .13 in Romania to .36 in the Czech Republic. The bracketed information about the countries in which the predictor is especially important refers to the 2 countries where standardised regression coefficients were the highest and were greater than 0.20; for Expected Education a tie resulted in 3 being listed

A peer culture that devalues educational activities and involves students in spending many evenings outside their homes with friends is associated with lower civic knowledge achievement in most European countries, but especially in England and Estonia. Spending evenings with peers is not a significant predictor in Cyprus, Bulgaria, or the Slovak Republic. Parents and teachers' expectations may be powerful enough to override out-of-school peer influences in these countries.

Peer interaction can also have positive effects. Participation in school parliaments is a predictor of civic knowledge in nearly half the European countries (Cyprus, Denmark, England, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden). The proportion of students who report participation in school parliaments is also relatively high in most of these countries. Watching news on television is a positive but small predictor in about half the European countries. Being female is a negative but small predictor in about a third (Table I), but, overall, the gender differences are smaller than those observed in the past.

An open classroom climate in which issues are discussed by teachers and students in a climate of respect is important in fostering civic knowledge in about two-thirds of the countries. This is a finding that replicates the first IEA study conducted in the early 1970s (Torney, Oppenheim, & Farnen, 1975) and that has distinct implications for teacher preparation. The two countries in which this factor seems most important in predicting within-countries differences in civic knowledge are Denmark and the Russian Federation. In other words, countries at very different levels of democratic development could apparently benefit from assisting teachers to develop modes of instruction that actively involve students in grappling with different points of view on political and civic issues.

This relates also to the framework of 'communities of practice' discussed by Wenger (1998). In his view, learning means mutual engagement in action and taking the opportunity to try out one's knowledge in interpersonal situations, while seeking to make the experience more meaningful by discussing it with others. A sense that one is a member of a classroom community in which one can engage in discussion as a mode of learning is a very important facet of educational experience according to the IEA results.

Further analysis within countries (to be found in forthcoming national reports), as well as secondary analyses of these data beginning in late 2002 can provide further insights on these preliminary conclusions (see www.wam.umd.edu/~iea/).

Findings on Civic Engagement

Measures of students' conceptualisations of important norms for the good citizen in conventional political terms (voting, participating in political parties or discussions) and in terms of participation in social movement activities (belonging to environmental or human rights groups) were developed for the IEA Civic Education Study. It was clear from the results that young people in the late 1990s believed that citizens should vote and obey the law, but apart from those activities, they were considerably more supportive of social movement activities than of conventional political activities such as political party membership or discussion of political issues (Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001).

Ratings of the importance for adult citizens of voting, discussing issues, and joining parties formed a measure of Conventional Citizenship (found in Figure 1). The countries where scores on norms of Conventional Citizenship were *above* the international mean included about half the post-Communist countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic) and all the countries in southern Europe (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Portugal). In contrast, several other post-Communist countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Russian Federation, and Slovenia) as well as all the Northern European countries (Belgium (French-speaking), Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland) had scores *below* the international mean concerning the belief that it is important for adults to participate in conventional citizenship activities (see Figure 1). In summary, in the case of accepting the norms relating to political engagement as conventionally defined, some of the post-Communist countries are high and some low. As a group, however, adolescents in Southern European countries seem to have relatively strong commitments to conventional citizenship activities, while those from Northern Europe do not. As in the case of civic knowledge, the patterns of between-country differences do not neatly separate the post-Communist countries from the others. In fact, the differences between Northern and Southern Europe are much more consistent in this area.

A second set of items asked about norms concerned with adult participation in social movement political activities (such as community betterment, environmental or human rights groups). Amongst the Northern European countries, only in Norway was Support for Social Movement Citizenship above the international mean, and it was at the international mean in Germany. In the other Northern European countries, support for both Conventional Citizenship and Social Movement Citizenship was below the international mean. This similarity among the countries in the Northern European group and among the countries in the Southern European group is intriguing because some other authors have argued for variability rather than similarity within these regions (Diamandouros & Gunther, 2001).

An analysis of the predictors of the likelihood of voting was also conducted. Both the amount of civic knowledge (the total test score) and the extent to which the students reported that elections and voting were emphasised in their school

classes and curriculum were significant predictors of the likelihood of voting, as was the openness of the classroom climate for discussion. A sample of teachers was asked whether they believed that they emphasised voting and elections in their classrooms; in most countries, more teachers than students thought this was emphasised in the classroom. Some of the messages that teachers believe they are transmitting may not be grasped by students. More detail about civic engagement, both between country differences and within country predictors, may be found in Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz (2001).

Findings on Civic Attitudes

Wenger's discussion of communities of practice also suggests that learning within groups consolidates personal histories or identities that link experiences in families with experiences with friends in school and in youth organisations as well as with the nation. [Note that although the European identity is of vital importance, the IEA study included only a few questions on this issue and they have been left for analysis by National Research Coordinators in the European region].

In countries that have recently experienced political transitions there may be a somewhat fragile sense of national identity. National narratives which previously gave meaning to people's understandings of themselves and their place in the world have radically changed (see for example Markowitz, 2000). There are also examples of positive identity. The Phase 1 case studies suggested that in a country such as Cyprus national identity has been shaped by a threat to national sovereignty. In Greece, from the early years of schooling, the nation is lauded as the birthplace of democracy. In some countries, the recent regime transformations took place in a very visible way that shaped identity and provided a new narrative (e.g. Poland and the Czech Republic/Slovak Republic). In other cases, national identity based on history and folklore is particularly important for young people (a good example in the IEA study being Finland). [For illustrations of these points see the Phase 1 national case study chapters in Torney-Purta, Schwille, and Amadeo (1999) and the chapters integrating themes across the national case studies in Steiner-Khamsi, Torney-Purta, and Schwille (2002)]. In the Phase 2 survey, all of these countries (and also Portugal) had scores on the measure of positive national identity that were above the international mean (see Figure 1).

Norris (1999) and many others emphasise the importance of trust in government-related institutions — the police, courts, national and local government. The score on the scale measuring Trust in Government Related Institutions was below the international mean in many of the post-Communist countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, and Slovenia) and also in Portugal (Figure 1). Trust was above the international mean in Northern and Southern European countries such as Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Norway, and Switzerland, as well as in the Slovak Republic. These are largely (but not exclusively) countries that have experienced over 40 years of democracy. The cross-national differences in trust largely correspond with those in studies of adults, such as the World Value Survey (Inglehart, 1997), and indicate that in many ways 14-year-olds are already members of the political culture they share with their elders.

Finally, groups that do not have the same status as the nation shape identity in relation to political action. The best examples in the IEA study are gender and immigrant status. There was a measure of Support for Women's Political and Economic Rights (e.g. running for political office, receiving the same wage for the same job), as well as a measure of Positive Attitudes toward Immigrants (primarily dealing with rights and opportunities). Students on average were positive about women having political and economic rights, and, overall, only small proportions saw much gender-related job discrimination. Most of the post-Communist countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, the Russian Federation, and the Slovak Republic) had levels of women's rights support that were below the international mean (see Figure 1). The Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia had scores at the international mean. The countries with the lowest support for women's political and economic rights tended to be those with high levels of unemployment, which may have influenced the responses. On the women's rights scale, most Northern European countries were above the international mean (Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland); Belgium (French-speaking) was at the international mean. In contrast, among the Southern European countries only Cyprus was above the international mean, with Greece, Italy, and Portugal at the mean.

There were substantial gender differences, however, in both Support for Immigrants' Rights and Support for Women's Rights, with the most substantial differences for women's rights. Being female in a political world that is largely controlled by males seems to serve as a salient focus of identity for female students. In contrast, there were relatively small gender differences in civic knowledge (and most of the other attitude scales) in the IEA results.

Being an immigrant also appears to be a salient identity for many of these students. In those countries with large enough numbers of immigrants to compute a stable attitude estimate, those born outside the country had more positive attitudes to immigrants and their rights than those born in the country.

Teachers' Views of Civic Education in the Curriculum

In addition to the extensive student findings, data from teachers of civic-related subjects (many of them teaching history) were collected in the schools where students were sampled (Losito & Mintrop, 2001). What is their view of the role of civic education and how it might be improved?

Most teachers from the European countries believed that 'teaching civic education makes a difference for students' political and civic development' (percentages who agreed ranging from 53% in the Czech Republic and 65% in Cyprus to over 80% in the other European countries). On another related question, relatively small proportions believed that 'schools are irrelevant for the development of students' attitudes and opinions about matters of citizenship' (percentages ranging from 18% in Cyprus to 1% in Hungary). This suggests that in Cyprus the adult political culture, families, and political groups play a prominent role in shaping young people's civic engagement, a role that is recognised by teachers.

When asked four questions about the place of civic education in the curriculum, in most countries a large majority of teachers endorsed the integration

of civic education into the social sciences (median percentage of 81% for the European countries). There were a few exceptions, however. Teachers in the Czech Republic, Romania, and the Slovak Republic were more likely to endorse civic education as a separate subject than as an integrated theme. High proportions of teachers endorsed both integration into the social sciences *and* teaching as a separate subject in Estonia, Poland and the Russian Federation. In slightly more than half of the post-Communist countries, where the subject matter is just becoming established, need for a protected place in the curriculum seems to be recognised.

Two Western European countries stand out in teachers' responses to this question. In Germany, 85% would prefer that civic education be taught as an extra-curricular activity (with 75% also endorsing integration in the social sciences). In Portugal, 90% would prefer that it be integrated into all subjects (with 71% endorsing its integration into the social sciences).

When asked what should be done most urgently to improve civic education, teachers in most of the countries asked for better material and more training in content. The need for more instructional time was also endorsed in some countries (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Russian Federation, and Sweden). Generally, the need for more collegial cooperation was identified by only about a quarter of teachers (although, in Italy, 55% wanted this improvement). The need for help with special projects was not a particular need (except in Sweden where 44% identified it). Few teachers across countries identified the need for more autonomy. As Losito and Mintrop concluded, 'according to civic education teachers, improvements should be made that have an impact on daily classroom experience by enhancing subject-matter expertise, the quality of materials available to students, and the time available for instruction' (Losito & Mintrop, 2001, p. 166).

Conclusion

In sum, there are both similarities and differences in overall performance between the 23 European countries that participated in the IEA Civic Education Study. In the area of civic knowledge, the group of high performing countries includes representatives from all parts of Europe, post-Communist countries, as well as Northern and Southern Europe. In the post-Communist countries greater emphasis seems to be placed on teaching the content of fundamental democratic principles than on transmitting skills in interpreting political communication. It is also in the post-Communist countries that teachers of civic-related subjects are seeking to establish a place in the curriculum for an academically focused civic education course. In the near term, this may move the subject into a stronger position in the curriculum.

In the area of conventional citizen participation, there is a similarly mixed pattern of country performance. In this area, Northern European young people generally have weaker beliefs in the importance of conventional citizen participation and social movement participation for adults than those from Southern Europe. Some countries whose students do very well on the measure of civic knowledge have students who seem relatively disengaged from civic participation. Conversely, students from some of the poorly performing countries (according to their civic knowledge scores) say they are willing to become engaged

in political activities as adults. Although knowledge is important, other factors can also motivate participation.

Scores on trust in government-related institutions separate most of the post-Communist countries (with low levels of trust) from those in both Northern and Southern Europe (with moderate or high levels of trust). Similar patterns hold for support for women's economic and political rights, with the post-Communist countries (especially those with high rates of unemployment) showing low levels of support and most of the Northern European countries showing high levels of support among 14-year-olds.

An examination of predictors of civic knowledge and of the likelihood of voting indicates that schools have a role to play: first, by teaching civic knowledge; second, by emphasising the importance of elections and voting; third, by providing a community of respect in which young people can discuss their views; and fourth, by giving students opportunities to participate in organisations such as school parliaments. These are directions for reform that can be explored by policy makers and those who train teachers and publish educational material. The steps that need to be taken in policy and curriculum differ by country, according to teachers. They largely agree that subject matter is important. Those in many of the post-Communist countries favour establishing civic education as a separate course. Across countries, these teachers believe that there should be more time for instruction in civic-related subjects, improved content-training, and better instructional material. This is the direction being taken in many European countries.

According to this study, however, no single narrowly-focused programme targeted at increasing knowledge or sense of engagement or support for the rights of others is likely to be successful across countries and areas. Preparation for citizenship is a multi-faceted and complex process embedded in the cultural and educational systems of the democracies of Europe, requiring the exploration of new models in many countries. The move towards European identity will make these processes more complex and, many would argue, more important.

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