

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIC EDUCATION STUDY**

### **1.0 Introduction to the IEA Civic Education Study**

In 1994 the General assembly of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) decided to undertake a study on civic education. As early as 1971 it had taken its first look at civic education, in the context of the so-called Six Subject Study. The decision, in 1994, to look again at the subject was a sound one given the huge changes by then facing many countries as a result of the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The considerable task of establishing or re-establishing democratic governments in a number of countries highlighted even more the need to develop citizenship and the role that educational systems could play in meeting that aim. Assessing civic education was important not only for those countries, however, but also for societies with long-established democratic traditions. In general, it could be said that changes in the political, social and educational scenes of many countries suggested the timeliness of this new study, particularly in terms of its potential to make a substantial contribution to an understanding of these changes.

The IEA was, and is, in an excellent position to make such a contribution. It was founded in 1959 for the purpose of conducting comparative studies focusing on educational policies and practices in various countries and educational systems around the world. Since that time, it has completed a significant number of studies in different subjects, as varied as reading literacy,

mathematics, science, pre-primary education, and information and communication technologies in education or languages, among others. IEA has served as a coordinating organization for comparative research in various school subjects since the 1960s, the best-known being the TIMSS (the Third International Mathematics and Science Study). The IEA with its nearly 60 member countries, its Secretariat located in Amsterdam and a number of interconnected research centers in all continents, is in a sound situation to produce cross-country comparison studies that are based on rigorously collected and analyzed data.

In 1994, the IEA General Assembly approved the Civic Education Study as a two-phased project, responding to the expressed need of many countries for empirical data as they began to rethink their civic education programs in the early 1990s. The aim of Phase I was to collect extensive information describing the circumstances, content and process of civic education in participating countries. In doing this, IEA summarized what country experts considered 14-year-olds should know about a number of topics related to democratic institutions and citizenship, including elections, individual rights, national identity, political participation and respect for ethnic and political diversity.

The results of Phase I were presented in *Civic Education across countries: Twenty-four national case studies from the IEA Civic Education Project*, a book that received wide recognition among researchers, practitioners and policy makers. Its 24 national case studies were written mostly by National Research Coordinators, and also took into account the opinions expressed by National Expert Panels. The information collected in Phase I was also used for preparing Phase 2. This second part of the project consisted of a test (keyed cognitive items) and a survey (un-keyed attitudinal and behavioral items) administered in each participating country to representative samples of about 3000 students in the modal grade for 14-year-olds. A questionnaire was also administered to civic-related teachers and to school principals. Data was collected in spring 1999 in most of the participating countries. The publication *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries* presents the first results of Phase 2 of the study. Together, the two publications provide a complete picture of civic education policies, practices and results across countries in the late 1990s.

Fourteen years was considered the modal age and 14 year olds the standard population for the 1999 IEA study, whereas the 1971 study had been administered to three age groups, including 14 year olds. It was also expected that the testing of an older population would be completed in

2000 in a smaller number of countries and that the findings would be reported approximately one year after the report on the standard population.

## **1.1 Rationale**

During a single decade, beginning in the late 1980s, initiatives toward democratic reform took place across the world. New constitutional regimes came into being. In countries that were establishing or re-establishing democracies after a period of non-democratic rule, the general public as well as their leaders realized that major changes in formal and informal civic education were required to prepare young people for this new social, political and economic order. What those changes should be and how they should be initiated was not clear, however.

During the same period, many well-established democracies recognized that their own methods of preparing young people for citizenship were far from ideal. In some countries, young adults were unlikely to vote or participate in other conventional political activities. Youth demonstrated gaps both in their understanding of the pivotal ideas of democracy and in their knowledge of existing political structures. Few seemed to have the skills to analyze political issues presented in the newspaper or on television news (if they paid attention to these media at all). In some countries, 'civil society', the web of community groups and private associations that operates independently from government and market sectors, seemed to be drawing in few youth.

These issues called for a rethinking of civic education, a challenge that many countries began to face during the 1980s. The home, school, community, peer group and mass media remained important considerations, but there were also new factors. A global youth culture was intensifying in its implications and nurturing common aspirations for freedom along with shared consumer tastes. Environmental organizations and human rights groups often involved youth on an equal footing with adults and seemed poised to replace more hierarchically organized political groups such as political parties. An enhanced emphasis on individual choice challenged long-standing views of youth as passive recipients of lessons from their elders. Young people could be seen as active constructors of their own ideas, as people whose everyday experiences in their homes, schools and communities influenced their sense of citizenship.

In light of these factors, questions were asked regarding the direction that should be taken in order to enhance the contribution of schools to citizenship. Should the emphasis be on teaching

factual information about the country and its structure of government? Should it be instead on making young people aware of political issues or interested in news provided by the mass media? Should they be encouraged to join explicitly political organizations, such as parties? Or should the emphasis be on providing opportunities for involvement in environmental organizations, or groups providing assistance to the community, or school councils? And how could community support be gained for programs that would provide more rigorous study of citizenship within schools and more opportunities for the practice of civic education outside schools? These questions were faced by countries where schools offered courses labeled civic education as well as countries where civic education material was embedded in history courses or spread throughout the curriculum.

No single piece of research could be expected to fully answer questions such as these. However, it was clear that rigorous cross-national research in civic education could play a role in providing an empirical foundation for policy-makers, those who design curricula and those who prepare educators, as well as for teachers or youth workers and the public.

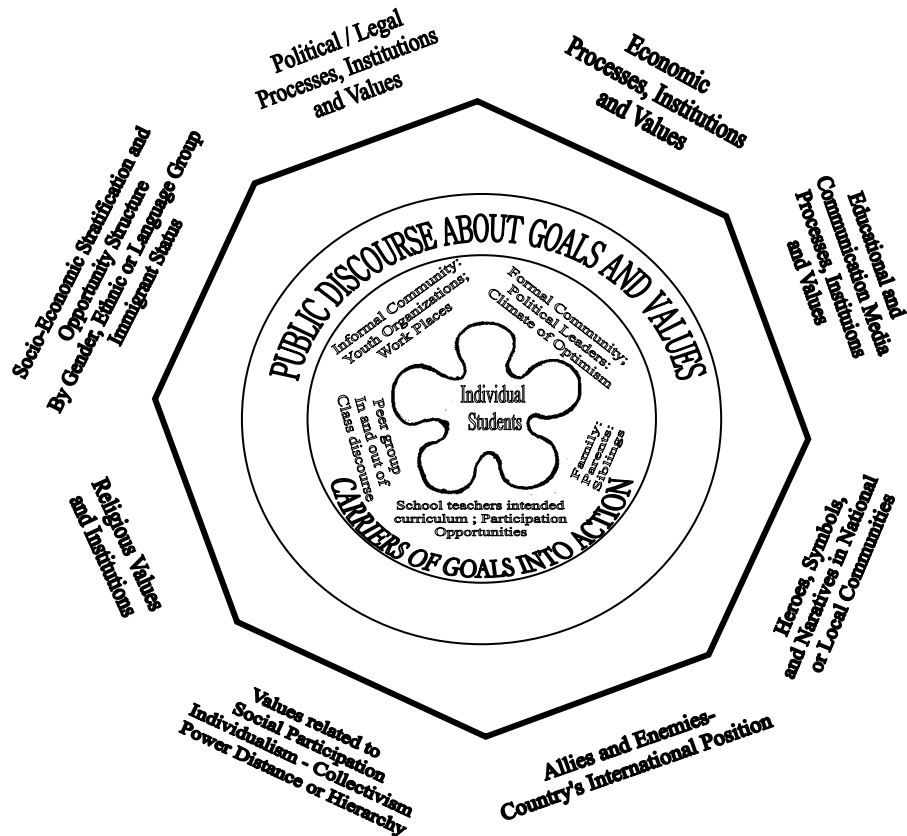
Education policy-makers in this area often operate with many aspirations but little up-to-date information about civic knowledge, attitudes and behavior in their own countries. On a cross-national basis, where the experience of other countries might provide a rich set of possibilities and comparisons, data were even more limited. Specifically, what can a cross-national study contribute to the educational debate? It can document similarities and differences in student outcomes, and also in the organization and content of programs across the world. Another contribution of well-designed cross-national research is that it can show connections between practices or policies and the achievement of certain goals for civic education in different nations. It can also foster awareness of the importance of education for citizenship in its many forms.

The goal of the IEA Civic Education Study was to identify and examine in a comparative framework the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their role as citizens in democracies. One focus of the study was the school. This was not limited to the formal curriculum in any particular school course, but included several subject areas across the curriculum. Opportunities for discussion in the classroom and participation in the school are important, as are textbooks and curriculum. A second focus was on opportunities for civic participation outside the school, especially in the community.

A primary purpose is to obtain a picture of how young people are initiated into the political communities of which they are members, including in- and out-of-school experience. The study concentrates on political processes and institutions. But the concept ‘political’ is used in a fairly broad sense and is not limited to formal political organizations or legislative structures.

## 1.2 Theoretical frameworks guiding the design of the study

Figure 1.1: Model indicating the theoretical framework for study



The overall model designed for the CIVED study by the National Research Coordinators is described as the Octagon (Figure 1.1) and graphically represents a framework for organization of the information collected (in both phases of the study). It is a visualization of ways in which the everyday lives of young people in homes, with peers and at school serve as a ‘nested’ context for young people’s thinking and action in the social and political environment. Learning about citizenship involves engagement in a community and development of an identity within that group. These ‘communities of discourse and practice’ provide the situation in which young people develop progressively more complex concepts and ways of behaving. The model has its roots in two contemporary psychological theories – ecological development (Bronfenbrenner, 1988) and situated cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). At the center of this model

is the individual student. The public discourse and practices of the society have an impact on the student through contacts with family (parents, siblings and sometimes extended family), school (teachers, implemented curriculum and participation opportunities), peer group (both in and out of class) and neighbors (including people in out-of-school youth organizations). Earlier work in political socialization usually referred to these groups of people as ‘agents’ of socialization.

In addition to these face-to-face relationships, there is also a broader society that has an impact through its institutions and the mass media. The outer octagon in Figure 1.1 which circumscribes these processes, includes institutions, processes and values in domains such as politics, economics, education and religion. It also includes the country’s position internationally, the symbols or narratives important at the national or local level, and the social stratification system, including the ethnic and gender-group opportunities.

Other models have also influenced the study. Sociologists and political scientists see the IEA study in relation to studies of political socialization – a sub-field of political science research that was popular 20 to 25 years ago and seems currently to be experiencing renewed interest (Niemi & Hepburn, 1995; Flannagan & Sherrod, 1998). Social scientists link studies in this area to recent surveys of adults concerned with social capital (Van Deth, Maraffi, Newton & Whiteley, 1999), democratic transitions (Diamond, 1999; Dalton, 2000) and political culture and citizenship (Norris, 1999).

These models from the social sciences suggest that young people move from peripheral to central participation in a variety of overlapping communities (at the school or neighborhood level, as well as potentially at the national level). Learning about citizenship is not limited to teachers explicitly instructing young people about their rights and duties. The political community itself (and its everyday practices) surrounds and provides a context for developing political understanding (Wenger, 1998; Torney-Purta, Hahn & Amadeo, 2001).

For young people, the peer group plays a vital role. The reactions of peers to ideas and choices are essential parts of the context for civic development. The extent to which students are able to incorporate what they are learning into meaningful identities is also important. Schools as well as neighborhoods are important sites for peer interaction and identity development.

### **1.3 Policy and research issues in the IEA civic education study**

In addition to these models, a list of policy-relevant questions was developed to focus the study and make it useful to those who teach, make education policy, educate teachers, prepare curriculum materials, provide guidance to student associations and conduct research. The original list of 18 questions has been merged into 12 questions. Information from Phase I (reported in Torney-Purta et al., 1999) and Phase 2 (reported in *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries, (2001)*) is referenced on treating each policy question in the relevant section. [see Annexe Ia: CIVED policy questions excerpted from Torney-Purta et.al., (2001) and, Annexe Ib: *Framing Questions* excerpted from Baldi et al., (2001), *U.S Results From the International IEA Civic Education Study*, NCES 2001-096]

### **1.4 Summary of aims of the study and influence on it**

The two-phased research study is intended to inform and stimulate discussion among policy-makers, curriculum developers, teachers, teacher educators and the general public. The study does not, however, try to identify a single best definition of citizenship or advocate a particular approach to civic education. Rather it tries to deepen the understanding of possibilities and practices in civic education as it takes place in different contexts.

Although the conceptual model has focused the study's attention on school-based, family, community and peer-group factors, the study is not an effort to refine theory. It has not been a curriculum development effort, although the test framework and the findings have implications for others who will develop curriculum, programs and materials in the future.

Three major sources of influence have shaped this study. The first relates to the IEA organization and the member countries that chose to participate in it. Rigor and collaboration are the hallmarks of IEA studies. The rigorous standards for research developed by IEA over the past decades has served as the standard, with participating countries actively collaborating in the design of the study. The second source of influence includes the theoretical frameworks and research literature - not only in civic education but also in sociology, political science and developmental psychology. The policy questions guiding and linking both phases of the study are the third source of influence.

## 1.5 A summary of processes and methods

A two year process of identifying a common core of topics to form a content framework relating to citizenship and democracy valid across the 28 countries that participated in the Civic Education Study, a three year process of developing a fair and valid test (items designed with keys for correct answers) and survey (items assessing attitudes or beliefs for which there are no correct answers) to meet IEA standards finally resulted in the IEA instruments.

A content framework that also provided a focus for those writing test items, titled *Content Guidelines for the International Test and Survey* guided the item writing.

Three domains of clustered topics were identified as ‘core international domains’- Domain I: Democracy, with three sub-domains; Domain II: National Identity, Regional and International relationships, with two sub-domains; Domain III: Social Cohesion and Diversity. Five types of items were developed. Type 1 items: assessing *knowledge of content* and Type 2 items: *assessing skills in interpretation* were included in the ‘test’. Type 3 items: assessing how students understand *concepts*, Type 4 items: assessing students’ *attitudes* and, Type 5 items: assessing students’ current and expected participatory *actions* relating to politics formed the ‘survey’.

Item Type:    1            2            3            4            5

Domain 1 Democracy/Citizenship					
Domain II National Identity/International Relations					
Domain III Social Cohesion/Diversity					

A little less than half of the testing time was devoted to a test including cognitive items that could be ‘keyed’ with correct and incorrect answers. A little less than half of the remaining testing time was devoted to a survey including non-keyed items that assessed concepts, attitudes and actions. The rest of the instrument asked about students’ perceptions of classroom climate and their confidence in participation at school, and obtained background information (including home literacy sources and the associations or organizations to which students belonged). A

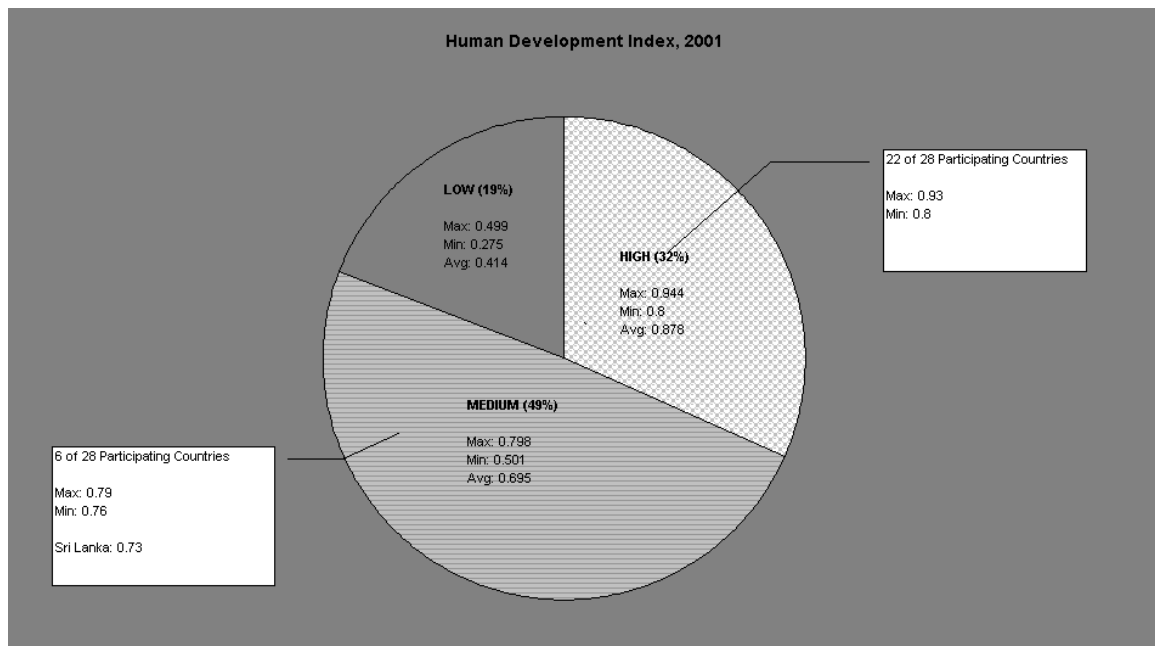




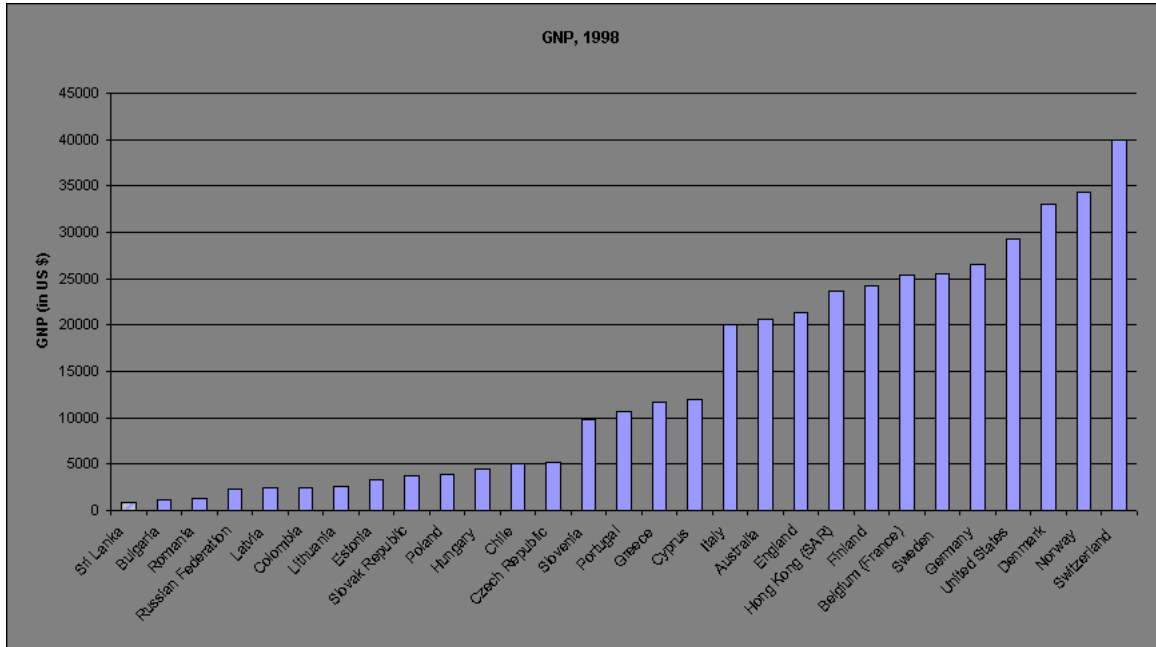
- Australia
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Chile
- Columbia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- England
- Estonia
- Finland
- Germany
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Slovak Republic
- Slovenia
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United States

Twenty-eight countries (Figure 1.2) accepted IEA’s invitation, sent to all 51 member countries to participate in the test and survey. Three aspects of the participating countries are important in terms of understanding the data collected: national demographics, characteristics of the education system, and characteristics of the political system.

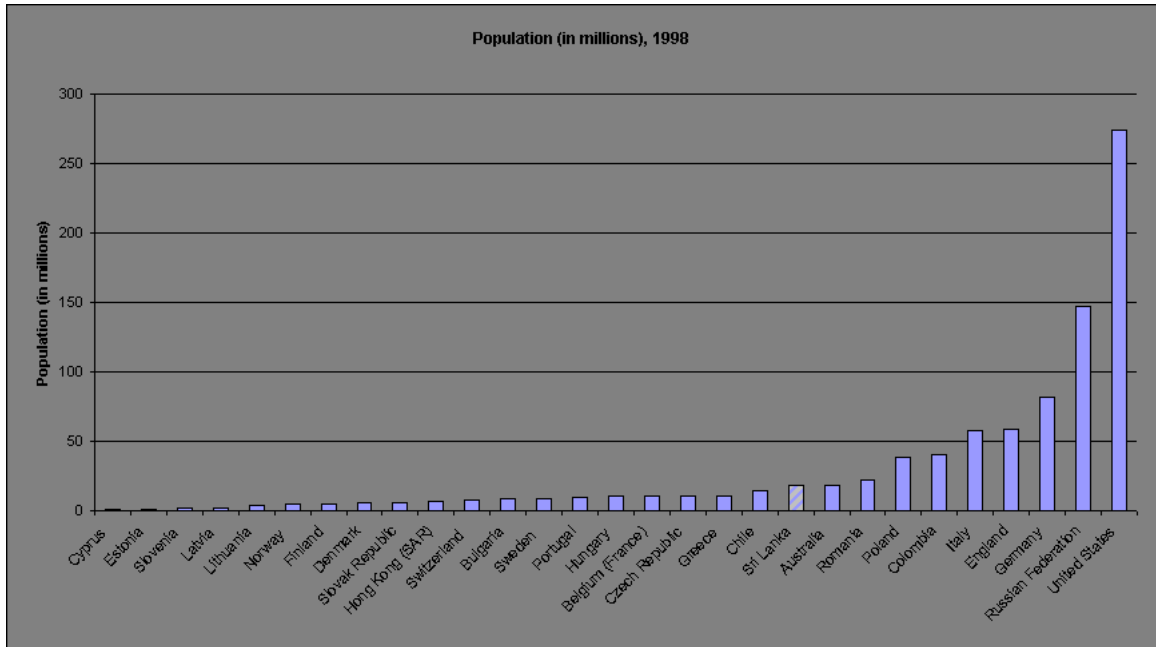
Data for Graphs 1.1 through 1.10 was obtained from three main sources; (i) the CIVED report (ii) UNICEF (2003) and (iii) The UNDP Human Development indexes. Data on Sri Lanka has been incorporated with data on countries that participated in the IEA CIVED study. Graphs 1.1. through 1.4 present selected demographic data; the position of participating countries in the **Human Development index, GNP, Population and unemployment rates.**



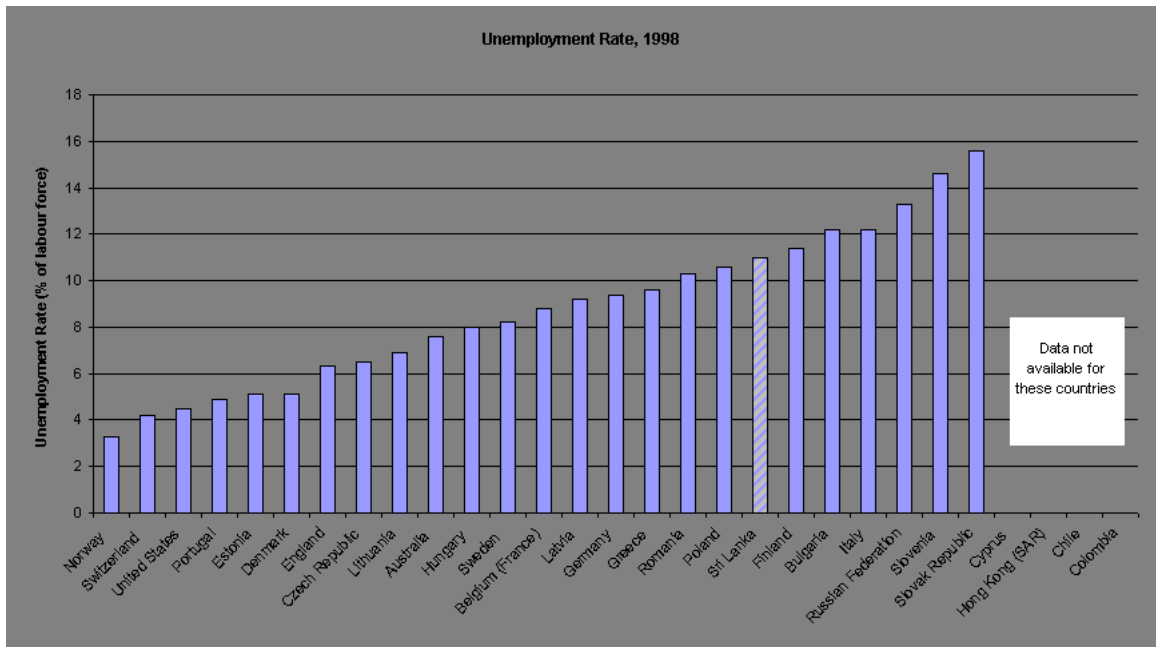
**Graph 1.1 Position of Participating Countries in Human Development Index**



**Graph 1.2: GNP of Participating Countries**

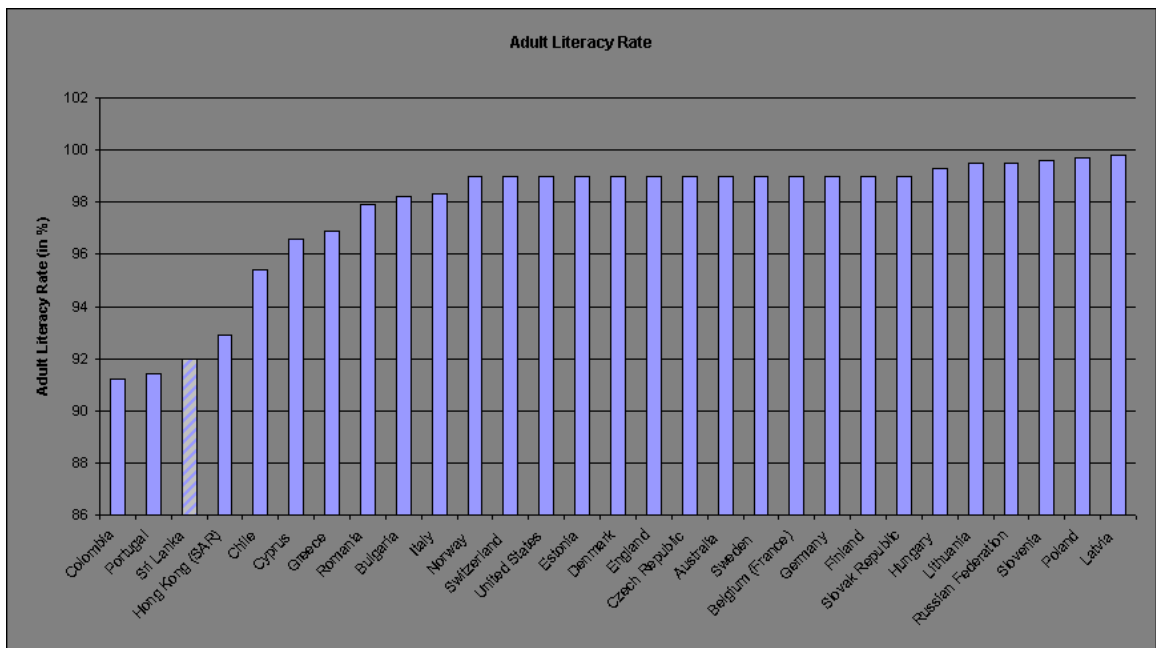


**Graph 1.3: Population (in Millions) of Participating Countries**

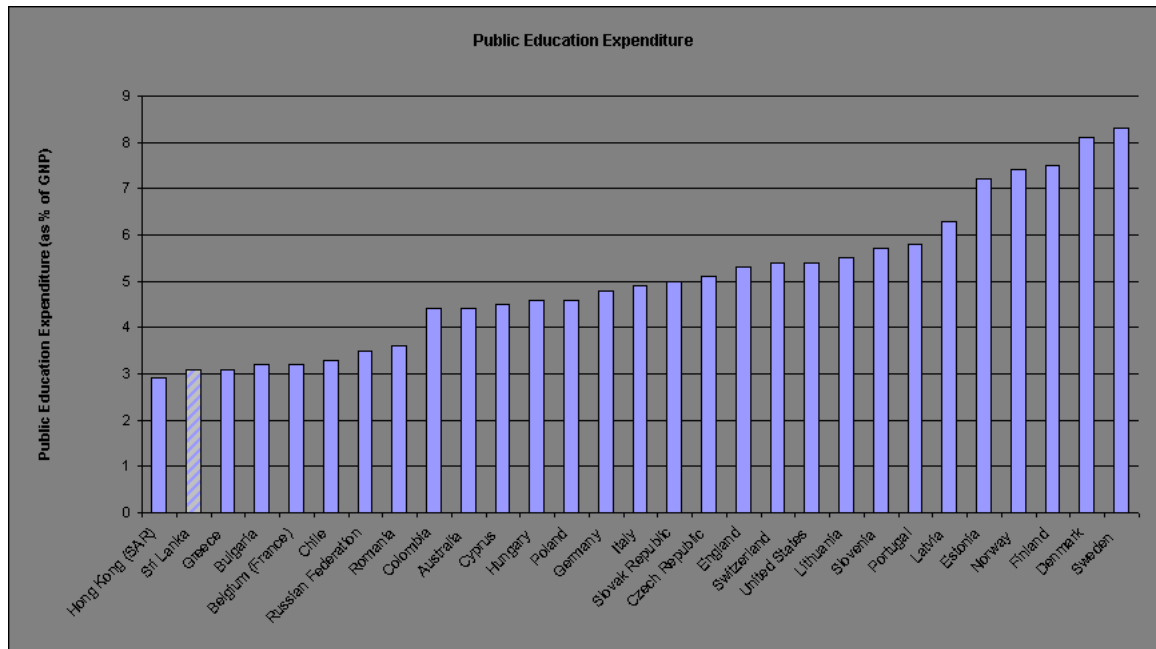


**Graph 1.4: Unemployment Rates in Participating Countries**

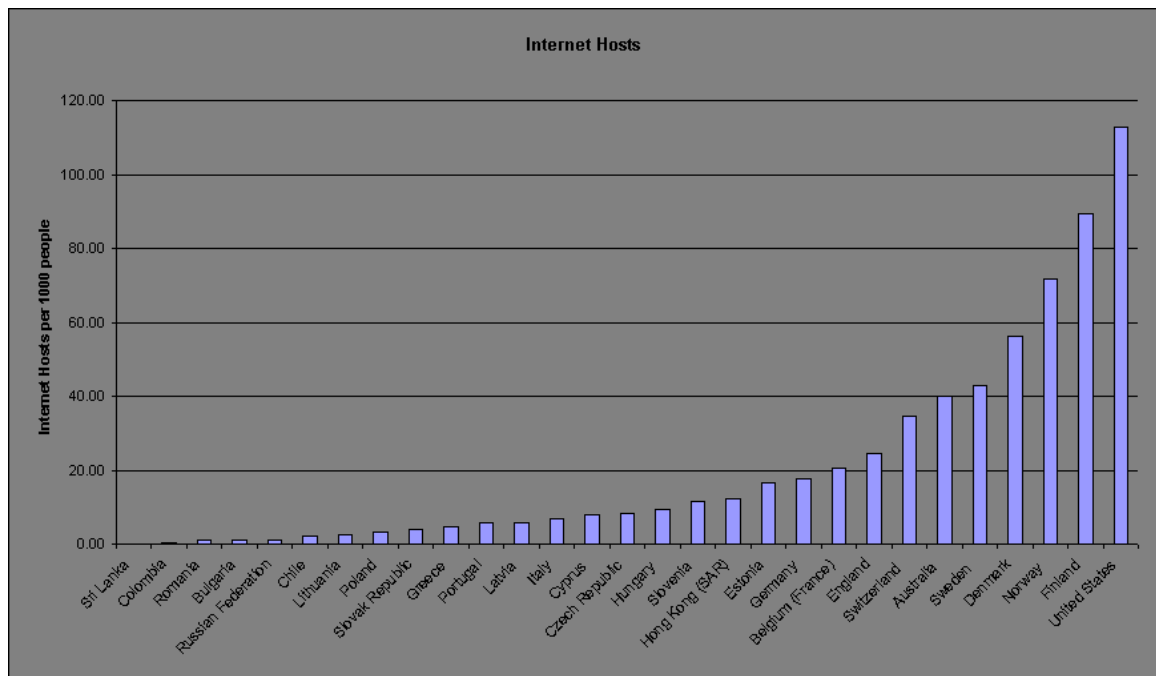
Graphs 1.5 through 1.7 present some educational characteristics of participating countries such as adult literacy rates, expenditures on public education and internet hosts



**Graph 1.5: Adult literacy rate of Participating Countries**

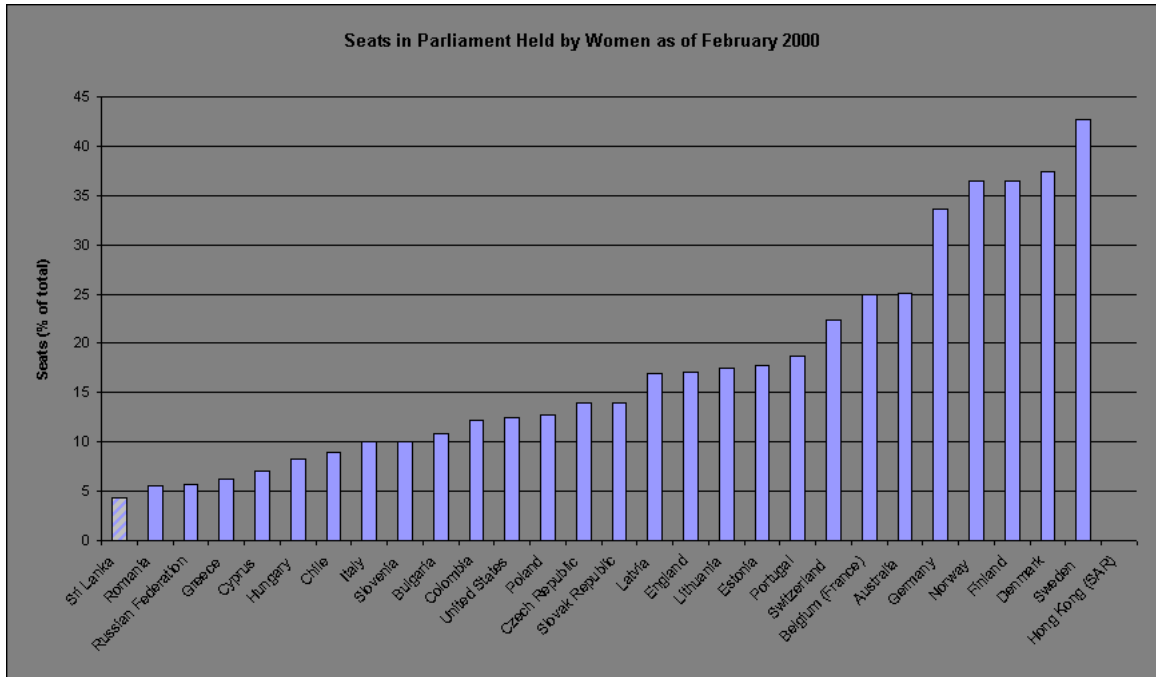


**Graph 1.6: Public Education Expenditure in Participating Countries**

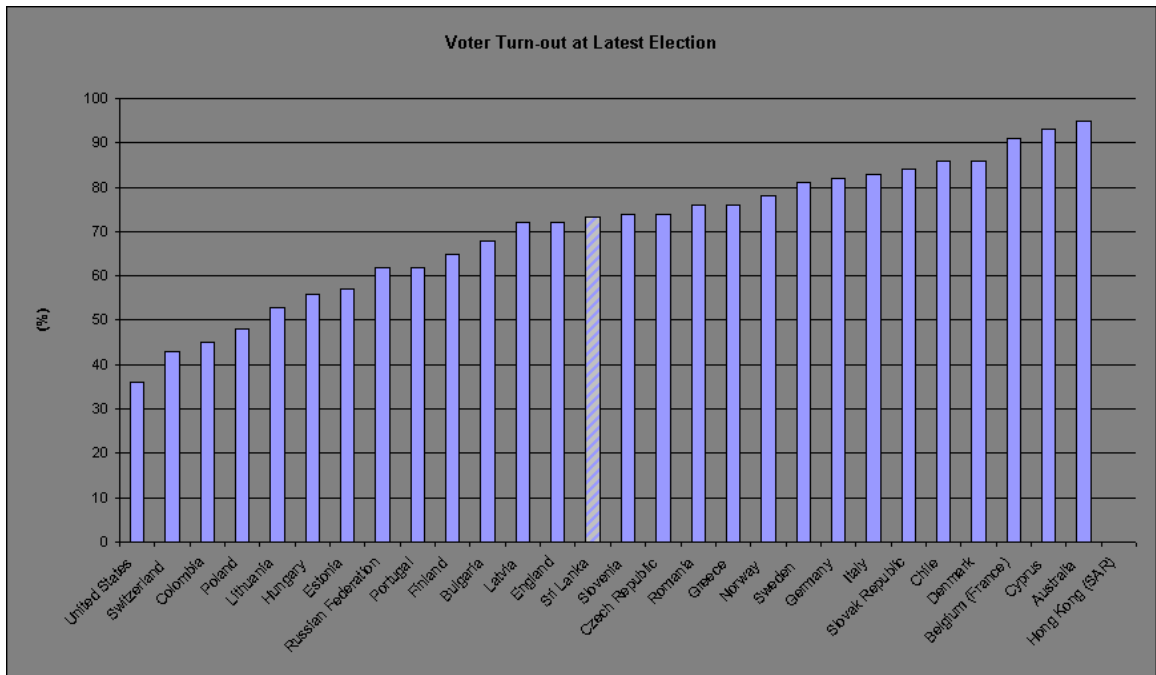


**Graph 1.7: Internet Hosts in Participating Countries**

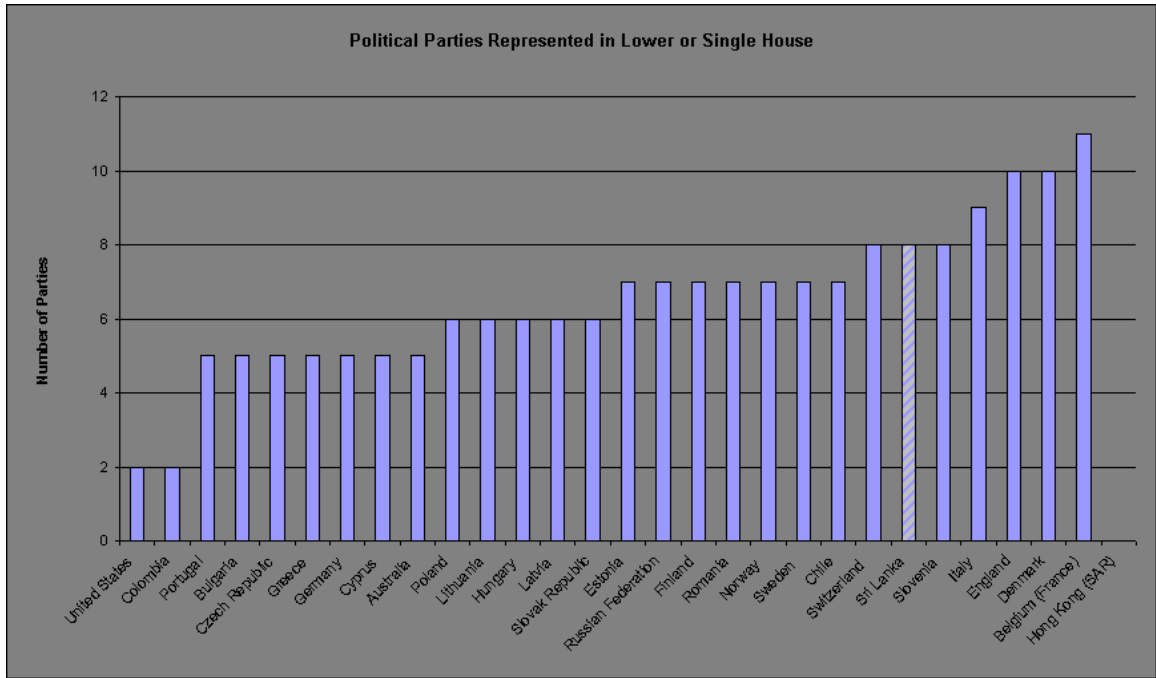
Graph 1.8 through 1.10 present some political characteristics of participating countries; the number of political parties represented in the lower house, voter turn-out at the last election for the lower house and percentage of seats in the national legislature held by women. All participating countries can be classified as liberal or electoral democracies, according to Diamond (1999). The age at which people cast their first vote is 18 in all countries.



**Graph 1.8: Seats in Parliament held by women in participating countries**



**Graph 1.9: Voter Turnout at Elections in Participating Countries**



**Graph 1.10: Political Parties Represented in Lower or Single House**