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Views and Beliefs of Social Studies Teachers on Citizenship Education: a Comparative Study of the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Croatia

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Abstract

This paper reports on a comparative study of high school social science teachers in three European countries: the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Croatia, and presents data from teacher interviews using Q methodology. An aim of the study is to make explicit the link between teachers' views on citizenship education and their underlying beliefs about education, teaching, and the social science curriculum. Central to this are views on the type of citizen they aim to develop through citizenship education. Five distinct types were identified in Bulgaria - Pragmatic Conservatives, Deliberative Liberals, Local Social Guardians, Personal Growth Facilitators, and Global Future Debaters. In Croatia, the types were Patriotic Conservatives, Liberal Democracy Guardians, Reflective Humanists, and Personal Growth Coaches. In the Netherlands, four types: Action Learning Idealists, Critical Academics, Loyal Citizens' Teachers, and Moral Democratic Educators. These are variations of four ideal types of views: Hierarchical, Individualist, Egalitarian, and Fatalist (grid-group theory of Douglas and Wildavsky). The study also aims to shed light on the complexity of cultural, political, and historical contexts surrounding the introduction and implementation of citizenship education. A third aim is to demonstrate the crucial role of teachers in shaping national and European citizenship education policies. Implications are discussed for citizenship education policy, curriculum development, and teacher training.

Keywords: *Citizenship education, Comparative study, Social science teachers, Q methodology, Group-grid theory*

This paper presents a study of teachers' views and beliefs on citizenship education. Teachers from three countries were interviewed using Q-methodology. First, we will explain how the study was set up. Second, we will present briefly the main preliminary outcomes per country. Third, we will discuss some of the most interesting insights from the comparison between the countries. Finally we will discuss the implication of the study results for curriculum development and teacher training, as well as the opportunities for expanding this research.

1. The political force-field of teaching citizenship by social studies teachers

In the last two decades, citizenship education has been high on the agenda in almost all European countries, 'old' and 'new' democracies alike. With more than 300 definitions of citizenship (Jones, E., J. Caventa, 2002), the term is intrinsically political. Furthermore, the very term *citizenship education*, indicates the intricate relationship between politics and education. Education is in itself always political. The temptation to shape people in a certain ideological direction, to try to develop in them particular political attitudes and a preference for specific political ideas, and ultimately to influence their behaviour, is not new and takes many forms in many different societies.

In one form or another, citizenship education is present in all school curricula in Europe. The school is the designated institution which has the task, and the capacity, to do this in a sustained, systematic way, reaching out to practically all youth. Our empirical study's focus is on social science teachers at the high-school level. In the context of broader objectives and school wide policy, the teachers are the ones who implement the task of citizenship education daily. Obviously, they do this according to their own understanding and skill. Faced with the task to implement a demanding and sometimes deliberately broadly defined curriculum in citizenship education, social studies teachers have to find a *workable balance* of conflicting demands upon their work: how to teach a subject according to their professional criteria and beliefs, while fulfilling the obligation to contribute to citizenship education? Should they educate students mainly about their rights or about their obligations? How do they find a balance between learning about freedom and about taking responsibility for a local and also increasingly global community? Should teachers remain neutral or rather propagate their own political and ideological preferences? Are they obliged to remain loyal to state policies or to the contrary, systematically criticize them? Should they shield children from political controversy or rather use it in the classroom? And finally, what kind of citizens would they educate – good and adapted ones or critical and caring citizens? These and other questions delineate the force-field in which social science teachers operate.

How to explicate and classify the different types of working solutions? In this study, we perceive the concept of citizenship education as the nexus of a number of important, but equally difficult to define concepts – democracy, politics, neutrality, political education, the place of education in society, and the teacher as a professional. These are not totally independent from each other and do not form random *mix-and-match* combinations. Rather, they constitute *patterns of thinking and subsequent action*, which are based on core beliefs about politics, education, and the teaching profession.

The question we asked in our study was: can we map this force field of dimensions in order to shed a light on the way citizenship is being taught at school? Is it possible to describe the distinct ways in which teachers think? Do they share a common ground? What are the topics that divide them? This study is an attempt to meet the methodological challenges of researching teacher beliefs and 'theories-in-action'.

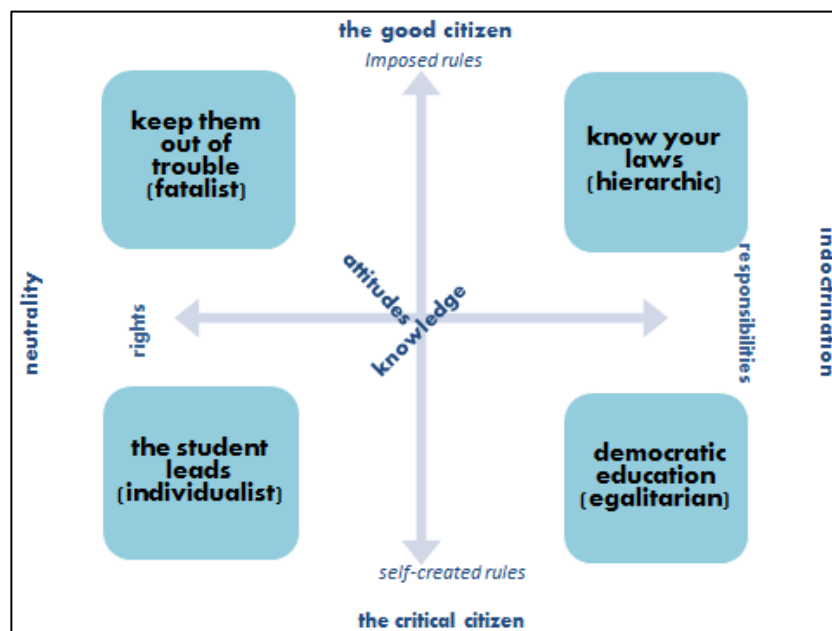
2. Q methodology research design

Q Methodology is an approach suitable for this purpose. Although we cannot afford to get into detail here (see for a detailed explanation Watts et al., 2012), we should state that the choice of method is not only technical. Q methodology allows us to engage in a dialogue with our respondents - the teachers - at all stages of research. We let teachers speak with their own voices and combine this with the necessary academic rigor. The steps in the research involved:

- a) *The construction of a set of statements about citizenship education in the classroom, based on extensive literature study and pilot interviews.*

We used the group-grid theory (Thompson, M. et al. 1990) to lay out the force field of dimensions where these diverse views and beliefs would fit. Group-grid theory has been applied to various policy domains. The four core-value types – conservative hierarchy, active and competitive individualism, egalitarian enclavisim, and fatalism - serve as the researcher's compass in structuring and ordering existing discourses. (Hoppe, R., 2007) Applied to teachers' views on citizenship education, literature review and pilot interviews add up to a description of the following ideal types (Jeliazkova, M., 2009; Jeliazkova, M. et al., 2012) (figure 1).

Figure1. Four ideal types of views



The individualist ideal type is concerned with educating critical citizens, but mainly aimed at promoting their individual progress and gain. The egalitarian type is also critical, but aimed at social equity in its criticism. Both teachers operate as a coach.

However, the individualist one puts knowledge of ‘the system’ at the forefront, whereas the egalitarian one is concerned with group values and morality. The individualist type shares with the fatalist one the ideal of remaining politically neutral, as opposed to the hierarchic and egalitarian ones, which are directly concerned with instilling and reinforcing particular values in their students. The hierarchic type is concerned with system-sustainability and thus at educating ‘good’ citizens. The fatalist type sees the ‘good’ citizen more as one staying out of trouble. The fatalist type shares a preference for attitudes and skills with the egalitarian type, while the hierarchic type’s focus is on knowledge about the social order and the established institutions. Unlike the individualists, however, they are concerned with assigning a proper place in society for the future citizens. While both the egalitarian and the hierarchic types encourage participation, the accent is respectively on alternative forms of (direct) participation as opposed to using the legitimate channels (elections, laws). These ideal types serve to delineate the discourse on citizenship education in relation to social studies.

Based on this framework, 41 statements were selected (see appendix 1) which represent the whole spectrum of possible views. These 41 statement stand for the discourse on the topic as explained above.

Every teacher finds their own particular position in this force field. This position never overlaps completely with any officially stated objectives, nor does it overlap with the ideal types outlined before. Every teacher finds their own workable balance of views, held together by core beliefs, sometimes quite implicit.

b) Ranking of statements

The second step in Q methodology is to interview respondents. They are invited to rank the statements in a fixed pattern, from ‘most agree’ to ‘most disagree’ (see appendix 2). During the interview, respondents explicate their choice and positions, thus shedding a light on their patterns of thinking and the priorities they set in their work as teachers. The respondents offer their own interpretation of the statements, while remaining in the shared context of the discourse delineated by the 41 statements. The rankings are recorded for subsequent processing.

In this study, three sets of interviews were held: 17 interviews with high school teachers in social studies in Bulgaria, 17 interviews with high school teachers in social studies in Croatia¹, and 28 interviews with high school social studies teachers in the Netherlands. The samples are not representative, as the method is explorative and does not claim representativeness of the outcomes. A balance between diversity of backgrounds and demographics on the one hand, and pragmatic restrictions, on the other, is sought.

c) Factor analysis and interpretation

Three sets of data were analysed, resulting in three sets of factors – 5 for Bulgaria, 4 for Croatia and 4 for the Netherlands. The factors represent groups of respondents, thinking in similar ways. In addition, the whole set of data was factor analysed, resulting in 5 factors. What follows is a short description of the factors, based only partially on the

¹ Data collected by A. K. Kostro, University of Zagreb, Croatia

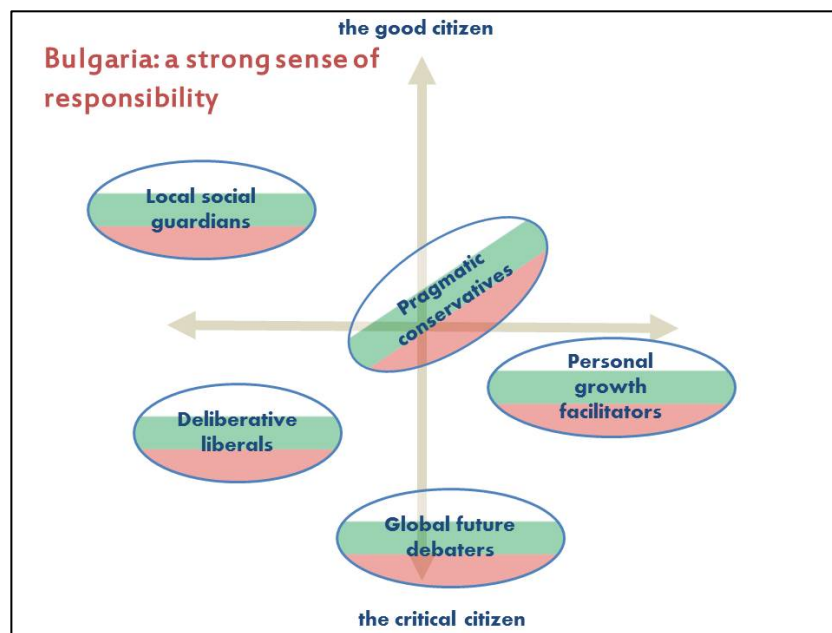
interview data. Further analysis of the interview data will undoubtedly result in adjustment and fine-tuning of the results. However, the main trends based on the quantitative data can be presented with enough confidence and raise interesting discussion questions.

In the following sections we will offer a short description of the data sets of the three countries, followed by the description of the factors in general set of all respondents together.

2. Bulgaria: a strong sense of responsibility

The five factors found in the Bulgarian data set are presented in figure 2.

Figure 2. Five factors in Bulgaria



a) Common themes

The teachers we spoke to were making a serious attempt to keep up to their own professional standards, to be truthful and to demonstrate a clear position on matters they deem important. The overall impression is that they remain critical, guard their degree of professional discretion and assume great responsibility for education Bulgarian youth, even when they feel that the school as an institution and particularly the state are failing them. In fact, especially when the institutions are failing them. This is why they do not feel restricted by state curriculum requirements. This almost allergic reaction to any state interference can be partially traced to old communist times.

All teachers agree that citizenship education is about participation in a democratic debate and this is why they help students to develop their research and discussion skills. The strong link between citizenship and democracy is to be found in every interview, in spite of critical notes about Bulgarian political reality. In the eyes of the teachers, the process of democratization, though far from completed, is irreversible. Teachers insist on a solid, though not overburdened knowledge base, but this is not the same as just feeding children with facts.

The most distinguishing feature is the ambivalent attitude of teachers towards politics and politicians. Most respondents make a clear distinction between the practice of politics – what politicians do – which is considered predominantly as something not suitable for students, if not outright harmful; and the *political nature* of any social phenomenon discussed. The latter is often not referred to as ‘politics.’ *Политика* in Bulgaria is a negative term for teachers and students alike. Teachers go sometimes at great lengths to explain how they differentiate between active political propaganda (which is considered inappropriate) and allowing for an academic, but not necessarily academically detached analysis of the most urgent problems of society. A positive role model of a Bulgarian politician suitable for school lessons is yet to be found, however.

Below is a short description of the five factors – five groups of teachers adhering to these five views.

b) Pragmatic Conservatives: ‘We give them the rules of social behaviour’

Pragmatic Conservatives put a strong emphasis on knowledge, take a mentoring and protective position towards their students, and exhibit a great amount of trust towards the school as an institution. They see the school as „a model of a social institution” and thus encourage participating in school activities as a preparation for later. The teachers in this group do not wish to encourage students to participate in Bulgaria's current political life. They clearly do what they can to protect students from the hardships of everyday politics. Their attitude towards the everyday practice of politics in Bulgaria is rather negative.

For the Pragmatic Conservatives, the greatest concern is discipline. In their eyes, students do not take their obligations seriously. Very often, the respondents mention rights in conjunction with democracy, stating that ‘democracy and freedom is not the same as doing whatever you want.’

Statements concerning the method, process, and critical analytic skills necessary to acquire knowledge about institutions, social structures, and politics in general, are rated positively. Respondents are concerned with neutrality and are careful not to promote any particular ideology. Personal political engagement of the teachers is not seen by them as linked to teaching citizenship. Rather, it is considered an act of irresponsibility which may lead to anarchy. This is why they are careful with discussions about controversial issues, in order not to ‘politicize’ issues too much.

In sum, these teachers see themselves as contributing to the education of a citizen who would find a place in the fabric of society, who would obey the law out of conviction and as a result of thoughtful deliberation, and would be mature enough to ensure social

stability, on the one hand, and safeguarding personal rights and freedoms, on the other. This situates the factor mainly in the hierarchical quadrant, with a slight overlap with individualism. In Bulgaria, the distrust towards power is too great to allow for a viable genuinely hierarchic position.

d) Deliberative Liberals: ‘We are here to provoke them into freedom’

The name of this group refers to their two most important vantage points – individualistic/liberal orientation and a focus on democratic deliberation. Deliberative Liberals’ main concern is the method of thinking and inquiry, the need to make one’s own decision. They steer away from everything that looks like indoctrination and imposing specific content and worldview. Providing *information* to students is important, particularly about civic rights and freedoms.

The Deliberative Liberals believe that citizenship education is political in its core and look for a balance between individual and collective action. At the same time, they are careful enough to stay at a more general, theoretical level of political discussion, ‘leaving it to the students to judge’ the current concerns of the day. They trust their students and do not feel the need to impose any views on them, in order ‘not to make them our copies.’

The teachers follow the students’ interests and needs and adapt their teaching practice to the demands and the capacities of the young people they work with. They put the individuality of their students in the limelight.

In short, the Deliberative Liberals see civic education mainly as a tool for promoting emancipation. Knowledge of rights and freedoms is put at the core of their efforts. They strive to equip their students with the necessary tools to operate in a world seen as increasingly complex, to understand political structures and games and to find their path in society. Although they certainly do not promote reckless egoism, the teachers see their students as individuals with inherent rights and see it as their task to support them in becoming independent, critical citizens who know how to defend and extend their freedom through democratic debate.

e) Local Social Guardians: ‘They need us as a personal example’

The Local Social Guardians differ from all the other respondents who tend to seek a balance between the role of a professional and the role of a teacher. They are convinced that their students ‘need a sense of direction’ and need to be taught to survive. Quite the opposite to the pragmatic conservatives, the local social guardians see their students as vulnerable and in danger. Their rights could be easily violated because of ignorance, no access to power structures, and lack of resources. The teachers see it as their task to educate students about their rights (sometimes seen also as entitlements). They do this both by providing them with the necessary knowledge and as establishing themselves as role models. They also feel strongly about the role of the school as an example of a democratic institution, a safe place to learn the first things about democracy in a world otherwise chaotic and threatening to the students.

The Local Social Guardians agree with the statement that politics is too abstract for their students. However, this approval is ambivalent, because they see different layers in political education. The respondents claim that their students feel left out, marginalized and disadvantaged by today's political ruling class in Bulgaria and were thus very cynical towards anything political. The teachers see themselves as an example that there are also positive ways to participate in social life. The respondents strongly encourage community involvement as a low-threshold activity that students understand, even when they are not interested in politics. They see charitable and community service both as empowering and as a way of teaching responsibility.

In sum, this group of teachers can be placed in the fatalist corner of the group-grid scheme. Their position is unique among all the other respondents, also from Croatia and the Netherlands.

f) Personal Growth Facilitators: 'We teach them to be happy'

A climate of collaboration which promotes free development and self-growth is a priority for this group of respondents. Participation, action, involvement is what they are about – practice what you preach, also outside the classroom, and set an example of honest and decent behaviour. Human nature and the values associated with human life are central to their teaching. Politics as practiced in Bulgaria is seen as something that children should be shielded from, for as long as possible.

The respondents in this group use words like emotions, feelings, growth, and 'the joy of life', and care about 'overlooked' topics such as ecological education and art education. Growth, harmonic development, self-realization of the human potential are the overarching goals of their everyday efforts, Interdependence, taking care of each other are values highly cherished by this group. Not only should students participate and be engaged in 'attitude building', they should do this in groups, as a way of developing a caring personality.

The Personal Growth Facilitators look at education in a broader context, with school only being a part of it. Participation in 'real life' and engagement at all levels are certainly more important than knowledge and facts. The minimum body of knowledge required is about the basics of democracy, as democracy is considered too essential to be left to chance instead of taught explicitly.

This factor coincides the most with the egalitarian ideal type, with a twist: personal growth is seen as being facilitated by participation in a group, rather than directed at group preservation. Again, like the Pragmatic Conservatives, truly collectivist attitudes are not popular in a country with a communist past and are always countered by a healthy dose of self-interest.

g) Global Future Debaters: 'The street won't turn them into global citizens'

The group underscores the European citizenship dimension as the most explicit of all. It is, however, quite divided in its judgment of the value and the success of citizenship education as a European project. One of the high loading respondents is quite positive

and cosmopolitically oriented, while the other one, to the contrary, is convinced that citizenship education was implemented under pressure and as an act of compliance – to demonstrate that Bulgaria belongs to the European Union. ‘just to show off.’

The global European orientation of this group of teachers makes the choice for an institutional approach logical. Not only values and abstract ideas, but the specific social structures and channels of influence are important. Action is what counts, active defence and expansion of freedoms is what makes civic education meaningful.

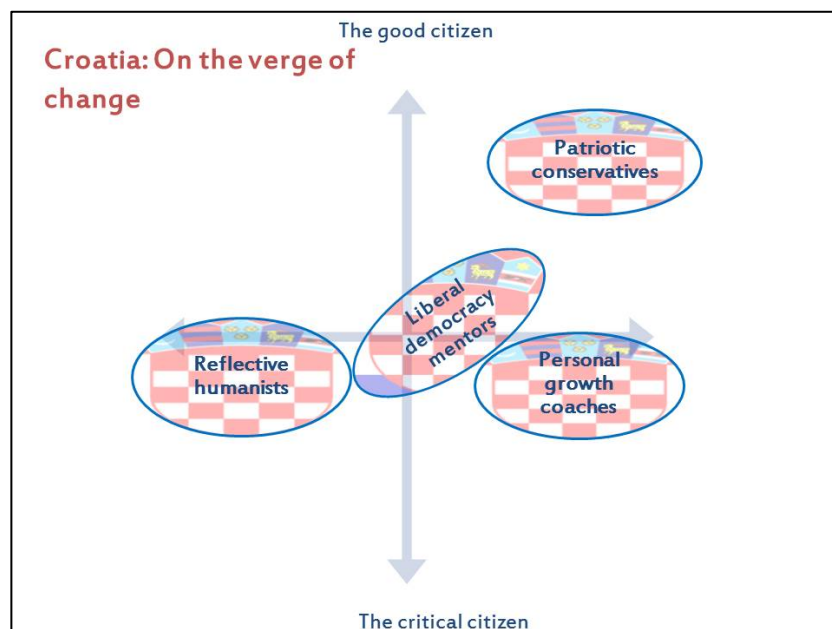
The Global Future Debaters take a rather pragmatic attitude toward the fashionable patriotic discourse in Bulgaria. They do think that students should know ‘what this country has achieved in order to go further’, however, the growing interdependence of people in the world takes precedence and is a far more dominant theme. The statement is interpreted at an interpersonal level – students need to learn how to respect each other, to be able to get in the shoes of others and understand their social experience.

In sum, the teachers in this factor are more concerned with the future of citizenship education and the future of their students in a global dynamic world than with current practice which can be disappointing at times. In the grid-group field, this group of teachers is positioned on the egalitarian/individualistic divide.

4. Croatia – On the verge of change

In the Croatian sample, four factors were extracted, presented in figure 3.

Figure 3. Four factors in Croatia.



a) Common themes

Croatian teachers show more common ground than their Bulgarian colleagues in reflecting on what kind of curriculum citizenship education should use. The consensus is evident in emphasizing the need for change of the overall approach to citizenship education in Croatia. The theme of curriculum change has been highly emphasized in the interviews as Croatia is currently undergoing a reform of the model and the curriculum for citizenship education. While referring to the current curriculum design process, all teachers have expressed disagreement with the practice of putting too much stress on knowledge and uncritical acceptance of reality. They agree moderately on the need to focus on democratic inquiry. All teachers have a strong consensus on the inclusive approach that aims to empower all students to understand politics. They believe that citizenship education is for all students, not just the elites, including those that 'just like adults, are disappointed in politics.' Teachers envision a political citizen which recognizes the importance of politics for other aspects of life. They see acts of compassion and generosity also as political in nature. Finally, teachers share the view that the school as an institution, even with nondemocratic structure, serves as platform for raising democratic citizens.

b) Reflective Humanists: 'I am just inviting students to be reflective, nothing more'

The Reflective Humanists put a strong emphasis on the development of intellectual skills and critical thinking. They envision citizenship education mainly as empowerment for 'survival' in today's complex world. The Reflective Humanists act as facilitators of students' intellectual growth, with a considerable emphasis on 'coping'. While doing so, they do not take exclusively pragmatic approach, but invoke personal inner morality and reflection as a way of coping with reality. In line with that, they focus on the development of students' ability to use concepts and methods to analyse and understand the world around them. They do this systematically, professionally, based on solid mainstream theory. They reject the idea that laws and rules should be at the centre of citizenship education. The respondents' position towards any ideology is neutral, but reflective and open. They are not particularly concerned with directly fostering students' participation in social and political life.

Respondents in this group fit in the individualist corner of the group-grid scheme with a bias towards fatalism.

c) Patriotic Conservatives: 'The teacher has to be a model of decent behaviour'

The main feature of the Patriotic Conservatives is their loyalty to the state. They see themselves as implementers of official state policy and as 'old school' models of decent behaviour. The Patriotic Conservatives place the values of patriotism on a very high position. The teachers in this group thus subscribe to the popular Croatian theme of national pride and loyalty, stemming from the 1990s by a history of war, independence and nation building. They also agree that citizenship education is a palliative measure towards the lack of tolerance in society. To help achieving this goal, they strive to hold their students accountable and to get them involved in charitable activities.

Knowledge of laws and rules is central to their understanding of the content of the curriculum. Their most important objective is to offer students enough understanding of the basic rules of the main political institutions. They see this as a step towards preparing students for active contribution to society in the future, within the rules and within the system. Part of this preparation implies a task for the school to establish a stronger connection with students' employability.

Being critical towards the media is not a high concern of this group of teachers. The development of thinking skills also is not a priority, they shy away from discussing norms and values, as well as controversial subjects.

The group of the Pragmatic Conservatives clearly stands out from the others and is positioned into the hierarchical corner of the grid-group field.

d) Liberal Democracy Mentors: 'Citizenship education as a preparation of students for the role of democratic citizens'

The respondents in this group hold the values of liberal democracy very high. In the classroom, they take the role of empowering mentors. As long as promoting democratic values is needed, they are not afraid of being biased. As a part of establishing a relationship of trust with their pupils, they openly discuss their political preferences. This, however, does not mean that they impose their views on their students. The teachers in this group strongly agree with the statement that young people should be taught to be critical and not to believe everything they see in the media. In order to achieve this, students need to learn how to use various methods, theories and models to explore the world around them. Rather than offering ready-made rules, the respondents in this group are inclined to look at the processes and the underlying debates behind the established rules and laws.

Although they encourage children to be critical and oriented towards change, the Liberal Democracy Mentors do not promote following private interests. Rather, they teach their students to take the common good into account, to respect the conventional political channels and to learn how to gain influence through them.

Summing up, the Liberal Democracy Mentors fit on the Hierarchic-Individualist axis, leaning towards the hierarchic position.

e) Personal Growth Coaches- 'We teach independent and responsible young people'

The Personal Growth Coaches are teachers by calling. The pedagogical core of their work gets priority over subject knowledge. They focus on students' personal growth, to help them develop into responsible and autonomous citizens. They focus on the development of participatory and intellectual competences, seen in a broader perspective. The social side of citizenship takes precedence over politics. Compassion and generosity are cherished and encouraged, preferably through taking 'real life' action.

For them critical reflection also refers to norms 'which should be always discussed.' It also means to raise controversial issues and to even personally take a critical stand

toward the state or the status quo. This critical stand or stirring things up, for this group doesn't imply 'revolutionary acts, but does imply active citizenship that will try to improve the situation and foster achievement of citizens' rights'.

Typical about this group is the strong connection between independent thinking and accountability. In the process, the teachers provide their students with some guidelines, but let them decide independently, reflect on their decisions and take responsibility for them.

On the group-grid field, the Personal Growth Coaches fit into the egalitarian position, with some prominent hierarchic elements, mainly related to their strong sense of accountability.

5. The Netherlands: an established professional community

In the Netherlands sample, four factors were extracted, presented on figure 4.

Figure 4. Four factors in the Netherlands



a) Common themes

The four factors are relatively highly correlated, which indicates a high degree of agreement between the Dutch teachers. Additional qualitative analysis is needed to confirm this observation. It is possible that the respondents adhere to different interpretations of statements while ranking them similarly. Still, there is a clear consensus on a number of issues:

All the Dutch respondents approve the statement: 'We have to teach young people to be critical and not to believe everything they see and hear in the media.' This is interesting on two counts. On the one hand, obviously the power and the influence of the media are perceived by teachers as growing. In many cases they see the media as a competing force to the messages they receive at school. Also for most of them, using examples from the media is a suitable way to teach critical thinking and reasoning skills. On the other hand, the new social studies curriculum which is in its pilot phase now, dropped the media as a separate topic, in spite of signals that students find it interesting. It will be interesting to see how teachers and students alike will accommodate their preference.

The other undisputable agreement is on the need to teach how democracy works and why it is worth defending it. Teachers do not see this as an attempt to indoctrinate. Rather, it is a very clear-cut delineation of the specific contribution of their subject - social studies - to the overall task of schools to educate future citizens. In addition, teachers subscribe to the statement: 'It is better that the teacher discusses norms and values instead of stiffly adhering to neutrality.' On the one hand, this reflects the general consensus on the importance of going beyond 'the established facts' in the general sample and in the Bulgarian group. On the other, the statement can be seen in the context of an ongoing debate about neutrality of the teacher in the Netherlands. The topic is prominently present in the teacher training programs and discussed at length in the standard textbook for teacher training programs (Olgers et al., 2010)

On the negative side, the statement 'My task as a teacher is to defend state policies and interest, because I am an employee of a state financed educational institution' is rejected. It was rejected by the Bulgarian respondents as well, but on different grounds. Whereas Bulgarians were quite adamant that they see themselves as anything but a part of the state, Dutch respondents defended their position with pluralistic arguments - there is no such thing as 'a state interest', so even if they would want to do that, they would not know what exactly to defend.

The statement 'Citizenship education should cultivate a spirit of unity, loyalty to the state and national pride' is unanimously rejected with very strong terms: 'nationalistic nonsense', 'I am allergic to this kind of language'. Given the current political debate about national identity in the Netherlands, it is worth mentioning that teachers do not feel part of this discourse at all. How exactly they deal with the issue in the classroom, when students inevitably bring it up, remains to be seen.

b) Action Learning Idealists: frustrated by the curriculum

Many of the respondents in this group are young teachers. They are change oriented, thinking skills oriented, and acting as coaches towards their students. They strongly agree with the statement: 'It is not enough to engage in discussion about how to improve the world, it is important to give young people the chance to participate in real life.' The other groups are neutral on the issue, mostly because they think it is not their task as teachers to do so.

The most striking about the Action Learning Idealists is their frustration about examination programs and the conflict between what they see as important and what

they 'should' teach for their students to pass the exam. This frustration stems from their strong preference for controversy in the classroom. While the other three groups also agree that controversy should be discussed in class, the Action Learning Idealists put controversy and discussion at the centre of their teaching. Knowledge and 'facts' remain on the second place, while at the end, 'facts are on the exam'.

Compared to the other teachers, they are not that strong in rejecting the statement 'In my opinion, citizenship education is an emergency measure by the state against the obviously growing lack of social tolerance.'

On the grid-group field, these teachers fit in between the individualist and the egalitarian position.

c) Critical Academics: systematic independent thinking about social structures

This group consists of teachers involved in national policymaking and curriculum development around social studies. This may be coincidental, of course, since our sample is not representative, but it may explain the position of the respondents. Also, these are in general teachers with many years of experience.

The Critical Academics emphasize stronger than anyone else that their goal is 'to educate thinking citizens who can employ various methods, theories and models to explore the world around them, and who are able to assess facts and arrive at conclusions'. Most remarkably, they are the only ones who subscribe to the suggestion that official study programs are quite uncritical towards democracy. Most of them are involved in writing and evaluating textbooks in one way or another. The 'users' of textbooks do not share their concern. We will come back to this point later.

These teachers are the least concerned with the pedagogical side of teaching. They are not overly concerned with creating a safe environment in their classroom. In conjunction with this, they are the only ones who do not strongly reject the statement that politics is for the elite only. While they share this position with the Bulgarian Local Social Guardians, the reasoning is different and is concerned indeed with the highly rational-abstract level of teaching to which they give strong preference.

The Critical Academics are very negative about the suggestion that their teaching will contribute to develop the skills necessary for the labour market. They do not see it as their task to encourage students to actually participate in society. Their focus on theory and academic skills keeps them in a strictly academic role of teachers in a subject with a clearly political core.

The rational, systematic, theory oriented feature of the Critical Academics place them in the individualist side of the group-grid field, with very strong hierarchic elements.

d) Loyal Citizens' Teachers: 'Get involved in social life for the common good, respect the system'

The Loyal Citizens' Teachers are quite clear about their acceptance of the Dutch political system and in their effort to encourage students to contribute positively to Dutch society. The suggestion that the official curriculum is somehow uncritical gets the strongest rejection of all factors. This does not mean that they would just follow and implement official state policies, though.

The Loyal Citizens' Teachers very strongly subscribe to the statement: 'Students should learn to take into account the common good, rather than follow only their private interests.' Most of all, they encourage their students to get involved in social life through the established institutions and to listen to the experts.

Compared to the Action Learning Idealists and the Critical Academics, these teachers, tend to focus more on knowledge as well the acquisition of skills necessary to participate in society. Loyalty for these teachers means active defence of the democratic system – participation in discussion and debate, critical, but adapted attitude towards the media. The Loyal Citizens' Teachers are the only ones who tend to agree with the idea that the school is not democratic enough to help students learn about democracy.

The strong focus on adapted participation, combined with the importance of democratic values and the tendency to abandon neutrality when necessary, places the Loyal Citizens' Teachers in the hierarchical part of the group-grid field, with some egalitarian elements.

e) Moral Democratic Educators: 'Coach them into democratic moral standards'

The Moral Democratic Educators define their role very clearly as pedagogical, as opposed to a subject specialist. Fostering their students' independence is their most important mission. At the same time, they do not take the back seat in this process, neither do they assume the role of a devil's advocate, as their Bulgarian colleagues are inclined. Rather, the respondents see themselves also as a personal example of moral behaviour. The common good is important, but less so than for the Loyal Citizens' Teachers. The accent is more on encouraging participation and helping students find their place in the world. The Moral Democratic Educators are neutral about specific knowledge, and also not particularly concerned about discussion, debate and research skills. Moral categories define their engagement, more so than issues and structures. Participation and action are seen as more important than theory. The Moral Democratic Educators adhere to the value-oriented view on citizenship, within the undisputed framework of democracy and a critical attitude towards the media.

In sum, the place of the Moral Democratic Educators is a mix of egalitarian and individualistic position, with a slight prevalence of the egalitarian one.

6. The three countries compared: ownership of citizenship education, national divides visible

a) Similarities and differences

In the following section we will present some of the interesting findings of the comparison between the three countries. The comparison is based on the qualitative data (only partially processed at the moment) and quantitative data (factor analysis of the whole set which revealed some shared underlying themes and put some differences in a new light.

When we look at the pattern of distribution of the different factors in the three countries, we see clearly a different pattern. In Bulgaria, the factors seem to be distributed predominantly around the fatalist-egalitarian axes, with some individualistic elements. The Croatian sample is very strongly leaning towards hierarchy, and the Dutch one is evenly distributed along the individualist-hierarchic axis.

It is not really surprising that the consensus of all respondents is only on the negative side: on what teachers do not want to be associated with. There seems to be a bottom line standards of integrity and professional traits of a high school teacher engaged in political education that goes across national borders. None of them see themselves as just a transmitter of information, of some firmly established body of knowledge about rules and laws. Also, none of them think it is enough to teach 'the established facts' about society.

The strong rejection of the suggestion that citizenship education would be something for the elites only is hopeful, at first glance. However, there are indications in two of the country-sets, in Bulgaria and the Netherlands, that the item is far from undisputed. In Bulgaria, the teachers with a relatively large number of disadvantaged students tend to agree with the statement. In the Netherlands, teachers with long experience and a strongly academic approach are also not quick to reject it.

In the general sample, some subtle lines of division become visible. Whereas only in the Croatian case the theme of national unity and loyalty was strongly represented, it was implicitly present in Bulgaria as well. The Dutch interpretation of anything that refers to 'national' was extremely negative. This item has become the point of strongest disagreement between the respondents. It is very tempting to call the East European teachers who emphasize the importance of national cohesion as exhibiting 'nationalistic' tendencies. This would do injustice to the serious attempt of these teachers to find a difficult balance between their professional standards and the dominant discourse dictated by the political reality of the day. Further research including other European countries would have to shed a light on this particular aspect of the study.

Also, the choice between being a teacher and being a subject specialist becomes a game changing item. Although most teachers would say that they combine both roles, the final choices in rankings result in strong positions in both directions.

Although statistically not a consensus item, the statement 'We have to teach young people to be critical and not to believe everything they see and hear in the media' is generally approved. However, when it comes to an estimation of their success in teaching students to deal critically with the media, teachers tend to give quite diverse answers.

A substantial number of Bulgarian and Croatian teachers tend to focus more on problems and on the need for a place to discuss and eventually alleviate them and less on participation. The society they seem to operate in seems to be a troubled one. Their mission can be seen as directed to emancipation and positive affirmation of the values of nations in transition, still marred by serious corruption scandals, and young and very vulnerable civil society.

One of the surprising emerging themes concerns the dichotomy of knowledge and attitudes. Although initially most teachers would claim that both were important, later they made a clear choice in one direction or another. Two things are worth noticing in this respect. First, there seems to be a shared consensus of a minimum required knowledge that students should acquire in the course of their education, no matter what the teaching style and preference of the teachers. Second, the more experienced the teachers, the less inclined to focus on skills without a solid knowledge base. This could be interpreted as conservatism, but maybe the reasons are elsewhere. Too much stress on innovative teaching method without taking into account 'no nonsense' teaching may unnecessarily alienate many teachers who derive their sense of professionalism from their subject knowledge. For those eager to introduce yet another innovative competence-oriented teaching method in the area of citizenship education, this outcome from our study may be a warning to take another closer look.

b) Implications for curriculum and teacher training

The diversity of positions found in each of the three countries should not conceal one important positive feature – teachers have a strong sense of ownership of the idea of citizenship education and a shared baseline professional standard. However, they differ in the way they conceptualize and execute their tasks, not only from country to country, but from school to school. The research findings demonstrate that 'taking the national context into account' is not enough in adapting curricula from other countries or from European sources. The national context is the common scene where several quite distinct perspectives coexist, held together by unifying themes. Equally important, a state initiated policy on citizenship education does not automatically ensure promotion of state-imposed objectives. Quite the opposite, in the case of Bulgaria demonstrates, teachers may use the existing state-shaped curriculum context to demonstrate a corrective position towards what they see as serious shortcomings of the current political reality, in an attempt to educate future citizens who would hopefully do better.

Our data shows that no amount of detailed curriculum requirements, specifications of standards, objectives and evaluation criteria would erase the diversity of perspectives on citizenship education that teachers exhibit. In this sense, citizenship education in any given country cannot even be seen as a single policy project without making it void of its most important feature - preparing young people to be citizens in a presumably pluralistic and democratic society.

In the field of citizenship education, relatively much attention is paid to the content and quality of teaching materials. Our data demonstrates that, in general, teachers do not put too much weight on the books and materials they work with. They remain neutral towards the idea of too much political correctness or lack of criticism in the books. Most mention that they feel equipped to create the necessary discretionary space to work

around whatever limitations the book may have. The explanations they offer may differ from country to country, the important message for curriculum developers is that too much focus on teaching materials, textbooks and official programs, as opposed to supporting teachers to develop their professionalism, may prove to be a waste of resources.

Finally, though the ideal of democratic education may be appealing to many, the majority of teachers do not adhere to this model. All three countries have variations of the egalitarian bias. The Bulgarian Personal Growth Facilitators, the Croatian Personal Growth coaches and the Dutch Moral Democratic Educators share a lot of common elements, in spite of differences in specific accents. But compared to the factors on the hierarchic-individualist axis, these teachers are certainly not a dominant majority. For those who find it desirable to promote democratic education through teacher training, the study sheds a light on the different routes they have to follow in order to achieve a substantial shift in their core beliefs.

c) Future research

Looking back at the theoretical framework of the study, we can formulate two conclusions. First, the data seems to confirm the assumption that views on different aspects of citizenship education, beliefs about education, the role of the teacher, and the school, are indeed not randomly combined, but organized around basic core beliefs about politics and society in general which could be traced back to the four main biases of the group-grid framework. Second, we see that the way these biases are manifested in the particular countries, is indeed influenced by specific historic events, current political climate as well as educational tradition and practice. The most striking differences between the three countries were in the area of their definition of 'political' and 'social', as well as the perceived distance to official power. The factor distributions tend to follow the expected general patterns of national political culture of the three countries: a generally fatalist attitude of mistrust towards power in Bulgaria, quite strongly hierarchically oriented around its national ideal Croatia, and a Dutch classic liberal democracy with strong communitarian features. A much more detailed analysis of the qualitative data is needed to formulate further conclusions in this respect.

A future expansion of the study to include other countries may shed more light on the interplay between these universal biases and their specific national colours. Particularly interesting would it be to see if any shifts would occur on two topics. First, the issue of national loyalty and identity: the theme proved to be game changing in Croatia, strongly present in Bulgaria and adamantly rejected in the Netherlands. Adding other countries to the mix, particularly 'old democracies' with a strong tradition of positive national identity, may show other undercurrents in this debate. Second, the issue of political education for the masses and for the elites attracts attention. The strong rejection of the idea that politics may be too difficult for most young people may be an artefact of our sample construction, combined with the specific educational structure of the countries. In Bulgaria, there is generally no streaming at high-school level, and exactly in Bulgaria there were teachers who indeed found it difficult to teach some of the young people. In the Netherlands, the slight approval by one of the groups was clearly linked to the form of education as well as the automatic thinking in terms of 'levels' inherent to the Dutch education system.

What remains open is practice. Do these different views result in observably different teaching practice? Our observations of lessons in Bulgaria offer a strong indication that this may be the case. We hope that this research would help teachers to reflect on their views and principles and to make their practice of educating the future citizens of Europe more informed and ultimately more effective.

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Appendix 1. English set of statements.

The original sample was a mixture of Dutch/English/Bulgarian sources. The long list was made in Dutch/English. The final short list was translated first into English, then into Bulgarian (discussed/edited by colleagues in BG), then back to Dutch (double-checked by native speakers and colleagues) and then back to English. Three sets of statements were used for each country's native language.

1. Students need an environment in which they could discuss the problems of society without anyone pointing a finger at them and correcting them.
2. We need to teach young people to be independent and to make their own decisions.
3. I encourage my students to get involved in social life through the established institutions and to listen to expert opinion.
4. These are the rules, these are the laws. I think this is the bulk of citizenship education.
5. The teacher should be a model of honest and decent behaviour, this is the core of citizenship education.
6. We have to teach young people to be critical and not to believe everything they see and hear in the media.
7. The teacher should make it clear to the students that they need to participate in public life if they want to advance in society.
8. Citizenship education should contribute to the development of competences required by the labour market.
9. We should pay more attention to knowledge: to look at how things really are, instead of just discussing how they should be.
10. It is not enough only to engage in discussions about how to improve the world, it is important to give young people the chance to participate in real life.
11. The teacher should stress first of all the anatomy of government: the separation of powers, the functions and prerogatives of the institutions, the different types and purposes of democratic systems.
12. I am pleased when my students begin to discover structures and regularities and when they begin to understand the world of politics.
13. The goal is to educate thinking citizens who can employ various methods, theories and models to explore the world around them, and who are able to assess facts and to arrive at conclusions.
14. It is important that students learn to defend their views in political discussions and social debate; this is why I help them to develop research and discussion skills.
15. Citizenship education should focus on the development of skills and attitudes, much needed for students to survive in today's complex world.
16. Young people may learn the law by heart, but this does not mean they will necessarily obey it.
17. Students should learn to take into account the common good, rather than follow only their private interests.

18. I feel that I am first and foremost a teacher and only then a subject specialist.
The subject matter is only secondary.
19. Controversial political problems should not be discussed in class.
20. Citizenship education should not be associated with politics, because individual acts of compassion and generosity are more important.
21. The subject "*Whatever it is called in the country*" is in fact citizenship education. Both are aimed at educating future citizens.
22. Young people should acquire knowledge about democracy: how it works and why is it worth defending it.
23. It is very important that students learn how to analyse social problems, but also select the most important ones.
24. The teacher should present to the class only established facts about society.
Social norms are not a suitable topic for teaching.
25. Official citizenship programs are essentially uncritical: democracy is good, we are a democratic state, therefore we are good.
26. The democratic approach to inquiry and debate should be demonstrated in class, in order to encourage students' interest in politics.
27. Students cannot learn democracy at school, because school itself is not a democratic institution.
28. Citizenship education means to hold students accountable for their behaviour and to get them involved charity and community activities.
29. It is better that the teacher discusses norms and values instead of stiffly adhering to neutrality.
30. The teacher should not disclose his or her political views to the students. Quite the opposite, only broadly accepted social and political values should be discussed.
31. My task as a teacher is to defend state policies and interests, because I am an employee of a state financed educational institution.
32. I am obliged as a citizen and a teacher to stir things up if necessary, and not only through the so called legitimate political channels.
33. In my opinion, citizenship education is an emergency measure by the state against the obviously growing lack of social tolerance.
34. We should not declare any ideology to be correct; instead, we should give students an opportunity to get acquainted with various ideas about political and social order.
35. The most important task of citizenship education is to inform students about their civil and political rights and freedoms.
36. Citizenship education should be of some use to society, for instance by contributing to greater safety.
37. Citizenship education is an outdated concept, because it conveys to students the values of the middle class.
38. Civic obedience means more than just obeying the law, it means obedience to higher personal standards and higher social interests.
39. Students should be made to realize that they live in a world of growing interdependence. Even though we do not respect each other, we still depend on each other.
40. Citizenship education should cultivate a spirit of unity, loyalty to the state and national pride.

