



CHAPTER 8:

Main findings and implications for policy and practice

After the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the subsequent replacement of authoritarian regimes with democratic systems both there and in a number of countries in other regions of the world since the mid-1970s, Huntington (1991) postulated a “third wave” of democratization. The end of the 20th century consequently saw widespread expectation that free elections, recognition of human rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law would become commonplace around the world. However, during the past decade, concerns have arisen over what Diamond (2014) has termed a worldwide “democratic recession.” This concern has arisen because of a surge in authoritarian government practices, for example in the Latin American region, as well as the failure of popular movements to replace undemocratic regimes in a number of Middle-Eastern countries. Lately, there has also been an increase in populist movements in many democratic societies. Their successes have been attributed, at least partly, to failures to mobilize young people to vote (see, for example, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2016; Jackson, Thorsen, & Wring, 2016).

Set in this global context, the second cycle of the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS 2016) aimed to investigate the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their current and future roles as citizens in a range of countries. ICCS 2016 gathered data on students’ knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship as well as students’ attitudes, perceptions, and activities related to civics and citizenship. These data were used to examine differences among and within the countries that participated in the study. ICCS 2016 has both continued and extended ICCS 2009 by studying civic and citizenship education in relation to continuing and new challenges in environments where contexts of democracy and civic participation change.

Based on data collected from about 94,000 students and 37,000 teachers from about 3800 schools in 24 countries, ICCS 2016 generated measures of enduring aspects of civic and citizenship outcomes and contexts and provided a basis for comparing those outcomes between 2009 and 2016. The study also measured selected characteristics of civic and citizenship education that have become prominent since 2009: the increase in the use of social media by young people as a tool for civic engagement, the growing concerns about global threats and sustainable development, and widespread recognition about the role of schools in fostering peaceful modes of interaction among young people.

In this final chapter of the ICCS 2016 international report, we summarize the main findings from the study relating to each of the research questions that were the main focus in the reporting in chapters 2 to 7. In addition, we discuss potential implications for policy and practice stemming from the findings of ICCS 2016, and consider prospects for future research in the field of civic and citizenship education.

Summary of main findings

National contexts for civic and citizenship education

Drawing on published sources as well as contextual information collected by ICCS 2016, we compared the implementation of civic and citizenship education across participating countries, and focused as we did so on the aims and principles of this area of educational provision as well as curricular approaches to it. We also looked at changes and developments in civic and citizenship education in the countries that participated in both ICCS 2009 and ICCS 2016.

The participating countries' demographic, economic, and political contexts all differ. We found considerable variation in such indices as population size, gross domestic product (GDP), and voter turnout at elections. Such findings are not uncommon for international studies of this kind, and the differences are ones that interested parties need to take into account when interpreting the results of ICCS 2016. For example, according to official statistics, literacy rates are generally high in the participating countries. However, the still considerable variation in student literacy within as well as across countries could have influenced students' ability to comprehend instructions, questions, and items in the ICCS instruments designed to measure the cognitive, affective-behavioral, and contextual variables of relevance to civic and citizenship education.

Schools in participating countries (also referred to in this report as education systems) have relatively large degrees of autonomy in civic and citizenship education, especially with respect to learning activities and projects. Similar to the findings from ICCS 2009, we observed variation in approaches to teaching of civic and citizenship education across and within the education systems. About half of the countries were offering a subject dedicated to this learning area, and in almost all countries it was an area taught by teachers of subjects related to human or social sciences. Seventeen of the 24 participating education systems positioned civic and citizenship education as a learning area integrated into all subjects at school. Fifteen of the 24 countries gave some degree of recognition to the importance that students' experiences at school serve with respect to students' civic learning.

We observed across the participating countries a relatively high degree of consensus among teachers and school principals that the most important aims of civic and citizenship education concern the promotion of students' knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities and development of students' critical and independent thinking. Of particular interest is the finding that, cross-nationally, about half of the teachers saw promoting respect for and safeguarding of the environment as a key objective of this learning area.

Student knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship

We investigated the extent and variation of students' civic knowledge within and across participating countries in 2016 and compared students' civic knowledge between the countries that participated in both 2009 and 2016. We also explored the associations between civic knowledge and selected student characteristics, home background variables, and contextual factors.

ICCS 2009 established a described civic knowledge proficiency scale that was employed again in the current cycle, albeit with one major change regarding the described levels of civic knowledge (see below). The scale reflects development ranging from a grasp of the concrete, familiar, and mechanistic elements of civics and citizenship through to understanding of the wider policy and institutional processes that shape our civic communities. The scale is hierarchical in the sense that civic knowledge becomes more sophisticated as student achievement progresses up the scale. However, it is also developmental because of the assumption that any given student is probably able to demonstrate achievement of the scale content below his or her measured level of achievement. Although the scale does not describe a necessary sequence of learning, it does imply that learning growth typically follows the sequence the scale encapsulates.

- Students working at the highest level (Level A, called Level 3 in ICCS 2009) are able to make connections between the processes of social and political organization and influence, and the legal and institutional mechanisms used to control them. They generate accurate hypotheses on the benefits, motivations, and likely outcomes of institutional policies and citizens' actions. They integrate, justify, and evaluate given positions, policies, or laws according to the principles that underpin them. Students also demonstrate familiarity with broad international economic forces and the strategic nature of active participation.

- Students working at the next level (Level B, called Level 2 in ICCS 2009) are able to demonstrate familiarity with the broad concept of representative democracy as a political system. They recognize ways in which institutions and laws can be used to protect and promote a society's values and principles. They acknowledge the potential role of citizens as voters in a representative democracy, and they generalize principles and values from specific examples of policies and laws (including human rights). Students demonstrate understanding of the influence that active citizenship can have beyond the local community. They generalize the role of the individual active citizen to broader civic societies and the world. One key factor differentiating Level B from Level A is the degree to which students use knowledge and understanding to evaluate and justify policies and practices.
- Students working at Level C (called Level 1 in ICCS 2009) demonstrate familiarity with the democratic principles of equality, social cohesion, and freedom. They relate these broad principles to everyday examples of situations that demonstrate protection of or challenges to these principles. Students also demonstrate familiarity with fundamental concepts of the individual as an active citizen: they recognize the necessity for individuals to obey the law; they relate individual courses of action to likely outcomes; and they relate personal characteristics to the capacity of an individual to effect civic change. The key factors that differentiate Level C achievement from that of higher levels relate to the specificity of students' knowledge and the amount of mechanistic rather than relational thinking that students express in regard to the operations of civic and civil institutions.
- Students working at Level D (a level introduced for ICCS 2016) recognize explicit examples representing basic features of democracy. They identify the intended outcomes of simple examples of rules and laws and recognize the motivations of people engaged in activities that contribute to the common good. The key factors differentiating student achievement at Level D from student achievement at the higher levels are the breadth of knowledge students demonstrate with respect to the fundamental aspects of democracy and democratic institutions and their capacity to engage with abstract concepts that extend beyond concrete, explicit examples of democratic principles and citizenship behaviors.

On average across the participating countries, 35 percent of students obtained test scores reflecting civic knowledge at Level A. Thirty-two percent recorded scores at Level B, 21 percent at Level C, and 10 percent at Level D. Three percent of students showed very low levels of civic knowledge—levels that could be classified as below Level D.

While there were considerable differences in students' civic knowledge across countries, the variation in civic knowledge within countries was even larger. Across all countries, the median range between the lowest five percent and the highest five percent of student civic knowledge scores was 275 scale points, which is equivalent to more than three levels on the civic knowledge scale. The largest range was 349 scale points (in Bulgaria) and the smallest range was 245 scale points (in Chinese Taipei). However, when interpreting differences in civic knowledge across countries, it is important to acknowledge that, as in other studies of this kind, the particular group of countries that chose to participate in this study had an impact on the amount of observable variance.

When we compared civic knowledge results from ICCS 2016 with the last survey cycle in 2009, we identified 11 countries where national average scores in civic knowledge were significantly higher. We did not observe any statistically significant declines in civic knowledge in any of the countries that participated in both cycles. Comparison of the results across time from some of the relatively low-performing countries, such as Colombia, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, revealed slightly higher percentages of students with civic knowledge at Level B or above in 2016. This level is characterized by demonstrable familiarity with the broad concepts of civics and citizenship.

Countries also differed with regard to the student background variables included in ICCS 2016. In all except two countries, female students demonstrated higher civic knowledge than male students. Students with higher levels of socioeconomic background (measured by student reports on parental occupation, level of parental education, and the number of books in the home) also had higher levels of civic knowledge. We furthermore found that in most countries students from immigrant backgrounds and those who spoke a language other than the ICCS 2016 test language at home had lower levels of civic knowledge. It should be noted, however, that these results were computed without controlling for the influence of socioeconomic background.

Aspects of students' civic engagement

ICCS 2016 looked at the extent of students' engagement in different spheres of society and sought to identify the factors within or across countries related to that engagement. Limitations on the extent to which lower-secondary students can actively participate in civic activities meant that, apart from reviewing students' age-appropriate civic activities at and outside of school, ICCS 2016 placed a particular focus on the following: students' beliefs about their capacity to engage, the value they place upon participation in civic-related activities at school, and their expectations of future civic engagement. ICCS 2016 also examined factors associated with civic engagement, and measured changes in some aspects of student engagement since 2009.

For students, television news and discussions with parents remained important sources of information about political and social issues. We recorded a general decline since 2009 in the use of newspapers as a source of information about political and social issues in nearly every country that participated in both surveys. The frequency with which students were using television as a source of national and international news also appeared to have declined in about half of these countries. However, students talking with their parents about what was happening in other countries became more frequent between 2009 and 2016 in most countries, a finding which suggests an increase in students' attention to global developments. Use of new social media for civic engagement was still limited, but it too varied considerably across the participating countries.

In comparison with ICCS 2009, ICCS 2016 found somewhat higher levels of student engagement in discussions about political and social issues. The same was evident for confidence in civic participation. Students with higher levels of interest in political and social issues were more likely to discuss these issues. Although students' confidence in civic engagement was positively associated with their interest in civic issues, it was not related to their levels of civic knowledge.

We also found few changes over the seven years between the two surveys in the extent of students' participation at school and students' endorsement of the value of participation at school. Students' willingness to participate in future civic activities appeared to be higher among female than male students. Willingness to participate at school was also greater among students who were more interested in political and social issues, but positive associations between this construct and civic knowledge were not evident in about half of the countries.

Between 2009 and 2016, students' reported participation in voluntary activities and in their expectations to engage in elections (once eligible to do so) increased in a number of countries. We found no association between students' expected participation in legal protest activities and civic knowledge, but did find that expected participation in illegal protest activities was higher among students with lower levels of civic knowledge. Expected active political participation, such as becoming a candidate for office, was higher among students who were interested in political and social issues but notably lower among students who had high levels of civic knowledge. These findings suggest that acquisition of civic knowledge influences young people's expectations of civic engagement in the future in different ways. The differences certainly warrant further investigation, in particular the negative association between civic knowledge and expectation of active conventional political participation.

Students' attitudes toward important issues in society

We also analyzed ICCS 2016 data with regard to students' beliefs about important civic issues in their societies. We looked at factors associated with the variation in students' attitudes toward civic institutions and society, their beliefs regarding the importance of different principles underlying society, and their perceptions of their communities and societies. We also examined changes in students' beliefs, attitudes, and values since 2009.

ICCS 2016 found differences in what the students perceived as good or bad for democracy. In some countries, the lower-secondary students viewed situations such as political leaders giving government jobs to their family members as good for democracy. In most other countries, however, students viewed this practice as bad for democracy. Students across the participating countries consistently saw government interference in court decisions, free election of political leaders, the right to peaceful protest, and equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups in a country as good for democracy. Students also consistently regarded the right to criticize the government and the existence of small differences in income in their country as positive for democracies. These results indicate that differences in national contexts (e.g., related to particular political cultures and everyday experiences) may shape students' perceptions of how democracies function.

ICCS also measured students' perceptions of what constitutes good citizenship. When asked about behaviors indicating good citizenship, the ICCS 2016 students tended to attach somewhat more importance to conventional engagement than did the students who participated in ICCS 2009. The ICCS 2016 results also showed high levels of endorsement of personally responsible citizenship behavior, with majorities rating obedience to the law, ensuring the economic welfare of families, and respecting others' opinions as very important. Students who were interested in political and social issues were more likely to regard conventional social-movement-related or personally responsible citizenship behaviors as important. Students with higher levels of civic knowledge were more inclined to regard behaviors related to social-movement activities and personally responsible citizenship as important for being a good adult citizen. We found no consistent associations between civic knowledge and endorsement of the importance of conventional citizenship behaviors. This finding might relate to other results from ICCS 2016 indicating that students with higher levels of civic knowledge are less inclined to anticipate actual participation in conventional forms of political action when they reach adulthood.

Students strongly endorsed gender equality and equal rights for ethnic and racial groups in their countries. Endorsement of gender equality increased between 2009 and 2016 in a number of countries. However, the pattern of males giving substantially less support than females to gender equality that we observed in 2009 was still evident in 2016. In contrast, levels of endorsement of equal rights for all ethnic and racial groups in society increased in almost all countries over the period between the two surveys. We also found that female students, students who were more interested in social and political issues, and students with higher levels of civic knowledge were the students most likely to endorse gender equality and equal rights for all ethnic and racial groups.

Majorities of students viewed pollution, terrorism, water and food shortages, infectious diseases, and poverty as major threats to the world's future. However, the extent to which students saw these issues as threats varied across countries, a finding that suggests the influence of local contexts on these perceptions. Variation was particularly marked for the perceptions of water shortages and crime. Students from countries where these issues were more likely to be part of their everyday experience were also more likely to regard them as substantial threats to the world's future.

In many countries, the ICCS 2016 students expressed greater trust than ICCS 2009 students did in their government, parliament, and courts of justice. However, they expressed less trust than their 2009 counterparts in the media and in people in general. In more established and economically stable democracies, the more knowledgeable 2016 students tended to have greater trust in civic

institutions. In countries with perceived higher levels of corruption and low government efficiency, the more knowledgeable students expressed lower levels of trust in civic institutions.

ICCS 2016 also included a section (optional for countries) in its student questionnaire that asked students about their endorsement of religious influence in civic society. Results from countries participating in this option suggest that young people's support for this kind of religious influence remains limited. Relatively small proportions of students across these countries supported religious influence on civic life; in four countries, significantly fewer students than in 2009 endorsed these views. While more frequent attendance at religious service was associated with higher levels of endorsement of religious influence, we recorded negative associations with parental education and levels of civic knowledge. The relatively large differences between students with high and low levels of civic knowledge indicate that learning about civic issues may have had the by-product of strengthening convictions about the necessary separation of state and religion.

School contexts for civic and citizenship education

We studied aspects of the organization of civic and citizenship education in schools and its associations with students' learning outcomes; specifically, school approaches to civic and citizenship education, processes thought to facilitate civic engagement, and interactions between schools and communities. The ICCS 2016 results indicate that in most countries students had the opportunity to participate in classroom and school elections. Although teachers across the participating countries said they were often involved in decision-making processes at school, the extent to which students were actively participating in decision-making at school varied considerably cross-nationally. The findings also suggest that while parents in most countries were frequently involved in discussions about student learning, they tended to have little influence on actual decision-making processes at schools.

Generally across participating countries, students had positive perceptions of the openness of their classroom climates for discussions of political and social issues. This degree of openness was positively associated with students' interest in political and social issues, students' expected level of education, and students' civic knowledge. These associations not only correspond with results from the previous civic studies but also support the notion of the importance of "democratic environments" for civic learning. Cross-nationally, positive views of teacher-student relationships were also common among the lower-secondary students. However, those students with at least one parent who had a university degree and those students who had higher levels of civic knowledge tended to have more positive perceptions than other students.

More than half of the surveyed students reported forms of verbal abuse (such as being called offensive nicknames or experiencing others laughing at them). More direct forms of abuse (such as physical attacks or posting offensive texts or pictures online) were reported less frequently, however. Abuse was more frequent among male students, students who were not expecting to attain a university degree, and students who had lower levels of civic knowledge. These findings may reflect differences in the social and academic contexts of the schools these students were attending. Results from the school survey also suggest that most students were enrolled at schools that had established procedures to deal with problems related to bullying.

Across the ICCS 2016 countries, lower-secondary students tended to have some opportunities for participation in civic-related activities in the community where their school was located. Most students were also studying at schools where principals reported initiatives intended to promote environmental sustainability, such as differential waste collection, water saving, and recycling. In addition, the teacher survey data suggest that the participating students tended to be involved in activities related to environmental sustainability, and that these activities were usually organized at schools.

We recorded considerable variation in the extent to which students had learned about civic issues at their school. Almost two thirds of students said they had learned to a moderate or large extent about how to protect the environment. Approximately 50 percent of the students, on average across countries, reported having learned to a moderate or large extent about political issues or events in other countries. These higher levels of civic learning were consistently and positively associated with students' interest in political and social issues, and in most countries with expected attainment of a university degree and with higher levels of civic knowledge.

Results from the optional survey of teachers teaching civic-related subjects at the target grade showed variations both in how teachers were teaching this learning area and in their approaches to learning activities. Generally, teachers of civic-related subjects expressed quite high levels of confidence in their capacity to teach a variety of topics and skills. While most teachers in nearly every country expressed confidence in teaching certain issues (such as equal opportunities for men and women, and critical independent thinking), we recorded greater variation across countries with respect to confidence in teaching about issues such as emigration and immigration or the global community and international organizations. This pattern may reflect differences in priorities with regard to the training of teachers for civic-related subjects or it may reflect the period of time when these teachers were trained.

Explaining variation in students' civic knowledge and expected engagement

In addition to presenting average scores for a series of civic-related cognitive and affective-behavioral measures, this report of the ICCS 2016 international findings included the results of multivariate analyses seeking to identify the factors that explain the variation in the national and international average scores on the ICCS civic knowledge scale, expected electoral participation (such as voting in national elections) scale, and active conventional political participation (such as joining a political party) scale.

Our multilevel modeling showed large differences in the amount of variation overall and within and between schools. Students' characteristics and social backgrounds were important predictors of students' civic knowledge. Factors reflecting civic learning processes showed relatively consistent associations with civic knowledge at the level of individual students, but less consistency at the school level. The results also showed that after we controlled for associations with student characteristics and social background, some of the previous statistically significant associations between civic learning processes and civic knowledge were no longer significant. Of particular interest, however, was our finding that an open classroom climate for discussion remained positively associated with civic knowledge after we had taken socioeconomic contexts into account. Participation in civic activities at school was another factor that had positive associations with students' civic knowledge in numerous countries.

ICCS 2016 also examined factors associated with expected student civic engagement in the future. Multiple regression models using student background, experience with civic engagement, disposition toward engagement, and beliefs about citizenship and institutions explained between a quarter and a third of the variation in expected civic participation.

Parental and student interest were the most important student background predictors of expected civic engagement. Female students were less inclined than male students to expect engagement in active political involvement in the future. Experience with civic engagement in the community or at school tended to be positively associated with expectations of political engagement during adulthood.

Student civic knowledge and self-efficacy as well as student beliefs were consistent predictors of expected electoral and active political participation. Students who believed in the importance of civic engagement through established channels were more likely to expect civic participation in the future. Most countries recorded positive associations between students' trust in civic institutions

and their expected electoral and active political participation. Our multivariate analyses confirmed previous findings about the relationship between civic knowledge and expected civic engagement as adults. Even after controlling for other variables, we found that the more knowledgeable students were more likely than their peers to expect to vote in elections, yet were less likely to expect to be actively involved politically.

This latter finding poses an interesting issue, which was originally raised in ICCS 2009. It suggests that higher levels of civic knowledge do not induce young people to develop a disposition for engagement in the traditional or conventional modes of active political participation. It is possible that having a higher level of knowledge about how the political system works, which includes the potentially negative aspects of its functioning, may be detrimental to adolescents' expectations of individual participation in these organizations and institutions. This finding should be considered in light of the positive association between socioeconomic background and civic knowledge. One could further hypothesize that young people from socially advantaged families tend to consider conventional political involvement as only one component of a broad set of ways for them to influence civic decision-making and effect change (either as part of a group or as individuals). Thus, this advantaged group of young people may tend to see conventional active involvement as a relatively less important means of civic engagement, while those young people who consider they have fewer mechanisms of influence available to them may value it more highly.

Comparing student outcomes across countries

ICCS 2016 collected a wide range of cognitive and affective-behavioral measures reflecting the different dimensions that were identified as relevant in the ICCS 2016 assessment framework (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, & Agrusti, 2016). Comparison of these outcomes across countries is therefore of interest. [Table 8.1](#) illustrates the relative position of national scale score averages to the overall ICCS 2016 averages for scales reflecting civic knowledge, aspects of engagement, and student attitudes. The markers in the columns indicate whether each country's score was more than one third of an international standard deviation above or below the ICCS 2016 international average, but still significantly above or below the ICCS 2016 average.

In some countries with higher average scores for students' civic knowledge, scores on the scales reflecting indicators of students' engagement were relatively low. Finland and the Netherlands were two such countries. Conversely, in some countries with low civic knowledge (such as Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Peru), the scale scores for engagement-related scales were low. However, this pattern was not consistent. For example, some countries with relatively low average civic knowledge scores had above-average scale scores for most of the affective-behavioral indicators but had below-average scores for students' endorsement of gender equality. In addition, some countries (such as Chinese Taipei and Italy) had relatively high levels of civic knowledge and showed above-average results for many of the affective-behavioral indicators.

The finding that some countries with low average scores for students' civic knowledge had relatively high average scores for engagement-related indicators while some countries with high averages of civic knowledge had students who appeared to be (relatively) less disposed to engage in society was also observed in ICCS 2009. Some of this variation may be due to differences across countries in how students responded to the attitudinal questionnaire formats used in ICCS. There may have been, for example, a tendency among students from particular cultural contexts to more strongly agree with statements.

These results may also be related to the previously cited findings at the individual level where students' higher expectations of active engagement were not associated with higher levels of civic knowledge. Countries with lower levels of civic knowledge are typically characterized by more social inequality and less political stability, factors that could make civic engagement appear a relatively promising way of achieving political and social goals in society. In countries with higher levels of

Table 8.1: Comparison of country averages for cognitive and affective-behavioral ICCS 2016 scales

Country	Student engagement										Student attitudes				
	Civic knowledge	Engagement with social media	Discussions of political and social issues	Sense of student citizenship self-efficacy	Valuing student participation at school	Preparedness to participate in school activities	Expectations to participate in legal activities	Expectations to participate in illegal activities	Expected electoral participation activities	Expected active political participation	Importance of conventional citizenship	Importance of social-movement-related citizenship	Importance of personally responsible citizenship	Endorsement of gender equality	Endorsement of equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups
Belgium (Flemish)	△	▽	▽	▽	▽	▼	▼	▽	▽	▼	▼	▽	▽	△	▽
Bulgaria	▼			△			△	▲	▽	▽	▽	▲	▽	▼	▼
Chile	▼	▽	▽		▲	△	△	▲	▽	▽		△	△	△	▲
Chinese Taipei	▲	▲	▽		△	△	△	▼	△	▽	△	△	▲	▲	▲
Colombia	▼	△	▽	△	△	▲	▲	▲	△	△	△	▲	△	▽	△
Croatia	△	▽	△	△	△	△		▽			△	△	△	△	▽
Denmark [†]	▲		△	▽	▽	▼	▽	▼	△		▽	▼	▽	▲	▽
Dominican Republic	▼	▲	△	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	△	▲	▲	▲	▲	▼	△
Estonia [†]	△	▽		▽		▽	▽	▽	▼	▽	▼	▽	▼		
Finland	▲	▼	▽	▼	▽	▼	▼	▼	▽	▽	▼	▼	△	▲	
Italy	△	△	△			△	△	▽	△		△	△	△	△	▽
Latvia [†]	▽		△	▼	▽	▽	▽	▽	▽	▽	△	▽	▼	▼	▼
Lithuania		△	△	▽	▽	△	△	△	△	△	△	▽	▽	▽	
Malta	▽	▽	△	▽		△	▽		▽	▽	▽	▽	△	△	▽
Mexico	▼	△	▽	△	△	▲	▲	▲	△	▲	▲	▲	△	▼	△
Netherlands [†]		▼	▽	▼	▼	▼	▼	▽	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	△	▼
Norway (9) [†]	▲	▽	▽	▽	▽	▽	▼	▽	▲	▽	▽	▽		▲	△
Peru	▼	△	△	▲	△	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	△	△	▽	△
Russian Federation	△	△		▽	▽	△		▽	▽	▽	△	▽	▽	▼	▽
Slovenia	△	▼	▽	▽	▽	▽	▽		▽	▽	▼	▽	▽	△	▽
Sweden [†]	▲		△		▽	▼	▼	▽	△	▽	▽	▽		▲	▲

National average:

- ▲ More than 0.3 of an international standard deviation above ICCS 2016 average
 △ Significantly above ICCS 2016 average
 ▽ Significantly below ICCS 2016 average
 ▼ More than 0.3 of an international standard deviation below ICCS 2016 average

economic stability and stable institutions, however, students' level of trust in civic institutions and the rule of law may be sufficient for them to see little or no need for individual engagement.

Implications for policy and practice

Any discussion of potential implications of the ICCS 2016 findings for policy and practice needs to recognize the limitations that arise from some of the features of this study. As pointed out earlier in this report, firm causal relationships cannot be established given the study's cross-sectional design. The "self-selective" nature of country participation also poses limitations. For example, although many European countries and a sizeable group of Latin American countries participated in the survey, participation in other regions was either scarce or non-existent, and two of the Asian countries did not meet the sample participation requirements that would have permitted their inclusion in the ICCS 2016 average calculations or comparison with the 2009 findings. However, the study has clearly contributed a number of interesting findings to research on civic and citizenship education, and some of these have possible policy implications.

One positive outcome found as a result of this study was the general improvement in civic knowledge among the target-grade students in about half of the countries since 2009—an improvement that was not limited to countries with already high average levels of civic knowledge. We also observed trends toward even more tolerant views among students regarding gender equality (in many countries) and equal opportunities for all ethnic and racial groups (in most countries). It is important to recognize in this context the positive association between higher levels of civic knowledge and students' endorsement of equal opportunities.

While the results mentioned above paint an encouraging picture, there is still considerable variation in civic knowledge within and across countries. While in some countries the average student demonstrated a high level of familiarity with issues concerning civics and citizenship—a familiarity that enables them to make connections across a wide range of areas—in other countries the average student showed only basic levels of familiarity with broad concepts in this area. Furthermore, within countries, a large gap remains evident between the students achieving the highest scores on the civic knowledge scale and those who recorded the lowest scores. As in ICCS 2009, we also observed a consistent and significant difference in the achievement of female and male students, with female students recording higher levels of civic knowledge. We additionally observed some variations across countries with regard to students' views of gender equality, and here females also had the consistently higher scores on the relevant scale.

Overall, findings from this study suggest that there is ample room for improvement, and that education systems should seek to strengthen their capacity to teach civic and citizenship education in ways that are inclusive. The ICCS 2016 test data suggest that emphasis could be given to supporting the needs of the lowest achieving students and understanding the differences between the civic and citizenship knowledge of female and male students. Given the absence of clear associations between the observed national levels of civic knowledge and the ways in which the corresponding countries had implemented civic and citizenship education in their national curricula, there is no obvious recommendation about the best way to organize civic and citizenship education. Context data indicate that different approaches tend to coexist, either through integration across subjects or the establishment of subjects specifically focused on civics and citizenship content.

The view that students' experiences at school are important for shaping future engagement as citizens is a long-held one. In keeping with evidence from other studies, a number of findings in this report suggest an association between how students experience democratic forms of engagement at school and their dispositions toward future civic engagement. For example, we found students' perceptions of open classroom climate and their experiences with engagement at school were associated with their intention to engage in civic life in the future and with higher levels of civic knowledge. These associations give some support to long-standing arguments that establishing

basic democratic structures within schools and providing students with early opportunities for active participation have the potential to promote students' civic knowledge and their disposition to engage in civic-related activities in the future.

Many countries in the world continue to express concern about low levels of voter participation among young people, and there have been claims that voter abstention among this segment of the population has been a decisive factor shaping voting results. The links that the ICCS 2016 findings suggest between civic knowledge, school-based experiences with civic engagement, and expectations to vote and participate in other civic activities in adulthood indicate that promotion of civic and citizenship education, in both formal and informal ways, should be considered as an essential means of helping young people become more conscious of their political roles and the importance of being participating citizens.

Outlook

ICCS 2016, like its predecessor ICCS 2009, has provided a rich database that we expect will contribute to generating new research and findings with substantial potential for providing further insights into civic and citizenship education. This publication is but a first report of the main findings based on initial analyses because ICCS 2016 will provide an ongoing basis for numerous research studies in the form of secondary analysis after the public release of the study's database.

IEA implemented ICCS as a fully developed cycle of comparative studies of civic and citizenship education. ICCS 2009 was the first in the cycle; ICCS 2016 has been the second. Over coming years, the ICCS 2016 data will contribute to a wide range of secondary research activities, as occurred with the CIVED 1999 and the ICCS 2009 datasets. The international research team will soon commence preparations for the next study in the ICCS cycle, with data collection scheduled for 2022. The initiation of this study will again address new developments and challenges in this learning area, such as implications from growing migration, the prevalence of new social media in young people's engagement with civic issues, the increased importance of notions of global citizenship, and the necessity of learning about sustainable development.

This report has highlighted the relevance of civic and citizenship education in modern democracies during the second decade of the 21st century. It has also emphasized the importance of a comparative study of this learning area across a wide range of different societies. Given the ongoing challenges of preparing young people for citizenship in a rapidly changing world, we expect continued interest and an increased engagement in this unique study across a wide range of regions, cultures, and societies.

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