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Social Science Teachers on Citizenship Education: A Comparative Study of Two Post-Communist Countries

This paper presents some of the results of a comparative study of high school social science teachers in two post-communist European countries: Bulgaria and Croatia. In both countries, citizenship education was implemented as a part of the EU accession efforts. I discuss the ways teachers deal with the everyday dilemmas of teaching in a field which is by definition controversial and loaded with diverse political meanings. The study involved teachers in the two countries using Q-methodology, a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Five distinct ways of dealing with these questions, five types of views were found in Bulgaria: Pragmatic Conservatives, Deliberative Liberals, Local Social Guardians, Personal Growth Facilitators, and Global Future Debaters. In Croatia, the types of views were: Patriotic Conservatives, Liberal Democracy Mentors, Reflective Humanists, and Personal Growth Coaches. The differences and similarities between the teachers' views in both countries are compared. The study highlights the crucial role of teachers, of their beliefs and experiences in shaping national and European citizenship education policies. The implications of the study findings for citizenship education policy, curriculum development, and teacher training are briefly discussed.

1 Introduction

The recent tragic events in the Ukraine are a painful reminder that we are still dealing with the legacy of Eastern Europe's communist past. Bulgaria and Croatia are two post-communist countries, which joined the European Union, the one after a peaceful transition, the other recently, after a war of independence. Both have made significant efforts to adopt citizenship education as suggested and guided by various European Union institutions (Council of Europe, 2010; Eurydice, 2012; Abbs & Werth, 2012). The opinions on the success of this endeavour vary considerably, and so do the ideas about the goals, the content and the methods of teaching citizenship. (Kerr, 2008; Splitter, 2011)

In this study, chose to talk to secondary school teachers in subjects directly related to citizenship education in Bulgaria and Croatia and to look for insights, which may go beyond the particular experiences of these two countries. I turned directly to teachers, the gatekeepers (Thornton, 2005) and the crucial actors of any educational process. I talked to teachers in both countries about their views and ideas of citizenship education and the ways they are coping with curriculum reform, overall educational policy changes, and ideological confusion. In this article, I will present the outcomes of these conversations. But first, the theoretical and methodological background of the study will be briefly explained.

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2 The political force-field of teaching citizenship explored with Q-methodology

In the last two decades, citizenship education has been high on the agenda in almost all European countries, 'old' and 'new' democracies alike. Although the temptation to shape people in certain ideological directions is not new, the ambition in Europe for the last 25 years has been to promote and enhance democracy through political education (European Commission, 2013). The discussions about the very definitions of citizenship and citizenship education have never seized throughout European History (Heater, 1990; Crick, 2000; (Jones, Gaventa, & Institute of Development Studies, 2002) Also, the discussion about what counts as effect and how this is to be measured has produced a considerable body of scholarly work. (e.g. reviews by Osler & Starkey, 2005; Hedtke et al; 2008, Neubauer, 2012) The studies tend to bypass the role and the attitude of teachers; as they seek a correlation between different types of curricula and various indicators of changed political attitudes in young people (Isac et al, 2011; Schultz et al, 2008, Torney-Punta et al., 2001); or they focus on curriculum analysis (Zimenkova, 2008; Hranova 2011). Worldwide, there have been even fewer studies on teachers' views. (e.g. Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, & Sullivan, 1997; Araújo, 2008; Evans, 2006, Patterson, Doppen, & Misco, 2012). Post-communist countries have received attention in research, but predominantly in one-country studies concerning particular aspect of citizenship education (Szakács, 2013; Hranova, 2011; Dimitrov, G., 2008; Rus, 2008). Comparative studies are usually focused on difference between countries and tend to overlook within-country diversity (Hahn, 2010).

Teachers are key players in the process of citizenship education. Teachers are the ones who implement the task of citizenship education daily, in the context of implicit or explicit school policies and broader national objectives. Obviously, they do this according to their own understanding and skill. Faced with the task to

implement a demanding and often deliberately broadly defined curriculum in citizenship education, social studies teachers have to find a *workable balance* of conflicting demands upon their work: how to teach a subject according to their professional criteria and beliefs, while fulfilling the obligation to contribute to citizenship education? Should they educate students mainly about their rights or about their obligations? How do they find a balance between learning about freedom and about taking responsibility for a local and also increasingly global community? Should teachers remain neutral or propagate their own political and ideological preferences? Are they obliged to remain loyal to state policies or to the contrary, systematically criticize them? Should they shield children from political controversy or use it in the classroom? And finally, what kind of citizens would they educate—good and adapted ones or critical and caring citizens?
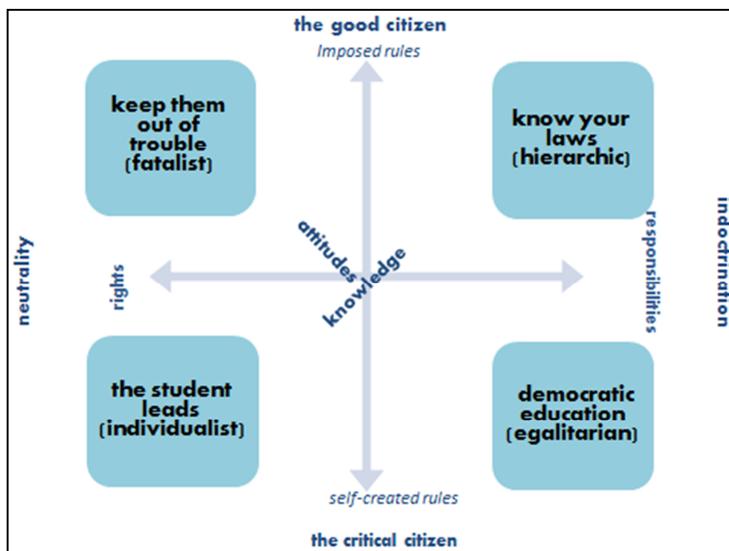
I argue that the answers to these questions constitute *patterns of thinking and subsequent action,* which are based on core beliefs about politics, education, and the teaching profession. They gravitate towards different definitions of *the concept of citizenship education* as the nexus of a number of important, but equally difficult to define concepts—democracy, politics, neutrality, political education, the place of education in society, and the teacher as a professional. These concepts are not independent from each other and do not form random *mix-and-match* combinations. What looks like a widely accepted definition is in reality a demarcation of a field within which political discussion takes place, at many levels, visible and invisible. Below, I will outline the boundaries of this field, I call it a force-field, to indicate that it is dynamic, with mutual influences of different dimensions which pull it one direction or another, but it remains one field, nonetheless. This force-field of ideas about citizenship education determines the topics included in my conversations with teachers.

The force-field of dimensions where the diverse views and beliefs of teachers fit is constructed on the basis of grid-group cultural theory (Douglas, M. 1978, Thompson, M. et al. 1990). Grid-group cultural theory defines four core-value cultural types, ideal types—conservative hierarchy, active and competitive individualism, egalitarian enclavism, and fatalism—that serve as the researcher's compass in structuring and ordering existing dis-courses (Hoppe, 2007). Using the grid-group framework, we can identify views on citizenship education, which gravitate towards one of the ideal types in the framework; not one of those ways can be considered better, or more viable, or more up to date, without taking into consideration the particular political and national context in which it originated and was developed. (Hood, 2000), The prominent themes in the citizenship education discourse fit the grid-group scheme and delineate its outer boundaries, organized around the four ideal types, presented in the scheme (figure 1) (Jeliazkova, 2013)

Figure1. Four ideal types of views

The individualist ideal type is concerned with educating critical citizens, but mainly aimed at promo-

ting their individual progress and gain. The egalitarian type is also critical, but aimed at social equity in its criticism. Both teachers operate as a coach. However, the individualist one puts knowledge of 'the system' at the forefront, whereas the egalitarian one is concerned with group values and morality. The individualist type shares with the fatalist one the ideal of remaining politically neutral, as opposed to the hierarchic and egalitarian ones, which are directly concerned with instilling and reinforcing particular values in their students. The hierarchic type is concerned with system-sustainability and thus at educating 'good' citizens. The fatalist type sees the 'good' citizen more as one staying out of trouble. The fatalist type shares a preference for attitudes and skills with the egalitarian type, while the hierarchic type's focus is on knowledge about the social order and the established institutions. Unlike the individualists, however, they are concerned with assigning a proper place in society for the future citizens. While both the egalitarian and the hierarchic types encourage participation, the accent is respectively on alternative forms of (direct) participation as opposed to using the legitimate channels (elections, laws).

These ideal types serve to delineate the discourse on citizenship education in relation to social studies. Every teacher determines his or her own particular position in the force-field described in Figure 1. This position would not overlap completely with the ideal types outlined before, and would also differ from the officially stated curriculum objectives. Every teacher finds his or her own workable balance of views, held together by core beliefs, often implicit.[i]

The description of the ideal types and the dimensions of the force-field guided the construction of a set of 41 statements addressing the spectrum of possible views. In this way, a common space was created, within which a discourse and an exchange of ideas could take place (see appendix 1). These 41 statements formed were used for structured interviews using Q-methodology. Q-methodology is suitable for the purpose of mapping highly diverse views to expose underlying similarities and key themes (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q-methodology combines face-to-face semi-structured interviews with factor analysis, thus allowing for working with small and diverse samples in exploratory settings (see for a detailed explanation (Watts & Stenner, 2012)

During face-to-face interviews, the respondents were invited to rank the 41 statements in a fixed pattern, from 'most agree' to 'most disagree' (see appendix 2). The rankings were recorded for subsequent processing and factor analysis, resulting in clusters of respondents holding similar views.

Thus, the sorting interviews served to explore these individual views and the subsequent factor analysis mapped and exemplified overarching central themes, important distinctions and similarities between the teachers within each country (Wolf, 2004). The analysis reveals a number of distinct views expressed by groups of teachers in each of these countries. The comparison between the two countries was then based on this revealed diversity within a shared national context. In other words, The analysis results in a map of teachers' views and beliefs, not a detailed one with myriads of islands, but a simple map with a few large 'continents', certainly all on one planet.

Two sets of interviews were held: 17 interviews with high school teachers in social studies in Bulgaria in 2011[ii], and 17 interviews with high school teachers in social studies in Croatia[iii] in 2012.[iv] Due to the explorative nature of the method and the small number, the sample of respondents is not representative. However, in order to capture as mush diversity of views as possible, I sought a balance between diversity of backgrounds and demographics on the one hand, and pragmatic restrictions, on the other. In both cases, teachers with social science and humanities were involved, who taught subject directly related to citizenship education at upper secondary school level. Their teaching experience varied from two to over twenty years.

The two sets of data were factor analysed separately, resulting in two sets of factors—5 for Bulgaria and 4 for Croatia. The factors represent groups of respondents who think in similar ways.

2 Bulgaria: a strong sense of responsibility
The five factors found in the Bulgarian data set are presented in figure 2. For clarity's sake, I have left out the labels from the original scheme, only referring to

one dimension, to serve as a 'compass' for the reader. Each factor represents a group of teachers holding similar view. The figure is not a mathematically precise representation; it is a visualisation of the mix of quantitative data and the subsequent qualitative analysis of the interviews. The distance between the factors is a rough indication of the degree to which they are alike.
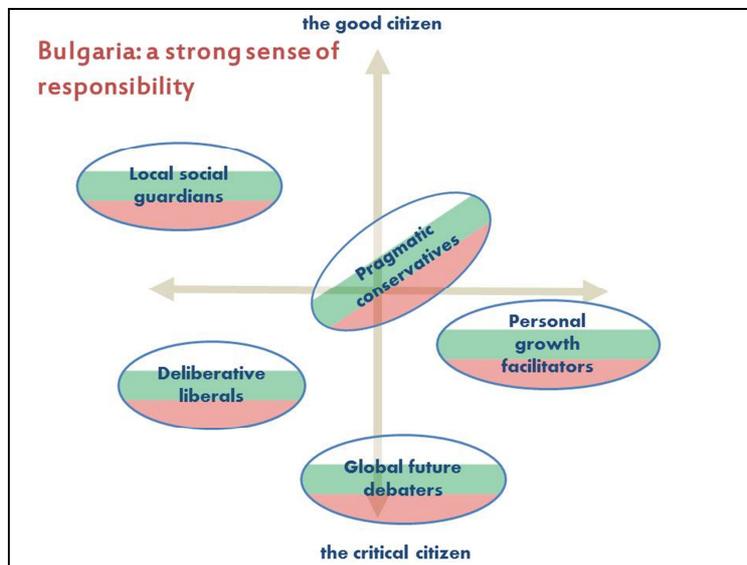

Figure 2. Five factors in Bulgaria

3 Common themes: "A neutral teacher is a scared teacher"
The teachers I spoke to were making a serious attempt to uphold their own professional and academic standards, to be truthful and to demonstrate a clear position on matters they deem important. The overall impression is that they remain critical, guard their degree of professional discretion and assume a great responsibility for the education of Bulgarian youth, even when they feel that the school as an institution, and particularly the state, are failing them. Especially when the institutions are failing them, the respondents add.

All teachers agree that citizenship education is about participation in a democratic debate and this is why they help students to develop their research and discussion skills. (14[v]) The strong link between citizenship and democracy was found in every interview, in spite of critical notes about Bulgarian political reality. In the eyes of the teachers, the process of democratization, though far from completed, is irreversible. (22)

"It is extremely important for them to understand that is not silence, aggression, negativity or passivity that would help them, but debate, regardless of how different your opponent's opinion is. This is the only civilized way to solve problems. To be able to defend your point of view, firmly, respectfully, without being afraid of the other."[vi]

Probably because many of the Bulgarian respondents had a background in philosophy, the fact value-dichotomy proved to be unpopular among them. They did not subscribe to the suggestion that only established facts should be taught (24). The statement was puzzling to most respondents and the reaction could be summed up by this quote:

"Oh, it will be extremely boring to present only established facts. Our teaching will be meaningless."

Absolutely categorically, with high statistical significance, teachers reject the statement '*My task as a teacher is to defend state policies and interests, because I am an employee of a state financed educational institution*' (31). In one case a respondent suggested that other subject teachers do behave as 'civil servants' and ascribed a special place to philosophy teachers at school. The teachers assume a strong professional attitude and do not feel too restricted by state requirements of any kind. This almost allergic reaction to any state interference can be partially traced to old communist times:

"We should not lose the art of telling the truth in a situation when it was forbidden to do so."

For the younger teachers the explanation is sometimes more trivial—they do not feel supported enough by the state to feel part of any official state policy. Generally, the teachers' attitude towards the state is ambivalent, to say the least. As one respondent puts it

"I am out of sync with the state."

Traditionally, as well, Bulgarian schools have been considered pioneers of progress, enlightenment and democracy. This is why all respondents define Bulgarian schools as largely democratic (27). The juxtaposition between school and state institutions emerges as a theme:

"[Today's young people] are critical towards society as a whole, towards the institutions which have no clear youth policy and strategy for their future, but they do not necessarily hold schools accountable for these problems."

Teachers insist on a solid, though not overburdened knowledge base, but this is not the same as just feeding children with facts. In a nutshell, this is everything they had to say about the official state standards and prescribed curriculum.

I have observed a peculiar combination of a large number of consensus items with low correlations between factors. The qualitative data reveal that, although some items do appear undisputed on the surface, reading them in context reveals substantial differences. For example, virtually every respondent agrees with the necessity to teach young people to be critical and not to believe everything in the media (6). However, they offer different assessments of young people's are susceptibility to manipulation. The comments vary from

"I am afraid it is too late, they already believe everything"

to

"They have this [critical attitude] naturally, they are Bulgarian and thus distrustful."

The teachers also vary in their ideas about independent decision-making (2). The group of teachers defining factor 1 considers independent thinking a necessary skill to enable the acquisition of knowledge, while factors 3 and 4 value *the spirit of independence*:

"*If they are dependent, they would never be able to be true to themselves …*" Also, the expected success of teaching this kind of independence varies from "*wishful thinking*" to "*self-evident*".

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

Let's turn now to the five types of teachers, technically called factors. The factors consist of groups of teachers holding similar views. The descriptions below are composite and the quotes are from teachers 'belonging' to this factor.

2.1 Factor 1[vii]. Pragmatic conservatives: 'We give them the rules of social behaviour'

The Pragmatic Conservatives put a strong emphasis on knowledge, take a mentoring and protective position towards their students, and exhibit a great amount of trust towards the school as an institution. They see the school as „a model of a social institution" and thus encourage participating in school activities as a preparation for life.

The Pragmatic Conservative teachers do not agree with the suggestion that citizenship education is an outdated concept and define it as follows:

"It gives students rules of social behaviour, after they have studied values in ethics classes."

Consequently, this is the only group that sees citizenship education as an instrument to help students find a place in the labour market. (8)

"The other subjects do not prepare them for the labour market… […] I tell them that school is also work and if you add up all the financing for their education, they sometimes end up making more money than their parents."

The teachers in this group are slightly more interested in factual knowledge—just to look at things as they are, instead of how they should be. (9) While the others sort the statement negatively and put an accent of the need to have a horizon, an ideal in the future, these respondents situate citizenship educa-tion in the current moment:

"Yes, I agree with this quite a lot, because we tend to do a lot of things for the future only, instead of here and now."

The latter quote corroborates the pragmatic, status quo orientation of this factor. Partly, the pragmatism could be explained as a reaction to Bulgaria's socialist past, where the unattainable 'bright future' had become a running gag.

The Pragmatic Conservatives do not wish to encourage students to participate in Bulgaria's current political life (26):

"They are children, after all, and should remain children... "

The teachers do what they can to protect their students from the hardships of everyday politics, which they see in a negative light. This is a theme underlying various other topics and echoing in other factors as well:

"Why would anyone want to encourage students' to engage in politics? In Bulgaria, politics is over-exposed; politicians get into the centre of events and get a lot of attention […] In Bulgaria, politics is seen as follows: elections are organized so that some people could enter some institutions and get privileges, and then nothing happens—I do not think that this is the right message to convey to kids!"

This particular respondent then goes on to explain that politics should be something left to professionals, after all. Not everyone needs to know everything about politics, the way we do not know anatomy and go to the doctor. Ideally, politicians are experts in governance, it seems. Logically, the teachers with this attitude are careful not to 'politicize' the class discussion too much (19)

The Pragmatic Conservatives very strongly reject the suggestion that sometimes it is necessary to engage in activities outside the legitimate institutions (32). Generally, teachers' personal political engagement is not linked for them to teaching citizenship. To demonstrate this kind of active political engagement is considered an act of irresponsibility:

"We should not forget that we are educating our students [….] It is extremely important for them to know the mechanisms of resistance, but this resistance should not result in anarchy […] they should act solely within the limits of the law…]

For the Pragmatic Conservatives, the greatest concern is discipline. In their eyes, students do not take their obligations seriously. Very often, the res-pondents mention rights in conjunction with demo-cracy, stating that '*democracy and freedom is not the same as doing whatever you want*.' They counter the youthful students' claim on more freedom with the classic:

"They know their rights perfectly well, but it is about time they should think about their respon-sibilities as well."

Statements concerning the method, process, and critical analytic skills necessary to acquire knowledge about institutions, social structures, and politics, are rated positively. (23, 13, 14, 12). Respondents are concerned with neutrality and are careful not to promote any particular ideology. (34). The teachers share a cautious, sometimes confused, judgment of the past. They often feel they are forced to renounce the 'old' ideology and they are not convinced that the new one, called 'democracy' in short, is necessarily better.

"Students need to decide for themselves what is good and what is bad […] Not all things from the past were bad; we should not throw out the baby with the bathwater."

Statement 2, '*We need to teach young people to be independent and to make their own decisions*', while on the surface concerned with granting students independence, is interpreted in a protective, mento-ring fashion. One respondent regrets that students have '*too little opportunity to express their own thoughts, we tend to draw them into the field of our own thinking."* Another respondent claims, similarly to the argument against engagement in politics, that students' independence in not a sign of maturity:

"Kids, due to circumstances, are forced to take responsibility for their lives much too early, this puts them under enormous stress."

This protective attitude towards the students is mixed with a matter-of-fact acceptance of the hardships and the challenges of the modern globalized world (39). The Pragmatic Conservatives are certainly not concerned with promoting values such as tolerance and multiculturalism. They focus on the message: learn to live with it!

Also, consistent with their role of mentor, they feel the need to step in where family, in their eyes, comes short:

"Parents do not have the time, plus the teacher gives a balanced picture of all views"[…]

"It will be completely anti-pedagogical and senseless to close my eyes to the problems and to let the kids enter society without a clear position on these topics!"

Just like all Bulgarian respondents, the Pragmatic Conservatives reject the idea that they are just civil servants and should defend the interest of the state (31):

"The state has abdicated from its duties, so why should we feel obliged to defend it?"

The Pragmatic Conservatives consider the state interest in general worth defending, but not in the current Bulgarian state, which they perceive as lacking in many ways. They are even ready to take some of the blame for this, which may explain their hesitation in imposing their views on students:

"Tomorrow they will rule us, the sooner they take power away from us, the better."

In sum, these teachers see themselves as contributing to the education of a citizen who would find a place in the fabric of society, who would obey the law out of conviction and as a result of thoughtful deliberation, and would be mature enough to ensure social stability, on the one hand, and safeguarding personal rights and freedoms, on the other. This situates the factor mainly in the hierarchical quadrant, with a slight overlap with individualism. In Bulgaria, the distrust towards power is too great to allow for a viable genuinely hierarchic position.

2.2 Factor 2. Deliberative liberals: 'We are here to provoke them into freedom'

The name of this group of teachers refers to their two most important vantage points – individualistic/liberal orientation and a focus on democratic deliberation. Deliberative Liberals' main concern is the method of thinking and inquiry, the need to take one's own decisions. They steer away from everything that looks like indoctrination and imposing specific content and worldviews. Providing *information* to students is important, particularly about civic rights and freedoms. (35) The defence and strengthening of civic rights and freedoms is high on their agenda:

"Particularly in Bulgaria, the most important thing is to inform students about their rights, they just do not know them."

The school subject "World and person", which deals directly with citizenship education, should be called "Person and world" according to one of the respondents. He clearly puts the individuality of his students in the limelight. The respondents in this group do not consider the curriculum in its current form to be a big obstacle to educating young people the way they find fit. They find enough room in the books for critique and discussion. (25). It is not that the books *encourage* critical reflection; the teachers have their own agenda and very strong didactic preferences and do not feel easily confined by textbooks and curriculum requirements. Although they do insist on providing correct information and acquiring solid grounds for discussion, the Deliberative Liberals do not see themselves as teaching only a subject.

"I do not feel a teacher or a subject specialist, I am a provocateur, and that's probably the opposite of what they expect from me as a teacher. They expect me to adhere to norms and standards […] Generally, teachers are just like civil servants, with the exception of the philosophy teachers, because they are very critical. Within the framework of limitations, we are able, thank God, to establish some kind of freedom."

The respondents approve, though moderately, of the idea that citizenship education should be of some use to society (36). This approval stems by no means from a particularly great concern about the common good. It is their pragmatism speaking – why do something that has no use? In contrast to all the other factors, they reject statement 39 – "*Students should be helped to realize that they live in a world of growing interdependence. Even though we do not respect each other, we still depend on each other*". Although it would be tempting to explain this as approval of egoistic self-interest, the interviews reveal a more sophisticated position. Respondents claim that just tolerating the other is not enough, a true liberal society should foster *respect* for every individual. Thus, the statement is rejected on the grounds of not going far enough. The fact that they value democratic inquiry the highest of all (26), is an indication that we are not dealing with individualists in the household sense of the word, concerned with self-interest only. The keyword for this group of respondents is '*inquiry*':

"Students should be made aware of the possibility and the need to enter discussions with lots of other people…"

Because the Deliberative Liberals value discussion and deliberation highly, the teachers reject the idea that citizenship education should not be associated with politics (20) and look for a balance between individual and collective action. They are careful about discussing politics at a more general, theoretical level, *leaving it to the students to judge".*

The Deliberative Liberals rank positively the demand to students to learn to take into account the common good, rather than follow only their private interests (17) The key to understanding this position is the rejection of narrowly self-serving behaviour. This makes sense, if we bear in mind that the self-perceived goal of this group of teachers is to provide students with the necessary skills and attitudes to function in the world (15) Note that they do not stress 'survival,' in the statement, which would be a fatalist position; they trust their students to be emancipated actors and to give direction to their own lives. This is why the Deliberative Liberals do not feel the need to impose any views on students:

"Political propaganda is forbidden. But even if it were not, my authoritative position would lead to some form of manipulation of the students. I do not want to make them my copies."

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

2.3 Factor 3. Local social guardians: 'They need us as a personal example'
The Local Social Guardians see their students as vulnerable and at risk. Their rights could be easily violated because of ignorance, no access to power structures, and lack of resources. The teachers see it as their task to educate students about their rights (sometimes interpreted also as entitlements). Teachers do this both by providing their students with the necessary knowledge, but first and foremost by establishing themselves as role models.

"Knowledge is the basis, but it is isn't the whole story. Otherwise they just stay home and watch television. You need to prepare, every day, every lesson, for every group. You don't know how they would surprise you, you need to be prepared to react, to calm them down and still take the challenge and make them think deeper in a certain direction. To do your job, actually."

The Local Social Guardians stand out a bit more from the others. Statistically, the group is the least correlated to the other factors, which gives it a distinct place in the force-field. Looking at the features of the respondents, we see that the respondents who define the factor the most clearly, both have a background in history, as opposed to the majority of the other respondents, who are philosophers. Also, the respondents teach at schools with a relatively large number of disadvantaged and minority students. This information can help us explain some of the views expressed by the respondents more clearly.

The respondents strongly emphasize the role of the teacher in the process of upbringing their students. In this they differ from all the other respondents who tend to seek a balance between the role of a professional and the role of a teacher. From this point of view, the comparatively strong rejection of statement 1 "*Students need an environment in which they could discuss the problems of society without anyone pointing a finger at them and correcting them*" is understood not so much as an inclination to indoctrinate. It is an expression of the teachers' conviction that their students "*need a sense of direction".* Similarly, the teachers assume great responsibility in countering the influence of the students' home environment. Although they sometimes feel that at 15 and up, it may be too late to change basic attitudes, the teachers know they should encourage their students, because

"[…] even when they do express their will, the family would tell them it's not for them [to have these ambitions]"

The Local Social Guardians reject very strongly the suggestion that their students should ignore their private interest in the name of the common good (17). One respondent feels that his students do not share in the common good anyway and therefore should be encouraged to claim their rights. By the same token, the idea that citizenship education would contribute directly to public safety (36) is strongly rejected, because it is seen as an attempt by those in charge to take advantage of the students.

"It is hard for [the students] to take the common good into account, while they see that everything around them is ruled by self-interest and money. This is not cynical, just their reality. […] for some of them, it is pure survival, how to make ends meet […] they need us teachers to support them."

Perhaps surprisingly, the Local Social Guardians do agree with the statement that politics is too abstract for their students (41). One explanation could be, at least partly, that these teachers work with socially disadvantaged students, a large portion of which have a minority background. Still, the respondents are ambivalent in their views, because they see different layers in political education. To begin with, they do think that the textbooks are written in a way that makes them inaccessible to the students, both in style and in price (in one of the schools, kids could not even afford to buy the books and were using syllabi put together by the teacher, instead). From a different angle, the teachers felt that kids were not interested, because they came from families where no one was engaged in politics in any way. The teachers thought it was their duty to show to the students that it matters to get involved. At yet another level, the respondents strongly felt that their students were left out, marginalized and disadvantaged by today's political ruling class in Bulgaria and this is why they were very cynical towards anything political. Again, the teachers saw themselves as an example of a positive way to participate in social life. They were very strongly involved in local politics and felt that their activities could not and should not remain hidden from the students. For the same reason, this group of teachers very strongly rejected the idea that the school is not a democratic institution (27). The Local Social Guardians share this conviction with factors 4 and 5. However, while the latter make a claim on the school as a playground for community involvement, the Local Social Guardian sees the school as a corrective and emancipatory institute in a society seen as grim:

"If the school is not democratic in Bulgaria, I would not know what is!"

The respondents strongly approve of the idea to get students involved in charity and community activities (28). The reason they give it that charity is a low-threshold activity, which students understand, even when they are not interested in politics. The involvement in charitable and community service becomes a way of teaching responsibility, on the one hand, and a means of empowerment, on the other.

At first glance, it might appear that the Local Social Guardians do not believe in the feasibility of the project to educate thinking people through citizenship education. Their (slight) doubts stem from the demand to employ a variety of theories or methods, which they consider indeed a bridge too far (13). This reaction is less unique than it may seem based on the numbers alone, as respondents from other factors have also expressed concerns about the effectiveness of explicitly teaching people to think. Moreover, the joy of discovering structures and regularities to understand the surrounding world (12) is overshadowed by distrust they share with their

students - nothing is the way it looks, the laws in the books are not the same as the laws in real life.

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

2.4 Factor 4. Personal Growth Facilitators: 'We teach them to be happy'

Participation, action, involvement is what this group of teachers is about—practice what you preach, also outside the classroom! Seeking growth and change, through dialogue and self-perfection, these teachers respect their students and attempt to provide for them the right environment to help them in their development. All the respondents defining this factor, and only they, used words like emotions, feelings, growth, and 'the joy of life'. They also expressed concern about such 'overlooked' topics as ecological education and art education.

Participation in real life, as opposed to just teaching during lessons, is the most important for the Personal Growth Facilitators, in contrast to all other respondents (10). Not only should students participate and be engaged in '*attitude building',* they should do this in groups, because

"Personality develops much better in a group than trough individual projects".

Because they value personality so much, the Personal Growth Facilitators, together with the Global Future Debaters, are categorically against any hint of instrumental use of citizenship education, by the state or by the students themselves (8, 7):

"Oh no, we are not going to educate self-seeking komsomol snitches any longer!"

They feel very strongly about letting the students free in expressing their opinion, without anyone pushing them in a certain direction (1). In contrast to other factors, the respondents from this group believe that the teacher should be a model of honest behaviour (5). Together with the Local Social Guardians, these respondents agree that teachers should not attempt to stay neutral at any price, as this is a sign of fear by the teacher. Similarly to the Local Social Guardians, the teachers in this group are way too personally engaged to consider withholding their preferences and views from students. (30) For them, citizenship education does not end with just *informing* students about their rights and freedoms (35):

"You can't just come and tell them, we are not the news broadcasting service."

Since the climate of collaboration, which promotes free development and self-growth is a priority to this group, they tend to avoid controversial topics in the

classroom (19). Not every controversy is avoided; teachers seem to make a distinction between political issues and social issues, the latter being less transient. The teachers still seek a solid knowledge base for their work, it goes beyond just practice (18).

"Citizenship education requires high personal erudition, combined with honesty and lack of hypocrisy."

The respondents in this group tend to sort negatively all statements suggesting that one needs to teach facts and 'a body of knowledge' (4, 24, 35, 9, 11) as opposed to the approval of statements stressing particular skills and attitudes (34, 14, 2, 6, 26, 23).

The Personal Growth Facilitators exhibit many features of the egalitarian ideal type, with a twist: personal growth is seen as being facilitated by participation in a group, rather than directed at group preservation. Again, like in factor 1, truly collectivist attitudes are not popular in a country with a communist past and are always countered by a healthy dose of self-interest.

2.5 Factor 5. Global Future Debaters: 'The street won't turn them into global citizens'

The Global Future Debaters are the most explicitly concerned with European citizenship. They are divided, however, in their judgment of the value and the success of citizenship education as a European project. One of the high loading respondents is positive and with a cosmopolitan orientation, while the other one, to the contrary, is convinced that citizenship education was implemented under pressure and as an act of compliance – to demonstrate that Bulgaria belongs to the European Union:

"It is just to show off—look, we have that thing—but there is no tradition, nobody takes care that teachers get schooled […]. The European Union is not a panacea for all problems in Bulgaria."

The most important task of citizenship education, according to the Global Future Debaters, is to help student develop as thinking citizens (13). The respondents recognize the serious dilemmas young people face and work to equip them with the instruments of analysis, self-reflection, debate and argumentation (1, 23, 14, 6). Similarly to the Personal Growth Facilitators, the teachers in this group adhere to a broad conception of citizenship education: action oriented, including matters as ecological citizenship and global awareness, but with critical thinking skills remaining at the core of teaching citizenship.

This group approves of the necessity to provide students with skills and instruments to advance in society (7, 15), because the future citizens they have in mind will live in a *complex global world* which requires different qualities to understand it and to manage it. In doing so, these teachers always depart from a strong professional identity, based on subject knowledge (18).

The respondents slightly disagree with statement 10 (1, 0, -3, 4, **-1** *It is not enough only to engage in discussions about how to improve the world, it is important to give young people the chance to participate in real life*). The main reason for rejecting the statement is that students should learn both – debate and discussion are also very important.

The Global Future Debaters are not inclined to impose any specific type of action on students; they need to take the lead. This does not mean 'stirring things up' however (32), because the teachers find that more suitable for the street; the school has other functions and other rules. This is also why they moderately agree with keeping controversy outside the classroom – an atmosphere of trust and safety is crucial to foster the development of independent thinking. These teachers' civic engagement is strong, but oriented towards individuals instead of institutions:

"We make the state, the initiative has to come from society, it is not necessary that all measures come from the state."

The Global Future Debaters share a focus on universal human values. They current political practice corrupt and thus not worthy of discussing in the classroom. (20: -1, -3, -1, -1, 1 *Citizenship education should not be associated with politics, because individual acts of compassion and generosity are more important*):

"For heaven's sake, do not encourage them to get into politics! [They need to learn what is] good and bad, the human nature, how to become good, but no politics, please! They do not have the social experience yet to engage in politics."

Instead, students should engage in activities in the school, a suitable environment to learn essential democratic skills (27).

The Global Future Debaters take a pragmatic attitude towards the fashionable patriotic discourse in Bulgaria. They agree that students should know "*what this country has achieved in order to go further*" (40). However, the growing interdependence of people in the world takes precedence and is a far more dominant theme (39)*. The statement is interpreted at an interpersonal level – students need to learn how to respect each other, to be able to get in the shoes of others and to understand their social experience.

In sum, the Global Future Debaters are more concerned with the future of citizenship education and the future of their students in a global dynamic world than with the current practice, which can be disappointing at times.

3 Croatia – On the verge of change

In Croatia, a similar set of ranking interviews and subsequent factor analysis yielded four distinct factors, presented in figure 3.
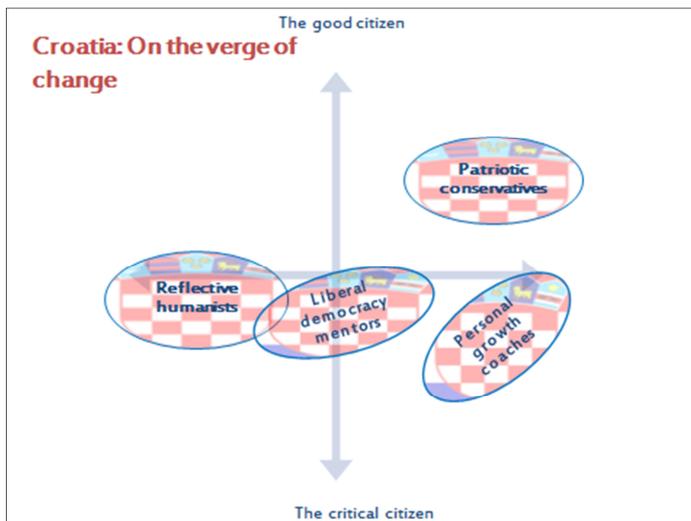

Figure 3. Four factors in Croatia

3.1 Common themes

At the moment of taking he interviews, Croatia was developing a new model for citizenship education.[viii] As a result, the need for change and the ways to achieve it emerge as a common theme in the whole Croatian sample. Teachers stress the importance of citizenship education in the overall curriculum and do not agree with the suggestion that it might be outdated (37)

The need to shift the focus from passive knowledge transfer to critical thinking competences is addressed by practically all respondents.

„Critical thinking and discussion with arguments should be highly positioned as a content of citizenship education. Therefore I think that only one hour per week in one year for such an important subject is just a terrible choice. The model we have now is just not functioning well as it is all about learning the textbook content...”

All teachers think that too much stress on knowledge transfer leads to uncritical acceptance of the surrounding world (9):

"Discussion on how things should be is an important part of a critical attitude toward reality"…. "We need to discuss and question things and on these grounds to see how they might become better"

Like their Bulgarian colleagues, Croatian teachers perceive the current political reality in Croatia as lacking in many ways and in need for improvement:

"Tell me, where do I find properly working institutions to show them?"; "There is no such thing as separation of powers in Croatia!"

On the surface, Croatian teachers subscribe to the need to focus on democratic inquiry (26) However, the qualitative data reveals a great amount of disconcert about the difference between discussion, deliberation, and debate, as well as on the way these should be implemented in everyday teaching. The devil is in the details, so to say. Some of the differences are highlighted in the factor descriptions below.

There is a strong consensus around the idea that all students should be empowered and taught to understand politics. Teachers believe that citizenship education is for all students, not just the elites, including those that '*just like adults, are disappointed in politics*' (41). Croatian teachers, unlike their Bulgarian colleagues, embrace a broad definition of politics and feel obliged to make it clear to their students that *"everything is political."* Acts of compassion and generosity are also seen as political in nature. (20):

"I keep telling to my students that politics is all around us, it is not just the government and [official] political fights. Acts of compassion and generosity are also political acts, they are not separated."

Teachers share the view that the school as an institution, even with a non-democratic structure, is a suitable platform to raise democratic citizens. (27) They tend to agree that the content of the school subject is more important than the school-structure.

"There is no democracy in mathematics, there is certainly no democracy in religious education."

This latter reference to religious education deserves attention. Many respondents mention religion and religious education while discussing norms and values, and particularly ethnic and religious tolerance. The role of the Catholic Church in Croatia is substantial and religious education has a prominent place in the school system (Bobinac & Jerolimov, 2006). This is in contrast to Bulgaria, where religious education has a marginal role at best, and has been largely linked to the emancipation of Muslim minorities.

The role of the church is often seen by Croatian teachers as anti-democratic and as a threat to free thinking:

"The Church cannot impose its views, nor can parents or politicians impose their views on children, not even teachers. They should listen to us, but they should not be afraid."

I now turn to the descriptions of the four groups of teachers, the four factors yielded by the data.

3.2 Factor 1. Reflective Humanists: 'I am just inviting students to be reflective, nothing more'

The Reflective Humanists emphasize strongly the development of intellectual skills and critical thinking skills of their students. They envision citizenship education mainly as an instrument to help students cope with today's complex world. Bordering on a fatalist worldview, the Reflective Humanists support their students' intellectual growth, but they also focus strongly on 'coping' (15).

"I see teaching as a help for students to become aware how schizophrenic is his/her situation and position and to accept it as it is in order to cope with it the best way possible!"

Yet, the teachers remain pragmatic and emphasize the importance of developing their students' ability to use concepts and methods to analyse and understand the world around them (13). They do this systematically, professionally, based on solid main-stream theory. The teachers recognize the importance of politics as the context of one's life and emphasize the importance of power relations in society. As one respondent puts it:

"We live in a world defined and divided by power".

But it is more about understanding than about participation, after all. The teachers' slightly cynical attitude towards a disappointing political and eco-nomic reality leads them to stress thinking and analytic skills more than actual participation. The Reflective Humanists are not particularly concerned with directly fostering students' participation in social and political life (10). As one respondent puts it:

"We simply do not see an alternative to the passivity which results in high distrust in political engagement. I am not a person who can promote any kind of social [community level] action among students. That is absolutely impossible. Only I can do is to try to evoke an act of humanity."

On the same grounds, the Reflective Humanists reject the idea that laws and rules should be at the centre of citizenship education. The respondents' attitude towards any ideology is neutral, but reflective and open (34):

"We are all limited with our ideological positions and other factors, but the intention is to remain open as much is possible... and ability to reflect on our own limitations is therefore extremely important"

With a strong focus on open minded, independent, critical thinking, this group of teachers does not agree that laws and rules should be accepted and followed at face value (4). They consider this approach to be at odds with the promotion of a basic level of political and social literacy. Also, the idea of promoting values of national loyalty and pride does not fit the individualistic orientation of the Reflective Humanists and is thus rejected (40):

"The fact that I do not preach loyalty to the state does not imply that I preach deviant behaviour. Not at all, I am just inviting students to be reflective, nothing more."

Summing up, the Reflective Humanists exhibit mostly individualist features, with some clear inclinations toward fatalism/cynicism. These are countered, however, with a faith in the inner moral strength of the young people educated by them.

3.3 Factor 2. Patriotic Conservatives: 'The teacher has to be a model of decent behaviour'

The main trait of the Patriotic Conservatives is their loyalty to the state. Statistically, the group stands out from the others and holds distinct positions, particularly concerning the defence of state interest and the endorsement of a patriotic perspective.

With a strong devotion to rules and formal state institutions, the Patriotic Conservatives see them-selves as an 'old school' role model for a decent citizen. The knowledge of laws, procedures and institutions is an important aspect of their idea of citizenship education. The main goal is to prepare students to act as good, adapted citizens who are able to function not only within the political community, but also on the labour market (8). The respondents perceive the relationship between the Croatian educational system and the labour market as proble-matic. Thus, to the extent they value the acquisition of skills, they are interested in more market-oriented skills, as a key to the successful adaptation of young people in the fabric of society:

"The ability to function on the labour market is very important. We do not prepare our students for that enough, and I believe that this subject has the potential to foster employability and even a spirit of entrepreneurship among our students."

Within a clearly hierarchic mind-set, the teachers see market oriented competences and tolerance as two sides of one coin, both promoting order; they believe that tolerance is also a skill that should be taught and that it is a state's responsibility to do so (33). Additionally, a high agreement is expressed with the idea of fostering charity through citizenship education (28), as an additional element of social order:

"Where the market does not succeed, tolerance and humanitarian activities should take place."

Citizenship education is clearly concerned with national identity and the loyalty to the state is highly valued by the Patriotic Conservatives (40).

"This is absolutely OK. It is a matter of identity"

While we could obviously trace the theme of national pride and loyalty in Croatia to post-war focus on independence and state-building, its defining role for the respondents loading on factor 2 is still striking.

The Patriotic Conservatives are the only group that endorses the unquestionable acceptance of procedures and rules (4). Knowledge of procedures and institutions is a key objective of citizenship education, according to them. This is why the Pragmatic Conservative teacher would shy away from discussions on dominant norms and values and from controversial topics (29). Instead, students should be prepared to contribute actively to society and the democratic political community. (note that the word 'democratic' here refers to a particular state arrangement, as normally and naturally succeeding 'socialist', but where, similarly, a set of rules must be obeyed, not questioned.)

"[It] is a way to provide students with general information on the structures, procedures, and basic concepts. And then, if the time allows, I can focus on the preparation of children for active participation that is aligned with what I was teaching them."

Thus, there is not much time left to devote to questioning and criticism (6). This group of teachers prefers to work within the rules and within the system (32):

"I do not need to stir up things, if they are OK, acceptable for a majority in a sense of common good. Why should I try to deconstruct things? There are people who do that all the time, always digging; they just cannot stand a peaceful doing. That kind of peaceful approach is in its core constructive one. You just cannot be constructive in stirred, un-peaceful, environment"

The Pragmatic Conservatives do their best to act as a role model that "walks their talk" of a decent citizen (5).

"I believe that a teacher has to be a model of decent behaviour. I belong to the old school, and therefore think that if I teach a certain model of citizen, then professionally, I should not allow myself to be a bad example."

In sum, the 'old school' Patriotic Conservatives fit the hierarchic corner of the force-field. They are not authoritarian in their attitude, but could be called patronizing. The teachers are loyal to the state, to their country and to their students and expect loyalty and respect in return.

3.4 Factor 3. Liberal Democracy Mentors: 'We prepare students for the role of democratic citizens'

The respondents in this group hold the values of liberal democracy very high. *(22).* In the name of propagating democracy, they are not afraid of being biased; as a matter of fact, the Liberal Democracy Mentors believe that liberal-democratic values should be actively promoted (34):

"I agree that students need to be acquainted with all important ideologies, but I am not for relativism. I believe that we can say that at this moment of human development, some ideologies are the closest to the ideal of common good. By that I refer to liberalism, only not in a sense of free market principles, but in a sense of its potential to enable the maximal number of people to achieve their rights and freedoms."

As a part of establishing a relationship of trust with their pupils, the teachers openly discuss their political preferences. This does not mean that they impose their views on their students. Teaching established facts only also does not make too much sense to them (24). The Liberal Democracy Mentors value their students' independent thinking and make an effort to teach them to be systematically critical (13). The teachers strongly agree with the statement that young people should be taught to be critical and not to believe everything they see in the media (6). The students need that:

"[in order] To be able to go a step further and to filter the information they receive to develop their own opinion, agreement or disagreement with something".

Instead of offering ready-made rules, the respondents in this group are inclined to look at the processes and the underlying debates behind the established rules and laws. They strongly reject the idea of taking rules for granted (4). Instead, the teachers emphasize their changing nature and the role of citizens in this change.

"Laws and rules are the human artefacts. […] The point is not to respect the [existing] rules but to create rules that would be better for most people and for the community. Education thus needs to deconstruct the rules and the laws and improve them. […] We do not raise children to conserve the world but to change the world so it becomes a better place."

Because of their conviction that the world is to be made a better place through education, the teachers gladly take the role of empowering mentors. They

actively encourage students to participate in social life in order to improve the world (10). This engagement is a social endeavour and takes the common good into account (17). As one respondent puts it,

"the ultimate purpose of education is human happiness."

The Liberal Democracy Mentors occupy a hybrid position between egalitarian and individualistic, leaning towards hierarchic, particularly because they are loyal to a Croatian ideal, which they feel should be pursued by all.

3.5 Factor 4. Personal Growth Coaches: 'We teach independent and responsible young people'

The Personal Growth Coaches are teachers by calling. The pedagogical core of their work takes priority over subject knowledge (18):

"I believe that the pedagogical core is inherent to the teaching profession and for me that represents the feeling for young people…besides giving them knowledge, we are also upbringing them…"

They focus on students' personal growth, on the development of participatory and intellectual competences, seen in a broader perspective. This group of teachers highly appreciates social and political responsibility and approves strongly of all statements, which emphasize the common good and accountability (28, 38, 17). The importance of high personal standards motivated this group, in contrast to the other three groups, to doubt whether politics should be the primer content of citizenship education (20). While teachers in this group do not downplay the importance and encompassment of politics, they emphasize value aspects such as solidarity among individual citizens:

"I agree that not everything should be tied directly to politics, because politics even in its broad sense is not the only thing that guides us through life. Compassion and generosity is something that needs to be more emphasized in societies… although that should not exclude politics"

The social side of citizenship takes precedence over politics. Compassion and generosity are cherished and encouraged, preferably through taking 'real life' action (10), Whereas the Liberal Democracy Mentors see action as derived from political and social theory, the Personal Growth Coaches think that it is increasingly necessary *"to teach students how to participate"*.

The Personal Growth Coaches tend to pay a lot of attention to the development of participatory skills, and consequently do not stress knowledge-oriented elements in the citizenship education curriculum (11), in contrast to the Liberal Democracy Mentors. Citizenship education, in the eyes of the Personal

Growth Coaches, does not end with just informing students about their rights and freedoms (35).

The teachers make a strong connection between independent thinking and accountability. They provide their students with some guidelines, but let them make independent decisions and encourage them to take responsibility for the consequences, particularly the consequences for others:

"We need to teach young people to think independently[…], always to be autonomous and responsible for their decisions. That implies, when making a decision, to take in account all consequences [it] can have for other people."

For them, critical reflection also refers to norms "which should be always discussed" (24) It also means to raise up controversial issues (19) and to even personally take a critical stand toward the state or status quo (32) Stirring things up for this group doesn't imply

"revolutionary acts, but does imply active citizenship that will try to improve situation and foster the achievement of citizens' rights".

The Personal Growth coaches occupy the egalitarian quadrant of our force-field, with some hierarchic elements. The most distinguishing feature of this factor is the moral, slightly depoliticized depiction of citizenship and participation and the strongly felt sense of accountability and responsibility to each other. There is less discussion on teaching methods and more of a general direction and spirit of citizenship education.

4 The countries compared: ownership of citizenship education, national divides visible

4.1 Bulgaria and Croatia: similarities and differences

When we look at the distribution of the different factors in both countries, we see that the patterns differ somewhat. In Bulgaria, the factors seem to be distributed predominantly around the fatalist-egalitarian axes, with some individualistic elements. The Croatian sample is very strongly leaning towards hierarchy. The clarification of this difference requires a longer argument beyond the scope of this paper. The pattern observed is in line with a strong felt mistrust towards any official institution in Bulgaria, while in Croatia this is clearly not the case. It is also in line with the most striking difference between both countries: whereas in Bulgaria politics is perceived mainly in the narrow and negatively charged meaning of party politics, in Croatia the respondents tend to highlight the political dimension of everyday life. Political participation is thus seen as something positive in Croatia. But Croatian teachers the aversion of their Bulgarian colleagues towards political careerism, clearly a legacy of the past, where belonging to the *nomenclatura* was required:

"Look, guys, you should join the SDP and you will prosper in life. No way I am teaching this."

This observation touches upon a broader issue in citizenship education: the attitude towards politics is ambivalent and the negative, 'messy' sides of politics are not always easy to incorporate in a constructive teaching environment. (Frazer, 2007)

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

The strong rejection of the suggestion that citizenship education would be something for the elites only is hopeful, at first glance. However, there are indications in two of the country-sets, in Bulgaria and in the Netherlands, that the item is far from undisputed. In Bulgaria, the teachers with a relatively large number of disadvantaged students tend to agree with the statement. In the Netherlands, teachers with long experience and a strongly academic approach are also not quick to reject it. The character of this study and the methodology which I have used does not permit to draw conclusions from this observation. However, the questions that occur pertain to general attitudes and expectations towards education and are worth exploring.

One topic that invited different opinions, but revealed a shared concern, was the theme of national unity and loyalty to the nation state. If we resist the temptation to accuse teachers who emphasize the importance of national cohesion in "nationalist" tendencies, we will see a threefold argument:

First, respondents struggled to find a balance between a positive connotation of patriotism (Hacek, 2014) and a more globalist, European oriented attitude. This is because in both countries citizenship is predominantly seen as something that is 'imported' from Western Europe, via official policy and through numerous NGO projects. Many teachers refer to various European projects when they talk about citizenship education, sometimes as a contrast to 'traditional' ways of teaching.

Second, while the war of independence in Croatia may be sufficient to explain the focus on national identity, in Bulgaria as well, this is a reaction towards the 'proletarian internationalist' ideology promoted by Moscow, which pushed for downplaying national identity and culture. The surge of nationalism in Eastern Europe is a serious topic, but I did not see many reasons to worry about it among our respondents.

Third, the theme of national identity is linked to the theme of tolerance. It is a topic that had not been addressed in the past. Cultural differences were underplayed and now they grow in importance. Although they acknowledge the importance of citizenship education for fostering tolerance, teachers realize that education cannot be the only contributing factor in a society they see as largely intolerant, and that a broader effort is needed.

"I am not sure if education can be the only help in it, but in practice we are the only ones doing it".

In both countries, teachers express concerns about the growing intolerance towards Roma minorities. In almost identical words they refer to the strange tension between 'hating' the Roma politically and at the same time being attracted to their music and sometimes 'dubious taste', as one teacher puts it.

A substantial number of Bulgarian and Croatian teachers tends to focus more on problems and on the need for a place to discuss and eventually alleviate them and less on participation. The societies they operate in seem to be troubled ones, with normal channels of dialogue frequently blocked, very visibly in Bulgaria and to a lesser extent in Croatia. The teachers' mission can be seen as directed to emancipation and positive affirmation of the values of nations in transition, still marred by serious corruption scandals, and young and very vulnerable civil society. In this sense, the teachers in both countries are less inclined that their Dutch colleagues to remain neutral towards ideologies they see as harmful. Often, they refer implicitly to a dichotomy Marxism – democracy. Some find an interesting compromise by claiming that they do not defend or reject ideologies, but political regimes:

"I have to be neutral while discussing political parties and I cannot be neutral while talking about political regimes. Therefore, when I talk about totalitarianism, I cannot remain neutral."

In post-communist countries, the breach between the totalitarian and post-totalitarian generation is so great that teachers often are ready to abdicate from the role of ideological guides for the younger generation, out of fear of contaminating them with what they see as the irreparable damage of being brought up not free. By the same token, the opposite position is also possible: teachers tend to minimize the differences between the two 'systems' and by this implicitly accusing their students in rejecting everything from the past, including 'the good things'.

Current political events, protests throughout Eastern Europe, allow us to revisit some of the findings of the study. Since the beginning of the year, Bulgaria is in a state of a deep political crisis, the signs of which already could de demarcated in this study – mainly the enormous divide between political reality and

ideological aspirations of teachers and schools. In a more cynical version, I have been aware of an undercurrent notion of 'official discourse' and showing off, largely due to the demands of European Union membership in a country, which increasingly exhibits features of 'façade democracy'. Recent events prove how political institutions as a whole are seen as void of content. This makes it even more remarkable to look at the value teachers ascribe to school as an institution and the hopes they have in the positive influence of education as a whole and political education in particular.

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

4.2 Implications for curriculum and teacher training

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

Our data shows that no amount of detailed curriculum requirements, specifications of standards,

objectives and evaluation criteria would erase the diversity of perspectives on citizenship education teachers exhibit. In this sense, citizenship education in any given country cannot even be seen as a single policy project without making it void of its most important feature - preparing young people to be citizens in a presumably pluralistic and democratic society.

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

In the field of citizenship education, relatively much attention is paid to the content and quality of teaching materials, e.g. (Zimenkova, 2012). Our data demonstrates that teachers do not put too much weight on the books and materials they work with. They remain neutral towards the idea of too much political correctness or lack of criticism in the books. Most mention that they feel equipped to create the necessary discretionary space to work around whatever limitations the book may have. The explanations they offer may differ from country to country, the important message for curriculum developers is that too much focus on teaching materials, textbooks and official programs, as opposed to supporting teachers to develop their professionalism, may prove to be a waste of resources.

Last but not least, coming back to our initial observation of the different conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education: though the ideal of 'democratic citizenship' (Europe, 2010) may be appealing to many, the majority of teachers do not adhere to this model. Democratic citizenship as promoted by the Council of Europe (as one authoritative example) is strongly associated with the egalitarian bias in our typology and both countries.

The Bulgarian Personal Growth Facilitators and the Croatian Personal Growth Coaches share a lot of common elements, in spite of specific accents. But compared to the factors on the hierarchic-individualist axis, these teachers are certainly not a majority. For those who find it desirable to promote 'democratic citizenship education' through teacher training, the study sheds a light on the different routes they have to follow in order to achieve a substantial shift in teachers' core beliefs.

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Endnotes

[i] I use the concept 'beliefs' by referring loosely to the considerably body of research on 'teacher beliefs', which are notoriously difficult to assess. The research unveils the complexity of teachers' work and the constituents of this peculiar mix of core value orientations, of political and ideological convictions, of educational philosophies, various ideas about the nature of learning, about the role of teacher and so forth. (see for an overview (Fives & Gill, 2014))

[ii] High school teachers in the so-called "Philosophy cycle" and the subject "World and personality" in 6 different cities.

[iii] High school teachers in "Politics and State" and "Economy" in 8 different cities. With a special thanks to A. K. Kostro, University of Zagreb, Croatia, who organized and conducted the Q-sorting interviews and contributed directly to the preliminary data analysis.

[iv] In 2013, a set of interviews was also held in the Netherlands, not included in the article. Further in the text I make an occasional reference to this data as a part of the discussion.

[v] The number indicates the number of the statement. See appendix 1, where the ranking of each statements by each factor is indicated, ranging from -4 to +4. Similar rankings indicate similar views, however, the comparison between the factors explores the overall patterns of sorting and not only the ranking of individual statements.

[vi] The quotes in italics are taken from the respondents. The English language translation is by the author and as close as possible to the original.

[vii] The factor number is important to trace the rankings of particular statements in the appendix.

[viii] At the moment, the implementation of the new citizenship curriculum is postponed again with one year.