

## CIVICS AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC – ITS TRADITIONS AND CURRENT SITUATION AND MODEL IN RELATION TO HISTORY TEACHING

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### ABSTRACT

#### CIVICS AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC – ITS TRADITIONS AND CURRENT SITUATION AND MODEL IN RELATION TO HISTORY TEACHING

The existing model of civic education within the school system in the Slovak Republic still bears an imprint of the traditions of various phases of the Czechoslovak educational system, which was roughly interrupted by the school system of the World War II Slovak Republic. At the same time it marks all the efforts made in order to adapt the system to motivations, trends and ambitions of the Europeanism and European education which has been promoted in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc in Europe for more than half a century. Since 1989, the Slovak civics passed several phases which worsened or improved its position within the country's school system under reform. However, verification of its position within curricula is still rather complicated, which is caused to a certain extent by the fact that the functional methods of education for the 21st century have not been identified with respect to that subject yet. This paper contains detailed characteristics of individual changes in the model of civic education in the Slovak Republic after 1989, and provides the analysis of a possible solution to overcome its present low functionality – not only a formal one, but an actual outline of points of contact between civic education and history teaching.

**Key words:** civic education, history teaching, school reform in Slovakia, functionality of factual description, National Educational Programme

**Słowa kluczowe:** wychowanie obywatelskie, nauczanie historii, reformy oświatowe na Słowacji, system oświatowy, Narodowy Program Edukacyjny

The complexity of Slovak contemporary humanistic education's issues represented mainly by the subjects of our Civics and History has been proven by many discussions which seem to go beyond the narrow community of specialists to the broader public in a quite turbulent manner. One of the natural factors of such situation is the specific status of both subjects in awareness of the society and the Slovak

situation, or respectively its sensitivity to the issues which can be briefly determined as an attempt to formulate the objectives of social consciousness which (according to a certain accepted consensus and, to a considerable extent, in particular through the learning of historical and cultural heritage of own community, national traditions, as well as broader transnational culture) should be instilled in the adolescent group of the national community, which is nothing exceptional in Europe. However, a complex of problems related to the dynamic changes of our society during the last quarter century added and still adds to it an exceptional status. Our specifics may not be of higher significance, but their real consequences have more considerable impact on our situation than all other factors existing in parallel also in the broader (European) educational context. At the same time, they make our situation strikingly similar to almost all Central European neighbours.

Even at glance we can find main signs of such similarity: basic objectives (and according to the relevant programme documents of the competent authorities of individual countries) of the building of cultural and historical awareness and attitudes of a future active citizen (of the democratic country) are outwardly obvious and even almost identical in each Central European society. Many signs of actual education prove that even in spite of seemingly clear criteria the respective society creates a real consensus on a concrete form of humanistic or social-scientific material in a much more complicated way, including the methodology by which it should be presented (consequently, e.g. also on the form of a textbook text). A more comprehensively verified comparison of individual aspects of the Central European humanistic or social-scientific environment (or respectively a range of school subjects included in the existing forms of broader, more or less formally similar known teaching areas in curricula of elementary and secondary schools, e.g. in the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic) does not exist yet in our country or in the neighbouring countries either, however, many more partial-oriented researches exist and the discussions published prove the typical similarity convincingly enough. Thus, they become a more clear challenge for a more specifically oriented system research<sup>1</sup>.

The Slovak tradition of civics and history teaching gradually created after 1989 (of course, if we can speak of the building of a real system or own way) means the tradition of the system of two clearly separated school subjects in senior classes of elementary school (i.e. the so-called second stage of elementary education) and two subjects of secondary school, however, with similar and to a certain extent with almost interchangeable objectives, and also with still lively heritage of the Czechoslovak teaching traditions. In complex conditions of relatively recently re-implemented,

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<sup>1</sup> From the Slovak-Czech (or Czech-Slovak) side we recommend e.g. the part of published outcomes of the Series of interdisciplinary conferences of the project "Otherness of Common History" organized in turns by Comenius University in Bratislava, Charles University in Prague, A. Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Ljubljana University in Ljubljana, P. Pázmány Catholic University in Budapest and other scientific and educational institutions from the Central European area, which were devoted to various aspects of educational and scientific connections in creation of civic historical and cultural awareness of adolescents of Central European countries: "*Otherness of Common History*", "HOP. History – Questions – Problems" č. 2, Prague 2010.

maybe still not firmly anchored democratic political system, it tries to jointly find the way of how to enable young generation to create “actively a comprehensive picture of the world it lives in” in order to obtain through such education “the ability to understand it independently” so that adolescents could use the acquired history education to understand “the presence of the country they live in” while in particular history teaching should result in “a student’s preparedness to live in and understand this society”, “in becoming “an aware, democratically oriented citizen”. Other objectives of both subjects declared are similarly interchangeable. (Confrontation of various situations of the past as situations of “the right and wrong decisions of people”, and their conduct in such situations should also enable students to understand and “acquire the sense of good and bad”)<sup>2</sup>. In this way and similarly, in the relevant preambles of reformative pedagogical documents (i.e. the documents adopted since 1990) the goals of curricula (at present the so-called national educational programmes) of the civics, civic education and history for both elementary and secondary schools are most frequently presented, or respectively the aims of their common, the so-called educational areas into which such school subjects were or are included at various stages of our educational reform<sup>3</sup>. Such goals were declared rather concisely, “monosyllabically” in the first reformative documents while in the later documents (approximately from the turn of centuries and then the documents of 2008–2010 for further reform of

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<sup>2</sup> *Civic education (compulsory school subject)*. Curriculum for elementary school approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Slovak Republic under No 2037/1993-30 of 14.4.1993 with effective date 1 September 1993, Ministry of Education and Science of the Slovak Republic, 1993 (i.e. the first reform programme educational document of the Slovak Republic for civic education): p. 2–3, *Curriculum of eight-year grammar school – history (compulsory school subject)* – approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Slovak Republic 1997, with effective date 1 September 1997. [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/nereformne\\_rocniky/uo\\_8r\\_gym\\_dejepis.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/nereformne_rocniky/uo_8r_gym_dejepis.pdf) [15.07.2014].

<sup>3</sup> We derive from the following programme documents (and curricula approved for them): Občianska výchova (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy pre základnú školu schválené Ministerstvom školstva a vedy Slovenskej republiky pod číslom 2037/1993-30 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993, Ministerstvo školstva a vedy SR, 1993 (p. 2–3); Náuka o spoločnosti (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy pre gymnáziá schválené MŠaV SR dňa 14.4.1993 pod č. 2166/1993-31 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; Občianska náuka (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy pre stredné odborné školy schválené MŠaV SR dňa 9.4.1993 pod č. 1916/1993-31 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; Občianska náuka (povinný učebný predmet pre študijné a učebné odbory) – učebné osnovy pre stredné odborné učilišťa schválené MŠaV SR pod č. 2085/1993-32 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; Občianska výchova (Učebné osnovy pre 6.-8. ročník základnej školy) schválené Ministerstvom školstva SR 14.8.1995 pod č. 1093/1995-17 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1995; Občianska výchova (Učebné osnovy pre 6.-9. ročník základnej školy) schválené MŠ SR 3.4.1997 výmerom č. 1640/1997-151 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1997; Náuka o spoločnosti (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy gymnázia štvorročné štúdium schválené MŠ SR 24.2.1997 pod č. 1252/96-15 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 2007; Vzdelávací štandard s exemplifikačnými úlohami z občianskej výchovy pre 2. stupeň základnej školy schválené MŠ SR dňa 30.1.2003 pod č. 112/2002-4 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 2002. Štátny pedagogický ústav, ŠVP Občianska náuka, príloha ISCED 2, Bratislava 2011; príloha ISCED 3a, Bratislava 2010. [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/2stzs/isced2/vzdelavacie\\_oblasti/obcianska\\_nauka\\_isced2.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/2stzs/isced2/vzdelavacie_oblasti/obcianska_nauka_isced2.pdf); [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie\\_oblasti/obcianska\\_nauka\\_isced3a.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie_oblasti/obcianska_nauka_isced3a.pdf) [15.07.2014]. With regard to the main aim of our article we just note that the above mentioned argumentation can be found also in curricula or respectively in all preambles of the national reform documents for history.

our educational system) they have been formulated in a broader way following more precise didactic goals and a reformed terminological vocabulary of the methodology of each discipline of instruction, its cognitive tasks, thematic units of the respective teaching material and aims and ways of presentation of its content and performance standards have been more specific. However, an “active approach” to common “reflection of the past and contemporary social reality from the local, regional, national, European and global perspective” is emphasized in them more and more insistently<sup>4</sup>. In other words, at least the preambles of educational documents ties clearly the goals of the teaching towards citizenship and history teaching, and at the same time, they lay down more concrete and similar updating targets also for pre-school history education adapting it in this regard to more clearly defined objectives of civics curricula starting from the beginning of the reform<sup>5</sup>. Functional elaboration of such aims in the follow-up documents and subsequently their actual effectiveness in the practice of school educations remains a permanent question. (They are not detailed even in the teaching plans). In the Slovak conditions, a more systematically conducted discussion between teachers and methodologists on both sides dealing with such issues is absent. Thus, in the situation when the lessons allocations per week for individual humanistic subjects has been radically reduced, the possibility to identify real overlapping of teaching material between individual subjects is becoming more urgent at least just for pragmatic reasons. (An overlapping may not consist only of inclusion of both subjects into common educational areas, which has been applied by the School Act of 2008, or in the generally proclaimed preambles of identical educational goals). However, more effective “inter-subject” cooperation exists now on the “case by case” basis – it depends on the good will, willingness and erudition of teachers – individuals.

It is noteworthy how similarly formulated common goals of history and civics teaching can be found in the Czechoslovak educational tradition dating back to the beginnings of the Czechoslovak State. Of course, we do not want to claim that the authors of individual programme documents of the newly built Slovak educational system after 1990 only drew upon the several decade old texts and laws of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic. On the other hand, the influence of its democratic traditions, or rather the memories of such traditions, was apparent, visible and understandable in post-revolution atmosphere at the beginning of the 90-s. We should also have in mind that during the first three years the new Slovak educational system was formed still in the conditions of the Czechoslovak State. In spite of that, reminding Czechoslo-

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<sup>4</sup> See: Štátny vzdelávací program, (ŠVP) pre gymnáziá, vzdelávacia oblasť Človek a spoločnosť, r. 2010. (National Educational Programme (ŠVP) for Gymnasium, Educational area: Individuals and Society, 2010) <http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdelavaci-program/Statny-vzdelavaci-program-pre-gymnaziaISCED-3a/Clovek-a-spolocnost.alej> [15.07.2014].

<sup>5</sup> Štátny vzdelávací program (ŠVP) Občianska náuka (ŠVP Civics). [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie\\_oblasti/obcianska\\_nauka\\_isced3a.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie_oblasti/obcianska_nauka_isced3a.pdf) [15.07.2014]; ŠVP Dejepis (ŠVP School History).

[http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie\\_oblasti/dejepis\\_isced3a.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie_oblasti/dejepis_isced3a.pdf) [15.07.2014].

vak and pro- Czechoslovak traditions after almost a quarter century of independent development of the Slovak statehood may seem to be a purely historical connection. It is true, however, that most of the positive and negative connections (or rather dependencies) of the contemporary solutions of the Slovak educational situation have been influenced by such traditions till now.

At the time of the formation of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak school system was in catastrophic state – with the exception of several church school facilities; the Hungarian language was exclusively the language of instruction at all levels of schools not to speak of inability of the Hungarian school system as such to keep up with the school system of Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. (A significant difference between the two parts of the State is proven also by the statistics of illiteracy of 1910: in the Czech lands it reached 2.4%, in the Slovak administrative districts it reached even 34.9% of the population)<sup>6</sup>. After-war chaos, fights with Hungarian troops contributed also to material damage to school buildings and their equipment. The first Slovak institution managing education, the so-called Office of the Ministry of Education and Public Education (in fact a branch of the central authority based in Prague) was established as the institution whose main task was to make the existing school system Slovak (eliminate illiteracy, establish all levels of schools with emphasis on elementary schools) and, at the same time, to align it with the system in the Czech lands, which became soon known as the process of unification. The collapse endangering education in Slovakia during the first peace years (lack of textbooks, extreme shortage of Slovak teachers) which was eliminated by the Office of the Ministry of Education and Public Education (besides ad hoc organized Slovak language courses and various temporary measures) by redeployment of Czech teachers, and historians and methods teachers are in general aware of social or social-political consequences of such decisions. Measures changing own structure of the “Slovak” educational system are less known, and in the context of this article, steps formulating its humanistic social-scientific education are the most interesting. (In particular, they seem to be repeated in the Slovak educational system even in quite different conditions and after seemingly very long time – i.e. after the formation of independent Slovak Republic in 1993).

In simple terms, interwar education in Slovakia could be built with fewer difficulties, or respectively “it could derive from the fundament of “Magyar Allami Népis-kola“ or „Kegyesrendi gimnázium“ in maths, physics, German or Latin languages“ without more serious methodological problems as was aptly noted by an outstanding Slovak historian, “but the teachers of a sort of mixed Czech-Slovak language and history were in a different situation” (and also teachers of civics)<sup>7</sup>. Whereas later Czechoslovak political development until 1989 which allowed no change, no intervention in dogmatic form of teaching material of humanistic subjects which was obligatory for several decades, after 1989 the Slovak educational system had not only a chance to make a choice but it was again in the similar situation of chaotic

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<sup>6</sup> *Slovensko v medzivojnovom Československu 1918–1939*, Bratislava, VEDA–SAV, 2012, p. 154.

<sup>7</sup> E. Lipták, *Storočie dlhšie ako sto rokov*, Bratislava 1999, p. 148.

ideas of the humanistic school subjects' possibilities<sup>8</sup>. The Office of the Ministry of Education and Public Education organized for teachers not only the above mentioned Slovak language courses but also training courses in Geography, History, Pedagogy already during the first holiday in peace time after the formation of the Czechoslovak State, and training courses in Civics took place in all districts with the same content for both parts of the country consisting of a mixture of information concerning the newly formed Czechoslovak Republic, newly formed neighbouring countries and political system of the new republic, which was presented in the spirit of the newly created state ideology<sup>9</sup>. „Slovakization” of the school system thus gained the signs of “Czechoslovakization”, and its second aspect was the unification of educational system. (It was achieved by nationalization of schools which ensured direct control of the state over educational process, creation of a unified three-level structure of schools (public or national schools – elementary schools, secondary schools – grammar schools and secondary technical schools, and universities), and introduction of compulsory eight-year education starting from school year 1927/28)<sup>10</sup>. The whole composition of school subjects and curricula of elementary schools were also subject to unification. However, civic education gained a special status.

Civic education as a new compulsory subject of junior and senior level of national schools (“a new subject in curricula” for “internal school work”) was introduced by the State in school year 1922/1923 (Act No 226, the so-called Small School Act of 13 July 1922)<sup>11</sup>. Of course, we can agree with basic assertion that its pragmatic goal consisted in the strengthening of the state authority and its system<sup>12</sup>. What did such goal look like in details? In the state emphasizing democratic principles of the political system built by it, civic education should have formed a new type of world view and morals of students and uniform awareness of the Czechoslovak citizenship: “more systematic fostering of civics and civic education at the appropriate pedagogical levels should guarantee that our schools will better than before educate conscious republicans knowledgeable about their civil rights and duties in the broadest sense of word, capable of giving themselves good laws and managing themselves”<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> For details see: M. Tonková, *Vysokoškolské všeobecné dejiny 20. storočia a výučba na Pedagogickej fakulte Univerzity Komenského* [in:] *Výuka dejín 20.století na českých a slovenských školách*, Ústí nad Labem 2006, pp. 63–73.

<sup>9</sup> For details see: Ľ. Kázmerová, *Vznik a rozvoj slovenského školstva* [in:] *Slovensko v medzivojnovom Československu*, Bratislava 2012, pp. 154–166.

<sup>10</sup> We only note that introduction, or more exactly prolongation of compulsory school attendance from the original six to eight years in Slovakia lagged behind the Czech Republic for four years. This was also caused by the general situation of the Slovak educational system. The Act of 1922 was applicable to the whole of Czechoslovakia.

<sup>11</sup> *Prejav ministra školstva Vavra Šrobára v poslaneckej snemovni Národného zhromaždenia, 26. júna 1922* [in:] *Slováci pri budovaní základov Československej republiky. Pramene k dejinám Slovenska a Slovákov*, XIIa, ed. R. Letz, Bratislava 2013, pp. 322–324.

<sup>12</sup> R. Letz, *Slovenské dejiny IV (1914–1938)*, Bratislava 2010, p. 286.

<sup>13</sup> *Prejav ministra školstva*, op.cit., p. 323.

See also: <http://www.jastrabieprimichalovciach.ocu.sk/File/1922.pdf> [16.07.2014].

Minister of education declared duties of the managing school institutions when a proposal for introduction of a new subject was submitted: „It will, however, require diligent work of experts of the Ministry of Education and Public Education to fill in the framework determined by law by appropriate content”<sup>14</sup>. One year following the adoption of the law Ministry of Education and Public Education published curricula of civics/civic education which should “contain basic knowledge about Czechoslovak State, in particular the organisation of economic, social, political and cultural life” and it insisted mainly on “republican education towards Czechoslovak citizenship so that everybody regardless of and without prejudice to nationality and religion was able to understand from an early age not only his/her rights but also duties towards the republic whose citizen he/she is.” The proclaimed principles were promptly and adequately reflected also in textbooks<sup>15</sup>.

Emphasizing republicanism and democracy as principles strengthening authority of the new State (even directly contrary to “non-productive pre-war monarchism”) became a basic normative and content of interwar teaching texts of civics. Slovak and Czech textbooks did not differ much from each other, and their curricula do not differ much from contemporary curriculum from the point of methodology. Similarly as the school subject as such, the textbooks integrated chapters and knowledge of national history/geography (the republic, homeland), law (Constitution, the judiciary, rights and duties of citizens, democracy of electoral system – proportional system), economics (finance, trade, taxes, correct approach to finance), political science (governance, other nations and their life) and anthropology (family, neighbours, nation) and they were able to interconnect very effectively or functionally the required ethic dimension in all themes and present it on the material concerning historiography and other humanistic disciplines – sociology, aesthetics, religious studies, psychology. (However, in discussions taking place after 1989 regarding the role and relationship between civics/civic education and history in our educational system, main objection against civics consisted in the fact that it had no own “scientific base” and it was merely more or less interconnected set of “introductions” to various social-scientific disciplines). Of course, simplifying educational constructs of texts are apparent and multidimensional, they can be found in historical contexts (“brotherly relationship between Slovaks and Czechs”), as well as in moral appeals of individual chapters (they contained not only ideals of humanity, values of education and self-education, values of health, ecology, health care etc., but also challenges concerning the harmfulness of smoking, alcohol, development of positive features of personality, and in particular evaluations of the personality of T.G. Masaryk are adoring although again in the spirit of democracy: therefore the President “was able to wheel a pram”<sup>16</sup>. A significant place in both language versions of the textbook belonged to M.R. Štefánik with the same evaluation).

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<sup>14</sup> *Prejav ministra školstva...*, op.cit., p. 323.

<sup>15</sup> Porovnaj: M. Šmíd, *Jak pan prezident tlačíval kočárek. První republika optikou dobových učebnic občanské výchovy*, „Dějiny a současnost“, roč. XXXIV, č. 2, Praha 2012, pp. 18–20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

However, from educator's present point of view, in particular the following aspect of the whole interwar educational model of civics should be acknowledged: not only textbooks of that period evoke a coherently scaled standard of teaching in the respective grades of the school system. "Acquiring knowledge and skills by own efforts" was considered as the basic method of pupils' work in the given subject just because the whole teaching procedure was aimed at encouraging more sustainable interest in education (after completion of compulsory education). By supporting self-study and self-education in particular in civics, modern students' competences have been underlined in the true sense of the word: self-reliance, independent work and independent expressing. Diversion from traditional forms of teaching was emphasized – e.g. from explanatory and reproducing method of teaching to dialogical methods (discussions during the lessons) or excursions which should allow students better contact with the reality studied. With the help of them, students' creativity should be developed and their social ties with the environment should be strengthened<sup>17</sup>. Terminology of that period in curriculum documents speaks of the so-called "active school". (It should be noted that a sensitive presentation of social dimension, social stratification of the society ranks among successful parts of the interwar model of civic education.) To sum up: what was unsuccessfully addressed by teaching procedure of the subject during the subsequent decades, in particular in the period of communist regime – taking into account all possible aspects of the relationship between upbringing and education towards citizenship awareness (proportion of cognitive and emotive elements, rational knowledge versus morals and upbringing) – that was effectively and practically addressed in the spirit of modern pedagogical principles by the model of civics/ civic education in the interwar period<sup>18</sup>.

Let us remind of several features which are essential for the general characteristics of our interwar teaching: in interwar Czechoslovak Republic, basic curriculum documents included curricula which only outlined main teaching material for all instructional levels, and the superior school institutions of that time did not issue teaching plans (we encounter such term only after 1945). Based on curricula, schools elaborated their own detailed curricula where they divided the teaching material independently into more detailed thematic and time units which were approved by the competent school inspector, or starting from 30-s they used to be prepared by teacher's council under the control of the competent inspector. Curricula, not framework teaching plans, determined also the number of lessons per week for individual subjects at the relevant instructional levels of schools, a possibility to join or replace lessons. The standards were subject to several amendments during 20 years between 1919–1938, while fundamental amendments took place in the 30-s of the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. also: L. Kázmerová, op.cit., p. 159.

<sup>18</sup> Curriculum for the Slovak council schools No. 54.840 z 31.1.1920, „Věstník MŠaNO“, roč. II, 1919–1920, zošit 5, pp. 71–79; „Věstník MŠaNO“, roč. III, 1920–1921, pp. 70–71, public education in Slovakia; Decree of the Ministry of Education and Public Education of 6 May 1930, No 47.415 amending normal curricula for public schools, „Věstník MŠaNO“ roč. XII, 1930, zošit 5, pp. 176–294; Výnos MŠaNO zo dňa 6. júna, ktorým sa stanovujú normal curricula for council schools, „Věstník MŠaNO“, roč. XIV, 1932, zošit 6, pp. 88–113.



20<sup>th</sup> century, and whereas their finalization by relevant schools was envisaged by them, they all were very concise. We can see in them to a certain extent a prototype of the contemporary two-stage curriculum documents.

However, the Czechoslovak pro-Czechoslovak model of civic education of the interwar period was unable and could not solve another substantial problem stemming from different conditions of two unequal components of a new-formed organism. The State's initial idea of humanistic education of young generation and its active guidance towards citizenship awareness consisted in purely lay or secular education (religion as school subject should have been replaced by the so-called lay morality). This dispute resulted in victory of the church, a new promoted subject was not established and religion remained as a school subject at both instructional levels of the national school. Religion was replaced by civics only if parents made a written application to the school management for permission to their child not to attend religion lessons. Arguments presented by important part of the Slovak political representation against initially promoted school subject and also arguments expressed in negotiations of the new School Act pointed out, however, the depth of fundamental problems which would be encountered with respect to the politically influenced new educational principles by culturally different, more conservative and religion-oriented Slovak environment<sup>19</sup>. The introduction of civics/civic education and preservation of religion did not resolve the substance of the above dispute but only mitigated it – education towards citizenship as education of the general civil rights, duties and mainly education towards the promoted social or social-cultural system was perceived as “unbeliever morality of the new subject”, “as a wolf dressed in lamb's skin”, the formulations of which smartly conceal its “antireligious, antichurch aims and plans, and the antireligious “progressive mentality” just implements them in a slower way”<sup>20</sup>. The Slovak school system has been struggling with part of substantial dimensions of such issues till now – objections against compulsory attendance of secular-oriented civic education and the question of financing religious schools. Discussions about general proportion of religion and civic education within educational system have lasted till now, as well.

Civics as a school subject remained also in the school system of the first Slovak Republic. However, while during the period of the so-called first Czechoslovak Republic civics/civic education had two lessons per week, then the number of lessons per week of the subject under the new, uniform name civic education decreased to one lesson in the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades of public schools and in all classes of the former council schools. The subject under the new name “social education” was included into curricula of the first four years of the former eight-year grammar school with minimum number of lessons per week (one lesson per week), and after all, starting from the school year 1943/44 the subject of identical name became part of curricu-

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<sup>19</sup> Pozri: *Prejav poslanca A. Hancka v poslanskej snemovni Národného zhromaždenia 27. júna 1922* [in:] *Slováci pri budovaní základov Československej republiky. Pramene k dejinám Slovenska a Slovákov*, XIIa., ed. R. Letz, Bratislava 2013, pp. 324–326. Also: *Školský plebiscit*, „Slovák”, 5. októbra 1924, 6/No. 227a, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Prejav poslanca A. Hancka...*, p. 325.

lum of elementary schools instead of the previous civic education. However, the new State completely changed ideological orientation of the school system, including the method of organisation of primary and secondary education, because it considered education as the key sphere. All textbooks considered harmful for moral and political reasons were removed from school libraries and books promoting “Czechoslovakism” and Marxist socialism were labelled as unsuitable, the school system should have acquired clearly defined and exclusively national and Christian nature<sup>21</sup>. As the new regime was formed, in particular practical needs or goals of the subject most sensitively responding to the new social reality have changed. It is already a change of its name which characterizes the narrowing and naturally also a substantial modification of the content of civic education although the main purpose was “to instil the most important knowledge of political systems and social systems, civil rights and duties in a student, to strengthen love to the Slovak Republic, respect to the head of the State and to emblems of the state sovereignty in convenient opportunities”<sup>22</sup>. The newly introduced social education exactly reflecting the name of this subject dealt rather with social standards enforced in the new State. Its content consisted of a broad list of “rules”: starting from the taking care of cleanliness or teaching sanitary principles through communication skills (using “nice speech, pleasant tone, cultivated expressions and pronunciation of literary Slovak language”) up to the principles of “plain and elegant clothing (a teacher had to pay more attention to the clothing of adolescents)”, or “fostering social tact at home and in public”<sup>23</sup>. We only note that the requirements for and rules of students’ behaviour became in general stricter in that period<sup>24</sup>.

The development in the period of 1945–1989/1990 is for the formation of a model of humanistic education in the Slovak conditions mainly a warning of how a relatively professionally built structure of educational system can be misused, or filled in by the content which by its substance declares and implements contradictory aims. Therefore, from this point of view, it is quite understandable that historians are more interested in the research of education as an instrument of propaganda compared to didacticians’ and methods teachers’ interest in learning a lesson from the past of their discipline. During the short period of 1945–1948, interwar conceptions and ideas of the content, goals and methodology of civic education were applied or were still seen, goals were formulated very realistically also with regard to the necessity

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<sup>21</sup> The new School Act of 26.11.1940 (Act No 308/1940 on public schools) defined the fundamental type of education as education which „educates children of school age to become moral and faithful citizens of the Slovak Republic on the national-Christian basis; it is provided education in the spirit of national culture to be able to fulfil properly *its religious and civic duties*. The increased role of religion was in line with the strong position of church within the whole system and the Act de facto changed national schools to church schools and religion became a compulsory school subject. R. Letz, *Slovenské dejiny V (1938–1945)*, Bratislava 2012, p. 207.

<sup>22</sup> D. Vargová, *Výchova k občianstvu v kontexte minulých a súčasných kurikulárnych trendov* [in:] *Dimenzie občianstva a výchova/Dimension on citizenships and education*, Bratislava 2010, p. 60.

<sup>23</sup> *Genéza výchovy k občianstvu na našom území*, p. 9 [in:] [www.vlasta.dubravova.sk/index.php/.../doc.../83-historia-vyucovania-on](http://www.vlasta.dubravova.sk/index.php/.../doc.../83-historia-vyucovania-on) [17.07.2014].

<sup>24</sup> R. Letz, *Slovenské dejiny V*, p. 207.

to overcome consequences of the war period and address ideological heritage of the school system of the first Slovak Republic in the situation of a sort of political “mean-time”; however, very soon after coup d’état in 1948 (following the adoption of Act on Uniform School of 21.4.1948), fundamental ideological changes of educational content of both civics and history and changes of general concept of both subjects were implemented. Clearly defined goals of both subjects consisting in the formation of the youth in the spirit “Marxism-Leninism” (in fact fully dependent on the respective political complications of seemingly problem-free clear-cut political orientation, i.e. dependent rather on differently coloured nuances of the doctrine than on doctrine itself) changed civic education and history almost in the same way to very utilitarian and propagandistic instruments of the regime. Methodology of their teaching concentrating on memorization of the subject matter of the curriculum corresponded to this fact. Consequences of such situation reflected in the atmosphere of the Slovak society, in its relation towards functionality of civic education, towards its role within the school system, its views of usefulness of history and truthfulness of the knowledge presented by history, which is apparent till now. Let us repeat the opinion that such situation is connected to a certain extent with the consequences of chaos in which the Slovak society occurred after 1989 (in contrast to the situation in Poland, in the Slovak conditions there was no longer formulated pressure to eliminate or mitigate at least partial theses which diverged most significantly from historical and social reality in the subject matter of the curriculum). In our current discussions regarding the effectiveness of the whole model of educational process in the Slovak Republic, which are not only professional but to a certain extent also political or politicized, and moreover, also because of chronically underfinanced Slovak education, they are exposed to lobbying pressure of groups representing various school subjects, it is difficult for history and even more difficult for civic education to find its place “under the sun”, or more exactly, to justify their existence within the educational system.

Texts of school documents and methodological materials for both subjects of that period have gradually, more and more systematically and systemically and coherently underlined general development of the components of education and upbringing of adolescent generation and student’s personality instead of educational goals. Elements seemingly identical with contemporary educational components and requirements of the subject: rational, emotional, ethic, world-view, moral, aesthetic components, components of medical, physical and civil defence education, environment protection, citizens’ coexistence have been gradually incorporated in such components of civic education and their methodology was elaborated according to individual instructional levels of the school system, in principle adequately as regards subject matter. However, each component had an attribute clearly monopolizing its overall goal. Their real notion and one-sidedness is proven by constantly repeated formulations emphasizing the need to form ideological-political attitudes of students in the spirit of “Marxism-Leninism” and their “communist education” (which, as we have already mentioned, derived rather from actual steps and aims of politics of the central bodies of the Communist Party). Indoctrination proceeded from issues dealing with the family up to the general social issues (“The socialistic family” is defined

as “the fundamental cell of the socialistic society”). In the curricula with thematic accent on the social life we can also find strong influence of actual political situation (up to the requirement to go through the latest session of the Communist Party), however, symbolic supporting fundamentals of that regime (subject matter of curricula concerning political holidays like February 1948 (“Victorious February”) or the Day of Liberation by the Soviet Army (9<sup>th</sup> May), the required commemoration of the “Victory of the Great Socialist October Revolution” and the “Month of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship” had its constant share, as well as the subject matter concerning the regime-supporting social organisations).

Although the civic education of the young generation had a clear task, such model passed frequent changes; (after all, like the organisation of the whole school system of the socialist education, including major changes significantly changing the length of school attendance: School Act of April 1948, i.e. as soon as two months after the communist putsch, a uniform national school system was established and classical grammar schools were removed, as well; Act on the new school system of 24 April 1953 enacted compulsory secondary education in the form of 8-year elementary school attendance and the so-called eleven-year secondary school consisting of three-year attendance which replaced grammar schools, so the compulsory secondary education should be acquired in eleven years instead of the original thirteen years. In seven years, a new School Act (of 15 December 1960) put the duration of elementary school attendance back to the previous nine years, and the general secondary education remained in the duration of three years; the reform of 1 July 1976 prolonged elementary (compulsory) school attendance to ten years while elementary school attendance was shortened from nine to eight years and general secondary education obtained again the status of grammar school with the duration of four years). Inconsistency of civic education model was manifested in frequent changes of the name of this subject for individual instructional levels, in even bizarre changes in lessons allocations and in introducing or withdrawing other school subjects broadening or narrowing its own content and goal. New educational plan and curriculum created upon adoption of the new Act on Uniform School changed the name of the subject used at secondary schools: the subject which until then emphasized and admitted educational and upbringing aspects of its function was taught at grammar schools in 1948–1953 under the name “civics” in order to present the required political forming of the youth together with a new subject – philosophy – as purely scientific<sup>25</sup>. At the same time, both these subjects became compulsory GCSE subjects. Upon establishment of the system of compulsory eleven-year secondary school attendance, they were withdrawn from the curricula of secondary schools; however, the subject “Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic and of the Soviet Union” was created for 8<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary schools. Philosophy in the curricula of secondary school was replaced by psychology in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and by logics in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. However, in 1961, competent in-

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<sup>25</sup> Predpis č. 196/1948 Zb. Nařízení, kterým se provádějí ustanovení školského zákona o školách národních a středních. Výchovné a vzdělávací obory a nauky, §11. (<http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1948-196> [15.07.2014]).

stitutions approved curricula which returned a compulsory subject “civic education” to all schools (both elementary and secondary) while surprisingly quite realistically emphasizing its upbringing nature and the teaching of civic education started according to the testing curricula in the school year 1958/1959 at secondary schools and in 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades of elementary schools<sup>26</sup>. A short, several years lasting period of slight easing of political tension or of very strictly controlled liberalisation brought into the teaching process of secondary schools independent subjects – philosophy, psychology, logics and partially political science and sociology where tentative attempts to de-ideologize explanation and focus it exclusively on the knowledge occurred in our country for the first time after a long time<sup>27</sup>. But the curricula introduced in the school year 1971/1972, i.e. right at the beginning of the well-known “normalisation” of political situation, which in fact consisted in extensive political cleansing spread to all layers and spheres of the society after invasion of armies of Warsaw Treaty into the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, returned humanistic education to the most dogmatic ideas of the 50-s and the subject underlined again its “scientific” status by simple re-introduction of its name “civics”<sup>28</sup>.

Lessons allocations for civics/civic education changed equally frequently and it was politicized from the very beginning (1 lesson per week in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year up to 2 lessons per week in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of grammar schools and with two more other lessons of philosophy in 1948–1953 up to the above mentioned prompt withdrawal of both subjects from the educational process after 1953. (“The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic and of the Soviet Union” acquired two lessons per week in the relevant grade)<sup>29</sup>. When the original subject was re-introduced into curricula, its number of lessons stabilized temporarily to one lesson per week, but its re-naming continued. In the 70-s – 80-s the scientific status of rigidly abridged civic education (social science) was supported by the increased role of philosophy in the teaching process at secondary schools<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Goals of the subject, in spite of the notes stating the need to use new teaching methodology – talks, discussions, individual students’ presentations, to link and use students’ knowledge from other subjects in teaching, are determined as follows: „civic education shall make efforts in particular to familiarize students with basics of the social system and the system of government of CSSR adequately to their age and instructional level, with basic tasks of the building of socialism and communism in our homeland, so that they understand historical and contemporary role of the working class and the Communist Party, form correct political opinions and attitudes, deepen the feeling of proletarian internationalism and socialist patriotism, so that they learn to participate in political, cultural, economic life, their scientific world views, [acquire] principles of the communist morals and characteristics of a socialist man. (Osnovy OV, 1958). Also: *Učebné osnovy. Občianska výchova*, Bratislava, ŠPN, 1967, pp. 4–11.

<sup>27</sup> D. Vargová, op.cit., p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Predpis č. 196/1948 Zb. Nařízení, kterým se provádějí ustanovení školského zákona o školách národních a středních. Výchovné a vzdělávací obory a nauky, §11. (<http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1948-196> [15.07.2014]).

Pozri tiež: Dejiny Slovenska- dátumy, udalosti, osobnosti. Bratislava 2007, p. 515, 544, 572, 631, 639.

<sup>29</sup> D. Vargová, op.cit., p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej socialistickej republiky: *Učebné osnovy gymnázia pre 3.–4. ročník*. Bratislava, SPN, 1986.

In fact, however, the compromising and discrediting of the whole model of “education towards citizenship” (similarly as history teaching) reached such extent in the Slovak conditions in the 80-s of 20<sup>th</sup> century that not only the scope of such school subjects but even the main sense of their existence was never more accepted by students and by population as such. We can dispute about the extent of such (non)acceptance in both cases, but we should consider also the fact that in contrast to civics, history as a school subject has never been questioned in any of the above described school reforms to such extent that would result in its elimination from curricula; however, problems of both traditional school subjects were perceived as identical by the general public opinion.

Part of such problems has naturally a broader context: questions of sufficiency or insufficiency, topicality and usefulness of both history and civics teaching mean the questions of the formation of new historical awareness which in broader (European) educational environment became resonant at the time of general pressure on the changes of social tasks of humanistic education. Such questions followed dramatic doubts of historiography and humanities raised about methods and goals, possibilities and limits of their research which have been continuously discussed in Western European countries in fact from the end of the World War II. The situation in the communist part of Central Europe outwardly categorically recognizing “Marxist” humanities seemed to develop free of any conflicts<sup>31</sup>. After 1989, it was “paid dearly” while Slovakia is an excellent example: other European countries maintained school subjects of history and civic education in spite of all changes or modified the nature of certain goals and teaching methods in a more natural manner, but in the Slovak conditions it seemed as if all theoretical, didactical, methodological and ideological questions were mixed up in one “kettle” and heated up by the flame of political turbulences in a short period of time. The existence of history and civics as school subjects started to shatter in its foundations as such.

“Western” responses regarding the formation of new historical and civic culture of the youth seemed to be formed in the broader community of methods teachers, theoreticians and teachers as responses to ambitious political project to unify European countries. Accelerated integration processes seemed to reflect straightforwardly in the growing number of clear-cut methodological recommendations or instructions to recast them into systematic teaching, or in other words, to introduce into humanistic education of the young generation elements which strengthen its feelings of affinity with respect to other nations of Europe and the European consciousness (i.e. “European dimension” well known among teachers as controversial). After all, the wave of Europeanism in humanistic education really reached its peak at the end of the previous century, or respectively at the turn of this century, i.e. at the time when new

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<sup>31</sup> G.G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Hanover 1997, czech translation Praha: 2002, (see mainly pp. 125–135). Of course, the reputable historian was interested in the internal side of the development of the writing about history, but he outlined some broader overlaps to history teaching and humanities teaching e.g. in the work: G.G. Iggers, *Historiography in the 20th Century* [in:] *Facing misuses of History, materials of the symposium entitled the same Oslo 1999*, Strasbourg 2000, pp. 9–21.

treaties were applied which significantly influenced the existing practice of treaties of establishment, and the Union expanded also territorially. It is enough just to browse through working materials issued for the needs of history and civics teaching by the Council of Europe, partially familiarize with recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of Educations of European countries and other institutions. However, political unification of European countries created only one, although more visible part of challenges for the newly formed humanistic education. It only placed to another level and identified a number of almost identical all-European educational problems questioning or modifying in parallel the existing responses concerning the fundamentals and principles not only of effectiveness and functionality of humanistic (not only civics and history) education. “Europeizing” or pro-European projects of humanistic education, and subsequently, “Europeizing” or pro-European textbooks are mainly professional reactions of didacticians, methods teachers and humanistic scientists to the consequences of the already mentioned big scepticism of humanities with regard to their real possibilities, possibilities to cognize reality, and even bigger scepticism with regard to the consequences of reality by which they influenced (historiography according of Iggers “in catastrophic way”) social reality also beyond the framework of their own science<sup>32</sup>. We can easily imagine the pressure of such processes on the prestige of humanistic school subjects. All questions have been resolved by elaboration of a new methodology and didactics of teaching and they implemented cognitive approaches already legitimized by social sciences but a bit later<sup>33</sup>. It should be just reminded that “Europeizing” projects were able to react promptly to the challenges pointing out the limitation of presentation of events of the past (political history), as well as the subsequent crisis of its exploration by the methods of social sciences. In the Slovak environment, certain “fading away” of political consequences of the unification process represents only one, in fact less important side of all educational issues; advancing Europeanism of education in particular in civic education and history obviously added another complication to suddenly emerging strained relations among experts, politicians and the public with regard to the general form and aims of our school system.

During the initial period of seeking new bases (till 1995), major part of debates resulted in assertion that in particular civics should be excluded from educational programmes (first of all at elementary schools), that in our conditions it is impossible to transform it into an adequate school subject. Before the new School Act was adopted (1.9.1993) it was still taught although in the reduced scope and without textbooks, with minimum number of teaching aids (prepared mostly by the system “do it yourself” in own initiative of individuals – teachers), in accordance with instructions of school authorities, lessons were transformed into a sort of “discussion clubs” dealing with topical social problems in which students themselves showed interest. We can speculate how together with other practical problems (absolute lack of qualified

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<sup>32</sup> For details see: M. Tonková, *Přítomnost minulosti – cesty moderní historiografie a cesty výučby moderního dějepisu* „HOP. Historie – Otázky – Problémy”, č. 2, Praha 2010, pp. 21–36.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 30.

teachers substituted by teachers of other subject) in particular such improvisation contributed to further discrediting of the subject (unprofessionally conducted “discussion clubs” – lessons which often ended by false ideas of basic content of newly adopted democracy, of its possibilities and limits, resulted then in opinions that the subject which “in its substance” is unable to take uniform position to anything is useless). Neither history teaching was able to cope with the fact that historiography lost its previous normative function. The fact that a wide spectrum of opinions of the national past appeared suddenly among reputable historians (which was perceived as the fact that they became members of opposite political camps) had almost destructive impact on the general public in our conditions. In the period when education in European countries was definitely “Europeized” not denying that its objective was updating, emphasizing pragmatic educational function of “learning a lesson” from the past (of course, within the limits not allowing to create a false picture of scientific exploration of the past), the pressure of the Slovak public opinion on history underlined “objective” (i.e. “one”) explanation of the real “definitive” historical “truth” about the development of own nation, materialized mainly by well-known terms eliminating “blind spots” from the so far existing history interpretation. There was really “supercritical” number of facts and themes in the Slovak history concealed and tabooed from the public although Slovak historians reflected equality of alternative interpretations or methodologies of exploration of the past.

It seemed that first discussions about the focus of civic education in 1993 when the expert commission of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Slovak Republic working since autumn 1991 completed its work on the creation of a new conception and new curricula of this subject for both elementary and secondary instructional levels. The commission composed of active teachers of all three instructional levels (elementary and secondary schools and universities), including scientific and pedagogical workers from various spheres of social sciences adopted basic agreements on the future teaching forms for both instructional levels. Inspiration by historical traditions of civic education formed since 1922 was recognized but the commission derived to a large extent from the models and curriculum materials of Western European countries (UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Austria) and USA<sup>34</sup>.

We can say that conceptual intentions of this commission consist of the principles followed by the Slovak educational model of civic education at least formally up to now: basic content purport of the subject has been radically changed (attempts at its rehabilitation in the society is less successful); its apolitical and non-confessional nature is emphasized and ideas of humanism have been implemented as determinative in the subject curriculum; the existence of the only one unified model or unified ideas of the form of civic education have been denied; education of “independently acting and feeling citizens of democratic society” became the main purpose and mission of the subject, the role of personality and creativity of each teacher, his/her necessary

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<sup>34</sup> M. Čapová, B. Stašenková, *Metodická príručka k občianskej výchove na 2. stupni základných škôl*, Bratislava, SPN, 1998, pp. 6–7.



share in finalisation of the form of this subject in the conditions of his/her own school, educational facility<sup>35</sup>.

Ministry of Education and Science of the Slovak Republic approved the new conception and new curriculum of civic education by Act No 2166/1993 of 14 April 1993 with effective date 1 September 1993<sup>36</sup>. This Act prescribed the introduction of the subject “civic education” at elementary schools, and the so called “social science and civics” at secondary schools. We indicate exact dates, because doubts and chaos in teaching continued: four months later of the same year (18.8.1993) the original scheme was cancelled by the new ministerial decree. The teaching of civic education in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades of elementary school was cancelled and in the following years it was taught only in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and in several classes of 9<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary schools. Opinions that such intervention disrupted the general aim of the conception requiring that civic education should apply continuously from junior to senior adolescent classes and that the whole content structure is liquidated<sup>37</sup> remained unheard. According to the conception approved, however, according to innovated curricula, the teaching of civic education at elementary schools started in the school year 1997/1998.

One of the problems was caused by still unavailable textbooks. The first more comprehensive working materials with at least partial didactic elaboration of individual thematic units of curricula issued for the school year 1993/1994 were recommended for both elementary and secondary schools<sup>38</sup>. First more specialized teaching texts did not appear until mid-nineties and they were introduced in elementary schools together with innovated curricula. However, in particular together with curricula they revealed a more substantial problem of the new model: their authors in their efforts to increase professional level of the subject after years of routine and clichéd old curricula arrived at another extreme: curriculum contained excessive difficult, demanding specialized information of social-science disciplines (psychology, sociology, law, political science, economy, philosophy) while the time allocation for the subject was insufficient<sup>39</sup>. First texts for secondary schools were published as individual textbooks of basics of political science, sociology, law, economy and their

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> In connection with the titles of documents we only note that since 1989 till now the names of many of our official bodies, including the full name of the Ministry of Education have changed several times (note by M.T.).

<sup>37</sup> Cf.: Z. Janasová, *Humanistický aspekt výchovy k občianstvu* [in:] P. K. Hun [a kol.], *Humanizácia výchovy a vzdelávania*, Bratislava, SPN, 1994, p. 56.

<sup>38</sup> Z. Janasová, *Kapitoly z etiky a občianskej náuky*. Bratislava, IRIS, 1993; Tiež: J. Tuláček, *Človek a ľudské práva*, Bratislava, IRIS, 1993; J. Tuláček, *Človek a štát*, Bratislava, IRIS, 1993; A. Kánský, *Človek a náboženstvo*, Bratislava, IRIS, 1993; J. Dobroruková, *Človek a príroda*, Bratislava, IRIS 1993.

<sup>39</sup> Občianska výchova (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy pre základnú školu schválené Ministerstvom školstva a vedy Slovenskej republiky pod č. 2037/1993-30 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993, Ministerstvo školstva a vedy SR, 1993. Náuka o spoločnosti (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy pre gymnáziá schválené MŠaV SR dňa 14.4.1993 pod č. 2166/1993-31 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; Občianska náuka (povinný učebný predmet) – učebné osnovy pre stredné odborné školy schválené MŠaV SR dňa 9.4.1993 pod č. 1916/1993-31 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; M. Čapová, B. Stašenkova, op.cit.

formal arrangement (maybe with a smaller exception of the basics of economy) reminds of the arrangement of encyclopaedic handbooks briefly explaining the respective technical terms of this or that scientific discipline<sup>40</sup>.

Another factor was created by new concepts of other subjects of broadly understood humanistic education and the renewed question of inclusion of religion into curricula. In 1990 ethic education was included as optional subject (the subject taught at elementary schools in the afternoon) into curricula, as “education towards pro-social behaviour and conduct”, which was considered as a competition to the teaching of religion. Many years lasting and still continuing disputes about its right role were resolved by various compromises: from 1997/1998 it was included in the streamline curricula for senior classes of elementary schools and as obligatorily optional subject alternating religious education; from the school year 2004/2005 the same alternating system (with one lesson per week) was introduced also for junior classes of elementary schools. Latest amendments of framework curricula applicable from the school year 2011/2012 determined altogether 4 lessons per week for junior classes (1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grades) and altogether 4 lessons per week for senior classes (5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades), the same number as for religion. The content of the subject has not practically changed and paradoxically, its position is also strong (in particular due its ties to religious education). It should be admitted, however, that religious education had much better professional, qualifications and material support (teaching aids). Another complication was then created by new subjects introduced like education by arts and then cross-cutting themes (e.g. multicultural education): in practice in the conditions of the Slovak educational system they had a “cutting-off” effect on a low number of lessons allocated to traditional humanistic subjects.

Therefore, professional community keenly awaited a more fundamental reform of the educational system. In discussions on necessary changes of the situation generally considered unsatisfactory, unsuitable and unacceptable they were considering whether the whole system of teaching students was obsolete, or only its parts, so whether only some of its segments should be revised or it should be changed fundamentally, whether its deficiencies arise from too much centralized model of education (just in civic education such model will be clearly manifested as the model not respecting differences of human individualities); or whether basic problem consists “only” in curriculum overloaded by superfluous information. Opinions on the way of changing curriculum documents followed from such questions. Some theoretical-empirical research (project: *Starting points for curriculum reform of civic and humanistic education of 2004–2006*) of methods teachers of civics clearly presented

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<sup>40</sup> R. Tóth, *Základy politológie*, Bratislava, SPN, 1994; J. Sopóci, B. Búzik, *Základy sociológie*, Bratislava, SPN, 1995; A. Krsková, D. Krátka, *Základy práva*, Bratislava, SPN 1995; R. Šlosár, S. Búrová, L. Fabová, J. Lisý, *Základy ekonómie a ekonomiky*, Bratislava, SPN, 1995. We simply must note that texts of the first series of the reformed history textbooks for grammar schools (in particular text of chronologically older eras) are characterized by excessive texts often going into unnecessary technical details. Their didactic arrangement is better elaborated, just because they were published even later than civics textbooks. On the other hand, they returned to older model of mechanic distribution of teaching material to national history and world history.

that most of reflections on the reform “revolve in a circle”, questions like those above outlined are repeated, and the question of whether the required purpose of the reform consists in harmonisation of the knowledge provided and educational ideal with other components of the society (with its ideology, state of politics, economy) or in the building of independent personality of a student having certain competences, becomes more and more pressing<sup>41</sup>. It is still a problem to denominate such competences and skills which are based (unclearly known and named) on the demand of the society realistically responding to the present situation, however, their relevancy out of the wide range of possible skills and available knowledge can be better identified by challenges of the future<sup>42</sup>. (Last but not least, this research also pointed out the existing doubts about sufficient strength of ethic drive able to eliminate expressions of national egoism in favour of the promoted tolerant Europeanism).

The new School Act of 2008 was accepted by professional community with understanding, because it enacted many decentralisation changes of still excessively unified Slovak educational model. The educational system should acquire more features of plurality, and adapt to specifics of various types of schools and regions with the help of simple transformation of one-level to two-level type of school education (the State determined the so-called obligatory educational standard of each subject and its framework curriculum to the extent of 70–75% of lessons allocated for the respective subject and each school was authorized to finalize the content of the subject within the remaining scope of time). Thus, the State ensured the required framework model and teaching goals of each subject at each instructional level (the so-called National Educational Programme of the respective subject and its educational standards expressed in the so-called performance and content standards). However, school have been given possibilities and obligations to finalize the form of the model “according to market conditions” to a certain extent, thus following from their own ideas, ambitions, as well as possibilities and restrictive limits<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, schools’ chances to autonomously finalize the form of the teaching model was supported also by the creation of the so-called common educational areas, i.e. grouping of individual subjects according to their internal affinity, whereas on the other hand, curricula developed according to educational areas kept the ratio of 70% of the national and 30% of the school educational programme, as well as lessons allocations per each subject. Optional features of own educational module of each school have intensified, at least seemingly, also in the result of introduction of new types of teaching units, the so-called cross-cutting themes underlying proximity of aims and issues of the respective unit among subjects created also in the curricula of history and civics (multicultural education etc.). In fact, this was in line with the results of expert analyses saying that

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<sup>41</sup> E. Mistrík [a kol.], *Východiská pre kurikulárnu reformu občianskeho a humanitného vzdelávania na základných a stredných školách* [in:] *Záverečná správa projektu KEGA č. 14/2048/04*, Bratislava 2006, pp. 2–8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Zákon č. 245/2008. Zbierky zákonov o výchove a vzdelávaní.

the teaching instrument of current education and the existing state of isolated school subjects should be changed into broader educational frameworks<sup>44</sup>.

Civics (together with history and geography) became part of the educational area “Man and Society” (denomination of the educational area and in principle its content, grouping of subjects are identical for senior classes of elementary schools (5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades) and for grammar schools, i.e. they are identical at the junior and senior secondary education, which international notions are definitively used also by the Slovak educational system). The Act and follow-up directives imperatively emphasize high priority attributed by the national educational policy to civics at both levels, which is irreplaceable “in preparing students for life in its multidimensionality”, so it is somehow a paradox that, at the same time, the national educational programme reduced its lessons allocations (traditional lesson per week for individual grades at primary schools changed to 0.5 hour for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade, lessons of civics were reduced also in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years at grammar schools, the 3<sup>rd</sup> year received two lessons and the 4<sup>th</sup> year one lesson per week).

Reduced lessons allocations for humanistic subjects were and still are a fundamental problem. Methods teachers argued in particular by the fact that preparation for civilian life is absent or narrowed just in the most important period of personality development of adolescents between 13 and 16 years of pupils' and students' age. They also pointed out a more liberal educational model of the Czech Republic which did not prescribe number of lessons allocated for individual subjects and classes, but for educational area<sup>45</sup>. Didacticians, methods teachers and history teachers also protested against reduced lessons allocations. The newly created two-level model gave schools a chance to adjust the number of lessons, however, not to such extent that would prevent civics to get to the situation which is according to some experts similar to helplessness just after 1989.

Along with objections of the opposite side pointing out useless abstraction and excessive demands (curricula) of humanistic subjects and insisting that humanistic subjects should make themselves much more substantial amendment of their internal content structure and overcome permanent isolation of the knowledge provided by them, find more effective teaching methods in order to stop constantly decreasing effect and effectiveness of their subjects, Ministry of Education made finally the amendment to the framework curricula for elementary schools and grammar schools with effective date of 1 September 2011 allowing a simplified change and substitution of half-hour allocations for subjects<sup>46</sup>. These steps are not considered sufficient by teachers either. They urge that within the Slovak educational system there is a constant lack of qualified teachers of this subject, partially because of the fact that its low

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> Cf.: D. Vargová, op.cit., p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> Informácia k zavedeniu upravených rámcových učebných plánov základných škôl a gymnázií schválených Ministerstvom školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu vedy, výskum a športu SR dňa 20. mája 2011 pod č. 2011-7915/18754:2-922. Available at: <http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Aktuality/Upravene-Ramcove-ucebne-plany.alej> [15.07.2014]. Štátny vzdelávací program: (ŠVP) [http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie\\_oblasti/obcianska\\_nauka\\_isc3a.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie_oblasti/obcianska_nauka_isc3a.pdf) [15.07.2014].

compulsory lessons allocations do not give many chances to potential teachers with such qualifications to get a full-time job. Thus, a vicious circle occurred, the subject is taught by teachers without full qualification (with relevant consequences) having passed only additional training courses and in the situation of lack of fully qualified teachers of civic education, schools direct their interest rather on other areas when creating the school educational programme.

The above describe situation is connected also with other purely practical reason symbolizing a declined interest in the subject of civics at secondary schools (which can be also related to history). During the 90-s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and first years of this century, both subjects together with the subject *Seminar of Social sciences* ranked among the most popular subjects for those interested in university study of the then popular law and social-scientific disciplines. The social-scientific seminar introduced since 1993/1994 as non-obligatory optional subjects for grammar schools and secondary technical schools (with a high two-lesson allocation per week for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year) broadened and technically in a new way defined the initial area of civics<sup>47</sup>. There is still high interest in the study of law or political science in our country, but almost massively broadened possibilities to study them accompanied by elimination of admission exams, which is connected with demographic factor, caused also declined interest in a non-obligatory optional subject.

The ways of increasing students' interest in the subject of civics, increasing low prestige and low functionality of humanistic subjects teaching constitute part of the discussions on the role, place and mutual relations between the subjects of natural sciences and humanities within the whole structure of the functional educational system. We cannot expect either that the increasing pressure of the subjects of natural sciences will stop. A concept based upon real and feasible interconnection and complementarities of both subjects can be a way out. However, in the current Slovak conditions there are not many suggestions in favour of such way. Not only civics experts can be blamed. Methods teachers and theoreticians of history teaching, although they mostly abandoned their conviction of relevancy of the argument that a school subject must be based upon the corresponding scientific discipline, they are unable to think hard about concepts of new ways of approximation towards school history, about the types provided to us by teaching practice of other countries and in the situation of low time allocations, they choose the path of the least resistance – narrowing and excluding certain thematic units from traditionally understood chronological conception of history<sup>48</sup>. Our curricula of both subjects thus legitimize the system where seemingly contradictory elements of traditional and modern educational methods get along with each other – didactic system of developing students' competences, exces-

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<sup>47</sup> Spoločenskovedný seminár (voliteľný predmet). Učebné osnovy pre gymnáziá schválené MŠaV SR pod č. 2167/1993-31 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; Spoločenskovedný seminár (voliteľný predmet). Učebné osnovy pre stredné odborné školy schválené MŠaV SR pod č. 2172/1993-31 dňa 14.4.1993 s platnosťou od 1. sept. 1993; Spoločenskovedný seminár (voliteľný predmet). Učebné osnovy gymnázia – štvorročné štúdium schválené MŠ SR dňa 10.05.1999 pod č. 155/99-41 s platnosťou od 1.9.1999.

<sup>48</sup> [www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie\\_oblasti/dejepis\\_isced3a.pdf](http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzdelavacie_oblasti/dejepis_isced3a.pdf) [15.07.2014].

sive amount of teaching material and the required knowledge. Unintentional effect of opposite barricades included, e.g. the expected elimination of the so-called cross-cutting themes in the new amendments of the national educational programme under preparation – mainly because teachers were unable to cope with them.

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