Implementation of the Curriculum of Cross-curricular Topic Citizenship Education in Croatia: Case of Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the approach to teacher education for conducting curricula of cross—curricular topic Citizenship education (CE) in Croatia. The analysis is based on three theoretical concepts - initial education, competence profile, and professional development of teachers. The analysis aims to determine the outlook of initial education, the matrix of the competence profile, and the modalities of professional development of elementary school teachers for the implementation of the CE curriculum. Content analysis of the educational policy documents, syllabuses of the faculties of teacher education, and national professional development plans sought to provide answers to the research questions. Results show that in faculties syllabuses the representation of courses with content related to CE is sporadic and unstructured with a negligible percentage share in the total number of courses. The lack of representation of content related to CE in initial teacher education is complemented by an undefined teacher competence profile for the implementation of the CE. There is no explicit competence profile, but after analysis of the teachers' tasks listed in the CE curriculum, an implicit competence profile was extracted. Within the extracted competence profile the dominance of the methodical, the presence of didactic, and the absence of pedagogical competence are observed, which indicates that educational policy does not have a clear picture of the competence profile required by teachers for the implementation of the CE curriculum. Research results point to the absence of a comprehensive system for the development of competencies necessary for elementary school teachers to implement the CE curriculum. That is a consequence of the lack of concern from the side of national educational policy for the elementary schools' teachers and the quality of implementation of the CE, and in wider perspective consequence of the activities of national political elites who do not want citizens educated for democracy.

Keywords: *citizenship education, competence profile, elementary school, teachers, initial education, professional development.*

1. Introduction

Historical perspective of the importance of the teachers for the quality of education is accompanied by contemporary trends at the level of international education, where "teacher education and teachers became an important international research and political issue" … "emphasizing the contribution of education to economic, social, political and cultural development, particularly within the European Union countries" [3 p 14]. The quality of teachers determines the quality of the educational system, and it is not possible to improve the functioning of the educational system without raising the competencies level of teachers [4]. In Croatia, the importance of teachers for the quality of the educational system is emphasized by all strategic documents of educational policy from 1999 until today. Following the aforementioned tendency, this paper presents the results of qualitative research to determine the preparation outlook of future teachers of elementary schools for the implementation of the first and second cycle of the Citizenship Education curriculum (CE) in Croatia. The objective was operationalized through three research questions:
1. How is the initial teacher education (ITE) for the implementation of the CE conducted in Croatia?
2. What is the teacher competence profile (TCP) for the implementation of the CE in Croatia?
3. How is the teacher professional development (TPD) for the implementation of the CE conducted in Croatia?

2. Method

Analysis of documents of educational policy and state actors conducting ITE and TPD of elementary school teachers were used to answer research questions.

2.1 Sources, processing, and encoding of data

Research questions and three theoretical constructs were used as an orientation in the selection of data sources [6]. The criteria for the selection, analysis, and grouping of data were:

a) Focus on CE

b) ITE for the implementation of the CE

c) TPD for the implementation of the CE

d) The teacher competence profile for the implementation of the CE

These topics are based on three theoretical constructs. *ITE for the implementation of the CE* refers to the acquisition of formal qualifications by graduating from a university which enables entry into the teaching profession [12]. *TPD for the implementation of the CE* combines the concepts of teacher education and lifelong learning, and at the theoretical level denotes "all activities in which teachers participate during their careers that are designed to improve their professional activity" [8 p3]. *TCP* is "an upgrade of the qualification framework, based on the determination of the type and level of competencies required to perform a specific job and serves as an orientation to employers and creators of educational programs" [16 p37]. TCP consists of different competencies, including civic competence [5], and following the aforementioned, it is the task of institutions that perform ITE to make sure that it develops civic competence.

3. Results

3.1 ITE for implementation of the CE

To answer the question about the ITE for the implementation of the CE, syllabuses of integrated undergraduate and graduate teachers' studies at universities in Croatia were analysed (Table 1).

Table 1. ITE for the implementation of the CE at Croatian universities

FACULTY	SEMESTER	COURSE	STATUS	RELEVANT ASPECTS
Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Split	4.	Introduction to the CE	Elective/obligatory for students who choose Module 3	Students will be able to devise and implement an interdisciplinary program of the CE.
	4.	Child and Society	Elective/obligatory for students who choose Module 3	The student will be able to define social and civic competence.
	8.	Democracy in theory and practice	Elective/obligatory for students who choose Module 3	The student will be able to: interpret leading theories and the development of the philosophy of democracy. To critically consider and evaluate democracy in theory and practice. Give his argument for and against the position of the philosophy of democracy.
	9.	Implicit pedagogy	Elective	/
Faculty of Teachers education at the University of Rijeka	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Teachers Education at the University of Zagreb	7./8.	Stage culture	Obligatory	/
Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of J. J. Strossmayer in Osijek	2.	Bioethics	Elective	The student will gain competencies for active citizenship and strengthen his pro-social behavior and social engagement.

Table 1 shows that the ITE courses with content related to CE are present at a negligible level, which is particularly evident when considering the total number of courses student take before obtaining a

master's degree as an elementary school teacher. The presented data suggest that a student can acquire a master's degree as an elementary school teacher without formally learning about the CE. If future elementary school teachers are not familiar with the content of CE it plausible to conclude that they didn't acquire the methodical competencies necessary to teach the CE topics [10].

3.2 TPD for implementation of the CE

The teacher represents the foundation of the educational system and plays a crucial role in supporting students in the process of development of various competencies (including civic competence). To successfully perform the tasks stemming from the role of the teacher, it is necessary to take the perspective of lifelong learning in the TPD. "Education and TPD in [CE] rely on the idea of lifelong, active and critical learning for citizen's empowerment, participation, and accountability using multiple perspectives and different content and sources of learning, teaching and training" [9 p11]. In the development phase, TPD for the implementation of the CE suffered from many shortcomings since "in most cases, TPD [was] the result of *ad hoc* initiatives, schools programs or cooperation between schools and civil society" [11 p9].

The most common method of TPD is professional training with the aim of "raising the teacher's professional, pedagogical and general competence throughout career" [21 p 61]. The leading actor of TPD in Croatia is the Education and Teacher Training Agency [ETTA] which, under Article 4 of the *Act on the ETTA* "organizes and conducts professional training of educational workers and principals" [13]. *The Strategy for TPD (2014-2020)* [1] does not specify activities aimed at the TPD for the implementation of the CE, and according to the *ETTA Professional meetings Timeline in 2020* six training related to CE was planned [2]. Besides ETTA, *CE Initiative* and *Youth Network of Croatia* play an important role in TPD and informing the public interested in the CE.

3.3 The TCP for the implementation of the CE

The TCP presents "determination of the type and level of competencies required to perform a specific job" [24 p37] and includes psychological characteristics, knowledge, behaviour, thought processes, decision-making following the situation, and learning activities resulting from the interaction of these elements[15]. The presented elements of the competence profile can be summarized as didactic, pedagogical, and methodical competence [7]. The question that arises is: what is the relationship between the TCP and the implementation of the CE? In Croatia, there isn't defined TCP for the implementation of CE, but the CE curriculum [14] describes the role of teachers. By analysing the description of the role of teachers from the CE curriculum the TCP was constructed. In the analysed descriptions the most frequent is the methodical competence and to a lesser extent, didactic competence is present while pedagogical competence is almost not represented (Table 2).

Table 2. The TCP extracted from the CE curriculum (OG 10/2019)

Professional competence	Description
Didactic; pedagogical; methodical	promotes human rights protection and civic literacy
Didactic	notes the importance of the context of social, cultural, political, and economic events in the local and national communities
Didactic; methodical	provides feedback on the learning process and outcomes; uses different teaching and learning methods at and outside school
Methodical	plans and conducts group and group learning, uses an individualised approach, creates and maintains an atmosphere of trust, solidarity, and openness respecting different opinions as a starting point for finding a common solution; ensure the inclusion and equal participation of all students solves group problems using nonviolent methods encourages student participation in school life and connects schools with the local community looks at the problems from the students' perspective accepts differences among students

is sensitive to the needs and interests of its students
notes the importance of equal treatment of all students
successfully communicates with other teachers and with students' parents
readily admits mistakes in front of his students
controversial topics are discussed openly
leads discussions and exchanges of views on developments in the community and social and political life in the community

4. Conclusion

The results of this research point to the absence of a comprehensive system for the development of competencies necessary to elementary school teachers for the implementation of the first and second cycle of CE curriculum. Analysis shows that initial education and TPD do not provide enough content aimed at developing didactic, pedagogical, methodological, and civic competence of elementary school teachers. This situation represents a combination of two elements: the systematic neglect of the teaching profession and the quality of implementation of the CE by the educational policy. The final element leading to the neglect of comprehensive preparation of elementary school teachers for the implementation of CE are political elites who do not want citizens educated for democracy, but citizens whom they can easily manipulate. The presented state of initial education, professional development, and the competence profile of elementary school teachers for the implementation of the CE, prevents comprehensive and high-quality functioning of the educational system aimed at the development of student civic competence in an important period of political socialization.

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