

Cross-national priorities for Civic and Citizenship Education

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Abstract

The ever-changing world we live in has led new challenges for countries in educating their youth to become citizens in the 21st century. This paper explores cross-national priorities for the implementation of civic and citizenship education utilizing data collected across twenty-four countries that participated in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) 2016. Information was collected on the main aims and objectives of civic and citizenship education for students at the lower secondary level from educational policy documents as well as how these are perceived at the school level. Results suggest a degree in commonality across countries in the importance of key content areas of Civic and Citizenship education that are incorporated in curriculum, while also yielding some striking differences. Some differences in the conceptualization of civic and citizenship education and perceptions at the school level are explored.

Purpose

As countries face both new and ongoing challenges in the way young people are educated for citizenship, it is important that educational policy in this area is sufficient to achieve the goals, and importantly is reflected via implementation in the classroom. The overall purpose of this paper is explore cross-national priority areas for the implementation of civic and citizenship in the school curriculum, and the degree in which policy and perceptions at the school level are aligned. Firstly, using information from national policy documents on the descriptions on goals and priority areas for civic and citizenship education sourced from a cross-national study, it examines what broad themes are more consistently identified as being important across different countries. Secondly, the degree in which these priority areas are shared both from the perspectives of policy documents as well as those from a sample population of school staff data will be explored. Finally, the paper will examine the extent in which curriculum documents and teacher training are aligned to help identify areas that may require greater professional development support.

Theoretical framework and academic significance of research

Civic and Citizenship education has traditionally been highly influenced by the political and historical contexts that are present in each country. Previous reviews of educational policy in this area have revealed areas of commonality but also identified gaps between policy documents and declarations and what happens in school (Bîrzéa et. al, 2004). A review of civic education in twenty-four countries as part of the IEA Civic Education Study (CIVED) (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999) revealed a larger than expected overlap in topics taught across participating countries, with some distinctive differences. Another conclusion of this study was the existence of a gap between the subject ideals and in the realities in the school and classroom. A recent review of the national curricula in European countries revealed that the majority “*tend to be broad in scope covering most of the competences related to democratic and socially responsible action, critical thinking and inter-personal interactions*” (Eurydice, 2017, p.10). Results from a questionnaire of national contexts for Civic and Citizenship education as part of the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010; Ainley, Schulz, & Friedman, 2013) again showed large degree of commonality across the thirty-six participating countries, but also indicated large differences in the emphasis that particular content areas related to civic and citizenship education featured in national policy documents. A similar pattern was identified in the most recent cycle of the study (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, Agrusti, & Friedman, 2017). The current paper will utilize additional data from this study on national priorities and goals for civic and citizenship education to extend what has previously been reported.

Methods and data sources

This paper uses data collected as part of ICCS 2016 (Schulz et al., 2017), involving 24 countries from Europe, Latin America and Asia. By drawing on available expertise and reference documents from their country, each participating national center was asked to complete the National Contexts Survey (NCS), which contained 46 questions related to topics related to do with the education system in general in the participating country as well as more focused questions on policies regarding civic and citizenship education and how this is approached in general and with regards to the ICCS target grade (Grade 8 students). The NCS

also included questions on teacher training, assessments and quality assurance and current debates and reforms related to this area.

Firstly the way in which civic and citizenship education is intended to be taught at the target grade in schools is examined, both from the perspective of the respondents to the NCS (as reported in Schulz et al., 2017) and additionally using data from school principals.

Secondly, the aims and objectives for civic and citizenship education at the target grade is considered. The NCS includes an open-ended question that asked countries specifically what the main aims and objectives of civic and citizenship education are for the target grade in their country. The responses to the question were coded using the following steps:

- 1) For each country, all aims objectives in the open-ended text were listed separately (this included those referenced in external documents and also those requiring web-based translation).
- 2) Each aim and objective was coded into a basic theme. Often a single objective listed, covered multiple themes
- 3) Each theme were then further categorized (where possible) into broader aims of civic and citizenship education
- 4) A second coder repeated steps 2 and 3 and where discrepancies were identified, a decision was made on the most appropriate way to code the entry

Data was for this exercise was available for 22 out of the 24 participating countries. Comparisons were made against the aims of civic and citizenship education that were prioritized by teachers and school principals (as reported in Schulz et al., 2017, p.32-36). Sampled respondents from each of each of these two populations were asked to identify what they believed to be the three most important aims of civic and citizenship education in their countries (selecting from 10 possible options).

Lastly, data from the NCS regarding whether a series of 12 topics of civics and citizenship education were included in the curriculum at the target grade are presented. This data was compared against data collected from the teacher questionnaire, where civic and citizenship education teachers were asked to report on whether they had participated in training courses for these same topics.

There are two important notes of caution advised before interpreting the results presented in this paper. Firstly with regards to the NCS data, national centers were asked to draw upon available expertise in sourcing the answers to the questions from the policy documents, thus the response to these questions may be considered the perspective of the respondents (one or more) to the survey. As the data is qualitative, there is also a degree of subjectivity in the coding process which may not necessarily reflect the response. Whereas the data from the teacher and school questionnaires are based on a sample representing the target populations in the country. The data in question from these questionnaires represent the perceptions of the staff, not necessarily how Civic and Citizenship is implemented. Secondly, although there is alignment between the questions across the different sources, they are not directly matched. A mis-match at the country level between NCS and teacher and school data may not be necessarily indicative of any actual differences between education policy and perspectives from the school, but simply a function of differences in the question wording and type.

Results and discussion

Data showing the ways in which civic and citizenship education is delivered to students from the target grade are presented in Table 1 below (using responses from the NCS and from school principals). The data from the NCS as reported by Schulz and colleagues (2017) revealed that the most common way that civic and citizenship education was delivered to target grade teachers was through teachers of subjects that are related to human/social sciences (22 out of 24 countries). This was the most common delivery mode suggested by principals (80 percent on average across countries that met sampling participation requirements). School principals, on average across countries, also were likely to suggest that it is considered the result of school experience as a whole (73 percent on average). High percentages of principals reported this delivery mode, even in a number of countries where this was not indicated as a way this was intended to be taught from the NCS responses. Integration into all subjects at school (60%) and taught as a separate subject by teachers of subjects related to civic and citizenship education (53%) were also selected by more than half of principals on average. Further country level discrepancies were identified. It should be noted that the wording for the question in the NCS, and the adapted wording that school principals received were not always equivalent which is likely to explain a level of these discrepancies.

Table 1 Percentage of students at schools where the principal identified the ways in which civic and citizenship education is delivered to target grade students and corresponding information from the national contexts survey

Country	Taught as a separate subject by teachers of subjects related to civic and citizenship education.		Taught by teachers of subjects related to human/social sciences (e.g. History, Geography, Law or Economics)		Integrated into all subjects taught at school.		An extra-curricular activity		It is considered the result of school experience as a whole	
	NCS	Principal	NCS	Principal	NCS	Principal	NCS	Principal	NCS	Principal
Bulgaria		^	●	90 (2.3)	●	42 (4.3)		33 (4.5)	●	86 (3.3)
Chile		13 (2.8)	●	76 (3.8)	●	81 (3.5)	●	39 (4.3)	●	90 (2.8)
Chinese Taipei	●	87 (2.8)	●	57 (3.9)	●	67 (4.0)	●	59 (4.4)	●	88 (2.5)
Colombia		56 (4.9)	●	84 (2.6)	●	63 (4.7)		9 (2.4)		74 (3.7)
Croatia		5 (2.2)	●	42 (4.1)	●	97 (1.3)	●	12 (2.2)		80 (2.6)
Denmark†	●	69 (3.9)	●	93 (1.9)	●	68 (3.4)		3 (1.3)	●	81 (3.2)
Dominican Republic		30 (3.5)	●	83 (3.7)	●	80 (3.9)		26 (4.6)		76 (4.5)
Estonia ¹		76 (4.9)	●	90 (2.6)	●	59 (5.3)	●	49 (6.0)	●	54 (5.1)
Finland	●	11 (2.4)	●	94 (2.2)	●	45 (3.7)		10 (2.2)	●	53 (4.0)
Italy		16 (2.9)	●	72 (4.4)	●	61 (4.0)		9 (2.3)	●	83 (3.2)
Latvia ¹	●	65 (5.0)	●	59 (4.3)		84 (3.5)		94 (2.3)		90 (2.8)
Lithuania		^	●	^	●	64 (4.4)	●	84 (2.8)	●	85 (3.0)
Malta		89 (0.2)	●	75 (0.3)		44 (0.4)		26 (0.3)		76 (0.4)
Mexico	●	67 (3.3)	●	71 (3.6)	●	72 (3.2)		4 (1.3)		63 (4.4)
Netherlands†		15 (3.9)	●	79 (4.2)		52 (4.6)	●	31 (4.7)		81 (4.0)
Norway (9) ¹	●	89 (2.7)	●	96 (1.6)	●	39 (4.6)	●	24 (3.9)	●	61 (4.7)
Peru	●	78 (2.7)	●	86 (2.5)		56 (3.8)		3 (1.0)		51 (3.8)
Russian Federation	●	76 (3.2)	●	82 (2.5)		46 (3.9)	●	71 (3.5)	●	90 (2.2)
Slovenia	●	80 (3.3)	●	89 (2.8)		53 (4.4)		4 (2.1)	●	63 (4.1)
Sweden ¹		35 (4.1)	●	97 (1.7)	●	59 (5.4)		5 (1.9)	●	78 (3.8)
Average ICCS 2016		53 (0.8)		80 (0.7)		60 (1.0)		28 (0.7)		73 (0.9)
Countries not meeting sampling participation requirements										
Hong Kong SAR ¹	●	15 (4.3)	●	83 (4.2)	●	74 (4.6)	●	53 (5.4)	●	88 (3.7)
Korea, Republic of ²		84 (3.7)	●	95 (2.3)		77 (4.0)		55 (6.0)		89 (3.3)
Benchmarking participant not meeting sampling participation requirements										
North-Rhine-Westphalia (Germany) ¹	●	78 (5.5)	●	76 (6.7)	●	47 (6.6)		50 (7.2)		50 (8.0)

() Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.

(9) Country deviated from international defined population and surveyed adjacent upper grade.

† Met guidelines for sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.

¹ National Defined Population covers 90% to 95% of National Target Population

² Country surveyed target grade in the first half of the school year.

[^] Item not administered

The responses for the open-ended question on the main aims and objectives of civic and citizenship education were coded using the procedures described earlier. In total 163 aims and objectives across 22 countries (where data was available) were classified into 13 broad themes (as presented in Table 2). The most common aims and objectives identified were diversity, equality and coexistence, active civic participation, understanding of democratic values and human rights. Although the data is not directly comparable with data from the teacher and school principal questionnaires on their perspectives on the most important aims of civic and citizenship education, similarities can be observed. For instance, the most commonly identified areas listed as important to both teachers and principals were promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities and their critical and independent thinking (see Schulz et al., 2017, p.32-36). These were both identified as aims and objectives for the target grade students using NCS data from eight countries respectively.

Table 2 Groupings across countries of aims and objectives of civic and citizenship education the target grade identified by respondents to the NCS

Broad groupings of aims and objectives of civic and citizenship education at the target grade	Number of countries where aim or objective is indicated
Diversity, equality and coexistence	15
Active civic participation	10
Understanding of democratic values	10
Human rights	10
Capacity of critical evaluation skills	8
National and cultural identity	8
Global identity	8
Rights and responsibilities of citizens	8
Student self-identity	7
Understanding of civic institutions and policies	5
Sustainable development and the environment	5
Conflict resolution	3
Collaboration	2

Notably some themes were given a larger degree of prominence in a small handful of countries (where only a small number of priorities were listed) yet were not listed at all as major objectives in the remaining countries, even for those that listed a large number of different priorities.

The question in the National Contexts Survey asking whether twelve civic and citizenship educational topics were included in the curriculum at the target grade yielded data that suggested these were very common in national curricula for participating ICCS 2016 countries (see Table 3). In this table, comparisons with teacher perspectives on whether they have undertaken training in these areas are made (using data reported in Schulz et al., 2017). Topics less frequently indicated as being part of the curriculum were 'Emigration and Immigration' (12 out of 23 countries) and 'Responsible internet use' (18 out of 23 countries), whereas topics such as 'Human rights' and 'Citizens' rights and responsibilities' were included in the curriculum for all countries bar one. However despite these topics being part of the curriculum, majorities of teachers in most ICCS 2016 countries reported not having received any pre-service or in-service training in areas such as voting and elections and the

global community and international organizations. In contrast, more than half of countries that met the sample participation requirements for the teacher survey had a majority of teachers indicate that they had participated in in conflict resolution (from those countries where this was indicated as part of the curriculum).

Conclusions

Although there is a degree of variation in priority areas for civic and citizenship education across the participating ICCS 2016 countries, the results from the analyses suggest a common international approach with regards to priority directions going forward for civics and citizenship education. This may be largely due to a common set of challenges facing the participating countries in how to educate their students to develop into citizens in the 21st Century. This is by no means universal: some countries do have themes in their policy documents that are emphasized strongly while being non-existent in others.

Secondly, the paper has identified both some complimentary and contrasting perspectives on the delivery of Civic and Citizenship Education to the target grade, from the perspectives of the policy makers and from those implementing it at the school level. It is hoped that the paper will provide useful insight on the multifaceted dimensions of Civic and Citizenship Education at the national and school levels to provide greater alignment between the two groups moving forward.

Table 2 Topics included in the curriculum at the target grade and the percentages of teachers reporting to have participated in training courses on these topics during pre-service and/or in service training

Country	Human rights	Voting and elections	The global community and international organisations	The environment and environmental sustainability	Emigration and immigration	Equal opportunities for men and women	Citizens' rights and responsibilities	The constitution and political systems	Responsible Internet use (e.g. privacy, source reliability, social media)	Critical and independent thinking	Conflict resolution	Regional institutions and organizations (e.g. European Union, European Parliament, Organization of American States)*					
Belgium (Flemish)†	● 36 (2.5) ▼	● 34 (2.1) ▼	● 32 (1.9) ▼	● 41 (2.0) ▼	● 33 (2.0) ▼	● 35 (2.0) ▼	● 36 (1.9) ▼	● 35 (1.9) ▼	● 56 (2.4) ▼	● 56 (2.0) ▼	● 54 (2.2)	●					
Bulgaria	● 43 (5.6) ▼	● 34 (5.5) ▼	● 41 (5.6) ▼	● 40 (5.6) ▼	42 (4.8)	● 38 (4.8) ▼	● 51 (6.1)	● 45 (6.1)	● 41 (5.3) ▼	● 46 (5.3) ▼	● 66 (5.4)	●					
Chile	● 41 (4.2) ▼	● 32 (4.1) ▼	23 (3.4) ▼	● 40 (4.4) ▼	24 (3.5) ▼	● 36 (3.7) ▼	● 42 (4.1) ▼	31 (4.1) ▼	● 41 (3.6) ▼	● 43 (4.3) ▼	● 56 (3.8) ▼	▼					
Chinese Taipei	● 87 (2.7) ▲	● 82 (3.4) ▲	● 63 (4.1) ▲	● 86 (2.8) ▲	● 42 (3.2)	● 93 (2.5) ▲	● 88 (2.9) ▲	● 80 (3.6) ▲	● 80 (3.1) ▲	● 80 (3.8) ▲	● 82 (3.0) ▲	●					
Colombia	● 74 (4.1) ▲	● 82 (3.1) ▲	47 (2.7)	82 (2.4) ▲	49 (3.1)	● 71 (3.1) ▲	● 80 (2.2) ▲	● 67 (3.2) ▲	72 (2.8) ▲	● 75 (4.0) ▲	● 82 (2.2) ▲	▲					
Croatia	● 32 (1.4) ▼	● 17 (1.0) ▼	16 (1.1) ▼	● 28 (1.5) ▼	16 (1.2) ▼	● 23 (1.3) ▼	● 29 (1.5) ▼	● 19 (1.1) ▼	● 41 (1.5) ▼	● 32 (1.4) ▼	● 44 (2.2) ▼	●					
Dominican Republic	● 70 (5.0) ▲	68 (4.6) ▲	● 50 (5.6)	● 77 (3.9) ▲	● 57 (4.4) ▲	● 70 (5.7) ▲	● 76 (5.0) ▲	● 65 (5.9) ▲	● 68 (5.8)	● 69 (5.9)	● 75 (5.1) ▲	▲					
Finland† 1	N/A	46 (2.8) ▼	N/A	25 (2.1) ▼	N/A	41 (2.0) ▼	N/A	60 (2.3)	N/A	34 (2.3) ▼	N/A	45 (3.0) ▼	N/A	46 (2.7) ▼	N/A	48 (1.9) ▼	N/A
Italy	● 47 (2.2) ▼	● 18 (1.8) ▼	● 27 (2.0) ▼	● 49 (2.5) ▼	44 (2.4)	● 31 (2.2) ▼	● 43 (2.4) ▼	● 34 (2.2) ▼	62 (2.5)	● 36 (2.5) ▼	● 47 (2.7) ▼	●					
Latvia	87 (2.6) ▲	● 64 (4.2) ▲	● 77 (3.9) ▲	80 (3.0) ▲	64 (4.5) ▲	70 (3.9) ▲	● 89 (2.6) ▲	● 68 (4.1) ▲	86 (2.7) ▲	94 (1.4) ▲	94 (1.6) ▲	●					
Lithuania	● 59 (3.8)	● 46 (3.5)	● 59 (4.5) ▲	● 59 (3.0)	● 56 (3.7) ▲	● 43 (3.8) ▼	● 65 (4.0)	● 60 (4.0) ▲	● 66 (2.5)	● 72 (2.7) ▲	● 82 (3.1) ▲	●					
Malta	● 34 (4.5) ▼	● 11 (2.9) ▼	● 27 (4.3) ▼	● 42 (4.3) ▼	● 37 (4.4) ▼	● 49 (4.7)	● 46 (4.6) ▼	● 16 (3.2) ▼	● 62 (4.2)	● 48 (5.5) ▼	45 (5.1) ▼	●					
Mexico	● 85 (2.9) ▲	● 60 (4.4) ▲	● 49 (5.1) ▲	● 76 (4.7) ▲	64 (5.8) ▲	● 82 (3.9) ▲	● 81 (4.3) ▲	● 57 (4.3) ▲	● 66 (5.1)	● 72 (4.2) ▲	● 85 (3.4) ▲	●					
Norway	● 38 (3.8) ▼	● 28 (2.5) ▼	● 38 (4.2)	● 32 (3.6) ▼	35 (2.8) ▼	● 32 (3.7) ▼	● 28 (3.1) ▼	● 39 (3.3) ▼	● 43 (3.9) ▼	● 35 (3.7) ▼	● 34 (3.0) ▼	●					
Peru	● 86 (3.1) ▲	● 89 (2.8) ▲	● 67 (3.2) ▲	● 89 (2.9) ▲	84 (3.1) ▲	● 91 (2.9) ▲	● 92 (2.4) ▲	● 80 (3.9) ▲	● 77 (3.2) ▲	● 87 (2.9) ▲	● 88 (3.3) ▲	●					
Slovenia	● 65 (2.1) △	● 47 (2.8)	● 42 (2.5)	● 55 (2.4)	43 (2.5)	● 48 (2.6) ▼	● 63 (2.2)	● 64 (2.4) ▲	80 (1.5) ▲	● 75 (1.6) ▲	● 81 (1.6) ▲	●					
Sweden	● 50 (4.4)	● 44 (4.7)	● 54 (4.0) △	● 56 (4.3)	● 44 (4.3)	● 47 (4.3)	● 54 (4.2)	● 50 (4.3)	● 37 (3.7) ▼	● 49 (4.1) ▼	● 43 (3.8) ▼	●					
Average ICCS 2016	58 (0.9)	46 (0.8)	44 (0.9)	58 (0.8)	45 (0.9)	53 (0.9)	59 (0.9)	49 (0.9)	61 (0.8)	61 (0.9)	65 (0.8)						
Countries not meeting sampling requirements for teacher survey																	
Denmark	● 61 (6.8)	● 69 (5.4)	● 65 (6.5)	50 (5.6)	48 (7.2)	52 (6.8)	● 75 (4.9)	● 77 (5.4)	● 34 (5.9)	● 75 (5.2)	56 (6.5)	●					
Estonia	● 53 (6.9)	● 41 (5.9)	50 (7.9)	71 (5.6)	55 (7.3)	51 (7.7)	● 57 (9.3)	● 49 (7.4)	● 78 (6.3)	● 68 (5.8)	● 73 (4.9)	●					
Korea, Republic of	● 54 (4.2)	● 32 (3.7)	● 35 (3.3)	45 (3.9)	28 (2.7)	54 (4.1)	● 52 (3.8)	● 37 (3.5)	69 (3.3)	● 49 (4.2)	● 61 (3.6)	●					
Netherlands	● 29 (2.8)	● 33 (2.6)	● 39 (2.6)	46 (3.1)	● 39 (3.0)	● 37 (2.9)	● 36 (3.2)	● 39 (2.8)	● 57 (2.8)	● 61 (2.2)	● 51 (2.7)	●					
Russian Federation	● 94 (2.0)	93 (2.1)	● 90 (2.1)	90 (2.7)	● 86 (3.1)	89 (2.6)	96 (2.0)	96 (1.2)	● 90 (2.5)	● 89 (3.1)	● 91 (2.6)	●					
National percentage																	
more than 10 percentage points above Average ICCS 2016	▲																
significantly above Average ICCS 2016	△																
significantly below Average ICCS 2016	▼																
more than 10 percentage points below Average ICCS 2016	▽																
) Standard errors appear in parentheses. Because results are rounded to the nearest whole number, some totals may appear inconsistent.																	
† Met guidelines for teacher sampling participation rates only after replacement schools were included.																	
● Topic included in curriculum at target grade																	
1 No specifications are given for specifically for the target grade curriculum																	
* There is no direct equivalent item in the teacher questionnaire																	

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