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An International Perspective on Civic And Citizenship Education: Exploring the Learning Context for Lower Secondary Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS) is to investigate, in a range of countries, the ways in which young people are prepared and consequently ready and able to undertake their roles as citizens. In pursuit of this purpose, the study will report on student achievement, student activities, value beliefs, behavioural intentions and attitudes related to civic and citizenship education. The collection of contextual data will help to explain variation in these outcome variables. This paper describes how the learning context for civic education is explored in the ICCS survey. It outlines the conceptual framework, the design of the study and the assessment instruments for students, teachers and school principals, as well as a national context survey collecting data on the national contexts for civic and citizenship education. Some preliminary results from the first data collections undertaken in this study are included at the end of this paper.

Introduction

The purpose of the *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS) is to investigate, in a range of countries, the ways in which young people are prepared and consequently ready and able to undertake their roles as citizens. In pursuit of this purpose, the study will report on student achievement, student activities, value beliefs, behavioural intentions and attitudes related to civic and citizenship education. The collection of contextual data will help to explain variation in these outcome variables. The study builds on the previous IEA studies of civic education (see Torney-Purta et. al., 2001; Amadeo et. al., 2002; Schulz & Sibberns, 2004) and is a response to the challenge of educating young people in changed

contexts of democracy and civic participation.

This summary describes how the learning context for civic education is explored in the ICCS survey. It briefly outlines the conceptual framework, the design of the study and the assessment instruments for students, teachers and school principals, as well as a national context survey collecting data on the national contexts for civic and citizenship education.

Civics and Citizenship Framework

Construct operationalisation

The ICCS *Civics and Citizenship Framework* underpins the collection of student outcomes data and is organised around three dimensions: a content dimension specifying the subject matter to be assessed within civics and citizenship; an affective-behavioural dimension that describes the types of student perceptions and activities that will be measured; and a cognitive dimension that describes the thinking processes to be assessed.

Civics and citizenship content domains

The first content domain, *civic society and systems*, comprises the mechanisms, systems and organisations that underpin societies. The second domain, *civic principles*, refers to the shared ethical foundations of civic societies. *Civic participation*, the third domain, deals with the nature of the processes and practices that define and mediate the participation of citizens in their civic communities (often referred to as *active citizenship*). The Civics and Citizenship Framework recognises the centrality of the individual citizen through the *civic identities*, the fourth domain. This domain refers to the personal sense an individual has of being an agent of civic action with connections to multiple communities. Together, these four domains describe the civic and citizenship content to be assessed in ICCS.

Civics and citizenship affective-behavioural domains

Data relating to the affective-behavioural domains are collected using a Likert-type item format. The following affective-behavioural domains are distinguished:

- *Value beliefs* can be defined as beliefs about the worth of concepts, institutions, people and/or ideas. They help individuals resolve contradictions, and they form the basis of how we see ourselves and others. Value systems are sets of value beliefs that individuals adopt and that, in turn, influence both attitudes and behaviour.[1]
- *Attitudes* can be defined as states of mind or feelings about ideas, persons, objects, events, situations and/or relationships. In contrast to value beliefs, attitudes are narrower in nature, can change over time and are less deeply rooted. The different types of attitudes relevant with respect to civics and citizenship include: (a) students' self-beliefs related to civics and citizenship; (b) students' attitudes towards rights and responsibilities; and (c) students' attitudes towards institutions.
- *Behavioural intentions* refer to student expectations of future action, not actual behaviour. This affective-behavioural domain, assessed in the student perceptions questionnaire, requires items that ask students about their intentions towards civic action in the near future or as adults.
- *Civic-related behaviour* is limited for 14-year-old students, and many activities for citizens are not available at this age. However, several civic-related behaviours can occur among 14-year-olds and the aim is to capture these through the student background questionnaire.

Civics and citizenship cognitive domains

To respond correctly to the ICCS cognitive test items, students need to know the core set of civic and citizenship content being assessed. Students also need to be able to apply more complex cognitive processing to their civic and citizenship knowledge and to relate their knowledge and understandings to real-world civic action.

The two ICCS cognitive domains comprise the cognitive processes that students are expected to demonstrate in the ICCS cognitive test.:

- The first cognitive domain, knowing, outlines the types of civic and citizenship information that students are required to demonstrate knowledge of.
- The second domain, reasoning and analysing, details the cognitive processes that students require to reach conclusions that are broader than the contents of any single piece of knowledge, including the processes involved in understanding complex sets of factors influencing civic actions and planning for and evaluating strategic solutions and outcomes.

The data derived from the test items constructed to represent the processes in the cognitive domains will be

1 Rokeach (1973, p. 5) gives the following definitions: 'A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance.'

used to construct a global scale of civic and citizenship knowledge and understandings of the four content domains

Survey design matrices in ICCS

The ICCS matrix predefines the civic and citizenship content and processes, and each cell in the matrix represents a question type that is the intersection of content and process.

Figure 1 shows the ICCS design matrix, with the item types in each cell representing as the intersection of civic and citizenship content and process.

Figure 1 shows how items can be placed in different cells and mapped to either cognitive or affective-behavioural domains as well as to content domains. Cognitive items from both domains (knowing, analysing and reasoning) and affective-behavioural items from two domains (value beliefs and attitudes) can be developed in the contexts of all four content domains. Because these mappings are guided by the compatibility of each content domain to the different affective-behavioural and cognitive domains, they will not necessarily spread evenly across the content domains. Items developed to measure behavioural intentions or actual behaviours relate only to Content Domain 3.

The ICCS field trial instruments contain some of the secure trend items from the IEA CIVED study in 1999 as a concrete scaling link between the two studies and allow trend comparisons for countries that have participated in both international surveys.

Contextual Framework

Classification of contextual factors

ICCS sets the study of civic-related learning outcomes and indicators of civic engagement needs in the context of the different factors influencing them. Young people develop their understandings about their roles as citizens in contemporary societies through a number of activities and experiences that take place within the contexts of home, school, classrooms and the wider community.

It is therefore important to recognise that young people's knowledge, competencies, dispositions and self-beliefs are influenced by variables that can be located at different levels in a multi-level structure (see a similar conceptual view in Scheerens, 1990). The individual student is located within overlapping contexts of school and home. Both contexts form part of the local community that, in turn, is embedded in the wider sub-national, national and international context. The contextual framework for ICCS distinguishes the following levels:

- *Context of the wider community*: This level comprises the wider context within which schools and home environments work. Factors can be found at local, regional and national

	Content Domain 1: Civic society and systems	**Content Domain 2:** Civic principles	**Content Domain 3:** Civic participation	**Content Domain 4:** Civic identities
Cognitive domains				
Knowing	I	II	III	IV
Analysing and reasoning	V	VI	VII	VIII
Affective-behavioural domains				
Value beliefs	A	B	C	D
Attitudes	E	F	G	H
Behavioural intentions			I	
Behaviours			J	

Figure 1: Relationship between cognitive or affective-behavioural and content domains in ICCS

levels. For some countries, the supra-national level might also be relevant as, for example, in member countries of the European Union.

- *Context of schools and classrooms*: This level comprises factors related to the instruction students receive, the school culture and the general school environment.[2]
- *Context of home environments*: This level comprises factors related to the home background and the social out-of-school environment of the student (for example, peer-group activities).
- *Context of the individual*: This level includes the individual characteristics of the student. Another important distinction can be made by grouping contextual factors according to those related to either antecedents or processes:
- *Antecedents* are those factors that affect how student learning and acquisition of civic-related understandings and perceptions takes place. Note that these factors are level-specific and may be influenced by antecedents or processes at a higher level. For example, civic-related training of teachers may be affected by historical factors and/or policies implemented at the national level.
- *Processes* are those factors related to civic-related learning and the acquisition of understandings, competencies and dispositions. They are constrained by antecedents and influenced by factors relating to the higher levels of the multi-level structure.

Antecedents and processes are factors that shape the outcomes at the level of the individual student. Learning outcomes related to civics and citizenship education at the student level also can be viewed as aggregates at higher levels (school or country) where they can affect factors related to process. For example, higher levels of civic understanding and engagement among students can influence the way schools teach civic and citizenship education.

Figure 2 illustrates which contextual factors might influence the learning outcomes of civic and citizenship education. The (double-headed) arrow between processes and outcomes signals a reciprocal relationship. It is important to emphasise that 'feedback' occurs between civic-related learning

2 Because of the sampling design for ICCS, school level and classroom level cannot be disentangled. Generally, only one classroom will be selected within each school in the sample.

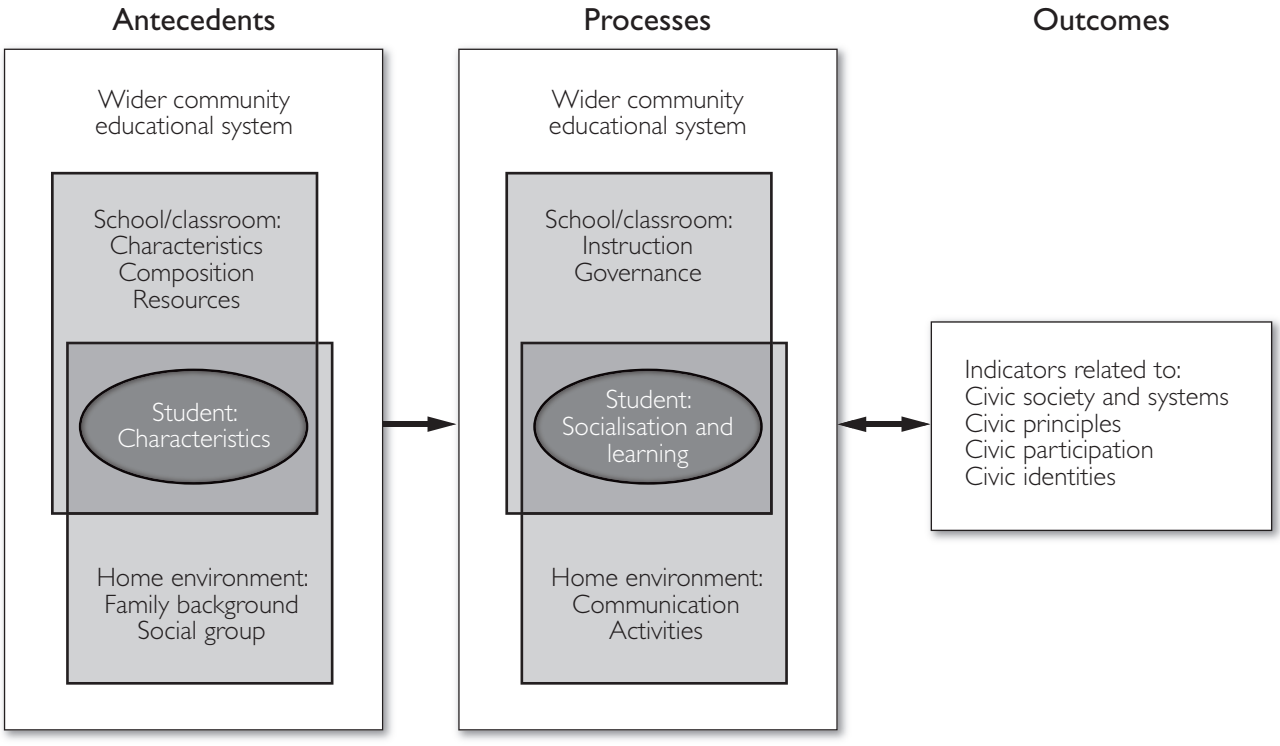

Figure 2: Contexts for the development of learning outcomes related to civics and citizenship

outcomes and processes. For example, students with higher levels of civic knowledge and engagement are those students more likely to participate in activities (at school, at home and within the community) that promote these outcomes.

The (single-headed) arrow between antecedents and processes describes the relationship between these two types of factors at each level as uni-directional. However, higher-level processes can influence antecedents, and it is likely that, from a long-term perspective, outcomes may affect variables that are antecedents for learning processes.

This general contextual framework for ICCS makes it possible to map variables for which data are collected on a three-by-four grid, with antecedents, processes and outcomes as columns and the levels of nation/community, school/classroom, student and home environment as rows. Although the last column for outcomes is not split into levels, it is important to recognise that, for the analysis, aggregates can also be used at country and school/classroom levels.[3]

Figure 2 maps examples of potential variables (or groups of variables) collected with different ICCS instruments to each cell in this grid:

- Variables related to the context of nation/community will be collected primarily through the *national context survey* and other possible data sources.
- Variables related to the context of schools and classrooms will be collected through the *school and teacher questionnaires*.
- The *student background questionnaire* provides information on antecedents of the individual student, the home environment and some process-related variables (for example, learning activities). In addition, the student background questionnaire will include questions regarding student participation in civic-related activities, which will also be used as indicators of active citizenship related to Content Domain 3 (civic participation).
- The *student test* and the *student perceptions questionnaire* will collect data on outcomes.

Some potential variables that can be measured at one level pertaining to another level are not included in the mapping in Table 1. Student observations of learning practices in the classroom can be aggregated and used as classroom or school variables. Student, school, and teacher questionnaires might also provide civic-related information about the context of the local community.

3 It should be noted that similar conceptualisations have been used for the planning of other international studies (see for example Travers & Westbury, 1989; Travers, Garden & Rosier, 1989; Harvey-Beavis, 2002; OECD 2005)

Table 1: Mapping of variables to contextual framework (examples)

Level of ...	Antecedents	Processes	Outcomes
National and other communities	**NCQ & other sources:** Democratic history Structure of education	**NCQ & other sources:** Intended curriculum Political developments	**StT & StPQ & StBQ:** Test results Student perceptions Student behaviours
School/classroom	**ScQ & TQ:** School characteristics Resources	**ScQ & TQ:** Implemented curriculum Policies and practices	
Student	**StBQ:** Gender Age	**StBQ:** Learning activities Practiced engagement	
Home environment	**StBQ:** Parent SES Ethnicity Language Country of birth	**StBQ:** Communication Peer-group activities	

Key: NCQ: National Context Survey; ScQ: School Questionnaire; TQ: Teacher Questionnaire; StBQ: Student Background Questionnaire; StPQ: Student Perceptions Questionnaire; StT: Student Test; SES: Socio-economic Status

Study outcomes

Two international data collections have been undertaken for ICCS:

- The *National Context Survey* was carried out in the first half of 2007 as an on-line survey in which national study centres provided information on the educational system and civic and citizenship education in their countries.
- The *international field trial* was undertaken in 32 countries between October 2007 and January 2008 and included a piloting of student tests, student questionnaires, teacher and school questionnaires typically with samples of about 600 students from 25 schools per country.

The *National Context Survey* provided a rich data set about the general context and different aspects of civic and citizenship education. National centres will be asked to update some of the data in conjunction with the main data collection, which will take place between October and December 2008 (Southern hemisphere) and between February and April 2009 (Northern hemisphere).

The field trial outcomes have generally shown encouraging results both for outcome and contextual measures and have informed the item selection for the main survey instruments.

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