

# RECON Online Working Paper 2011/04

## Education for Democracy in Hungarian Schools

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## **Abstract**

Democracy at supra-national level would be stable only with stable national democracies. That is the responsibility of national education for democracy. Efficiency in this field of Hungarian secondary schools was measured by students' gaining socio-political knowledge through different school subjects and communication with teachers as well as by their experience of participation in democratic institutions of everyday life in schools. Both formal and informal communication of teachers and students fall far from the ideal while data show that it could become more efficient. Institutions for student participation in school community life rarely offer room for creativity and autonomy. Education for democracy turns to education for obedience and for accumulating good contact with superiors.

## **Keywords**

Democracy – Educational Policy – Hungary – Socialisation



## Introduction

Eriksen and Fossum (2009) see that the challenge is, for Europe, “to forge a viable democracy at the supra-national level” and they add that “this issue must be considered in light of the challenge of *sustaining* national democracy within an altered European and global context.” My interest goes to this second challenge which I consider a precondition to the first one. Without consolidated democracies at the national level no viable higher – supra-national – level democracy can be forged. This may seem trivial to anyone looking over Europe from the Atlantic coast, but it is not so trivial if we take into consideration member states without long historical experience in democracy.

Hungary is one of such countries. While Hungary has a long history of movements which failed to start a democratic development in the country, Hungarians kept on living under regimes with sharply different political colours and slightly different degrees of authoritarianism. After the so-called systemic turn, in the early nineties, governmental and civil organisations of the EU member states made great efforts to teach East European politicians, trade union leaders and a wide range of civilian study groups how to build a democratic system of institutions. Institutions have been changed since then. But to change peoples’ values, attitudes and everyday routines need much more than a couple of years. The European Parliament kept this idea in mind when it declared 2005 the *Year of Education for Democracy*.

The European Union does not wish to implement an educational policy (unlike in vocational training), thus education remains under the full control of the member states.<sup>1</sup> The European Union encourages their cooperation, supports and supplements their action but member states keep all their responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation of the educational system. This is the reason for studying education for democracy at the national level as a precondition to any reflexion on viable models for the supra-national level.

The Year of Education for Democracy offered a good opportunity to explore the state of the art of education for democracy in Hungarian secondary schools. In fact, the way young people conceptualize various models of democratic decision-making, civil participation and public deliberation will directly affect the way democracy functions in the European Union and its member-states. Schools are a special space where youngsters first meet institutional hierarchy, unequal social status and roles. Their everyday practice of power relations, trust, cooperation and solidarity may deeply influence and define their future concept concerning democracy and their future civil behaviour. Schools do not only provide educational material on these topics but functions as a space for democracy training.

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\* The research is based on a survey that was motivated by the fact that the European Parliament declared 2005 the Year of Citizenship through Education. This was the governing principle of the research: we wanted to examine how children think of citizenship and democracy and how the school fulfils its mission in this respect.

<sup>1</sup> See Articles 165 and 166 of the consolidated version of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*. The principle expressed in these articles has not been changed since the very beginning of the European unification process.

Classics have provided a rather complete theoretical framework concerning the role of school as a primary agent of socialisation. Durkheim (1934) says that education is systematic socialisation of the young generation. Parsons (1961) describes the characteristics of socialisation at school in comparison with socialisation within the family before starting school. In the family, the child is subordinated to adults (parents) in a personal-natural relationship which will be transformed by school into a formal-institutionalised relationship, where rational objectivity rather than the emotional component becomes the decisive factor in evaluating his/her behaviour and achievements. Also, for the first time the child is provided with an organised setting to form relationships with theoretically equal peers in an age group.<sup>2</sup> The original equality disappears in a long series of conflicts between peers and gives place to informal inequality between formally equal children.<sup>3</sup> “Newcomers” are integrated in this complex structure of formal equality and informal inequality of a class within the general framework of pupils’ formal subordination to teachers. These, of course, are not components of education in the Durkheimian sense, but settings and opportunities surrounding that activity. They are spontaneous processes of socialisation, certainly linked with education, a conscious way of socialisation, even if education ignores them. The influence of the teacher<sup>4</sup> is different from spontaneous socialisation effects because the pupils never consider it spontaneous or accidental but deliberate and intended to orientate them somehow. And if school is a stage for the operations of an institutionalised, rational power – pedagogy – and if it is also a stage for spontaneous, temporary or permanent power formations – in peer groups – it will have an impact on the development of political behaviour and culture, since power is at the very core of politics.

The school is the first place where children enter into a hierarchical institution, where they experience institutionalised power towards them and their peers (through the teachers, the administration and the whole educational system), and they will form an opinion and judgement about this experience. Even if these experiences are not of a political nature, they are, however, connected to the practice of power, to the relationship with formal or informal ways of that practice and to the relationships between various powers. Consequently their impact on a growing child is an important part of his/her political socialisation. In that sense the school – that is a more or less integrated, but always formally hierarchical group of teachers and other adults – will be an important factor of political socialisation, both when it consciously acts like such, and even when it denies or rejects that role.

The following study based on an empirical survey entitled “School and Society”<sup>5</sup> conducted in secondary schools in Budapest and four regions in Hungary aims to inves-

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<sup>2</sup> Naturally, occasional relationships are formed at the playground and permanent groups are created at the kindergarten, which fix important behaviours in the child, but forming and managing (maintain, cultivate or terminate) relationships will only become a conscious activity when the child is at the age of „school maturity”.

<sup>3</sup> Think of Lindsay Anderson’s film *If...* or Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* (though the latter is placed out of a school setting, the figures are school kids and they are very equal in the beginning). Recent reports and scandals concerning initiation rituals performed in students’ dormitories are similar examples.

<sup>4</sup> It inevitably has some measurable effect and is part of a “hidden agenda”.

<sup>5</sup> The research was conducted jointly by sociology students of the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) Budapest and the universities of Debrecen and Pécs, assisted by Debrecen Health College, the Kurt Lewin Foundation, the Echo Survey Sociology Research Institute and the Blackboard and Pencil Association, on samples of 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders in secondary schools of Budapest, Baranya, Fejér, Hajdú-Bihar and

investigate the impact of school on young citizens' concept of democracy. According to our hypotheses both the content of education (subject taught in schools) and the institutional structure of the school, namely the communication network, teachers' attitudes, their relationship with the students, the functioning of student self-government: school board, school radio, school journal, Internet fora, etc. may have a crucial impact on teenagers' views and attitudes towards democracy. Civic activities, citizen behaviour are based on experience gained at young age in spaces of socialization, among which school is a determining factor. We attempted to scrutinize these various aspects of school life having direct affect on young people's notions of democracy and democratic functioning. The concepts of democracy, of trust, as well as participation in deliberation, in civil society and in political activities of the adult citizen are highly shaped by experiences gained in young age and thus should be part of the educational programme not only as teaching content or curricula but also as attitudes and behaviour interiorized through the educational system. In the lack of democracy training at school, we can assume that future generations will be more inclined and easily captured by totalitarian ideals, undemocratic behaviour or at least indifference and ignorance in social matters.

After the changing of Hungary's political regime in 1989, the attitude of rejection of politics became dominant among teachers. Under the former regime schools were institutions of the party-state: in the fifties they had to contribute to political-ideological indoctrination directly, and later they participated in providing scenery to conceal the real nature of the system.<sup>6</sup> Right after the changes, Ferenc Gázsó, a prominent sociologist of education insisted that schools had effectively sabotaged the party-state's socialisation objectives. He declared that schools lacked "even the foundations of the social medium of democratic socialisation. In terms of schooling it will probably lead to a prolonged crisis of socialisation, an orientation chaos being the dominant feature." (Gázsó, 1992:144 – in Hungarian) The crisis emerged when the empty space which was left behind after ideological oppression had been eliminated, was not filled with new values and practices expected to rise in this vacuum and turmoil. In a situation which developed after a law<sup>7</sup> was passed to prevent political party activities at the workplace, most schools and teachers considered the very word 'politics' as risqué inside the school building. What is more, explaining the institutions of the political system and more importantly efforts to develop a political culture and educate future active citizens has been practically banned from schools alongside with party politics. While school leaving age was raised to 18 years, many teachers and headmasters still consider their students "immature" to hear anything about politics and to be educated to become voters and citizens with full rights.<sup>8</sup> In the nineties, politics seemed to replace the former childhood taboo of sexuality: *Nicht vor dem Kind!*

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Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties. County samples are representative by school types and grades. Head of the project: Mihály Csákó (ELTE).

<sup>6</sup> For reference see Mihály Andor's historical essay *Dolgozat az iskoláról (Study on the School)* (1979-1980) or Ágnes Ráczkevi's analysis on radio programmes for children (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Law XXXIII of 1989 on the operation and financing of parties, Chapter 2: *Operations of a party* – Article 2 (1) „Parties shall not establish an organisation at the workplace (place of service, school) and shall not pursue any activities.” The reservation and perplexity is clearly indicated by the fact that for a few years after 1989, post-1945 history of Hungary was not taught at all, and that the national publisher of school textbooks simply omitted the chapters on Marxism and on the international working class movement from books for the third year of grammar schools (11<sup>th</sup> grade).

The result could be called „fragmented socialisation” adopting Ildikó Szabó’s term (2006): political orientation could be shaped by the family, the media, and various persons – teachers, even – but the shaping of a civic culture remains a peripheral activity.<sup>9</sup>

Education should, by definition, systematically structure this multitude of impacts and it should consistently orientate the young generation in the labyrinth. A democratic society should primarily advocate democracy. The school has a number of tools to perform that function. It is obvious that at the cognitive level it can offer systematic information about politics and democracy, e.g. in the form of subjects taught. At the same time, as an organisation it provides an everyday framework for students to live in, it also offers room to experiment and solidify the relationships and interactions between various generations in unequal positions, as well as the relationships within the young generation itself and the development of the individual’s own position among peers. According to Ildikó Szabó „school for the kids is a social exercise to learn norms and social rules, to practice participation in various forms of action, and at the same time to experiment with various forms of representing individual and group interests.” (Szabó, 2006:332 – in Hungarian) In the theory of political socialisation we usually assume that those exercises will – at least to some extent – be integrated in the *par excellence* political behaviour of the adult.

Concerning the mechanism of socialisation we could say that these impacts primarily work through communication,<sup>10</sup> which justifies that we apply Régine Sirota’s theoretical model. Sirota (1988) assumes the operation of two different communication networks at school: the main network and a parallel network. The first one is a formal, institutional network organised by the school to serve as a channel for teaching and education, and the second is an informal network created and operated by the students for other purposes. Formal communication is controlled by the teachers: the teacher allows access and controls the „regularity” of participation (e.g. through notes sanctioning the content of the interventions) and s/he defines the form and duration of individual interventions. (Sirota, 1988:43-44)

If we only wanted to know how a child learns something at school, Sirota’s model would be sufficient. But since we are not only interested in the cognitive dimension, but in attitudes and behaviours as well, we need to consider the attitudes of students towards teachers and educational subjects as well. Teachers are not only actors and guardians of formal communication; they also create a semi-formal communication network which again will involve those students that the teacher provides access to. Participation here, however, is less formal and is based on mutual consent, to a certain extent. Naturally, it will never represent a relationship between equal parties, as the teacher will always stay a teacher to some degree. We can assume, however, that this network will exert a stronger socialisation effect than regular classes.

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<sup>8</sup> I myself have been blocked by a number of similar – and heated – arguments during the past 16 years when I approached headmasters asking them to allow my students to conduct surveys in their schools on the subject.

<sup>9</sup> Sik (2007) adds a pertinent theoretical and empirical analysis to Ildikó Szabó’s study.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to deny the existence of other channels – those for example examined in the theory of schools’ hidden curriculum.



## Information and information sources

This study is based on a survey of 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders of Hungarian secondary schools in Budapest and four counties. 5000 students participated in the research, as well as their teachers and the schools' headmasters. We tried to get an overall picture about secondary education in Hungary, thus the survey was conducted in socially and economically different parts of the country. Hungary is divided by the Danube not only geographically but also socially. Its counties are situated on a socio-economic slope descending from the Austrian border towards the Ukrainian and Romanian ones. Indices like the rate of unemployment, the level of education or living conditions are best in the western counties (Fejér and Baranya) and worse in the north-eastern region (Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg). This study does not seek to provide a systematic comparison of the counties of Hungary, not even of the sampled ones. Nonetheless, with the county data, we provide an insight into regional differences<sup>11</sup>.

Our research aimed at evaluating the differences of young citizens' notions of democracy according to school types, because in the system of secondary education, three different school types provide different education. Various research programmes analysing the Hungarian secondary school system pointed at the hierarchical distribution of these institutions<sup>12</sup>: on the top of the system, with best results one finds grammar schools (*gimnázium*), technical secondary schools provide general education plus training for certain fields of technical or commercial carriers (*szakközépiskola*) while vocational training schools (*szakiskola*) mainly concentrate on the acquisition of skills necessary for blue-collar jobs.

In Table 1 we use an aggregate index of the level of political knowledge of secondary school students based on our survey data. In the survey, several groups of questions were included to investigate the young respondents' level of knowledge concerning the constitution, actors of legislation and law enforcement, as well as political parties.<sup>13</sup> The following table shows the aggregate index of the level of political knowledge of the students according to the above mentioned dimensions.

Table 1: Average of political knowledge in Budapest and in four counties by school type

County samples	Grammar schools	Technical schools	Vocational schools
Budapest	51,70	41,24	25,83
Baranya	45,60	37,87	30,23
Fejér	51,07	42,91	34,19
Hajdú-Bihar	45,89	44,13	30,23
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	46,90	41,15	33,20

It is clearly visible that in all counties the school types follow the same order, but the largest difference between the knowledge of students in grammar schools and those in vocational schools is marked in Budapest, whereas the difference between school types is the smallest in the easternmost parts of the country (in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county). The results show a fairly low level of political knowledge in general

<sup>11</sup> See the map of Hungary in the Appendix 1 for a geographical picture of the location of the counties.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Liskó 2005 and 2006.

<sup>13</sup> The questions covered the whole scale of political objects identified by Almond and Verba (1963).

and it becomes clear that vocational schools provide the least knowledge in political issues. Our goal, however, is not to look at the impacts of the educational system and the social environment, but at influences inside the school. To what extent does knowledge depend on the school itself?

### The role of educational subjects in teaching social issues

At secondary school the subjects taught provide the main framework for communicating information (Bernstein, 1971). But to what extent does each subject contribute to the transmission of information relevant for political socialisation? To answer that question, we chose not to analyse word by word each lesson of given subjects, we decided to look at those that actually make an impact on the student. We have, therefore, asked the question: „*In which classes have you received information on or insight into social issues that you find personally important for yourself?*”<sup>14</sup> By this wording the focus is put on the impacts perceived by the students themselves as such – the criteria for the answer being the respondent’s recognition of the information received and its personal importance.

Table 2: In which subject were you given relevant social information (%)<sup>15</sup>

Subjects	Budapest	Baranya	Fejér	Hajdú– Bihar	Szabolcs– Sz–B
History	40,2	38,9	34,9	36,6	39,5
Literature	32,8	29,9	22,1	27,3	24,3
Biology	20,7	22,3	18,8	19,3	28,2
Geography	19,5	18,5	21,8	19,0	18,7
Mathematics	13,6	14,1	10,7	15,4	13,5
Grammar	11,9	10,2	8,1	11,4	10,9
Other	14,9	12,6	11,0	10,6	8,5

The figures are not too surprising: the two basic art subjects, literature and history are named by most respondents in all the counties. Just like teachers and experts, students attribute *a key importance to history in conveying social information*. Though biology, geography and mathematics are less frequently mentioned than literature or history almost everywhere<sup>16</sup>, our assumption that important social contents are communicated not only in arts but in science classes too, seems justified. It is empirically confirmed that all subjects may have an impact on the social dimension of socialisation and that the students’ *learning processes are not at all as segmented as educational knowledge is into separate subjects*.<sup>17</sup> This result warns teachers that they are considered by students not only as teachers of history, literature, biology or mathematics but also as educators in general.

Many factors may have an influence on which subjects convey relevant social information to the students and our results prove that the students consider the social in-

<sup>14</sup> We listed eight subjects and offered multiple choices and the possibility to add further subjects. The subjects listed were as follows: biology, ethics, geography, literature, mathematics, grammar, social science, history and optional other subject. Ethics and social science are optional for secondary institutions.

<sup>15</sup> Data on social science and ethics are not included in this analysis, these subjects being optional only and not taught in each secondary school.

<sup>16</sup> With the exception of Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg county.

<sup>17</sup> It would be worthwhile to analyse this phenomenon in terms of “hidden curriculum”.

formation provided in their favourite subject more important than that received in other classes.

Table 3: The role of attraction of the subject in learning

Subjects	Respondents that received important social information in the subject (%)	
	100 = all respondents	100 = those that like the subject
Mathematics	13,1	30,6
Literature	26,5	65,3
History	37,5	76,5

This fact also underlies the teacher's role as an educator in general rather than just being the teacher of a particular subject.

### The role of teachers

The available data make it possible to further analyse the role of the teacher – as described by Sirota – with regard to discussions concerning political issues between the teacher and the students, both in and outside classes. Our survey data allow to distinguish student groups: (1) one which did not mention either conversation with teachers or ideas from subjects; (2) others who mentioned impacts through particular subjects; (3) those mentioning only conversations with the teacher (irrespective of where conversations take place<sup>18</sup>); (4) many mentioned just ideas from subjects and conversations in class, and finally (5) we found a group of students that mentioned all the possible ways of teacher's effect, even conversations outside class. These groups are of different size, but their distribution is similar in each county.

Table 4: School as a source of political information

Counties	None	Subject only	Teacher only	In class only	All, outside class too
Budapest	26,7	61,5	1,4	7,5	2,9
Baranya	23,1	60,8	2,3	11,6	2,2
Fejér	31,4	56,3	2,4	8,4	1,5
Hajdú-Bihar	25,0	60,3	2,7	10,2	1,8
Szabolcs-Sz-B	23,3	59,0	2,1	14,0	1,6

More than one quarter of the students do not consider their secondary school as a source of political information at all. Some 60 percent are influenced through the subjects only, and a mere 15 percent refers to the personal role of the teacher – a role which varies in form and intensity.

Let us turn to the result of these effects: how different is the level of political knowledge in these groups of students? We find a wide range on this scale with 63.5 percent for the highest and 16.7 percent for the lowest level of political knowledge. Surprisingly, both extreme levels are observed in Budapest: the highest at those students of grammar schools who profit of each identified source, the lowest at those trainees of vocational training institutions who did not identify any source of social/political ideas in their school. No other counties produce such big difference in

<sup>18</sup> Though we did not originally intend to amalgamate conversations in and outside class, the number of these students is so small that we could not analyse them separately.

the level of political knowledge in any type of secondary institutions. In fact, counties do not have any identifiable effect on political knowledge but through interaction with school types and the distribution of information sources within schools.

Our research gave evidence that *the level of political knowledge depends more on the differences of information sources at school than on the school type.*

It should be pointed out, that on the basis of this analysis we cannot make causal statements like “conversations with teachers have increased the level of knowledge by x points at a certain location” or “information obtained through certain subjects have increased the political knowledge of one or another group by y points”. Probably students with more interest in politics and a higher level of knowledge in it, will profit more of information sources offered by schools than those who are not interested. On the other hand, those who get more information out of school sources may attain higher level of knowledge. Both ways are possible and our data suggest no priority to any of them.

The significance of school (educational) factors is highlighted by the fact that the social hierarchy of school types is not always predominant. In Budapest and in Baranya county that hierarchy is obvious: any combination of information resources results in the highest level of political knowledge in the grammar school and the lowest in vocational schools.

## The concept of democracy and democracy at school

Based on the survey data, we first established the following *hypothetic* statements about secondary school students’ notion of democracy:

1. Secondary school students hope democracy would be a protective shield rather than an activity.
2. They tend to mix two kinds of elements in their view of democracy: political participation (and freedom) on the one hand and social justice (and equality) on the other.
3. Of the two views the political one looks stronger, but there may be a large group of students that reject this view.

Table 5: Distribution of ideas of democracy by county

County	Equality centered	Mixed	Freedom centered	N=100%
Budapest	20,0%	61,8%	18,2%	825
Baranya	24,1%	56,6%	19,3%	970
Fejér	18,9%	59,2%	21,9%	1534
Hajdú-Bihar	22,1%	55,9%	22,0%	1001
Szabolcs-Szatmár-B.	18,4%	58,8%	22,8%	918
Together	20,6%	58,4%	21,0%	4693

A detailed analysis (Csákó, 2007) revealed that there are no two concepts of democracy in the minds of secondary school students. We could not even claim that there are two different “approaches” to democracy mixed up, we can only say that within one mixture of ideas – which is largely similar among the students – some youth groups may attribute a little more importance to the elements like political institutions and participation (associable with the principle of freedom) while others put a little more emphasis on social components (rather associable with the principles of equality and fraternity). The ratio of these groups is 20-20 per cent. (Table 5)

We found that the concept of democracy is *not* differentiated by school type, a strong factor of the school system. The school type influences, however – together with the counties – the *personal importance* attached to components of democracy. (Table 6)

Table 6: Personal importance of the components of democracy

County	Personal importance of the components of democracy				N=100%
	hardly any	little	medium	full	
Budapest	9,5%	18,0%	28,3%	44,3%	729
Baranya	9,0%	23,7%	30,8%	36,4%	873
Fejér	12,1%	23,3%	28,5%	36,1%	1356
Hajdú-Bihar	12,6%	25,2%	28,5%	33,7%	903
Szabolcs-Sz-B	12,7%	29,4%	27,9%	29,9%	832
Total	11,3%	24,0%	28,8%	35,9%	4693

It is an unexpected finding that those that think democracy important – *i.e.* what they consider to be democracy – are much more ready to accept anti-democratic views than others. Attitudes towards the issues of Hungarian political scene were measured by the level of acceptance of a series of characteristic statements. The two critical statements in this respect are as follows: “Hungary needs a party which does not only speak but which strikes too when necessary” and “Hungary needs rather a firm-handed leader than laws.” What is more, this attitude is not rooted in ignorance: members of the group with anti-democratic attitude are among the best informed of all respondents. Looking back after the 2010 elections, this result can be considered a precluding sign of the quick growth of the extreme right-wing party – *Jobbik* – among youth during these years.<sup>19</sup>

In the following, we are going to analyse what experience of everyday democracy young people may get at secondary schools and if that experience influences the development of their notion of democracy. Here we are not looking for a full and “objective” description of the principles and rules of secondary institutions; we are only interested in those characteristics of the schools that *have* an impact on the students.

<sup>19</sup> In the Eastern part of Hungary (from the Danube river to the Romanian and Ukrainian border), *Jobbik* (Movement for a better Hungary) jumped to the second place with 12 per cent of seats in the 2010 parliamentary elections.

## On the conditions of democracy at school

The basis for modern democracy is publicness and the opportunity for participation. This depends on technical and organisational conditions. What conditions are in place for secondary school students in their schools? (Table 7)

The significance level values indicate that it is only the school's domestic regulations that we will find in all counties and roughly to the same extent. Practically each school has them and the students are aware of the code. All other conditions are less frequently found (and in significantly different percentage); school fora (school radio, paper, internet forum) are especially rare in Baranya county – or the students do not know about them. The fact that school webpages are wide-spread (79-89 per cent) indicates that the general technical conditions could facilitate an intensive, democratic public life at school, however, the ratio of internet fora is only half of that of webpages (34-49 per cent). A school paper or a school radio, supported by more conventional technology, is only found in the environment of over half of the secondary school population.<sup>20</sup> Apart from those two traditional means of communication all other aspects are best in Budapest.

Table 7: Proportion of students aware of the existence of components of democracy at their school

Ratio of "yes" answers by county						
Does your school have a(n)...?	Buda-pest	Baranya	Fejér	Hajdú–Bihar	Szabolcs Szatmár–Bereg	Sig.* p =
...student self-government	96,6	88,1	93,4	93,3	92,2	0,000
...school regulations	98,2	98,1	97,8	98,1	96,9	0,252
...web page	89,5	79,2	84,1	80,1	79,8	0,000
...internet forum	49,0	34,0	44,7	44,7	43,2	0,000
...school radio	55,1	36,2	56,7	85,1	60,6	0,000
...school paper	52,6	31,6	43,2	46,9	59,3	0,000

\* Level of significance of the difference between county samples

A *student self-government*, which may be the most important democratic institution in secondary schools, is less frequently experienced in vocational schools than in grammar schools or technical secondary schools (with the exception of Fejér county). In the latter two school types, students report on it with roughly the same frequency. As we see in Table 7 almost every school has its own *school regulation* for everyday life regardless of the county, still, vocational schools within each county lag markedly behind the two other school types from this aspect as well (again with the exception of Fejér county). The school *web page* is one of the latest novelties, and the way it is introduced reflects that fact. It spreads from the top to bottom in the institutional hierarchy and from the centre of Hungary to marginal areas. (Table 8) It is usually grammar school students that get acquainted with it most often, though in Budapest it was technical secondary students that mentioned it in the largest number – due to better technical opportunities provided by technical schools and to the better representational abilities of schools in the capital. However, less than 60% of vocational school students have it at hand – with the exception of Budapest and Fejér county, where the rate is higher.

<sup>20</sup> Hungary is characterized by a West–East slope in economic development and infrastructure and Hajdú–Bihar and Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg are the easternmost counties. (See the map in Appendix 1)

The only group in which more than half of the members are aware of the possibility of chatting or arguing with each other on an *internet forum* at school is grammar school students in Budapest. The diffusion of this tool is still so weak that its existence largely depends on spontaneous local factors (*e.g.* whether there are enthusiastic and initiative teachers) and it does not depend so much on accepted institutional criteria. Probably that is why its spread is not so strongly connected to the hierarchy of school types.

Table 8: Experience of school web page by school type and county

School type	Buda- pest	Baranya	Fejér	Hajdú– Bihar	Szabolcs – Sz – B
Grammar school	91,2	90,0	90,4	92,0	84,8
Technical school	94,5	83,7	83,9	86,3	84,6
Vocational school	70,5	44,7	77,4	57,4	59,5
Significance $p =$	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000

*School radio* and *school paper* affect youth going to different school types in a very different way. Moreover, the characteristics of each school type are different in each county. Just like in the case of the internet web page, it is an advantage to be at a technical school in Budapest or in Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg county in terms of school radio – only 43 per cent of grammar school students in Budapest listen to a school radio, as opposed to 70 per cent of technical secondary students; in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg these ratios are 60 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, in Fejér county 70% of grammar school students and only 58 per cent of technical school students do the same. In Baranya the relevant ratios are 43 per cent and 30 per cent. Differences in weight of science and technology subjects between school types and the characteristics of the counties may have contributed to the development of these ratios.

It is an interesting fact, that an internet forum – which is not as widespread as a school radio but equals the school paper – is not influenced by the hierarchy of school types unlike the traditional “paper based” communication channel.

The usual hierarchy of school types is manifested in Budapest only. In three counties school internet forum was reported without significant differences. In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county one sees a significant difference between school types, but not in line with the usual hierarchy.

Several hypothetical explanations may account for this rare phenomenon, and they do not necessarily exclude one another. It is well known that new technology offers interactive options. In that sense electronic networks offer an inherent opportunity to further develop democracy. Therefore if we find that the diffusion on internet fora in secondary schools does not follow the accustomed social hierarchy of institutions, it can be interpreted as a manifestation of democratic, emancipatory endeavours. If, on the other hand, we consider that they are not too wide-spread as yet, we will be more cautious in judging endeavours in the background. The initial boom may have been driven by enthusiastic technology teachers, small developer and user groups of various motivation, and technical schools may have more easily such initiators than grammar schools. By all means our results indicate that an internet forum, a beneficial tool for democracy, does really loosen the rigid hierarchy of school types.

Thus we see the same social factors at work in determining the conditions of democracy at school that we experience in most school phenomena, but here this hierarchy is somewhat disturbed by the spread of modern technology. It is yet to be seen if the disturbance is just an initial side-effect of a boom of modernisation or the beginning of a permanent change, which will create more equal conditions in school education and which might contribute to efforts of educating for democracy.

Table 9: Experience of internet forum by school type and county

School type	Buda- pest	Baranya	Fejér	Hajdú– Bihar	Szabolcs - Sz - B
Grammar school	53,1	30,2	44,9	46,8	47,5
Technical school	47,6	36,7	43,0	41,2	38,6
Vocational school	36,0	38,0	47,2	47,5	42,6
Significance* $p =$	<b>0,002</b>	0,064	0,550	0,180	<b>0,030</b>

\* Significant values are in bold.

### Participation of students in the institutions of democracy at school

Articles 62-64 of the Public Education Act of 1993 entitle students to form student self-governments in public education institutions. The student self-government has the authority to define and organise student activities and to represent their interests within the institution. Students are entitled to elect their own representatives without the interference of school management or the teachers. The headmaster and school management have the authority to elaborate and adopt the institution's regulations, which takes effect only upon approval by the student self-government. Such regulations shall be binding both for students and teachers. The student self-government creates its own bylaws.

Table 10: Participation in the student self-government

County	Participation				Total
	none	subordinated	supervised	independent	
Budapest	3,90	31,51	59,35	5,23	100
Baranya	3,93	29,13	62,77	4,16	100
Fejér	3,65	30,34	62,02	3,99	100
Hajdú–Bihar	3,92	32,46	59,91	3,70	100
Szabolcs–Sz–B	4,01	24,16	63,71	8,13	100

Earlier experience (Csípő-Daróci-Kun-Lakatos-Vircsák, 2005; Ligeti, 2000; Pál, 1992) shows that “neither word nor spirit” of this law is enforced in schools. We measured the level of participation of students in the democratic institutions and procedures of the schools – student self-government, regulations, school web page, school radio or paper – on a four-grade scale: (1) students do not participate at all; (2) they perform teachers' instructions only; (3) they may have their own initiatives, but under supervision of teachers; (4) they act entirely on their own. Table 10 shows proportions of these forms (levels) of participation in the student self-government – again, of course, through the eyes of the students.



The distribution looks very similar in each county again. (The only slight exception is Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg.) The effective norm is a student self-government having some room for initiative but controlled by teachers. About 3/5 of students get this experience. Only less than one of ten students see an entirely autonomous student self-government in their institution, while almost every third of them feel deprived of autonomy and totally subordinated to teachers. That means that a large part of Hungarian schools fall far from the legislator's intention of entitling students to self-govern in their everyday life and defend their interests in an institutionalised form. At least 30-40 per cent of the students of Hungarian secondary schools are socialised by the experience of being permanently deprived of democratic rights provided by law.

Under the law, a student self-government – as indicated by the term itself – is an institution initiated and created by the students, which, following its establishment, defines its own rules of operation. In this research, we have only focused on the first step, setting up the student self-government. We identified 5 degrees of procedural autonomy, following the law: 1 = the legal solution: each student has the right to nominate candidates, to vote and to be elected, and representatives are elected by secret ballot; 2 = most rights listed in point (1) still hold, but there is an open vote instead of a secret ballot; 3 = students may only vote on candidates nominated by the teacher<sup>21</sup>; 4 = the teacher appoints the “representative(s)” without nomination or vote; 5 = any other procedure. There is a slight but significant ( $p = 0,000$ ) difference between the counties as to the proportion of the above procedures. (Table 11)

Table 11: The procedure of setting up student's self-government

The procedure:	Buda- pest	Baranya	Fejér	Hajdú– Bihar	Szabolcs – Sz – B
Secret ballot	21,9	27,9	22,5	25,0	31,4
Open vote	51,9	47,7	48,8	46,5	45,2
Teacher nominates	8,4	10,4	10,0	11,0	11,9
Teacher appoints	8,0	7,9	9,6	12,4	9,1
Other procedure	9,9	6,1	9,2	5,1	2,4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Though there usually is a vote, over twice as many students are forced to vote openly in comparison with those that are allowed to cast a secret ballot. The formally legal procedure is in minority in each county (between 21-31 per cent). It is grammar schools in Budapest where secret ballot is applied the least frequently and it is most often followed in Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg county<sup>22</sup>. Not only does democracy at school appear weak in the light of the low ratios of participation, *the anti-democratic nature of the actual mechanisms* is also manifest.

This negative picture is in sharp contrast with the high participation of students in the operations of school radios and papers. Teachers mostly play but a supervisory role in these institutions, and there is a higher rate of responses indicating complete inde-

<sup>21</sup> In Hungarian schools each class has one of its teachers appointed to take care of the organisational and educational problems emerging in the class. In order to provide the necessary conditions for this activity, this head teacher of the class gets one hour per week in the official timetable of subjects. At the level of class the head teacher organises and controls students' activity – e.g. elections to student self-government – most often. But schools are free to set different rules.

<sup>22</sup> The relatively large difference for Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg raises doubt concerning the reliability of the data: this high level of positive behaviour seems rather incoherent with other data of that county.

pendence as well. (Table 12) The difference, at first sight, could be explained by the fact that school radios and especially school papers have an older tradition and the forms and customs of cooperation between teachers and student participants must have taken shape for a long time. We should also remember that these institutions are based on the intensive and continuous activities of a small and enthusiastic group, which earns a kind of confidential position next to the school management. The radio or the paper is never owned by the students but by the school, and the participating students are never representatives but commissioners. On the other hand, the student self-government - with all its authorisations - belongs to and is governed by the students.<sup>23</sup>

County	Participation in school radio				Total
	none	subordinated	controlled	autonomous	
Budapest	9,6	20,6	48,8	20,9	100
Baranya	12,7	18,0	53,7	15,7	100
Fejér	7,1	14,6	49,9	28,4	100
Hajdú-Bihar	6,5	17,3	51,2	25,1	100
Szabolcs-Sz-B	6,9	17,6	49,1	26,4	100

Table 12: Participation of students in the school radio

Participation in the two institutions (school radio vs self-government), therefore, is conceptually distinguished by the difference between the relationships of authority. Most schools are able to develop a well functioning and controlled student participation and activity, but - as the student self-government elections and especially the procedures of adopting school regulations demonstrate - they refuse to act as an equal partner and to exert an educating effect on the development of democratic behaviours and values. It appears that most teachers and headmasters feel their pedagogical competence and knowledge and the always remaining informal inequality between teacher and student insufficient to secure the order of the school.

### Evaluation criteria for school democracy as viewed by the students

If we attribute such great importance to the assumption that only the students' own concepts, positions and judgements can explain directly their behaviour, we should also identify the criteria they use when they consider a school democratic or non-democratic. To that end, respondents were invited to assess 13 criteria in the questionnaire. These criteria include some that refer to the freedom-principle of democracy, others that express the principles of equality or fraternity. Table 13 shows the average values (on a scale of 1-5) by county and school type, indicating the degree students consider those criteria necessary for the school to be viewed as democratic.

Looking at the columns it is obvious at first sight that there is but a small difference between the opinions of grammar school students in different counties, but the opinions of students are strongly different by school types, and that difference is of a similar pattern in each county. If we disregard the score values and just look at the order of the criteria, it will be clear that *technical school students view democracy almost like*

<sup>23</sup> At least in theory, under the law.

*their peers in grammar schools, and even vocational school trainees consider the same four criteria as most important; it is but the order of the third and fourth ones that is swapped in some counties (Table 14).*

It is a generally accepted view among secondary school students that the most important criterion for school democracy is that *teachers should observe the regulations the same way as students do.* (Grammar school students in Budapest gave this factor an average 4,72 points, vocational school trainees in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg an average 4,12 points – these are the extreme values for that criterion which was put in first place in each county.) The requirement that *teachers should listen to problems when students approach them* is considered almost equally important. (Grammar schools in Budapest: 4,56 points, vocational schools in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg: 4,10 points.) A condition based on the principle of equality is considered as the most important, while a fair practice of super-ordination is put in second place, which implicitly implies acceptance of subordination, that is the hierarchy of school. The order will be exactly the same for the third (equality-related) and for the fourth (hierarchy-related) criterion. These, in order, are the following: 3. *If a student thinks that s/he has been treated unjustly s/he should have the right for an honest procedure, in which not only the teacher can come out on top (4,40 – 4,08), and 4. Class head masters should regularly ask for the opinions of students (4,37 – 4,05).*

Freedom-based criteria are not high on the list of secondary school students. For the first time, one is mentioned in the 5<sup>th</sup> rank, and that refers to protection of students' private sphere (*„students should have the right to decide what events they wish to organise after class“*), which is quite understandable with teenagers. Requests for independent decisions, activities and independent functions are all manifested in the lower part of the list.

When secondary school students consider democracy, they accept the hierarchic order of institutions, and they simply wish regulated, equitable and fair conditions *within that order.* Their requirements will not cross the border of a *fair paternalism.* To build a culture of democratic citizenship much more would be needed from the school than what the students themselves consider as the criteria for democracy at school. Hungarian teachers are probably little or not at all prepared to educate their students as individual persons, as partners. And it is also likely that teaching democracy without democracy is just as impossible as learning to swim without splashing into water.

Table 13: Criteria for democracy as seen by students, by county and school type

How necessary is it for democracy that...	Budapest			Baranya			Fejér			Hajdú-Bihar			Szabolcs-Szatmár-B		
	gram mar	tech	voctl	gram mar	tech	voctl	gram mar	tech	voctl	gram mar	tech	voctl	gram mar	tech	voctl
...the school management defines written school regulations	4,01	3,77	3,61	4,06	3,83	3,29	4,05	3,85	3,57	4,21	3,93	3,42	3,86	3,77	3,36
...there is a student self-government	4,01	3,93	3,91	4,01	3,94	3,39	4,04	3,91	3,77	4,21	4,00	3,21	3,99	3,64	3,94
...there is a permanent disciplinary council	2,78	2,83	3,04	2,91	2,89	2,87	2,86	2,96	2,90	2,87	2,91	2,91	2,92	2,81	2,85
...all students participate in defining the school regulations	3,62	3,74	3,51	3,78	3,74	3,30	3,73	3,57	3,42	3,55	3,59	3,33	3,65	3,55	3,44
...teachers should not control jewellery, personal adornment	3,94	3,76	3,80	3,83	3,92	3,48	3,84	3,86	3,73	3,91	3,94	3,44	3,74	3,74	3,78
...students are involved in organising school events	4,19	3,87	3,66	4,07	3,88	3,49	4,17	3,74	3,74	4,16	3,94	3,43	4,00	3,81	3,67
...teachers listen to students' problems when approached	4,56	4,47	4,25	4,61	4,46	4,08	4,57	4,28	4,12	4,57	4,49	3,90	4,47	4,20	4,10
...teachers must observe school regulations the same way as students are required	4,72	4,56	4,24	4,82	4,58	4,13	4,71	4,42	4,30	4,69	4,62	4,10	4,52	4,42	4,15
...head masters ask for the opinion of students on a regular basis	4,37	4,31	4,10	4,42	4,31	4,00	4,48	4,15	4,02	4,46	4,36	3,90	4,36	4,20	4,05
...the disciplinary council co-opts a student as a permanent member	3,61	3,41	3,46	3,50	3,56	3,46	3,52	3,60	3,30	3,55	3,44	3,15	3,46	3,43	3,51
...if a student is treated unjustly, he should have the right for an honest procedure in which the teacher is not automatically right	4,40	4,36	4,14	4,54	4,39	3,88	4,55	4,24	3,97	4,47	4,41	3,85	4,24	4,13	4,08
...students can decide what events they want to organise outside school	4,21	4,05	3,91	4,21	4,03	3,70	4,13	3,95	3,85	4,31	4,05	3,71	4,07	4,00	3,95
...students may elect any peers (including not-so-bright students) to represent them in student self-government without the interference of teachers	4,02	3,79	3,76	4,1	3,88	3,64	3,79	3,81	3,67	4,04	3,79	3,62	3,90	3,73	3,67

(Average scores on a scale of 1-5)

Table 14: Rank order of criteria for evaluation democracy at the given school as viewed by two extremes: grammar school students in Budapest and vocational trainees in Szabolc-Szatmár-Bereg county (based on average scores)

How necessary is it for democracy at school	Buda- pest- grammar school	Szabolcs – Sz – B – vocational school	Principle	Nature
...that teachers have to observe the rules just as students do	1	1	Equality	Democ- ratic
...that teachers listen when students approach them with problems	2	2	Hierarchy	Paternal- ist
...if a student is treated unjustly, he should have the right for an honest investigation in which the teacher is not automatically right	3	3	Equality	Democ- ratic
...that head masters ask for regular feedback from students	4	4	Hierarchy	Paternal- ist
...that students are allowed to determine what events they should organise outside school	5	5	Freedom	Democ- ratic
...that students are involved in the organisation of school events	6	8	Hierarchy	Paternal- ist
...that students can elect their own representatives (even not-so-bright students)	7	9	Freedom	Democ- ratic
...that school management defines written regulations for the school	8	12	Hierarchy	Paternal- ist
...to have a student self-government	9	6	Freedom	Democ- ratic
...that teachers do not have control over jewellery or personal adornment	10	7	Freedom	Democ- ratic
...that each student participates in defining the school regulations	11	11	Equality	Democ- ratic
...to have a permanent student member in the disciplinary council	12	10	Equality	Democ- ratic
...to have a permanent disciplinary council	13	13	Security	Democ- ratic

### Differences of opinion among students

Based on our experience with other variables of the survey, we expected that any formal category of students – by county, school type, grade or other – would also be divided in their opinion concerning democracy at school.

That expectation, however, is not met. An attempt to discover a latent structure behind the responses through a factor analysis proves to be futile. The opinions could best be illustrated by a simple Likert scale. If all responses preferring paternalism and those favouring democratic criteria (freedom and equality) are projected on a scale of 100, the cross-tabulation of these two variables will result in a surprisingly symmetric distribution (Table 15).<sup>24</sup>

The main diagonal (in bold) shows that 42,5 per cent of the students attributed more or less the same importance to paternalistic and freedom-equality-related criteria. A slight – not significant – lead of the freedom-equality principle is indicated by the margins: 30 per cent of the students gave between 81-90 points to these criteria, while

<sup>24</sup> The county samples are amalgamated in this table because there is no significant difference between their distributions.

for paternalism the modal group is somewhat lower, between 71-80 points. Comparison between the three boxes in the left bottom corner and the three boxes in the right upper corner (in bold and italics) yields the same result: paternalism is more stressed by only 6,8 per cent, while freedom-equality principles get higher points from 9,3 per cent of students. The difference is very small.

Table 15: Criteria for democracy at school: cross tabulation of freedom-equality and the paternalistic principles

		Criteria for Democracy for Democracy at School: Paternalism (group)				Total
		less than 70 points	71 to 80p	81 to 90p	91 to 100p	
Criteria for Democracy at School: Freedom-Equality (group)	less than 70 points	<b>15,6</b>	5,6	<b>2,8</b>	<b>1,1</b>	25,1
	71 to 80p	5,8	<b>9,4</b>	6,8	<b>2,9</b>	24,9
	81 to 90p	<b>3,5</b>	9,7	<b>9,9</b>	7,5	30,6
	91 to 100p	<b>1,4</b>	<b>4,4</b>	5,9	<b>7,6</b>	19,4
Total		26,4	29,1	25,4	19,1	100,0

The most important finding is that *students do not clearly distinguish between the principles of democracy, or between concepts of the various practices based on those principles*. It is to be assumed that lack of comprehension and lack of information go hand in hand – that should certainly be tested.

### Democracy at school and school as a source of information

It is proven that practising democratic procedures, if but slightly, contributes to the students' appreciation of those procedures. Those respondents, whose peers at school may work in the student self-government without teachers' interference or at least with limited supervision, consider the student self-government a key component of school democracy by over 10 percent in comparison with those students who see participation in the student self-government as just obeying instructions – in any school type.

Students have but little experience of any connection between how to express or enforce their needs and demands and the formal democratic institutions within the school. The latter – as we have seen – are not institutions of the students' own, despite the word and spirit of the law, they are mostly set up and operated by the school. That is why students will not feel comfortable in these institutions, and that is why they will prefer limiting and regulating the authority of the teacher (towards equality) as a criterion for school democracy, rather than ensuring room for their own activities. Experiencing the effects of the institutional hierarchy day by day, students in most schools do not trust that they could enforce their demands as partners, through negotiations and self governance – when the law is not sufficient to ensure that procedure. This could explain why students who elect their representatives by secret ballot – *i.e.* who have some experience of democracy – do not consider freedom of electing student representatives a key component of school democracy by larger proportion than those students whose representatives are appointed by the head teacher of the class. It

appears that if the practice of school democracy is not strong, it cannot really facilitate a definition of expectations concerning democracy either.

If we introduce the index of the school as a source of political knowledge – as developed in the first part of this study – into an ANOVA model including not only counties but school types and grades and we look for explanation of the criteria of democratic school, the analysis reveals that the ratio between freedom-equality/paternalism principles is only influenced by the school type and the school as a source of political knowledge and not by other factors. (Table 16) The effects are significant, but rather weak.

Table 16: The ratio of the freedom-equality principle and the paternalistic principle among the criteria of democracy at school, by school type and by the school as a source of information

<b>School type</b>	Average	SD
Grammar school	1,03	0,17
Technical school	1,04	0,19
Vocational school	1,06	0,21
<b>School as a source of political knowledge</b>		
None	1,05	0,20
Conversations with teacher only	1,08	0,26
Subject only	1,03	0,18
Subject+teacher, in class only	1,03	0,17
In and outside class	1,07	0,18

None will result in a difference of more than one or two percentage points on a scale where 0 means that the respondent has not marked a freedom-equality criterion at all, 1 indicates that the scores for paternalistic and freedom-equality criteria are the same, and if the value is above 1, the freedom-equality criterion is as many times stronger than the score for paternalism, as the value itself indicates. Here again a minimum lead of the democratic principles is indicated, but the differences must be interpreted in a careful way since we are dealing with ratios. A larger proportion of vocational school trainees, for example, will vote on democratic principles as against paternalism, but the absolute scores of each principle will be below the points granted by grammar school or technical school students to those principles.

Differences in the students' interpretation of school democracy, therefore, remain largely unexplained by variables that we usually consider as obvious – in our research they are the county, school type, school grade and gender, family background in terms of occupational status and cultural capital –, or by those factors that we have attempted to identify in this special study on political socialisation – such as the role of subjects and teachers in social and political orientation, or some characteristics of the practice of democracy at school. We keep in mind that none of the big actors of socialisation beyond school – neither the family, nor media, nor peer groups – have been studied in depth in this respect in Hungary. Within schools, it is important to carry on intensive research on the mentality, school conditions and inter-group attitudes of both the lower and upper grade secondary school students.

## Summary

- The political knowledge of teenagers is 25-45 per cent on the scale we have applied without the impact of school. School impacts increased that level by 20 per cent the most, to 45-65 per cent.
- Secondary school students see the school as an actor of political socialisation, primarily through the subjects taught. The impact of teachers is also exerted through the subjects. Maximum impact, however, can only be exerted if teachers involve youth in the formal and semi-formal communication network the teachers control. Teachers of the surveyed counties involved a mere 1/6 of the students in the two kinds of communication networks.
- The importance of research on the impacts of school is highlighted by the fact that from several aspects they seem to be independent or just slightly dependent on regional discrepancies or on the hierarchy of school types.
- The Hungarian public education system practically neglects the opportunity to educate for democracy by democratic school practice. The larger part of student rights stipulated by law has not become everyday practice.
- In this situation students indicate a preference for the democratic principle of equality and the paternalistic principle of fairness when evaluating the democratic nature of their school. No wonder that those who have to seek for tools of protection for the self in the institutions of school democracy will primarily consider guarantees for the individual as the essence of democracy when they grow up.

The research conducted among 5000 secondary school students seems to prove that schools have great difficulties, not only in transmitting educational content concerning concepts of democracy and values of civil society, but also in providing a space where democratic practices can be experienced. The results give evidence that students' views on democracy depend on the relationship between the student and the school as an institution. The relationship between the students and the teachers also deeply influence how young people evaluate the possibility of participation in the functioning and decision-making of their own direct context. It is surprising to see that many students are not even aware of the existence of certain elements of democratic "publicness" of their own school. It is predictable from the results that students, subjects of this type of weak democratic socialization will have difficulties to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be active and conscious citizens of their country and the EU. The school system has to undergo profound structural and conceptual changes in order to fulfil the tasks of a modern and democratic space of socialization, able to answer the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Our expectation that an active and democratic school life enhances students' experience of deliberation and participation and increases knowledge about democratic rules and functioning could not be justified because the research revealed that schools do not fulfil their role of "cradles" of democracy. The research results showed that students are not very much interested by questions of equality and liberty, thus the outcomes did not support the assumption that students are politically active and keen on the establishment of a strong civil public life. Their attitudes are more often directed by a paternalist system of behaviour which is an output of a dysfunctional and outdated political context and its matching school system. The Hungarian school system does not reinforce the concept of the 3<sup>rd</sup> RECON model presuming a democratic deliberative participatory institutional system.



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