

Policies on Civic Education in Bulgaria: National and European Union Perspectives

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“There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship. If we do not exercise our civic rights, who will? If we do not perform our civic duties, who can? The fiber of a just society in pursuit of happiness is a thinking, active citizenry. That means you.”

Ralph Nader, 2004

Abstract

Civic education has been looked at as an important tool that could support EU in reinforcing its political grounds by contributing to the social inclusion of its citizens and help in developing a sense of a common European identity and citizenship. This research examines the motivations behind civic education policies in Bulgaria as one of the EU member states and how these motivations reflect European motivations in this area. Moreover, it analyzes if civic education policies in Bulgaria really contribute to developing active citizenship and strengthening the sense of a common European identity. In order to answer the research questions policy documents from the strategic framework for education and training at EU level and policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science in Bulgaria have been analyzed. The results show that there is an inconsistency in the motivations behind civic education in the Bulgarian case. In most policy documents developing active citizenship and civic competences are present in the generic statements of the policy documents. However, they are hardly translated into specific activities or through the specific requirements in State Education Requirements. Moreover, the Bulgarian policy documents translate the European values and focus on the knowledge accumulation about the EU rather than on educating students for European citizenship.

Key words: Civic Education, Education Policy, Active Citizenship, Bulgaria, European Union

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List of Abbreviations

CivEd – Civic Education Study

EC – European Commission

EDESNC – The Education Degrees, Education Standards, and National Curriculum Act

EU – European Union

ICCS – International Civic and Citizenship Education Study

IEA – International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

MEYS – Ministry of Education Youth and Science

NEA – National Education Act

SER – State Education Requirements

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is largely accepted that education plays a crucial role in contemporary societies, contributing in particular to economic development and social cohesion. Somewhat less discussed is other function of education namely fulfilling political goals such as nation state building, legitimizing the state authority, transmitting social values or helping to develop a sense of citizenship (Green1990).

In the current European context, it is interesting to note that not only do nation states pay particular attention to education, but also the European Union (EU) as a whole. Similarly to a nation state, despite its very limited constitutional mandate in this area (formally subject to the principle of subsidiarity), EU has focused on education and training as one of the major policy areas to be developed in order to achieve the goals set in the Lisbon Agenda in 2000, reaffirmed in 2010 by the Europe 2020 strategy. The EU formally recognized that “education and training are fundamental to Europe’s success” (<http://ec.europa.eu> 2011). Economic growth, increased employment (even “full employment”) and social cohesion were basic goals of the Lisbon Strategy. In addition to core economic objectives, challenges resulting from low political participation at national and European levels and a certain alienation of the citizens from the EU institutions, urged the EU to include other goals in the Lisbon Strategy such as stimulating *active civic participation* and building a stronger sense of *European citizenship* and *identity* (Jan Figel, Commissioner responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism in Eurodyce 2005, 3).

The above two are important political objectives meant to support EU citizens’ increased participation (developing democracy in Europe), but also to facilitate the legitimization of the EU institutions’ authority (Keating 2009; Georgi 2005). Therefore, civic

education as a tool for fostering active participation and developing sense of common identity has become an important part of the EU education agenda.

With the recognition that knowledge and innovation are of great importance for fulfilling the strategic goal of building a competitive and sustainable Europe, set in the Lisbon Agenda, “education and training policies have gained impetus” (<http://ec.europa.eu> 2011). One of the first major steps was the launch of a common work program on *Education and Training* in 2001 by the European Commission (EC). Through adopting the *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* in 2009 (<http://ec.europa.eu> 2011) the *Education and Training* has been continued and the cooperation between member states in educational field has been strengthened. These and other policy documents developed in the context of the Lisbon Strategy *de facto* created elements of a EU policy framework in education with common European objectives.

This thesis seeks to identify and analyze the motivations behind the emergence of a European policy framework in civic education, under which civic education is considered as a tool for developing a European *common sense of identity* and *active citizenship*. Furthermore, the study examines how this European framework influenced the development of a national policy framework on civic education in Bulgaria as a EU member state. More precisely, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. *What are the main motivations behind civic education policies developed in Bulgaria during and after the EU accession period? Do these motivations reflect European motivations and ideals in this area, and a larger European agenda?*

2. *Do civic education policies in Bulgaria really contribute to developing **active citizenship** and work for strengthening the sense of a **common European identity**?*

Bulgaria is a low achiever in promoting civic knowledge in secondary education. The International *Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS 2009, 47) conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) revealed that 53% of the Bulgarian students showed *Proficiency level 1* of civic knowledge (the scale ranges from one to three, and one is the lowest level) and 26,8% of them did not reach even that. These results position Bulgarian students among the fourth worst EU countries as regards civic knowledge when compared with peers from 24 other European countries. Hence, there survey indicates a problem either in policy formulation and goals setting or in the implementation of civic education policies in Bulgaria.

One finds many studies conducted on civic education both on global (*e.g.* ICCS 2009, CivEd 1999), and EU level (*e.g.* Eurydice 2005, DG Education and Culture 2007) as well the ones focused exclusively on Bulgaria (*e.g.* Vardjiiska 2010, Kazakov, n.d.). Moreover, there is a certain contribution of Bulgarians working for NGOs and writing on the topic (Roumen Valchev from Open Education Center, Paideia Foundation, Open Society Institute Bulgaria). However, most of these studies have either focused on recommendations how to improve the process of civic education or on developing methodologies and textbooks for its teaching. Little has been said, though, on the compliance or its lack between the EU and Bulgarian national policies on civic education. Therefore, the study aims to bridge this gap and research to what extent the Bulgarian education policy regarding civic education meets the EU policies in this area. In practical dimension, this will allow to point out the weak parts in the

Bulgarian civic education policies and if applied by policy makers – lead to its improvement and helps in bringing up students as active and responsible citizens.

The research uses secondary sources, as the main research tool employed is document analysis. In order to answer the research questions, key policy documents in the education area sourced from the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO and Ministry of Education, Youth and Science in Bulgaria are examined. Firstly, I look at the policy documents which set the strategic framework for education and training at EU level. In the case of Bulgaria, selected documents are the National Education Act (NEA 2010) that outlines the main characteristics of the Bulgarian education system; programmes and strategies that reveal the government's focus in education, and the State Education Requirements (SER 2000) which are bridging the policy setting and the implementation process. The unit of analysis are mission statements, the definitions of civic and citizenship education as well as specific goals and objectives from the above documents. In the specific case of Bulgarian policy documents, particular attention has been given to analyzing how mission statements have been linked to practical guidelines for civic education implementation in practice.

The research is organized in three parts. The first chapter lays down the theoretical foundations, defining the two main concepts, civic education and active citizenship and the relation between them. The second chapter focuses on the increasing role of civic education in the globalizing world in order to explain why active citizenship and developing a sense of a common European identity have gained such importance in the EU context. Moreover, this part summarizes the EU perspective on civic education and related policy formulation at EU level. The third chapter introduces the Bulgarian case exploring the national policy perspective on civic education in order to answer the question what are the motivations

behind civic education in the Bulgarian policy framework. Starting from the characteristic of different historical periods when civic education has been taught to the current policy education framework, the chapter ends up with the results of implementation of civic education. The final chapter discusses the research results.

Chapter 2

Conceptualization of civic education and active citizenship

In order to understand the civic education policy, there is a need to, at least briefly, define the main concepts employed in this research. Therefore, this chapter discusses different definitions of civic education and active citizenship and contrasts them with the ones provided by the EU policies. Furthermore, it examines the link between the concepts of civic education and active citizenship through models explaining how civic education promotes active citizenship.

2.1 How is civic education defined?

Different institutions such as family, church and media help in forming young people's personality and attitudes as well as their propensity to participate in the social life of their community and beyond. However, education is acknowledged as one of the tools for young people's socialization as well as equipping them with civic values and preparing to be responsible citizens. As a specific subject of educational system, the role of citizenship or civic education is emphasized as "broadly to encompass the preparation of young people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens" (Kerr 1999, 6).

Civic education is often associated with education for political engagement, while it can have as well as broader implications. For example, Amy Gutmann presenting a political perspective describes it as "the cultivation of the virtues, knowledge, and skills necessary for political participation" (1999, 287). At the same time, Kymlicka (1999) points out to civic education as a tool for educating in democratic virtues. She defines citizenship education as a "matter of learning the basic facts about the institutions and procedures of political life it also

involves acquiring a range of dispositions, virtues and loyalties that are immediately bound up with the practice of democratic citizenship” (Kymlicka in Harris 2005, 2).

Scheerens, similarly to Kymlicka, identifies the main goal of citizenship education to enhance students’ role in building a democratic society (2006). Moreover, he identifies one of civic education main goals as to “develop rational/analytical thinking as well as the competency to judge and make decisions adequately and foster democratic attitudes and values” (Scheerens 2006, 156). Consequently, citizenship education should not only transfer knowledge but also develop skills, transmit values and promote activism among young people.

In this study, a definition of civic education complying with these of Kymlicka (in Harris 2005) and Scheerens (1999) will be employed. I will use the understanding of civic education as presented by Eurydice:

Citizenship education refers to school education for young people, which seeks to ensure that they become active and responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live. While its aims and content may be highly diversified, three key themes are of particular interest. Citizenship education is normally meant to guide pupils towards (a) political literacy, (b) critical thinking and the development of certain attitudes and values and (c) active participation.(Eurydice 2005,10)

This definition of civic education has been adopted by Eurydice in its comparative study on citizenship education at schools across Europe conducted with the European Commission support. One of the aspects that the study looked at was the variations of that definition across the countries and more specifically of the identified three “key themes”. These specific objectives of civic education are as well responsible for developing civic competences and fostering active citizenship at which this study will focus.

2.2 Why is active citizenship important?

In order to explore how civic education contributes to active citizenship, it is crucial to realize what is understood by the latter term. Ichilov defines it as a concept that consists of “legal, cultural, social and political elements and provides citizens with defined rights and obligations, a sense of identity, and social bonds” (Ichilov in Cecchini 2004, 4). However, actual participation of citizens can be challenged due to different reasons. As a policy paper of the European Commission on learning for active citizenship acknowledges “having the right to participate in economic, political and social life is not equivalent to doing so in practice, nor indeed being equipped to do so on equal terms” (www.ec.europa.eu 2006).

Indeed, active citizenship has not always been perceived as a positive tool for sustaining healthy democracies. Some academics argue that the control by political elites not only is unavoidable but also favorable for the whole society. According to Joseph Schumpeter “[t]he electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede” (Colby et al. 2007, 26). Moreover, Dye and Ziegler even assumed that “[p]olitical apathy and nonparticipation among the masses contribute to the survival of democracy” (Colby et al. 2007, 26).

On the other hand, researchers are arguing that citizens’ participation is important because it is a “defining characteristic of democracy qua democracy” (Hanson and Marcus; Pateman in Colby et al. 2007, 27) and provides legitimacy to the state. Moreover, active citizenship not only does enhance the democratic processes but also has beneficial effects for the whole society. Civic participation fosters “social trust, reciprocity, and the ability to see beyond one’s own narrow interests or perspective” (Colby et al. 2007, 27) which can be beneficial in pursuing and achieving common public goals. It is important to underline that the aim of developing active citizenship in the case of EU does not include only political

participation but also nonpolitical civic engagement. According to Colby et al. (2007, 27) the motives for both are different but often skills necessary for them are overlapping.

How is active citizenship defined at EU policy level? The European Commission defines the practicing of active citizenship as involvement of “empowering individuals, enabling them to feel comfortable in democratic culture, and feeling that they can make a difference in the communities they live in” (in Anhere 2009, 7). In that policy context it is important to emphasize the fact that active citizenship involves not only political participation but also a wider range of values such as rule of law and human rights.

The above understanding is complemented by the one given by the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning, part of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission: “[Active citizenship is] participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy” (Hoskins 2006, 5). European citizenship is seen by researchers not only as a “legal status, a set of rights and duties” but moreover as a way to form and promote “transnational community as well as identity” (Georgi 2005, 4).

However, the understanding of active citizenship may depend on the geopolitical situation of the country. It has been observed that in countries where democracy is newly established or reestablished the role of citizenship to achieve social transformation is emphasized (DG Education and Culture 2007, 59). On the other hand, in countries with traditions in democracy, the focus of active citizenship is shifted to other issues (DG Education and Culture 2007, 59). That is an important fact when analyzing the Bulgarian policy framework and how active citizenship has been translated into it considering the fact that Bulgaria is a case of reestablished democracy.

2.3 The link between civic education and active citizenship

In order to explore how civic education policies contribute to developing active citizenship, the next step after defining the concepts of civic education and active citizenship is to provide the link between them. The civic skills leading to active citizenship can be enhanced through formal, non-formal and informal education in pre-school, elementary, secondary school or also in different trainings for young people and adults. My study, however, will focus on the formal civic education in Bulgaria which is a result of the official educational policies of the country.

How does civic education affect students' attitudes for active participation? According to some academics the connection between both still remains a "black box" that has to be further researched (Campbell in Hoskins et al. 2008, 13). Mc Allister for example expresses doubts that civic education can influence students' participation even though it enhances their political literacy and competence (1998). But still, other researchers consider that civic education influences students' behavior in terms of participation (Finkel 2002, Ehrlich 2007, Cohen 2010). However, its impact depends on its nature including the teaching methods and the school environment; extracurricular and voluntary activities. In order to be effective in terms of enhancing participation civic education has to not only transfer knowledge but also to instill values, the combination of which leads to a change in the behavior (Cohen 2010, 19).

Under a recent research Measuring Civic Competence in Europe, a joint project of the EC with other European organizations, Hoskins, Villalba, Nijlen and Barber have used a detailed model (developed by NFER 2006 for this project) involving the cognitive (knowledge) and the affective (values) components in order to prove the relationship between civic education, civic competences and active citizenship. According to the model "learning

develops certain civic competences that drive active citizenship” as well taking into consideration the socio-demographic characteristics of the students (Hoskins et al. 2008, 13).

To sum up, this chapter based on the literature review of civic education provided the main definitions and the connection between civic education and active citizenship which will be explored on policy level in the Bulgarian educational policy framework in the next chapters.

Chapter 3

Civic education: The European Union perspective

After introducing the main concepts, this chapter focuses on the motivations driving the increased interest towards civic education globally and more specifically in the EU context. Moreover, it analyzes EU policy documents which represent the importance of civic education and the necessity of its implementation in EU member states for developing students civic competences and enhancing their ability actively to participate in the political and social life of their communities, countries and the EU as a whole. This analysis provides the benchmarks upon which Bulgarian policies will be measured in the next chapter.

3.1 The increased importance of civic education in international and European context

In order to explore why civic education gained bigger recognition in the educational policies of the EU, the importance of civic education on global and European level will be discussed in the context of globalization.

The studies (CivEd 1999, Citizenship Education at School in Europe 2005, Measuring Civic Competence in Europe 2008, ICCS 2009) that have been conducted for exploring the effects and the effectiveness of civic education and the public discussions on the topic provide evidence for the increased interest towards civic education in the recent years. According to some researchers there can be identified a few common problems in the societies across the world that drove that interest and the perception of civic education as a tool for tackling these problems. Timmer and Veldhuis identified the following concerns as “low levels of electoral participation”; “increased intolerance”, “xenophobia and racism”;

“apparent alienation and marginalization of some young people from the mainstream of society” (Fogelman 1997, 17).

Kerr adds to these challenges some more such as “rapid movement of people within and across national boundaries”, “growing recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities”, “the changing role of women in society”, “the effect of a revolution in information and communications technologies”, “the creation of new forms of community” (1999, 11). All of them directed further attention to respecting fundamental human rights, diversity in society, social cohesion and justice as well as to the citizens’ responsibilities in the educational and more specifically in the civic education curriculum (Kerr 1999, 12). As a result UNESCO and the Council of Europe, focusing on the elements of human rights and democratic process, have developed their own initiatives regarding civic education promotion - Decade for Human Rights Education from 1995 to 2004 and “European Year of Citizenship through Education” 2005 (Council of Europe) and World Programme for Human Rights Education (UNESCO).

As a part of a global community the EU as well addresses the above mentioned challenges. However, two more elements can be added to the civic education objectives in the European context. These are enhancing the “understanding of and an informed debate on the development of the European Union” (Fogelman 1997, 17) including strengthening the sense of a common European identity and preparing young people from the newly democratic countries for active participation.

3.2. Civic education and the EU perspective

Civic education has no unified form in the EU member states. The reason for it is not only in the historical, cultural and social differences which formed the traditions of their national educational systems but also in the limited constitutional mandate of the EU in the

educational area. The conclusion of Gerard McCann and Peter Finn is that citizenship education is promoted in “various contexts in different ways” and the national governments emphasize on different priorities depending on their goals (McCann and Finn 2006, 61). For example, Keating concludes from his study on civic education in Ireland that despite “acknowledging and endorsing the concept of multi-level citizenship”, European citizenship has been set within the Irish citizenship education as a “supplementary” and adjusted to educating for citizenship in Ireland (Keating 2009, 173). It can be argued that this conclusion, that national education systems focus on national citizenship rather than on European one, can be applied to other EU member states as well. In the next chapter I will look at the case of Bulgaria and how policies for enhancing active citizenship and strengthening the European identity are implemented in the national policy documents and guidance for development of school curricula.

Moreover, Keating distinguishes between educating about Europe and educating for Europe observing that in most of the member states transmitting facts and knowledge about European institutions and processes is prevailing over educating for European citizenship (Keating 2009, 163). Learning facts about the EU structure, integration and institutions does not fulfill the main goal of educating for active European citizenship. Special attention will be paid to this observation while looking at the educational policy framework in Bulgaria.

Even though the focus and the implementation strategies of civic education in EU member states differ, the EU strategic framework for education and training addresses the importance of civic education and its role for development of civic values and enhancement of active citizenship. The next part of this thesis examines the above mentioned EU strategic framework; the EU lifelong learning strategies and the developing school education policies

of the EU through whose perspective the Bulgarian policy documents promoting civic education will be analyzed.

3.2.1 Active citizenship, civic competencies and civic education in the EU education and training policies

The Lisbon Strategy and the following after it Europe 2020 strategy has recognized education and training area as a key area for achieving the strategic goals to turn EU into “*the most competitive market and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*” (Lisbon European Council 2000). As a part of the implementation of these strategies, *social inclusion* and *active citizenship* are set as important policy objectives that have to be fostered. The European Council concludes that education and training are responsible for providing the “right mix of skills and competences” (Council of the EU 2011, 3) to foster active citizenship and sustainable development.

Active citizenship is one of the four main objectives together with *social cohesion* and *promoting equality* that are set in the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training “Education and Training 2020”. Active citizenship is perceived as one of the main tools to “fight against exclusion in all its forms, including racism and xenophobia” (European Parliament, Council of the EU 2006, 47). Moreover, it shall foster social inclusion in the diverse environment of the European Community. While considering *active citizenship*, in the policy documents low political participation of citizens is also addressed: “Active citizenship education has the potential to raise the level of social and political responsibility in civil society and in the workplace” (Commission of the European Communities 2003, 8). However, social inclusion, conflict solving and preserving human rights in the EU still remain the focus of *active citizenship*. The broader scope of the concept

of *active citizenship* can be observed also in the way that the European Commission defines it: “cultural, economic, political/democratic and/or social participation of citizens in the society as a whole and in their community” (Commission of the European Communities 2001, 31). We can conclude from that *active citizenship* embraces all spheres of life of the citizens in the European Community.

The key competences for lifelong learning are considered as another important element for enabling active citizenship and achieving social cohesion (European Parliament, Council of the EU 2006a, 13). “Social and civic competences” are defined as a separate competence in the Recommendation of the EU Parliament and Council on key competences for lifelong learning. It aims to achieve “personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society” (European Parliament, Council of the EU 2006b, Art.6B). The definition of civic competence and what it shall include is very specific. The Recommendation of the EU Parliament and Council states that civic competence shall encompass “knowledge of the concepts of democracy, justice, equality, citizenship, and civil rights”. Moreover, it should include “knowledge for contemporary events”, main historical events, “awareness of the aims, values and policies of social and political movements”, “knowledge of European integration and of the EU’s structures, main objectives and values” (European Parliament, Council of the EU 2006b, Art.6B). Furthermore, it involves promoting tolerance and “willingness to participate in democratic decision-making at all levels” (European Parliament, Council of the EU 2006b, Art.6B). Therefore, “more political interpretation of active citizenship” (Regioplan 2005, 11) can be obtained from the definition of civic competence. In the EU documents active citizenship is combined in a frame with fulfilling the goal of equal opportunities and social cohesion. Nevertheless, civic education is not limited to the political aspect of enhancing civic competences. It aims at preparing students for being active citizens in the EU,

developing critical thinking and certain attitudes and values such as respect for human rights and tolerance (see 2.1).

Regarding the implementation process in the EU member states for developing civic competences, a country has to have a “national lifelong learning strategy that explicitly indicates the essential role of school education as providing key competences for further learning and adult life” (Commission of the European Communities 2009,v17). The EU policy documents stress the important role of the teachers and “innovative pedagogies” (Commission of the European Communities 2009, 17) in the process of developing social and civic key competences. The importance of teachers is explicitly stated as the key factor for any substantial change in schools (Commission of the European Communities 2009, 17).

Education systems in EU member states are considered the “most important medium through which to impart and demonstrate the principles of equity, inclusion and cohesion” (Eurydice 2005, 7). Moreover, civic education is suggested as one of the tools for promoting social and civic competences. It is suggested that the “surest way of providing this competence for all young people” is to integrate it in the whole curricula (not only in subjects directly teaching social and civic issues) but moreover to provide students such an environment where it is possible to experience democratic participation in reality (Commission of the European Communities 2009, 64). The European Commission states that it is required a “shift from viewing education as the transmission of a static body of knowledge, to a more dynamic approach combining knowledge, skills and attitudes in each subject area” is necessary in order to promote civic competences (Commission of the European Communities 2009, 99). It is recognized that as a cross-curricular subject civic education requires much more efforts for change involving further teacher qualifications and competences, revising the curriculum of subjects through which civic education can be

taught, involving community actors in the process of student learning and new methods of assessment (Commission of the European Communities 2009, 99). As a main problem in the implementation of civic education it is identified that in many EU countries educational systems mainly address the “knowledge dimension and somewhat its attitudinal” aspects without being able to promote actual change in behavior (Commission of the European Communities 2009, 101).

To sum up, civic education is considered as an important element of the educational system for developing civic competences in students and fostering active citizenship. Respect for human rights, tolerance, promoting equality, social inclusion, increasing political participation are set as main goals and motivations behind the efforts for improving civic education in the EU member states.

3.2.2 Civic education and strengthening the common European identity

Civic education has been used as a tool to promote political participation and civic engagement on local and national level and to solidify the identity of the respective nation. According to some researchers such as Gellner, Hobsbawm and Green civic education is educating for citizenship of a nation-state, “a tradition which reflects the close relationship between citizenship, schooling, and the emergence of the modern-nation state in the 18th and the 19th centuries” (in Keating 2009, 161). Even if not so explicitly the EU as well has been using civic education in order to strengthen the sense of a common European identity. As Gerard McCann and Peter Finn concluded in their research of the development process of the citizenship education in the EU policy framework that “encouraging a distinct European identity education has increasingly come to the fore, with a process aimed at encouraging civic participation and recognition throughout the various facets of the emerging EU education policy” (2006, 52).

Moreover, some researchers such as Ronald Sultana and Peo Hansen claim that the European education policies and “the EU policies in particular have adopted some of these nation-building techniques to suit their own purposes” (in Keating 2009, 161). Furthermore, the process of fostering this common identity leads to exclusion of everything that is not European. For example, while distinguishing between global and European citizenship education, Marshall points out that “there is “a growing sense of the need to express an identity of exclusion, a supranationality, when the reference point is the non-European” (Delanty, 1998, 4.10).

One of the reasons why strengthening the sense of a common European identity is not so explicitly promoted through the EU policy documents is the fact that European identity is still considered a threat to the national identities of the EU member states. On the one hand, education has been an important “weapon” for supporting the national identity and acquiring legitimacy and therefore education has been always a state responsibility. On the other hand, the common challenges and goals in the European Community required finding common solutions which fostered the creation of a EU strategic framework for education and training. Moreover, the aim of developing a common European citizenship requires a European transnational curriculum which will support the cultural and social integration across Europe. As Gerard McCann and Peter Finn noticed “[f]or the Commission it was quite clear that citizenship and economic integration were inexorably linked, that the prosperity of the people of the EU needed to be marked by a shared civic identity” (2006, 54).

To sum up, this chapter presented the EU educational policies which promote civic education and development of civic competences in young people across the EU member states. The motivations behind that are not only universal values such as respect for human rights, tolerance in multi diverse environment but also directly connected to the Europe 2020

strategy such as social inclusion and active citizenship. Furthermore, they include some political goals such as fostering common European identity which will add more legitimacy to the EU institutions and will promote further integration of the whole union.

Chapter 4

The national perspective on civic education in Bulgaria

This chapter discusses the motivations behind civic education in the Bulgarian case. The first part of the chapter is a historical overview that provides evidence for the changing motivations of civic education in different historical periods and what characteristics the contemporary civic education has inherited from them. The second part focuses mainly on the analysis of the contemporary policy framework in Bulgaria regarding civic education in order to reveal how the concepts of *active citizenship* and sense of a *common European identity* are enhanced through it and to compare them with the European perspective. This will lead to the main findings which are put down in the final part of the thesis.

4.1 Inherited characteristics of civic education: Historical overview

Civic education has a long history as a part of the secondary school curriculum in Bulgaria. Civic education can be compared to a social mirror that has been reflecting the different values and principles of given historical times and governance models. It existed under different names, methodologies and ways of teaching but it always has one main goal: to educate children and young people in the values of that given period (Owen 2004).

To track the process of development of civic education in Bulgaria the most up-to-date findings of Albena Hranova (Hranova 2011) will be used. This Bulgarian researcher explored the link between the history and civic education from the 1878 till present, examining more than eighty history and civic education books published during this long period.

In order to make a brief overview on traditions in civic education and the motivations hidden behind the content during the different periods, this time interval can be divided into

three sub-periods: from the Liberation (1878) till 1944, between 1944 and 1989 (the period when Bulgaria was under a Communist Party Rule) and contemporary history.

The first period, extending from the Liberation from the Ottoman rule in 1878 till 1944 is characterized by attempts to unify the territory of Bulgaria, which was divided into three parts: Principality of Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia (Hranova 2011, 33). The division of the country is known as one of the saddest moments in Bulgarian history, which is reflected in history textbooks, Bulgarian belletristic and the civic education books. Hranova quotes a history book from 1918 when Bulgarian people were “on the way” of achieving their national goal, saying “The Bulgarians participated in the European war, defeated their *enemies*, and liberated Macedonia, the Morava lands and Dobrudzha. In this way they restored the *great and whole Bulgaria* [italics added]” (2011, 33). This quotation uncovers on one side the emphasis on the education of national ideals and the representation of state-building as a value, and on the other side the representation of European countries as “enemies” who are challenging the national mission of the Bulgarians. Furthermore, Roumen Daskalov, a respected historian writes in his study of Bulgarian society between 1878-1939:

The ideal and objective of “the new Bulgarian education” (called by some “balgaroznanie”, “balgarouchenie”) was the formation of “the new citizen”, who had to be above all “Bulgarian” and “patriotic”. He had to be disciplined, to respect the authority of the leaders and to have a sense of “duty” to the nation and the state, being ready to unconditionally sacrifice himself for them. A national and state (authoritarian) spirit was to be cultivated by teaching particular subjects, especially “national” subjects such as Bulgarian history, language and literature, and geography. To these were added the subjects “religion” (designed to “Christianize” schools) and “civics” (where the emphasis was on duty to the state). (Daskalov in Hranova 2011, 34)

His analysis reveals what were the motivations behind civic education at that time – solidifying the new state and the new citizenship. The role of education was to convey obedience to the laws of the country and to reinforce the connection “citizen – state”

(Hranova 2011, 34). Koychev's statement "O you Bulgarian, keep your state as the apple of your eye!" (in Hranova 2011, 34) confirms that the state is presented to students as the highest value. Moreover, civic education was influenced by the more general trend of constructing a strong relationship between the "legitimacy of the nation-state and the education of citizens" in Europe during these times (Keating et al. 2009, 146).

The second period of the Bulgarian history which had a great impact on civic education is the Communist Party rule in Bulgaria from 1944 to 1989. This period of time, despite the end of the one-party rule, in fact greatly influenced the formation of the current environment in which students are being brought up because their parents were educated during the communist regime and most of their teachers were also taught in the Marxist schools of the time (the average age of the Bulgarian teachers is 50 years). The idea of developing a "social man" was at the center of the communist educational system and the related activities in Bulgaria. The subject matter closest to civic education was "Social Science" (Obshestvoznanie), introduced in 1970s, which taught "Marxist-Leninist historical materialism" (Hranova 2011, 8). Besides formal teaching, the communist party imposed its ideas through non-formal activities in youth organizations such as Komsomol (the Communist Movement of the Youth for youth between 14-28 years of age). This was not "active citizenship" in the democratic sense but participation in the party and community life was encouraged through the methods of the "carrot and the stick" and other obligatory activities. The motivations lying behind civic education were supranational and devoted to the Marxist ideology as in the communist of the region.

After communism, the tradition of civic education has been taken up again. Considering that this subject matter did not exist as such during communism, and that its aim was to teach democratic values, the know-how and curricula have been adopted from abroad.

However, to a large extent the old methodology, teachers and tools of teaching remained unchanged. Todor Mishev (a researcher in the field of Methodology of History Education) reveals that a comparative study of the textbooks for “World and Personality” after 2002 and “Obshtestvoznanie” before 1989 are very similar in their way of disseminating ideas. The same “propaganda clichés” have been used in favor of the communist ideas and the European integration after 2007 and only the political orientation “East-West” has been changed (Mishev n.d., 6).

Genuine democratic civic education has to develop in students understanding of democracy, ability for critical thinking and to enhance their active participation in social and political life of their communities. It is apparent that these values are far away from the oppression, the passivity and obedience that were taught under the communism. That makes one wonder how is it expected that active citizenship of students can be achieved using the same old teaching methods?

The other radical approach is transferring curriculum from the USA and other European countries to the Bulgarian school without understanding and adjusting it to the Bulgarian context (Mishev, n.d., 6). This copying of policies undermines setting policy goals that would be indeed responding to Bulgaria’s on national context and will help to achieve the underlying motivations of the new policies, which currently are democratization and Europeanization.

4.2 Official policy framework and underlying motivations

This section analyzes the Bulgarian education policy framework regarding civic education and development of civic competences, compared to the EU one (Chapter 2). It will be divided into two parts. The first part analyzes the framework at macro level, exploring the intended role of civic education as part of this framework. This provides an answer to the

question of underlying motivations of civic education, and more specifically regarding how education for *active citizenship* and for building a stronger sense of a *common European identity* are presented as part of this framework. National education acts and strategies sourced by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education will be examined. The second part will focus on the State Education Requirements, which are a major formal guidance for teachers in developing their teaching plans and in assessing the students. It provides insight regarding how civic competences are prescribed to be translated in actual activities at school level.

4.2.1 National Education Acts (NEA)

The *National Education Act (NEA)* “regulate[s] the structure, functions and management of the system of national education” (NEA 2010, art.1). According to Art.15 of the Act, the State Education Requirements shall provide the conditions for “formation of a free, moral and enterprising personality, respecting the laws and rights of others, their culture, language and religion”, which outlines some of the main virtues that civic education develops in students and coincides with the objective of the EU for educating citizens in culture of tolerance.

Another formal pillar of the Bulgarian educational systems - *The Education Degrees, Education Standards, and National Curriculum Act (EDESNC)* – grounds the general compulsory education on the following principles: “1. Fundamental human rights; 2. The children’s rights; 3. Traditions of the Bulgarian culture and education; 4. Achievements of the world culture; 5. The values of the civil society; 6. The freedom of consciousness and freedom of thoughts” (EDESNC 2009, art.8). These principles do not focus on the affiliation of Bulgaria to Europe or the European culture. They emphasize basic human rights and the Bulgarian identity, which may lead to the conclusion that the major education acts aim at educating good citizens not only for Bulgaria (art.9) or Europe but for the world.

4.2.2 Strategies and programmes for future development

One of the main steps for including civic competence as a part of the Bulgarian policy framework was the adoption of the *National Lifelong Learning Strategy in 2008*. It grants the responsibility for developing students as active members of the society to the upper secondary school in Bulgaria: “this period is related to acquiring of basic knowledge, abilities and competences necessary for [...] socialization and active citizenship”¹ (MEYS 2008, 10). However, under planned activities for the future the document cites and sets as a deadline 2011 for incorporating in the school curricula key competences such as digital competence, communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, sense of entrepreneurship (MEYS 2008, 11), leaving out the *social and civic competence*. Developing an active citizenship position is mentioned as an objective only under the strategy for future development of adult education. This reveals that developing civic competences and thus *active citizenship* is important but it is not at the top of Bulgarian policy makers’ priority list.

The *National Program for Development of School Education and Preschool Education and Training (2006 – 2015)* pointed out that one of the main problems that Bulgarian education is facing is the “Orientation of the system towards memorizing and reproducing, not towards provoking independent thinking, freedom and forming of competences”² (MEYS 2006, 3). Another problem is the subordinate position of the student in the relation between the teacher and the students. As the strategy states, this type of rigid hierarchical relationship is neither justified, as the teacher is not any more the only source of information, nor is it beneficial for students’ development. Furthermore, this kind of relationship seriously hinders the participatory and democratic culture of the students. As the first chapter pointed out, there are different methods of educating in democracy values and

¹ Author’s translation

² Author’s translation

one of the most effective is being part of a democratic school environment. The described hierarchical connection between a teacher and their students is not an example of democratic environment. Both of these problems underlined in the strategy are critical for developing an active citizenship culture, critical thinking and personal autonomy of students. The fact that they are stated in the policy framework shows that policy makers realize the problems hindering the students' democratic culture. This is an important step towards adjusting the EU policy goals of developing civic competences to the Bulgarian reality and going beyond their mere copying in the national policy framework.

The *National Program for Development of School Education and Preschool Education and Training* puts forward strategies for addressing school education problems. These strategies are divided into two parts – on the one side they are connected to knowledge and on the other to educating children in the spirit of specific values (MEYS 2006, 13). Making school environment more democratic includes changes such as taking into consideration student participation in the decision-making processes of the school, launching School Councils and involving students in extracurricular activities. However, civic education as a subject does not find a place among these recommendations as a main cross-curricular subject area, which also plays an important role in the development of personality of students. The envisaged activities are part of developing the active role of students at local level in their communities. However, there are not intended measures for making students part of the European and global community. Moreover, the strategy points out to the necessity of developing a sense of belonging to the school, their region and Bulgaria, but it does not mention Europe and the world in general.

The *Programme for Development of Education, Science and Youth Policies in Republic of Bulgaria 2009-2013* also puts an emphasis on “education, upbringing and the

personal development of children and young people”³ (MEYS 2009, 5). Under one of its priorities, “Develop the human capital of the nation and create appropriate conditions for the success of each citizen”⁴, the programme declares to aim at developing young people as “responsible, caring and active members of the society”⁵ (MEYS 2009, 8). Moreover, it focuses on “achieving European quality of education”⁶, under which not only language and math skills are emphasized but also development of tolerance and practical applying of the knowledge. Another step for fulfilling this goal is “developing of school curricula with integrated content”⁷ (MEYS 2009, 13) emphasizing a few fundamental subjects, including civic education. In this national programme the main problems regarding globalization, practical application of knowledge and acquiring of basic competences are addressed, which makes it compatible with the European policy framework. Furthermore, it is not only talking about European development of education but also for education which is globally oriented (in the program aiming at and applying the “world standards of education” are mentioned many times, p.8, 9, 12, 22, 28, 32, etc.).

The *National Youth Strategy 2010 - 2020* declares “Increasing of Active Citizenship” as one of its strategic goals. It involves further development of civic education as an operational goal. One of the main proposed activities are fostering volunteering and supporting youth organizations. The problem of low civic engagement is considered from a political perspective. As stated in the strategy the main expected results of this plan are increasing the electoral activity (MEYS 2010, 32), which is an important factor for the legitimacy of the authority and the democratic processes.

³ Author’s translation

⁴ Author’s translation

⁵ Author’s translation

⁶ Author’s translation

⁷ Author’s translation

One of the main problems that can be observed in the analyzed strategies and programs is that their main statements do not always coincide even if they are setting goals for future development of the same educational system. Some of them focus on building national identity, while others concentrate on the European agenda. Moreover, developing civic competences among Bulgarian students is often formulated as a generic statement without a clear plan of implementation, as the emphasis falls on other competences such as the digital and foreign language communication, which are more concrete and easy to implement with the current resources.

4.2.3 State Education Requirements (SER)

State Education Requirements are a further step towards the implementation of the strategic goals on the school level. They are setting the minimal state requirements according to which teachers have to develop their teaching plans and evaluate students. Considering that in the Bulgarian case civic education is a cross-curricular subject which is part of a “Social sciences and civic education” education field, minimum requirements for fulfilling the goals of civic education are set in all the different subjects taught under that field.

On the elementary school level, civic education is taught through *Homeland, Man and society*; in the lower secondary school – *History and Civilization, Geography and Economics*; upper secondary school – *Philosophy/ Psychology and Logics, Ethics and Law and World and Personality* (SER 2000, 45). The mission of this group of subjects is defined as educating for better understanding, adaptation and self-realization in the democratic society, as well as developing students’ abilities for active citizenship in the conditions of multicultural environment and globalization (SER 2000, 45). This generic statement definitely complies with the European and global objectives for citizenship education.

History is singled out as a subject matter that develops the citizens' identity and "creates rational and emotional basis for civic integration"⁸ (SER 2000, 45). *Geography and Economics* is granted the responsibility to educate about integration of Bulgaria in the European economic, political and cultural area. *Philosophy, Ethics and Law* are the subjects which aim to lay the "basics of their [students] civic culture introducing them to the fundamental human rights, values of democracy and with the ways for effective social participation in the life of the society"⁹ (SER 2000, 46). It is emphasized that *World and Personality* is a subject with practical focus supporting students for active citizenship.

Nevertheless, both *Philosophy* and *World and Personality* are subjects introduced in upper secondary cycle of education when students already have acquired significant heir knowledge and formed stable representations about the world around them. Moreover, *World and Personality* is introduced in the last grade when not all students are obliged to attend school (compulsory education is till 16th years). Therefore, as some Bulgarian policy makers suggest, a subject with practical focus aiming at active citizenship and developing civic values should be included in the curriculum in the earlier stages of education.

One of the stated goals of civic education in SER is "realizing spiritual unity with the Bulgarian nation and the European nations"¹⁰ (SER 2000, 47). It can be noted that among all declared goals there are much less linkages with countries beyond Europe. Therefore, it could be partially concluded that civic education is Europe and nation centered rather than globally oriented.

These generic statements are in line with the EU goals for developing a culture of active citizenship participation. However, most of the stated requirements in the SER are

⁸ Author's translation

⁹ Author's translation

¹⁰ Author's translation

mainly related to knowledge accumulation rather than to competence development, especially considering civic and social competences. This is also reflected in the way they are defined: students have to “*know*”, “*compare*”, “*explain*”, “*formulate*”, “*give arguments*”, “*understand*”¹¹ (SER 2000, 48–67). However, knowledge accumulation and more specifically understanding is just the first step and it is not enough for developing a culture of active citizenship.

The school curriculum focuses on knowledge accumulation rather than on developing actual competences, even though they are emphasized in the strategies for the development of Bulgarian education. The actual low results of Bulgarian students, in international comparisons and studies regarding these main competences, constitute another argument in favour of this hypothesis. Key competences and more specifically civic and social competence are present as generic mission statements in Bulgarian policy documents in order for the Bulgarian policy framework to comply with the EU one. However, they are hardly translated into specific activities or through the specific requirements in SER.

¹¹ Author’s translation

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The paper examined the main motivations behind civic education in the Bulgarian educational policy framework and how the enhancement of *active citizenship* and the strengthening the sense of a *common European identity* are translated from the EU level into Bulgarian policy documents. All in all, the historical overview of civic education goals across time revealed that the national motivations behind civic education during a certain historical period are not aspirations only of the national authorities but they also depend on trends in countries that Bulgaria has been interacting with on the international scene – first European, later the Soviet Union and after that the EU.

Currently, as a member state of the EU, under the common programme for cooperation in education, Bulgaria works towards complying with the EU recommendations and achieving the common EU goals. The analysis of the Bulgarian policy documents showed that there is an inconsistency of the motivations behind civic education policy in Bulgaria: first, between defined policy goals and specific actions for developing civic education and second between the prescriptions for development in the different Bulgarian policy documents. Moreover, it can be observed that in some of these documents the motives behind civic education in Bulgaria are not contextualized but mainly translated as such from EU documents.

The *National Education Act* regulating the Bulgarian educational system sets as main motivations universal values such as bringing up children and young people in freedom, independence, moral values, “respecting the laws and rights of the others, their culture, language and religion” (National Education Act 2010, art.15, sec. 2, cl. 1). They are based on promoting the fundamental human rights, tolerance, values of the democratic society, world’s

achievements as well as national culture and traditions. However, they do not focus on strengthening the sense of a *common European identity*. In this view, the motivations behind civic education in Bulgaria seem to go beyond pure compliance with the EU agenda and indeed focus on the promotion of universal values.

The analysis of the *strategies and programmes for future development* adopted recently by the Bulgarian authorities, on the contrary, reveals a slightly different intent. They copy the underlying motivations of civic education from the EU policy documents i.e. acquisition of civic competences, development *active citizenship* and strengthening the sense of a *common European identity*. The generic statements of these documents emphasize the above mentioned goals, while fewer specific activities are pointed out for their development. These policy documents disclose that recent Bulgarian governors focus on introducing the changes recommended by the EU. However, these will stay only good intentions in the documents' broad statements if they are not implemented through specific activities. As evidence for the real results ICCS conclusions show that until 2009 26,8% of the Bulgarian students have not gained any civic knowledge and 26,3% have developed some civic knowledge only at an elementary level.

The *State Education Requirements (SER)*, crucial guidelines for the teachers for implementing the strategic goals at school level, emphasize knowledge accumulation rather than development of students competences. Knowledge, indeed, needs to be the first step towards enhancing active citizenship, nevertheless it is not sufficient to promote it. Moreover, promoting *active citizenship* at the school level depends to a high extent on the school environment and teachers' attitudes. The SER promote the national identity building in the first place and only later refer to the connections with European values and culture.

The study observations for Bulgaria coincide with the general conclusion of Keating who noted that civic education is teaching about Europe rather than educating for European citizenship (2009, 163). Therefore, in Bulgaria extracurricular activities and projects developed by NGOS usually take over the responsibility for developing civic competences of students.

In the light of these conclusions, several recommendations can be made for the policy makers in the educational field in Bulgaria. Firstly, Bulgarian policy educational framework regarding civic education needs to be more consistent in its motivations, deriving them not only from the EU recommendations but also properly contextualizing them in the Bulgarian reality with its historical and cultural characteristics. Moreover, a greater consistency is needed between the generic goals of the policies and the guidelines for implementation (teaching plans and evaluations) for the teachers. Secondly, introducing civic education as a separate subject in secondary or even in elementary school and keeping the cross-curricular connections with other subjects can contribute to greater social and civic competences development at earlier students' age. It will necessarily require increasing civic education qualifications of the teachers. Thirdly, an indicator for measuring *active citizenship* enhancement should be included in the internal and external evaluation of schools. Its goal would be not only to evaluate successful implementation of the curriculum and the teachers competences and attitudes, but also the degree to which school environment is democratic and involves extracurricular activities and established Student Councils.

Overall, there should be an equal opportunity for all students to develop civic competences to support their active participation in the social life of their own communities, country as well as on the European level. As the Dutch Ministry of Education stresses "education comes in" in order to assist parents to "educate their children as citizens"

especially in fast changing societies where “additional efforts on the part of society are needed to define and further social cohesion” (Regioplan 2005, 9). The Bulgarian policy makers need to shoulder this responsibility of designing policy goals and appropriate and consistent activity plans for educating active citizens for Bulgaria, Europe and the world. Due to the importance of the topic, further research is needed to explore how enhancing *active citizenship* and strengthening the sense of a *common European identity* can be fostered in a national context of a post-communist country and how this can contribute to the Bulgarian society.

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