Discussion Paper

Value crisis and change of values: In the mirror of social values and history education in Hungary

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Proposal Information

In recent years, factors suggesting that we are living in a world risk society (Beck, 1997, 2007; Beck & Grande, 2004) have been strengthening. Economic and political crises, increasing poverty, new migration flows, political populism gaining strength, and technological changes (ICT and web2), in addition to the intensifying European youth vulnerabilities specified at the beginning of the century (Furlong, Stalder, & Azzopardi, 2000; Znidarec Cuckovic, 2014), create new vulnerabilities for child and youth generations both in Europe (Sortheix, Parker, Lechner, & Schwartz, 2017) and in Hungary, such as the crisis of freedom, solidarity, empathy, values of autonomy (crisis of universal humanistic values and crisis of European values), furthermore exposure to manipulations of the post-truth era, and the "fear industry" (Beck, 2007). The influencing effects of the mass media have become dominant on young people's thinking. Along with the appearance of web2 and smart devices, time spent on talking with the family is decreasing; thus, the impact of the family on young people's thinking and value orientations is also decreasing. The role of peer groups has been revalued. In most recent years, real,

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face-to-face friend communities have been taken over by virtual youth interpreting communities and influencers guiding the individual. As a consequence of all, in Hungary, school-age children use the Internet and social media as a basic source of information, which thus become fertile grounds for hoaxes, misconceptions, manipulative grouping of information, and claiming false facts. This vulnerability is reinforced by the phenomenon of increasing isolation and seclusion, measured among Hungarian youth (Gabor, 2012; Jancsak, 2013; Zsolnai, 2015), which means that children and young people leave the filter system of traditional interpreting communities (family and peer friend communities) that would restrict the spread of misconceptions and manipulation (Galan, 2014; Kasik, 2015). The Hungarian educational system is not prepared to provide answers for this phenomenon. This applies for the school subject of History and Civic Education, which provides civic education within the frameworks of educational documents (National Core Curriculum), with its key task to sensitize (educate) students in Grades 8 and 12 of public education (14- and 18-year-olds) into conscious, active citizens. Our earlier studies reveal that history education, due to its textbook-driven nature, performs its democratic education function to a lesser extent; contents reflecting on civic education issues are absent from history teacher education, and teachers do not feel prepared for this task (Jancsak, 2018).

Relying on the value theories of Rokeach (1968, 1973), Schwartz (1992, 2006), and Rezsohazy (2006), our research focus was whether the phenomenon of value crisis/value change could be detected among Hungarian children and young people in two school-life phases that are significant from the perspective of civic education. Our other research question aimed at discovering whether the phenomenon of value crisis appears, and how it appears, among teachers of History and Civic Education. Furthermore, we investigated what opinions students and history teachers hold concerning value transfer processes that are and that could be realized within the framework of History as a subject in case of certain European (universal and humanistic) social values, such as freedom, solidarity, autonomy, democracy, right for making decisions, critical thinking, active citizenship, and empathy.

Methods

The empirical data of the present paper were gained through my studies conducted in Hungarian public education institutes. Questionnaires were administered in two age groups: among 8th graders in primary school (14-year-olds) and among 12th graders of secondary school before their Matura exams (18-year-olds). The first data collection happened in the spring of 2017 and the second is happening in the spring of 2019. The venues of data collection were the 28 partner schools of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – University of Szeged Oral History and History Education Research Group. In the two data collection phases of the research, questionnaires were and are administered among history teachers as well (2017: $N = 133$, planned for 2019: $N = 200$). The items on

our questionnaire were based on Gabor's (2012) adaptation of the questionnaires applied by Rokeach (1968), Inglehart (2000), and Schwartz (1992), for Hungarian youth research, and specified for the democratic and civic competencies expected to appear in history education according to the Hungarian National Core Curriculum, and also supplemented with a group of questions on values of democratic competencies, critical thinking, historical thinking, and active citizenship. The independent variables of this study, in case of the students, are sex, age, cultural capital of family (parents' qualifications and talking about historical and public topics), economic situation of family (financial situation), the interpreting community role of peer friend communities made up of real people, and online user habits. In case of the teachers, the independent variables are sex, age, year of earning a degree, and participation in further trainings.

Conclusions

According to our expectations, in the two data collection phases, changes in the social environment of the youth and school in Hungary (e.g., the communication environment appearing in connection with the European Union and migration), the opinion forming of virtual interpreting community platforms (websites, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter), and the reception of manipulative media contents all had an impact on students' value orientations and structure of value judgments. This study revealed the expected research findings that the phenomenon of value crisis/value change (Rezsohazy, 2006) means the devaluation of universal (European) values and the preference of material values of a new type (financial well-being vs. equality, consumption vs. environmental awareness) and the preference of individual values (egocentrism vs. empathy, experiences vs. solidarity, individual vs. community, benevolence and altruism vs. stereotypical thinking and hate). Simultaneously, it is also assumed that, in case of History and Civic Education as a subject, there is a chasm between the teachers, who are more sensitive from the point of view of critical and historical thinking, and new generations, being formed in school, who are exposed to new vulnerabilities.

Keywords: social values, value crisis, civic education, history education

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