

Citizenship Behavior among the Iranian Elementary School Students

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Abstract—Citizen education has become an important component of school curriculum. Schools have taken close responsibility to provide citizens getting involved in the democratic values of the society. The present study was conducted to investigate the degree of citizenship behavior among the Iranian elementary school students. Population for the study were all 2800 females students in 52 elementary schools in District No. 8, East of Tehran. A sample population of 390 based on Morgan Table were randomly selected and a researcher designed questionnaire with 50 items was used to determine citizenship behavior among students in the study. According to literature, citizenship behavior was defined in terms of social, cognitive, democratic and creative behavior of students. The binominal test showed that students do believe and practice civics education. The study recommends a more detailed inspection of curricula regarding the competencies required to be a good citizen.

Keywords—citizenship education; elementary schools; IRAN

I. INTRODUCTION

The historical roots of citizenship should be found in Plato's thoughts and other philosophers of ancient Greece. Citizenship has a two fold role, one in citizens and the other in governors [1].

Citizenship means to become a total member of a society in which everybody has equal right to participate in social activities and take part in decision makings and responsibilities. Social rights as a result of a civil and political process is considered to be legal by political and judicial authorities [2]; [3] ; [4] . In the industrial era of Europe, the need for justice in a liberal state and the need for identity and membership in a civil society were are signs of citizenship [5].

Citizenship education has now become worldwide. Not only it has been focused in the school curriculum but has been considered a need to be expanded for the youth and adults in higher education institutions in order to produce responsible citizens for the society [6].

Many societies are now worried about how the youth and adolescents should be trained for civil life and how they should be provided to be able to participate in the social responsibilities [7]. Citizenship requires a long life education. All individuals need to receive education relative and compatible to citizenship life. Students need to receive education in ethics, social behavior, and skills to be able to have a real understanding of the world and be active and independent in social life [8]; [9].

Commitment, feeling of equality, curiosity, obedience from law, progress seeking, respecting public interest, social participation, readiness for future life, and responsiveness are all considered as citizenship characteristics [10]; [11]; [12]; [13]; [14].

In an international comparative study, [15] mentioned 12 values needed to be known as a good citizen, namely: ethical values, civil values, personal independence, democracy, work values, family values, knowledge of the environment, cultural dimension, peace and conflicts, national identity, and knowledge of world affairs, and sexual equality.

Causal links between education and citizenship was investigated in a comparative study [16]. The researchers explored the effect of extra schooling induced through compulsory schooling laws on the likelihood of becoming politically involved in the United States and the United Kingdom. They found that educational attainment was related to several measures of political interest and involvement in both countries. They also found a strong relationship between education and voting for the United States, but not for the United Kingdom.

In a research, in 1999, over 3000 Australian students in 115 schools representing all schooling sectors participated in the Australian component of the Civic Education study [17]. The study used items to seek students' views about 'good citizens'. The items asked about what 'an adult who is a good citizen' would do in relation to nominated areas of political and social action.

The most important identifier of good citizens is that they obey the law. Australian students agreed with the international cohort on this issue. The second-most supported identifier of good citizenship is 'votes in every election'. Students seemed to value this highly even though some of them did not anticipate voting when adults themselves. The third most supported identifier is of one who 'works hard'. Australian students value this quality more highly than their international peers. The fourth citizenship identifier is that it is not important for a good citizen to 'join a political party'. They are much more certain about the value they attach to this position than the international cohort.

Australian students agreed, though less enthusiastically than their international peers, that a good citizen was one who 'participates in activities to benefit the people in the community'. For some the good citizen was one who 'is patriotic and loyal to the country'. The Australian attitude of the relative unimportance of conventional citizenship is

indicated by the 'fairly unimportant' response category for the importance of a citizen to engage in political discussions. Half of the Australian students believed a good citizen knows about the county's history, and follows political issues in the press.

The focus in particular was on Australian students' democratic values and on their attitudes towards participation and social action. The results suggested that while Australian students had a well-developed set of democratic values, they adopted a passive rather than an active style of engaging in conventional citizenship activities. They would participate formally through voting and they would pursue issues where they saw some community benefit but they did not see themselves exercising an effective presence in the formal political system. The implications of these results were discussed in relation to the characteristics of citizens needed in a democratic society and the role that schools could play in adopting curriculum and pedagogy that would engage young people in the development of their civic knowledge.

In Australia, the Minister of Education in his advice to the Board of Studies for the development of Civics and Citizenship Education noted that this was one of the priority areas of the curriculum for students as they enter the 21st century [18]. The Minister, in his address, put a strong emphasis on Civics and Citizenship Education and the commitment to educational values of rational enquiries and openness to evidence. Accordingly, Citizenship Education supports students in becoming active and informed citizens with the ability to exercise judgment and responsibility and ethics in matters of morality, ethics, law and social justice.

In an editorial message to the special issue on Civic Education Study, [19] argue that Schools may need to rethink the way they approach civics education. They suggest considerable room for improvement for all countries, especially with regard to curricula and extra-curricular activities. The gap between intended curriculum (to develop active citizenship) and implemented curriculum (teaching of content) point to need to reconsider educational citizenship such that curricula for citizenship will acquire a different structure and content from the curricula for citizenship. Adequate teacher development and training is always vital for the implementation of educational policy. Practices and discourse that will cultivate student interest in involvement and participation demand initial and continuous professional development. This professional development should focus on contextualized political information concerning the role and the intervention of political persons, parties and active citizens. The authors suggest that differentiated citizenship based on student differences in cultural, social, school and family capital will contribute to better results for active citizenship, inclusion and participation of all students.

Civics education has attracted considerable interest internationally and has emerged as a critical area of discussion and concern as societies strive to develop educational policies and school curricula designed to promote a variety of conceptions of a "good citizen". As of early 2002s education for citizenship has become a statutory requirement in English secondary schools for the

first time. Broad guidelines issued to schools include some elements of economic understanding, although this aspect of citizenship has attracted little attention in public debate. Moreover, relatively little is known about students' current thinking on these aspects of citizenship.

In an article, [20] addressed this gap in current knowledge through reporting results from a large-scale (over 1000 responses) survey of 15- and 17-year-old students. The instrumentation for the study focused on students' understanding of, and attitude towards, aspects of taxation, government spending, employment and inflation. Evidence from the study suggests that levels of economic understanding among 15–17 year-old students in England are low. However, the difficulties in helping young people to develop their understanding of experiences of everyday life and the workings of the society in which they participate are far from exclusive to this aspect of the curriculum. Given the levels of knowledge and understanding reported here, some development is eminently desirable. The challenge for teaching is finding ways to develop learning that will impact on the way in which young people perceive, participate in and change the economy. These results may usefully inform planning for programmes of citizenship education and they can also provide a point of reference for subsequent evaluation of those programmes.

The introduction of Citizenship Education in English secondary schools in 2002 has raised a number of important questions concerning the way in which children and young people construct and obtain local, national and global identities. Citizenship Education was introduced as compulsory for secondary schools (ages 11–16) and consisted of political literacy, community involvement and social and moral responsibility. The construction of young people's experiences in city schools through a new curriculum subject, Citizenship Education, in secondary schools in England was studied in another research paper [21].

The paper demonstrates how citizen identities are constructed through discursive practices in the classroom and are shaped by geographies of education. The placebased identities formed within urban schools both reflect and refute the inequalities inherent in the selective education system which pertains in many UK cities.

A discussion of the urban context in which the research was undertaken is followed by an analysis of empirical research in two schools in and around Bristol, south-west England. This explores the ways in which particular place-based subjectivities are actively and knowingly enacted by teachers and pupils in the classroom through their talk about what constitutes the ideal citizen.

The Norwegian ambitions for Civic and Citizenship Education and the concept of democratic competence and awareness is investigated by [22]. It presents some of the main Norwegian results from the Civic Education Study. Most Norwegian 14-year olds seem to possess an adequate democratic competence. However, they seem to lack interest, engagement and will to participate politically in the future despite this competence.

The article discusses some Norwegian/Nordic findings concerning the relationship between political interest, engagement and expected participation and trust in government in comparison with data from other European regions. Civic education in Norwegian schools is supported by comprehensive policy documents and is governed by extensive implementation, especially through the curriculum for the ten years of compulsory schooling. The Norwegian curriculum was approved by the Norwegian Parliament in 1996. Discussions in the legislature resulted in ambitious objectives for civic and citizenship education.

The study shows that in many ways, the democratic ambitions stated as aims in various parts of the curriculum seem to be satisfactorily achieved. It is, however, extremely difficult to identify the role of the school in developing students' knowledge, concepts and attitudes as opposed to influences from other agents of political socialization like the media, peer groups and parents. Students themselves state that the school has been important for explaining concepts of democracy, for its democratic environment and for teaching tolerance and cooperation, but less important in terms of influencing them to vote as adults.

In the United States, a primary purpose of public schools has always been to prepare youth for their roles as citizens of a democracy. From the time of Thomas Jefferson to the present, political and educational leaders have continually asserted the importance of educating youth for informed participatory citizenship. However, despite a consensus in the country about the value of civic education, there is no uniform policy for preparing young people in this area. Because states and local school districts are responsible for education, there is much variety in policies that influence how civic education is delivered. Yet, in spite of this decentralized system of policies and practices, students in the United States are exposed to remarkably similar civic content. In contrast, instructional practices, school climates, and opportunities for extracurricular activities vary greatly from one school to the next—indeed, even from one classroom to the next when the same curriculum and textbooks are used. As part of the IEA study of civic education, US ninth graders were assessed for their civic knowledge, concepts, attitudes, and experiences [23].

The study yielded information about the development of democratic attitudes and dispositions toward social action. US ninth graders rated free expression and free elections as most important for democracy. They were less sure about the importance of peaceful protests. US ninth graders were above the international average in their support of rights for both women and immigrants. However, not all groups of students were willing to extend rights to "the other." Additionally, students were most likely to have experienced social actions to help the community; far fewer were likely to engage in more politically oriented actions. Socio-economic variables and race/ethnicity were related to civic knowledge.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the review of the literature, the conceptual framework for the present study was defined in four major

categories as follows: creative behavior, social behavior, cognitive behavior and democratic behavior.

III. PURPOSE FOR THE RESEARCH

This survey research is to find out the degree of each of the four components of citizenship behavior among the fifth grade elementary students in district No. 8 of Tehran.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive analysis was taken for this survey research. Population for the study was all 2800 fifth grade elementary female students in 52 schools of district No. 8 in east of Tehran. Based on Morgan Table, 390 students were selected randomly from a stratified sample of 7 schools in the district. Based on review of literature, a researcher designed questionnaire measured the four components of citizenship behavior of students in the study. The instrument contained 40 items, creative behavior with 15 items, social behavior with 15 items, cognitive behavior and democratic behavior each with 10 items explaining citizenship behavior. For the test of reliability, Alpha showed .39, .58, .57, and .51 for social behavior, democratic behavior, cognitive behavior, and creative behavior through distribution of the questionnaire among a pilot of 30 students. Alpha for all 50 items was 0.72. Minor changes were made in the items explaining social behavior. The questionnaire was then distributed among the sample population. Each item had a Yes or No response. The students self assessment of items explained whether they respected and considered citizenship behavior in their daily life.

V. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution, mean, median, standard deviation, Min and Max of the data for each four variables in the study. As shown in table 1, for all 390 sample population, Mean for social behavior behavior is 1.44, highest among the four components of citizenship behavior and creative behavior with a Mean of 1.23 shows the lowest.

The data collected for the study is analyzed and reported in table 2. To analyze the degree of students' performance of citizenship behaviors, Binominal Test was run. Group 1 is chosen for the Yes responses and group 2 for the No responses. As the results in table 2 shows, the observed P-Value for all four components of the main variable is less than .01 and therefore, could be concluded that with a confidence of .99 the students in the study believe and respect all four components of citizenship behavior, being that of social, democratic, cognitive and creative behavior.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with the purpose of evaluating the degree to which elementary students believe and behave and respect values of civics education. The term 'values' is used to refer to the principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behavior, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good and desirable. Active citizenship can be as straightforward as helping a neighbor. For some people this comes naturally, perhaps as a

result of family tradition. For others, active citizenship means to contribute to the common good rather than furthering the priorities and interests of specific individuals or groups in society. Participation in social activities is a source of interest and challenge to many students, and may provide opportunities to explore new roles, work in teams and develop leadership skills.

Analysis of the data for this study, although based on students' self assessment, showed that students do respect citizenship behavior. The findings of the present study support previous studies and is consistent with earlier assessments of citizenship behavior. Learning about citizenship involves engagement in the community and development of democratic values within that group. In recent years civics and citizenship education is being re-developed in an attempt to prepare young people for more effective participation in our complex, evolving society. More specifically, civics education has attracted considerable interest internationally and has emerged as a critical area of discussion and concern as societies strive to develop educational policies and school curricula designed to promote a variety of conceptions of a good citizen [24].

TABLE 1. CENTRAL TENDENCY MEASURES FOR THE VARIABLES

Citizenship Behaviors	Frequencies	Mean	Median	Standard D.	Min	Max
Social B.	390	1.44	1.44	0.107	1	1.8
Democratic B.	390	1.28	1.28	0.184	1	2
Cognitive B.	390	1.26	1.26	0.185	1	1.9
Creative B.	390	1.23	1.23	0.135	1	1.73

TABLE 2. RESULTS OF BINOMINAL TEST

Citizenship Behaviors		Category	N	Observed Prop.	Test Prop.	Asymp. Sig. 2-Tailed
Social B.	Group 1	<= 1.5	29	.75	.50	.000
		> 1.5	4	.25		
	Group 2	<= 1.5	96	1.00		
		> 1.5	39	0		
Democratic B.	Group 1	<= 1.5	35	.91	.50	.000
		> 1.5	4	.09		
	Group 2	<= 1.5	36	1.00		
		> 1.5	39	0		
Cognitive B.	Group 1	<= 1.5	36	.92	.50	.000
		> 1.5	0	.08		
	Group 2	<= 1.5	30	1.00		
		> 1.5	39	0		
Creative B.	Group 1	<= 1.5	37	.96	.50	.000
		> 1.5	6	.04		
	Group 2	<= 1.5	14	1.00		
		> 1.5	39	0		

In view of this increased interest, it is important to inquire into the nature of student ideas about democratic values and the extent of their participation in social actions.

Studies indicate that students in all ages would like to learn about global citizenship. An article based on the data from a 2 year Department for International Development (DfID) funded research project looks at the perceived needs of teaching and learning about global issues, particularly war and conflict. The study found that students wanted to learn about complex contemporary issues, particularly war and conflict, and had sophisticated understandings and questions. Yet, for teachers, these topics were to be avoided if possible. Teachers felt inadequately prepared and 'haunted stories' about upsetting children and other problems deterred them from teaching about sensitive issues. Teachers' fears also result from unclear government legislation and advice. This could be addressed by using the concepts of 'misrepresentation' and 'deceit', rather than 'promoting' a 'partisan' 'opinion' [25].

Yet some studies focus on group dialogue to teach citizenship education. The results of a study indicates that a dialogic approach to citizenship education as an integral part of history classes helps students to form a more profound opinion about moral issues in the subject matter. In addition, group work seems to be a more effective method to implement dialogue in the classroom than whole-class teaching [26].

Adequate teacher development and training is always vital for the implementation of educational policy. Practices and discourse that will cultivate student interest in involvement and participation demand initial and continuous professional development. This professional development should focus on contextualized political information concerning the role and the intervention of political persons, parties and active citizens, and not only merely emphasize theories about participation. Differentiated citizenship based on student differences in cultural, social, school and family capital will contribute. Still studies are required to obtain a picture of how young people are initiated into political communities of which they are members, including in- and out-of-school experiences.

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