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# ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND PATRIOTIC EDUCATION AMONG SLOVENIAN YOUTH

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# ORIGINS

- patriotism: the most incorrectly used term in the field of education (i.e. Levine and Youniss).
- Very often teachers confuse the notion of patriotism and patriotic love of homeland with militaristic chauvinism, applied by some political regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, they fail to recognise it was the very patriotic resistance against such authoritarian movements that contributed to their demise.
- Callan and Galston:
  - both authors emphasise a deep need for active citizenship in the modern education system that should build a patriotic adherence of the youth to a uniform national identity.;
  - both perceive active citizenship as being intertwined with the elements of patriotism as a means to these ends;
  - both expressed worry about the care for disinterested, objective thinking, which persistently reappears whenever there is an attempt to introduce whatever form of patriotic education, especially within the system of compulsory education.

# ORIGINS

- The most important problem faced by different modern approaches towards active citizenship is how to articulate a theory of active citizenship that recognises and respects individual cultural differences and is at the same time attentive to the demand for cultivating the common political values of future adult citizens?
- How must public schools respond to the ever-increasing multicultural character of modern societies?
- How then to modify patriotic education within the public education system so that it would be based on the fundamental democratic principles of non-discrimination and non-exclusion and simultaneously develop fundamental civic virtues such as love for the homeland, bravery and tolerance that are important for the unity of a certain political community?
- ***best tradition patriotism:*** reducing democratic discord among citizens regarding the fundamental aims of the public education system.
- This form of patriotism puts forward the compatibility of patriotic education with active citizenship (Taylor, Gutmann) → enables teachers to develop adolescents' moral obligation to be patriotic, without rendering themselves to support the existing political regime and at the same time encourage critical thought and other educational aims.

# RESEARCH PLAN

- To analyse inclusion of the elements of active citizenship and/or patriotism in the Slovenian school curriculum in primary and secondary schools;
- To conduct extensive empirical research among different categories of pupils/students in Slovenian primary and secondary schools in order to
  - analyse the actual situation of active citizenship and patriotic awareness among young people and
  - the role, the educational system on the primary and secondary level is currently playing in that context.

# SCHOOL CURRICULUM

- Within the ('state prescribed') obligatory curriculum for primary and secondary education in the public education system of Slovenia, educational topics referring to patriotic education and active citizenship can be incorporated in various subjects:
  - Primary education: *Patriotic and Civil Culture and Ethics* (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades of primary school); *History* (6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades); *Geography* (6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades); *Slovenian language and literature* (1<sup>st</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades); *Society* (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades); and other compulsory and facultative subjects at primary school.
  - Secondary education: *Slovenian language and literature*, *History*, *Geography*, *Civic Culture*, *Sociology* and other compulsory and facultative subjects in secondary education.

# EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

- the importance of active citizenship and patriotic consciousness of youth and based on that wanted to attribute to the role and importance of active citizenship and patriotism in the context of the system of education in primary and secondary schools; we conducted a survey among teachers/professors of social sciences and humanities courses in primary and secondary schools, to yield an additional perspective view of the problem of active citizenship and patriotism among youth.
- A survey among pupils and students was conducted using the same questionnaire for each of the two target populations (youth).
- Time-wise, both surveys were carried out among young people at the same time, in 5-6/2013 on a representative sample of 1,000 pupils of the ninth grade and 1,000 students of the final year.
- The questionnaire was sent with the help of interviewers to 18 selected primary schools in all regions (representative sample) in Slovenia, where the questionnaire was solved by 888 pupils
- At the same time, we sent a questionnaire via the interviewers to 13 secondary schools in all Slovenian regions (representative sample) where the questionnaire was solved by 844 students
- A survey among primary school teachers and secondary school professors of social sciences and humanities subjects was conducted using the same questionnaire for each of the two target populations (smaller sample of 100 primary school teachers and 100 secondary school professors).

# INTERESTS AND MOTIVATION OF THE YOUNG

Table 1: Interest of young people in different areas of their lives (elementary schools)

How much are you interested in any of the following things?	RESEARCH - PRIMARY SCHOOLS	RESEARCH - SECONDARY SCHOOLS
Labour and employment	3.29	3.47
Family life	3.23	3.32
National history and destiny of the nation	2.31	2.38
The formation of an independent country of Slovenia	2.27	2.31
Politics and political happenings	<b>1.78</b>	<b>2.04</b>
Friendship	<b>3.72</b>	<b>3.67</b>
Concern for your own looks, external appearance	3.29	3.28
Work, profession	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.61</b>
Sex and love	3.29	3.53
School and education	3.26	3.38
Sports and sporting events	3.09	2.99
Technique and technical achievements	2.37	2.50
Arts and culture	2.38	2.52
Religion and religious life	2.08	<b>2.06</b>
Army and military affairs	2.02	<b>2.01</b>
Entertainment and leisure	<b>3.69</b>	<b>3.64</b>
Science and scientific achievements	2.55	2.55

Source: Survey of »Active citizenship and homeland« (Faculty of Social Sciences, 05-06/2013, N (PS) = 888, N (SS) = 844). Respondents assessed their own interest in the above areas on a scale from 1 to 4, with a value of 1 representing the answer »I do not care«, value of 2 representing »I'm a little interested in«, value of 3 representing »I'm quite interested in«, value of 4 representing »I'm very interested«. The greater the value in column »average value of responses« the more interested the respondents are of the indicated area.

# SUBJECT OF HISTORY

- The next set of questions focused on the subject of history, which is a key subject in primary and secondary school to develop patriotic consciousness of youth.
- First, we asked the young people how many of them were attracted to the subject of history during school.
- Most ninth grade pupils (65 percent) and final year students (54.7 percent) answered that they were a bit or very attracted to the subject of history.
- Subject of the history is somewhat more popular among pupils, as evidenced by a smaller proportion of those who are not interested in the subject (10.5 percent of pupils and 15.7 percent of students).



# INTEREST OF YOUTH FOR THE ORIGIN OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY

- Central set of questions was meant for **understanding of the formation of the Slovenian state**. First, we asked young people whether this issue might be addressed in the context of a history lesson and we expected a high percentage of positive responses, because the topic is definitely a part of the current curriculum. It was therefore a considerable surprise, although the majority of pupils (73.3 percent), but not the students (37.0 percent) responded positively, but at the same time 11.4 percent of pupils as well as 44.5 percent of students answered negatively.
- Young people were asked whether they discussed this subject at any other subject in school. Ninth grade pupils responded that the theme of independence was also at **geography** (37.8 percent), another subjects (27.7 percent), as well as at **Slovenian language** (29.5 percent); and final year students discussed it at **geography** (34.2 percent), at **Slovenian language** (36.5 percent), at **sociology** (23.9 percent), **philosophy** (2.5 percent) and elsewhere (16.7 percent).

*Table 2: Self-evaluation of knowledge about Slovenia's independence (in percentages)*

	Insufficient (1)	Sufficient (2)	Good (3)	Very good (4)	Excellent (5)
PUPILS	3.7	16.6	38.0	30.1	11.7
STUDENTS	14.4	34.1	37.7	9.4	4.4

*Source: Survey of »Active citizenship and homeland« (Faculty of Social Sciences, 05-06/2013, N (PS) = 888, N (SS) = 844). Respondents were asked the question »Can you estimate what is your knowledge about Slovenia's independence? «*

# ASSOCIATION OF DIFFERENT CONCEPTS WITH COUNTRY'S ORIGIN

Table 4: Connection of certain concepts to a period of Slovenia's gaining independence

How much is each concept connected with the period of Slovenia's gaining independence?	RESEARCH - PRIMARY SCHOOLS	RESEARCH - SECONDARY SCHOOLS	RESEARCH - TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS	RESEARCH - PROFESSORS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS
	(888)	(844)	(80)	(87)
Courage	3.28	3.35	3.49	3.35
Patriotism	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>3.56</b>
National consciousness	<b>3.36</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>3.72</b>	<b>3.59</b>
National purity of Slovenia	<b>2.77</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>2.36</b>
Abolition of socialism	2.97	3.00	2.87	2.87
Democracy for every citizen	3.32	3.40	3.49	3.35
Freedom	<b>3.63</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>3.52</b>
Equality	<b>3.59</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.42</b>
Enforcement of Slovenia in the World	<b>3.37</b>	3.32	<b>3.49</b>	3.37
Injustice	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.68</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>2.55</b>
War suffering	<b>2.60</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>2.52</b>
Exploitation	<b>2.57</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>2.61</b>
Economic development	3.25	3.27	3.25	3.06

Source: Survey of »Active citizenship and homeland« (Faculty of Social Sciences, 05-06/2013). Respondents were evaluating the concepts on a scale 1 to 4, wherein a value of 1 represents an answer »not connected at all«, the value of 2 represents »a bit connected«, the value of 3 represents »substantially connected«, and the value of 4 represents »highly connected«. The values in the columns are averages of responses, the larger the value, the more the respondents associated each concept with the period of Slovenia's gaining independence.

# PATRIOTIC AND CIVIL LITERACY

- The next section of the questionnaire was aimed at **investigating the knowledge of the state symbols** (flag, emblem and anthem of the Republic of Slovenia), **independence and associated key events, knowledge of public holidays**
- Youth had no problem recognizing the flag and national symbols (over 92%).
- Knowledge of civil literacy is adequate, but not also knowledge of national history.

*Table 5: Knowledge of holidays among youth (the proportion of correct answers in percentages)*

	PUPILS	STUDENTS
Slovenian Cultural Holiday	85.5	88.9
<b>National Statehood Day</b>	59.9	58.2
Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland	54.0	52.2
Reformation Day	63.9	72.7
Rudolf Maister Day	54.5	51.2
Christmas	90.8	92.3
<b>Independence and Unity Day</b>	51.0	48.0

*Sources: Survey of »Active citizenship and homeland« (Faculty of Social Sciences, 05-06/2013, N (PS) = 888, N (SS) = 844). Respondents were asked to associate seven specified dates with the names of seven different public holidays.*

# LEARNING OF PATRIOTIC CONTENT

Table 7: Point of view of the respondents on different forms of integration of patriotic education in class

Patriotic education should be...	NOTHING (% of responses)	A LITTLE (% of responses)	PARTIALLY (% of responses)	A LOT (% of responses)	FULLY (% of responses)	AVERAGE VALUE OF RESPONSES
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>... taught as a special school compulsory subject</b>						
TEACHERS IN PS	20.0	12.5	23.8	17.5	26.3	3.17
PROFESSORS IN SS	21.2	17.6	24.7	18.8	17.6	2.94
<b>... taught as a special school optional subject</b>						
TEACHERS IN PS	31.3	17.5	25.0	22.5	3.8	<b>2.50</b>
PROFESSORS IN SS	21.8	16.7	28.2	25.6	7.7	<b>2.81</b>
<b>... taught in course of subjects related to social sciences and humanities (history, geography, and so on).</b>						
TEACHERS IN PS	0	2.5	27.5	43.8	26.3	<b>3.94</b>
PROFESSORS IN SS	2.4	11.0	19.5	26.8	40.2	<b>3.91</b>
<b>... included in all subjects taught in school</b>						
TEACHERS IN PS	0	7.6	41.8	26.6	24.1	3.67
PROFESSORS IN SS	9.5	14.3	32.1	25.0	19.0	3.30
<b>... included the activities that the school implements as special projects</b>						
TEACHERS IN PS	2.5	2.5	42.5	42.5	10.0	3.55
PROFESSORS IN SS	3.6	11.9	23.8	45.2	15.5	3.57

Source: Survey of »Active citizenship and homeland« (Faculty of Social Sciences, 05-06/2013. Respondents evaluated its consent to the integration of various forms of patriotic education in teaching on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represented a response values »nothing«, 2 values »little«, 3 values »partially«, 4 is »a lot«, and 5 »fully«. The greater the value in the far right column (average value of responses), to a greater extent a particular form of integration of patriotic education in teaching is supported by the respondents.

# ATTITUDES TOWARDS ARMED FORCES

- In two different research projects, conducted in 2008 and 2010\* we asked both groups of young people about their trust towards various political and administrative institutions and among institutions listed also Slovenian armed forces were evaluated.
- Analysis of both survey results revealed that trust of pupils and students towards political and administrative institutions is rather low, even more with students than with pupils.
- Highest level of **trust** among eleven listed institutions in 2010 was recorded for **Slovenian armed forces**, that received **highest grades** from both pupils (2.89) and students (2.81);
- same institution prevailed as victorious also in 2008 in the group of pupils (2.79), but not also in the group of students, where »educational institutions« (2.69) managed „to beat“ Slovenian armed forces (2.63) by a small margin.

\* Sources: Surveys »Youth and the EU« (Faculty of Social Sciences, 10/2010, N (PS) = 881, N (SS) = 928); »Development of patriotism among the young people « (Faculty of Social Sciences, 9-10/2008, N (PS) = 516, N (SS) = 648). Institutions were evaluated on the scale from 1 (absolute distrust) to 4 (absolute trust).

# CONCLUSION

- Fragile post-socialistic systems (Slovenia), carry the burden of their past. Offering the youth an example of patriotism in these circumstances is a hard task; should patriotic elements in the education system be implemented at the early age and groom them (sometimes forcefully) or should this path be significantly different from the previous regime with patriotic elements being left aside?
- Based on the results of the conducted research, the inclusion of various elements of patriotism in the Slovenian education system could be feasible especially through 'softer' activities.
  - One possibility could be the **development of multidisciplinary and innovative approaches** to the implementation of patriotic elements in the education system; similarly the **development of in-school and out-of-school activities** offering pupils and students the ability to recognise the importance of active participation in modern democratic society (i.e. within the school community, contemporaries' groups or local communities) could be welcomed.
  - Another way to encourage patriotic emotions is through **overall school activities like visiting monuments of national heritage and public celebrations of national holidays** (especially those connected to the country and nation).
  - Many practitioners (teachers) encourage **the formation of an interdisciplinary model of teaching** about elements from the wider area of patriotic education within the remaining subjects from the social science and humanistic part of the primary and secondary educational curriculum, via History, Geography and Slovenian language and literature [the so called '*civic related subjects*'].
- All of these approaches are feasible and could make a difference in the perceptions of youth regarding patriotism.