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Some thoughts on civic education: Lessons from the international literature

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Abstract

From time to time, both political scientists and education researchers articulate that the civic competences of the Hungarian youth should be developed. The phenomena, which should be tackled in this way are varied: lack of basic civic knowledge, low political interest, low level of political participation, relatively high rejection of democracy, and openness to radicalism are among the most frequently mentioned. Based on this, civic education may seem a universal therapy. Since a good deal of empirical research from mature democracies has shown the positive effects of civic education, it should be indeed kept on the list of potential solutions. However, those scholars, policymakers, and practitioners who would like to achieve change, should go beyond this superficial tip and ask the key questions of civic education. Who is a responsible citizen and how can civic education prepare students for this role? The paper does not seek to provide exclusive answers to these questions. It aims to provide a comprehensive picture of possible answers, based on the current literature of various disciplines.

Keywords: civic education; citizenship; Hungary; literature review

1 Introduction

In the twentieth century, many democracies articulated the need for modern civic education, which included the topics of democratic commitment, social inclusion, tolerance, and the need for more equitable societies. Also, school curricula came under the spotlight as a potential means of achieving these goals (Kennedy, 2019). In the 1990s, as the level of civic knowledge, interest, and engagement of youth declined, raising concerns both in the USA and the mature democracies of Western Europe, interest in civic education gained new momentum (Galston, 2001; Torney-Purta, 2002a). At the same time, the topic became relevant in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe because of the need for democratic consolidation and the democratic (re)socialization of citizens (Torney-Purta, 2002a). During the past decades, several actors, including governments, educational agencies, and non-governmental organizations, have promoted civic education. For example, civic education has a long

tradition in the United States, and an especially rich literature deals with the country's experiences from various angles. Further often-discussed examples include the German model – which is based on the more-than-40-year-old Beutelsbach Consensus – and the famous Crick Report from 1998, which set out a vision for citizenship education in England. Also, the European Union has prioritized civic education several times in the past decades. For example, the European Commission defined active citizenship as one of the four aims of education in 2001, and the European Parliament and the Council listed social and civic competences among the eight key competences for lifelong learning in a 2006 recommendation. Civic education became a leading theme at the beginning of 2015, after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen. As a result of the events, the ministers responsible for education issued a joint statement (Paris Declaration, 2015) stressing that education has a key role to play in communicating shared values and in educating young people to be responsible, open, active and tolerant citizens. A year later, a follow-up report showed that while most Western and Southern European Member States had made some policy responses since the Declaration was adopted, this was less common in Central and Eastern Europe (Eurydice, 2016).

Despite decades of general interest in school-based civic education, the field was relatively neglected in empirical political science between the 1960s and 1990s, mainly due to an American study (Campbell, 2019). Langton and Jennings (1968) examined the effects of civics courses on a broad range of civic outcomes; their results suggested that such courses only have a marginal effect or do not have an effect at all. The 1998 US study by Niemi and Junn brought a turnaround as, unlike the study by Langton and Jennings (1968), it found positive effects. Also, an international civic education study was launched in this period. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement has so far organized three waves of data collection: in 2001 (Torney-Purta et al., 2001), in 2009 (Schulz et al., 2010), and in 2016 (Schulz et al., 2017), which have served as the basis for several empirical studies since then. Despite this growing scholarly interest in civic education, no mature messages can be articulated regarding this field. The reasons are manifold. First, the aims of civic education will always be debated due to their political, value-laden character. Even though this is an irresolvable issue, scholars of civic education should be more conscious and more explicit about their standpoints in this debate. In several empirical studies there is no reference to the competing views of citizenship and the authors' normative position. This makes it hard to link the theoretical viewpoints and the empirical results. Second, the exact aims of civic education have to be redefined from time to time, also in line with a given approach, as they are not only value laden, but also context dependent. As the context changes, so do the ends and means of civic education. Third, the study of civic education is a truly interdisciplinary field and involves scholars of political science, sociology, education research, psychology, and economics. Even though there have been some remarkable attempts (e.g. Mouritsen & Jaeger, 2018; Print & Lange, 2013) not to lose sight of this interdisciplinary character and to address the most important questions associated with civic education in their complexity, this is not the general approach. With this in mind, it is not hard to imagine how confused practitioners who are given the task of educating future citizens can be, and why it can be an easier option for many of them to ignore civic education entirely.

In Hungary, there are several phenomena which inspire people to support civic education, especially when youth are considered. It is conventional wisdom that young people are alienated and disengaged from the world of politics. They opt out of traditional forms of participation, but this trend is not coupled with an involvement in new forms of participation.

The level of passivity of Hungarian youth is striking, even within the post-socialist country bloc (Kovacic & Dolenec, 2018). Moreover, studies show that skepticism about democracy is widespread (Szabó & Székely, 2016), and many young people are open to anti-democratic, radical voices (Oross & Szabó, 2019; Sik, 2017). What is more, university students with democratic attitudes are politically less engaged than university students that have an authoritarian attitude (Kovács, Oross & Szabó, 2017). Many scholars who have examined these various phenomena conclude that there is a need to develop the civic competences of young Hungarians and civic education should be fostered. Nonetheless, studies about civic education are quite rare in the field of social sciences. What is known, based on the few pieces of research, is that no educational ministries have prioritized or implemented meaningful civic education since the regime change (Hunyadi & Wessenauer, 2016) and school-based civic education has been empty and dysfunctional since then (Csákó, 2009; *Iskola és Társadalom*, 2017; Szabó, 2009). Although this statement is very important, at best it is good only for self-flagellation if no further suggestions accompany it concerning how the situation could be improved. Given the current state of research on civic education, there is a long way to go before we can arrive at policy recommendations. However, a step forward can be taken: some lessons can be drawn from the international scholarly discourse on civic education for a Hungarian audience. This study is designed according to this goal and has two objectives. First, to highlight some important issues regarding civic education and through this to fertilize discussion among academics. In some cases, it arrives at provisional conclusions that are open to scholarly debate. In other cases, it just formulates questions, hoping they will attract academics to contribute to this field of research. Second, the study is written to attract the attention of teachers and seeks to highlight a range of theoretical and practical issues from more disciplines, hoping that these will provide input for their work. It was emphasized earlier that civic education research has an interdisciplinary character, but reviewing all the relevant research fields is beyond the scope of this article. Mostly, it is the perspectives of psychological research that are missing (for such contributions, please see, e.g., Borgida, Federico & Sullivan, 2009; Carretero, Haste & Bermudez, 2016; Pancer, 2015; Stevenson et al., 2015). In the review no guidelines will be given but rather the complexity and the challenging nature of this work will be shown. Hopefully, this will not deter practitioners but rather motivate them to find ways of implementing civic education that best suit them and the people who they are working with.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2 the basic concepts of citizenship, civic education, and civic engagement are introduced. Section 3 briefly argues why schools ought to play a prominent role in civic education. In Section 4, different approaches to citizenship are presented and some implications for civic education are discussed. Next, empirical findings on the effects of civic education are summarized, and the role of teachers is also discussed. The paper finishes with a short conclusion.

2 Key concepts

Citizenship is an unavoidable notion when discussing civic education. Broadly, citizenship can be defined as membership in a political community characterized by rights and duties, which manifest in three dimensions: a legal, a political, and an identity dimension (Leydet, 2017). Thus citizenship is way more than a legal status – it also implies a broad set of virtues,

attitudes, and behaviors. As Levinson (2014, p. 3) puts it, citizenship can be treated as 'a way of being in the world.' Such basic statements can be often found in the different discussions about citizenship, but after that, disputes and disagreements begin. How can the various dimensions of citizenship be defined? How important are these dimensions and how do they relate to each other? What are the appropriate normative standards of each of them? These are the questions around which the debates on the concept of citizenship unfold (Leydet, 2017), and the answers that are given to them define the good or responsible citizen.

Most definitions of *civic education* are developed within a democratic theoretical framework without making this explicit. However, as Kennedy (2019, p. 18) states, civic education 'is best seen as a political construction designed to serve the purposes of the nation state reflecting its values, its purposes and its priorities.' Some would surely criticize this definition because it focuses solely on nation states, but at the moment it is more important that it acknowledges that civic education can not only be democratic, but also authoritarian in nature. In a post-socialist context, it is worth admitting that civic education is not desirable per se, but only if it has a democratic character. This is especially so because many scholars argue (e.g. Csákó, 2009; *Iskola és Társadalom*, 2017) that civic education in Hungary is still failing due to the legacy of a non-democratic past. Such a legacy might include the fear of indoctrination or the lack of understanding of democracy. Because of this, one could argue that the use of the terms 'education for democracy' or 'education for democratic citizenship' would be more precise, but the use of the term 'civic education,' which implicitly assumes democratic aims, is more common.

According to Scorza (2011, p. 232), 'civic education aims to promote and shape civic engagement by developing citizens' competencies (e.g., attitudes, skills, and knowledge) needed for participation in community, government, and politics.' In its broadest meaning, this is a lifelong process in which several actors are involved, intentionally or even deliberatively (Crittenden & Levine, 2016). Even though this paper concedes the complexity of this process, it intentionally focuses only on one part of it: school-based civic education. Section 3 argues why. It should also be mentioned that civic education not only has a socializing effect, preparing people for their roles in various communities, but also a potentially transformative capacity by equipping them with the competency to be able to think critically and act upon this (Peterson et al., 2016). Last, within the context of schools, civic education is used as an umbrella term as it can be implemented in numerous different ways, such as civics courses, active learning opportunities, overall school culture, and an open classroom climate.

Civic engagement is a central element of the practice of citizenship, and this term has framed the discussion about the topic in past decades. However, as Berger (2009) highlights, civic engagement has become a catch-all-term in the social science literature as it has been used by different disciplines to describe a wide variety of things – from social connectedness through membership in particular organizations such as sports clubs or churches to political activity. Even though the latter are imprints of an intrinsically pluralistic civic life and of the various ways that citizenship is practiced, the use of the umbrella term as an analytical concept is problematic. An overly broadly defined, vague, and imprecise concept can lead to misunderstandings and false conclusions about both the actual and desired levels of civic engagement. To overcome the problem, Berger proposes to drop the qualifier 'civic' entirely and replace the all-encompassing term with a set of more nuanced 'engagements': political, social, and moral. In all three cases, the author understands engagement as a combination of

attention and activity. While in particular cases engagement can also refer to only attention or only action, as a generalized condition it is always a combination of both. Berger defines the three categories as follows. Political engagement is any attentive activity which directly involves any level of polity or which affects government action directly or indirectly. By contrast, social engagement includes associational involvements having no political objective. Such activities have received a lot of attention in political science as they may produce social capital, which may foster political engagement. In this sense, social engagement can be, but is not necessarily, pre-political. Finally, moral engagement is attentive action that supports a particular moral code, moral reasoning, or moral principles. Berger emphasizes that a healthy democracy needs all three kinds of engagement. However, the substance of moral engagement, and the desired level, realms, aims, and means of social and especially political engagement are open to debate (for some details of this debate, see Section 4). The three kinds of engagement often intertwine, but as concepts they are and should be distinctive in the scholarly discourse.

In my view, Berger's approach helps to think about engagement in a more nuanced way as it distinguishes between the different types and emphasizes that only a combination of attention and activity can lead to meaningful engagement. Many argue for the need to increase civic engagement in general, presenting it as a positive thing without explaining what is meant by it or which preconditions it should meet. But only by using a more differentiated approach can we create a realistic picture of the actual levels of engagement and have a meaningful discussion about the desired ones.

Moreover, I believe that this approach can help both in the design of school-based civic education programs and in the design of empirical research on the subject, and can lead to clearer messages about its impact. Accordingly, before civic education is proposed as a cure for a phenomenon, the phenomenon itself should be judged (i.e., the identification of in which category it belongs, and whether it is indeed a threat to democracy). Moreover, when any civic education activity is planned and its effects are later measured, it should be kept in mind which kind of engagement it is intended to promote and shape. Pedagogical approaches and teaching methods should be chosen based on this decision, and measured outcomes should also be in line with the original intentions. Moreover, in a context such as the Hungarian one, where ideas and knowledge about school-based civic education are still immature, such a categorization can help to delimit and enrich the discourse on this issue.

3 Why schools?

In Section 2 two key elements of civic education were emphasized. First, it is a lifelong process, and second, several actors are potentially involved in it. Even though every stage of this process and all the actors involved in it are worth studying, the predominance of the international scholarly interest in schools in the empirical literature is justified.

The emphasis on the young is reasonable due to the characteristics of the various stages of psychosocial development. According to Erikson's theory (Erikson, 1963; 1968), the time from about 12 to 18 years old is the period when individuals are dominantly occupied with the search for a sense of self and personal identity, including personal values, beliefs, and goals. Adolescents explore various options to help them find their identity and fit into society.

Thus civic habits and values are also relatively easily influenced at this age (Crittenden & Levine, 2016). Besides this, conceptual frameworks and content learned at this stage of life serve as a filter for additional socialization effects (Percheron, 1999).

Factors influencing the political socialization process can be formal (school, various organizations, churches) and informal (e.g. family, peers, cultural patterns and individuals' own lived experience) (Szabó, 2013). The socialization mechanism of the particular agent can be direct or indirect, but in most cases, both are involved. Moreover, the role of a particular agent can change over time to great extent (Bognár, 2014). As the effects of the various factors interact and intertwine, it is nearly impossible to argue why some of them should receive more attention. Also, there are many reasons to think that school-based civic education is not the most effective way to shape political, social, or moral engagement. Hence, the reason why schools dominate the discourse on civic education is purely pragmatic: educational institutions are subject to public policy to a much greater extent than other actors (Campbell, 2019). If no attention is paid to school-based civic education, the largest explicit opportunity for public policy is missed. What is more, an absence of attention can lead to a lack of direct, conscious and intentional civic education in schools, but this does not mean that civic education in its broadest meaning does not take place. In this case, its absence has a socializing effect (Csákó, 2009).

The fact that schools are important agents of civic education from a public policy point of view does not necessarily mean that they are on the top of the education policy agenda as educating future citizens is only one of the many possible goals of schooling. The education system has eight main functions (Halász, 2001): (1) developing an individual's personality; (2) cultural reproduction; (3) reproducing or transforming the social structure; (4) promoting economic growth; (5) legitimizing the political system; (6) ensuring social inclusion; (7) providing services; and, (8) accelerating or decelerating social change. These functions do not have equal weight in various education systems and even though some of these elements may amplify each other, there are typically significant trade-offs between them (Halász, 2001). In past decades, qualifications for employability have dominated both policy priorities and education research at the expense of the other aims (Kennedy, 2019; Peterson et al., 2016). However, as economies, and hence the skills employers are looking for, are changing, multiple potential ways of implementing civic education align with emerging business priorities. For example, many of the twenty-first-century skills defined by the World Economic Forum (2016), such as cultural and civic literacy, critical thinking, communication, collaboration and social and cultural awareness, can be developed through civic education. Thus, at this moment it might be easier to reconcile the seemingly conflicting aims of schooling – preparing young people for employability and for being future citizens – than it was in preceding decades.

Despite all of the above, it is worth mentioning that some authors have cast doubt on the necessity for and implementation of school-based civic education. Murphy (2007), for example, criticized the field from two main points of view. On the one hand, he argued that the goal of civic education, the development of civic virtue, cannot be effectively achieved in a school setting. However, based on the empirical evidence that has accumulated since the publication of Murphy's study, this statement is no longer tenable (see Section 5 and the Annex). On the other hand, the author claimed that civic education compromises the inherent moral purpose of school education – namely, developing a desire for knowledge and the conscientious search for truth. For this reason, Murphy concluded that schools can only aim

to impart civic knowledge, and that any activity beyond this (e.g. aimed at developing civic virtues) is fraught with contradictions and can be considered indoctrination. In so doing, however, Murphy did not reject school-based civic education but was arguing for a narrow concept of it, focused on knowledge transfer.

Merry (2020) also questioned the power of schools to produce good citizens. His criticisms were specifically related to the liberal approach to civic education. According to him, the proponents of this approach are too disconnected from the real world of schools and ignore the inequalities in school systems and individual schools. Moreover, many forms of civic education can themselves contribute to the reproduction of inequalities. For example, the form of the latter that focuses exclusively on knowledge transfer and on learning about political institutions – which Murphy (2007) considered the only acceptable form of implementation – favors students who morally or intellectually conform. Merry (2020) further questioned whether state authority is legitimate at all if the same authority is used to determine who is a good citizen, and conveys this idea through education. Despite his criticisms, the author stressed that '[n]one of what I have argued means that schools have nothing to offer, or that the social reproduction of inequality is the whole story' (Merry, 2020, p. 132). He cited several real-life examples that he considers desirable manifestations of school-based civic education. Nevertheless, Merry argued that instead of promoting ideal forms of civic education, it would be more useful to focus on making schools more just institutions. In this vision, however, he left room for current, less ambitious forms of civic education in schools, such as civic courses or community service.

Even though these studies strongly criticize school-based civic education, none of them go as far as rejecting it altogether. Rather, they present models that fit their normative positions as the solution. As civic education is essentially normative, it is associated with no model which could not be criticized. Hence, the more approaches teachers encounter, the more consciously they will be able to choose between the various alternatives, hopefully with the best interests of their students in mind. For this reason, the following section presents some approaches to 'the good citizen.'

4 Approaches to citizenship

Now that the meaning of civic education has by and large been discussed, and the role of schools in civic education justified, it is time to turn to the question that should be the starting point of every discussion about civic education: Who is a good citizen? The answer depends greatly on what kind of democracy is thought to be ideal (and/or practical). The following brief descriptions do not give a complex picture of the various approaches and are not suitable for illustrating the points of contention and different positions associated with each approach. They are, however, adequate for giving a sense of the main differences between the models and of the wide range of very different content that moral engagement can have. Moreover, if we look at these approaches in relation to Berger's (2009) two other categories – political and social engagement – it becomes apparent that they take on different weights in each model.

Many discussions about civic education that entail theoretical reflection mention two approaches as their points of reference: the liberal and/or the republican approach. For liberals, democracy means the ability to exercise control over the government, while for

republicans democracy is understood in terms of civic self-government (Leydet, 2017). In other words, while classical liberals want to safeguard individual liberty against the state and prefer regimes that make relatively modest demands of citizens, civic republicans argue that highly active and deliberative citizenship constitutes a good life and therefore endorse a republican regime (Crittenden & Levine, 2016). Thus the liberal understanding of citizenship emphasizes its first dimension, legal status, while republicans primarily understand citizenship as political agency, accentuating its second dimension (Leydet, 2017). Freedom is a central notion in both approaches, but with a different meaning. For liberals, freedom is non-interference, while for republicans it is non-domination, understood as 'living under the rule of laws that one has a voice in making' (Dagger, 2004, p. 174). Even though the two models are typically seen as two ends of a spectrum, some argue that it is reasonable to consider them complementary. There are times when the liberal approach to citizenship is sufficient to make democracy work, but at least intermittently, when security provided by authorities must be secured, the republican public-spiritedness of citizens is needed (Walzer, 1989, p. 217 cited by Leydet, 2017).

Neither of these normative viewpoints about the desired type of democracy question the importance of civic education, but they strongly influence its content. Hoskins (2013) summarizes the main differences between the two extreme approaches as follows. According to liberals, education should be neutral towards the different conceptions of the good, thus civic education should aim to help young people to become autonomous citizens who possess adequate political skills and enough knowledge to be able to act in their own self-interest. Even though individualism is central to liberals, this does not mean that the importance of interpersonal or group relations is not acknowledged at all. Hence, doing activities aimed at helping others may constitute civic education, but such activities do not necessarily reflect on society, politics, or further critical thinking. By contrast, from the republican perspective, civic education means developing the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values which enable political engagement and involvement in political decision-making not only as possibilities but obligations and values in themselves. Central, explicitly taught values include public-spiritedness, solidarity, the responsibility to act for the common good, and a belief in the importance of political engagement.

Even though liberalism and republicanism are the most influential theories that affect civic education, there are other approaches to citizenship that are reflected in the practice of many education systems. Mouritsen and Jaeger (2018) mention three of these. First, they describe the communitarian-national approach, which values tradition and religion and sees respect for authority, normative grounding and civil-society voluntarism as desirable virtues. Identity is based on national belonging, and knowledge of national history and culture is required. Community is an important notion both in republicanism and communitarianism. However, while a republican does not value any particular community intrinsically, a communitarian does. A republican esteems a community of self-governing, public-spirited citizens committed to formative politics, while a communitarian desires that the values and preferences of a particular community prevail (Dagger, 2004).

The next approach introduced by Mouritsen and Jaeger (2018) is the intercultural one. It is based on the respect for and recognition of different cultures, with dialogue and empathy as the main virtues. Regarding identity, pride in diversity and group identity play a key role. This approach emphasizes the need for knowledge of postcolonial history and the

legacy of different ethnic groups. Last, Mouritsen and Jaeger (2018) also describe the ideal type of economic, neoliberal citizen. It is debatable whether this is worth considering as an independent approach, or whether it is rather an extreme version of liberal citizenship in which the classical liberal demand of self-sufficiency is strongly emphasized. Although this thin concept of citizenship might have been quite influential in past decades as future employability dominated the aims of schooling, seeing it as a potential ideal that civic education should pursue is questionable. This approach sees the individual only as a worker or entrepreneur and says little about desirable values, virtues, identities, or knowledge in the public and political realm.

A further approach described by Hoskins (2013) is the critical model of citizenship, which centers on the agenda of questioning the status quo and improving social justice and equality. In this sense, civic education aims to develop the competencies needed for a critical assessment of social problems and injustices and transmit social values like empathy and care. Social movements are seen as the appropriate means of creating social change. Even though the critical model is often discussed among academics, it is rarely found in school settings.

These approaches are the most influential ones in the civic education literature, although the abstract constructions might not be easily accessible to practitioners. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) propose a categorization that aims to accord with theoretical perspectives but also reflect the practiced reality of civic education programs and resonate with practitioners. The three kinds of citizens they define are the personally responsible, the participatory, and the justice-oriented citizen. Even though Westheimer and Kahne do not make any explicit references to the theoretical underpinnings, the three types align with the liberal view, the republican view, and the critical model, in this sequence. Being personally responsible mainly involves the character of the citizen – it concerns being a good person within one's community. The most important values that should be fostered through civic education are honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. Moreover, civic education might also entail engaging students in volunteering. By contrast, the participatory citizen is someone who actively participates in civic affairs and organizes social life. For this purpose, civic education should concentrate on transferring knowledge about how governments and community-based organizations work, and develop skills enabling participation, but also planning and organizing social life. Last, the justice-oriented citizen is associated with the same ideals as described earlier under the critical model of citizenship. To be able to meet these ideals, civic education should ensure opportunities for analyzing and understanding the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and consider collective strategies for change. The authors illuminate the essence of each kind of citizen through the following example: 'if participatory citizens are organizing the food drive and personally responsible citizens are donating food, justice-oriented citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover' (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 243). Westheimer and Kahne make their position about the desirable type of citizen for an effective democracy very clear. They argue that most engagements of personally responsible citizens do not advance democracy, while participatory citizens may become effective contributors, but not necessarily in a thoughtful way. For Westheimer and Kahne, only justice-oriented citizens will understand what causes society's ills and act to diminish them. In the last one-and-a-half decades, this categorization has become fairly widely spread in civic education literature. Presumably, most political scientists find this typology to be an oversimplification, while the overall mes-

sage might trigger intense debate. However, the effort to link practice and theory should be acknowledged and its resonance creates an important message for political scientists: It is worth trying to formulate messages in a more accessible way, even if they are more nuanced and sophisticated.

5 Effects of civic education

Next, an empirical question arises which is worth asking, whatever kind of citizen is thought to be ideal. Is civic education in schools an effective means of shaping the desired civic competencies? It was a prevalent view in political science for decades – mainly based on the results of Langton and Jennings (1968) – that civic education has only a marginal role in political socialization. The landmark event was the nationally representative U.S. study of Niemi and Junn (1998) that showed that civic education classes do affect students' political knowledge. Since then, several methodologically sound studies have shown a positive effect of civic education and have examined its various forms. For the sake of this study, fourteen empirical studies were reviewed (Bruch & Soss, 2018; Campbell, 2008; Condon, 2015; Gainous & Martens, 2012; Green at el., 2011; Kawashima-Ginsberg & Levine, 2014; Keating & Janmaat, 2016; Langton & Jennings, 1968; Martens & Gainous, 2013; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Neundorf et al., 2016; Niemi & Junn, 1998; Torney-Purta, 2002b; Whiteley, 2014). The sampling of the studies was purposive. When selecting the articles, the aim was to cover a wide range of forms of school-based civic education that have been analyzed and the measured outcomes. It was considered important to get an overview not only of the overall effects but also of the effects on disadvantaged students. Another aim was to include studies that examined the long-term effects of civic education. So as not to oversimplify the articles' messages, their main findings are summarized in a table in the annex to this study. This section aims to draw some general statements.

The first is that empirical studies barely refer to theoretical debates about the good citizen explicitly. This may be because the programs and curricula they evaluate do not do so either. Nevertheless, I believe that it is important to try to make the link between theoretical concepts and empirical results. So, if the examined forms of civic education are seen through the lens of the various citizenship approaches, it is obvious that some of them reflect the intentions of the liberal approach, focusing on formal instruction and factual knowledge, and sometimes introducing a special curriculum on civil liberties or having a special focus on voting. But there are other forms of civic education that are better aligned with the republican approach, such as the open classroom climate or education through citizenship, which are deliberative and participatory forms of learning. The idea of the critical, justice-oriented citizen is barely present in these empirical studies – which situation is in line with the statement of Westheimer and Kahne (2004) that only a minimal number of civic education programs seek to educate young people based on this ideal. On a theoretical level, many learning practices such as the open classroom climate and some of the active learning strategies would have been suitable for educating critical citizens, but based on the available data it is not known whether this was the actual intention. However, a study by Kawashima-Ginsberg and Levine (2014) implicitly refers to this citizenship concept as it differentiates two types of service-learning programs: those that also involve a discussion of the roots of the problem, and those which do not. In respect of the measured outcomes, political engagement and so-

cial engagement dominate – moral engagement is rarely of interest. What is more, the dual nature of the desired kind of engagement (in terms of it being partly an attentive activity: Berger, 2009) is not reflected in every study; many of them focus solely on activity. This is not a criticism of empirical studies, which understandably focus on easily measurable outcomes. However, it is risky if civic education programs are designed based solely on such evidence and do not promote goals that are difficult to measure but necessary for maintaining a healthy democracy.

Turning to the results of these studies, some disagreements and ambiguities emerge; nevertheless, some conclusions can be drawn. First, civic education is not an empty promise: it can be an effective policy measure. Nonetheless, it is not a silver bullet. Policymakers and educators not only have to make a conscious choice about which citizenship approach they seek to convey implicitly or explicitly. They also have to be aware of the trade-offs between the desired civic competences associated with the particular ideal. In some cases, teaching strategies, which are beneficial for developing a competence have no effect on, or harm another competence. For example, the results of Gainous and Martens (2012) show a clear trade-off between the development of political efficacy and factual political knowledge in the case of disadvantaged students if a wide range of instructional methods is used. The question is whether it is in line with the overall aim of civic education and the maintenance of a healthy democracy if efficacy grows while political knowledge does not. Is having factual political knowledge an essential characteristic of the democratic citizen? If so, how could this trade-off be eliminated? Also, some characteristics of the good citizen, values, and attitudes are harder to develop in classroom settings. An interesting question is how the moral component of civic education could be strengthened.

Second, political socialization is a complex process, and there is an interaction between the various agents. Civic education matters, but as many studies have shown (e.g., Gainous & Martens, 2012; Langton & Jennings, 1968; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Neundorf et al., 2016), it matters most for students who need it the most: those with disadvantaged backgrounds, who have fewer resources, and lack parental political socialization. Educators should choose the pedagogical approaches which fit the needs of the students they are working with. Third, civic education is a broad concept that can take many forms within a school. But the results of Condon (2015) suggest that we should think about civic education from an even broader point of view than is the case now in the mainstream literature. Condon (2015) shows that there is an important downstream effect: the development of verbal skills can foster civic outcomes. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) have already pointed out that verbal and cognitive proficiency are essential resources for engagement as they are necessary for information utilization, debate, and argumentation. Also, verbal skills are a precondition for developing other civic skills, as is critical thinking. Nevertheless, verbal skills are rarely framed as civic skills (Condon, 2016). I believe their paramount importance should be emphasized regarding civic education, although it should not be used at the expense of more classical forms of civic education. Also, the essential role of verbal skills can have important implications in contexts in which civic education is typically avoided, such as in the case of post-socialist countries. Approaches that emphasize the importance of the development of verbal skills are less liable to be rejected by practitioners than approaches that explicitly aim at the development of civic competences. Thus they can be a good starting point, on which civic education can be gradually built.

The empirical studies reviewed here offer important messages regarding the effects of civic education, but how to translate these into everyday classroom practices is not self-evident. It should not be forgotten that teachers are key figures in the education process, whose various beliefs – beliefs about self, context, content, specific teaching practices, teaching approaches and students (Fives & Buehl, 2012) – greatly affect what happens in the classroom (Bishop & Wößmann, 2002; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Patterson et al., 2012). Nevertheless, studies that focus on the role of teachers' beliefs in civic education are quite rare, even in the international literature. One robust large-scale quantitative study was undertaken by Reichert and Torney-Purta (2019), who analyzed data from twelve European and Asian countries from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of 2009 using latent class analysis. The authors identified three distinct teacher profiles based on the question what teachers thought the primary goals of civic education were. The identified profiles were (1) teaching for dutiful school participation and consensus-building; (2) teaching for knowledge and community participation; and (3) teaching for independent thinking and tolerance. The national samples were relatively homogeneous, and many countries were largely dominated by one of the three profiles. For example, in all Nordic countries more than 80 percent of teachers belonged to the third type. In contrast, in Czechia and Poland teacher profiles were more evenly distributed across the three categories. The results of this study suggest that exploring teachers' various understandings regarding civic education is very important in Eastern European countries, as the situation there is plausibly more fragmented than in more developed countries.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was twofold. First, to start the discussion about civic education at the point where most Hungarian studies finish it. I fully agree that we need civic education in Hungarian schools, but I believe that there is a range of controversial questions that deserve more attention from social scientists before a strong claim is made. Hopefully, the results of the international literature presented in this study can fertilize the discussion, but some further directions can also be suggested. Crittenden and Levine (2016) listed a range of philosophical questions pertinent to civic education. For example: What is the relationship between a good regime and good citizenship? Who decides what constitutes good citizenship? What means of civic education are ethically appropriate? This study touched upon the first question in a rather superficial way, but I believe that this and the further questions deserve in-depth discussion. As Crittenden and Levine (2016) write, 'questions are rarely treated together as part of comprehensive theories of civic education; instead, they arise in passing in works about politics or education. Some of these questions have never been much explored by professional philosophers, but they arise frequently in public debates about citizenship.' Moreover, these questions should be discussed pragmatically, not losing sight of the current factors that threaten democracies nor the particularities of the post-socialist context, as civic education has a context-dependent nature.

There is also a range of empirical questions related to civic education. Public discussions are often centered on the question of whether there is an effect, but as the literature review presented here suggested, there are plenty of questions beyond this that are worth examining. For example: Are the effects long-lasting? How do education and family interact?

Is there a compensation effect, and in which domain(s)? What kind of downstream effects are there within the field of education? The thorough literature review of Campbell (2019) provides ample food for thought for those who are interested in such questions. Finally, the state of the current literature suggests that the dialogue between theoretically and empirically oriented scientists should be more intense, while also keeping in mind that their results should be accessible and useable for educators.

The second aim of the study was to shed light on the complex nature of civic education to practitioners, and to provide some inputs for their work. Even though the lack of adequate public policy is often mentioned as a reason why civic education fails in Hungarian schools, this literature review has an important takeaway. Schools themselves and individual teachers can make a difference when they are dedicated to the aims of civic education. An open classroom climate or a positive school ethos are forms of civic education that can be realized within many education regimes. This is not to suggest that education policy does not have a responsibility – naturally, a lot depends on the conditions and incentives created by this. The message is rather that schools and teachers do have agency under many circumstances. Naturally, many characteristics of the Hungarian education system, such as early tracking, the vocationalization of secondary education, and the taboo culture around politics in schools, make this task hard. But there are still opportunities that are worth considering. The development of verbal skills may be one of the most promising places to start as it is not as value laden as civic education is. What is more, it has positive effects not only on civic but also work-related/economic outcomes. Teachers who are dedicated to the aims of civic education may have a means of killing two birds with one stone, while also avoiding some of the costs associated with more classical forms of civic education.

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Annex

An overview of empirical studies on the effects of civic education

Study	Form(s) of civic education examined	Measured outcome(s)	Result(s)
Langton and Jennings, 1968	Formal instruction	• political knowledge/ • sophistication • political interest • spectator politicization • political discourse • political efficacy • political cynicism • civic tolerance • participation orientation	• no overall effect on civic outcomes • positive impact on the civic engagement of African American students
Niemi and Junn, 1998	Formal instruction	• political knowledge (factual knowledge on NAEP civics assessment)	• modest overall positive effect • higher amounts and greater recency of civic courses, a broader range of topics and more discussion of current events have additional positive effects
Torney-Purta, 2002b	Formal instruction Explicit focus on learning about voting and elections Open classroom climate	• civic knowledge • sense of engagement, including willingness to vote • sense of efficacy	• explicit learning about voting and elections is positively associated with willingness to vote • open classroom climate is positively associated with both civic knowledge and sense of engagement
Metz and Youniss, 2005	Service-learning (required)	• interest in and understanding of politics • intended participation in civic life, including voting, various conventional forms (volunteering, joining a civic organization) and unconventional forms (such as boycotting a product or demonstrating)	• positive effect on students who were less inclined to serve (non-self-selected youth) in three dimensions: political interest and understanding, future voting and future conventional civic involvement • no effect on students inclined to serve

Study	Form(s) of civic education examined	Measured outcome(s)	Result(s)
Campbell, 2008	Open classroom climate	• likelihood of voting • illegal forms of political expression • civic knowledge • appreciation of political conflict	• open classroom climate correlates with increased political knowledge, greater appreciation for the role of conflict within a democratic political system and increased likelihood of voting • the relationship between open classroom climate and the likelihood of illegal forms of political expression is negative
Green et al., 2011	Formal instruction with an enhanced civics curriculum designed to promote awareness and under-standing of constitu-tional rights and civil liberties	• knowledge about civil liberties • general political knowledge • attitudes towards civil liberties	• positive effect on knowledge about civil liberties, while no effect on general political knowledge • no effect on support for civil liberties
Gainous and Martens, 2012	Various instruction-al aspects of civic education, including instructional breadth, social studies frequency and curricular breadth Open classroom climate	• political knowledge • internal political efficacy • external political efficacy • voting intent	• a wider variety of in-structional methods has a positive effect on political efficacy among students from disadvantaged back-grounds, but it impacts their factual political knowledge negatively • more frequent social studies have a positive effect on disadvantaged students in all dimen-sions, except for internal efficacy • curricular breadth has a positive effect in all dimensions for disadvan-taged students • open classroom climate has positive effects for all students in every dimension, except for internal efficacy, which is positively affected only in the case of less privileged students

Study	Form(s) of civic education examined	Measured outcome(s)	Result(s)
Martens and Gainous, 2013	Open classroom climate Traditional teaching in civics courses Active learning strategies (e.g., research projects or simulations) Using videos in instruction	• political knowledge • external political efficacy • internal political efficacy • intention to vote	• open classroom climate has a positive effect on all outcomes • traditional teaching increases internal political efficacy and intention to vote • active learning has a positive effect on internal political efficacy, but affects political knowledge negatively • videos increase political knowledge
Kawashima-Ginsberg and Levine, 2014	High-quality civics class (interactive, using a variety of civic education techniques) Democratic school climate Required civics test Explicit focus on learning about voting Main theme in social studies was current issues Required service learning Discussion of the problem's root cause in the service project	• electoral engagement • informed voting • political knowledge	• high-quality civics class is a predictor of electoral engagement and more informed voting • service-learning is marginally beneficial as regards informed voting, if the root causes are discussed, but has a negative effect if discussion is not part of the experience • high-quality civics class did not matter for political knowledge, but learning about voting predicted this
Whiteley, 2014	Formal instruction	• political efficacy • sense of morality • political participation • voluntary activity • political values • political knowledge	• medium-term positive effects on efficacy, political participation and political knowledge

Study	Form(s) of civic education examined	Measured outcome(s)	Result(s)
Condon, 2015	Verbal skills	• voting • volunteering with civic organization • volunteering with political campaign	• strong positive effect on voting • smaller positive effect on volunteering with civic organization • no detectable effect on volunteering for political campaign
Keating and Janmaat, 2016	Education through citizenship (school-based political activities)	• voting • expressive political activities (e.g., boycotting or using social media for political purposes)	• medium-term positive effects on both outcomes
Neundorf, Niemi, and Smets, 2016	Formal instruction Open classroom climate Active learning strategies	• political engagement (measured with an index showing the extent to which students follow socio-political issues)	• civic education has a positive effect on political engagement of those who lack parental political socialization (persisting for decades following high school) • the most important school variables are the amount of formal education and inclusion of group projects • classroom climate has no compensation effect
Bruch and Soss, 2018	School climate, understood as experiences regarding school authority	• voting • trust in government	• negative experiences regarding school authority (punitive school policies and a perception of unfair treatment by teachers) decrease the likeliness of voting and the degree of trust in government in young adulthood