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**INVESTIGATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIFIED
COMPONENTS AND FORMS OF BEHAVIOURS OF CITIZENSHIP
COMPETENCE IN GRADE 7 AND GRADE 11**

Theses of Ph.D dissertation

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INTRODUCTION

The leaders and citizens of democratic countries all agree that the educational systems have to prepare their students for the acquisition of social norms and democratic behaviour necessary for everyday life in a democratic society. Citizens' active partaking in public affairs is a key factor in granting the survival of these societies. Hence, a number of countries foster civic education, which appears as a priority in the national educational policies (IEA, 2007). The international suggests that most democratic countries are committed to the assessment and evaluation of citizenship competence: only nine out of the 38 participating countries in the 2009 IEA ICCS survey did not have standards for evaluating their students' citizenship competence (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito & Kerr, 2010). In addition to the curricular regulation of civic education, several research institutes publish theoretical frameworks and models for the assessment of citizenship competence in public education and from time to time – around once in a decade in the current practice – international comparative assessments (IEA studies) include the assessment of civic education and societal knowledge as well.

Previous research in the field was conducted on samples of one age group, hence no prior studies have not analyzed comparatively the citizenship competence and related forms of behaviour of students from different age groups. Prior research did not intend to explore the age related changes using identical dimensions in the analysis of multiple age groups. In addition, due to the lack of several decades of traditions in assessment and educational evaluation in the field, the developmental characteristics of citizenship competence and the sensitive periods of development regarding its components are yet unknown. The empirical research on which this thesis is based makes an attempt to reflect on these knowledge gaps by (1) focusing on the psychic system of the students and their – self-report based – forms of behaviour at the same time and (2) identifying the changes of the components of this construct with age by comparing the results of students from different age groups.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND/LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of the present thesis is based on the work of *Hoskins Villalba, Van Nijlen and Barber (2008)*. Their model of active citizenship allowed us to investigate the civic activity of students from various age cohorts alongside the different aspects of their citizenship competence, because the model relates the manifest civic activity and forms of behaviour to the psychic structure of the individuals, i.e. their citizenship competence. According to the model, the individual's willingness to participate in public affairs depends on the development of his citizenship competence. In addition, it takes into consideration the fact that this is a field where the effect of informal learning (individual experience in the family, workplace or other social environment that is not necessarily intention driven) might be greater than that of formal learning (figure 1).

The definition of citizenship competence used in this thesis is based on the findings of CRELL's citizenship research group and the description of the socio-cultural context of the concept relies on the theoretical foundations of the IEA CivEd and ICCS studies. The *NAGB (2010)* framework for assessment was used as a general operational structure to identify the skills needed for democratic behaviour and everyday participation in a community. It also served as a theoretical frame to which concrete questionnaire items can be developed for any age groups in potential further research.

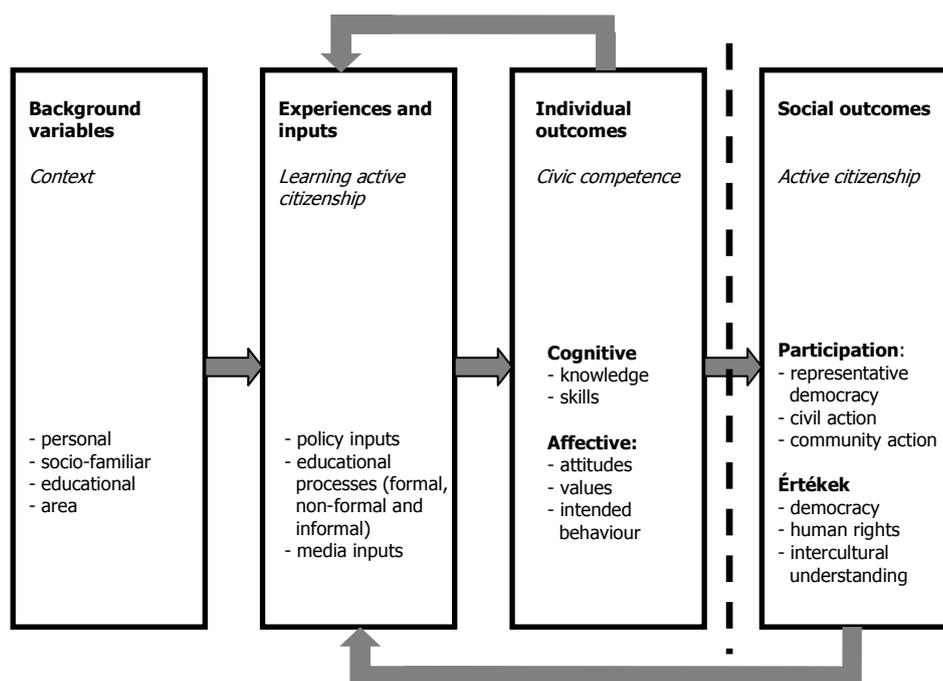


Figure 1
 Model of active citizenship (Hoskins et al., 2008, p 14)

The literature review provides a deep insight into the state of civic education in Hungary. It describes that along the development of more precise, elaborated curriculum standards the state of civic education has constantly been changing over the past two decades. In the years after the change of the political system in 1990, the position of civic education was unstable, it had not been integrated into the everyday life of the institutions (Falus & Jakab, 2005). However, the recently experienced changes in the educational system have definitely pointed towards the revaluation of the subject. In addition to these changes, the development of educational assessment and evaluation in Hungary together with the international results of civic education have verified the necessity of theoretical and empirical research in the field. As a result, systematic theoretical and empirical research of citizenship competence has been started in Hungary in the recent years (see e.g. Kinyó, 2008; Gáti, 2010; Kinyó & Barassevich, 2010; Kinyó & Molnár, 2012).

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the following aspects of citizenship competence among grade 7 and grade 11 students: (1) civic knowledge (subject knowledge and related cognitive skills), (2) forms of their current civic activity and behaviour, (3) forms of their planned civic activities in adulthood, (4) social concepts, (5) political self-concept, (6) civic commitment and (7) their perception of democracy in their schools. In addition to these objective, the research aimed at exploring the relationship between these domains and to comparatively analyze the results according to age, school type and gender.

Investigation of the civic knowledge of grade 7 and grade 11 students

This research did not intend to comprehensively investigate the overall knowledge of students related to society, democratic form of government and its legal system. The main objective was to discover the basic civic knowledge of the students, measuring a restricted, close circle of domains with a newly constructed test. Secondary objectives of the study were to explore

the internal and external factors influencing the results on the test and to identify the differences according to age and socio-economic status, represented by the parents' level of education. Further objectives – as usual in the studies conducted in the University of Szeged – included the discovery of the internal and external system of relationships regarding the examined construct (by investigating the effect of school achievement and other background variables).

Investigation of the forms of students' current and planned civic activity and behaviour

The theoretical model for empirical research in the field (*Hoskins et al., 2008*) allowed us to examine the civic activities and behaviours of the sample together with the investigation of the constituents of their citizenship competence, since it draws a correlation between the psychic structure of the individual (citizenship competence) and the manifested activity. According to the model, the willingness to participate in public affairs depends on the level of development of the citizenship competence. In addition, it takes into consideration the fact that this is a field where the effect of informal learning (individual experience in the family, workplace or other social environment that is not necessarily intention driven) might be greater than that of formal learning. Hence, the study aimed at exploring the relationships between civic knowledge, affective and environmental factors, current forms of activity inside and outside the school and the planned forms of civic activity in adulthood.

Investigation of students' social concepts

The study of social concepts was based on the fact that there are no normative definitions based on scientific consensus about what system and understanding of social concepts are required from the citizens in a democracy. Therefore the research applied the approach of exploring the belief- and conceptual systems of students with the objective of identifying the characteristic features of students' conceptions and their changes with age.

The concepts were examined from three aspects. First, students' core concepts of society and democracy were compared to these concepts of the adult population. Second, the students' degree of relying on state interventions in certain economical and societal issues was explored. Third, it was investigated the importance attributed to community oriented activities and traditional forms of political engagement when defining the behaviour of a „good citizen”.

Investigation of political self-concept and civic commitment

The most influential studies in the field (IEA CivEd, ICCS) included various affective dimensions of citizenship competence as well. Among others the issues of national identity, human rights, equal rights of women, prejudice, and attitudes towards immigrants. This study, however, focused on civic commitment and political self-concept out of the variety of affective dimensions. The dimension of civic commitment was examined in a historical perspective, compared to the findings of the 1999 IEA survey. Regarding the IEA survey, *Torney-Purta Lehman, Oswald & Schultz (2001)* found that the students of traditional, old democracies were more critical about their countries than the students of post-socialist countries. One of the objectives of the present study was to find out whether the students of Hungary still show the strong commitment characteristic to the post-socialist countries more than 20 years after the change of the political system or have their attitudes moved closer to the more critical position of the historic democracies.

In addition to the above objectives, the study aimed at investigating the students' political self-concept as well. The question regarding this construct was how persistent and stable are the following constituents of the political self-concept: political awareness, political

self-confidence, intention of expressing one's political opinions, understanding of political content, interest in politics).

Students' view on democracy in school

Torney-Purta et al (2001) recognised that the students' civic knowledge is influenced by the democratic experiences they encounter in their school. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring how the possibilities of experiencing democracy in grade 7 and 11, the perception of individual differences in the class and the perception of cooperativity and support in the class influence the civic knowledge of the students in Hungary.

Research questions

The questions and hypotheses of the research aiming at exploring and comparing civic knowledge and participatory activities of grade 7 and grade 11 students were grouped into six topics: (1) research methods and instruments, (2) characteristics of students' civic knowledge (knowledge and cognitive skills), (3) influencing factors of the test results, (4) internal and external systems of relationships of citizenship competence, (5) characteristics of psychic components – measured by questionnaire – and forms of activities across ages, school types and genders, (6) characteristics of the questionnaire's content domains. When describing our results, we paid attention to verifying or falsifying our hypotheses (H_{1-30}). Related to the above described topics, the following six research questions were formulated:

1. Are the methods and instruments applied in the research suitable for exploring the civic knowledge, psychic components and forms of civic activities of the grade 7 and grade 11 students in Hungary?
2. How can the civic knowledge of grade 7 and grade 11 Hungarian students be described? What are the characteristics of their civic knowledge and skills?
3. What factors influence the civic knowledge of these students measured on a test?
4. What are the relationships between the civic knowledge of the students and the examined cognitive and affective processes, environmental and behavioural factors?
5. Can any differences be detected in the examined psychic components and forms of civic activities according to age, school type or gender?
6. What kind of age or content specific characteristics can be described in the cognitive, affective and behavioural manifestations measured on a questionnaire?

METHODS

The sample of the study constituted of grade 7 (N=432) and grade 11 (N=491) students of 19 elementary and 21 secondary schools in Hungary. The sample is representative regionally representative of the southern region of the Hungarian Great Plains regarding school types.

The research was conducted in March and April, 2010 and used the developed versions of the instruments previously applied in other studies (*Kinyó*, 2008; *Kinyó & Tóth*, 2010), which means that the applied complex instrument was the outcome of a several year long development process. This complex instrument consisted of a questionnaire and a test, 138 items altogether. The battery was based on the most significant Hungarian and international studies in the field (IEA Cived, 1999; „Iskola és Társadalom 2008” research, *Flanagan, Syvertsen & Stout*, 2007), which were used as sources, however, no adapted equivalent versions of the source instruments were applied.

The test of civic knowledge involved 20 items out of which 13 aimed at exploring the students' knowledge and skills related to the political system and the legal system and 7 referred to the framework of interpreting political information. The involved contents of the measurement reflected on fields of knowledge that relies heavily on the students' everyday experiences regarding societal phenomena and knowledge from other non-school-related sources. Since every student filled in the same instruments, our data allowed direct comparison of the sub-samples according to grades and school types. The reliability indices of the instrument were acceptable in case of both grades (Cronbach's α was 0.73 in grade 7 and 0.77 in grade 11).

The questionnaire measuring the students' (1) civic knowledge, (2) political self-concept, (3) civic commitment, (4) forms of their civic activity and behaviour and (5) perception of democracy in their schools originally consisted of 118 items. We conducted a factor analysis on the questionnaire items in order to reveal the latent structures behind the students' actual answers. We hoped that the generated system of variables would provide a more reliable estimate about the examined field. As an outcome of the factor analysis, the questionnaire was significantly shortened, with a modest decrease in reliability. Cronbach's α of the 51 variables was 0.83 in case of grade 7 and 0.84 in case of grade 11.

RESULTS

Research methods and instruments

It was hypothesized (H_1) that the assembled test could provide a reliable estimate about the civic knowledge of the grade 7 and grade 11 students. Although the Cronbach's α values were lower than the 0.93-0.94 values found in science and general cognitive skills tests, the 0.73 and 0.77 values are considered acceptable in some fields of social sciences. We assume that these lower values can be explained by the low number of items, and the increase in the number of items would also increase the reliability values in both grades.

Two hypotheses were formulated regarding the factor analysis of the questionnaire items (H_{2-3}). It was assumed that the system of variables resulting from the factor analysis would be congruent with the preliminary theoretical structure (H_2). According to the results, the system of variables resulting from the factor analysis was congruent with the theoretical structure, though the more sophisticated factor structure of the factor analysis lead to a deeper understanding of the internal structure of the construct. In the cases of four sub-scales the analysis resulted in the recognition of more differentiated lines of structuring the items, whereas in the case of one sub-scale, the organization of the factor was opposite to the expected showing a more comprehensive structure. The factor analysis was expected to provide more accurate estimates regarding the participants (1) civic knowledge, (2) political self-concept, (3) civic commitment, (4) forms of their civic activity and behaviour and (5) perception of democracy in their schools compared to the one based on the variable structure prior to the factor analysis. It was further assumed (H_3) that the Cronbach's α values would be higher in the case of the repeated reliability analysis, due to the lack of the items excluded by factoring. However, opposing our hypothesis the exclusion of variables resulted in a modest decrease in reliability. Cronbach's α of the 51 variables was 0.83 in case of grade 7 and 0.84 in case of grade 11.

We conducted a multivariable linear regression analysis in order to discover the relationship between the original and the contracted variables. This method is suitable for indicating the explanatory effect of the psychic components and forms of activities measured on the questionnaire (H_4). The results suggested that this analysis was applicable for the discovery of the latent relationships and the diversity of explanatory effects derived from the

characteristics of the applied system of variables. The results showed a wide range of various explained variance. The largest degree of explained variance was found in the case of the contracted variable of Planned political participation in adulthood (PPP), 53.64% in grade 7 and 43.49% in grade 11, while the smallest degree of explained variance was found in the case of the variable Modern forms of political activity of the good citizen (9.73% and 12.44%). The resulted complex system of variables explained 31.68% and 32.58% of the variance of the test results. It is difficult to recognize general tendencies in the explanatory effects of the content and structural units of the instrument summarized in table 12. However, it seems that the greatest explanatory effects are related to the manifest behaviour, i.e. the actual and planned forms of civic activity, and the least explained variables are the ones related to societal concepts. It can be mentioned as a critique of factor analysis that the contraction of several individual variables into factors that characterizes a whole group of variables might result in loss of some valuable aspects of the analysis. However, this research did not suffer from this drawback when applying the method, since the contracted variables included in multi-variable correlation analysis adequately pointed out the hidden sources of the explanatory effects of the perceived phenomena.

Characteristics of the students' civic knowledge (knowledge and cognitive skills)

Three hypotheses ($H_{5.7}$) were articulated regarding the civic knowledge of grade 7 and grade 11 students. Based on prior findings in the literature, grade 7 students were expected to achieve a relatively low result, around 40%p on the test, whereas grade 11 students were expected to achieve significantly higher, assuming development in the field of civic knowledge and related cognitive skills. The hypotheses were partially verified by the results, since the mean achievements in both age group significantly exceeded the expectations – reaching 61.09%p in case of grade 7 and 72.59%p in case of grade 11 – but the direction of changes was in line of the assumptions. The achievements are seemingly high already in the seventh grade and the years of secondary education do not contribute largely to the development of civic knowledge and related skills. The fact that civic knowledge does not develop drastically between grade 7 and 11 suggests that further research needs to concentrate on lower age groups when trying to detect the dynamic periods of civic knowledge development.

It was also assumed that a linearly increasing trend could be drawn in the achievements across increasing school grades and in direction of higher prestige school types, i.e. the achievement of students attending higher grades or more prestigious school types would be significantly higher than that of participants from the lower ends. According to the Tukey's b test conducted on the sub-samples divided by school types and school grades all the higher grade sub-sampled achieved higher than any of the grade 7 samples. However, when comparing the secondary school sub-samples, it turned out that the grammar school sub-sample achieved significantly higher than the other two types, but the sub-samples of vocational and technical schools could not be distinguished based on achievement. That means that the hypothesis of the linear trend according to school types was falsified.

The distribution of achievements was drawn for all the distinguishable sub-samples according to school grade and school types, represented in figure 2, by their histograms of relative frequency. The curves visualize well the characteristics of the distribution of achievements. Neither of the sub-samples reflect a standard distribution.

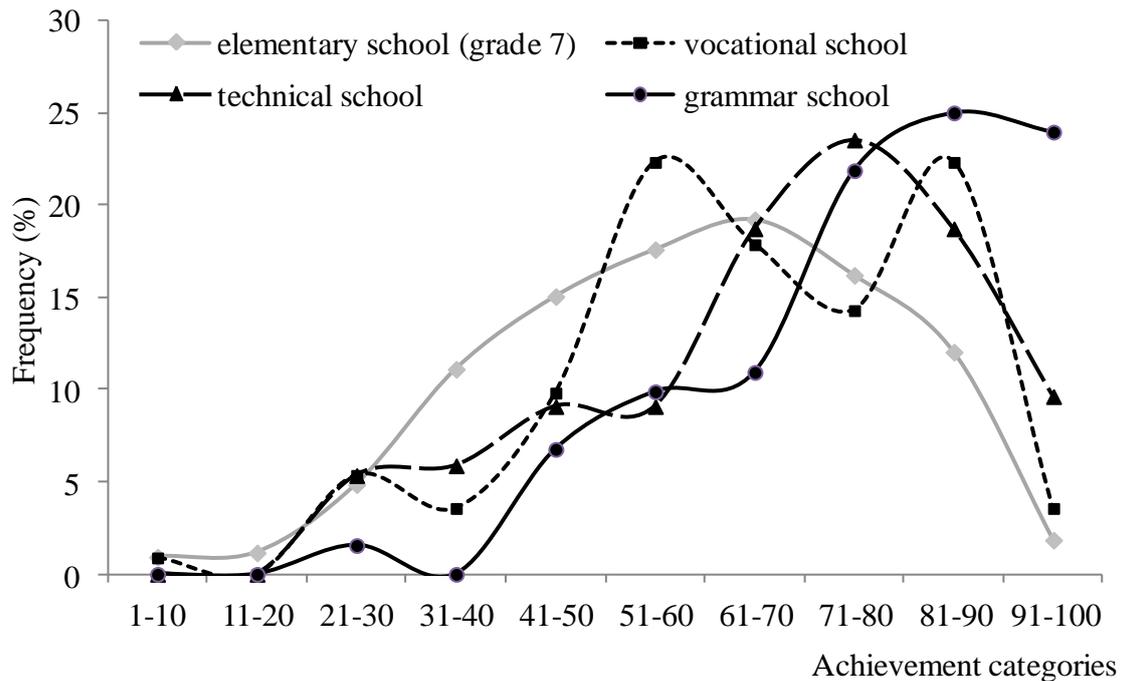


Figure 2
Distribution of achievements according to school grades and school types

Regarding the results of the civic knowledge test it was hypothesized that some items of the test would be identified as making a significant difference between age groups regarding their solutions. At the same time, it was also assumed that some items are likely not to distinguish the two grades from each other (H_7). The results verified this hypothesis, since three items were found that displayed no significant difference between the sub-samples according to school grades, but 17 items showed significantly higher achievement in the grade 11 sub-sample. However, the linear trend in the increase of achievements could not be found in any items, though the grammar school sub-sample achieved significantly higher than any other sub-sample in case of more than 50% of the items.

Influencing factors of the test results

Four hypotheses were formulated regarding the psychic and environmental factors influencing the test results (H_{8-11}). On the basis of the literature it was assumed that no gender differences can be found in grade 7, but in the secondary education the boys significantly achieve higher than the girls (H_8). It was found, however, falsifying this hypothesis that in both age groups the girls achieved a little, but statistically significantly, higher than the boys. Yet, this difference was found to decrease with age. The 4.32%p difference, found in grade 7, means an approximate one and a half year difference, compared to the 3.8%p, found in grade 11, which means 1.32 years.

On the basis of the IEA CivEd survey and additional preliminary studies in Hungary it was assumed that the selective mechanism of the Hungarian school system and the differences between the individual classes would also effect the results. According to the hypothesis, the F value expressing the degree of selection would be equivalent with the F value calculated in the IEA CivEd survey's similar size Hungarian sample and the F value of the secondary school sub-sample would be higher than that of the elementary school sub-sample. The F value of the Hungarian sample (8.78) in the 1999 IEA CivEd study was more than three times more than that of the Finnish sample (2.78), which indicates strong selection (Csapó, Molnár

& Kinyó, 2009). The results of the present study indicate that the hypothesis could be accepted, since 7.02% of the variance in the achievements of the grade 7 students and 9.38% of the variance in grade 11 was explained by the differences of the classes. The F value of the 1999 IEA survey, carried out on a grade 8 sample, is inbetween the two newly measured values, higher than the one measured in grade 7, but lower than the one in grade 11. Although the school change from primary to secondary education after grade 8 increase the differences between schools, these differences are more modest in the field of civic knowledge than they were found in other cognitive domains.

It was further assumed that the level of parents' qualification would effect the level of civic knowledge (H_{10}). This hypothesis was verified by the results, since the correlations between the test achievements and the parents' qualification levels were found to be significant. The quality of civic knowledge correlates most strongly with the variable contracted from both parents' qualification levels. However, the low values of the correlation coefficients (around 0.2) indicate that this factor only explains approximately 4% of the variance in the students' achievement.

The role of parents' qualification was examined at the level of individual classes as well, and on the basis of prior research in other knowledge domains conducted in the University of Szeged we assumed that this variable would have a significant effect on the overall class achievement. The results confirmed this hypothesis, since the 0.45 correlation coefficient found in grade 7 suggest that the students' civic knowledge is in 20.25% determined by their parents' level of qualification, while the coefficient measured in grade 11 (0.52) means that the effect of the parents' qualification explains 27.25% of the variance in achievement.

Internal and external system of relationships in citizenship competence

The internal and external system of relationships in citizenship competence was investigated by (1) the exploration of the relevant background variables, (2) the determination of the influence of civic behaviour and activity and (3) the discovery of the overall effect that the cognitive and affective processes and the environmental and behavioural factors have on citizenship competence (H_{12-16}). It was assumed that the results of the civic knowledge and skills test would strongly correlate with the school achievement in the humanities (literature, grammar, foreign language, history) in both school grades, out of which correlations the strongest would be with the achievement in the subject of history (H_{12}). The test results correlated more or less strongly (0.29-.49) with all of the selected subjects in grade 7. Surprisingly, however, even stronger correlations were found with science subjects. Opposed to the above hypothesis, the strongest correlation was also found with the achievement in physics, instead of history.

It was further hypothesized that the intention to continue learning to higher education, the number of capita per family, the attitude towards attending school and the habits of media consumption (reading news on the internet, watching news on TV or watching movies) would have a significant relationship with the civic knowledge of grade 7 and grade 11 students (H_{13}). The most manifest correlation was found between the intention to continue learning in higher education and the test achievements. The medium strength ($r=0,32$) and strong ($r=0,46$) correlations indicate that eagerness and ambition as general dispositions draw higher level of civic knowledge. Since the additional background variables did not correlate significantly with the test scores in both school grades, the hypothesis was only partially accepted.

On the basis of the literature, we were looking for relationships between the students' psychic structures and the manifest behavioural traits (H_{14-15}). It was assumed that civic knowledge is related to the degree of civic activities in and outside of school. Contrary to the expectations, we found that the frequency of civic activities does not correlate with the level of

civic knowledge, hence our hypothesis was falsified. The expected relationship between the psychic structures and manifest behaviour was found only in one instance, namely in the regression analysis of the explanatory effects of the test results. 3.78% of the variance of the grade 7 students' test results was explained by the Cooperative activity for each other factor that constituted of two questionnaire items.

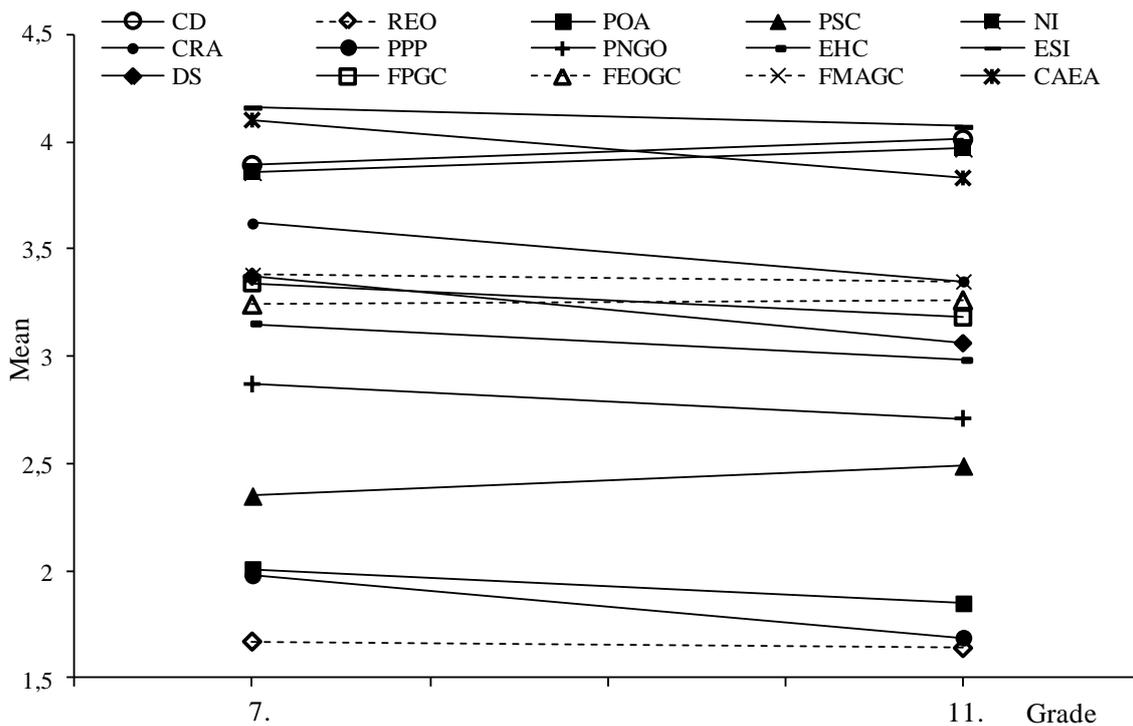
In addition to the assumed relationships between the test achievement and forms of students' actual civic activity the planned civic activity in adulthood was emphatic in this research as well. It was hypothesized that this variable is also related to the test achievements (H_{15}). The results supported this hypothesis, since significant negative correlation ($r_7=-0.20$, $r_{11}=-0.12$) was found between the test scores and the Planned political participation in adulthood (PPP) contracted variable. These correlations indicate that civic knowledge and planned political participation are separated, and the possibility of political participation is not considered by the most successful students. In grade 7, another variable, called Radical expression of opinion in adulthood (ROA), also displays weak, but significant negative correlation with the test achievement ($r=-0.24$). However, in this case the negative correlation demonstrates a more positive role of civic knowledge, since this relationship suggests that those, who know more about political and societal issues would be less likely to express their opinions in radical forms of behaviour.

The calculation of correlation coefficients allowed us to compare pairs of variables, but they are not applicable for discovering the nature of the relationships between the variables and their joint effects. Since the regression analyses were meant to reveal the influencing factors of the test achievement, it was assumed that these factors derive from various cognitive and affective processes and environmental and behavioural affectors in both age groups (H_{16}). The results clearly indicated the presence of these diverse sources. In grade 7, these influencing factors of achievement are strongly related to the school context and behavioural intentions, in secondary school, on the other hand, all the discovered effects are related to internal cognitive processes, symbolic, abstract social scientific thinking.

Characteristics of the psychic components measured on the questionnaire, according to age, gender, school type and forms of activity

The characteristics of psychic components and forms of activities according to age (H_{17}), gender (H_{19}) and school type (H_{18}) were explored on the basis of the contracted variables that were the outcome of the factor analysis. Based on the developmental process of general cognitive and affective psychic components it was assumed that the mean values of the contracted variables resulted by the factor analysis would be significantly different between grade 7 and grade 11. This hypothesis was mainly verified, because there were only three (ROE, FEOGC, FMAGC) out of the 15 contracted variables that did not display significant difference between the examined school grades. The detected differences, however, covered negative changes apart from two variables (NI and PI) (Figure 3).

The mean values of the contracted variables deriving from the resulted factors cover a wide range, the comparison of the individual variables according to age groups drag a picture that is free of major changes – despite the statistically significant differences. The results suggest that no fundamental changes happen in this four year period and the psychic structures are basically formed by grade 7 and the slight changes later on are rather negative. The major conclusion of these findings is that the sensitive periods of the development of the psychic constituents of citizenship competence have to be found in earlier ages, i.e. in lower school grades.



Note: CD=Concept of Democracy, REO=radical expression of opinion in adulthood, POA=Participation in organizations and associations, PSC=Political self-concept, NI=National interest, PPP=Planned political participation in adulthood, EHC=Empathy, help, cooperation, CRA=Country related attitudes, ESI=Expected state intervention, DS=Democracy in school, PNGO=Participation in non-governmental organizations, FPGC=Forms of participation of a good citizen, FEOGC=Forms of expressing opinion of a good citizen, FMAGC=Forms of modern activities of a good citizen, CAEA =Cooperative activity for each other

Figure 3
Mean values of the contracted variables of the questionnaire in grade 7 and grade 11

In addition to exploring the changes in the field between grade 7 and grade 11 this questionnaire study aimed at identifying the differences across school types as well. It was assumed that several changes could be detected in the results of some questionnaire items according to secondary school types and that the sub-sample of secondary grammar school would be definitely separated from the other types in this respect (H_{18}). However, the results did not indicate many significant differences. Only a quarter of all the variables (13) reflected statistically significant differences, related to one of the following seven factors: CD, POA, PI, EHC, DS, FMAGC, CAEA. The differences between the school types were visible e.g. in every variable of the DS factor, however, were completely lacking in case of eight other factors. In 10 cases out of the 13 identified differences, the grammar school sub-sample was the better achieving one, the hypothesis could therefore be partially accepted.

It was also assumed, regarding the the gender specific characteristics in civic behaviour, that several gender related forms of present and planned forms of civic activity would be found among the traditional and the so called social organization related forms as well. Based on the factor structure resulted from factor analysis, the following derived variables could be considered as forms of civic behaviour: Participation in organizations and associations (POA), cooperative activity for each other (CAEA), radical expression of opinion in adulthood (REO), planned political participation in adulthood (PPP) and participation in non-governmental organizations (PNGO). Among the variables included in the POA factor, the activities preferred by the girls are clearly distinguishable from the activities preferred by the boys. While keeping the national traditions was more characteristic to the boys in grade 11, and especially those attending secondary grammar schools, charity and artistic self-expression were preferred by the girls in both age groups. Both variables of the CAEA factor were

dominated by the boys. The after school chat as a form of behaviour did not reflect gender differences in grade 7, however in grade 11 clear differences were found in this variable. The participation in teams and sport club membership indicated clear gender related differences already in grade 7 and they became more emphatic by grade 11. The REO factor factor also displayed a significantly higher mean for the boys. In grade 7 all the item means in this factor are higher in the case of the boys, except for one, but these differences do not indicate real differences in their opinion. In grade 11, however, real differences could be found across the different school types and between genders as well, opposed to the total denial regarding this form of behaviour expressed by the girls, the boys answered rather with „unlikely”. The differences between girls and boys were also present in the PPP and PNGO factors, since the boys’ means are higher in political type of activities and the girls’ means were higher in social types of activities.

Characteristics of the questionnaire’s content domains

11 hypotheses (H_{20-30}) were formulated regarding the content domains of the questionnaire. It was assumed that the influencing factors of the contracted variables representing the psychic components and forms of activities measured with the questionnaire derive from different cognitive and affective processes and environmental and behavioural factors in the two examined age groups (H_{20}). Based on the explanatory effects revealed in the regression analysis of the contracted variables, the factor of political self-concept (PSC) was the only one that did not support this hypothesis. In case of the other 14 factors the hypothesis was verified, since – although the explanatory effector reveal 1-3 common background variables in the two school grades – the main variables explaining the largest variance are different.

It was further hypothesized regarding the planned activity in adulthood that the students would not reject the civic activities completely, but the involvement would differ according to age and gender (H_{21}). In this research the Planned civic activity in adulthood (PCA) factor represented two traditional and well-known forms of civic activities (fundraising and collection of signatures) and the Planned political participation in adulthood (PPP) factor represented the different forms of personal engagement in public affairs. The means of planned civic activity are higher than the means of planned political participation in each age grade. Although the mean values of planned civic activity do not display a high level of overall commitment, they still maintain the potential involvement depending on the situation. The further analysis reveals the gender related and age differences in planned future activities. The boys scored higher in forms of political activity, whereas the girls had a higher mean in civic activities, but there is also an age difference in the planned activities. In grade 7 the girls have a significantly higher mean in forms of civic activities (fundraising and collection of signatures), but by grade 11 this advantage shrinks. In case of boys the phenomenon is exactly the opposit, i.e. in grade 7 they do not rate higher in questions related to the future political engagement, but in grade 11 their advantage over the girls is very clear in this respect.

It was assumed (H_{22}) that voluntary and other forms of community oriented activities are not characteristic to Hungarian students. According to the results, a quarter of grade 7 students and a fifth of grade 11 students were involved in artistic or music groups or drama circles. The least involvement was displayed in religious charity organizations (4.3% and 4.6%). Hence, the low numbers verified the original hypothesis.

We were looking for relationships between the students’ present activities and the forms of planned future activities, therefore it was hypothesized that voluntary or other community oriented activities correlate with planned civic activity in adulthood (H_{23}). In the applied system of variables the variables of participation in organizations and associations (POA) factor represented the forms of student activity. Based on the regression analyses the contracted variable of the planned civic activity in adulthood (PCA) factor had the greatest

influence, since half of the known effects were explained by this one variable. This supported the original hypothesis based on the findings in the international literature (*Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995*).

Three hypotheses were formulated regarding the students' concepts of society, democracy and democratic social order (H_{24-26}). Based on the findings of *Richardson and Torney-Purta (2008)* it was assumed that students attribute higher importance to the community oriented forms of activity in their views about the „good citizen” than to the traditional political kinds of activity. The results did not support this assumption (H_{24}), since the students attributed higher importance to the traditional political forms of activity, yet most of the variable means indicated uncertainty and they did not express clear commitment to either of the activity types.

Based on the findings of *Menezes és Campos (1997)*, and *Sinatra, Beck and McKeown (1992)* it was hypothesized that both the grade 7 and grade 11 students have similar concepts about democracy to the adult population, meaning that the possibility of political choice would appear as a central element of the concept. The results supported this hypothesis, the political choice appeared as one of the fundamentals of democracy in the students' concepts.

Based on prior research findings it was also assumed that students have high expectations towards the state and heavily rely on state intervention in social and economical issues (H_{26}). The high mean values (3,52–4,48) together with small distribution supported this assumption. The results suggest that the students considered the contents appearing in the items of the questionnaire as state responsibilities and their thinking reflect the intention of assigning every civic roles and responsibilities to the state.

The students' relations to politics was assessed through the hypotheses regarding political interest and planned activities in adulthood (H_{27-28}). Based on the literature, it was hypothesized that the students are not interested in politics. However, the results suggest that this could not be so clearly stated, since the 2.67 and 2.6 means of boys attending vocational and grammar schools indicate that they are not so reluctant regarding politics (anymore). Besides the ones interested in politics, the most numerous group is that of uncertain: 27% of vocational school students and 27.3% of grammar school students were interested in politics and 28.6% and 25% indicated that they are uncertain about their interest. This means that the student population is not homogeneous in this respect.

It was also assumed that, apart from participation in elections, traditional forms of political activity (e.g. joining a political party, running for a political position) would not be popular among the students (H_{28}). According to the results, the mean values of planned political participation in adulthood (PPP) are grouped around the potentially rejective 2 and although the difference between the age groups are statistically significant, it does not represent an essential difference. Only 6.1% of the students in grade 7 and 4.4% in grade 11 indicated that they would surely run for a position in the local government. 8.5% and 4.7% would join a political party and 10.2% and 5.6% would participate in collecting proposal coupons. These results are consistent with the second part of the above hypotheses based on the literature. The first part of the hypothesis could not be verified nor falsified, since the variable was not included in the system of variables resulting from the factor analysis.

Based on international literature it was assumed that – similarly to the students of the post-socialist countries – Hungarian students are strongly committed to their country (H_{29}). The results, however, were surprising, failing to meet the expectations. The view that emphasized national interest and rejected foreign influence did not come together with strong positive attitudes toward the home country. The only variable in the country related attitudes (CRA) factor where the students expressed their agreement was the foreign views on Hungary, however, they were not sure about whether they would like to stay and live in Hungary for long. The item directly referring to patriotism revealed strong country related

attitudes only in grade 7 and reflected uncertainty in grade 11. Also the opinions expressed were closer to those occurring in traditional democracies in the IEA study.

The study also searched for relationships between civic knowledge and democratic experiences in school. It was assumed that civic knowledge of the students is influenced by their experiences in school (H_{30}). Correlation analysis revealed weak, but statistically significant ($p < 0,01$) correlations between the test achievements and the complex constructed variable referring to democracy in school (DS) (the correlation coefficients were 0.14 in grade 7 and 0.19 in grade 11). Since the regression analysis did not indicate any influence of democratic experience in school on the test achievement or the other way around, it seems that the effects of the school experiences are indirectly represented by other psychic structures or forms of behaviour.

The correlations between the results of the civic knowledge and skills test and the achievement in school subjects have questioned the exclusive relationship of civic knowledge with humanities and indicated the necessity of further research. Future research needs to focus on the relationship between this domain and general thinking skills (e.g. inductive reasoning) in order to be able to verify or falsify the effect of civic knowledge on thinking skills.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of the questionnaire study and the civic knowledge and skills assessment indicate that no fundamental changes happen in the four years in scope of this research. The measured psychic structures and fundamental behavioural intentions are developed by grade 7. The following changes in the course of secondary education are positive in civic knowledge, pointing towards the further development of knowledge in the field. However, the changes in the domains covered by the questionnaire are mainly negative (see Figure 3). The overall conclusion of the results might be that further research needs to explore the sensitive periods of development in earlier stages of education.

The relatively low reliability of the 20 item knowledge and skills test was explained by the low number of items included, therefore further research will also concentrate on developing the item pool for the test. In addition, the analysis of the distribution of wrong solutions can contribute to the understanding of the functioning of the test by pointing out the need for changing the distractive alternative answers.

The most influential studies in the field (IEA CivEd, ICCS) included various affective dimensions of citizenship competence as well. Among others the issues of national identity, human rights, equal rights of women, prejudice, and attitudes towards immigrants. This study, however, focused on civic commitment and political self-concept out of the variety of affective dimensions. In the areas not included in this thesis we started separate research as well (see e.g. *Dancs & Kinyó, 2011*).

Further research also has to consider the fact that along the most widespread use of ICT devices in education (*Kőfalvi, 2006*) the culture of educational assessment and evaluation is heading towards computer based assessment which has the potential to bring new energy into research in the social scientific domain as well. In case of the subjects having the longest tradition of assessment and evaluation the replacement of paper based instruments with computer based assessment has already started in Hungary as well (see e.g. *Molnár, R. Tóth & Tóth, 2010*). We expect from the computer based tests to be constructed for lower age groups that they would allow us to explore the characteristics of the development of the constituents of citizenship competence. Hence, it might be possible to identify the age periods when the investigated psychic and behavioural components go through the most significant development. The identification of these sensitive periods is crucial for developing the concepts of potential training programs in the field.

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