

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA

**EFFECTIVENESS OF CIVIC EDUCATION:
CASE STUDY IN “THE INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS”**

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ABSTRACT

There has been a global surge of democracy throughout the world. It is the power of the people but for having that power citizens must possess the skills, embody the values, and manifest the behaviors that accord with democracy. Civic education is the tool through which citizens will gain necessary skills, values, and behaviors.

This study was undertaken to focus on civic education in Armenia and the concentration was on non-governmental organization, as NGOs are the main realizers of civic education in our country. The aim of this paper was to see how effective is civic education in Armenia. More particularly, the study was done in the “Institute for Democracy and Human Rights” NGO and interview conducted within the participants of the six-week courses of civic education. Then for checking the effectiveness of the course the participants were compared with non-participants with similar backgrounds. This was accomplished through 44 interviews in each group, totally 88 interviews were conducted.

Having analyzed the major findings of this study, it is possible to conclude that in Armenia the effectiveness of civic education is quite low. The results of the present study demonstrated that the difference between the knowledge of participants within the experiment and control groups is not great. The difference was checked based on three categories of civic education: civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills and participatory civic skills. As a result of the study it can be concluded that ways should be found to make it more effective in Armenia.

Finally, this study suggest that it is not enough to improve on just one category without paying attention to other factors. For maximum impact all factor need to be present and for that aim the time frame of civic education programs should be long enough to include all the categories. All these in concert will be effective to form effective civil society, which is essential for a democracy to survive and flourish.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to observe the effectiveness of civic education for forming the civil society in the consolidation of democracy and to answer research questions. For this end people who participated in civic education course, which will be the experiment group will be compared with non-participants, which will be the control group. In literature review it will be discussed what civic education is and what its role on civil society is. In methodology the techniques will be presented through which the research was conducted. Findings concerning each question will be presented in consequent part. In the analysis the results of statistical tests will be presented and analyzed. The analysis will also include the results of interviews with the lecturers of the civic education course. Finally in the conclusion, some limitations of the research and some recommendations will be discussed.

In democracy, civil society occupies quite a definite place and the mere fact of whether it is there or not is a proof of whether the state's democracy is genuine or formal. Democracy is the power of people but for having that power, the citizens need to be informed and thus become capable of confronting, debating, and deciding current issues of public policy.

In Armenia there was a move towards democratic principles in its national politics in 1991 after it gained its independence. Citizens began to demand transparency and accountability from their government, and want public participation in shaping policies that affect their lives. It would be possible only when citizens are educated and well informed. Democracy will work if the citizens know what democracy is, how to do it and why it is desirable. There is a big support of the belief that democracy depends upon good education of democratic citizenship for its maintenance and improvement. A major purpose of education is

to teach citizens that security for their rights depends upon their interest and capacity to judge the quality and uses of their government's power and to act effectively to either enhance or limit it in order to guard against abuses of their rights.

The focus of my study is the education of civil society as it is in the core of democratic reformation of our society and the role of it is crucial in promoting democracy and in driving forward change in our country. It has the aim to answer the following question: "How effective is civic education in Armenia for forming the civil society in the consolidation of democracy?"

Literature review

The basic principles of democracy are discussed from different angles and some of those main principles are the concepts of social capital, civic engagement in economic and political life, and volunteerism in local problem solving that strengthens civil society. Dahl (1998) describes democracy in concert with such core concepts as representational government, constitutionalism, human rights, citizenship, civil society, and market economy. Constitutionalism means limited government and the rule of law to prevent the arbitrary use of power, to protect human rights, to regulate democratic procedures in elections and public policymaking, and to achieve a community's shared purposes. A market economy, which promotes the free exchange of goods and services, and civil society, which involves freely-formed civil associations, are distinguishing features of a constitutional democracy (Dahl 1998, 166-167). Civil Society occupies quite a definite place in democracy and the need for a body of informed and responsible citizens in a democracy capable of confronting, debating, and ultimately deciding current issues of public policy cannot be overstated. The more democratic is civil society, the more likely it is that democracy will emerge (Diamond 1994).

Before going ahead to discussions of what strengthens civil society, it is essential to understand the concept of civil society itself. Political theorists and practitioners used this concept variously during the past 300 years. However most would agree that it pertains to “social interaction not encompassed by the state” (Dryzek 1996, 481). Further, most current users of the idea agree, that civil society is the complex network of freely formed voluntary associations, distinct from the formal governmental institutions of the state, acting independently or in partnership with state agencies. Apart from the state, but subject to the rule of law, civil society is a public domain that private individuals create and operate (Patrick 1999, 27).

Civil society provides intermediate organizations operating between government and individual that may protect individuals psychologically and practically from the direct operation to government power. Civil society helps to develop the potential of citizens, promoting creativity, serving as laboratory for experimentation, initiating and sustaining innovation and reform in social and public affairs.

Larry Diamond defines civil society “as the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules” (Diamond 1994). Diamond explains civil society to involve citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. Then Diamond (1994) brings some democratic functions of civil society as follows:

1. To provide the basis for the limitation of state power and by containing the power of democratic government check their potential abuses and violations of the law and subject them to public scrutiny;
2. To supplement the role of political parties in stimulating political participation;
3. Civil society can be a crucial arena for the development of such democratic attributes as tolerance, respect for opposite viewpoints, willingness to compromise;
4. To create channels, other than political parties, for the articulation, aggregation, and representation of interests;
5. Richly pluralistic civil society will tend to generate a wide range of interests that may crosscut the principal polarities of political conflict;
6. To recruit and train potential political leaders;

7. Such organizations may help to build democracy in a variety of other ways such as in monitoring election procedures;
8. To disseminate information;
9. Civil society can help to achieve the economic reforms without which democracy is unlikely to take root;
10. It may strengthen the emerging democratic state by pressuring it into patterns of behavior that enhance its legitimacy.

Finally, Diamond states that civil society serves democracy best when it is dense, affording individuals to participate in multiple associations and informal networks at multiple levels of society (1994). For a democracy to survive and flourish, a critical mass of its citizens must know enough about the basic features of a democratic political system to be able to access it when their interests are at stake, and they must believe in the importance of certain key democratic values, such as tolerance for divergent viewpoints and support for the rule of law. They must also be willing and able to participate in local and national politics, and they must believe that their participation is important to the continued viability of the democratic political system. A political system without a genuine civil society cannot legitimately claim to be democracy (Patrick 1999).

How then are the citizens of democracy to gain the skills, values, and behaviors that are thought to be necessary for a stable and effective democracy? An answer to this question is civic education, which essentially seeks to jump-start the process of democratic socialization by promoting support for democratic behaviors and values among ordinary citizens.

Civic Education in a democracy is education in self-government. Democratic self-government means that citizens are actively involved in their own governance; they do not just passively accept the dictums of others or acquiesce to the demands of others. And good

civil society depends mostly on good civic education, as informed and capable citizenry is vital to the preservation of a free and democratic government. Indeed, a citizen in the twenty-first century should be comfortable acting in several different ways - upholding laws or protesting, voting or forming new organizations - as the situation demands. Citizens need an overlapping set of knowledge and intellectual skills for all of these tasks. If there would be “government of the people, by the people, for the people” then there must be education of the people in the principles, practices and commitments of democracy (Patrick 1999, 52).

The major goal of Thomas Jefferson’s proposals for the education of citizens was derived directly from the principal American founding document, the Declaration of Independence, which asserted, that to “secure the rights to Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the Consent of the Governed” (Center for Civil Education 1997, 6). In line with these criteria for good government – security for rights and government by consent of the governed – Jefferson recommended education of citizens “to enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom” (Pangle and Pangle 1993, 108).

Indeed, people are not born with the knowledge, skills and habits necessary to make democracy work, but rather acquired through education and experience. A major purpose of education is to teach citizens that security for their rights depends upon their interest and capacity to judge the quality and uses of their government’s power and to act effectively to either enhance or limit it in order to guard against abuses of their rights.

Patrick (2002) introduced several trends of civic education. The first trend is the conceptualization of civic education in terms of four interrelated components: civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills and civic dispositions. The first component, civic knowledge, consists of basic concepts and information that students must know if they would become competent citizens of a democracy. Concepts in the theory and

practice of democracy, such as representative government, popular sovereignty, constitutional government, the rule of law, human rights and citizenship, must be understood by people if they would know what democracy is and what is not (Patrick 1999). Civic knowledge is vital to democratic citizenship. It helps citizens understand their interests as individuals and as members of groups. Civic knowledge promotes support for democratic values. The more knowledge citizens have of civic affairs the less likely they are to experience a generalized mistrust of public life (Galston 2001).

Cognitive civic skills are the intellectual operations that enable students to identify, describe, interpret, explain, and evaluate events in their democratic government and civil society. These cognitive skills enable to use civic knowledge to make reasonable decisions about public policy issues, to justify these decisions and to implement the decisions (Patrick 1999). Education increases cognitive proficiency and related intellectual skills, which improves an individual's ability to understand political events and act in an institutionally rational manner (Galston 2001). If students develop cognitive skills they can respond to their experiences reasonably and effectively, and when confronted by a public issue, for example, they can make and defend decisions about the matter, as a good citizen should do.

Participatory civic skills involve actions by individuals to monitor and influence public policies and the resolution of public issues. These skills of participation, in tandem with cognitive skills enable to cooperate to promote personal and common interests (Patrick 1999). The more knowledge citizens have the more likely they are to participate in public matters. Civic knowledge promotes political participation. And political knowledge affects participation not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively (Galston 2001). So education for democracy involves students cooperatively in active learning of skills that enable them to participate constructively in their government and civil society.

The fourth component, civic virtues and behavioral dispositions are the traits of character needed by individuals to preserve and improve their democratic government and civil society. Civic virtue entails the subordination of personal interests to the common good of the community to which they belong. If people develop civic virtue, they must practice the behavioral dispositions or habits of the good citizen in a democracy. Examples of these democratic dispositions are self-regulation, courage, commitment to justice or fairness, prudence, charity or compassion for others, hope or optimism about the future, honesty, tolerance, and respect for the equal worth and dignity of each person in recognition of the equal humanity of each one. These traits of good character constitute the morality of democratic citizenship (Patrick 2003).

The second trend is a systematic emphasis on teaching and learning of the core concepts in the theory of democracy and information about government and civil society that exemplifies the core concepts. By increasing the exposure of people to core content in the theory and practice of democracy, it increases the probability that they will master these ideas and remember the information related to them. This type of teaching is effective as the mastery of core concepts of democracy is related positively to achievement of civic skills and to dispositions and to desirable democratic behavior, such as propensity to vote and otherwise participate in government and civil society, to be interested in politics, and to respect the worth and dignity of other persons (Patrick 2002).

The third trend that Patrick (2002) speaks about is the using legal court cases or cases of political behavior to integrate the teaching and learning of civic knowledge, skills and dispositions. Dramatic stories and cases of human behavior tend to attract the interest of students and to challenge them to use core concepts to analyze, explain, and make decisions about the issues presented in the cases. And the cases portray positive and negative human behavior and thereby contribute to the teaching of civic dispositions. This method of teaching

with cases brings the vitality and reality of human behavior in a democracy and requires the integrated teaching and learning of all four components in the framework for civic education.

The fourth trend is systematic development of decision-making skills. Case studies of political and legal issues, as well as inquiries into community problems should be used to develop decision-making skills. The systematic teaching of decision-making skills in response to public policy issues is an especially effective method for teaching cognitive civic skills (Patrick 2002).

The fifth trend is the establishment of open classroom conditions of teaching and learning. These conditions are conducive to free and open exchange of opinions about public issues and policies. This will give opportunity to freely investigate controversial topics and to openly and candidly express opinions. This kind of situation is related to such positive civic dispositions as tolerance, propensity to participate, and political interest (Patrick 2002).

The sixth trend, which Patrick (2002) introduced, is to teach about democracy and democratic citizenship comparatively and internationally. If democracy would be taught realistically and responsibly, then it must be taught globally and internationally. And the main method of teaching and learning is the comparative method of analysis and appraisal. By teaching democracy comparatively, the knowledge is broadened. Breadth of knowledge comes from studying comparatively the wide range of institutional and constitutional designs and political practices across many different democracies of our world. Depth of knowledge about particular principles and institutions of democracy is conveyed by examination of various examples from different countries, which represent variations on the common themes or principles by which we distinguish democratic and non-democratic governments. Teaching democracy comparatively directs the attention to understand the common or generic political and civic choices confronted by people across the cultures and civilizations of our world. It helps them to more readily and accurately understand ideas and information about

government, politics, and other aspects of human societies and cultures. By using comparative method, people can develop high-level intellectual skills. It helps them to think analytically and critically about the constitutions, governments, and political activities of people around the world (Patrick 2003).

The final trend introduced to us by Patrick (2003) is to conjoin content and processes in the teaching and learning of civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions. Civic skills and dispositions are inseparable from a body of civic knowledge or content. They cannot be taught and learned effectively in isolation from one another. All the necessary components of a good education for democracy – knowledge, skills and dispositions – must be continually connected through activities that involve application of knowledge through the persistent practice of skills and dispositions. Elevation of one component of education for democracy over the other components, for example knowledge over skills and dispositions and vice versa, is a flaw that impedes teaching and learning about the theory and practice of democracy. So, basic knowledge, skills and dispositions must be combined and connected continually, systematically, and dynamically to bring about an effective education for democracy.

Thus education for citizen engagement involves teaching and learning of civic virtues and dispositions, traits of character that dispose one to subordinate personal interests for the common good and development of capacity to make sound judgments about when and how to act for the general welfare of the society (Callan 1997; Dagger 1997). The goal of education in civics and government should be informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of constitutional democracy. Their effective and responsible participation requires the acquisition of a body of knowledge and of intellectual and participatory skills. Effective and responsible participation also is furthered by development of certain dispositions or traits of character that enhance the

individual's capacity to participate in the political process and contribute to the healthy functioning of the political system and improvement of society. So effective civic education is indispensable to the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of the institutions of government and civil society (Patrick 2002).

Civic education is also a vital means by which our society transmits to the next generation the core knowledge, skills, and dispositions of democratic citizenship. It is what allows democratic societies to reproduce themselves across generations. Of course, there is an appropriate place for civic education at every level of learning. Although the process of education leads to the preservation of traditional cultural values, it is also perpetually future-oriented. Alvin Toffler (2000) puts it well: “all education springs from images of the future and all education creates images of the future... Unless we understand the future for which we are preparing we may do tragic damage to those we teach.” In the face of an uncertain or even unknowable future civic education, as the cornerstone of formal education must express a new way of thinking about the present generation's moral responsibility to future generations. So it is essential for people to get an effective program in civic education and become informed, responsible, and competent participants in the political life of their communities, states, and the nation. There is no more important task than the development of an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry as democracies are sustained by citizens who have the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Through a good education for democracy people learn that the future success of their government and civil society depends ultimately on citizens, persons who are just like them (Patrick 2003).

After gaining independence in 1991, Armenia began to move towards democratic principles in its national politics. Citizens began to demand transparency and accountability from their government, and want public participation in shaping policies that affect their lives. But it would be possible only when citizens are educated and well informed. There was

a belief that democracy depends upon good education of democratic citizenship for its maintenance and improvement. For that end, after independence, many international and local organizations started to implement programs in order to educate and develop civil society in Armenia. They have the goal to strengthen quality education in order to build a just society. They mobilize citizen participation in education and are aimed to promote national development by means of education. They support the formation and development of democratic institutions; provide teaching, research and services to address the needs of Armenia and surrounding region for sustainable development. Thus, the mission of these organizations is based on the belief that they will contribute to the development of Armenian political culture, which values the possibilities of active democratic citizenship.

The prime concern of many organizations is the same, civic education, but their approaches are different. They do it in a different way, in different time periods and for different groups of people. One of them is “Human Rights Protection Center” located in Gyumri and Goris. It serves as a school for new beginning NGOs, community members, interested persons who are intended to form some type of groups or join such ones. The training usually includes lectures and seminars within a period of 16 hours. “All Armenian Women’s Union” NGO located in Yerevan also has programs of civic education lasting from 1 to 3 days. Their programs are usually for young women to make them become politically active participants. The organization is not only concentrated on women; their participants include also community members and different groups of interested people. The NGO “Center for Development of Civil Society” located in Yerevan does not have a specialized civic education program, but in any program that they have they include also civic education and pay much attention to it. For example if they have a program lasting 9 months they devote 5 months to civic education, so most part of any program realized by this NGO is devoted to civic education. The participants of their programs are students, especially from

socially vulnerable families. The “Caucasus Research Resource Center” NGO located in Yerevan realizes civic education for socialists. Their program has no fixed time period and is not usually realized periodically. All these NGOs realize civic education based on grant system.

For the purpose of my study I chose the NGO “Institute of Democracy and Human Rights” (IDHR), located in Yerevan, which is focused on civic education. I chose this NGO because it has periodic civic education program with fixed time period, six weeks, and any interested person can be a participant if pass a test. They do not have any limits on age, gender, education and sphere of activity. The six-week courses encompassed interactive lectures, practical groups sessions or teamwork, and a round table discussions including presentations of experts on respective themes. The theoretical issues included the nature of a person; the idea of freedom; the issue of a person’s freedom and equality; the place and the role of a person and the issue of human rights in civil society and in democratic state. The courses included also themes concerning the democracy today in Armenia including the difficulties of democracy in today’s Armenian reality: the issue of national and state relationship; political and civic consciousness in today’s Armenian reality, the issue of creativeness in education and the important points in the system of education in democracy, the culture of political and civic dialogue in Armenia, the issues of nation – state dialogue, skills of communication and dialogue, the right of education in the system of main human rights etc.

By this six-week lasting program the institute has the aim to promote a change in the civil and civic conscience and approach of the various groups in the society by means of education. If good education will be experienced for people, they will enhance their understanding of what democracy is, how to practice it, why it may succeed or fail, and why

it is worthy. They may also enhance their capacities to develop and maintain the kind of political and civil conditions that are indispensable to the survival of democracy.

So democracy in order to be maintained and improved needs to have a good system of education for democratic citizenship. Citizens should participate in political and civil life, and for participation the good education plays a vital role.

Methods

For the purpose of this research a case study was made in the “Institute of Democracy and Human Rights”. The data was collected by conducting survey research within the participants who passed the civic education course and those who did not. The participants of the course were the experiment group and non-participants as the control group. There were forty-four participants in each group, in total eighty-eight participants. For this light a purposive sampling was done.

The range of the participants’ age of both experiment and control groups is from 21 to 30 years old. The mean age of both groups is 26 and there is no mean difference. The mean of education of both groups is 3.23, where 1 is “secondary school” and 4 – “advanced university degree”. There is no mean difference between the experiment and control groups.

Collected data is analyzed through SPSS. For the purpose of this research the questions were analyzed based on three categories discussed by Patrick (1999): civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills and participatory civic skills. The fourth category, civic virtues and behavioral dispositions, was not included in the analysis, as the six-week lasting courses would hardly have an impact on civic dispositions of a person.

Findings and Analysis

The comparison was made between experiment group and control group based on three categories: civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills and participatory civic skills.

Civic knowledge was measured by seven statements. Response categories were from one to four (1. strongly agree, 2. agree, 3. disagree, 4. strongly disagree). Don't knows were considered as missing.

Attitudes checking civic knowledge				
	Type	N	Mean	Mean difference
Citizens can change their government through elections	Experiment group	44	2.05	.27
	Control group	44	1.77	
Democracy should protect a person's untouchables	Experiment group	44	1.86	.23
	Control group	44	1.64	
Demonstration is a right way to express the people's will	Experiment group	44	2.50	.14
	Control group	44	2.36	
The characteristic of civil society is their being informed	Experiment group	44	1.95	.25
	Control group	44	1.70	
NGOs are formed only to earn money	Experiment group	44	3.05	.18
	Control group	44	2.86	
HGOs are formed to protect people's rights	Experiment group	44	1.98	-.20
	Control group	44	2.18	
In the case of planned economy it is impossible to have democracy	Experiment group	44	3.16	.43
	Control group	44	2.73	
Note: 1= strongly agree; 2= agree; 3=disagree; 4=strongly disagree; Don't knows excluded				

Civic knowledge was compared by employing Independent-Samples T-test between seven questions. There was only slight difference between the two groups. All participants agreed that citizens can change their government through elections and that democracy should protect a person's untouchables. The participants in a proportionate way agreed that demonstrations are not a right way of expressing people's will or it is not one of the main right ways. Participants from control group were stronger convinced that the main characteristic of civil society is their civic awareness. Nearly 80% of the participants from both groups were members of NGOs and mainly disagreed that NGOs are formed only to make money and on the contrary agreed that NGOs are formed to protect people's rights. In all cases the results were not statistically significant.

There was only a slight statistical significance between the opinions concerning the question that it is impossible to have democracy with planned economy. Participants from experiment group more disagreed with this statement than participants from control group. Armenia has been under the influence of communist ideology for many years and it still has influence on people, while those who passed the course of civic education got rid of that communist ideology and accepted the western ideology according to which it is impossible to have democracy in a planned economy. As the courses are taught according to western ideology which accepts that republican way is the right way of state regulation, the participants of the courses are convinced that other ways of state regulation is wrong and non-democratic. In all other cases the difference between the experiment and control groups is not great and almost in all cases the opinions coincided.

Cognitive civic skills which enable students to identify, describe, interpret, explain, and evaluate events in democratic government and civil society were measured by six open-ended questions.

To give the correct name of Universal Declaration				
		correct	incorrect	Total
Type	Experiment group	23	21	44
	Control group	23	21	44
Total		46	42	88

By comparing the answers of experiment and control groups concerning this questions it has become apparent that there was no great difference between these two groups. By proportionate size they all named the correct name of the Universal Declaration.

What are the ways that, in their opinion, will promote the development of civil society			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Education	13	17	30
Provide democracy	3	4	7
Mentality change	2	1	3
Civic awareness	12	11	23
Lawful state	5	11	16
Large field of NGOs	1	0	1
Activate the people	8	0	8
Total	44	44	88

Almost in a proportionate size they were convinced that education and civic awareness are the main ways that will promote the development of civil society. Participants from experiment group were also convinced that one of the ways to promote the development of civil society is to activate the people.

The opinion about the role of a man in democracy			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
The main	27	33	60
Important	14	9	23
To protect his rights	3	2	5
Total	44	44	88

There was almost no difference of thinking between these two groups about a person's role in democracy. More participants from control group thought that a person's role is the main in democracy and he/she should be active to rule his/her fate, to change the government and to believe that he/she can do it, while those in experiment group thought that he/she has an important role.

Opinions towards the way the state monitors the citizen's financial activities			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Normal	10	18	28
Bad	12	12	24
Incomplete	6	4	10
Be limited	10	10	20
Don't know	6	0	6

Total	44	44	88
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The difference between their perceptions towards the state monitoring of the citizens financial activities is not remarkable. By a proportionate size they were convinced that it is normal, bad or incomplete. Even 6 participants from experiment group had no opinion about it and all participants from control group expressed their opinions and attitudes concerning this question.

The opinion about the level of president's activity			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Sovereign	1	7	8
Share the power with NA	16	12	28
Do his job according to constitution	17	24	41
Don't know	10	1	11
Total	44	44	88

There was a slight difference between the thoughts of two groups about the limit of the president's activities. Participants from experiment group were more convinced that a president should share his power with National Assembly and should be accountable to it and to people. Contrary to that there were opinions in control group that a president should be a sovereign. And what was apparent in experiment group was that there were 10 participants who had no opinion concerning this question while there was only one don't know in the control group. It is again a result of western ideology according to which there should be share of political power to which the participants of the courses are taught and didn't think of a president to be a sovereign, while there were such opinions in control group.

Familiarity with constitutional changes				
		yes	no	Total
Type	Experiment group	36	8	44
	Control group	34	10	44
Total		70	18	88

Their opinion about changes in court system			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Positive	9	11	20
Negative	2	5	7
Incomplete	3	9	12
Don't know	22	9	31
Total	36	34	70

The difference of opinions of cognitive civic skills was checked also by their familiarity with constitutional amendments and if they were familiar what was their opinion about the amendments in court system. In this case again the difference was not remarkable. With proportionate size they were familiar with the changes and those who were familiar only few could express their opinion about the amendments in court system. And what was apparent was that 22 participants from experiment group had no opinion about court system amendments while there were only 9 don't knows in the control group. Among those who had opinions were negative and positive ones and some of the participants in control group thought it was incomplete.

Participatory civic skills, which enable to promote personal and common interests were measured by 5 questions:

Voting in the last community elections				
		yes	no	Total
Type	Experiment group	15	29	44
	Control group	21	23	44
Total		36	52	88

The position in voting during the last community elections			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
As a voter	7	19	26
As a trusted person	1	2	3
As a party member	7	0	7
Total	15	21	36

Participatory civic skills were measured by questions to check which of the two groups – experiment and control – were politically more active. More participants from control group than from experiment one participated in the last community elections. But at the same time more people from experiment group participated as board members during elections than from control group.

Participation in demonstrations				
		yes	no	Total
Type	Experiment group	15	29	44
	Control group	5	39	44
Total		20	68	88

There was a difference of participation in demonstrations between the two groups. Participants from experiment group were more active in participating in demonstrations than from control group.

Membership in political party or in NGO				
	Political party	NGO	Neither	Total
Experiment Group	3	28	13	44
Control Group	5	25	13	44
Total	8	53	26	88

What about NGO participation experiment group had more participants than control group, though for the purpose of this study an attempt was made to have proportionate size of NGO members and non-members.

Within this category there are two open-ended questions:

1. To the question why have you referred to your deputy and why would you refer to, the answers were categorized from 1 to 5 according to their responses. With proportionate size of participants from experiment and control groups responded that they would refer if they had social problems, there were also cases for right

protection, and for getting information. There were 2 answers from control group that the case would be for promoting health system problems (to make it free of charge at least for old people). The same number of participants from both groups answered that they would not refer at all. The mode of the experiment group is 4, which means that they would not refer to the deputy. The mode of the control group is again 4. This once more emphasizes that there is no difference between the experiment and control groups.

This question was given to check the participation level of the participants and at the same time to check the level of their trust towards political actors. The results of the study revealed that almost half of the participants from both groups had no trust that they will get any help from their deputy while the others would refer with different problems like social, health or for getting some type of information.

2. To the question what are the methods you would use to make a question politically sound, the answers were categorized from 1 to 7 according to their responses. 16 participants of the experiment group answered that they would do it through NGOs and 9 participants from control group said that they would do it through an NGO, there were answers from both groups that they would do through media, through national assembly or through their deputy. More participants from experiment group than from control group would do it through lobbying. In experiment group there were 4 don't know while there were no don't know answer in control group. The mode of the experiment group is 6, which means that they would more likely make a question politically sound through NGOs. And the mode of the control group is 16, which means that the participants of the control group are more likely to make a question

politically sound through mass media. This maybe a result of the fact that more participants from experiment group are members of NGOs, so they have more trust in them than those from the control group.

This question was given to find out what were the methods that the participants would use to make a question politically sound. The participants named different methods like lobbying, media, deputy, national assembly or an article in the newspaper. What was more apparent was that all the participants from control group had some way of making a question politically sound, but four participants from experiment group had no opinion at all how to make it. So it became apparent that participatory civic skills differed between two groups in demonstration participation. In all other cases the difference was very slight and control group participated more and had more trust than experiment group. Though there were claims from experiment group by those who did not participate at all that the reason for their non-participation is because there was no candidate whom they would vote for and not because of being politically passive.

Follow-up interviews

As a result of the survey it has become apparent that the difference of civic knowledge, cognitive and participatory civic skills between the control and experiment groups is not great. For that reason the participants of the civic education course were asked directly what impact to their opinion has that course upon them and if they think it will be applicable in their activities and be useful for them in the lifetime. Most of them were convinced that what the course gave to them was not new for them, rather it was new by its way of teaching, which is an alternative way education differing from the dogmatic one taught in the state institutes and universities of our country. It gave them opportunity to take part in frank and direct communications and discussions; ask questions and get answers to them, which in its turn removed their constraint. They became more familiar to subjects and themes through discussions. The course made them to be individuals who think critically, to become more active, sagacious, to see and understand aims and goals better, and at the same time to be a part of a group, to become aware with different viewpoints and to form small groups with those who have similar way of thinking. It gave them opportunity to get acquainted with different people, to understand them, to learn to listen different opinions and ways of thinking, to become tolerant to do it and to choose those with whom they continued to cooperate to reach certain goals, for example some of them formed their own NGO. But at the same time there were opinions that the time frame was very short, that it would be better to have longer courses. It would give them opportunity to first of all get civic knowledge, as most of them didn't have such background. Some of them thought that atmosphere in the Institute was very warm and discussions were interesting, but they would better be more practical, be in accordance with reality. One of the lacking points was also that the

participants didn't take any exam or get any marks, which would be a type of a stimulus for them, and would give their lecturers opportunity to have some type of expectation from them.

Interview was also conducted within the lecturers. The objective was to understand what information they gave to the participants of the course and what were the expectations from them. Samvel Martirosyan, who is a journalist, taught the participants about civil society and its relation to other spheres. He claimed that unlike other organizations who concentrated on target groups, IDHR gathered different types of people with different viewpoint, which gave them opportunity to interact with each other, to discuss, try to understand and interpret issues. They did not concentrate on special themes, rather there was a general idea which gave them opportunity to think, to have questions and to get answers to them. Hovhannes Hovhannissyan and Aghasi Tadevosyan, who were lecturers in the Institute of Democracy and Human Rights, had almost the same opinion. They thought that the course was an opportunity for people with different specialties to get together, to take participation in discussions, to debate, to express their opinions and to listen to other ones. There was a general idea, which gave ways and opportunities to think, to have questions, to get answers and to discuss.

Conclusions

The present study examined the effectiveness of civic education in Armenia organized by non-governmental sector. For this study the aim was to see whether there exists a difference of knowledge between participants of civic education program and non-participants. The basic conclusions made as a result of the analysis of the case study's findings are presented below.

For the purpose of this research the questions were analyzed based on three categories discussed by John Patrick: civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills and participatory civic skills. The fourth category, civic virtues and behavioral dispositions, was not included in the analysis, as the six-week lasting courses would hardly have an impact on civic dispositions of a person. As a result of the survey it has become apparent that the difference of civic knowledge, cognitive and participatory civic skills between the control and experiment groups is not great.

Analyzing and comparing the questions measuring civic knowledge between participants in experiment and control groups it has become apparent that there is almost no difference. Almost in all questions the opinions coincided.

Analyzing the questions measuring cognitive civic skills it revealed that both groups had almost similar skills to think critically, to discuss, to express opinions concerning certain political issues. The slight difference between their skills is deducted to have more influence of western ideology in the experiment group than in the control group. The follow-up interviews conducted for the purpose of this study revealed that the civic education realized by a civil society organization less concentrated on civic knowledge and had more concentration on cognitive civic skills.

The questions measuring the participatory civic skills between experiment and control groups revealed that the participants of both groups were almost equally politically active. 80% of participants in experiment group were board members of different NGOs, so accordingly there was a self-selection in control group too in order to have the same number of board members of NGOs. What was apparent that the control group appeared to be more politically active than the experiment group. Though there were claims from experiment group by those who did not participate at all in elections that the reason for their non-participation is because there was no candidate whom they would vote for and not because of being politically passive. At the same time participants from control group had more trust towards political actors than from experiment group.

To sum up, it can be inferred that the difference of knowledge between the participants of control and experiment groups based on civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills and participatory civic skills is not great.

Of course, there were some limitations concerning this study, which could affect the results (the fact, for example, that the survey was conducted in only one organization). And if the time frame of the study were longer one of the best ways would be to survey program participants before they begin a program to gauge their level of political participation and knowledge and to determine their support for key democratic values. Surveying them again after the course then yields a clear comparison, and impact is much easier to assess. This remains highly open leaving a lot of space for future research.

However, as a result of this survey it may be deducted that the effectiveness of civic education in Armenia is quite low and ways should be found to make it more effective.

Recommendations

My recommendation will be concentrated on the time frame. If the participants are prepared, i.e. if they have the civic knowledge, this type of education will give some improvement to their cognitive civic skills. But generally it will be reasonable to have long-lasting courses; the time frame of the courses should be longer. It will give the participants to get relevant civic knowledge. So the first objective of education is to teach thoroughly what democracy is and what it is not. A set of key concepts necessary to a deep understanding of democracy must be taught and learned. How should the core concepts be introduced, defined, and elaborated upon in education for democratic citizenship? This is the recommended response: introduce the definition of minimal democracy, and then elaborate upon it through explication of a set of core concepts such as constitutionalism, rights, citizenship, civil society, and market economy. These concepts should be used as criteria by which to compare and evaluate political systems and thereby to determine whether they are more or less democratic. If people would establish or improve a democratic political system, they must first know the concepts or criteria by which to distinguish a democratic government from a non-democratic government. Then through their civic education people should develop defensible criteria by which to think critically and evaluate the extent to which their government do or do not function authentically as democracies. It will be effective to develop civic knowledge and cognitive civic skills in interaction with each other; to give the knowledge and discuss it, make people think and interpret. The development of these two skills will have its impact upon participatory civic skills and the participation of people will be reasonable, and will be not quantitative but rather qualitative. People must also be willing and able to participate in local and national politics, and they must believe that their participation is important to the continued viability of the democratic political system.

Longer period of education will also have its impact on civic virtues and democratic dispositions of the people. People should be taught the skills and dispositions - attitudes and habits - that support the principles and practices of democracy. This type of education enables one to make sense of the world and thereby to act rationally and effectively within it.

If students experience good education, which includes at its core these four components, they will enhance their understanding of what democracy is, how to practice it, why it may succeed or fail, and why it is worthy. They may also enhance their capacities to develop and maintain the kind of political and civic conditions that are indispensable to the survival of democracy. Finally, through this kind of civic education people may learn that the success and failure of democracy depends ultimately on the knowledge, skills, habits and actions of committed citizens and the political and civic conditions they create.

Evidence drawn from the study on civic education tends to suggest that it is not enough to improve on just one dimension without paying attention to other factors. For maximum impact all factors need to be present. All these in concert will be effective to form effective civil society, which is essential for a democracy to survive and flourish.

Hopefully, this study would make it to have a more clear understanding of the ways of improving civic education in Armenia and will be of benefit for our nation to develop civil society in our country.

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Table 1: Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Male	42	47.7	47.7	47.7
Female	46	52.3	52.3	100.0
Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Age				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
18-25	49	55.7	55.7	55.7
26-30	39	44.3	44.3	100.0
31-40	0	0	0	0
41 and more	0	0	0	0
Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Education				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Secondary school	0	0	0	0
College	0	0	0	0
University degree	51	58.0	58.0	58.0
Advanced university degree	37	42.0	42.0	100.0
Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Attitudes checking civic knowledge			
	Type	N	Mean
Citizens can change their government through elections	Experiment group	44	2.05
	Control group	44	1.77
Democracy should protect a person's untouchables	Experiment group	44	1.86
	Control group	44	1.64
Demonstration is a right way to express the people's will	Experiment group	44	2.50
	Control group	44	2.36
The characteristic of civil society is their being informed	Experiment group	44	1.95
	Control group	44	1.70
NGOs are formed only to earn money	Experiment group	44	3.05
	Control group	44	2.86
HGOs are formed to protect people's rights	Experiment group	44	1.98
	Control group	44	2.18

In the case of planned economy it is impossible to have democracy	Experiment group	44	3.16
	Control group	44	2.73
Note: 1= strongly agree; 2= agree; 3=disagree; 4=strongly disagree; Don't knows excluded			

Table 5: To give the correct name of Universal Declaration				
		correct	incorrect	Total
Type	Experiment group	23	21	44
	Control group	23	21	44
Total		46	42	88

Table 6: Opinions about the ways that will promote the development of civil society			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Education	13	17	30
Provide democracy	3	4	7
Mentality change	2	1	3
Civic awareness	12	11	23
Lawful state	5	11	16
Large field of NGOs	1	0	1
Activate the people	8	0	8
Total	44	44	88

Table 7: The opinion about the role of a man in democracy			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
The main	27	33	60
Important	14	9	23
To protect his rights	3	2	5
Total	44	44	88

Table 8: Opinions towards the way the state monitors the citizen's financial activities			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Normal	10	18	28
Bad	12	12	24
Incomplete	6	4	10
Be limited	10	10	20
Don't know	6	0	6
Total	44	44	88

Table 9: The opinion about the level of president's activity			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Sovereign	1	7	8
Share the power with NA	16	12	28
Do his job according to constitution	17	24	41

Don't know	10	1	11
Total	44	44	88

Table 10: Familiarity with constitutional changes				
		yes	no	Total
Type	Experiment group	36	8	44
	Control group	34	10	44
Total		70	18	88

Table 11: The opinion about changes in court system			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Positive	9	11	20
Negative	2	5	7
Incomplete	3	9	12
Don't know	22	9	31
Total	36	34	70

Table 12: Voting in the last community elections				
		yes	no	Total
Type	Experiment group	15	29	44
	Control group	21	23	44
Total		36	52	88

Table 13: The position in voting during the last community elections			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
As a voter	7	19	26
As a trusted person	1	2	3
As a party member	7	0	7
Total	15	21	36

Table 14: Participation in demonstrations				
		yes	no	Total
Type	Experiment group	15	29	44
	Control group	5	39	44
Total		20	68	88

Table 15: Membership in political party or in NGO				
	Political party	NGO	Neither	Total
Experiment Group	3	28	13	44
Control Group	5	25	13	44
Total	8	53	26	88

Table 16: If yes, then how long						
	Up to 1 year	2	3	4	5	More than 6 year
Experiment group	8	3	6	6	3	2
Control group	4	6	1	8	4	0
Total	12	9	7	14	7	2

Table 17: How much time it takes monthly						
	25 hours	30 hours	40 hours	45 hours	50 hours	Total
Experiment group	2	2	5	2	4	31
Control group	4	7	4	0	0	26
Total	6	9	9	2	4	57

Table 18: The reason why the participants have referred to their deputy or why they would refer			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Social problems	11	11	22
Health problems	0	2	2
Right protection	2	4	6
Getting information	4	2	6
None	23	25	48
Don't know	4	0	1
Total	44	44	88

Table 19: The methods participants would use to make a question politically sound			
	Experiment group	Control group	Total
Mass media	11	16	27
Demonstrations	0	2	2
Through deputy	5	7	12
Through NA	3	2	5
NGO	16	7	23
Lobby	5	10	15
Don't know	4	0	4
Total	44	44	88