# The practice of voting as intangible heritage: An exercise worth cultivating

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ABSTRACT. The concept of heritage has widened to span the tangible to the natural to the intangible, and from objects and monuments to geological structures to cultural practices. Yet academics have yet to hold a comprehensive debate on the extent to which intangible heritage should be conceptualized, valued, and promoted. Further discussion is needed to determine what cultural practices, beyond traditional forms of folklore, should be included under the hypernym of intangible heritage, while at the same time outlining both priorities and limits. This article argues that political participation, an element so key to the health and preservation of our democratic societies, and which UNESCO unswervingly promotes, is worth considering valuable intangible heritage in that it is fundamental to maintaining and improving the democratic structures that exist today across the world. The authors make a case for using UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage platform in an attempt to safeguard and promote conventional types of political participation, particularly voting, given the decrease in voter turnout, especially among youth, in many western societies. Given that empirical evidence shows a correlation between knowledge and voting and suggests that voting is a habit-forming practice, it is argued that one of the best ways to promote voter turnout, and political participation in general, is through educational initiatives such as mock student elections that are run parallel to actual campaigns. The article provides examples of organizations and administrations that are already putting these types of initiatives into practice, and concludes by calling for more empirical evaluation of these types of measures.

RESUMEN. A medida que el concepto de lo que constituye el patrimonio se ha ampliado desde el tangible, al natural y al patrimonio intangible, de los objetos y monumentos a las estructuras geológicas y formaciones a las prácticas culturales, los académicos todavía mantienen un amplio debate en cuanto a qué se considera patrimonio inmaterial, qué es lo que se concibe como tal, qué se debe valorar y promover. Es necesario ampliar el debate para definir qué prácticas culturales, más allá del folclore, deben ser incluidos. Se necesita más debate sobre la forma de definir qué prácticas culturales, deben ser incluidas bajo la categoría de patrimonio intangible, mientras que se delinean sus límites y principios que lo definen. En este artículo se presenta una breve revisión sobre el movimiento internacional para preservar y promover el patrimonio inmaterial y se defiende que en la participación política, un elemento clave para la fortaleza y preservación de nuestras sociedades democráticas es necesario tener en cuenta el patrimonio intangible, ya que es fundamental para mantener las estructuras democráticas existentes hoy en día en todo el mundo. El artículo se centra en la afirmación de la salvaguardia de los tipos convencionales de participación política, como ejercer el derecho al voto, lo cual en muchas sociedades occidentales ha sufrido una notable disminución, especialmente entre los jóvenes. Teniendo en cuenta evidencias empíricas se muestra una importante correlación entre la formación y el hecho de ejercer el derecho al voto y que esta es una práctica que se crea con la práctica.

Además, los autores afirman que la mejor manera de promover la participación electoral es a través de iniciativas educativas, como los simulacros de elecciones entre los estudiantes que se llevan a cabo en paralelo a las campañas electorales reales. El artículo explicita ejemplos de organizaciones y administraciones que ya están poniendo en práctica este tipo de iniciativas y concluye reclamando más estudios evaluativos sobre este tipo de propuestas.

## Introduction

For many, the term intangible cultural heritage brings to mind a variety of locally-based folklore traditions, such as *castells* in Catalonia, the Oruro *carnaval* in Bolivia, *Naqqāli* or dramatic story-telling in Iran, or *igwala*, the gourd trumpet music and dance of the Busoga Kingdom in Uganda. This should come as no surprise since the impetus for the intangible heritage movement came from widespread concern that globalization and/or the Information Society would end many folklore customs central to the lives of people in diverse cultures around the world, thus robbing humanity of aspects of its rich cultural diversity (for a review see Kurin, 2004; Brown, 2005). Nevertheless, attempts to preserve traditional folklore often change and, some would argue, even "destroy" the very intangible heritage that has been identified for protection, for example, by attracting mass tourism which requires fundamental changes to the performance of traditional practices. The minute someone fixes a fluid, ever-changing practice and attempts to stop the process of change, that act of preservation itself is, paradoxically, an act of change. Thus, the way that the term intangible cultural heritage is currently employed can be considered problematic in itself. Another concern that has been voiced in the debate thus far is where to draw the line as to what is acceptable in one culture and not in another; practices like polygamy, bull fighting, and fox hunting may be important cultural practices for some, but whether or not they should be considered as intangible cultural heritage is up for debate (Santacana, 2014).

A move toward using the term intangible cultural heritage for cultural practices in a broader sense, those that are shared across borders, and which act to improve the goals set forth in the UNESCO framework of human rights, could be a welcome and complementary addition to the existing intangible cultural heritage platform. The definition of intangible cultural heritage broadly includes many types of cultural heritage and continues to be broadened. An initial definition was collectively written at the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Paris:

> Intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills —as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith— that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development (Article 2.1).

Although the 2003 definition of intangible cultural heritage is comprehensive, it still left doubts as to how UNESCO should prioritize candidates and what limits to set as to what the term encompasses.

Logan (2007) has argued that the debate on the definition of intangible cultural heritage has opened up a "Pandora's box of difficulties, confusions, and complexities" (p. 33). He believes that the solution to this somewhat daunting debate is to bring human rights to the center of the debate to be used as a guide in determining what is considered intangible cultural heritage by UNECSO and what is not. He writes, "As heritage professionals —practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and educators— we need to learn how to work within this new paradigm, to deal with the disjuncture between conservation and human rights principles, to adopt a human rights foundation for our heritage work, and to engage more fully with the public whose cultural heritage we are seeking to conserve" (2012, p. 242). Logan's point of view brings into question whether or not broader conceptualizations of the term intangible cultural heritage should be brought into question on the basis of their social benefit to society. Could a cultural practice such as informed voting, or other forms of political participation,[1] earn a place on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage?

Since the initial 2003 Convention, the concept of intangible heritage has been broadened by a more recent (2011) definition that has been published by UNESCO:

> The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones. Intangible cultural heritage [...] contribute[s] to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future. Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. It contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and

responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large (p. 4-5).

There are a number of elements in the UNESCO (2011) definition of intangible cultural heritage that are in sync with political participation practices such as voting. Potentially, political participation "helps individuals feel part of one or different communities", "contributes to social cohesion" it also can act as an impetus to strengthen or "[encourage] a sense of identity or responsibility", and the "social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones".

Molina, Salazar and Sáez (2014) likewise contend that different practices related to political participation could be considered intangible heritage. These authors argue that political activities should be recognized as heritage in order to increase the engagement and the protection of current democratic systems and also to encourage citizens to be more conscious of their own civil and social rights. With the 2013 addition of the "Mediterranean diet", a candidacy presented jointly by Cyprus, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco, and Portugal, the debate as to what constitutes intangible heritage was pushed to a new limit. Intangible cultural heritage is now not only considered social practices such as rituals and festive events, traditional craftsmanship, etc., but also those social practices beneficial to the common good, and shared across borders, which may be argued provides many with an increased sense of identity and continuity that the current accepted definition of intangible heritage attempts to embody. This potential candidacy of political participation and/or voter turnout could garner consensus on the widespread benefits of promoting healthy democratic societies and improving those that already exist.

UNESCO is no stranger to pro-democratic initiatives and is a blatant supporter of spreading democratic values worldwide. UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Democracy* (1997) states "Democracy is a universally recognized ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to

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[1]    For a discussion on politics and political communication, including voting, as a form of cultural practice, see Schudson (2001).

be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity" (p. 1-2). Over the past few decades, UNESCO has organized international conferences on democracy, democratic culture, and education for democracy, and edited numerous publications on the latter subjects; it has consistently credited democratic practices as fundamental to sustainable development and peace (1997; 2002).

In a recent document also edited by UNESCO, Boutros-Ghali, et al. write: "Democracy is a system whereby the whole of society can participate, at every level, in the decision-making process and keep control of it. Its foundation is the full observance of human rights, as defined by both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Pacts and Declaration of 1993" (2003, p. 9-10). The authors continue by highlighting the importance that democracy plays, as a cultural element or "state of mind" and as shared heritage:

> In short, democracy can be defined as a political system that is capable of correcting its own dysfunctions. But a true democracy cannot be restricted to this institutional format alone. It also needs to be embodied in a culture, a state of mind that fosters tolerance and respect for other people, as well as pluralism, equilibrium and dialogue between the forces that make up a society […]. These basic democratic principles constitute a fundamental source of common values that can be described as the common heritage of humankind (Boutros-Ghali, et al. 2003, p. 10).

The idea behind political participation practices like voting is to allow citizens of a country or given region to hold institutions accountable, call for change, and influence actions of their politicians. However, it is up to a nation's citizens to vote, organize, and petition for change. In recent times, especially in light of the economic turndown, democratic institutions and their politicians have increasingly come under fire, which, ironically often causes lower voter turnout and increased apathy. Citizens of modern western democracies need to realize that it is through voting, petitioning government, talking to politicians, peaceful protests, in sum, active participation, that democracy is preserved and strengthened. If the UNESCO itself recognizes basic democratic principles as "the common heritage of humankind" and

uses other avenues to promote these principles, using the platform of intangible cultural heritage may be complementary in safeguarding and promoting these practices.

## Why does the practice of voting need safeguarding and promotion?

Many may argue that without the participation of an informed electorate in a plurality of ways, democracy ceases to work. Lipset defines democracy as "a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office" (1959, p. 71; see also Lipset, 2000). In many western democracies, voter turnout, especially that of youth, has consistently dropped in numbers over the past three decades (see Blais & Rubenson, 2013). In the European parliamentary elections and in the mid-term elections in the US, voter turnout is at devastatingly low rates (see also Franklin & Hobolt, 2011). Whatever the election, young people increasingly choose to not exercise their right to vote. The reasons for this are complex and varied, but a number of reasons are highlighted in the pertinent literature.

Some scholars argue that youth voters simply do not share the same value system as older generations. They do not have the same sense of duty nor see the usefulness or immediate social benefit of voting (Dalton, 2007; Wattenberg, 2007) and thus simply do not register in countries that require voter registration, or do not show up on election day, or bother to turn in their absentee ballot. In some countries, memories of war and struggles for universal suffrage may be long past and their contact with these struggles may be limited to a few pages of a history or civics textbook.

Another reason that younger voters may feel alienated from politics is a feeling of disillusionment. In her comparative review of students and political education in five countries, Hahn (1998) found that in the US, UK, Netherlands, and Germany less than one fourth of the students surveyed believed politicians could be trusted; in Denmark, roughly half said they could be trusted. Younger generations have been shown to be less likely to identify with political parties than older people (Converse, 1976; Biorcio & Mannheimer, 1995; Tilley, 2003). O'Toole, Marsh, and Jones (2003)

point out that youth voting abstinence is often mistaken as apathy or ambivalence: "To put it simply, political participation has a number of 'others', not just apathy. Many young people are cynical, taking 'a plague on all your houses' as their mantra; others don't feel that they can influence outcomes and are alienated from the political system" (p. 350).

Aside from possible dealignment, disillusionment, or cynicism, many young people feel at a loss when it comes to politics. They lack understanding of party differences, how political decisions affect their lives, and how they can participate. Many are unversed in the intricacies of voting strategy and may feel at a loss when it comes to a plurality of choices. This insecurity in some young potential voters can disguise itself as disinterest. A number of studies have been dedicated to the relationship between political participation and political knowledge.

## Links between political participation and political knowledge

The hypothesized link between political knowledge and political participation is not new. Almost two centuries ago, Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) postulated that those who read newspapers were more likely to participate in public associations. More recently, however, scholars have shown that lack of knowledge was considered by potential young voters themselves as one of the most important reasons why they do not vote (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). A higher level of political knowledge is also thought to encourage people to seek out others who are politically oriented, thus encouraging political participation (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996). The longitudinal results of Krampen's (2000) study show that an individual's perception of their own levels of political competence and political knowledge are highly predictive of political activity and voting in early adulthood among Germans. Numerous other studies have also linked higher levels of political knowledge with higher likelihood to vote and/or otherwise engage actively in politics (Junn, 1991; Milner, 2002; Popkin & Dimock, 1999; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba, Scholozman & Brady, 1995).

## Active learning in civics education

In most modern democracies, generations of students have sat in civics classes and are told that the strength of the political systems under which they live is democracy and the participation of the people that live under this government. Nevertheless, few of these classes familiarize students with the act of voting or introduce them to the ideologies and practices of the political parties most will have the opportunity to vote for when they come of voting age. Students may fall victim to seeing themselves as subjects of an enigmatic system rather than potent democratic actors.

Recent studies on the effectiveness of civics education environments point to the importance of an open classroom climate for cognitive development, which may have the strongest effect on democratic attitudes and participation patterns (Hooghe & Quintelier, 2011; Persson, 2014; Torney-Purta, 2002). Open classroom climates in general are considered those that encourage students to investigate issues, explore their own opinions, and express those opinions openly in classroom debate (see Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001, p. 137-138). Classroom climates that integrate active learning activities by encouraging student input and role playing are easily integrated into civics education curriculum. As Archer and Miller (2001) write, "Active learning techniques seem a natural fit for political science. The subject matter lends itself to discussion and debate, theories and decision-making can be evaluated in light of current events, and institutions… lend themselves easily to simulations" (2001, p. 430). Active learning approaches in civics classes have been shown to increase knowledge retention and improve judgment when it comes to making civic-related decisions (Lay & Smarick, 2006; Bonwell & Sutherland, 1996; Martens & Gainous, 2013; Omelicheva & Avdeyeva, 2008; Frederking, 2005). Simulations lead to increased understanding of the concepts presented in class and in readings, especially those regarding complex situations (Frederking, 2005; Grummel, 2003; Lay & Smarick, 2007; Pappas & Peaden, 2004; Shellman & Turan, 2006). Since students are forced to apply theories and concepts to lifelike situations when they participate in simulations and case studies, they gain a deeper understanding of the questions at hand and are required to think critically about the information to which they are exposed (Shellman & Turan, 2006).

## Electoral simulations: Increased learning and voter turnout?

There are few empirical studies that assess the correlation between mock election curricular projects and voter turnout in actual campaigns, but those studies carried out so far point to positive outcomes. McDevitt and Kiousis' (2006) qualitative study found that through the program Kid's Voting USA, communication about politics in participant's homes increased the probability of voting when these participants reached voting age. Using evidence from "multiple waves" of student and parent interviews, the authors argue that the news media use at home, and discussions with parents about an ongoing election campaign contemplated in the Kid's Voting USA activities stimulated parents to pay more attention to news and to gain political knowledge. McDevitt and Kiousis believe that the news media use and discussions with parents magnified learning effects in the short term and were responsible for sustaining them in the long term.

Civic education programs that include direct participation through mock elections have also shown evidence for potential change in voter turnout. Linimon and Joslyn (2002), using regression analyses, found that first-time voters in counties using Kids Voting USA curriculum were more likely to vote than their counterparts in other counties. Well-documented factors that influence political participation include the media (Atkin, 1981; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001) and discussion with peers (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998) and family (Beck & Jennings, 1982; Westholm, 1999). These are elements that can easily be integrated and taken advantage of in civil education courses and which come into play especially when mock elections are carried out in parallel to actual campaigns. Nevertheless, youth who live in homes with largely absent parents, foster homes, single parent homes, parents with deficient language resources, an abusive home life, etc., might have many less opportunities to take advantage of the discussion about politics at home on which McDevitt and Kiousis' (2006) findings place so much importance.

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| Kid's Voting USA | United States | kidsvotingusa.org |
| Student Vote/Vote étudiant | Canada | www.studentvote.ca |
| Électeurs en herbe (Voters in Training) | Quebec | www.electeursenherbe.com |
| Aprenem a votar (Let's Learn to Vote) | Catalonia | www.ub.edu/dhigecs |
| School Election Project* | Norway | www.samfunnsveven.no/skolevalg/english/ |
| Y Vote Mock Elections | United Kingdom | www.mockelections.co.uk/ |
| Kids Voting | New Zealand | www.elections.org.nz/resources-learning/ |

*The mock elections in Norway take place during the weeks before the real elections. Results are published a few days before the election and draw a significant amount of attention from political analysts and the media (for more on the School Election Project, see Børhaug, 2008).

**Note.** *Your Opinion Counts* of the Victorian Electoral Commission in Australia contains a single activity sheet curriculum resources on the Victorian electoral system designed for teachers of middle secondary school students; however, it was not considered extensive enough to be included in this list.

**Tabla 1. Multiclass mock election programs run parallel to actual campaigns**

Franklin (2004) emphasizes early socialization experience as an important factor in affecting voting turnout. Furthermore, running a mock election parallel to an actual campaign and election has a number of potential benefits. Curricular projects can instigate discussion and media use at home, inform students on party ideologies and differences on a number of issues, and invite them to take a critical view of information sources. Learning experiences such as these can act as scaffolding for future learning about the political sphere. Furthermore, debate on voting as a civic duty may develop a sense of responsibility and, in turn, have positive effects on prospective voting opportunities.

Casting a mock vote could also potentially have an added side effect of promoting habitual voting turnout. Recent studies like that of Dinas (2012), who traced participants over decades, show that early voting experiences shape future voting habits. Furthermore, Obradovic and Masten (2007) provide evidence that suggests that civic engagement is a behavior acquired during adolescence. The empirical literature shows us that, in general, voting is habit-forming; if an individual votes in one election, it is much more likely that he or she will vote in subsequent elections (Blais, 2000; Campbell, 2006; Denny & Orla, 2009; Franklin, 2004; Gerber, Green & Shachar, 2003; Goerres, 2007; Plutzer, 2002). Future studies might determine whether or not mock elections in schools have similar habit-forming effects later on in life.

### An example initiative: Catalonia's Aprenem a votar, or Let's Learn to Vote

Aprenem a votar was launched as a pilot project in 30 secondary schools throughout the Barcelona province and ran parallel to the actual 2010 Parliamentary campaign and elections in Catalonia. The project was aimed at 1500 secondary students, aged 14-15, although a number of schools decided to extend aspects of the project to other age groups. Teachers dedicated between 10 and 15 hours of classroom instruction immediately prior and following the official Parliamentary elections in Catalonia. The materials emphasized higher-order thinking and included active, hands-on activities using case method activities, news attention, cooperative learning, group problem solving, reflection, and debate. Students learned about the different political parties and their respective agendas

and, in groups, created an imaginary party and campaign. The students participate actively in every stage of the voting simulation guided by their teacher and excerpts of the current voting legislation. The students vote two days before the actual elections, and use the final week to debate about the differences between the simulated and actual results.

The project provided a reciprocal relationship between investigators and secondary school teachers. The researchers provided student workbooks, teacher guides, and ballots and other official-like election materials, designed based on real life examples. In turn, the teachers provided constant feedback previous to, during, and after the implementation of the materials in their classrooms. Participating teachers were encouraged to attend a small number of sessions for training, question answering, discussion, and a final session for providing their project feedback and student questionnaires.

Based on the initial pilot project, and the analysis of teacher and student comments, the materials were revised and adapted for the 2014 European parliamentary elections. The more recent Aprenem a votar multiclass simulation was designed for its incorporation into the curriculum over the course of five weeks before, during, and immediately following the 2014 European elections. Given that most participants are 13-15 at the time they participate in the project, almost all of them will be eligible to vote in the European parliamentary elections planned for 2019.

### Conclusions and future prospects

Most educators and stakeholders agree that a more knowledgeable electorate equals higher-quality citizen participation. Given the promising results of active, teaching-through-doing learning activities in civics classes, and open debate on relevant issues, it seems reasonable to expand educational initiatives like Aprenem a votar and other student voting simulation units throughout classrooms in all democracies. Knowledge of political institutions allows individuals to make more informed decisions and to better process political information cumulatively (Popkin & Dimock, 1999). Moreover, in order for democracy to function properly its voters need to have sufficient knowledge of political parties and leaders to allow for comparison with their own political preferences and to know how to determine the credibility of

their commitments (Milner, 2002). Education initiatives, such as those outlined in the latter section of this article, not only have the potential to educate participants on the intricacies of the election process, but also to walk them step by step through the voting process. Knowledge acquired during activities carried out around mock elections run parallel to actual campaigns could potentially act as scaffolding for understanding the complexities of future campaigns as new information becomes available to participants. By teaching through doing, Aprenem a votar, and similar programs, aim to make students feel more prepared and knowledgeable about voting in hopes that they will be more likely to vote in future elections given that voting seems to have habit-forming attribute. Voting in one election may lead to a life-long voting habit, especially important in youth. Educational initiatives that invite high school students to learn about candidates and follow actual campaigns alongside their peers and family members, and in which they cast their own mock vote, seem to be a positive impetus responsible for initiating the habit of voting among youth.

Declines in democracy worldwide may point to a need for "safeguarding" the practice of voting, as well as other forms of political participation, through active, hands-on educational initiatives. The UNESCO concept of safeguarding is aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including promotion and transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education (2003). A campaign for the recognition of voting and other forms of political participation as intangible cultural heritage could act as an impetus for widespread education initiatives in democratic countries, which would aid in facilitating access to practical information on the election process and introduction to the intricacies of the information available in the political sphere. Relevant literature, as outlined in this article, identifies the need for civic education programs in secondary school, at earlier stages in an individual's life. UNESCO stresses that education and awareness-raising of intangible cultural heritage are key to safeguarding intangible heritage and places particular emphasis on the safeguarding of intangible heritage through the use of information and communication technologies, its promotion and transmission to younger generations, and to research (see UNESCO, 2003, Article 14). UNESCO recognition of political participation as intangible cultural heritage could provide a platform for which multiclass mock elections programs run parallel to actual campaigns could be promoted and shared. It could potentially provide a platform for which materials could be adapted, experimented, and disseminated in a variety of contexts, thus promoting, in a small way through schools, healthy democratic practices internationally.

In places like Catalonia, educational initiatives such as Aprenem a votar may be of special relevance due to the large number of parties voters have to choose from; this May, student voters choose from 41 lists of candidates to the European Parliament. Elections to the Catalan and Spanish parliaments require voters to choose from similarly high numbers of candidates. Also, recent waves of immigration have brought first generation and second generation newcomers to classrooms whose parents did not grow up in a democracy and who were never given the chance to vote. Thus, initiatives such as this could work to close a gap in the degree to which immigrant background students participate in Catalonia's political sphere. One reason both Aprenem a votar initiatives have focused on 14 and 15 year olds (4rt d'ESO) is because this is the last year of compulsory schooling. As Levinson (2010) points out, not all citizenry participation in politics occurs at equal levels; a wide engagement gap exists in that marginalized groups are less likely to participate politically.

Student and teacher comments, discussion groups and classroom observation suggest that Aprenem a votar had a positive impact on student learning and positive perception of the utility of voting and/or other forms of political participation. However, it is important that the practical goals and long-term learning outcomes of this project, as well as other similar projects, be further assessed, as well as the long-term effects on inviting a habit of voting. Although the results of the 2010 pilot were encouraging (see Prats & Wilson, 2013; Aznar García, 2012), the Aprenem a votar initiative has yet to be empirically evaluated. The authors and other members of the DHIGECS research group are currently experimenting the Aprenem a votar 2014 European Parliament elections, both though pre and post-test quantitative methods with experimental and control groups, and student and teacher focus groups, in order to evaluate the potential of their current proposal. The knowledge gains of immigrant background students will also be specifically assessed.

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