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Citizenship Education and Political Literacy in Hungary According to Hungarian Non-Governmental Organizations Focusing on Citizenship Education

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ABSTRACT

Through citizenship education, countries try to provide individuals with the desired knowledge, skills and values. Although curriculums are prepared for this purpose, deficiencies may occur in practice because of various reasons. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in education can also contribute to completing these deficiencies. The European Union also supports the work of NGOs in this direction. It's understood that citizenship participation in Hungary, a member of the European Union, is less than other member countries. In this context, this research aims to reveal the views of NGOs -interested in citizenship education in Hungary- regarding citizenship education and political literacy. In this study, an example of a case study from qualitative research designs, the opinions of members of NGOs working on citizenship education were taken within the scope of a purposeful sample. The data were analyzed by content analysis. As a result of the research, it's seen that members of various NGOs organize educational and awareness-raising activities for students and teachers. According to them, citizenship education isn't carried out at an adequate level in Hungary. So, it's thought that political literacy, one of the basic elements of citizenship education, should be included in the program. But, it has also been concluded that political literacy is handled more with the knowledge dimension.

Key Words: Citizenship education, Hungarian non-governmental organizations, political literacy

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Vatandaşlık Eğitime Odaklanan Macar Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarına Göre Macaristan'da Vatandaşlık Eğitimi ve Politik Okuryazarlık

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ÖZET

MAKALE BİLGİSİ

Vatandaşlık eğitimi aracılığıyla ülkeler, istenilen bilgi, beceri ve değerleri bireylere kazandırmaya çalışmaktadır. Öğretim programları, bu amaç doğrultusunda hazırlansa da uygulamada çeşitli sebeplerle eksiklikler ve aksaklıklar yaşanabilmektedir. Yaşanan bu eksikliklerin tamamlanmasında eğitimle ilgilenen sivil toplum kuruluşlarının da katkısı olabilmektedir. Avrupa Birliği de sivil toplum kuruluşların bu yönde çalışmalarını desteklemektedir. Avrupa Birliği üyesi olan Macaristan'da diğer üye ülkelere göre vatandaşlık katılımının daha az olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda araştırmada, Macaristan'da vatandaşlık eğitimiyle de ilgilenen sivil toplum kuruluşlarının vatandaşlık eğitimi ve politik okuryazarlık ile ilgili görüşlerini ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Nitel araştırma desenlerinden durum çalışmasına örnek olan bu çalışmada, amaçlı örnek kapsamında vatandaşlık eğitimi üzerine çalışmalar yapan sivil toplum örgütü üyelerinin görüşleri alınmıştır. Veriler, içerik analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda çeşitli sivil toplum kuruluşu üyelerinin öğrencilere ve öğretmenlere yönelik etkinlikler düzenlediği, bilinçlendirme faaliyetleri yaptıkları anlaşılmaktadır. Katılımcılara göre Macaristan'da vatandaşlık eğitimi yeterli düzeyde gerçekleştirilmemektedir. Bu nedenle de vatandaşlık eğitiminin temel unsurlarından olan politik okuryazarlığa programda yer verilmesi gerektiği düşünülmektedir. Ancak bilgi, beceri ve değerleri içeren politik okuryazarlığın daha ziyade bilgi boyutuyla ele alındığı sonucuna da ulaşılmıştır.

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Introduction

In order to establish the relationship between the state and the citizen and to create the desired citizen profiles of the countries, state administrators focus on the citizenship education system. However, today, within the scope of this focus, it's understood that the expectations of the states from their citizens, as well as the expectations of the citizens from their states, have begun to be given great importance. In fact, it is aimed to raise politically literate

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citizens participating in state administration in the 21st century and helping their rulers by participating in politics to create a better and more fair world. In other words, today, it's expected to raise citizens conveying their expectations to their managers/administrator and having an influence on the decisions taken by the managers. Quigley and Bahmueller (1991) define citizenship education as an education that enables citizens to participate in government.

Historically, before 1978, citizenship education was a general education program that was the responsibility of all subject teachers. However, after 1978, a separate subject was created reflecting citizenship education, which was carried out with the restrictions associated with the Communist system (Davies ve diğerleri, 2004). In Hungary in the 1990s, the absence of politics constituted one of the fundamental principles of the program (Halasz et al., 2001). With the changes to the Citizenship Law made in 2010, a more national, cultural and ethnic understanding of citizenship was adopted in Hungary (Kars & Çakmaklı, 2023). When compared to other EU member countries in terms of education, it is seen that Hungary's educational objectives are handled with a more traditional understanding (Demircioğlu, 2006; Duran & Tangülü, 2020). Furthermore, Demircioğlu (2006) concluded that history lessons, including citizenship education, are far from developing skills such as problem solving, analytical thinking and decision making, which are necessary in the 21st century, and are based more on the transfer of historical knowledge and culture. When looking at the majority of educational institutions in Hungary, it is not possible to see the reflections of a regular democratic school culture in the country (Eurydice, 2005 as cited in Uğurlu, 2011). After the collapse of communism, citizenship education in Hungary aimed to strengthen social cohesion by giving importance to values and social competencies, as well as knowledge of political processes and structures (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). It is understood that the emphasis is on citizenship responsibilities rather than rights in ensuring social harmony. In the research conducted by Davies et al. (2004), it is stated that teachers in Hungary associate citizenship with being human and fulfilling responsibilities. According to Dancs and Fülöp (2020), while ideology-based education activities were carried out in the second half of the 20th century, it was abandoned at the end of the 20th century and a program approach with democratization movements was adopted. Based on democratic foundations, active citizenship is about participation and should include the active development of all dimensions (knowledge, skills and values) of citizenship (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). In the report (Crick Report) prepared by the Advisory Group on Citizenship (1998), citizenship education has three basic components: Social and moral responsibility, social/social participation and political literacy (p.11). From these components, it is understood that within the scope of active citizenship, an individual should be responsible in society, participate socially and be a politically literate individual (Ersoy, 2012). The European Union expects member countries to raise their citizens as politically literate individuals (Euridyce, 2005). Political literacy is individuals' use of knowledge, skills and values in their approach to political issues (Şan, 2019). Political literacy is to critically consider administrative policy within the social structure (family, school, country, world) (Crick and Lister, 1978). Citizenship education, including political literacy, requires acting with a sense of unity and solidarity to ensure social development.

In Hungary, for education and training, civil organisations and consultative bodies have to involve in policy making (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008). Citizenship education can become more effective with the cooperation of every social structure throughout the country. According to Yatkın (2008) non-governmental organizations can fill the gap or deficiencies left by institutions. Tutar, Tutar ve Erdiñç (2012) states that since non-governmental organizations help to democratize countries, EU give importance to them. In Hungary, citizenship education non-governmental organizations have an important place in

achieving the country's educational goals within the scope of the European Union. So, the question "what are the views of citizenship education organizations' members in Hungary on Hungarian citizenship education?" constitutes the problem of the research. In other words, the aim of the research is to detect the views of the members of the Hungarian citizenship civil organizations about the status of citizenship education in Hungary. In this context, answers are sought to the following sub-questions:

1. What are the tasks of the non-governmental organizations according to members?
2. What are the meanings of citizenship education and political literacy according to the members of the non-governmental organizations?
3. Which skills and values needed by Hungarian citizens according to the members of the non-governmental organizations?
4. How is the implementation of citizenship education in Hungary according to the members of the non-governmental organizations?

Methodology

This research is an example of a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. The study group of the research consists of 18 people who are members of different non-governmental organizations aiming citizenship education in Hungary, and are actively involved in citizenship education in their city/region and participated in the annual meeting conference. Citizenship organizations represent the nonformal participant of the citizenship education in Hungary. Within the scope of purposeful sampling, 18 people, members of non-governmental organizations engaged in activities for citizenship education, were interviewed.

The prepared structured interview form was sent to three social studies experts working on citizenship education. The form was finalized in line with the opinions of experts. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed with content analysis. In the analysis of the data, codes and categories were created and frequencies were given. Two researchers independently provided consensus on the analyzed data

Findings

The Tasks of the Citizenship Education Organizations According to Members

The participants of the study takes part in the activities are given in Table 1. The most repeated first category is *tasks for association*. The second one is *tasks for students* and the third one is *tasks for teachers*. In category *tasks for association* the most repeated to present about the works of the association, it followed by administration, research and editing papers, editing publications about the work of the association. In the category *tasks for students*, the most repeated task is training students, it is followed by editing publications for students, preparing student training. In category *tasks for teachers*, the most repeated task is editing publications for teachers, it is followed by preparing teacher training and training teachers.

Table 1. The Tasks Participants Do in Their Organizations

Categories and codes		f
<i>Tasks for association</i>		
	Presenting about the works of the association	10
	Organizational administration	8
	Research and editing papers	7
	Editing publications about the work of the association	6
<i>Tasks for students</i>		
	Training students	10
	Editing publications for students	7
	Preparing student training	6
<i>Task for teachers</i>		
	Editing publications for teachers	8
	Preparing teacher trainings	5
	Training teachers	5

It is also seen that for teachers' citizenship education, the most repeated task is editing publishing and then training them. But for students' the most repeated task is training them for citizenship education.

When considering the tasks generally, it's seen that the most repeated tasks are *presenting about the works of the association* and *training students for citizenship*. And the second one is editing publications for teachers in terms of citizenship education. There is a remarkable point that organizations made presentations in the conference and introduce their task, made a small activity with teachers and explained their activity with students.

The Meanings of Citizenship Education and Political Literacy According to the Members of the Citizenship Education Organizations

Table 2. Meaning of Citizenship Education According to the Participants

Categories, sub categories and codes		f
<i>Teaching</i>		
Teaching Rights/Human Rights	Teaching citizens to know their rights/citizenship rights	6
	Teaching human rights /for others	3
	Teaching how to keep rights	1
	Teaching for decision making	1
	Teaching for debating	1
Teaching Duties -Responsibilities (Expected skills and values)	Teaching to make responsible citizens	5
	Teaching about awareness	2
	Teaching about consciuosness towards citizenship rights	2
	Teaching active/democratic participation	2
	Teaching being a democratic person	2
	Teaching for social participation	2
	Teaching making citizens tolerant	2
	Teaching citizenship duties	1
	Teaching using democratic principles	1
	Teaching for being political literacy	1
	Teaching for communication	1
	Teaching for critical thinking	1

<i>Learning</i>		
Learning about Rights/Human Rights	Learning their rights in their community	2
	Learning new knowledge about adulthood	1
	Having a critical view toward political status of the country	1
	Having a realistic view about the political status of the country	1
Learning about Duties and Responsibilities (Expected knowledge, skills and values)	Active participation in the country	1
	Creating a democratical, cooperative and responsible constitutional state	1
	Following norms	1
	Knowing how democracy / election / judicial system works	1
	Knowing basic political knowledge	1
	Learning about democratic institution	1
	Learning about their responsibility in their community	1
	Respecting the country	1
	Patriotism	1

According to Table 2, the definition of citizenship education is related to two main categories: Teaching and learning. Teaching rights/human rights, duties and responsibilities and secondly learning about these topics. The category of teaching was mentioned more. Among the subcategories, teaching for duties and responsibilities was mentioned the most. Namely, it has meaning for teachers and students. Rights and duties should be taught for students. And students should learn their rights and duties for citizenship education. But it is clearly seen that learning and teaching duties and responsibilities are much more repeated than teaching and learning rights/human rights.

Most repeated phrases are teaching citizens to know their rights/citizenship rights (f6), teaching to make responsible citizens (f5), teaching human rights /for others (f3), teaching about consciuosness/sensitivity towards citizenship rights (f2), teaching about awareness (f2), teaching for being a democratic person (f2), teaching active/democratic participation (f2), teaching for social participation (f2), teaching making citizens tolerant (f2), learning their rights in their community (f2).

Table 3. *The Importance of Political Literacy for Citizenship Education*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>f</i>
Really important	10
Important	5
Necessary	3

As stated in Table 3, political literacy is coded as really important, important and necessary for citizenship education. The most repeated phrase is *reaaly important* (f10), the second one is *important* (f5) and the last one is *necessary* (f3). The reasons of impartance of political literacy for citizenship education are shown in the Table 4.

Table 4. Reason of the Political Literacy's Importance in Citizenship Education

Categories and codes	f
Knowledge	
To be well-informed about politics/political culture	2
To know what happens in the world	2
To be well-informed about public affairs	1
To know that voting is a responsibility	1
To know what can be done in the world	1
Knowledge about values and state/governmental responsibilities	1
Young people have to know how the state is working	1
Young people have to know their duties	1
Young people have to know their rights	1
Skills	
To make democratic change	
To make responsible decisions	2
To speak one's mind about a topic	1
To think humanistic/responsible	1
To use media critically	1
To use citizenship rights	1
Young people have to become active citizens	1
Thinking about politics	1
Values	
It is a significant/basic element for democracy	2
To develop responsible citizens	2
To develop tolerant	1

In table 4, it's seen that political literacy's importance divided in 3 categories including knowledge, skills and values. In general context, most repeated category is knowledge (f11). Under the category, there are politics/governmental knowledge, knowledge about society, rights and duties. But it is seen that they are repeated only once excluding "*being well-informed about politics/political culture (f2), know what happens in the world (f2)*".

The second most repeated category is "skills" (f8). This category is about making democratic change, making responsible decisions, speaking one's mind about a topic, humanistic thinking/responsible thinking, using media critically, using citizenship rights, being active citizens. But it is seen that they are repeated only once excluding "*making democratic change*".

The least repeated category is "values (5)". Under it, democracy (2), responsibility (2) and tolerant (1) are emphasized.

These outcomes indicate that the participants mainly think that political literacy is a set of knowledge (information, facts, etc.) about politics. It also includes skills and values, but the weight of values is the least.

Skills and Values Needed by Hungarian Citizens According to the Members of the Citizenship Education Organizations

Table 5. Skills and Values Needed by Hungarian Citizen According to Participants

Categories and codes	f	Categories and codes	f
<i>Skills expected from Hungarian citizens</i>		<i>Values expected from Hungarian citizens</i>	
Active participation/Participation	7	Responsibility	8
Critical thinking	4	Tolerance	4
Cooperation	3	Openness	4
Political literacy	3	Respect/Respect to diversity/human rights	3
Empathy	2	Consciousness	2
Communication	2	Dare to speak/ Free thought	2
Thinking independently	2	Democracy	2
Conflict resolution	1	Rights	2
Economical literacy	1	Will to change some things/to struggle	2
Responsible decision-making	1	Duties	1
Social literacy	1	Peace	1
Self-recognition	1	Social responsibility	1
Solving conflict	1	Trust/trustworthiness	1
Using rights	1		

When looked at the Table 5 it is shown there are 14 (fourteen) skills and 13 (thirteen) values of citizenship organizations for Hungarian citizens. The most repeated skills are active participation/participation (f7), critical thinking (f4), cooperation (f3), Political literacy/being informed about politics (f3), empathy (f2), communication (f2), thinking independently (f2). And the least repeated (only once) skills are conflict resolution, economical literacy, responsible decision-making, social literacy, self-recognition, solving conflict, using rights.

The most repeated values are responsibility (f8), tolerance (f4), openness (f4), respect/Respect to diversity/human rights (f3), consciousness (f2), dare to speak/free thought (f2), democracy (f2), rights (f2), will to change some things/to struggle (f2). The least repeated (only once) values are duties, peace, social responsibility, trust/trustworthiness.

The implementation of citizenship education in Hungary according to the members of the citizenship organizations

Table 6. The Evaluation of the Status of Citizenship Education

Codes	Totally Not agree	Rather not agree	Undecided	Rather agree	Totally agree
The status of citizenship education in Hungary is good	6	10	-	2	-
The status of citizenship education in schools is good	7	10	-	-	1
Teachers get enough help during their training to teach citizenship effectively	6	7	4	-	-
Society is actively/vividly interested in citizenship education	4	7	6	1	-
Teachers are actively/vividly interested in citizenship education	2	4	10	1	1

According to Table 6, participants don't think that the situation of Hungarian citizenship education is good totally. Only 2 out of 18 (eighteen) participants rather agree that it's good. Nobody said that they are totally agree. 6 participants are totally not agree and 10 of them are

rather not agree. For citizenship education in schools, 7 participants are totally not agree that it is good; 10 participants are rather not agree and only one of them is totally agree that it is good.

6 of them are totally not agree that teachers get enough help during their training to teach citizenship effectively. 7 of them are rather not agree, 4 of them are undecided and none of them are totally agree.

For being vividly interested in citizenship education, 4 of them are totally not agree, 7 of them are rather not agree, 6 of them are undecided, one of them is rather agree and none of them is totally agree. For being vividly interested in citizenship education, 2 of them are totally not agree, 4 of them are rather not agree, 10 of them are undecided, one of them is rather agree and one of them is totally agree.

Result and Discussion

Hungarian civil organisation members thinks their mainly activities are presenting the works of the their association, carrying out studies related to the management of the organization, to do researches and to publish them. They make publications, prepare training programs and train teachers in terms of citizenship education. However, in terms of citizenship education, it is seen that the students' education is given more weight. While more publications are organized for teachers, more practical trainings are provided for students. However, in order to have an impact on more students within the scope of citizenship education, much more emphasis can be given to teacher education. In particular, teachers can be trained to improve active participation. As Kerr (1999) stated although the program is adequate, it frustrates civic education because teachers believe that controversial and sensitive topics should be kept out of the classroom. Moreover, Hungary is one of the two countries where active participation is the least among the EU countries (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009 cited by Doganay, 2009). For this reason, teachers should be supported in this context and they should be provided with activities to encourage students for active participation. Non-governmental (civil society) organizations are very important for citizenship education. As Yarkin (2008) states, non-governmental organizations can fill the gap left by governments or different mechanisms. According to Tutar, Tutar and Erdinç (2012), the EU attaches importance to non-governmental organizations because non-governmental organizations help to democratize countries. It also believes that European integration can be achieved through responsibility and the active participation of citizens. As Reichert and Torney Purta (2019) indicates that Hungary (post-communist countries in Eastern European) became democracies more recently and it is new becoming EU members. In this research it is clearly seen that Hungarian citizenship civil organizations are interested in citizenship education. But to become a more democratic country Hungarian citizenship education should be more effective. As a result, Hungarian government should work with them to enhance teachers and students citizenship participation and political literacy - being democratic - for citizenship education.

Citizenship education is handled in two ways, according to the participants: Teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the meaning of citizenship education has given more emphasis to teaching. While citizenship education was divided into rights and responsibilities in terms of teaching and learning, it was mainly defined as teaching duties and responsibilities. This points may indicate that teachers are taken to the center in citizenship education because of teaching. But, it may be better to take learning at the center of citizenship education because

of the student-centered understanding in the constructivist education system. As reported by Reichment and Torney Purta (2019), some of the post-Communist countries, instilling knowledge seem to be more important. Moreover, citizenship education was defined as a curriculum to understand and fulfill duties and responsibilities rather than to learn or teach rights. In other words, knowing rights and exercising them were less emphasized while duties and responsibilities were expected to be taught and be fulfilled by the students. Şan, Dedeşali and Daşdemir (2019) also concluded that social studies teacher candidates defined citizenship as duties and responsibilities rather than knowing and exercising rights. There is an important point that Hungary's low level of active participation in citizenship education is one of its issues. However, it is a remarkable situation in this research that there were little emphasis on active participation, political literacy, democratic values in defining citizenship education. This situation may be the same in schools for students. As reported by Szabo and Dancs (2007) students are unwilling to participate in political actions and do not want to be involved in promoting change.

The participants stated that political literacy is very important for citizenship education. Political literacy was described as important in educating citizens with knowledge, skills or values, but it was considered mainly in the dimension of knowledge. As a skill, thinking skills were more emphasized. This is an important point for political literacy. In terms of values, political literacy were handled very little. Political literacy, however, includes knowledge, skills and values together. There are some researches that consider political literacy as skills and values (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Faiz & Dönmez, 2016; Şan, 2019). Knowledge is important for political literacy, but the use of skills and values should come to the forefront for a democratic citizenship education. Because political literacy aims to educate active and democratic citizens. As a result, political literacy were summarized as having knowledge on politics and political culture, knowing rights and duties, being responsible citizens and making decisions. However, it is concluded in this research that political literacy is not known exactly by participants. So it is suggested that for an effective citizenship education, political literacy should be learned with all dimensions and be included in civil organizations' activities. As Advisory Group on citizenship (1998) emphasised that the concept of political literacy is at the center of citizenship education.

According to participants the skills expected from Hungarian citizens are more active participation / participation, critical thinking, cooperation, political literacy (knowledge-based), empathy, communication and thinking independently. Among these skills, it was seen that especially active participation was given more importance. This is a remarkable result. Because Hungary is one of the two European countries with the least active participation. Indeed in Hungarian National Core Curriculum there are *"key competences suggest developing skills, value orientations and attitudes related to 'Education for active citizenship and democracy' through the entire process of learning at school and participation in school life."* (Eurydice, 2012, p.23). So, at the end of this research, it is suggested that teachers should be trained for active participation and political literacy.

According to participants, the most important value expected from Hungarian citizens is responsibility. It is expected to educate people as responsible citizens. In addition, tolerant, openness, respect / respect of human rights are other important values expected from citizens. These are also important values for political literacy (See Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Crick & Lister, 1978; Crick & Porter, 1978; Şan, 2019).

In general, as being one of Eastern European countries, Hungarian citizenship education has not good situation for the members of citizenship education organizations. According to them there is no good citizenship education in the country. Also according to them as a conclusion, schools also are not in a good position for giving a good citizenship education. Teachers don't get help during their training to teach citizenship effectively. Society and teachers are not interested in citizenship education actively. These are may be so normal. Because as Reichert and Torney Purta (2019, p.116) stated that "*post-Communist countries in Eastern European became democracies more recently. They are new to the European Union and face challenges due to political, economic and societal transitions.*" However according to Davies, Fülöp, Hutchings, Ross & Berkics (2004) as citizens all students have right to education and are prepared through schools to fulfill their role as citizens. Citizenship is perceived as determining factors and significant educational outcomes in Hungary. So it is very important to research how teachers apply the National Core Curriculum for citizenship education in terms of Hungarian political, social, economic life, etc.

Non-governmental organizations carry out important work within the scope of citizenship education. However, as a result of this research, it is recommended that non-governmental organizations and schools cooperate more. Greater cooperation between schools and non-governmental organizations within the scope of citizenship education may have a positive impact on the quality of Hungarian citizenship education. Within the scope of this cooperation, teachers and non-governmental organizations should work on active participation and political literacy.

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