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**Final Analytical Report**

The Impact of Civic Education  
on Schools, Students and Communities

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**[The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]**

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**Abbreviations**

ACE - Armenian Civic Education

CCE - Center for Civic Education

CE – Civic Education

CEP – Armenian Center for Education Projects

IEDA – International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IREX - International Research and Exchange Board

JAA - Junior Achievement Armenia

MoES - Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia

NIE - Armenian National Institute of Education

NCGE - National Curriculum for General Education

**Abstract:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of civic education on Armenian communities, schools, and students. Hence, this research project tries to understand if the materials and documents developed by the policy makers and curriculum developers in education field are similar to the internationally accepted practices, and to identify the effectiveness of the organization for curriculum implementation: do those efforts and teaching processes lead to the formation of democratic citizenry?

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized in ten Armenian schools, located in Yerevan (the capital city) and three rural out of capital regions for collecting the necessary data on democracy education. In parallel, the policy level documents and curricular materials related to civic education were reviewed and analyzed. The current reform process in Civic Education started in 2004, when the Government of Armenia adopted the new National Curriculum for General Education. The new State Standards and Program for Social Studies prepared and realized by the Ministry of Education and Science brought a new breath and ocean of opportunities for citizenship education. In another section of this paper the researcher presents the concept of civic education and the mission of teaching civics internationally.

The curricular and legal document support the preparation of effective citizens, while civic instruction, teaching and learning needs significant improvement through professional development and support from education policy makers, schools administrators, community leaders, parents and students. For better achievements, the stakeholders should connect the learning and social issues, the students should gain civic knowledge, skills, and values and dispositions in authentic settings within a civil society.

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*"The higher needs require better outside conditions to make them possible. Better environmental conditions (familial, economic, political, educational, etc.) are all more necessary to allow people to love each other than merely to keep them killing each other. Very good conditions are needed to make self-actualization possible" (A. Maslow, 1987, p. 58)*

### **1. The Research - Introduction**

The ultimate goal of Civic Education is to prepare generations for the essential principles and values of democracy embodied with a high sense of responsibility and active engagement in issues the society, community, or state face in their everyday life (CCE, 1994, p. 1). Civic education, whenever and however undertaken, prepares people of a country, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens. Civic education is, therefore, is "the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation" (Gutmann, 1987, p. 287). Student service learning the participatory part of civic education, bridging classroom activities with the community. However, service learning is no replacement for civic education. Although commonly associated with schooling civic education is not the exclusive domain of schools. Hence, both students and communities benefit from student involvement in community based learning activities. The most effective civic education design includes the direct teaching of the scholarly content knowledge and the balance of participatory skills with the modeling and teaching of civic values and dispositions. Delli Carpini (2003) at the Pew Charitable Trusts says, "My worry is that as good as a lot of service learning work is, that it does not encourage political involvement and policy involvement, but it may, in fact, even discourage it."

One of the most important things that we know about civic education is that American profess it to be essential—if not the essential—purpose of education. Although the notion that civic education needs to be strengthened and positioned as an organizing force in the public

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education system is not a novel one, there are variations in the nomenclature used by different scholars. Francis Kidwell (2005), a researcher and civic educator, addresses the relationship between civic education and state policy, and examines the use of the terms “civic/government education” and “citizenship education,” which are often used interchangeably. “Citizenship education implies reference to the participatory aspects of civic education which ‘civic/government’ appears to be used as a more inclusive term that suggests a broader scope in student understanding of the historical, philosophical, and political science foundations of civic education” (Kidwell, 2005, p. 11). Organizations such as the Center for Civic Education, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and the Center for the Information on Research of Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) use the term civic education, while other organizations and countries may use the term citizenship education. For the purposes of this study, civic education will be generally used unless otherwise referenced to one of the other terms. Over the course of 33 years of Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polling, Americans have overwhelmingly concurred that “educating young people as note, that the need of civic education is not only recognized by the elder generations of Americans. In a 2002 survey, young people supported mandatory civic classes in middle and high schools by very large margins.

That all citizens need to understand the basic values and principles of a democracy is a well-accepted premise. As a matter of fact, all 28 countries participating in the IEA Civic Education Study (2001) agreed on that point. The results of the study, however, reveal that this objective is far from being realized. One of the challenges civic educators face is how to help not only the young but adult citizens as well develop a more realistic understanding of today’s world in which they live and why the manner in which complex global problems are addressed affects them.

There are, of course, more propitious reasons for examining civic education in the context of democracies. One significant reason, for example, can be traced to Aristotle. In *The Politics*

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Artistotle asks whether there is any case “in which the excellence of the good citizen and the excellence of the good man coincide” (Everson, 1988, p. 13 – 15).

The purpose of this research project is to explore whether the Armenian civic education curriculum implementation corresponds to the goals and objectives of the Social Studies curriculum; and reforms the population. The researchers were also curious if the introduction, development, and the implementation of civic education curricula are valued and useful.. This research attempts to identify and link the relevance of the civic curriculum to civics theory and with internationally recognized pedagogy, to the Armenian culture and society. In addition, the researcher examines whether the current reforms are designed effectively, in relation to the research literature and whether it uses effective education policy theory and tools for the program transition. .

This research project intends to explore the intersection between education policy and implementation, which are embedded within the Civic Curriculum and National Standards, in the State Standards and Program for Social Studies. The interests to the civic projects are twofold. First, as an education consultant I was involved in the National Curriculum development process. The second reason connects to the recent and current political, social, and economic situation in Armenia. The results of the presidential and parliamentarian elections during the last 12 years have confirmed that the society still lacks legitimate political institutions, understanding of and respect for democratic values, dispositions, principles and practices.

In sum, the aim of this research project is to:

- a. explore the degree to which the Armenian Civic Education standards incorporate international standards of civic education,
- b. discover the effect of civic education on students, teachers, and other community members, the progress of the school-community relationship and integration

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c. examine students' active participation skills and whether these are the conditions of effective learning is experiencing within the civic curriculum

### **The preliminary hypothesis is:**

*- The National Curriculum on Civics/Social Studies is mainly based on the educational theory and is congruent to the international practice. Moreover, the Curriculum takes into account the national characteristics of the Armenian culture.*

*- Although it is a comprehensive document, it is hard to meet all the requirements of the document in the implementation phases with the available resources, teaching and administrative staff, and educational authorities.*

High quality implementation of civic education provides a philosophical and structural framework on which to base the teaching of skills and strategies that reinforce reasoned decision-making skills, evaluation of information, practical application of civic virtue, and an in-depth understanding of citizenship responsibility. (Kidwell, 2005).



### **Other Research Projects in the Field**

The reform process in Armenia includes the development and improvement of social studies curriculum and instruction in public schools. In the last decade only a few research projects have been conducted in Armenia to identify the status of social studies teaching and learning in schools. In 2002-03, Junior Achievement Armenia (JAA) commissioned Van Dusen Consulting, Inc. (VDC) to conduct a comprehensive external formative evaluation of the JAA Civics Education program and to assess their program implementation, summarize curricular the general satisfaction with the civics instruction , and determine necessary tasks to improve the civic education program. (JAA. 2004)<sup>1</sup> .

Another research project was administrated by L. Danielian and L. Umroyan. This was the first comprehensive assessment of human rights education in Armenia, "...which is to be used as a basis for the development of a national strategy and plan for human rights education in the country. The objective was to assess human rights education activities in Armenia within the framework of the UN Human Rights Education Decade with a focusing on current human rights programs and curricula at all grade levels and for all groups and programs including continual professional development"(L. Danielyan, L. Umroyan, 2005). One more qualitative and quantitative research project was conducted by D. Ter-Stepanyan, a CRRC fellow who worked to "help increase the quality of civic education, particularly in the areas of law and social studies in high schools of Armenia" (D. Ter-Stepanyan, 2006).

The researcher, conducted an evaluation study in 80 Armenian schools in 2004-2005 to determine the effectiveness of the Armenian Civic Education projects that emphasizes the role of value education in the fundamental principles of democracy. In 2008-2009, the National Instituirte of Education (NIE) plans to implement a research project to explore social studies in schools.

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<sup>1</sup> VDC – 2003 Report on JAA Civics Education Formative Evaluation. The report is available at JAA office in Yerevan

### **3. Citizenship Education in Armenia**

Global developments during the last 50 to 60 years have significantly impacted the organization of education systems, as well as the establishment of goals and priorities for public education. Providing proper educational means to an ends is accompanied with outstanding scientific and technological developments. The education system should address the societal changes in the school curriculum and prepare citizens with new knowledge, skills, values and dispositions. Study after study has documented the inadequate preparation of students who live in the rapidly changing and increasingly independent world (Avery, 2003). Students need more exposure to topics such as: international affairs, globalalization, and economic and political systems around the world. At least an awareness of the world in which these young people will live requires them to have an understanding of nation-states, world markets, international law, and human rights. The IEA Study mentioned earlier, found that “Content related to national history and human rights tops the agenda in most countries...Human rights and the environment are topics of importance. But the fairly low profile of international concerns may worry those educators who see civic education as a prime area of instruction that should prepare students for life in a globalized world” (Torney-Purta, 2001, p. 172).

An important role of public education is to prepare citizens with capabilities for the labour market. However, a more important part of the school curriculum is to prepare students to learn and function in diverse social circumstances; learn how to reason; identify and solve problems; work in teams and collaborate with others; develop research and critical thinking skills, understand responsibility, develop leadership, learn tolerance, and how to coexistence, and respect others. Since the primary purpose of social studies and civic education is to instil in students the knowledge, skills, and values for active contribution in society (Ross, 1997). This includes those skills essential to workplace success. In addition to the skills mentioned above,

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researcher, D.W. Sax (1997) would also include the ability to create and maintain constructive relationships, make decisions, prioritize tasks, work through challenging situations and apply those findings to daily life situations. Another report published by the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development reveals the unique roles that social studies education plays in the lives of students (and future employees): "...to provide students with the awareness of careers directly related to the social sciences (for example, urban planner, sociologist, government administrator, and business economist); to help students reflect on their worker-related experiences (such as analyzing interpersonal relationships and conflicts on the job); to provide students with knowledge that will place in historical and social perspective the role of the worker in society; and to help students analyze and discuss the interrelationships between the worker role and other social roles (the conflicts that often arise between being a responsible member of the family and a conscientious worker)" (Superka and Hawke, 1982). Research consistently indicates that a good education in social studies builds students' capacity for early and long-term professional success.

Equally as important is respecting the rule of law, freedom, knowing the importance of human rights, and world justice. Students also need to develop participatory skills and then learn how and when to effectively use these skills..

In 1998, the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia launched a new reform program called "*Education Quality and Relevance*" to deal with the global developments and actual problems facing the education system after the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

The ultimate goal of the reform in education is to integrate the development of the Armenian education system with international education systems and match it to the requirements of "knowledge economy". The need to create a favorable environment for education requires a revision of traditional approaches to teaching and learning and changes in attitudes towards educational institutions within the education system (MoES, 2004, p. 1-2).

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The Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia (MoES) identified the main problems of education as follows: outdated educational standards, current curricular frameworks in disciplines, textbooks, and assessment requirements and products. In addition, teachers are still requiring their students to rote memorize information thus students lack active learning skills. There is also the tension to choose discipline-specific content vs. integrated curriculum and some teachers' orientation to teaching to only the elite students. There is still a widespread use of the teacher-centered approach with the teaching directed at only the elite students. Few teachers demonstrate an interest in differentiating their lessons to the students needs and interests. There is also a lack of the use of media and technology integrated into the learning process. In order for schools to reform students' success and teachers understanding, principals and other instructional leaders must make difficult decisions. Two additional concerns are the lack of attention to rural schools and an instructional scope and sequence, which needs to be addressed at the policy makers' level<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, some other problems were identified in the Strategic Mission of Education in Armenia report: ineffective pedagogical cadres, poor access to computers and Internet, lack of parent and community involvement into the school governance, outdated textbook content and relevance to the curriculum (MoES, 2007, p. 20-21).

The Armenian education policy makers deem education as an important means for promoting country's social and economic development. The Armenian Constitution reaffirms the citizens' right for free public education<sup>3</sup>. The recently prepared strategic mission of education in Armenia identifies the major targets where the education system should contribute as a part of country's development:

- supporting the sustainable economic development,
- promoting international and regional cooperation,
- strengthening country's independence (state craftship) and developing civil society,

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<sup>2</sup> Center for Education Projects. (2002). Education Quality and Relevance. Retrieved on December 15, 2007 from <http://www.cfep.am/index-arm.php>.

<sup>3</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. (2005). Yerevan, Armenia: Tigran Mets. Article 39, page 31.

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- promoting common good and well-being, and alleviating poverty (MoES, 2007, p. 4).

The strategic mission document claims that the education system guarantees the increase of higher level achievements each year, advances capabilities for international cooperation, and encourages learners to explore and assess their identity. MoES intends to achieve these goals through introducing programs that encourage investments, expand the capabilities for the leadership of reforms, increase the transparency and accountability to society members, improve educational content and standards, improve teaching capabilities, increase the effectiveness of governance and organization, and expand the participation in the global networks (MoES, 2007, p. 27-35).

Finally, to address the problems, the MoES started to revise the education policy and the content of general secondary education in the Republic of Armenia for providing new perspectives and introducing the new curriculum in a systematic way. Four subprojects for carrying out the new ideas and goals into the reality within the Education Quality and Relevance (EQR) project were designed aiming at:

- development of the national curriculum framework, subject based curricula, and assessment system,
- introduction of ICT into the schooling system,
- organization of a professional development plan which is accessible and available to all teachers,
- improvement of the effectiveness of the education management system (CEP, 2002)<sup>4</sup>.

The National Curriculum for General Education identifies the major features for organizing teaching and learning process that is based on universal human rights, needs and interests of students, protection of the national identity, school autonomy, contemporary achievements of pedagogy and psychology, integration of teaching and learning (MoES, 2004, p. 4). The

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<sup>4</sup> Center for Education Projects. (2002). Education Quality and Relevance. Retrieved on December 15, 2007 from <http://www.cfep.am/index-arm.php>.

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document also outlines the profile of secondary school graduates, defines the structure of state standards for general education, guidelines the creation of subject standards, describes the main principles and functions of assessment, guides teachers in selecting and utilizing proper teaching methods, describes the requirements for teachers (MoES, 2004)<sup>5</sup>.

The State Standard for Secondary Education, in turn, develops and describes the structure of education content, the maximum educational load, the general qualitative requirements established for learners, the specific forms of assessment and grading policies (MoES, 2004)<sup>6</sup>. The content of secondary education is organized into the following disciplines, which are defined by the state standards:

- Armenian language and literature
- Foreign languages
- Mathematics
- Information and communication technologies (ICT)
- Natural sciences
- Social sciences
- Technology (technical knowledge and labour skills)
- Physical Education, Initial Military Training (IMT), and Health and Safety Education.

In November 2006, MoES adopted the new National Program and Standards for Social Studies that was introduced to Armenian public schools started and initiated in the 2007-2008 school year.

Newly developed curriculum materials demand a reform in pedagogy . The harsh reality is even more striking in the post-communist context, where teaching for democracy has been in short supply. Teachers, after all, are the final arbiters of the curriculum, and the way they use

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<sup>5</sup> MoES. (2004). *National Curriculum for General Education*. Yerevan, Armenia: National Institute of Education.

<sup>6</sup> MoES. (2004). *State Standard for Secondary Education*. Yerevan, Armenia: National Institute of Education.

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these materials will ultimately define the materials. Hence, attention must be paid to the teacher preparation and interdisciplinary integration.

The materials developed by the experts from the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Center for Education Projects (CEP) in the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science are being piloted in different classrooms across Armenia. The connection to classroom practice does not occur spontaneously. It has to be developed through a dissemination process that not only offers instructional materials to teachers, but also the general understanding of general pedagogy and content knowledge required to actualize the benefits inherent in the new materials (Shulman, 1987). The access to such materials will bring new possibilities for educators to begin putting ideas into action and to see public education as an experience anchored in democracy, where children learn what it means to experience a thoughtful and meaningful life in an enlightened society.

Thus, the National Curriculum for General Education (NCGE) proposes to undertake several activities for shaping citizens committed to democracy and the national values. Some of those activities are the creation and introduction of new discipline-specific standards and syllabi, equipping schools with relevant information and communication technologies, pay attention to the teacher preparation process, and develop new assessment and evaluation policy and procedures (MoES, 2004, pp. 43-44)<sup>7</sup>. NCGE hopes to promote logical and creative thinking, develop individual decisionmaking and, improved social and effective communication skills in young learners (Harutyunyan, Davtyan, 2006, p. 34).

Following the logic and requirements of NCGE, the State Standards and Program on Social Studies recognizes that “the democratic processes in the Republic of Armenia calls for developing such citizenship qualities, as exploring and utilizing personal rights and responsibilities, positive participation and leadership, desire and willingness in seeking societal

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<sup>7</sup> MoES. (2004). *National Curriculum for General Education*. Yerevan, Armenia: National Institute of Education.

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ideals” (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, p. 4). Social studies instruction is meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active. In social studies students learn connected networks of knowledge, skills and beliefs in the disciplines of political science, history, geography, and economics. It also draws on humanities, literature, art, music, drama, and philosophy to enrich the study of what it means to be human in this time and culture and in times past. The humanities within the social studies have a role in supporting the intellectual and social development of students as thoughtful humans able to contribute to their civil society—through inquiry, analysis, critical understanding, and reflection. Moreover, the goal of social studies is to create young people who are capable of being informed, engaged, and participatory citizens of their communities, nation and the world (Taylor-Thoma, 2000) Citizens in democracy are responsible for their education, they should be able to define their own goals and strive for those goals, evaluate their actions in the society and reflect on their behaviour. The Social Studies discipline is diagnosed as an educational sphere through which students develop citizenship characteristics including the above mentioned concepts , skills, and dispositions.

The Social Studies Curriculum reflects on the idea of *Paidea* as a means for self-actualization, and self-improvement. Social Studies teaching will enable students to form a knowledge, skill and value system that is necessary for citizens to create and support a democratic society. Particularly, civic Education is aimed at shaping democratic citizens through internalizing the fundamental principles and values of democracy and supporting the formation of a civil society. A Social Studies classroom is seen as a mini-model for a democratic society, where the learners are independent, the teacher tries to utilize the strengths of every student for the sake of the whole. Students will internalize the culture of care and will not try to hide their personality behind a social group. Moreover, they will be able to understand the importance of their personality and will develop a high sense of responsibility (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, pp. 5-6). A citizen who understands the essential tenets of democracy is more likely



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to recognize that he has a shared interest, a collective interest that may or may not contradict or override his individual preferences (Branson, ).

The Armenian education practitioners also signify the practical side of teaching Social Studies/Civic Education as a societal imperative. The practical consequences are vital in forming new social relationships. The schools should enable their students to implement community learning projects, search and find community actual problems, propose sound solutions to those identified problems and chance them throughout their life. The practical experience will develop active citizenship skills and dispositions among students, willingness and skills for realizing personal responsibility as a citizen. The school graduates should be able to analyse various situations independently, express and defend personal opinions and attitudes, and develop action plans (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, p. 6).

The Social Studies discipline is aimed at giving learners an opportunity to shape such a worldview that symbolizes the Armenian culture and takes into consideration the humanistic values at the same time. The content should support the development of patriotic and citizenship upbringing, evaluate and protect the national and world cultural heritage and human values. Moreover, the classroom practice should not be limited within the school walls. The learning should take place in nature, streets, business organizations, governmental offices, cultural sites, public and private libraries. The school itself is considered as a model of a democratic institution, where the citizens should shape, practice and improve their analytical, creative, participatory decision making, leadership, and active citizenship skills and abilities. Additionally, in this uncertain world, Civic Education is the channel through which the citizens of a new generation develop the peace culture, where the national values are protected (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, p. 7).

The teaching and learning methods and learning opportunities are also important in achieving the goals and objectives of teaching Social Studies. Social Studies' teachers are free to select the

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appropriate learning activity depending on the aim of a lesson, classroom environment, peculiarities of learners, discussed topics and other educational factors. The curriculum encourages the Armenian Social Studies teachers to utilize an army of teaching methods, techniques and hints: brainstorming, exploring teaching materials, analysis, conversation, interview, mass media analysis, reviewing art works, discussing philosophical and moral problems, researching a problem, role plays, peer communication using Internet, meeting with university faculty members and professionals, games, performances, competitions, report preparing and writing, debates, tests, utilizing information and communication technologies, developing and assessing student and teacher portfolios, openly discussing conflicting issues, independent and group work, implementing projects, community service learning and community problem study (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, p. 11).

The Standards for Social Studies come to support the formation of a citizen for a democratic society. Citizens need to understand the basic values and principles of a democracy is a well established premise. The learner should be able to comprehend the essence of human being and analyze the relationship between a man and society. The basic school graduate should learn how to collect data and analyse facts, events, situations; differentiate between facts, opinions, knowledge, and beliefs; develop effective communication and conflict management skills, improve inter and intracultural competence; understand and value personal, ethnic, cultural, and other identities; connect the ideas of freedom, responsibility, tolerance and democracy (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, pp. 12-14).

The Armenian subject based standards are divided into “three-column” categories: minimum requirements, additions to minimum requirements, and advanced requirements. The sample three column standards are portrayed on **Table 1** (page 17). The standards consider the learners age development, physical, psychological and national peculiarities. The second categorization of the

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standards are related to the standard levels. They define the knowledge component that the learner should comprehend (intellectual standards). Some intellectual standards are:

- *explain the concepts of democracy and freedom;*
- *have knowledge about the principles and values of democracy, understand their need and perceive them as life style;*
- *have knowledge about other governance systems (monarchy, oligarchy), have understanding about the concept of constitutionality (rule of majority, protection of minority rights, system of checks and balanced, importance of legitimate authorities);*
- *understand and describe democratic elections as a main institute for a democratic representative government .*

The standards consist of a set of skills and abilities that give students the opportunity to apply the obtained knowledge in practice, enrich learners' cognitive life, develop logical, communicative, and collaborative skills, improve his/her social life (*content standards*). For example:

- *ability to distinguish between different categories of a democratic society;*
- *ability to describe similarities and differences of democracy and freedom.*

Finally, the third category of standards expresses relevant behaviour, attitudes, and actions of learners (*value system*). For example:

- *explain the need of principles and values of democracy and their need him/her and the society;*
- *interpret constitutional democracy underlining main principles (rule of majority, protection of minority rights, system of checks and balanced, importance of legitimate authorities).*

One more innovation in the reform Social Studies Curriculum is the introduction of the practical aspects of creating a citizen for a democratic society or developing civic dispositions. As Margaret Branston believes: "Civic dispositions, like civic skills, develop slowly over time and as a result of what one learns and experiences in the home, school, community, and

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organizations of civil society”. Those dispositions are “becoming an independent member of society”, “assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen”, “respecting individual worth and human dignity”, “participating in civic affairs in a thoughtful and effective manner”, “promoting the healthy functioning of constitutional democracy”. (Branston, 1998, p. 6). Some scholars claim that knowledge of the values and principles of democracy may be the most significant component of education for democratic citizenship, because when democratic norms are well understood they may have a kind of “grip on the mind” that makes them operate at a deeply internalized if not unconscious level (Delli-Carpini, 2003).

The students who graduate from middle school, should be involved in the study of public policy problems and develop complex skills and abilities for identifying problems in their communities; selecting most relevant problems using democratic selection process; obtaining more comprehensive information about the selected problem through interviewing people, public officials, NGO representatives, reviewing legislative and normative documents, policy papers, academic literature, mass media, visiting libraries, searching relevant court cases; finding alternative public policies addressing the community problem; developing a public policy that solves the issue; and creating an action plan that is attached to the policy and assists the public officials in solving the issue through adopting the policy proposed by the learners (Gyulbudaghyan et al, 2007, p. 10 and p. 19). In theory, the citizenship building experience is called *the Project Citizen* development by the Center for Civic Education (Calabasas, CA, USA)<sup>8</sup>. *Project Citizen* is a curricular program for secondary students that promotes competent and responsible participation in local and state government. The program helps young people learn how to monitor and influence public policy and officials. In the process, they develop support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy. Equally as important is helping young students change their opinions and attitudes towards government officials and institutions.

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<sup>8</sup> More info about the Center for Civic Education and Project Citizen can be found on [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org).

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**Table 1.** *Social Studies Standards. Civic Education (9<sup>th</sup> grade)*

As a result of learning Social Studies, the students shall:

<b>Group A: minimum requirements</b>	<b>Group B: added to the requirements of Group A</b>	<b>Group C: added to the requirements of Group A and B</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the concepts of democracy and freedom;</li> <li>• Understand the importance of democracy and freedom for himself/herself and the society;</li> <li>• Have knowledge about the principles and values of democracy, understand their need and perceive them as life style;</li> <li>• List episodes of democracy recorded in the history of Armenia;</li> <li>• Have knowledge about other governance systems (monarchy, oligarchy), have understanding about the concept of constitutionality (rule of majority, protection of minority rights, system of checks and balanced, importance of legitimate authorities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to distinguish between different categories of democratic society;</li> <li>• Substantiate the importance of principles and values of democracy and their need him/her and the society;</li> <li>• Ability to describe different governance systems;</li> <li>• Identify their similarities and differences of different systems (monarchy, oligarchy);</li> <li>• Ability to comment on constitutional democracy describing its main principles (rule of majority, protection of minority rights, system of checks and balanced, importance of legitimate authorities);</li> <li>• Understand and describe democratic elections as main institute for democratic representative government;</li> <li>• Understand the difference between the different types of equality of rights – legal equality, equal opportunities, material equality and democratic equality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to describe similarities and differences of democracy and freedom;</li> <li>• Have knowledge about the historical roots of the principles and values of democracy;</li> <li>• Ability to differentiate between operational types of democratic system;</li> <li>• Explain the need of principles and values of democracy and their need him/her and the society;</li> <li>• Understand the role of equality and link it with the concept of freedom;</li> <li>• Interpret constitutional democracy underlining main principles (rule of majority, protection of minority rights, system of checks and balanced, importance of legitimate authorities).</li> </ul>

#### **4. Mandatory Civic Education Courses and Textbooks**

First, the civic course emerged in Armenian schools in 1999 as a pilot program prepared and implemented by the specialist from the Junior Achievement Armenia (JAA) organization. The aims of JAA Civics program were:

- to prepare at least 2400 teachers to educate 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students,
- to improve civic education in collaboration with MOE across the country,
- to increase in-class and extracurricular activities emphasizing on student enrollment in civic and community life,
- to support pedagogical and other universities in civics teacher preparation and reached.

In three years the JAA program reached all (1394) Armenian schools, students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and corresponding teachers. The table below portrays the progress of the Civic education program from 1999 to 2002:

# of / school year	1999/2000		2000/2001		2002/2003	
<b>Schools</b>	300	21.3%	325	23.2%	1394	100%
<b>Students</b>	6000	1.1%	24000	4.3%	160000	30.5%
<b>Teachers</b>	290	0.6%	300	0.6%	3200	6.6% <sup>9</sup>

As a result of the civic education movement and huge contribution of civic-minded progressive educators, three new courses were introduced in the National Program (Curriculum) in 2002: Human Rights (8<sup>th</sup> grade, Middle School), Civic Education (9<sup>th</sup> grade, High School), and State and Law (10<sup>th</sup> grade, High School). Consequently, three new mandatory textbooks were developed by the order of the Minister of Education and Science and carry the names of the courses. All three courses were taught one hour per week without any final exam.

<sup>9</sup> JAA. (2004). *The Junior Achievement Armenia Profile*. An email from the organization.

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<u>Soaicl Studies subjects</u> before 2006-2007 school year	<u>in the National Curriculum</u> after 2006-2007 school year
n/a	Me and My Surrounding (2-4 <sup>th</sup> grades, Elementary School)
n/a	Armenian Studies (5 <sup>th</sup> grade, Middle School)
<b>Human Rights (8<sup>th</sup> grade, Middle School)</b>	Basics of Social Studies (8 <sup>th</sup> grade, Mid. Sch.)
	Human Righst and Civic Education (9 <sup>th</sup> grade, Middle School)
<b>Civic Education (9<sup>th</sup> grade, High School)</b>	
<b>State and Law (10<sup>th</sup> grade, High School)</b>	Government, Ethics, Estetics, Psychology, Economics, Political Science (10-12 <sup>th</sup> grades)
<b>Also History, Geography and Armenian Church History (4-10<sup>th</sup> grades)</b>	Also History, Geography and Armenian Church History (5-12 <sup>th</sup> grades)

The second cycle of the civics movement in Armenia started in 2003-2005 with the introduction and implementation of the *Armenian Civic Education* project. The major goals of the project were:

- *to design a civic education curriculum unit comprising of a student handbook, a teacher manual, and a teachers' kit relavant to 8/9<sup>th</sup> grade level students,*
- *to develop and conduct teacher training in civics,*
- *to prepare students as active citizens and participants of community life, owners and developers of the principles of democracy.*

The first interactive student centered textbooks and teacher guides emerged as a result the project piloted in 80 schools across Armenia: *Fundamental Values of Democracy. Civic Education*. The books were a a supplementary resource for the eighth and nineth grade teachers.

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A new project necessitates a comprehensive professional development plan. The *Armenian High School Curriculum Development and Teacher Training* project strengthens the previous civic education initiatives. Over 500 teachers in 18 Armenian training centers were exposed to the new approaches of pedagogical curriculum development and teaching in civics/social studies. *Contemporary Issues in Social Studies Teaching* and *Curriculum Design and Models: Integrated High School Social Studies Instruction* teacher handbooks were developed and made available for every school in Armenia.

Moreover, during the second phase of the movement, the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Institute of Education (NIE) had established the role of professional discourse and published the *Man and Society* professional educators' journal. This journal and another, *Pedagogy*, rapidly became a supplementary teaching resource for social studies teachers. .

Table 2 shows the old and new teaching materials (textbooks, teacher guides, and handbooks) which had been prepared within the last ten years. . It is easy to discern that beginning in 2005 an enormous number of progressive teacher resources were published. Civic education is no longer considered a course designated only for high school students (former 8-10<sup>th</sup> graders ). Recent research emphasizes the importance of the appropriate grade level of civic education. Development psychologists and political scientists have confirmed what many have long suspected—civic education programs in high school are too late. Researchers such as Amy Gutmann (2007), Richard Niemi and Jane Junn (1998), and Judith Torney-Purta (2002) report the most effective civic education must begin in elementary school since this is when young people form their social and civic identity. They also believe that that adolescence—and early adolescence in particular—appears to be the prime time. The work of William Damon (2002) and his associates at the Center on Adolescence at Stanford University, conclude the importance of civic education for early adolescents. Evidence from large databases spanning many countries and several generations confirm his hypothesis. “A civic identity is an allegiance to a systematic



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set of moral and political ideology of sorts, to which a young person forges a commitment...the beliefs may change over time, but the initial formation of them ranks as a key landmark of human development” (Damnon, p. 127). In the new Armenian curriculum, the elementary school students are introduced to the basic ideas of civility and are able to develop simple life skills. Civic Education is an inter-disciplinary subject and civics topics are represented in the programs and standards of other subjects and disciplines.

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**Table 2. Social Studies Textbooks and Teaching Materials**

<b><u>Social Studies Mandatory and Supplementary</u></b>	<b><u>Textbooks, Teacher Guides, Handbooks</u></b>
<b>Before 2007-2008 year</b>	<b>Since 2007</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 2001</li> <li>• Civic Education, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 1999</li> <li>• State &amp; Law, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 2001</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Me &amp; My Surrounding, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 2007</li> <li>• Armenian Studies, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 2007</li> <li>• Basics of Social Studies, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 2007</li> </ul>
<b>Supplementary sources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Education, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 2002</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life Skills, 2-7 grades, 6 volumes, NIE, 2001-2003</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental Principles of Democracy: Civic Education, 8(9)<sup>th</sup> grades, 2005</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Man and Society. Social Studies Journal for General Schools, NIE, 2005 to present</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contemporary Issues in Social Studies Teaching, IREX, 2005</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum Design and Models: Integrated High School Social Studies Instruction, IREX, 2005</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civics &amp; Election Education, IDEA 2007</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Assessment Tests, 2007</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compass. Human Rights Education. Teacher Resource Book, ACRPC, 2007</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Studies Teacher Guide, 8-9<sup>th</sup> grades, 2007</li> </ul>
<b>Forthcoming</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Social Studies Supplementary Handbook for Teachers, 2008</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict Management, Teacher Guide 2008</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Me &amp; My Surrounding, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 2008</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Me &amp; My Surrounding, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 2009</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Human Rights &amp; Civic Education, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 2008</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 2009</li> <li>• Ethics/Estetics, Economics, 2010</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Project Citizen. Level 1, Textbook and Teacher Guide, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 2008</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology, Philosophy, 2011</li> <li>• Political Science, 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 2012</li> </ul>

## **5. What do effective civic education programs constitute?**

### **An International Context**

The aim of teaching civic education is considered to be the preparation of active, accountable, and knowledgeable citizens, “committed to the fundamental values and principles of democracy” (Center for Civic Education, 1994, p. 1). The new individual, who is “aware of cultural heritage and contemporary institutions”, is “committed to maintaining democratic society” (Newmann, 1985, p. 5). Another definition of civics mission is given by Butts who expects schools “to deal with all students in such a way as to motivate them and enable them to play their parts as informed, responsible, committed, and effective members of a modern democratic political system” (Butts, 1980, p. 123).

Civic education is to produce and enrich “a political knowledgeable citizenry”, and educates and inspires individuals to be responsible and devoted “to the production of good government and the legitimacy of the democratic regime” (Niemi & Junn, 1998, p. 1). Dynneson and Gross believe that “citizenship training” had long been hankered for and devoted to building a human environment where the new members value and believe in “the democratic way of life, which is based on specific and identifiable moral and ethical behaviors” (Dynneson & Gross, 1991, p. 1). Or, civic education creates a meaningful position for the individual within society and provides equal opportunity for him/her to realize his/her knowledge, skills and abilities through different specialization and professional channels.

A USAID study in 2002 discovered that civic education programs have an enormous and positive impact on learners in comprehending and practicing key aspects of democratic behaviors and attitudes. The report claims that civic education helps students to know and identify public policy and increases their political participation through exploring and studying local problems. “It also leads to more moderate, but still significant, differences in participants’ knowledge about their political system and about democratic structures and institutions in

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general, and it also tends to contribute to a greater sense of political efficacy” (UASID, 2002, p.1). Moreover, the report recommends to the policymakers and curriculum developers and professional development specialists to:

- *be aware of, and try to design around, obstacles to frequent participation,*
- *use as many participatory methods as possible,*
- *build opportunities for participation directly into the program,*
- *focus on themes that are immediately relevant to people’s daily lives,*
- *invest in the training of trainers and target voluntary associations,*
- *pay attention to gender issues and avoid inflating expectations,*
- *bring parents, teachers, and school administrators into school-based programs (UASID, 2002, p. 2-3).*

*The Civic Mission of Schools* identifies some promising practices that support the implementation of effective civic education programs. Those ideas are:

- *Schools should provide sound formal instruction in government, history, law, and democracy.*
- *Schools should include discussion of current events at local, national, and international levels and particularly those events that students see as important to their lives.*
- *Schools should provide students with opportunities to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.*
- *Schools should provide students opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities focused on civic life.*
- *Schools should provide students opportunities to participate in student government that gives them a meaningful voice in the management of their own classrooms and schools.*
- *Schools should provide students opportunities to take part in simulations of democratic processes and procedures such as simulations of legislative, administrative, and judicial hearings; lobbying; coalition building; negotiation; and seeking consensus or compromise (The Civic Mission of Schools, 2005. p. 6-8)<sup>10</sup>.*

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<sup>10</sup> The Civic Mission of the Schools. (2005). *What Constitutes an Effective Civic Education?* Retrieved on 10 November 2007 from [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org).

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Both reports signify the role of enabling students to learn in real life situations within and out of school boundaries. At the same time the students should not set high expectations in terms of of the context—the more important priority is student engagement rather than the outcome of their actions.

In many European countries the central part of education reforms and policies is considered education for democratic citizenship (EDC). The reformers' concern is also “to prepare people and adults for active participation in democratic society, thus strengthening democratic culture”. Democratic education is a subset of civic education. For philosophers, it is the most important subset (Gutmann, 2007). Informed and knowledgeable citizens should contribute to “social cohesion, social justice and the common good”, respect diversity, pluralism and rule of law (EDC, 2005, p. 25). EDC is based on four core dimensions that involve cognitive, social and affective learning strategies:

- *The **political and legal dimension** that covers citizens rights, respect to each other, the political systems, and the law,*
- *The **social dimension** that refers to individuals' behaviour towards each other within the society by using the established social institutions,*
- *The **economic dimension** that deals with economic relations and organization, production and distribution of goods, services and information,*
- *The **cultural dimension** that connects the shared values, traditions and customs of nations, peoples and groups (Audigier, F, 2000, p. 23).*

The basic principles of EDC is to involve students in learning “about” democracy and human rights, learning “through” democracy and human rights, and learning “for” democracy and human rights (Golob & Krapf, 2008, p.6).

The Latvian policy makers believe that besides contributing to economic development, the education reforms should promote “genuine democracy”, transparent society, and citizens' active participation (Latvia MoES, 2004, p. 18). Their Serbian colleagues see Civic Education in the secondary schools as a vehicle for enabling school students to acquire awareness, develop abilities and skills and embrace values and dispositions that will shape competent individuals

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committed to building “involved and responsible life in civil society with respect for human rights and freedom, peace, tolerance and gender equity, understanding and friendship among peoples. Ethnic, national and religious groups” (Smith, Fountain & McLean , 2002, p. 40). In England, the aim of Citizenship Education is to promote and shape citizens with social and moral responsibilities, enhance community involvement and political literacy (Kerr, 1999).

The Hungarian civic education standards require that the students shall gather information on the political and organizational culture as well as on the operation of organizations shaping local democracy. The student shall be able to recognize the elements of a public affairs that influence the local community and the motives behind local decisions. Students shall utilize their knowledge acquired by studying public policies and the operation and values of democracy. Furthermore, graduates shall list alternative decisions after analyzing a certain public affair. Students shall be able to elaborate on elements of public interest and civic solidarity in connection with a matter of local significance (Civitas Hungary, p. 16)<sup>11</sup>.

All experts identify the ultimate goal of civic education as the preparation of citizens for democratic society, and that the knowledge transferred through various educational processes should contribute, enhance, and strengthen democratic values. Civic education should develop learners intellectual skills such as analysis, evaluation, synthesis, multiple perspectives, critical thinking, and in-depth understanding of political, social, and economic issues. “Recent political events and the attention to world-wide issues have opened the door to increased focus on citizenship, rights and responsibilities, comparative governments, the role of religion, foreign and domestic policy, global responsibility, and the need for understanding from multiple cultural and economic perspectives. Service learning, with a civic mission focus, has become a mainstay in many school programs” (F Kidwell, 2005, p. 16).

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<sup>11</sup> Civitas Hungary. *Civic studies and skills*. An emailed document.

## **6. Teaching Civic Education**

Beside the intellectual and participatory standards, there are standards for teachers, schools, and state and local education agencies. These standards set benchmarks to find out whether teachers ensure that students are achieving content and performance standards, schools are providing equal access to resources and opportunities, and educational agencies are doing well, respectively (CCE, 1994, p. 3). Alternatively, these extra standards guarantee the environment for better internalization of content standards.

As the extra standards relate to teacher effectiveness, students' performance evaluation, the role of parents and the community, the way of curriculum organization, and policy issues in teaching civics (CCE, 1994, p. 10), there is a strong correlation between conditions for effective learning and these standards. The mentioned environment is also the best place for educators, policy makers, and teachers to exercise the principles of democracy in practice and link them into students' everyday life.

Tyler identifies six conditions for effective learning, which are consistent with civic learning and teaching: motivation; confidence; a clear idea of what is to be learned; a plan for sequential learning; appraisal and feedback; and transfer. He believes that schools should develop student motivation towards achieving their personal goals, avoiding segregation and isolation, and facilitating integration into the group or society they belong to through learning channels. Moreover, students should be aware of what the learning possibilities are, and be confident of and believe in their learning abilities to meet schooling system requirements. It is the teachers' task to illustrate the learning process and its ends, as well as to encourage student participation in "developing understanding" (n. d., p. 4).

Learning should be organized according to student growth and progress, and balancing the middle rate of learning within the classroom is recommended for effective development, as well

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as every new lesson should add cumulatively to the knowledge, abilities and skills of learners. The success for desirable learning depends on the teacher- student mutual relationship. Appraisal and feedback are key tools for avoiding anxiety, letting students know about their success in covering and owning different topics and behaviors. Honest feedback will provide more confidence to students; enable them to seek out lacking places and overcome difficulties. Finally, the last condition to transfer effective learning is spreading out “school learning” in different situations out of school (Tyler, n.d., p. 4).

Sinclair and Ghory believe that:

- *“The mission of public schools in a democracy is to strive for high achievements by all learners;*
- *All students have the capacity to learn at high (not the same) levels of accomplishments;*
- *The quality of a school is not determined by the accomplishments of a few students but by the success of all;*
- *Learning is the result of interaction between the environment and the individual – it is not solely an individual’s responsibility – conditions in schools can either foster or hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning;*
- *Learning takes place in school and non school settings: the local school and its immediate community are a powerful context for improving student learning – families need to be involved;*
- *Careful evaluation of the gains achieved by students as a result of interventions developed by study terms is a necessary step for increasing learning” (1997, p. 8).*

A Russian scholar Voskresenskaya talks about intermental and intramental knowledge: “On the intermental plane, learning is carried out in relation to and in cooperation with others; on the intramental plane, learning occurs as we internalize and re-conceptualize” (2003, p. 4).

Richard Niemi and Jane Junn make reference from their nationwide research-study of Civics Assessments administrated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, that “Schools and curriculum” are two important indicators for improving student civic knowledge, which include teaching hours in schools, the time of teaching civic education, covered issues, teacher preparation and willingness to introduce contemporary issues into the classroom (1988, p. 121). They also emphasize students’ personal role in obtaining higher accomplishment trough



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individual involvement, course and career selection, and personal preferences (Niemi & Junn, 1988, p. 123).

The authors find the “home environment”, which embraces parent assistance and attitude to education, “two parent household”, home library, spoken language, means of electronic and published mass media and so on, to be very influential and supporting on students’ advancement of gaining political knowledge, public awareness, and civic participation (Niemi & Junn, 1988, p. 124-125). Moreover, “when teachers acknowledge that parents have important information about students and can make lasting contribution to the development of academic competence, a basis for working together can be created” (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987 p. 144).

By the way, Niemi and Junn consider television watching as a counterargument for inspiration to learning; particularly to civic learning, as their research concluded that students usually avoid political information (Niemi & Junn, 1988, p. 58). Finally, race has also been identified as an indicator of difference in learning in the American society. “Minority students more frequently come from homes with less highly educated parents than do whites, and many grow up in a home environment in which a language other than English is spoken” (Niemi & Junn, 1988, p. 127). The other explanation of lower interest of African-American, Hispanic, and Native American population to political knowledge is that social studies curriculum in the US does not reflect properly on the issues related to minorities and their history.

Experts in the field identify “the knowledge, skills and veracity” of society members and administrators owning democratic values and beliefs as a foundation for society’s well being. Moreover, individual and society are interrelated, and their progress mutually depends on each other: “Being an effective and responsible citizen requires knowledge of the democratic principles and the ability and willingness to be an informed participant in the process. It also requires the development of certain qualities of character that increases the individual’s capacity to participate in the political process and contribute to the effective functioning of the political system and improvement of society” (Pepper, Burroughs, & Groce, 2003, p. 31-32).

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Another group of experts finds out that only knowledge and skills are not enough for effective learning. “Quality instruction” is the manner to adopt, which is to connect school with community’s authentic needs and problems, strive for alternatives, and enhance expertise. Therefore, “if we expect students to perform as effective citizens, we must educate them through a curriculum that indicates all steps we value of citizens”. The curriculum should originate from students’ environment, and be sound to the society’s needs and located within the framework of democratic citizenry (Clark et al, 1997, p. 165).

Pepper, Burroughs, and Groce (2003) also think that student learning depends on teacher preparation and will be more productive if the teacher can connect the classroom environment with home and apply theoretical knowledge about the principles of democracy in practice, within home setting. They add “If education is the key to ensuring that our people are responsible effective citizens, then we must look to the teachers to assist in carrying out this feat”, as well as they should guarantee the flow of smooth discussions and facilitate debates. Additionally, parents are rich resources for helping and shaping citizens (2003, p. 37-41).

These authors do not forget the role of teacher training for better teacher preparation; teaching materials as a means for effective organization of learning; and support from professional organizations in meeting different problems of teachers and students. They end up with the following conclusion: “We must train our young people in the principles and practices of democracy by modeling what it means to live in a democracy within the schools and community and by allowing students to participate in the democratic process”. Moreover, the desirable results do not happen immediately. The process of democratization should be consistent and persistent, every single effort should be dedicated to enhancing students understanding of being responsible and participating actively (Pepper, Burroughs, & Groce, 2003, p. 48).

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A famous expert in the field, Dewey, also reflects on teachers' place and significance: "There is no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as educational resources. A system of education based upon the necessity connection of education with experience must, on the contrary, if faithful to its principle, take these things constantly into account" (Dewey, 1997, p. 40). He too thinks that democracy is a lifestyle rather than a governmental system.

An important consideration that should be noted while teaching civic education in order to accomplish expected results is profoundly embedded in cultural values and ideas. The Hungarian civic expert Setenyl claims that, "the fact that living in a democracy has become an everyday experience does not necessary mean that these values have become automatically deeply rooted" (Setenyl, 1996, p. 1). Besides, he believes that the school environment should be inviting, open, and critical. Many experts in the field highlight the role of organizational "obstacles" along with the educational knowledge that decision makers should consider, which embrace the issues of class size, teaching load, standardized tests, teacher collaboration, technical support, and so on.

Many European educators believe that schools should be governed democratically that will lead to making better discipline in schools, increaseing students learning, diminishing conflicts between different schools parties, making the school more competitive, and protects the sustainability of democracy (Bachan and Trafford, 2007).

## **7. Research Methodology for the Study of the Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students, and Communities**

For the last decade the Civic Education course is a “full member” of the Armenian General Education curriculum. The course was introduced with the support from international partner organizations and institutions active in the field . Those organizations carried out the whole teacher preparation and monitoring process. Meantime, not one higher education (pedagogical) institution has been specialized in formally preparing teachers for the instruction of civics. Hence, the society as a stakeholder of the schooling and instruction could rely only on informal teacher training opportunities offered by various local and international organizations promoting character and democracy education.

The Armenian society and schools lacked the democratic schooling and promotion of the principles and values of democracy through formal instruction during the Soviet era and after the independence. Hence, the civic education course and the ideas behind it were new to the teachers, who had been practicing the traditional approach of teaching in their prior teaching life. In the traditional instruction, the teachers use the rigid state curriculum and ready-made materials (mostly textbooks) as the only form of teaching resource, and the instruction was based on lecturing methods. .

A new conflict emerged as a result of practicing the traditional instruction and the requirements from modern pedagogy and social life. Many teachers tried to merge their methodological “bank”, pedagogical knowledge and civic ideas in their classrooms. Others tried to internalize the meaning and goals of civic education and build up their instruction by utilizing relevant active and interactive techniques. Consequently, besides examining the legal document and curriculum supporting citizenship education, this paperevaluates the implementation process and civic activities in Armenian schools.

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*Research Participants:* The intended participants of the research were identified:

- 75 middle and high school students taking civics classes and eight teachers of Civic Education representing four Armenian regions (Shirak, Syunik, Lori Marzes (regions) and Yerevan city) out of 11 regions. There are 1427 public schools in Armenia, of which 1169 are general secondary schools, 34 are colleges, 45 are special schools, 16 are upper secondary vocational schools. The following chart<sup>12</sup> shows the number of students in Armenian public schools (*target population*) taking social studies courses (Human Rights in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Civic Education in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Stat and Law in 10 grade):

<b>Grade level</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b># of Students outside the Capital City</b>
<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	57 666	28 551	41 158
<b>9<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	54 071	27 625	38 859
<b>10<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	48 894	25 506	34 776

These students are the direct beneficiaries of the civic courses. The Armenian schools are going to shift from 10 years of schooling to 12 years of schooling starting from September 2008. The transformation started in September 2006. The table below shows the levels of general education and the transformation of grades within three levels:

<b><i>Before 2006-2007 school year – 10 years</i></b>		<b><i>After 2007-2008 school year- 12 years</i></b>	
a)	Primary school PS- 3 years (1-3 grades)	a)	Primary school - 4 years (1-4 grades)
b)	Middle school MS - 5 years (4-8 grades)	b)	Middle school - 5 years (5-9 grades)
c)	High school HS - 2 years (9-10 grades)	c)	High school - 3 years (10-12 grades)

<sup>12</sup> The data is retrieved from Harutyunyan, K., Davtyan, N. (2006). *Education in Armenia*. Yerevan, Armenia. Edit Print.

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The schools were selected from the list of Armenian schools taken from the official web page of the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia ([www.edu.am](http://www.edu.am)) by stratified random sampling methods. First, the schools in four cities were separated into four groups (Yerevan City Schools, Gyumri City Schools, Vanadzor City Schools, and Goris City Schools). Secondly, the target schools were randomly selected from those four cities. There was one more criteria for selecting schools in Yerevan: the schools needed to be from different districts (Yerevan has twelve districts). The number of selected schools is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Number of schools in target cities and number of selected schools*<sup>13</sup>

	<b>Total Number of Schools</b>	<b>Selected schools</b>	<b>%</b>
Yerevan	260	4	1.54%
Vanadzor	36	2	5.56%
Gyumri	52	2	3.85%
Goris	31	2	6.45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2.64%</b>

After selecting the schools and getting permission from the school administration to enter the school for conducting experimental research, the teachers and students were selected. In schools, where there was only one teacher of Civics<sup>14</sup> and one 9<sup>th</sup><sup>15</sup> and one 10<sup>th</sup> grade class of students, that teacher of Civics, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes were selected automatically. In the selected schools, where there were more than one 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes, one of them was randomly selected and their Civics teacher was appointed as a research participant - teacher. Finally, over ten students were chosen from those selected 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Additionally, the teacher was asked to select one student from a 9<sup>th</sup> grade classroom for an in depth interview.

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<sup>13</sup> The list of selected schools is not shown in the research paper and other related articles because of protecting the identity of those schools, teachers, administrators and students.

<sup>14</sup> There is at least one teacher of Civic Education in each school in Armenia. As there is no single university in Armenia formally preparing a teacher of Civic Education, the teachers have different university background. Mostly they are teachers of History or Geography, but it is not unusual to encounter a teacher of civics having a background in linguistics, IT, biology, art, mathematics, physics, etc.

<sup>15</sup> In Armenia, the students are categorized into grade levels according to their age and 9<sup>th</sup> grade means that all the students in the classroom are peers, persons in the same age. All these students attend all the courses within their school curriculum together.

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To summarize, , **one Civics teacher** for an in depth interview and classroom observation, **one 9<sup>th</sup> grade student** for an in dept interview, **one 9<sup>th</sup> grade class** for observation and **ten 10<sup>th</sup> grade students** for completing a questionnaire were selected from each targeted schools as the research participants. The schools were selected by **random stratified sampling**<sup>16</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes were selected by **simple random sampling**<sup>17</sup> method, ten students from 10<sup>th</sup> grade were selected by **systematic sampling method**<sup>18</sup>, and one 9<sup>th</sup> grade student was appointed by his/her teacher.

**Table 4.** *Distribution of the participant students by grade level<sup>19</sup>, gender and geographical location*

Region	Male	Female	9 <sup>th</sup> grader	10 <sup>th</sup> grader	total	%
Yerevan	8	24	3	29	<b>32</b>	42.67%
Vanadzor	7	14	1	20	<b>21</b>	28.00%
Gyumri	2	9	1	10	<b>11</b>	14.67%
Goris	2	9	2	9	<b>11</b>	14.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
%	25.33%	74.67%	9.33%	90.67%	<b>100.00%</b>	

Table 4 shows the distribution and percentage of the students participating in the research by their regional locations, gender, and grade level. A great t majority of the participants (over 90%) are in their last year of study in schools (10<sup>th</sup> grade). All those students took the course a year ago, and the research tried to find out their attitude towards the Civics course and its impact on them, while over 10% of participating students some actually involved in the Civics course during the research. . Additionally, over 75% of the students were female and 67% of the students represented three regional schools.

<sup>16</sup> **Random Stratified Sampling** – the process of selecting a sampling such a way that identified subgroups in the population are represented in the sample in the same proportion that they exist in the population (Gay, L. R., Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational research*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall , p.106).

<sup>17</sup> **Simple Random Sampling** – the process of selecting a sample in such a way that all individuals in the selected population have an equal and independent chance to be selected for the sample (p. 103).

<sup>18</sup> **Systematic Sampling** – sampling in which individuals are selected from the list taking every K<sup>th</sup> name (p. 110). In this research K=2 and the list of students from 10<sup>th</sup> grade was taken from the class log.

<sup>19</sup> In this table, the students' grade levels are mentioned according to the old, 10 year schooling system as the new *Social Studies* course have been introduced in September 2007, and the *Human Rights and Civics* course will be introduced in 2008-2009 school year.

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- over 15 policy makers from MoES, NIE, CEP, State Inspection on Education, the Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Youth Affairs of the National Assembly (NA), representatives of educational NGO's .

### Instruments:

- a. **Document review:** In the first stage of the research, all the curricular and teaching materials were reviewed. The legal documents reviewed included the Constitution, the Law on Education, the *National Plan for Education Development for 2008-2016*, the draft *Law on Public Education*, *National Curriculum for General Education*, *National Curriculum and Standards on Social Studies*, analytical papers such as the *Strategic Mission of Education in Armenia*, and *UN Human Development Report. Education Transformation in Armenia*, etc. Besides studying the legal documents, the textbooks and teaching materials mentioned in Table 2 were examined.

Besides the National Curriculum and Standards; the curricula and standards, analytical paper from other countries have also been reviewed and compared with their Armenian equivalents.

The review of legal documents, textbooks, reports and other instructional materials from diverse civic education initiatives provided a ground for defining the conceptual framework for the research and directions for developing proper tools for collecting information in the field.

As a result of the documents reviewed , the following instruments were developed: structured questionnaire for teachers, structured questionnaire for students, and classroom observation box.

- b. **The structured questionnaire (SQS) for students** comprised of 21 structured questions for collecting in-depth data about students attitude towards the Civics curriculum. SQS tried to explore specific information about the civics program and all the respondents



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were asked a set of questions regarding the content areas such as implementation process, perceived role of the civics program, things that facilitate or hinder the implementation process, effectiveness of the curriculum, and recommendations for improving the curriculum and instruction. The questionnaire (*see Table 5*, page 38) also includes five open-ended questions. Niemi and Junn (1998) identify some problems within the American society: “Most Americans know little about current issues; few can name their state or congressional representatives, many are uncertain of how their government work; and a large proportion are ill-informed about or unable to apply the basic principles on which our political system is based to hypothetical situations” (Niemi & Junn, 1998, p. 5). The extent to which the similar issues are occurring in Armenian schools were explored through those open-ended questions. Along with political knowledge, civic education values the practical application of obtained skills in a community through introduction of authentic issues into the classroom.

- c. **The structured questionnaire (SQT) for teachers** also comprised of 21 structured questions for collecting information from the selected teachers of Civics. The first set of questions tries to reveal teachers’ perspectives towards the civics program, their preparation process, and the curriculum’s relevance to students’ personal life, as well as teachers’ perceptions on curriculum effectiveness. The research also considers political awareness and active participation of students in building a democratic society. Hence, the teachers’ role in preparing better citizens equipped with necessary political knowledge and participatory skills are crucial for building a democratic society.

SQT also tries to discover the teacher preparation and leadership in civics, their comprehension about the aims of civic education and pedagogical expertise, and ability to evaluate the civics program and provide recommendations for improving it (*see Table 6*,

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page 41). SQS and SQT have similar questions for checking the consistency of students and teachers' responses.

- d. **Dialogic interviews**<sup>20</sup> (**informal free conversations**) with diverse education stakeholders (Ministry of Education, teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, students, developmental partners, and so on) satisfaction with the civics program.
- e. **The classroom observation box** aims at defining the accuracy of the implementation process, student involvement level in the civics courses, and the effectiveness of the curriculum in meeting teaching/learning objectives. The box examines the civics course objectives, the students' and teachers' behaviors in classroom settings, i.e., as active teaching, lecturing, or conducting simulations. The box also asks how different stakeholders are involved; the extent to which students are involved; and how they evaluate the teacher interacts with the students. The questionnaire also asks whether or not students are cooperating and learning.

### **Classroom Observation Box**

What percent of students are actively engaged in classroom activities? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any marginal students? \_\_\_\_\_

Check all types of activities observed

\_\_\_ lecture

\_\_\_ group activity/discussion

\_\_\_ seat work

\_\_\_ computer work

\_\_\_ role play, simulation, game

\_\_\_ other interactive activity

- What kind of materials is the teacher using in the classroom? Specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Is the teacher giving proper feedback? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is the lesson participatory? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are the students cooperating? \_\_\_ Is the decision making process transparent? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are the students freely expressing their ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there any quest speaker- professional or community leader in the classroom? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is the teacher using the teaching time effectively? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is the teacher utilizing appropriate teaching methods? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>20</sup> **Dialogic Interviews** are true conversations in which researcher and participant together develop a more complex understanding of topic. There is authentic give and take in these interviews – mutual sharing of perspectives and understandings – and “talk time” is more balanced between researcher and participant than in the interview guide approach. From Rossman, G., B, Rallis, S., F. (2003). *Learning in the field. An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications (p.182).

**Table 5. Structured Questionnaire for Students**

**Student Questionnaire**

1. What grade are you currently in? (Check one)

\_\_\_\_ 8<sup>th</sup> grade    \_\_\_\_ 9<sup>th</sup> grade    \_\_\_\_ 10<sup>th</sup> grade

2. Gender

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

3. What were your expectations from the Civics course when you were involved in the course?

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4. Did your teacher encourage your active participation during the lessons? *(Select and circle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = strongly disagree \* 2 = disagree \* 3 = neither agree or disagree \* 4 = agree \* 5 = strongly agree

5. Did your teacher clarify all your questions and issues raised during the lessons? *(Select and circle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = partially \* 2 = completely \* 3 = sometimes \* 4 = never

6. Did your teacher clarify all your questions and issues raised after the lessons? *(Select and circle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = partially \* 2 = completely \* 3 = sometimes \* 4 = never

7. Were you able to express freely your opinions and ideas during the lessons without being afraid of the criticism from your classmates or teacher or being wrong or other circumstances? *(Select and circle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = strongly disagree \* 2 = disagree \* 3 = neither agree or disagree \* 4 = agree \* 5 = strongly agree

8. What are your preferred learning styles? *(Rank from 1 to 6, where one is the most preferred style and 6 is the least preferred learning style)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ lecturing
- \_\_\_\_\_ discussion/ group work
- \_\_\_\_\_ individual assignment in the classroom
- \_\_\_\_\_ work with computers
- \_\_\_\_\_ role play, simulations, games
- \_\_\_\_\_ other interactive methods

9. Please, assess the Civic Education course topics according to your interests: is the topic important to you?

- a. the topic is very important, b. the topic is desirable to learn, c. the topic is boring

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Topics of Civic Education	Is the topic important to you? (select <i>a</i> , <i>b</i> or <i>c</i> )	Would you like to extend your knowledge about the topic? (Yes or No)
Power and authority		
Democracy		
Civil Society		
NGO's		
The economic system of civil society		
The legal status of a human being and citizen in Armenia		
The President of Armenia		
Legislative Branch of Power: The national Assembly		
Executive Power		
Judicial Power		
Regional Government and Local Self Administration		
Foreign Policy and Diplomacy		

**10.** Besides the mandatory textbooks, what other resources did your teacher use during the civics lessons? *(Please, cycle the type of teaching resource first and then the frequency of usage of a resource by your teacher):*

- a. newspaper      \_\_\_ every week      \_\_\_ twice in a month      \_\_\_ once in a month
- b. other books      \_\_\_ every week      \_\_\_ twice in a month      \_\_\_ once in a month
- c. video/audio materials \_\_\_ every week      \_\_\_ twice in a month      \_\_\_ once in a month
- d. materials prepared by the teacher      \_\_\_ every week      \_\_\_ twice in a month  
      \_\_\_ once in a month
- e. pictures, art work \_\_\_ every week      \_\_\_ twice in a month      \_\_\_ once in a month
- f. other (\_\_\_\_\_)      \_\_\_ every week      \_\_\_ twice in a month      \_\_\_ once in a month

**11.** What kind of resources help you learn better from the list mentioned in Question # 10? *(Please, select the most efficient three resources)*

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

**12** In your opinion, what percentage of your Civic Education course represents knowledge, skills and abilities and values?

Knowledge	%
Skills and Abilities	%
Values	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**13.** Do you think that the title and content of Civic Education are congruent?

Yes

No

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**14.** Are you a member of an organization or group? *(Please, list them. For example: Student Council)*

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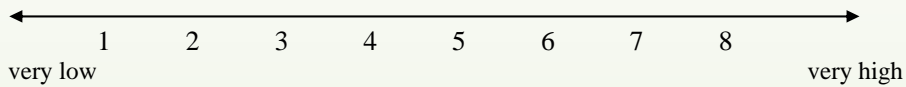
**15.** Have you ever participated in a community service, volunteer job? *(For example in your schools, community, region, country, etc.)*

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**16.** How would you rate the involvement and support of your family members to the Civics Program? *Please, circle the most appropriate respond, where 1 means no support, 8 means complete support and involvement.*



**17.** Has the Civics course helped you to get connected to your community, understand the problems facing the community, solutions to those problems and propoe corresponding alternatives. *(Select and cycle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = strongly disagree \* 2 = disagree \* 3 = neither agree or disagree \* 4 = agree \* 5 = strongly agree

**18.** How often does your teacher explain to you about your achievements and challenges?

1 = always \* 2 = very often \* 3 = sometimes e \* 4 = rarely \* 5 = never

**19.** How would you rate the Civic Education course in terms of utilizing active and interactive methods?

- a. the course was the most active course
- b. the course was like the others
- c. the course was completely traditional based on lecturing method

**20.** Could you please, describe the advantages and disadvantages of your Civics course/program?

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**21.** What topics would you like to see included in the Civics course?

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**[The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]**

- a. I encourage them to participate in the Student Council activities
- b. I organize extra classes
- c. I organize extra meetings with specialists
- d. I use weekend time

**8.** How long have you been teaching Civics?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 year          \_\_\_\_\_ 2 years          \_\_\_\_\_ more than 2 years

**9.** How often do you encourage your students active participation during the lessons? *(Select and cycle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = always \* 2 = very often \* 3 = sometimes e \* 4 = rarely \* 5 = never

**10.** Did you clarify all the questions and issues raised by the students during the lessons? *(Select and cycle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = partially \* 2 = completely \* 3 = sometimes \* 4 = never

**11.** Did you clarify all the questions and issues raised by the students after the lessons? *(Select and cycle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = partially \* 2 = completely \* 3 = sometimes \* 4 = never

**12.** Were your students able to freely express their opinions and ideas during the lessons without being afraid of the criticism from their classmates or teacher or being wrong or other circumstances? *(Select and cycle the most appropriate answer)*

1 = strongly disagree \* 2 = disagree \* 3 = neither agree nor disagree \* 4 = agree \* 5 = strongly agree

**13.** Besides the mandatory textbooks, what other resources did you use during the civics lessons? *(Please, cycle the type of teaching resource first and then the frequency of usage of a resource by your teacher):*

- a. newspaper    \_\_\_every week            \_\_\_ twice in a month            \_\_\_ once in a month
- b. other books    \_\_\_every week            \_\_\_ twice in a month            \_\_\_ once in a month
- c. video/audio materials \_\_\_every week            \_\_\_ twice in a month            \_\_\_ once in a month
- d. materials prepared by the teacher    \_\_\_every week            \_\_\_ twice in a month  
      \_\_\_ once in a month
- e. pictures, art work \_\_\_every week            \_\_\_ twice in a month            \_\_\_ once in a month
- f. other (\_\_\_\_\_)    \_\_\_every week            \_\_\_ twice in a month            \_\_\_ once in a month

**14.** What type of assessment tools do you utilize in your classroom?

	sometimes	never	often	Not familiar
a. Grading/markings				
b. Rubrics				
c. Portfolios				
d. Self assessment				
e. Peer assessment				
f. Tests				

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**15. How often do you explain to your students about their achievements and challenges?**

1 = always \* 2 = very often \* 3 = sometimes e \* 4 = rarely \* 5 = never

**16. How do you inform the parents of your students about the Civics program and encourage their participation?**

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**17. Does the Civics course help your students to get connected to their community, understand the problems facing the community, finding out solutions to those problems and propose corresponding alternatives? (Select and circle the most appropriate answer)**

1 = strongly disagree \* 2 = disagree \* 3 = neither agree or disagree \* 4 = agree \* 5 = strongly agree

**18. Could you please, describe the advantages and disadvantages of your Civics course/program? How can it be improved?**

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**19. What topics would you like to see included in the Civics course that will enrich the Civics Curriculum?**

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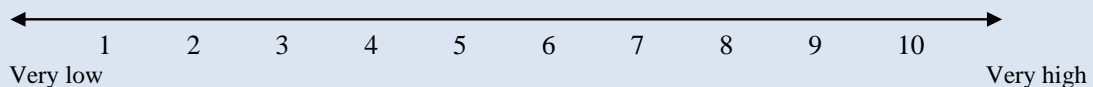
**20. How are you going to improve your teaching skills?**

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**21. Please, circle the number that will describe the effectiveness of the Civic Education Curriculum implementation in terms of reaching the goals and standards of CE?**





## [The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]

### Design:

The primary method of gathering data was planned to be a multi-method and multi-source approach descriptive study. The use of multiple methods from multiple sources provides in-depth information and ensures that no one source of data biases the results in a way that is inconsistent with the real civics program implementation. The use of only one technique, or collection of information from only one stakeholder group, may result in an accurate description of one aspect of the program, but may be misleading in describing the overall process. The researcher recruited participants using random sampling. “Multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods are used to build the picture that you are investigating. This helps ensure that you have studied only a fraction of complexity that you seek to understand” (Rossman, Rallis, 2003, p. 69).

Consequently, this research employed a combination of techniques and perspectives to study the civics program. All data obtained in the research are submitted to a triangulation process whereby information that is supported from multiple perspectives is used in the final assessment of the civics curriculum.

### Procedures:

The state curriculum, civics standards, civics projects initiated by different organizations, the paper-based and electronic materials resulted from those projects, the level of collaboration with policy makers/stakeholders, textbooks, and other related documents and instructional materials were examined and civics standards were analyzed. Simultaneously, the structured questionnaire and classroom observations box were adapted from existing tools. The document review allowed the researcher to review and analyze the direction and attitudes where the policy makers, curriculum developers, and experts want to project the democratic education and student-citizens after the completion of formal schooling or secondary education.

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Based on the results of the documents review research from the filed: observations, structured questionnaires, teachers, students, and parent interviews, the structured questionnaire and classroom, data collection observation boxes and other research tools were prepared.

The structured questionnaire and classroom observations forms were provided to ten schools from four regions including Yerevan. The other three regions are Shirak (Gyumri City), Lori (Vanadzor City), and Syunk (Goris City). The schools and students were randomly selected. As mentioned above, each school has at least one social studies teacher; hence, the teacher of civic education was interviewed in each selected school. In schools where there were two or more teachers, one of them was randomly selected. Overall, four schools in Yerevan, and two schools in each region were selected.

After selecting the schools and teachers, two civic education lessons were observed. The focuses for observation in the classroom were the students' active involvement, instruction style, feedback, teaching and learning materials, classroom management, teamwork, and activities. The next step was to interview the teacher and a student from the classroom being observed. Next, the students from the last year of study were asked to complete the structured questionnaire. Also, dialogic interviews were conducted with the school principal or vice principal being present in the schools.

Finally, informal meetings were organized with policy makers from the Ministry of Education and Science, National Institute of Education Representatives from different schools and NGO all focused on the on education reform issues.

## 8. Results

### **Classroom Observation:**

The school visits showed that all interviewed teachers have participated in professional development trainings or seminars on average 4.4 times during the last eight years including the Social Studies teacher training within the Education Quality and Relevance project<sup>21</sup>. In those seminars, teachers were trained on how to utilize active and interactive teaching methods, cooperative learning, backward design, critical thinking skill developing techniques, contemporary assessment methods, etc. Interestingly, if we review the list of teacher training opportunities organized by the various local and international educational institutions or bodies, we will notice that the majority of those professional trainings are designed for teachers from the social studies discipline. Consequently, I assumed that the great majority of teachers, especially young ones, are widely using interactive methods for teaching and learning.

The first thing that surprised me was the fact that teachers still continue using the civics textbook<sup>22</sup> as the most important teaching resource and utilizing the traditional teaching method by introducing some elements of active teaching. Here is an example of a lesson conducted by teachers:

The lesson of the day was *Human Rights Issues*. Eighteen students participated in the classroom. The teachers asked the students to list the basic human rights. The students were listing those rights and the teacher was adding the ones missed by the students. Then, the teacher asked another question: "Why it is important to have such rights?" The students were trying to answer with the help of their teacher. This process of questioning and answering continued until the end of the lesson. In many cases, the kids were answering very smoothly as they read and reminded the answer from the textbook. The level of creativity was minimal and opinion-based answers were very rare. The teacher was employing a lesson that develops only the student knowledge component of learning.

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<sup>21</sup> **Education Quality and Relevance** is a joint program designed by the Armenia's Ministry of Education and Science and World Bank. All Armenians from all subject areas participated in 8-day trainings seminars covering the National Curriculum and Standards, subject program and standards, IT, teaching methods, and assessment. More [www.cfer.am](http://www.cfer.am).

<sup>22</sup> Before 2007-2008 school year, there was only one mandatory textbook for each subject in Armenian schools and the teacher were using the textbook as their teaching guide and teaching everything that is written in a textbook.

## [The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]

In one situation, the teacher asked the students to name the article in the Constitution that protects the right to liberty. She continued to ask similar questions for other rights as well. However, the teacher tried to describe several situations where the students needed to explain if the human rights were violated. One of the examples was related to the policeperson entering a private property of a citizen without proper permission. All students expressing their opinion agreed that is not a violation of basic human rights. This proves that the students who are going to graduate from secondary school after one year have challenges in identifying a main idea in a given text, are not prepared for thinking critically, do not enough learning motivation and have difficulty in transferring the learnt knowledge from one situation to another.

Lastly, only a few students were actively responding to the series of questions by the teacher and in some cases, they were answering the questions by reading from the civics textbook, when the majority of the students were following along. In many cases, the teacher was replying to her own questions instead of the students. Even the reflection exercise was taken from the textbook, and the teacher exposed no independently planned work during the 45-minute instruction.

The described lesson was not a unique one in terms of its implementation. Mostly, the teachers of civics graduated from pedagogical universities practice and promote a traditional approach to teaching and instruction. Moreover, many civics teachers completed their formal higher education during the Soviet period when creativity, critical thinking, independent work, or opinion sharing was not encouraged.

In some cases, the observed teachers were trying to promote discussion in the classroom by asking a real life question and inviting the students to present their attitudes or opinions. One of the examples of such a situation was when the teacher asked: “Was Israel Hakobkhokhyan, the famous Armenian boxer [*Winner of the World Cup and Olympic Games*] right, when he sold his gold medals to earn enough money to pay the loan required by the Central Elections Commission for registering the candidates of the Parliamentary elections?” The response of the students were typically very short provided “surface” support to their opinion, and their justifications were not research-based.

One of the civics teachers assigned an interesting homework task: she asked the students to investigate their neighborhood, find a person or family representing one of the national minorities, and conduct an interview about their life. The students who did the homework

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reported fascinating stories about the life of various national minorities, such as their traditions, rituals, and daily life. . They were also explaining the presented phenomena, traditions. In this example, the students were able to connect their life with what they learn. Mary Kirlin in her work called “Promising Approaches for Strengthening Civic Education” urges to civic educators to “incorporate discussion of current, local, national, and international issues and events in the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives” (page 7) and believes that “the most obvious benefit of extracurricular participation is the development of civic skills. In addition, habits of participation may lead to political and community participation later in life (page 9)<sup>23</sup>.

One of the interesting factors of the observation was the existence of marginal students<sup>24</sup> and teacher behavior in the classroom. It was not unusual to track many students who were very passive in the classroom. That was true even during the group work when those students neither participated nor wanted to engage themselves into the group discussion. The so-called high performing students were dominating during the discussions and always trying to signify their opinion and prevent others from contributing to the group work. The teachers were not trying to intervene and preclude this “dominant effect”.

I also observed lessons where the students had very low motivation to participate in the classroom activities and answer the questions posed by their teacher. Many of them did not have learning materials. Consequently, over the years the teaching practices in Armenian schools and home environment have created an army of students, who attend school with limited learning interest and efforts to develop his/her knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions. Some teachers even tried to use the assessment as a punishment tool.

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<sup>23</sup> Mary Kirlin. (2005). *Promising Approaches for Strengthening Civic Education*. Educating for Democracy. California Campaign in for the Civic Mission of Schools.

<sup>24</sup> **Marginal students** – In the Armenian context, the marginal students are those who do not participate fully in the learning process because of teaching, instruction, classroom management and school environment.

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### **Teacher Interviews:**

First, I tried to discover if the teachers who are involved in preparing citizens for a democratic society for about 4-5 years fully comprehend the aim of teaching civic education.

The teachers reported the following options as the aim of civics:

- The members of civil society should learn about the state, government system, and their individual rights in order to protect them.
- To learn about civil rights, citizen and alien rights.
- To obtain knowledge about the society and authorities and then apply that knowledge in real situations.
- To educate a politically rich generation, members of which are able to protect their rights and to form a healthy society.
- To inform students about their rights and responsibilities and to prepare knowledgeable and ready citizens.
- To prepare active and knowledgeable citizens with fundamental values of democracy.
- To form a Citizen for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: self-confident, self-organized, being able to orientate in various situations, valuing rights and responsibilities, effective citizen, democrat.

All those options represent some parts of what civic education should do. As most teachers of civics have little exposure to curriculum development, lesson planning, and are utilizing the mandatory civics textbook as the only or main teaching resource, they state the goal of the civic education based on a particular viewpoint.

All the participant-teachers attended many professional development activities (PDA, seminars, workshops, trainings, etc.) organized by various educational organizations and institutions. Some examples of PDAs are the Civic Education program by Junior Achievement Armenia (6 month training), Human Rights Summer Institute by the Armenian Constitutional Rights Protection Center, the Debate Program by Youth Achievements, the Armenian Civic Education Program by CDS/ISIS Users Group Association (9 months), the Armenian Middle/High School Social Studies Teacher Training and Curriculum Development Programs by IREX (9 months), the Civic Education Exchange Program by Project Harmony and so on.

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Finally, all the teachers of civics/social studies participated in the 8-day training organized by the National Institute of Education called “Social Studies Teacher Training Program”.

After exploring the teacher preparation opportunities, a question was asked to elicit the strengths and weaknesses of those trainings. The teachers recognized the following strengths:

- introduction to the new teaching methods (examples of methods mentioned by the teachers: “Storytelling using pictures”, “Group work”, “Schematic work”, “Individualistic approach”, “Debate”),
- different teaching materials, handouts,
- application of theoretical knowledge, effective lesson planning and management,
- sharing the experience/materials/video-materials with other teachers and specialists,
- meeting with specialists from various organizations such as UNESCO, UN, Red Cross,
- opportunity for self expression and self work, opportunity for improvement,
- new knowledge, work with a large audience, methodological skills and abilities.

As a weakness, one of the teachers stated the necessity of observing lessons designed and implemented by their trainers: “We need to attend lessons prepared and conducted by a trainer”. Another teacher asserts “the trainers are not fully knowledgeable about the problems of a school and a classroom”. The third teacher thinks that the trainers utilize too many games and go far beyond the topics. She also did not like the Jigsaw method<sup>25</sup> as that is not supporting the learning. A teacher who complained about the fact that “the trainings programs do not require us to apply the learned materials” presented another curious answer. Nevertheless, many teachers had difficulty in properly identifying advantages and disadvantages of a concept, idea, or phenomena.

The next question asked the teachers to determine the main challenges of teaching Civic Education. Some teachers could not identify even any single difficulty they face as the students “participate in the classroom with love”. One teacher talked about the gap between theory and practice. Here are some other examples of difficulties that prevent civic teaching and learning:

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<sup>25</sup> More about the Jigsaw method can be found at <http://www.jigsaw.org/>, <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/coop/page4.html> ,

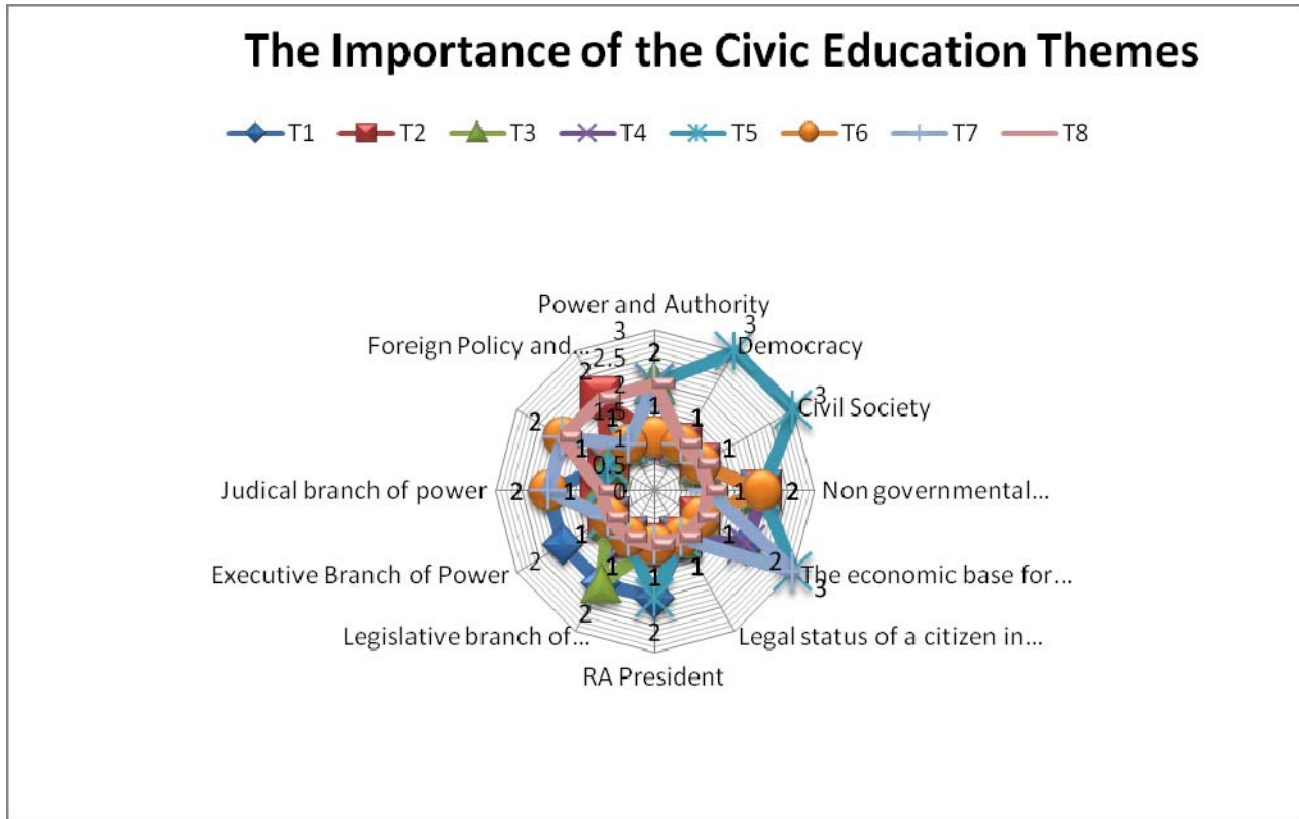
## [The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]

- low student learning motivation,
- inadequate experience of using interactive methods,
- the overloaded textbook is difficult for the students to understand,
- the discreteness of the Social Studies in the National Curriculum,
- the teaching time. We need extra time for excursions,
- ICT usage in the schooling process and lack of familiarity with new technologies
- Lack of materials and supplies, cooperation with local self-administrative bodies,
- difficulty of implementation of practical lessons,
- communities are not supportive,
- the school principal and other administrators complain about the noise when we use interactive methods.

Figure 1 (page 52) shows the teachers attitude towards the importance of civic education content for their students, where 1 means that the civic education theme is very important for the students to learn, 2 means that the theme is desirable to learn, and 3 means that the theme is not interesting to the students. Here are the themes of civic education included in the civics textbook and national curriculum:

- Power and Authority
- Democracy
- Civil Society
- Nongovernmental organizations
- The economic base for civil society
- Legal status of a citizen in Armenia
- President of the Republic of Armenia
- Legislative Branch of Power: National Assembly
- Executive Branch of Power
- Judicial branch of power
- Regional Government and Local Self Administration
- Foreign Policy and Diplomacy.





\* - T1 = Teacher 1, T2= Teacher 2, .... T8= Teacher 8

**Figure 1.** *The importance of Civic Education themes*

The chart shows that only few teachers think that there is uninteresting themes (3) in the curriculum and all of them agree that the civics themes are very important to the students (1) or those themes are desirable to learn (2). This also means that the teachers are satisfied about what they are teaching and accept the teaching content. Additionally, all the participant-teachers answered positively to the questions: “Does the name of Civic Education match with the content?” This last fact is proof that the teachers support the existing civics program they teach.

Since civic education is not limited within the school environment, clarification of the types of extracurricular activities was provided. Many progressive schools and teachers around the world involve their students in exploring community problems by conducting research projects; interviewing community leaders, state officials, experts, and other community players; observing

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mass media and internet, discussing those issues; and trying to influence public policy by proposing alternative actions. Other types of exercises that the teachers encourage their students to engage in were identified their participation in students council activities, planning and implementing extra civic lessons, meeting with famous specialist, experts or community leaders, using weekend time, inviting guest speakers, participating in International programs, attending out-of-school meetings and round tables, creating dialogue clubs or organizing debates, working with parents and schools council members. The table below shows the percentage of the teachers who undertake steps to engage their students in some optional activities:

**Besides the classroom teaching, in what way do you support civic learning?**

<i>a. I encourage them to participate in student council activities</i>	75%
<i>b. I organize extra meetings with specialists</i>	75%
<i>c. I organize extra classes</i>	63%
<i>d. I use weekend time</i>	25%

An interesting finding of the research was the fact that over 90% of teachers believes that they always or often encourage their students' active participation in the classroom. In this context, students' active participation is a term that describes the level of ALL student involvement in the classroom activities. The class size in Armenian schools varies from 17-18 to 30-32 students who learn together. Usually, the teacher pays more attention to the middle to high performing students and build classroom activities based on the interests of those students who comprise about 40-60 % of the class students. The rest of students are very passive and in some cases they just do nothing and in many cases, they try to interrupt or, impede the schooling process.

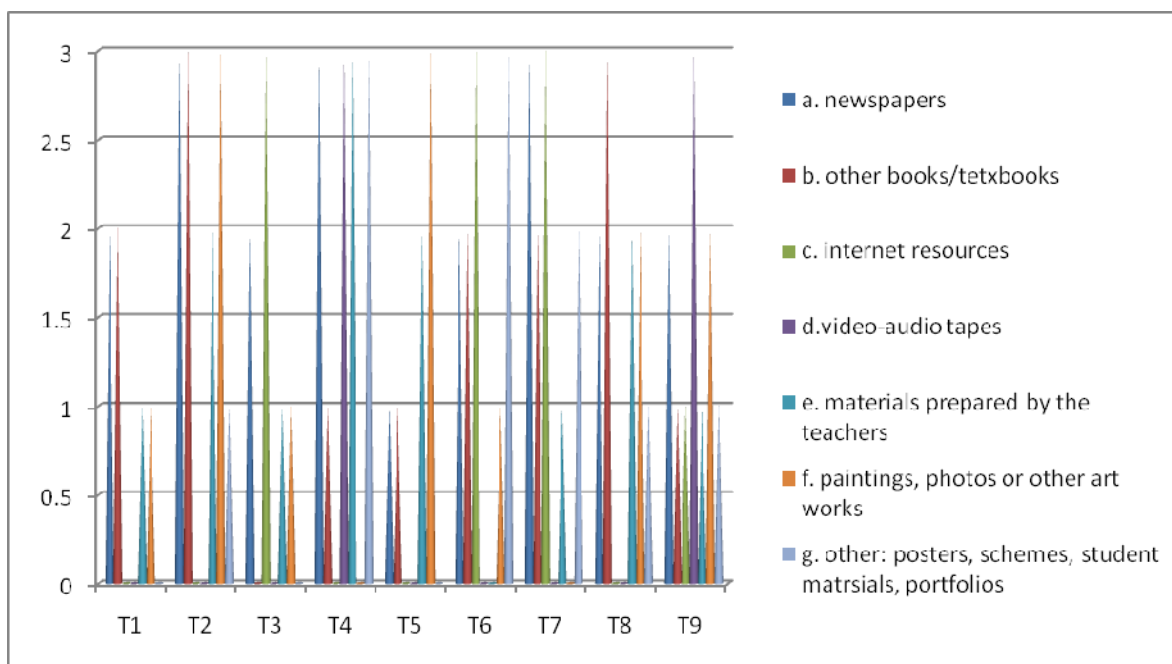
Over 75% of teachers stated that they answer all the questions raised by their students and only 25% reported that they answer partially during the teaching time. No one chose "never" and "sometimes" options. The answers slightly change, when they were asked the same question (How often do you answer the questions of your students?) but for non-teaching time. 63 %

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reported that they always respond to their students and 37% stated they partially answer their students after the classroom instruction time.

The teachers respond to the multiple-choice question about students' ability to express ideas freely: "Are your students able to express their opinions without being afraid of the criticism by their peers or teacher, being wrong or other hindering circumstances?" All the teachers (100%) responded that their students have a chance to express their opinions often. The other choices were "sometimes", "rarely", and "never".

The next key aspect of effective civic education programs is the consumption of various teaching and learning materials in the classroom. Therefore, the researchers surveyed the teachers using multiple-choice questions about the provision of alternate sources and the use of multiple types of instructional resources: "Beside the mandatory textbook, what kind of materials do you utilize in your classroom?" The chart below shows the teachers' responds:



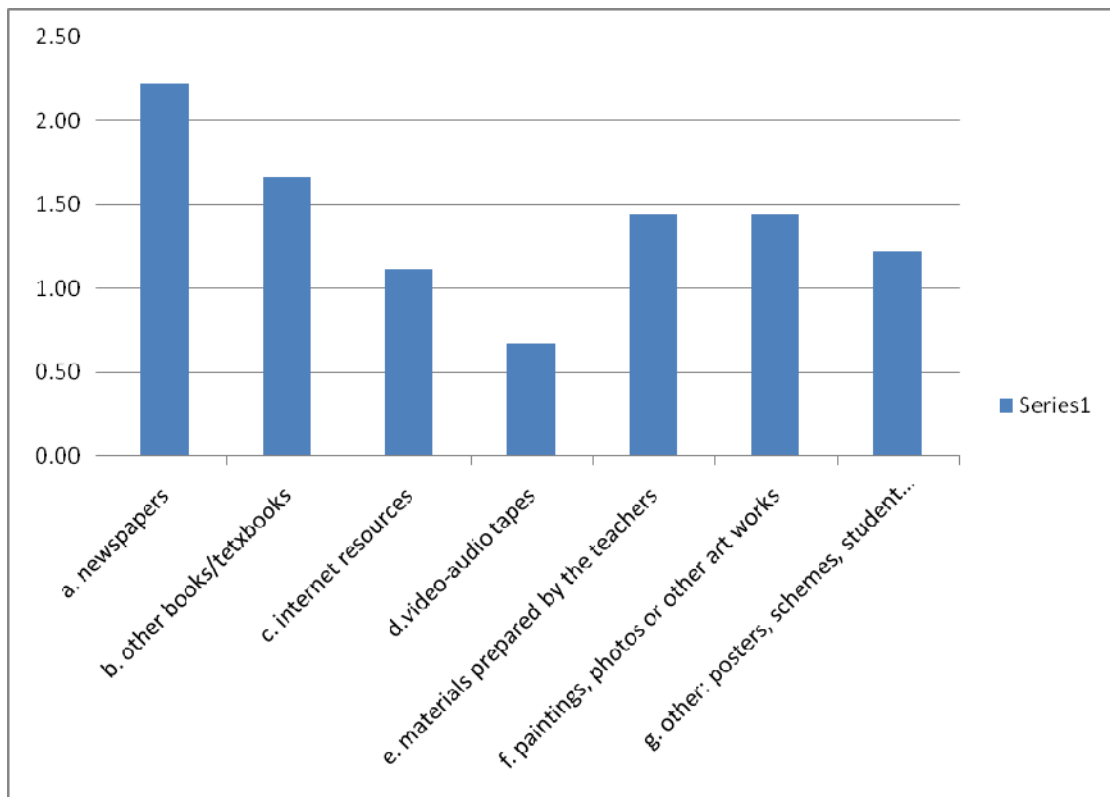
**Figure 2.** *Materials utilized in civic classrooms*

\* T1=Teacher 1, T2=Teacher 2, .... T9= Teacher 9.

\*\* 0= "The teacher is not utilizing that materials"; 1= "The teacher is using that material every week",  
2="The teacher is using that material twice per month"; 3="The teacher is using that material once in a month".

## [The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]

Newspapers are leading among the materials used by teachers in Armenian civics classrooms and the frequency of newspaper usage is the highest as reported by the interviewed teachers. Unfortunately, during the observations the newspapers were rarely used. The second most used instructional material is textbooks. Thus, the teachers reported using a variety of informational textbooks to increase their students learning. I have observed the Armenian Constitution in almost all classrooms widely used by the learners. Finally, the least utilized teaching material in the classroom was video and audio teaching materials, and tapes. The majority of Armenian schools do not have TV's or other electronic equipment such as DVDs and VCRs, which could enhance the instruction in the classroom.



**Figure 3.** Average usage of teaching materials in civics classrooms

0= "The teacher is not utilizing that materials"; 1= "The teacher is using that material every week",  
2="The teacher is using that material twice per month"; 3="The teacher is using that material once in a month".

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*How often do the teachers explain to their students about the achievements and challenges?*

The teachers reported that one third of them provide feedback to students all the time, another one third stated that they talk about their students' learning progress or problems very often. Finally, the rest of interviewed teachers confirmed that they sometimes provide feedback to their students.

In modern education, civic courses apply textbook content knowledge to real life situations. *The Civic Mission of Schools* urges the educators to develop civics programs that enable students "to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction"<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, the teachers were asked a question if the current civics course helps their students to be connected to their community, understand the problems facing the community, assess solutions to those problems, and propose- corresponding alternatives. Over 65 % of the teachers believe that the course encourages the students to get involved in solving community problems through active exercises, while the rest (35%) thinks that is not true.

The next issue of interest related to the parents' involvement in promoting civic learning and helping the kids to become effective citizens. Some advanced teachers discuss the Armenian Constitution with the parents; the others design and implement training seminars for them. One teacher often invites the parents to observe lessons and organize a follow up discussion. Another teacher reported that she helped her students in teaching their parents. On the other hand, less active teachers meet the parents during the parents' meeting taking place in a school or "have little experience working with parents: mostly through principals". Finally, some parents volunteer their time and help the teacher to prepare the extracurricular activities by making posters, finding information, etc.

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<sup>26</sup> CIRCLE. (2003). *The Civic Mission of Schools*. Retrieved from [http://civicmissionofschools.org/cms/site/campaign/cms\\_report.html](http://civicmissionofschools.org/cms/site/campaign/cms_report.html)

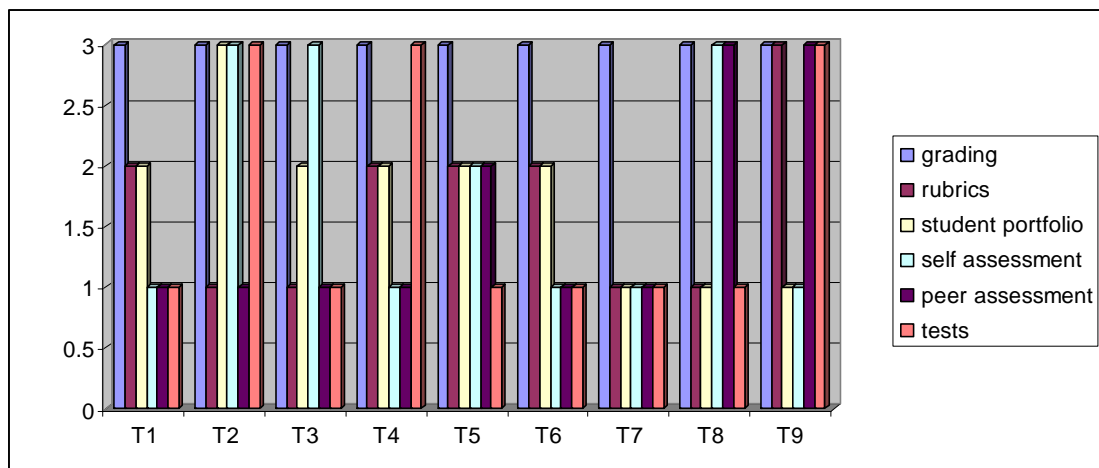
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Ralf Tyler identifies one of the most important conditions for learning as the appraisal and feedback to students’ performance: “When learners want to learn something, and try to learn it, they want to find out whether they have learned it or are making progress in learning it. As each step in the sequential learning plan is taken by students, both the students and the teacher need to know whether the step was successfully taken” (Tyler, p.6). Hence, the following question help the researchers understand the teachers' assessment strategies. The table below shows how often the teachers utilize assessment tools such as grading students, rubrics, student portfolio, student self-assessment, and classmate-assessment.

**Table 7. Assessment tools teachers utilizing in classrooms**

Assessment tool/Teachers	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Grading	often	Often	Often	often	often	often	often	often	often
Rubrics	never	some-times	some-times	never	never	never	sometimes	some-times	often
Student portfolio	never	Often	Never	never	never	never	sometimes	some-times	sometimes
Self assessment	some-times	Often	Often	some-times	never	some-times	sometimes	often	sometimes
Peer assessment	some-times	some-times	some-times	some-times	never	some-times	sometimes	often	often
Tests	some-times	Often	some-times	often	some-times	some-times	sometimes	some-times	often

The table and following chart show that all the teachers still prefer grading as a dominant assessment tool and they try to avoid student portfolio as a tool for measuring student performance and opportunity for giving a positive feedback .



**Figure 4. Assessment tools teachers utilizing in classrooms (3=often, 2=sometimes, 1=never)**

## [The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]

The next two questions are related to teachers' attitude towards the effectiveness of the civics course. The teachers described the strengths and weaknesses of the course. Advantages of the program were illustrated by the facts that students:

- get knowledge about their rights, democracy, and diplomacy,
- get the feeling of being protected,
- are prepared to participate in the political life. They understand the election process,
- increase their law awareness and develop practical skills,
- learn in a real situations and gain responsibilities that is highly valued by members of a society.

As the weaknesses of the civics program were determined the facts that students:

- are not able to comprehend clearly the concept of responsibility,
- do not get enough skills during the course to utilize their knowledge in their life.

In addition, there are some other challenges that hinder the effectiveness of the civics course implementation such as short teaching time (one academic hour per week), lack of teaching and learning resources and materials, the conflict between the textbook and the Constitution because of the constitutional amendments. A few teachers complained about the fact that there is no question/item from civics in the state standardized graduation exam; others wanted to see global topics in the civics curriculum, while few teachers criticized the overemphasis on using interactive methods.

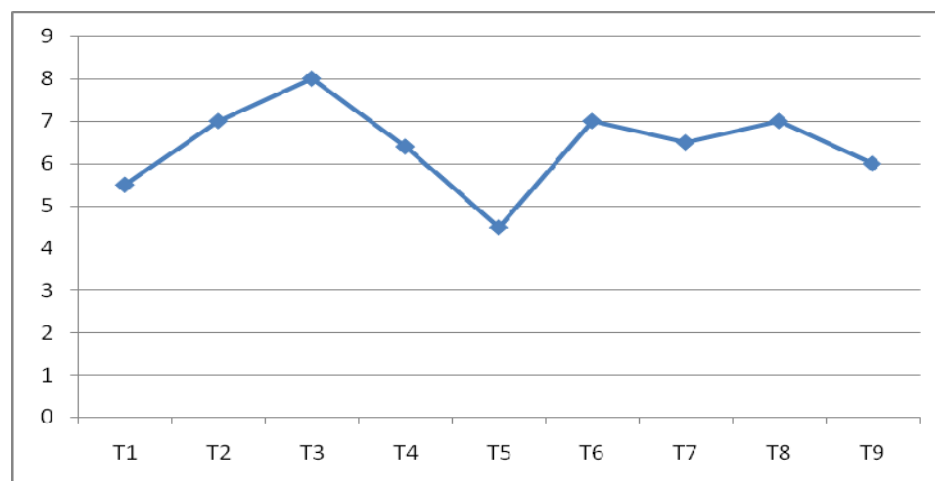
The teachers were asked to state those topics that were included in the Civics Curriculum that enrich the content of the course. The teachers reported some concrete topics that they have learned through several non-formal channels (seminars, workshops, etc): gender issues, HIV/AIDS, drugs, mass media (advanced, as this topic is included in the both old and new curricula), election education, teenagers' rights, and politics (advanced). The others want to include skill and value developing lessons on responsibility, freedom, justice, limitations of power, and to study contemporary hot issues as well. Few teachers listed names of teaching methods or techniques: case studies, simulations, cooperative learning, and teamwork. Although,

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all the mentioned teaching methods have nothing to do with the content and deals with the organization of education, they are promoted by the National Curriculum framework and is the responsibility of teachers to learn and utilize in their classroom.

Consequently, the next issue of interest was to explore how the interviewed teachers are going to improve their professional (teaching, classroom management, educational leadership, ICT) skills. The responses varied from reading books to gaining more skills on applying theoretical knowledge in practice. Some teachers considered self-education as an improvement tool; others want to attend professional development events such as training or seminars. Some teachers will limit themselves by reading books and contemporary pedagogy books, while others will establish partnerships with libraries, particularly the human rights libraries and will try to improve their curriculum development experience.

Finally, the teachers' attitude to the effectiveness of the civics implementation in schools in terms of meeting the national standards and goals for civic education was explored. A 10-point scale was presented to the teachers where (1) meant the effectiveness of civic education is very low and 10 meant very high effective curriculum implementation. Overall, the teachers rated 6.43 the effectiveness of civic education implementation in Armenian schools. The average rate for the Yerevan teachers was 6.73. The chart below shows the teacher responses (T=Teacher).



**Figure 5.** *The effectiveness of civic education*



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### **Student Interviews:**

The students are the direct beneficiaries of the civics program and 75 students participated in the research. 68 students (over 90% of participants) have taken the civics course a year ago, while seven participants (over 10%) were actually involved in the course during the research. First, they questioned about their expectations from the civics course. Many questions in the questionnaire resembled the questions from teachers' questionnaire.

The most common answer was “to learn the Armenian *laws, rights, and responsibilities*”. This category includes the responses like “I thought that learning the subject would enable me to protect my rights”. They also believe that learning the legislation will lead to justice. A student was inspired to learn “all rights and responsibilities of a citizen” as she discovered that there are so many violations and illegal actions in the country. Another student expected that learning the civics content would lead the fellow citizens to respect and obey laws and rules. *Therefore, they believe that the civics course is a protective tool against violations. Knowing the Constitution and laws is a key means that empowers the citizens to become a “full citizen” of the society.*

The second category is to learn about *human rights and liberties*. By learning the subject, the students want to grow up politically knowledgeable and be a deserving citizen of the country. Civics helps them orientate in various real life situations, involves them in a political life, study laws, and become “complete” individuals. One student believes that he needs to learn civics so that no one can “cheat or deceive me because of my poor knowledge on civic issues”.

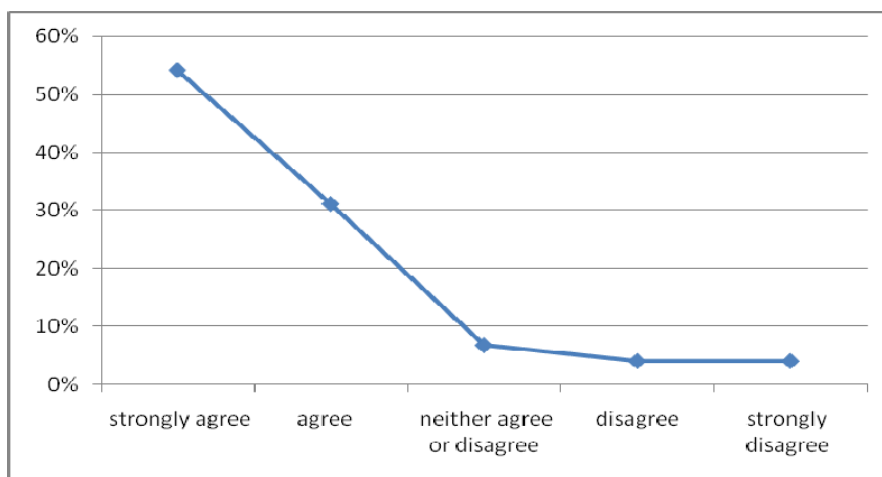
Another theme that was often addressed by the students was related to the *future*. They think that the knowledge they acquired in the school will help them in the future. For example, one student expressed that she expected to learn her rights for protecting herself in future. The second group of students anticipated that learning about human rights could prepare them for future analytical and practical applications.

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There were few students with no expectation from learning civics. One student even was unclear why and what he is learning. These-disenfranchised students are marginalized year after year and believe learning is not significant or meaningful. These disillusioned young people may be capable of higher achievements if they had a change in perception.

The other theme derived from the responses of the students was related to their course expectations and whether it was related to active citizenship. A number of students valued learning about citizenship and politics. One student expected to “express my ideas freely, obtain authentic information about different countries, and receive the answers of many social issues”. Thus, the students envision that that Civic Education provides an opportunity to learn about citizenship, to get political literacy, respect laws, rules, and other citizens, and to be able to utilize theoretical concepts and ideas in their life.

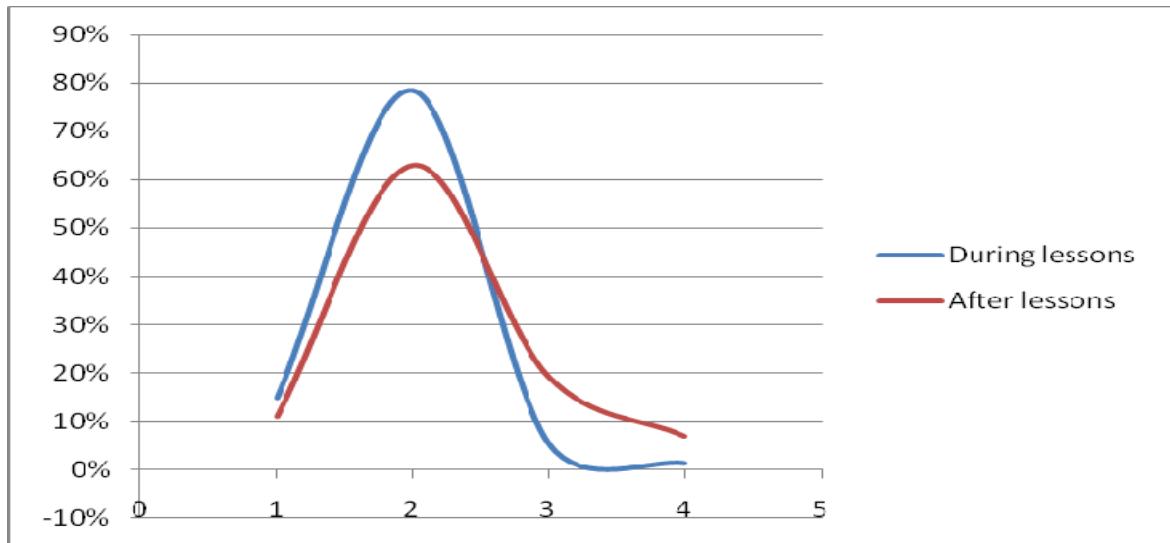
The next few questions were given to the students to explore the students’ attitude towards the classroom organization that encourages a democratic environment using a Likert scale. One of the key concepts of education for democracy is the preparation of active citizens. Thus, do the teachers in Armenian classrooms encourage active participation? 74 students responded to the question and the great majority (81%) of them agree or strongly agree that their civic classrooms promote active citizenship and only 8% of the students do not believe in that fact.



**Figure 6.** *Did your teacher encourage your active participation during the lessons?*

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One of the indicators of an effective lesson implementation is teacher's ability to satisfy the curiosity of students by responding the questions they have. Two student questions inquired how the teachers reacted to the students concerns or questions during and after the lessons.



**Figure 7.** *Did your teacher clarify all your questions and issues?*

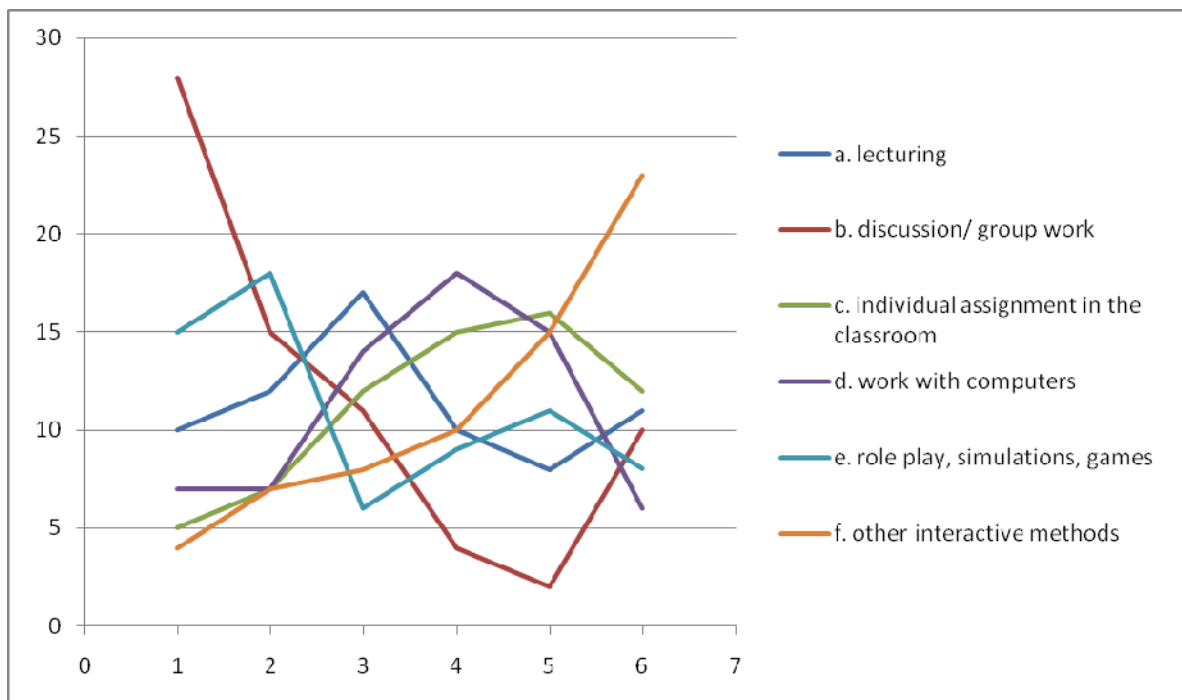
1=teachers respond partially,  
2= teachers respond completely,  
3= teachers respond sometimes,  
4=teacher never respond.

The chart above shows that over 80% of the students believe that their teachers respond to all the questions during the classroom instruction and 60% of the questions after lessons. Thus, it is noticeable, that the teachers prefer to satisfy their students' curiosity in the classroom more than in other settings or situations. However, few students reported that their teachers do not respond to their questions in the classroom (1%) or out of classroom (7%).

While 81% of the students stated that their classroom environment promote active citizenship, only 55 % of students or 41 respondents think that they were able to freely express their opinions and ideas during the lessons without being afraid of the criticism from their classmates or teacher or being wrong or other circumstances.

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Different teaching methods help students learn based on their learning styles. In this research, the students were given a list of teaching methods (**a. lecturing**; **b. discussion/group work**; **c. individual assignment in the classroom**; **d. work with computers**; **e. role play, simulations, games**; and **f. other interactive methods**) for ranking the learning styles from the most preferred to the least preferred ones (1 was the most preferred style and 6 was the list preferred one).



**Figure 7.** Preferred learning styles by students

The chart shows that **b. discussion/group work** and **f. other interactive methods** options were recognized as the most (28 students selected as the first option) and the least (23 students selected as the sixth option) preferred learning styles respectively.

The old civics curriculum consisted of twelve topics: Power and Authority, Democracy, Civil Society, Non-governmental Organizations, Economic Base of Civil Society, Legal status of a citizen in Armenia, President of Armenia, Legislative Branch of Power: National Assembly, Executive Branch of Power, Judicial Branch of Power, Regional Government and Local Self

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Administration, and Foreign Policy and Diplomacy. The researchers asked the students to rate the civics topics according to their interests by the following three criteria: a. the topic is very important, b. the topic is desirable to learn, c. the topic is boring.

Table 8 portrays the students' response and 83% of students have high interest in learning about the citizens' rights and responsibilities, while only 27% are interested in exploring the essence and functions of nongovernmental organizations. The students also asked if they want to continue exploring the civics content in the future. For a second time, the students gave high priority to the *Legal Status of a Citizen in Armenia*. The issues related to the *Regional Government and Local Self-Administration* and the *Executive Branch of Power* was not attractive to more than half of the respondents.

**Table 8.** *The importance of Civic Education topics to the students*

<b>Topics of Civic Education</b>	a. the topic is very important	b. the topic is desirable to learn	c. the topic is boring	Would you like to extend your knowledge about the topic?
Power and Authority	54%	42%	4%	54.8%
Democracy	61%	36%	3%	72.2%
Civil Society	58%	37%	5%	70.8%
Non-governmental Organizations	27%	56%	16%	52.8%
Economic Base of Civil Society	37%	44%	20%	50.7%
Legal Status of a Citizen in Armenia	83%	14%	3%	91.8%
RA President	62%	31%	7%	65.2%
Legislative branch of Power: National Assembly	49%	41%	10%	62.3%
Executive Branch of Power	38%	47%	15%	49.3%
Judicial Branch of Power	68%	25%	7%	69.1%
Regional Government and Local Self Administration	41%	41%	18%	46.4%
Foreign Policy and Diplomacy	59%	32%	9%	65.2%

The students as well as the teachers were asked to describe what kind of teaching/learning materials are being used in the civics classrooms besides the mandatory textbook. Besides, the

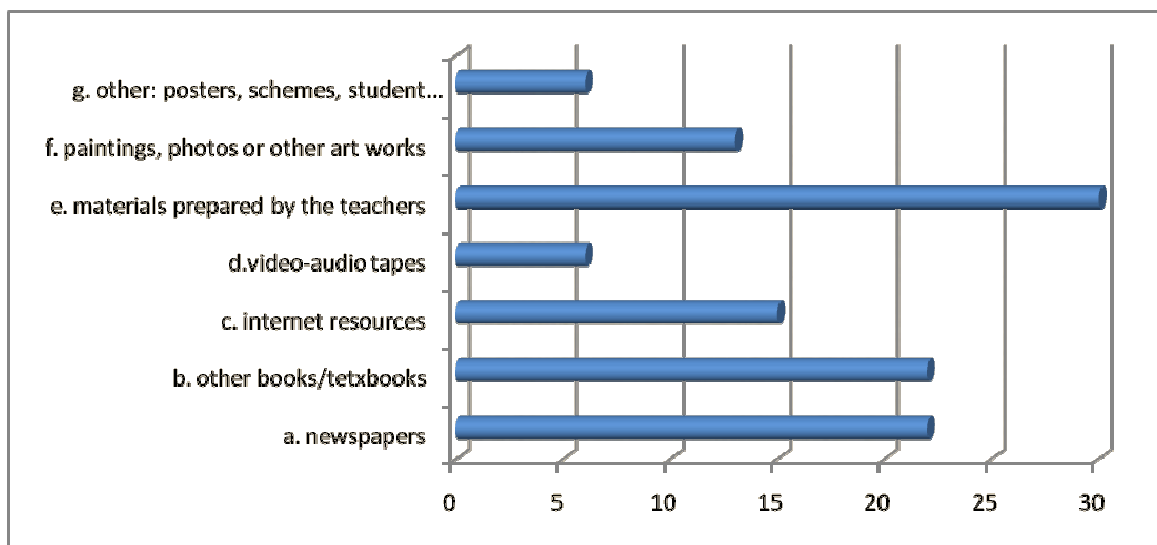
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question included three additional options were included for verifying the frequency of material usage (every week, twice in a month, once in a month).

**Table 9.** *Supplementary teaching materials used by the Civics teachers*

<b>Besides the mandatory textbook, what kind of materials does your teacher utilize in the classroom?</b>	every week	twice in a month	once in a month	never	# of students responded the question
a. newspapers	7	11	13	44	75
b. other books/textbooks	13	15	8	38	74
c. internet resources	1	7	6	61	75
d. video-audio tapes	0	2	3	70	75
e. materials prepared by the teachers	40	12	6	17	75
f. paintings, photos or other art works	9	6	16	44	75
g. other: posters, schemes, student materials, portfolios	8	5	4	55	72

The students responses contradict one another in many cases as 31 students state that their teachers are using newspapers during the lesson, while 44 students are not familiar with their teachers’ effort to make the lesson richer. These 44 students do not represent one or two classes: their respond contradict the answers of their classmates. However, a great majority of the respondents mentioned that their teachers prepare materials to be used in the classrooms and the Internet and video/audio materials are not considered as teaching materials yet.



**Figure 8.** *Teaching materials that help students learn better*

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The next question linked the materials used to enhance student learning to the teachers lessons. Thus, the students were asked to respond the questions: “*What kind of resources help you learn better from the list mentioned in the last question?*” Figure 8 illustrates the students learn better when their teachers bring newsletters, books, and other materials prepared by them to the classroom.

Civic Education should not only help students to enhance their civic knowledge, but also develop civic skills and promote the fundamental principles and values of democracy. The students’ attitude was explored towards the civics course as what percentage the civics course represents knowledge, skills and abilities, or values. The table below shows their accumulative (average) respond:

<i>Knowledge</i>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Skills and Abilities</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Values</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Moreover, 88% of students think that the civics content corresponds to the goals and missions of civic education.

The next cohort of questions was trying to discover if the students are actively involved in extracurricular activities and contributing to their community life and learning from that engagement. 24 students reported that they are members of students’ councils. Even more, one of them was the President of the Student Council of the School, and three students participated in Debate Clubs<sup>27</sup>. Six additional students also participated in Debate Clubs. Eight students from Syunik Marz (Region) joined the local *Syunyats Artsiv* (Eagle of Syunik) Youth Organization. Four students wrote that they are a member of youth lawyer’s association. Two students had short-term engagements in grassroots organizations by joining the Leadership School and organizing the School Military-Sport Unit. In summary, from 75 respondent-students only 46 stated that they are a member of one or another youth organization or club.

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<sup>27</sup> **Debate Club** – A program funded by Jinishian Memorial Foundation and implemented by Youth Achievements NGO in 80 Armenian schools and aimed at improving students’ skills for debate and communication. More [www.debate.am](http://www.debate.am)

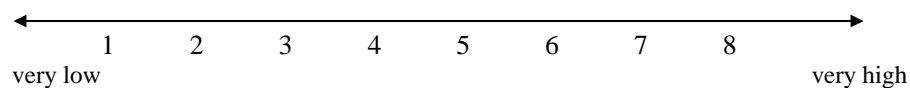
## [The Impact of Civic Education on Schools, Students and Communities]

As to the community involvement, the students are more active in doing community service or volunteer jobs and 56 students reported that they participated in activities such as clean ups, tree planting, visiting orphanages and elderly houses and helping people living in there, Olympiads, fundraising, HIV campaign, charities. The table below shows the numbers of students involved in those activities:

Activity	# of students involved
Saturday Clean up	22
Community Clean up	5
Tree planting	15
Visiting orphanage and helping	28
HIV Campaign	1
Participating in Olympiads	1
Participating in Fundraising	1
Participating in Charity actions	2

Only one student shared her educational leadership experience in her community by conducting classroom observations, examining student behavior, and talking about the learning process with peers through discussions. She was going to organize an event to promote student presentation and speaking skills.

The family environment plays a significant role in shaping an effective citizen for the society that protects and promotes the development of democracy. The following diagram was presented to the students to mark the level of family involvement in and support to the civic program in schools:

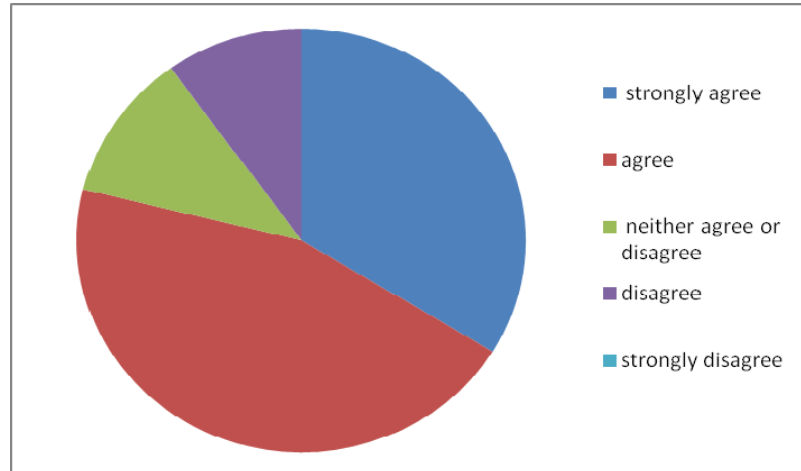


In the 8-scale diagram, 1 means no support and 8 means complete family/parental support and involvement. Only two students selected the lowest option (no support), while eight participants think that their families are entirely involved in enhancing civic knowledge and skill development process. On average, the students rated 6.5 (81.3%) the family effectiveness for promoting civics.



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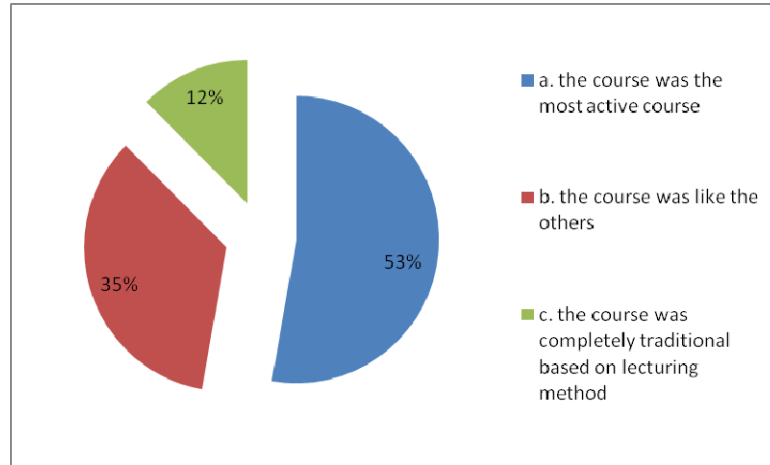
Using the Likert scale, the students were asked a question to rate the level that Civic Education helps them to get connected to their communities, understand the problems facing the community, finding out solutions to those problems and proposing relevant alternatives.



Over 80% of the students believe in the fact that the course contributes linking the students and their communities. Fascinatingly, no one student strongly disagreed that the course contribution is insignificant or irrelevant. Another student question asked about the feedback they receive on their schoolwork: *How often does your teacher explain things to you?* Over 75% of students are satisfied with the work done by their teachers. Only 6% of the students never receive feedback from the teachers, while over 20% of the students get partial feedback on their learning achievements and challenges.

The respondents also rated the civics course in terms of utilizing active and interactive methods. 53 percent of 72 students claimed that the civics course was the most active/interactive among the others. 35 % thinks that the course is similar to others and the remaining 12% of students consider the course as a traditional one with the lecturing method dominating versus to other interactive or active teaching and learning methods.

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The students identified several advantages of the civics program. They learned and signified their human and civil rights and responsibilities; got knowledge about the government, citizenship, and constitution; understood the election process; formed their opinion; some of them became more confident; studied the problems faced by the country, etc. Here are some examples:

- the civics course teaches us how to protect ourselves and introduces us to state matters,
- I knew my rights and know how to protect them,
- we learn the political events in Armenia and express our opinions about various political issues,
- we get information about the judicial branch of power and the responsibilities of the president,
- we learn about NGO's and their activities,
- Civic Education course helped me to become a societal leader and fully engage into the society issues. The course is very positive as that provides comprehensive idea about democracy, mass media, etc. The textbook identifies many social problems,
- I could recognize my rights, freedoms and responsibilities,
- CE is related to our life, we attend other schools for a debate and discussions. I was shy to speak, but the course encouraged me to participate, express my opinion,
- learning civics will enable anyone to become a good citizen, understand others in the society,
- the course makes us to love our country,
- we are not ashamed to participate and express opinions, etc.

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The students also identified several weaknesses of the civics course:

- we have few discussions and debates, and our teachers does not use other resources often,
- the course has very hard lessons and many times I am not able to earn "Satisfactory" grade,
- the course is not promoting the fights against smoking,
- we would like to have computers involved into the classroom activities and internet usage will increase the course interest.

Finally, the students were asked to suggest civic topics to be included in the civics curriculum. First, they offered concrete topics they would like to see in the program:

- youth issues, laws and rules related to students,
- children's rights, student and teacher rights, parent-children relationship, family violations,
- economy, hygiene, ecology, nature protection, pollution, environmental issues,
- patriotism, self-defense,
- new constitution, criminal law, politics, diplomacy, earth, world change,
- unwritten rules, the law creation mechanisms, marriage,
- freedom, responsibilities,
- alcoholism, anti-smoking, HIV/AIDS , drugs, and other modern hot topics

Some other students did not see any need for changing the civics program as one student “found the answers of all questions” or “the textbook is well enough”, or another student thinks that he “obtained all necessary civic knowledge from the course” and if he missed any topics, those topics are learned in other courses. The third group of students offered complex problems and issues for study within the civic education course:

- topics that help children to overcome the difficulties of life.
- how can we to fight smoking and pollution?
- assessment of the presidential elections,
- topics that will persuade the country's population against migration,
- I would love to get info about Diaspora Armenians rights and responsibilities in their respective countries and their participation in the political life.

## 9. Policy Recommendations

Though, the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, National Curriculum General Education, and the Social Studies Curriculum promote the new pedagogical approaches and democratic practices in schools, there are several public policy level documents that do not adequately prioritize or properly encourage democratic citizenship. Thus, the Armenian *National Plan for Education Development for 2008-2015* signifying the role of international cooperation and networking, identifying the main goals of public education:

- to guarantee the accelerated high level achievements in education year by year,
- to broaden the potential for international cooperation, and
- to promote the awareness of a specific identity, and to value it.

After the independence in 1991, the Republic of Armenia transformed from one societal form to another and sought to strengthen the independence and build a civil society. In this situation, education plays a significant role in shaping citizens and the goal of education is to form active citizens who are committed to national values integrated with the culture of civil society (MoES, 2007, p. 5-6)<sup>28</sup>.

A new draft of the Law on Public Education was released in spring 2007 and the law came to supplement the legislative gap related to the organization for public education. The law defines the principles of public education policy, identifies the organizational, legal, financial and economic foundations of the public education system, regulates the relations between education stakeholders, and guarantees citizens' constitutional rights to basic and general education.

Unlike many countries where public education is distinguished as *education for democratic citizenship*, the Armenian policymakers stated that "public education is a teaching and development process that counts individuals, society and country's benefits and is devoted to developing students' intellectual, spiritual, physical and social qualities; contributes to the

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<sup>28</sup> MoES. (2007). National Program for Education Development for 2008-2015. Retrieved on 15 December 2007 from [www.education2015.am](http://www.education2015.am).

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formation of a future citizen, preparation of students for independent life, professional orientation and professional education”. But in the Article 5 of the Law, *the Main Principles of Public Policy in Education*, the policymakers finally affirm the importance of the democratic nature of education. The main principles also signify analytical, creative and critical thinking, independent learning, humanistic nature of education based on national and international humanistic values, tolerance and civility (Law on Public Education, 2007, pp. 1-3)<sup>29</sup>.

The recent *National Report on Human Development. Education Transformation in Armenia* identifies strategic challenges in education: the gap between the thinking and new realities, economic crisis, diversification within the Armenian society, education and globalization, etc. However, the document pays little attention to the misconduct of democratic practices in Armenian schools, the report encourages the teachers to be prepared for an open society and recommends the policymakers to prepare the strategic mission of education<sup>30</sup>.

Civic Education is no longer an abstract or generic objective in the Armenian National Curriculum, but an actual school subject accompanied with useful materials and training assistance. The materials give substance and durability to the course of civic education.

In 2004, the Government of Armenia adopted the new National Curriculum for General Education that outlines the structure of state standards standards for general education, guides for the creation of subject standards, profiles an ideal secondary school graduate, defines the foremost principles and functions of assessment. The standards should ensure the comparability of the educational system to internationally accepted standards. Social Sciences is one of the education spheres defined by the Government.

The main objective of Social Sciences is to provide the learner with the widest possible knowledge and understanding about human beings and society, and, as a result, to form and develop cognitive, social and individual abilities and skills, and to develop national and universal

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<sup>29</sup> Law on Public Education. (2007). Draft Document. Retrieved on December 10, 2007 from [www.parliament.am](http://www.parliament.am)

<sup>30</sup> UNDP. (2007). *National Report on Human Development. Education transformation in Armenia – 2006*. Yerevan, Armenia. Also [www.undp.am/publications](http://www.undp.am/publications).

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values. Social sciences should assist the learner to become socially active. It should enable the individual to explore personal qualities and to ensure full participation of the learner in the life of the school and the community. It should strengthen the learner's respect and pride towards the homeland, national history and Armenian traditions and national characteristics. This will help to “ground” the learner in the modern world and in social relationships, and will provide an overview of the political, economic, social, spiritual and cultural perspectives of Armenia<sup>31</sup>.

For building a democratic society, Armenia needs civic-minded people who own civic qualities. The schools are considered safe places for educating students with strong and effective leadership skills who are committed to democratic values. The newly adopted *National Curriculum Framework* and *State Standards and Program for Social Studies* encourage schools and teachers to ensure the democratic environment in classrooms. Those two documents led the education policy makers to produce sound curriculum for Social Studies that includes the three-column standards and program for different grade levels.

The Social Studies program, in turn, covers a wide range of topics necessary for equipping citizen-students with basic civic knowledge (man and society, fundamental principles of democracy, human rights and liberties, protection of human rights, civil society, authorities, and community problem study). The Social Studies standards come to support the development of various civic qualities and skills such as:

- *define, explain, know, identify, list, understand*– **knowledge and comprehension;**
- *present, use, make actions* - **application**
- *differentiate, analyze, compare, contrast, categorize* – **analysis**
- *develop, explain* – **synthesis**
- *assess, make choices, make decisions, value* –**evaluation.**

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<sup>31</sup> MoES. (2004). *National Curriculum for General Education*. Page 29.

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Contrary to the fact that the Social Studies program and standards are congruent to effective civic education curricula utilized in many countries, the civics instruction still faces several challenges. The very first issue is related to the teacher formal preparation. For the last ten years, the curriculum for secondary education in Armenia owns the civics course, but there is no single university or college specialized in preparing teachers for teaching democracy. Moreover, there is no one integrated social studies program in universities producing modern teachers of social studies/civics.

As Social Studies curriculum is a mandatory part of the National Curriculum for General Education, the Ministry of Education and its sub-structures should work closely with the pedagogical universities and colleges in developing and implementing sound civics programs. In 2005, Armenia joined the Bologna Process of promoting the European dimension in higher education. The support from European partners and other specialists in the field would be valuable in the process of establishing bachelor/master-level teacher preparation programs.

The classroom observations showed that many civics teachers still are attached to the “mandatory materials” such as the mandatory civics textbook that limits possibilities for creativity and critical thinking. In Armenian classrooms, the teachers used to teach everything that is included in the textbook without trying to make their own lesson plans on the same topics from the program. Although each teacher has participated on average 4.4 training seminars (usually 30 hours and more), they introduce only few teaching methods or techniques in their work. Integrated thematic units have not become important tools for teachers to promote students complex learning.

Some teachers did well in utilizing interactive methods in their classroom, while there were others who organized group-work activities, but the goal of those activities were not clear to the students nor was the students’ participation efficient and communicative. Hence, the curriculum developers, training designers and trainers should pay attention to the importance of team

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activities and cooperative learning. They need to give a chance to teacher-trainees during the professional development activities to comprehend the theory and practice by utilization of theoretical guidelines. Reflecting to performed teamwork activities is also an important part of learning.

The next issue was directed to whether or not the teachers understood the goal of civic education. The majority of the interviewed teachers believed that their mission is to teach their students laws, rights, and duties. They all pay attention to the knowledge component of civic learning. However, Civic Education consolidates knowledge with civic skills and dispositions and the students need to learn not only the branches of power and their functions, but also should learn how to participate actively, communicate effectively, improve leadership skills, respect others and their opinions, promote participatory decision-making process, follow the principles of tolerance, be responsible for personal learning and actions, be committed to contributing the society's common good and other skills and values necessary for being an effective citizen in a democratic society.

The students were asked the same question about the goal of teaching Civic Education and their responses were very similar to what their teachers believed. They expected to learn their rights and responsibilities, human rights and liberties, the Constitution and laws. The students also believe that by learning those laws they will be able to protect themselves and others, and will become a "full" citizen. Therefore, their feeling is that many people who are not able to protect themselves are excluded from the social life, political processes, and they do not want to deepen that "social gap"., The main mission of Civic Education, however, is to prepare informed, responsible, and active citizens committed to the fundamental principles and values of democracy.

Interestingly, there were students who did not try to share their viewpoint about the goal of teaching civics. Some of them were very ignorant to the posted question while the others did not



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know what to answer. Both kinds of students were not included in the schooling process: they were marginalized to some degree. Moreover, no one cared: not the teacher, the school administrators, the students and their parents. Still, there were a few students who envision that the subject will give them chances for expressing ideas openly, learning authentic social problems, developing leadership skills, hence, becoming, becoming effective citizens.

The teachers identified many problems that face our teachers during their work (low student learning motivation, inadequate experience of using interactive methods, the overloaded textbook is difficult for the students to understand, short teaching time, lack of materials and supplies, cooperation with local self-administrative bodies, communities are not supportive, the school principal and other administrators complain about the noise when we use interactive methods). Those are examples of real challenges, but the teachers are not ready to strive for improving the situation by increasing student motivation, trying to advance their pedagogical expertise, using more time besides the scheduled one academic hour per week, linking communities and school life. The education policy makers and implementers in Armenia should prioritize those issues as well.

As a discipline, Civic Education is responsible for shaping citizen. Civic educators have obligations to engage their students into real life exercises to learn the complexity of the societal life. Neither the old curriculum nor the teachers try to involve the students into such complex community practices. The teachers encouraged the students to involve actively in student councils activities (75% of the teachers reported this fact). Needless to add, that recently MoES adopted a policy requiring the Armenian schools to establish student councils.

Finally, the teachers are committed to their teaching process and try to excel in their job. They ranked very high (80%) the effectiveness of civics implementation in schools. The teachers rated very high the importance of civic education topics for the students when asked to assess them. Hence, they believe that the students should learn almost all the civics topics included in

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the mandatory textbook and they adjusted teaching the twelve civics themes. Therefore, they have low motivation for improving their teaching/learning skills.

The students responses about the importance of the civics topics learned are very similar to their teachers' responses. Consequently, they also rated very high all the topics included in the textbook. Besides, they are eager to explore those topics in their future life, especially the legal status of a citizen in Armenia. Nevertheless, the students need more exposure to the various aspects of civic life throughout their secondary education along with learning their rights and responsibilities.

The students have the point of view that their teachers organize civics lessons effectively and the classroom environment encourages the democratic processes as the great majority of the respondent students stated that the teacher supports their active participation, responds to all their learning needs during the teaching time and after the teaching.

Ten years ago, no one could believe that interactive teaching methods would become dominant teaching methods over traditional ones and required by the Armenian Ministry of Education and Science (National Curriculum for General Education) to be utilized in classrooms. Moreover, two third of students reported that certain interactive methods help them learn better. Yet, there were students who still enjoy the traditional approach of teaching. Nevertheless, truly, most of the students deem that the course is the most active one in their school, which provide the policy makers and curriculum developers' room for more positive efforts to make civics the leading course in the secondary school.

Besides the civics mandatory textbook, the teachers use some other books and materials to promote student learning. They also prepare and distribute materials to utilize during their lessons. The students' responds portray that they benefit from the materials their teachers prepared and that those materials consider their needs and interests. The *National Curriculum for General Education* and the *State Standards on Social Studies* enable the teachers to choose the methods and materials to be used in the classroom. Consequently, the teachers are responsible

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for the teaching and learning strategies to promote student civic learning. The pedagogical and teacher training programs should consider and benefit from this opportunity.

The students reported very few examples of extracurricular activities they were involved in: student council, debate club, leadership course, and young lawyers' activities. The school administration, educational organizations and NGOs enabled these activities for students and there was no single activity initiated by the students to enhance their non-formal learning. Consequently, the education policy makers should try to seek the society's assistance in building the bridge between schools and their communities, linking students and community life despite the fact that over 80% of students believe that the civics course help them to connect to their communities. An example of an authentic learning exercise would be the implementation of the Project Citizen in all Armenian schools. The Project Citizen, for example, is included in the new curriculum.

Finally, the students were able to identify several positive and negative sides of teaching civic education and offer some modifications in the curriculum. They are anymore committed to protecting their rights as a human being and citizen, are not shy to express opinions and stand for those opinions, love their country stronger than before, and want "to become a good citizen, understand others in the society". Moreover, they are eager to explore more civics issues related to their life, local and global environmental problems, and other "hot topics".

In **summation**, , there is a fertile l ground for the Armenain teachers to work with the students in classrooms and out of school settings to prepare better democratic citizens. The Constitution is the principle authoritarian document that dictates to to the educators to the legality to ensure democratic context and content. . The recent National Curriculum for General Education also promotes active learning, utilization of contemporary pedagogical approaches and creation of learners with creative, effective leadership , and communication skills. Besides those documents, there are some policy level legislative, normative documents that undermine the preparation of a citizen committed to the fundamental principles, skills, and values of a democracy.

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