Towards Contextualized Civic Education Research
Some Lessons from the IEA Studies

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Lessons Learned for Understanding Civic and Citizenship Education
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International studies in civic and citizenship education typically
- center on all learning related to civics and citizenship, which is planned and guided by schools
- include selected contextual factors assumed to relate to educational outcomes

Factors that influence education in this area are not stable across countries and over time
- altering content of school education
- redefining type of competences considered necessary for citizens
- influencing the activity of students in process of becoming citizens

Studies in civic and citizenship education should
- go beyond education as defined by the system and relate assessment to changing conditions

Makes it difficult to develop a study for a variety of countries and overtime comparisons
Dilemma 1: *Comparative assessment of school education should be curriculum driven, but …*

how to develop a civic and citizenship education study considering limited responsiveness of educational systems to changing content and contexts of citizenship?

- **Civic and citizenship framework** requires going beyond most common curricular content
  - from specific knowledge content to the total learning experience provided by school
  - from cognitive skills to other specific performance expectations
  - from experiences organized by school to other learning environments

- **Contextual framework** requires going beyond standard set of variables included in educational research
  - to specific, stable variables in student environment which might be directly related to socialization and political socialization
  - to fluctuant variables (e.g. related to events such as political/social changes, political conflicts, economic crises, etc.)

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Dilemma 2: *Comparing apples and pears because …*

… postulate of broadening framework can limit comparability of diverse countries. How to address this problem?

• **Common stance for participating countries:** democratic organization of society and free market economy
  - common frame in which civic and citizenship curriculum is set
  - interest in assessing comparative standing within this frame
  - possibility to review needs and reach agreement on adjustments to frame

• **Recognition of differences between participating countries:** different development and advancement of democratic system and economy, different culture and societal organization, different situational variables
  - regional modules
  - thematic modules
  - national options (including/excluding specific issues)

• **Frame for identifying distinctive characteristics of participating countries** that are related to citizenship
Dilemma 2: *Comparing apples and pears because …*

… diversity of countries produces obstacles for *study development and implementation* in comparable manner. How to address this problem?

• International cooperation to develop international version of the instruments
  - extended contribution of the participating countries
  - international body of experts in advisory group(s)

• Standardized procedures for preparing national version of the instruments
  - translation and national adaptations
  - quality control: translation and adaptation verification

• Uniform technical standards
  - nationally representative samples of cohort selected for study
  - precise procedures for data collection and preparation
  - external control of compliance with requirements
Dilemma 3: *When measuring change, do not change the measure, but …*

… assessment needs to develop in order to meet **specific and non-specific changes** that influence civic and citizenship education in:

- Content, expected outcomes and context related to citizenship: introduction of new topics (e.g. economic education), interest in new skills (e.g. emotional or participatory skills), social/political developments (e.g. economic crises)
- Educational priorities of countries related to civic and citizenship education (e.g. growing interest in active citizenship)
- Reforms of educational system (e.g. policies for inclusion, curriculum, start of schooling, teacher preparation)
- Culture of assessment (e.g. language and terminology used in survey instruments, “dated” test items, new modes of survey delivery)
- Methodology of large scale assessment (e.g. scaling, construction of test and questionnaire items, scoring)
Dilemma 3: *When measuring change, do not change the measure, but …*

How to assure **continuity with the past and relevance to the present**?

- **Framework development**
  - maintaining strong connection to constructs fundamental for the study subject
  - reflecting on results of previous data collection and other studies
  - responding to emerging questions and needs

- **Bridging study**
  - surveying some students under old or new procedures (e.g. paper-and-pen vs. computer based assessment, providing accommodations for students who need them)

- **Linking assessments over time**
  - using the same set of items in successive assessments
  - restricting changes in design
  - employing statistics that permit data from successive assessments to be placed on a common scale
  - interpreting results cautiously

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What was achieved by IEA studies in civic education?

1971: *Does school make a difference?*

- **Context:** growth of youth political activism (anti-war movement)

- **Content:**
  - curricular information about civic and citizenship education
  - student knowledge and understanding of democracy, support for democratic values and national government, civic interest
  - school and classroom related characteristics
  - demographic variables

- **Results:**
  - civic values were of importance in education (but not obviously in school)
  - no country in which students scored above average in all outcome measures
  - limited influence of school (positive relation with classroom climate only)

- **Impact:**
  - discussion about organization of school for civic education
  - reforms in school civic education
What was achieved by IEA studies in civic education?
1999: *School and other social agents*

- **Context:** collapse of communism, rise of “new democracies”, global interdependency, human and minority rights

- **More content:**
  - selected in-depth characteristics of national context
  - regional and global organizations, national identity, social cohesion and diversity
  - out-of-school civic-related experiences (home, youth groups, local community)

- **Results:**
  - considerable variation between countries in students’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors
  - school is positioned within set of systems and influences on political socialization (factors such as school climate, open classroom discussion, emphasis on voting)

- **Impact:**
  - school role recognized and some shortages indentified (limited democratic experiences)
  - growing interest in civic education at national and intergovernmental level
What was achieved by IEA studies in civic education?

2009: *Citizenship in a changing world*

- **Context**: globalization vs. regionalization, immigration, threats for democracy and terrorism

- **More content**:
  - various aspects of global awareness
  - inclusion of teachers of various school subjects
  - collecting data on systemic level
  - regional modules for Asia, Europe and Latin America

- **Results**:
  - identification of significant within-country differences (in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors)
  - school does not prepare students for active citizenship: knowledge and cognitive skills as major objective of civic education in school

- **Impact**:
  - further engagement of school in civic and citizenship education (e.g. economic education, active citizenship)
Development of IEA studies in civic education
2016: in progress …

• **Context:** financial/economic crises in Europe and United States, youth unemployment and protests, political unrest and changes in Arab world, development of communications technology

• **Trend:** changes in knowledge and attitudes for countries that participated in ICCS 2009

• **New content:**
  - social interactions in school
  - economic awareness
  - sustainable development
  - role of morality
  - role of social media
Conclusions

- International civic and citizenship education studies follow “moving target” in respect to content and context

- Studies in this field should assure comparability by investigating core issues that are common across various countries, but also need to create possibilities for countries to group according to their specific interests

- Measuring trends in this field might be more difficult than in other school subjects, but is possible by following basic methodological requirements (link items, stable design) and using bridging studies when necessary

- To provide useful data, new aspects have to be introduced in each subsequent study carefully and following tendencies that can be observed across assessments, such as those shown by the IEA studies:
  - changes in knowledge requirements from local to global
  - changes in competencies needed from passive to active citizenship
  - changes in the role of school from transmitting knowledge to guiding student activities

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