

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Alexandra Holle

In Search of Civic Education

Theories, Political Intentions, and Perspectives from Elite High Schools

Ph.D. dissertation

Supervisors:

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Associate Professor

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Head of Department, Associate Professor

Budapest, 2023

Department of Political Science

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1 Background and justification of the topic selection

In their seminal work, Almond and Verba (1963) pointed out that the survival and stability of democracy require not only democratic institutions but also the democratic political culture of society. Based on similar insights, after World War II in West Germany, much emphasis was placed on the democratic reorientation of citizens, with a special emphasis on civic education in schools (Csizmadia 2014). However, this kind of awakening did not occur later during the ‘fourth wave’ of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe, or at least not everywhere. For example, there was no significant effort to do so in Hungary. Consequently, the transition to a participatory civic culture still shows shortcomings. As Ervin Csizmadia often puts it – for example in the title of his 2014 book – democracy is ‘groundless’ in Hungary.

The results of youth research suggest that there are deficits in democratic civic competencies not only among generations born and socialized under the party-state system but also among young people of the democratic period. These studies show that young Hungarians are isolated from the world of politics, and a significant proportion of them are alienated, dismissive, disillusioned, and suspicious (Bíró-Nagy and Szabó 2021; Csákó 2018; Kalocsai and Kaposi 2019). Their political participation is strikingly low, even within the post-socialist countries (Bíró-Nagy and Szabó 2021; Kovacic and Dolenc 2018; Szabó and Dancs 2018). A significant proportion of them is skeptical of democracy, although recent data show that the proportion of skeptics is declining. However, the share of those in favor of democracy is still only 57% (Domokos et al. 2021). Many young people are open to anti-democratic, radical voices (Csákó 2018; Oross and Szabó 2019; Sik 2017). Intolerance is typical; recent findings show that young people have negative feelings mostly towards Roma (Bíró-Nagy and Szabó 2021). The issue of civic education in schools has therefore not lost its relevance since the regime change. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the field cannot be ignored; democratic competencies do not develop spontaneously or solely through reliance on other socialization agents.

In my opinion, the issue of school-based civic education is worth addressing in the domestic context for two reasons. First, because of the inherently political nature of school life: school is an institution in which students experience power relations daily, develop their relationship with the community, and learn the community’s specific norms and rules. Civic education, whether conscious or unconscious, is therefore inevitable within the walls of these institutions. If all this is done reflectively, schools can be a good training ground for civic education in a democratic spirit.

On the other hand, it is now well established in the Anglo-Saxon literature that civic education in schools is an effective policy measure. Several empirical studies have shown that its various forms (e.g. civics classes, community service, open classroom climate, or open school climate) have a positive impact on civic competencies (Bruch and Soss 2018; Kawashima-Ginsberg and Levine 2014; Martens and Gainous 2013; Torney-Purta 2002). Moreover, properly implemented civic education in schools compensates for deficient political socialization in the family (Campbell 2008; Gainous and Martens 2012; Neundorff, Niemi, and Smets 2016), and its effects are long-lasting (Keating and Janmaat 2016; Whiteley 2014).

Although the legal framework for school-based civic education in Hungary has been in place since the early 1990s – albeit in varying ways – the field has not yet succeeded in becoming an integral part of school life. According to the literature, it has remained empty and dysfunctional, and its potential has remained untapped (Csákó 2009a; Iskola és Társadalom 2017; Szabó 2009). Furthermore, civic education in schools has shortcomings not only as a practice but also as a research area. As Adrienn Bognár and Andrea Szabó (2017, 20) note, it has been relatively little addressed in the Hungarian social sciences, despite a consensus on its relevance. This under-exploration is problematic because it is a highly normative field, full of ‘*essentially contested concepts*’ (Gallie 1956), and value disputes surrounding its goals and means, that could not be carried out in the scientific sphere. Rather, the debates flare up from time to time among public figures, mostly about the national curricula. There is a sharp clash of views, and the debate dies out after a short time. In the decades following the regime change, no social consensus has developed, and, in its absence, the field has not been able to consolidate.

Considering this, my doctoral thesis is motivated by understanding the reasons behind the dysfunction of civic education in schools as well as the desire to improve the field. This raises several questions, of which I will focus on a narrow area: the role of teachers. According to the international literature, those who want to improve the practice of civic education in schools and classrooms should first focus on understanding the related beliefs and goals of teachers (Reichert and Torney-Purta 2019).

This topic deserves special attention because teachers are the gatekeepers of the education system (Thornton 2005), that is, their beliefs have a significant influence on how they implement the curriculum (Fives and Buehl 2012). While this is the case for all education and training activities, personal beliefs and the personal meanings attached to concepts are of particular importance in the field of civic education. The reason is that there is no single, widely accepted meaning of civic education: under the same nomenclature, there are diverse approaches, often in serious ideological conflict. Moreover, the research on teacher beliefs is of particular interest in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe because in the context of fragmented political socialization (Szabó 2013; Szabó and Falus 2000), these beliefs are presumably more mixed, even fragmented, than in mature democracies.

To illustrate the conceptual complexity of citizenship and civic education, I presented seven different political philosophical approaches in my dissertation, outlining their central elements, their main expectations of a good citizen, and the goals and tools of civic education that can be derived from them. These include liberal (Gaus, Courtland, and Schmidt 2020; Honohan 2017; Kymlicka 1999), communitarian (Arthur and Bailey 2000; Delanty 2002; Etzioni 2015), republican (Honohan 2001; Lovett 2022; Peterson 2011), national (Calhoun 2007; Mišćević 2020), global (Schultz 2007; UNESCO 2014; Veugelers 2011), critical (Bohman 2021; DeLeon 2006; Johnson and Morris 2010) and green approaches (Bell 2005; Dobson 2007; Machin and Tan 2022).

In my research, I assumed that the ideological diversity and conceptual complexity of the field might make it difficult for teachers to assign civic education any deeper meaning, which could lead to neglecting the

field. On the other hand, it may imply that when and if the field is not neglected, classroom practice will ultimately be shaped by personal beliefs. Teachers, therefore, must make important value choices during this activity, even if they do so unconsciously.

Therefore, my main research question was how beliefs about citizenship and the aims of civic education influence the practice of civic education in Hungarian schools. To answer this question, I first analyzed the intentions and goals explicitly formulated in or underlying the five national curricula published since the regime change. The aim of this was twofold. On the one hand, to show what messages, beliefs, and content education policy has aimed to convey to students through the education system and teachers. I assume that these have been filtered through teachers' beliefs. On the other hand, I also sought to highlight these messages as contextual factors that can shape teachers' beliefs. Second, I examined teachers' beliefs about citizenship and the goals of school-based civic education through two methodological approaches. During the analysis, I used the above-mentioned political philosophical approaches as '*sensitizing concepts*' (Blumer 1954).

In my dissertation, I formulated two further research questions. The first one concerned the identification of barriers to the implementation of civic education in schools in Hungary. The other was to explore what kind of citizenship education practices exist in the schools under study.

2 Data and methods

2.1 Methodological background

The purpose of the research was exploratory. I examined the research questions with an idiographic approach, that is, focusing on individual cases and their characteristics. I did not seek to generalize, unlike nomothetic research, which aims at exploring universal regularities (Wharton 2006). It followed from the idiographic approach that the research had a qualitative methodology. This methodology can provide an insightful, rich description and explanation of a phenomenon in a well-defined local context (Miles and Huberman 1994).

The research followed the phenomenological tradition, given that the primary aim was to investigate the subjective perspective of teachers. This research approach seeks to capture and describe phenomena through the perspective of those who experience them (Teherani et al. 2015). I used an inductive strategy in the research. I used related scientific theories and knowledge to design the empirical research rather than to formulate testable hypotheses (Ritchie et al. 2014).

In interpreting the data, my ontological position was subtle realism. According to this view, there is an external reality that is independent of the observer. However, to understand the complexity and depth of this reality, the exploration of individual perceptions and interpretations is essential (Ritchie et al. 2014). Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that the research was practice-oriented. Its primary aim was not to theorize, but to contribute to overcoming a practical problem - the emptiness and dysfunctionality of civic education in Hungarian schools.

The following table shows the data sources and data analysis methods I used to investigate the research questions. These are explained in the following subsections in depth.

Table 1: Linking research questions to data sources and data analysis methods.

Research questions	Data sources	Data analysis methods
<p>1) What beliefs about citizenship and the aims of civic education influence the practice of civic education in Hungarian schools?</p> <p>1a) What beliefs have educational policies implied for teachers in the national core curricula, which are the basic documents of education, since the regime change?</p> <p>1b) What beliefs do teachers hold?</p> <p>1c) To what extent are the beliefs in the national core curricula reflected in teachers' beliefs?</p>	<p>National core curricula.</p> <p>Thematic interviews with teachers.</p> <p>Q-method data collection among teachers and pre-service teachers (in person and online).</p>	<p>Thematic analysis.</p> <p>Q-factor analysis.</p>
<p>2) What barriers can be identified to the implementation of school-based civic education in Hungary?</p> <p>2a) What barriers do teachers and school principals identify?</p> <p>2b) What barriers do experts identify?</p> <p>3) What civic education practices can be identified in the examined schools?</p>	<p>Thematic interviews with teachers and school principals and in-depth interviews with experts.</p>	<p>Thematic analysis.</p>

2.2 Data collection methods

2.2.1 Qualitative interviews

The first data collection method used in the research is the qualitative interview, which has several types. I used two types: thematic interviews with school principals and teachers, and in-depth interviews with experts. The thematic interview is a semi-structured interview, during which an interview guide is used. At the same time, the interview situation is flexible, it does not necessarily take place according to pre-formulated questions but adapts to the reactions of the interviewee. In contrast, the in-depth interview is less constrained and can be characterized more as a monologue by the interviewee following a broad topic introduction by the interviewer (Langer 2009). The main distinguishing feature of the in-depth interview is that the researcher allows the interviewee to teach them what the problem, issue, or phenomenon is (Dexter 2006).

2.2.2 Q-method

The second data collection method used in the research is the Q-method (Hofmeister-Tóth and Simon 2006; Kurucz 2011), which aims to explore subjective opinions, attitudes, and value orientations. This is why it is usually identified as a qualitative method. However, the data are analyzed using a statistical method, the Q-factor analysis, thus, this method provides a bridge between qualitative and quantitative research. The method aims to create typologies by examining the subjective perspectives of respondents, based on any similarities between them.

During the data collection, respondents (P-set) are asked to sort the statements pre-defined by the researcher (Q-set) in a constrained shape corresponding to a standard normal distribution (Q sorting grid). The crucial aspect of the method is that the statements should reflect the diversity of the discourse on the topic under study. A specific feature of the Q-method is that the Q-set itself is the sample, which must be representative of the phenomenon or discourse. Another characteristic of the method is that it requires a small number of respondents and, in their case, does not require representativeness. The essential criterion for the selection of respondents is that they should be involved in the phenomenon under study. The statistical method used to analyze the data, Q-factor analysis, groups the respondents according to the correlation of their thought patterns.

2.3 Sampling

2.3.1 Interviews with school principals, teachers, and experts

Qualitative research typically involves a small sample size, which makes it necessary to narrow down the study population to a relatively small, homogeneous group. For this reason, I focused on history teachers in elite secondary schools rather than teachers in general. This choice was justified by the following:

1. Although the different areas of civic education can be linked to several subjects, it is typically history teachers who have been given this task since the regime change (Dancs and Fülöp 2020; Jakab 2018).

2. The age between 12 and 18 is the age when civic beliefs, values, and attitudes are relatively easy to form (Crittenden and Levine 2018; Eriskon 1963, 1968). Therefore, secondary school teachers have a distinct role to play in school-based civic education.
3. To follow the logic of qualitative research and to make the research feasible the study population had to be defined in a way that it was sufficiently homogeneous. Thus, during the research, I focused on only one of the different types of secondary schools. As the aim of the research was not only to explore teachers' beliefs but also to identify civic education practices, I wanted to conduct interviews in schools where such examples are most likely to occur. Academic secondary schools seemed to be the most suitable for this purpose since students are the most deprived of civic learning opportunities in vocational schools (Csákó 2009b). To narrow the scope of the academic secondary schools, I focused on selecting institutions with high-quality history education, assuming that this could be a good predictor of at least the implementation of civic education within the curricular framework.

I developed the sampling frame based on the assumption that the institutions whose students are ranked in the National Secondary School Academic Competition (Hungarian abbreviation: OKTV) in history have a high-quality history education. To define the sampling frame, I aggregated the results of the last five academic years (at that time: 2016/2017-2020/2021) and compiled a list of successful schools. I aimed to include schools of all three maintainers (state / churches and denominations / foundations and natural persons), as well as from the capital and Pest County (treating these two as one category), and from Western and Eastern Hungary in the sample. Since private schools did not achieve a ranking in the OKTV in the years under study, I had to apply another selection criterion to potentially include all three maintainer categories in the sample. To gain insight into civic education practices, I added private schools to the sampling frame that refer to education for democracy or democratic education as their defining value or goal on their website. I found such high schools only in Budapest.

In total, I asked the principals and teachers (two history teachers per institution) of 37 academic secondary schools to participate in the research by e-mail, via the head of the institution. In the end, seven high schools agreed to take part in the research, meaning 19% of the institutions contacted. I was able to interview the school principals in all high schools, and both history teacher interviews were carried out in five schools. In the remaining two cases, the conditions were different from those agreed upon beforehand: in one case only one history teacher, and in another none were able to participate, claiming a lack of time.

Five public and two church schools took part in the research. Four of them were in Budapest or Pest County and three were in Western Hungary. The church schools were all in Budapest or Pest County. Unfortunately, there were no institutions in Eastern Hungary whose leaders and teachers agreed to participate in the research, nor did any private schools respond positively to the request. Among the heads of the institutions, there were six men (86%) and one woman (14%), while among the teachers, there were eight men (73%) and three women (27%). The average age of the principals was 55 years, while the average age of the teachers was

52 years. The length of the interviews with the schoolmasters ranged from 20 to 70 minutes, while the shortest interview with a history teacher was 50 minutes and the longest 135 minutes.

To investigate the barriers to civic education in schools, I interviewed not only high school principals and teachers but also six experts, including public education experts, leaders of country-wide teachers' associations, and NGO staff. To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, I did not provide further demographic information about the experts.

2.3.2 Developing the Q-set and characteristics of the P-set

In addition to the interviews, two Q-sorting exercises were used to explore teachers' beliefs: the first was on citizenship, and the second was on school-based civic education. In the first sorting exercise, respondents were asked to rank 40 statements about being a responsible citizen on a scale of -3 to +3, where -3 meant '*least agree*' and +3 meant '*most agree*'. In the second sorting exercise, they were given 24 statements about the aims of civic education, which they had to rank according to a similar logic.

In both sorting exercises, I used a structured Q-sample, that is, I selected the statements based on theoretical considerations, assigning the same number of statements to each theoretically relevant category. I chose these theoretically relevant categories based on political philosophical theories and the results of my thematic analysis of national core curricula. Thus, in both tasks, the Q-samples consisted of eight sets reflecting liberal, communitarian, republican, critical, national, European, green, and economic approaches to citizenship and civic education. Basically, both the statements on responsible citizenship and civic education were taken from the national core curricula, with at most minor editorial changes. However, I was not able to take a sufficient number of statements from the core curricula for all sets, such as the critical set. In such cases, I added some statements that I formulated, and that reflected the political philosophical literature.

The respondents were partly history teacher interviewees and partly other practicing secondary school teachers or pre-service teachers. This choice was made possible by the specificity of the Q-method, in that the sample is provided by the statements to be sorted, not by the respondents. The criterion for selecting respondents is that they should be involved in the phenomenon under study. This was the case for both practicing teachers and pre-service teachers.

Of the 50 respondents, 34 were practicing teachers and 16 were pre-service teachers, 64% were women and 36% were men. Their average age was 44 years. 40% of the respondents were history teachers, 30% were foreign language teachers, and 22% were Hungarian language and literature teachers. Other subjects related to civic education, such as social studies, law, philosophy, economics, and finance, were mentioned by 20% of respondents. Among science subjects, many respondents mentioned geography (14%), while 18% mentioned other science subjects. A quarter of teachers and pre-service teachers taught or prepared to teach other subjects such as arts or vocational subjects.

2.4 Methods of data analysis

2.4.1 Thematic analysis

The analysis of the documents and interviews was carried out using thematic analysis. This is a qualitative data analysis method that aims to identify recurring meanings, patterns, or in other words, themes in the data set. In thematic analysis, the researcher not only describes the content of the data but also interprets it. Themes capture an essence related to the research question. Their significance does not depend on the frequency with which they occur in the data set, but on whether they succeed in shedding light on an essential aspect of a phenomenon (Braun and Clarke 2006).

2.4.2 Q-factor analysis

The data were analyzed using principal component analysis with a free software tool specifically designed for Q-analysis (KADE version 1.2.1). Following the scree test and Humphrey's rule (Watts and Stenner 2012), I retained three factors for rotation in both Q-analyses and used the Varimax method. The Q-sorts whose factor weights were significant at the 95% level ($P < 0.05$) were included in the final analyses. Taking these into account, the KADE software provided the factor arrays (factor exemplifying Q-sorts) based on which the factors could be interpreted. For the question of being a good citizen, 17 Q-sorts had a significant factor weight for the first factor, 18 for the second, and 9 for the third. That is, 44 Q-sorts out of 50 (88%) were included in the final analysis. For the question on the aims of school-based civic education, 42 Q-sorts (84%) were included in the analysis: 17 for the first factor, 16 for the second, and 9 for the third.

3 Main findings

3.1 Results of the thematic analysis of national core curricula

The main findings of the thematic analysis of the national core curricula (NCC) are:

1. Each core curriculum is a bearer of the political messages of the current government. For example, in the 2007 NCC, there is a striking European commitment, a focus on the current priorities of the European Union, such as the competitiveness of EU Member States or open and multicultural societies. In contrast, a conservative approach prevails in the national curricula after 2010: the family as the basic unit of society, the need to preserve traditional values and Hungarian culture and traditions, and the need to develop strong national ties are given priority. As this example illustrates there were sharp shifts between the individual documents, while several of the core curricula were fraught with internal contradictions. The results of the thematic analysis show that these basic documents have not provided teachers with adequate tools to form a coherent and consistent picture of citizenship and the aims of civic education over the last three decades.
2. Liberal elements can be identified in all core curricula, but no NCC has been purely liberal in approach since the regime change.

3. In the 2007 National Core Curriculum, the expectations towards students as citizens were densified, many of them related to the various communities of the individual. As the text is not sufficiently nuanced, some of these can be interpreted as either communitarian or republican.
4. A further feature of the 2007 NCC is that its expectations of citizenship are repeatedly imbued with a strong economic perspective. This justified the inclusion of an economic approach to citizenship and civic education in the Q-method study of teachers' beliefs, alongside the political philosophical concepts.
5. The 2012 National Core Curriculum started a national and communitarian turn, which has been completed in the current curriculum. This document can be considered national-communitarian.
6. A more nuanced picture of the communitarian turn identified in the post-2010 national core curricula can be obtained by interpreting it in the context of other education policies. There are others that underpin this commitment, such as the introduction of community service or the promotion of church schools with homogeneous values. However, other measures call it into question, such as the centralization of education, which has reduced the freedom of schools as local communities.
7. One of the most striking changes I have identified in the thematic analysis of the national core curricula was the shift in the tone of national and European engagement and the relationship between the two. In the first three national core curricula, openness and acceptance of other cultures were emphasized alongside a national orientation. In addition, the European dimension became increasingly strong, until finally, in the 2007 NCC, the importance of national civic education was equated with that of European civic education. This trend has been reversed in the 2012 national core curriculum, where the national orientation has come to the fore, taking precedence over the European one. In the 2020 NCC, the European orientation has been narrowed down and transformed into a civilizational identity with Judeo-Christian roots. In this document, the nation became the primary reference point, and a strong national identity became a prerequisite for openness to other cultures.
8. A complex global approach or a complex critical approach to civic education was not identified in any of the documents.
9. A kind of green approach to citizenship, with lower expectations, was present in all national core curricula. The need to know and exercise rights and duties relating to the environment was present, but the latter were mainly emphasized in the documents as private matters – such as lifestyle and habits – and not as public issues.
- 10.

3.2 Teachers' beliefs about citizenship and civic education

3.2.1 Results of the qualitative interviews

There was no discernible pattern in the interviewees' beliefs about being a good citizen as expressed in their own words. Some gave a much denser description, listing 8-10 different requirements, while others highlighted only 3-4. The qualities most frequently mentioned by interviewees were the ability to form an independent opinion, adequate knowledge, being well-informed, and critical thinking. Each of these was mentioned by at least a third of the interviewees.

At the same time, a continuum emerged from the interviewees' definitions of civic education. At the one end of the continuum was the narrow definition of civic education as a classroom activity aiming at knowledge transfer and the development of certain skills (e.g. critical thinking, debating), which may be complemented by extra-curricular activities for more motivated students. At the other end of the continuum was a broad definition of civic education as an activity that permeates every moment of school life. The interviewees holding this view were more skeptical about its implementation as a subject.

3.2.2 Results of the Q-method study

In the Q-factor analysis, I identified three teacher profiles of both responsible citizen and the aims of civic education in schools. In the case of beliefs about responsible citizenship these were (1) the critical, liberal, and nation-skeptical profile, (2) the national and work-oriented profile, and (3) the national and liberal profile.

1. According to those who belong to the critical, liberal, and nation-skeptical profile of educators, responsible citizens are autonomous individuals with a critical attitude. They are committed to liberal values and are environmentally aware in their daily life. For them, active citizenship is first and foremost about self-fulfillment. They are free of communal attachments and their identity is neither national nor European. But while they are neutral towards the latter, they reject the former.
2. According to the national, work-oriented group, responsible citizens are strongly attached to the nation, more than to other communities. They are a good labor force, who create value and they are mindful of conserving natural resources in their daily life. They place less importance on liberal values but do not reject them while shying away from active citizenship in the republican sense and a critical attitude.
3. According to teachers and pre-service teachers with national and liberal beliefs, responsible citizens live according to liberal values but also care about their community ties, of which the national one stands out. Being an active citizen is also important to them, albeit in a narrow sense, mainly for self-expression. Nevertheless, they also try to keep the public interest and the common good in mind. They do not consider expectations of other approaches to citizenship.

I also identified three approaches to civic education in schools: (1) environmental education with liberal, critical, and nation-skeptical features; (2) national civic education with economic and communitarian features; and (3) liberal-economic civic education with participatory features.

1. Environmental education with liberal, critical, and nation-skeptical features. Those who belong to this profile believe that civic education in schools should prepare students for autonomy, self-advocacy, critical thinking, and empathy. It should also contribute to the development of environmentally aware citizens who are not only aware of the environment in their lifestyles but are also capable of exercising their rights and duties in relation to it. However, civic education in schools is not intended to foster national attachment or to prepare students for active citizenship.
2. National civic education with economic and communitarian features. According to members of this group, the main aim of civic education in schools is to develop students' national attachment and prepare them to be able to be successful in the economic sphere. They believe that civic education should also serve to develop students' community ties, although active community participation is not emphasized. They tend to reject critical, republican, and liberal approaches, and they disagree that civic education should be value-neutral.
3. Liberal-economic civic education with participatory features. Respondents in this profile are committed to a liberal approach to civic education in schools, which aims to help students develop as individuals and empower them to assert their interests and pursue their economic goals. They also set out various participatory objectives in the field of civic education, both regarding students' daily lives and their future participation in public life. While the members of this group consider it important that teachers take a neutral approach to civic education, there are some approaches that they completely reject. One example is the critical approach to civic education.

Summing up, I have identified three profiles regarding the beliefs both on good citizenship and the aims of civic education, which indicates important socialization differences among teachers. Marked cleavages emerged regarding attitudes towards the nation and critical attitudes. This may partly explain the integrational difficulties of civic education in schools. By comparing the three teacher profiles concerning the good citizen with the classification defined by Reichert and Torney-Purta (2019) I found that no specific patterns - either unique or inconsistent and fragmented - emerged among the Hungarian teachers participating in the present research as a result of fragmented political socialization.

Another noteworthy finding is the rigid detachment from politics and public affairs of the teachers and pre-service teachers in the study, which is observed in all three profiles and, according to the interviews, is mainly because teachers identify politics and public affairs exclusively with party politics. It is also interesting to note that in the case of the profile with a national commitment, national attachment is passive and does not go hand in hand with the demands for community activism that appear among the communitarian requirements. These two phenomena reveal elements deeply rooted in Hungarian political culture: the negative connotation of politics and demobilization (see, for example, Szabó and Gerő 2015; Oross and Szabó 2019; Szabó and Oross 2017).

A further important finding of the doctoral thesis is that two of the three groups of teachers do not include among the aims of school-based civic education the preparation for community, public and political participation. These are only partially mentioned in the third profile (liberal-economic civic education with participatory features). This also resonates with the demobilization that characterizes Hungarian political culture. At the same time, it is worth considering that according to the results of comparative international research, teachers typically do not consider the preparation for future political participation and activism as an important goal of civic education in schools, and a certain distancing is characteristic of teachers in this area (see for example Reichert and Torney Purta 2019).

If the identified teacher profiles are compared to the civic education goals set by the national core curricula, it can be assumed that teachers in the national, work-oriented group can partially identify with the communitarian-national turn that had started in the 2012 NCC and was crystallized in the 2020 NCC. At the same time, the beliefs of the critical, liberal, and nation-skeptical group of teachers are at odds with current government objectives on several issues. This is an antagonism that is sure to hamper the consolidation of civic education in schools.

3.3 Barriers and opportunities to civic education

The thematic analysis of the interviews with teachers and school principals identified obstacles to the implementation of civic education in schools, which I grouped into three categories:

1. Barriers to a subject-based form of civic education. For example, the instability of the status of a separate civics subject and of related subjects such as philosophy or ethics; too few lessons; lack of innovative, activating pedagogical methods, and outdated output requirements. The result is that this subject, whether as part of history or as a stand-alone subject, has a low prestige among students.
2. Barriers to the implementation of extra-curricular forms of citizenship education. Examples include the lack of awareness of rights among school citizens; the lack of interactive, experiential civic education; or the constraints imposed by the functioning of the school as a hierarchical institution.
3. General barriers include the close link between civic education and the quality of public life; the outdated expectations towards schools from society, including parents; and structural problems in the education system such as teacher overload and low wages.

The results of the analysis of expert interviews were in several places consistent with the findings from that of the interviews with principals and teachers. For example, the outdatedness of parents' expectations towards schools, the non-acceptance of the teachers' modern role as facilitators and the rejection of innovative pedagogical methods were identified as hindering factors. Other barriers were the lack of a comprehensive, long-term education policy strategy, the sharp shifts in the direction of the education policies of various governments and the lack of emphasis on the implementation of these policies. Another theme emerging in the expert interviews was that the complete exclusion of politics from schools hampers civic education.

Furthermore, the question was raised whether NGOs could take over the task of civic education from teachers. However, in the experience of NGO professionals, their programs can have a greater and more lasting impact if teachers are actively involved in the process: they prepare with students beforehand and take the time and energy to process the experience afterwards.

I grouped the practices identified in the schools participating in the study into four categories: student council, school community service, programs aiming to strengthen national identity, and the democratic climate in schools. The interviews showed that several of the institutions had managed to make good use of the legal framework and, despite the obstacles described above, to create functioning civic education spaces that could contribute to the development of students' civic competencies. The interviews showed that two factors played a role in overcoming these obstacles: the role perception and individual ambitions of a teacher or the school principal, and, in the case of schools with a longer democratic tradition, the institutional ethos, which is important for the socialization of both students and new colleagues.

3.4 Policy recommendations

Based on the results of the research, I formulated and elaborated the following eight policy recommendations for the development of civic education in Hungarian schools:

1. A prerequisite is to improve the working conditions of teachers, and to rethink and reduce curricular expectations, thus decreasing the workload of students and teachers.
2. Encourage cooperation between disciplines related to civic education and introduce state-funded and supported research.
3. Encourage public debates and discussions in school forums about what it means to be political in schools and what are acceptable manifestations of this.
4. Combining political philosophical approaches with appropriate pedagogical methods and encouraging professional dialogue on these. Developing programs for different civic education orientations and assessing their impacts.
5. Rethinking the conditions of the two fundamentally different models of civic education, the subject-based approach and the extra-curricular approach and developing their methodological background.
6. Establishment of a professionally and politically independent center for developing teaching and learning materials and methodologies.
7. Raise the prestige of civic education among stakeholders and develop an appropriate incentive system.
8. Immediate support for less taboo areas of civic education, such as verbal skills development or theatre education programs.

I believe that these measures can help to ensure that the need to develop civic competencies will be embedded in political culture in the long term and that civic education activities designed to serve this purpose can be given their rightful place in schools.

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