

# Civic Education in an Emerging Democracy: Students' Experiences in Malaysia's *Projek Warga*

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## Abstract

This article aims to look at the relevance of civic education in Malaysia—an illiberal democracy—by using data collected from students participating in *Projek Warga* throughout the year 2009. While civic education as advocated by the state is geared towards legitimizing the status quo and therefore does not necessarily converge with democratic norms and values, *Projek Warga* stresses the importance of active citizenship by exposing participants to the need for civic engagement at the local level. This is achieved by educating students on how public policies are formulated as well as its dynamics. It is hoped that after participating in the project, students will in turn internalize that democracy is not a spectator's sport and consequently value active citizenship as an indispensable element in public life. The results suggest that participation in the project has succeeded in increasing students' understanding of public policy and the democratic process in general. As most students entered the project without prior knowledge of public policy, their understanding of the different dimensions of public policy—its processes as well as parties involved—have significantly increased. Similarly, they are also able to see the importance of exercising their rights as citizens so as to make their community a better place. In light of these findings, it could be argued that civic education propagated by a non-governmental organization that is geared towards instilling social responsibility and citizenship is more likely to succeed in promoting “civic respect”.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Public policy, Civic education, Civic culture

## 1. Introduction

Proponents of civic education have claimed that civic virtues can be inculcated into the everyday lives of citizens by exposing them to a series of well-designed curriculum either in school or through intervention by non-governmental organizations that are committed to promoting democracy. Donor organizations from the West, working on the assumption that civic education has the potential to promote democratic norms and values have funded numerous projects that were aimed either at strengthening democracy or helping emerging democracies to consolidate. Implicit in this assumption is the belief that the existence of civic attitudes is a prerequisite for democratic consolidation. This is in line with Almond and Verba's (1963) pioneering study which posits that the viability of democratic institutions is positively correlated to the existence of civic attitudes. Countries in which its citizens are imbued with civic attitudes are said to be better able to either make a successful transition to democracy or live up to the democratic ideals. Following this line of thought, one can infer that civic attitudes are the most crucial variable in ensuring successful democratic transitions.

Scholars who privileged the behavioral explanation are in agreement that the consolidation of democracy in the mature democratic countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Italy, and Germany has a lot to do with their citizens' belief in their ability to influence policy outcomes, trust in fellow citizens, and high regard for the political system. Inglehart (1988, 1990) for example, is one of the most influential scholars in propagating that civic culture has an effect on democracy. If Inglehart's findings are valid, research on democratization should be designed to look at the primacy of political culture variables over and above other variables such as socioeconomic factors. While the bulk of the studies on civic attitudes have focused primarily on the mature democracies, and the findings seem to confirm Almond and Verba's (1963) hypothesis, little has been said about what can be done in order to promote civic attitudes in developing democracies. Can democratic norms and values be transplanted to citizens in developing democracies? In an attempt to make a small contribution to this line of inquiry, this article seeks to demonstrate the positive effects of civic education on lower secondary school students in Malaysia. More specifically, it will be shown that the students' understanding of public policy and

democracy has increased after participating in a civic education program run by a Non-Governmental Organization called *Projek Warga*. Our findings support the contention that democratic consolidation in nations with flawed democracies is contingent upon how its citizens can be influenced to embrace civic attitudes.

### *1.1 Civic Education, Civic Culture and Democracy*

While the discourse on civic education in the west focuses on whether or not state mandated civic education can produce autonomous individuals (Brighouse 1998; Gutmann 1995), it is too farfetched to situate the discourse on civic education in developing democracies on the same plane as the mature democracies. This is partly due to the fact that the political culture in the west is wholly compatible with the democratic ethos. Conventional wisdom on changes in political culture has it that the development of democratic political culture would occur slowly in response to economic growth (Lipset 1993), socialization process (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1990), or the long term experience of citizens with rotations of power and a responsible opposition structure among the country's political parties (Weil 1989). More recent findings suggest that an individual's encounter with governmental authority and perception of the economic conditions can color the way he or she looks at the political system (Dalton 1994; Rose and Mishler 1994; Brehm and Rahn 1997). These are said to be the immediate variables that can affect citizens' orientation towards the political system.

Can exposure to civic education bring about the existence of civic culture among citizens in developing democracies? There is an extensive literature both on the effectiveness of school based civic education and the impact of civic education on the democratic values, attitudes, and activities of citizens who take part in these programs (Niemi and Junn 1998; Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Bratton et al. 1999; Finkel et al. 2000; Finkel 2002). The findings from these studies suggest that just like any form of political mobilization, civic education programs have the ability to mobilize citizens to be active politically at the local level, and this has a significant repercussions for developing democracies. Since the political system in developing democracies is very fragmented, exposure to civic education can be a stimulus in getting the citizens to live up to the democratic ideals. Steven Finkel's (2002) study on the relationship between civic education and democracy in South Africa and the Dominican Republic has found that democratic training has significant effects on local-level participation in four of the seven programs examined in the two countries. The effects of civic education on participation in both countries varied considerably and is largely dependent on the frequency of individual's exposure to civic education training, the extent to which the program focused on participation and other democratic orientations, and the extent to which the training was conducted with active, participatory resources. While Finkel has mentioned that civic education can mobilize individuals in developing democracies to participate in politics, he qualifies this statement by saying that the success of civic education programs is largely dependent on the same factors that mitigate or enhance successful group mobilization in general.

Most studies on democratization have indentified that the existence of civic culture is crucial in bringing about successful transition but conspicuously absent from the literature is how a civic culture can come into being. Huntington (1984) and Lipset (1994), for example, have made an observation that democracy thrives in North-West European countries or in territories settled by North-West Europeans. This observation does not bode well with the findings that show the positive relationship between civic education and civic attitudes because Huntington and Lipset seem to argue that civic culture is a cultural corollary of protestant ethics. In addition, Rice and Feldman (1997) are in agreement with Huntington (1984) and Lipset (1993) when they concluded that Americans who descended from nations with highly civic attitudes tend to hold relatively civic attitudes, while those who descend from nations with less civic attitudes tend to hold less civic attitudes. This study adds credence to not only the claim that a civic culture is crucial for effective democracy but also to the claim that a society that is underpinned by a strong civic value should be primed for successful self-rule. Rice and Feldman (1993) further added that these civic attitudes are both durable and portable. While these findings suggest that molding civic attitudes in uncivic societies might be an uphill battle, a recent study conducted by Mattes and Bratton (2007) has found that Africans form attitudes to democracy based upon what they learn about what it is and does. Their findings add weight to the need to promote civic education in developing countries because it points out the limited role of economic considerations in shaping Africans' attitudes to democracy. More importantly, they recommend that deepening public commitment to and satisfaction with democracy can be achieved by enlarging the pool of cognitively sophisticated citizens and by practicing good governance.

While the above review of the works done on the relationship between civic culture and democracy is by no means exhaustive, we can nonetheless deduce that civic attitudes are important in making democracy work. The question here is whether or not civic attitudes can be learned by citizens in developing democracies and if there is a role for civic education in molding civic attitudes in uncivic societies. There is no agreement among scholars on the origins a civic culture. While some say that it is a cultural corollary, others urged leaders in developing

democracies to concentrate on the rapid expansion of cognitive skills. We agree with the latter view. Here we argue that civic education programs that stress on the importance of being an active citizen through not only tackling local problems but also a deeper understanding of public policy can have an impact on citizens' attitudes to democracy. An important element in *Projek Warga* is local problem solving program. Participants in this program are then instructed to come up with public policy initiatives to overcome local problems. The implicit assumption of this project is that by coming into contact with public policies and the complexities involved in formulating one, participants will develop greater appreciation for democratic norms and values. Participant will inevitably come across competing views, government officials, strategic ways to win over opponents, and civic associations. *Projek Warga* therefore has the potential to encourage its participants to be interested in public affairs, treat each other as equals, respect and trust one another, and promote collective action. Put differently, exposure to a participatory project on public policy may have an indirect effect on democracy as it adds weight to the claim that political culture can change in response to a short term stimuli.

### 1.2 Democracy in Malaysia

The Malaysian regime, which has often been characterized as a "half-way house" is a hybrid polity. It is democratic because elections (free but not necessarily fair) were held religiously since the country gained its independence in 1957 but it is also authoritarian because the state does have under its belt a host of repressive laws such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) which permits the detention without trial of individuals that the state feels is a threat to national security. More often than not, opposition politicians were incarcerated as the incumbent government felt that they were out to undermine "national security". Nevertheless, as Crouch (1996) has noted, "the government has been careful to respond to the expectations of a large part of the society...because competitive elections have continued to be held" (114-35).

To its credit, the Malaysian regime has successfully managed ethnic relations in a plural society, which if not properly handled, could lead to instability, and has managed the economy rather successfully as well. As such, democratic consolidation has remained elusive in Malaysia because of the aforementioned factors coupled with the emergent of the new political culture of developmentalism. According to Francis Loh Kok Wah (2002: 21):

this new political culture valorizes rapid economic growth, the resultant consumerist habits, and the political stability offered by BN (*Barisan Nasional* or National Front) rule even when authoritarian means are resorted to. Since no party has ever governed Malaysia, many ordinary Malaysian cannot imagine that political stability can be maintained in multi-ethnic Malaysia without BN rule. A "self-policing" system in support of BN rule which is believed to be essential for maintaining political stability, which then attracts FDIs and allows economic growth to occur, and ultimately for the enjoyment of higher standards of living and consumption, has kicked in.

While Francis Loh Kok Wah might give the impression that there is almost a consensus among Malaysians that BN rule is the only viable form of government, and that this new political culture pervades all Malaysians, it is important to highlight that this consensus is more prevalent among the middle class. We would also like to caution that the Malaysian middle class is by no means homogenous. That the new political culture of developmentalism may be dominant among the middle class could be attributed to the fact that the Malaysian middle class has historically been supportive of the state as demonstrated by the elections results (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2001: 80). Nevertheless, since the late 1960s, a small segment of the middle class began to demand for a more participatory approach in decision-making - articulating their grievances in the language of democracy and democratization.

### 1.3 Civic Education in Malaysia

The government of Malaysia has long viewed the importance of teaching civic education in schools. However, the philosophy underlying this view as well as the approach taken to impart the knowledge is rather conservative. As a subject called "Civics", it first appeared in the primary school curricular after the country gained its independence in 1957. A revamp in the education system took place in the 1980s and with it, the subject was replaced with another subject called "Man and Nature", which was also taught in primary schools. While the previous subject focused on civics-related matters, the new subject combines Science, History, Geography and Health, which, prior to this change, were taught as separate subjects. Although this move was made in order "to teach civics across the curriculum", it also resulted in a diminishing focus on civic education or civic-related matters. In addition to this curriculum revamp, the 80s also marked a strong emphasis given to "science and technology" by the government which resulted in dividing the subject into two separate subjects, "Science" and "Local Studies". Thus, while in the 1950s throughout 1970s civic education was treated as a stand-alone subject,

with clear objective on the subject matter, from 1980s through late 1990s, civic education can be said to be pushed aside for more relevant subjects that were in line with the country's aspiration for economic development. In the middle of 2000, realizing the importance of a more focused civic education as a tool towards nation-building and human capital, the government reintroduced "Civics and Citizenship Education" in both primary and secondary curricular whereby the secondary students are required to complete a 10-hour citizenship program which include community work. (Note 1)

In line with the general philosophy held by the government that views the education as a tool for achieving social harmony and arriving at racial integration and understanding, the content of civic education in Malaysia slants towards exposing students to the cultures of the various ethnic groups in the country. Exposure to different cultural practices of its population is deemed crucial as each ethnic group exists within its own space, with distinct ways of life and belief systems. By introducing students to the differences that exist in the society, it is hoped that a higher level of understanding and tolerance will be achieved. Civic education is also used to disseminate ideas of the ruling class of "accepted" ways to be a Malaysian. This is achieved by instilling a sense of loyalty to the country (read government) and by promoting individual aspirations that do not deviate from those outlined by the country (also read government). Even the re-introduction of civic education in the curricular is still grounded in this philosophy despite being envisioned as a curriculum that will create active citizenship among students.

While this new outlook on civic education is a positive change, there are challenges in its implementation (Balakrishnan, 2004). As education in Malaysia is essentially exam-oriented, subjects that are taught but not part of the examination subjects—with Civics and Citizenship Education as one of them—are competing with other subjects such as Mathematics, Bahasa Malaysia, English, Biology and Physics for students' attention and teachers' commitment. Without these important ingredients surely the objectives of civics and citizenship education may be lost to them. As an attempt to make the subject interesting and relevant, the current civics and citizenship education focus on "education for citizenship and education through citizenship" by encouraging learning through experiences and senses by taking the subject out of the classroom (Balakrishnan, 2004). Another issue that was discussed is the readiness of the teachers in terms of their skills and understanding to impart knowledge on the importance of active citizenship to their students. Citizenship education should not only be about memorizing important national symbols as well as historical facts but equally important is that it should lead to political literacy on the part of young Malaysians. As this should be one of the objectives of the current subject, the educators must also be equipped with the necessary teaching tools while society as a whole should view this subject as equally important despite not being one of the subjects in major examinations.

#### 1.4 "We are Malaysians": *Projek Warga and Civics and Citizenship Education*

*Projek Warga* is a civic education program run by Malaysia Citizenship Initiative (MCI), an NGO based in Universiti Sains Malaysia in the state of Penang. Following closely the Project Citizen module developed in the United States of America, *Projek Warga* aims to promote civic and citizenship awareness among young students by educating them on the process and dynamics of public policy. With members equipped with knowledge on public policy, *Projek Warga* departed from the teacher-centered and classroom-based learning to a more student-centered and research-based learning experience. To facilitate teaching, MCI provides training for the identified teachers from the participating schools which includes introduction to public policy and ways to prepare the portfolios and panels. Although students work mostly with the teachers, MCI members make school visits to see the progress made by the participants as well as to offer feedbacks and to keep them on track.

In order to let students "experience" the process involved in the making of a public policy, participants work together as a team in identifying and researching an existing local issue or problem, including the strengths and weaknesses of existing public policy put forth to tackle that problem. Offering a solution to the problem, either by emulating a policy adopted by other legislators that is viewed as more successful, or offering a fresh policy with similar intention is the final goal in this project. In this way, students acquired the necessary skills to deliberately and rationally choose one policy from many different possible alternatives. At the same time, they learned to understand and appreciate the processes involved in policy making. As the students work together for a period of approximately twelve weeks, it is hoped that the different stages they have to go through in preparing for the portfolios and panels will inevitably expose them to the importance of active citizenship in upholding the democratic values.

## 2. Data

The data used for this paper was obtained from MCI's *Projek Warga* evaluation exercise conducted in 2009 on various schools that participated in the program. As an assessment tool, a set of pre and post program

questionnaires were administered to the students, aged between 13 to 14 years old. While the pre program questionnaires were developed to gauge the participants' prior understanding of public life and were distributed before the project took off, the post program questionnaires, on the other hand, aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the project measured by the level of understanding of public life and public policy as well as issues of citizenship. The post program questionnaires were administered at the end of the project. Areas covered in the questionnaires include demographic backgrounds, knowledge about public policy, issues of citizenship as well as knowledge about immediate community, politics and public life. In addition to these areas, the post program questionnaires also touch specific issues pertaining to the project such as skills acquired, advantages of participation and thoughts they have about the project, in a mixture of both open and close ended manner. Of relevance to this paper are results pertaining to public life, public policy and citizenship. Although the total number of participants is 1900 students, to enable pre and post comparisons, the results were drawn from 1432 students who took part in both the pre and post questionnaires.

### 3. Results and Discussions

Four sets of data is used for the purpose of our discussion in assessing the effectiveness of *Projek Warga* in creating awareness towards public policy and active citizenship among its young participants. Pre-post analysis of the quantitative data will be made to provide evidence and support to our discussions.

#### 3.1 Public Policy and Public Issues

The first set of data, presented in Table 1, deals with students' understanding of public policy and its relations to public issues which is the central aim of *Projek Warga*. Statistically significant changes and desired results were observed in the four measurements, providing evidence that these students have gained positive insights from their exposure to the project. Bearing in mind that most students reported that they never heard of the term "public policy" let alone understood its mechanism prior to their participation in the project, the results are indeed encouraging.

Defining public policy as "something that authorities (governments) do to solve public issues and problems", students expressed a higher level of understanding about what public policy is, appreciating the interplay between authorities, policy and social problems during the course of their participation in the project. As *Projek Warga* departs from a classroom-based and teacher-centered learning approach, the way in which understanding about public policy and active citizenship are hoped to be achieved is by tasking the students to chart out ways to solve a public problem from the standpoint of public policy. At the end of the project, students will propose either a new policy adopted and adapted from a different legislation or a new policy, with ways to go about in order to formulate it into a policy. As a good amount of research into the chosen public problem or issue is necessary in order to make a sound judgment and decision, these young participants also demonstrated a better understanding of the complexities in solving public problems after their experience with *Projek Warga*. The research element of the project has also enabled the students to consider the pros and cons of a public policy as they work together in assessing alternative public policies related to the problem studied resulting in students stating a greater awareness that there are positive and negative consequences of any public policy initiatives. These students also reported a statistically significant change in their understanding that public policy issues involve not only a few general public but many interested parties, indicating a deeper appreciation of the dynamics of public policy making.

#### 3.2 Public Policy, the Public and the Government

The second set of data presented in Table 2 deals with students' understanding of the role of the public in a democratic system in influencing public policy. Prior to the project, students reported a good level of understanding of the role that the public can play in influencing the formation and implementation of public policy within a democratic system. Pre-post comparisons for the five measures used in this section reveal a statistically significant desired change occurring in the first three items, indicating *Projek Warga's* success in imparting the importance of these values. Students expressed a higher level of understanding that voting in general election is not the only means by which the public can influence a policy after their exposure to the project. Similarly, a statistically significant change also occurred in their understanding that the public can criticize a public policy, whereby the post-program result indicated a decline in the mean value. As public issues and problems affect the lives of the general public, an increase in awareness of the first two items also brought about a desired change as students expressed a higher level of agreement that the general public wishes to influence the authorities in the formulation of a public policy. It is certainly hoped that this positive change that occurs after their participation in *Projek Warga* would further transformed them into an informed and active citizens in the future.

It is a known fact that a group has a better chance in asserting their influence compared to an individual and this is in turn part of the message that *Projek Warga* wishes to impart to these students by exposing them to the spirit of working together as a team. However, after going through this project, students reported a statistically significant decline in the way they view the effectiveness of working together to form pressure groups in order to influence public policy.

While the students have expressed greater understanding of the role that the public can play in not only providing inputs but also in initiating public policy changes, they were still of the opinion that the bulk of the responsibility in overcoming public policy issues rests with the government after going through the project. This could be attributed to the fact that *Projek Warga* emphasizes active engagement with the state in solving local problems. Students' engagement with local authorities has in one way or another conditioned the way they view the government's role in alleviating local problems. Put in another way, this can be seen as a positive change in that the students were demanding that the government should be more responsive in addressing local problems.

### 3.3 Views on Freedom to Express Oneself

The third set of data deals with freedom to express oneself, measured in two items namely freedom to express oneself regardless that s/he is wrong and to dress as one pleases. Table 3 shows the pre and post program results. After going through *Projek Warga*, students expressed a higher degree of agreement that is statistically significant in both measures. They indicate the importance to allow one to say what is in his/her mind although he may be judged as wrong by others, and although the mean values are not as high for both pre and post program, these students also reported greater importance in expressing oneself, through dressing.

### 3.4 The Rights and Responsibility of the Citizens

Table 4 shows the pre and post program results for items related to the role and responsibility of citizens in which students stated their degree of agreement with all the statements related to civil and political rights.

Pre-post analysis reveals that changes did occur after participating in *Projek Warga* in all the six variables. More importantly, these changes are of statistical significance. Unfortunately though, rather than a positive change as hoped, the results pointed a downward change for all the six items. In addition, the mean value of both pre and post-results indicate that the scales for each item remain somewhat the same at around 4 ("Important"). As an example, take voting in general elections. Students regard voting as important pre project, with the mean ranging between 4 ("important") to 5 ("very important"). Yet, after going through the project, the mean shows a slight decrease, moving towards the scale of 3 and slightly farther away from 5. Similar trend is also observed for abiding rules and paying tax as well as the rest of the variables.

On average, students began the project with a positive view regarding the six measures. Despite the decrease in the numerical value of the mean after going through *Projek Warga*, it does not alarmingly affect the scale as they still viewed these positive traits of active citizenship as important. While these decline may be partly attributed to the fact that these participants are young students who are still quite removed from the fundamentals of public life, the open ended part of the questionnaire offers glimpses of experiences, traits, skills and view points that speak indirectly towards positive traits of a citizen, as shown in Box 1. Despite its many disadvantages such as having to deal with different personalities and ideas as well as unequal contribution to the task, students came to appreciate the importance of working as a group. Almost in agreement, these students think that working in a group will get the task at hand done speedier. Ability to tolerate, cooperate and communicate ideas which in turn are important ingredients in public life, were also often cited as benefits they gained from the project. In addition to a deeper appreciation of public policy and public problems, it is hoped that these skills and benefits that they gained from the exposure to the project will assist them when the time comes for them to be active members of society.

## 4. Conclusion

The results have shown that *Projek Warga* has succeeded in increasing its participants' understanding of public policy in particular and democracy in general. These findings suggest that civic education can act as a short term stimuli in molding a civic culture in developing democracies. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that *Projek Warga* is a one off undertaking. This in turn raises questions about the frequency and intensity of civic education programs carried out by non-governmental organizations as some studies have argued that the deepening of civic culture in developing democracies depends largely on the continuous effort done by advocacy NGOs. While the civic education program conducted by the Malaysian Citizenship Initiative does not reinforce the prevailing sentiments and political climate of the community, we have no way of knowing as to whether or not the participants' attitudes about political participation and varying levels of political activity will change unless and

until a longitudinal study is conducted. There is no doubt that civic education can induce short term interests in matters related to public life but the sustainability of that awareness remains questionable. Nevertheless, civic education as promoted by the Malaysian Citizenship Initiative is starkly different from that being taught in schools as it does not promote the dominant ideology. To a certain extent, *Projek Warga* has succeeded in equipping the participants with the skills and knowledge to function as active citizens.

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### Note

Note 1. "Muslim Educators Discuss Education, Civics and Contemporary Issues at TC" (2004) <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/news/article.htm?id=4660> (retrieved on 9 June 2010). Malaysian representative, Kalthom Musa, the then Assistant Director and head of the Preschool Unit in the Curriculum Development

Center at the Ministry of Education discussed the situation of civics education in the country in a panel discussion.

Table 1. Pre and Post Results on Participants' Understanding of Public Policy and its Relations to Public Issues

Do Not Know (1)	Not True (2)			True (3)				
	-	=	+	Mean PRE	Mean POST	Mean Paired Diff	T	Sig. Level
Public policy is something that authorities (government) do to solve public issues/problems. (V1)	223 (6.4)	668 (48.9)	475 (34.8)	2.25	2.55	.298	10.134	.000
Normally, public issues/problems are easy to solve. (V2)	267 (19.2)	926 (66.6)	198 (14.3)	2.03	1.98	-.057	-3.165	.002
Generally, a public policy can lead to good as well as bad consequences to the general public. (V3)	263 (11.5)	1020 (72.2)	230 (16.3)	2.69	2.77	.081	3.707	.000
Generally, public issues do not involve the general public except a few. (V4)	314 (22.2)	822 (58.2)	277 (19.6)	2.17	2.13	-.040	-2.024	.043

(Note: - shows a negative value between the post and pre results, while + shows a positive value in the difference between post and pre results. The bolded figure in the column "sig. level" shows a change that is not statistically significant.)

Table 2. The Public and Public Policy

	Do Not Know (1)			Not True (2)		True (3)		
	-	=	+	Mean PRE	Mean POST	Mean Paired Diff	T	Sig. Level
In a democratic system, the general public can only influence public policy by voting in a general election and not by any other means. (V4)	478 (33.9)	614 (43.5)	319 (22.6)	2.22	2.06	-.164	-6.182	.000
In a democratic system, the general public is not allowed to criticize any public policy once it has been decided. (V5)	443 (31.5)	634 (45.0)	331 (23.5)	2.15	2.04	-.107	-3.869	.000
Normally, the general public wishes to influence the authorities when it wants to make a public policy. (V6)	338 (24.6)	640 (46.4)	400 (29.0)	2.09	2.17	.073	2.435	.015
Normally, groups can effectively influence public policy compared to an individual. (V9)	283 (20.3)	845 (60.6)	266 (19.1)	2.57	2.55	-.022	-.850	.395
A significant proportion of the responsibility to solve public problems is the responsibility of the government. (V5)	277 (19.6)	781 (55.2)	357 (25.2)	2.40	2.45	.049	2.257	.024

(Note: - shows a negative value between the post and pre results, while + shows a positive value in the difference between post and pre results. The bolded figure in the column "sig. level" shows a change that is not statistically significant.)

Table 3. Students' Views of Freedom to Speak and Dress

Completely disagree (1)	Disagree (2)		Agree (3)		Very agreeable (4)		Strongly agree (5)	
	-	=	+	Mean PRE	Mean POST	Mean Paired Diff	T	Sig. Level
A person should be allowed to state what s/he wishes to say even if s/he is clearly wrong.	369 (26.2)	584 (41.4)	456 (32.4)	2.87	2.95	.080	2.528	.012
A person should be allowed to dress as he/she wishes.	286 (20.3)	711 (50.5)	412 (29.2)	2.39	2.52	.127	4.399	.000

(Note: - shows a negative value between the post and pre results, while + shows a positive value in the difference between post and pre results. The figures in brackets are percentages.)

Table 4. Exercising the Rights of the Citizens

Not important at all (1)	Not important (2)		Somewhat important (3)		Important (4)		Very important (5)	
	-	=	+	Mean PRE	Mean POST	Mean Paired Diff	t	Sig. Level
To vote in general elections. (1414)	359 (25.4)	798 (56.4)	257 (18.2)	4.49	4.34	-.143	-5.240	.000
To pay taxes. (1401)	419 (29.9)	614 (43.8)	368 (26.3)	3.91	3.83	-.081	-2.592	.010
To abide the nation's rules, regulations and laws. (1394)	266 (19.1)	987 (70.8)	141 (10.1)	4.79	4.66	-.130	-6.407	.000
To protest or to offer opinions against at law that you think is unjust. (1412)	496 (35.1)	513 (36.3)	403 (28.6)	3.90	3.80	-.104	-2.877	.004
To cooperate with other citizens to solve problems by the community. (1413)	543 (38.4)	507 (35.9)	363 (25.7)	3.95	3.74	-.214	-5.780	.000
To incorporate other citizens' opinion in solving public issues/problems. (1416)	532 (37.6)	513 (36.2)	371 (26.2)	3.84	3.67	-.177	-5.016	.000

(Note: - shows a negative value between the post and pre results, while + shows a positive value in the difference between post and pre results. The figures in brackets are percentages.)

Box 1. Sharing Experiences and Benefits from Participation in *Projek Warga*

## Toleration

- I learn to accept ideas that are different than mine.
- Although discussions and brainstorming sessions could become heated at times, we learn to be patient and respect each others' turn to speak.

## Working as a Group

- I came to realize the importance of team work.
- There were misunderstandings and arguments, and I also feel that at times my opinions were not taken into account, but we have to put that aside in order to get the job done.
- I learned to cooperate with others in completing the task.
- Discussions are the best way to solve arguments and misunderstanding; most of the time we tried to discuss the problems among ourselves before resorting to seeking the help of our teacher.

## Knowledge about Public Policy

- Public policy is enforced by the government for the good of the society.
- I learned more about the problems faced by our country and the policies that are put in place to solve these problems.
- Some public policies are not well implemented due to lack of understanding and information on the part of the public.

## Communication Skills

- I improved my ability to argue my point of view.
- I am better at communicating my ideas to my fellow team members.
- I overcome my shyness in asking questions and giving opinions.

## Other Skills

- I acquire the skills of interviewing people whose lives were affected by the problem.
- As a group leader, the project has certainly harness my leadership skills.
- I learned to look for information from the Internet, library and newspapers.
- I appreciate the experience of presenting our work in English.