The Evolution of Civic Education for Democracy in the Digital Age

Gio Kobakhidze
Deputy Country Director, International Foundation for Electoral Support (IFES), Ukraine
Global Technical Lead on Civic Education, IFES
Democracy in the Classroom
The Evolution of Civic Education for Democracy in the Digital Age

Gio Kobakhidze
Deputy Country Director, International Foundation for Electoral Support (IFES), Ukraine
Global Technical Lead on Civic Education, IFES
Effective Civic Education for Democracy

What is it?

– Life-long process of learning, development
– Broadest level of learning
– Beyond the knowledge
– Skills, Values, Attitudes, Virtues
– Aspirational, not utopian
Effective Civic Education for Democracy

What can it achieve?

– **Knowledge**: human rights, democratic governance, civil society, citizen engagement, cross-cutting themes

– **Skills**: critical/abstract thinking, active listening, consensus building, public speaking, media literacy, group work and problem solving

– **Values and Attitudes**: desire to make change in society, a sense of civic responsibility, respect for individual worth and human dignity, tolerance of divergent views and lifestyles, a concern for others and the common good
Effective Civic Education for Democracy

How is this achieved?

– A blend of theory and practice
– Interactive, student-centered
– Active learning
– Experiencing democracy
– Facilitators, not experts
– Socratic methodology
– Action projects
Effective Civic Education for Democracy

Bloom’s Taxonomy

- **Remember**: Recall facts and basic concepts
  - define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state

- **Understand**: Explain ideas or concepts
  - classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate

- **Apply**: Use information in new situations
  - execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

- **Analyze**: Draw connections among ideas
  - differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

- **Evaluate**: Justify a stand or decision
  - appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

- **Create**: Produce new or original work
  - design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching
Democracy in the Digital Age

– Innovations in and access to technology and information
– Fine-tuned algorithms about our behaviors and preferences
– Sophisticated tools for electoral and societal engagement and manipulation
Democracy in the Digital Age

– Crisis of vision and values
– An attack on facts and the truth
– Democratic backsliding
– Percolations of authoritarianism
How Do We Respond?

What are the skills, knowledge and values that are essential for...

– democratic citizenship and democracy to persevere in the digital age?
– individuals to thrive as mindful consumers and informed participants?
– greater social cohesion and pluralism?
– reasoned commitment to longstanding democratic principles, institutions and values?
Effective Civic Education for Democracy

What can it achieve?

– **Knowledge**: human rights, democratic governance, civil society, citizen engagement, cross-cutting themes

– **Skills**: critical/abstract thinking, active listening, consensus building, public speaking, media literacy, group work and problem solving

– **Values and Attitudes**: desire to make change in society, a sense of civic responsibility, respect for individual worth and human dignity, tolerance of divergent views and lifestyles, a concern for others and the common good
Civic Education for Democracy in The Digital Age

Greater focus on:

– Critical thinking and logical deduction
– Consensus building and conflict resolution
– Digital and media literacy
– Active listening
– Defending democratic values and institutions under attack
Challenges to Broader Applications of Civic Education

– Defining the concept of citizenship, globally and nationally
– Resources, teacher qualifications, continuous training
– Competition for attention
– Competition for space
– One-way consumption
Opportunities in the Digital Age

– New tools, broader engagement
– Reinvigorated conversations on civic education
– Civic education is not broken, it is underutilized
– Methodology is tested and proven across cultures and nations
– Increases in technology, importance of soft skills/values, “human education”
Next steps

– “Selling” civic education
– Engaging policy makers and civil society
– Cross-government partnerships
– Building upon the foundation of traditional civic education
– Evolve the methodology
  • Reinforce existing core skills and values
  • Prioritize skills and needs of tomorrow
IFES’ Global, University-Level Civic Education Methodology

– SEED –

Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy
ДЕМОКРАТІЯ: від теорії до практики
“Democracy seemed to be one of the most unstable regimes for me, but the course made it clear to me that it is civil society that sustains democracy.”

“We learned to express opinions, listen to others, find compromises.”

“Before the course I thought voting changed nothing, now I see that if you don’t use your vote, others will use it for themselves.”

“We often say: ‘the state must’ or ‘society must’... we seem to be separated from all of this. It sounds like someone is obligated to do something for us. The course helped me understand the importance of citizen participation in the life of the university, city, society.”
"If liberty and equality are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost."

- “Politics” by Aristotle, 350 B.C.E
Thank you.

gkobakhidze@ifes.org

This presentation is based on research and activities made possible by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada and UK aid. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government, Global Affairs Canada, the Government of Canada, UK aid or the UK government.