

Developing balanced public life and socialization pattern from gender approach in elementary schools

Introduction

The study investigates the public experience and political attitude of rural educators with a gender-thematic aspect from an interdisciplinary approach. The analysis forms a part of a research studying the female operators of municipal decision making and their ratio with the analysis of quantitative data and interviews of the operators. Inspection of social status of women can be approached from several aspects (e.g.: changes in family and gender roles, labour market and wage inequalities), which involves the gender ratios of decision making positions. The first research results confirm the previous literature statement (Leijenaar 1991:98, Koncz, 2006:134), that is mainly highly qualified women are involved in politics. Thus, it is not surprising that in city councils there are many female educators. It is also known that socialization in school (including the model and thinking provided by the teacher) may have a determining role in the development of the future civil attitude. In public participation it is the qualification acquired by education, the competencies and the socialization patterns that have a major role. (Koncz, 2006). That is how the school and the educators as potential operators of rural public life and as supportive social background are related, which may have an impact on the creation of a balanced public life at the level of municipalities from a gender perspective. From the point of view of ecology of education: *'not only the availability and experience of institutions and organizations but outstanding individual behavioural aspects are necessary to give a boost to the development of communities'* (Forray, 2016). Thus, the investigation of the background and the experience of teachers with double role, namely educator-politician teachers, are important.

Conceptual framework of the research –the gender concept and the interaction of education and decision making

From 1966 the gender perspective has gradually become the part of international standards (UN¹ and EU² documents). In 2010 the European Union has approved its *National Strategy on Gender Equality (2010-2015)*³, in which the increasing number of women in the area of education and training is positively evaluated, however, further interventions has found to be necessary in several other fields. In Hungary a governmental decree (1004/2010) has been established in 2010 on *The National Strategy for Gender Equality*. 6 priorities has been expressed and the 5th concerns the field of education (by *supporting the reduction of gender-related stereotypes*). Gender-related stereotypes are real or hypothetical characters

¹ 1979 CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

² European Union, The Treaty of Amsterdam 1997 (Ilonszki, 2005, 59-60.).

³ COM(2010) 491

of men and women that explain the differences of the genders and have a role in the maintenance of social inequalities (Rédai, 2010). The social status of men and women is not determined by their actions but their social interactions. It is culture that lends meaning to social gender that is related to place and time (Scott, 2001).

International standards has been developed in order to be able to measure gender equality processes (that is *gender mainstreaming*) (Solt, 2015). Such standard is the *Global Gender Gap Index* measured by the World Economic Forum since 2006 that investigates 4 indicators and 14 variables each and in total to present the gender gap in the area of economics, politics, education and healthcare. The indicator is suitable for the comparison of patterns in countries (Table 1.). The comparison of the gender gap indicators of the Visegrad Group reveals that the results are the best in the educational sub index (EDU) (where the difference is the smallest between genders). Political gender gap sub index (POL) is far behind this. This means the gender equal educational opportunities (such as the ratio of women in higher education) did not bring automatically political gender equality. Hungary is the last among V4 concerning both indicators.

Table 1.: edited based on Global Gender Gap Index

V4 gender gap partial indices 2015			
country	indicator	rank	result
Poland	total ⁴	51	0,715
	EDU	38	1,00
	POL	52	0,213
The Czech Republic	total	81	0,687
	EDU	1	1,00
	POL	83	0,134
Slovakia	total	97	0,676
	EDU	1	1,00
	POL	115	0,087
Hungary	total	99	0,672
	EDU	76	0,991
	POL	139	0,035

The partial index of education (EDU) shows the availability of education and the ratio of men and women in primary, secondary and higher education. In the long run it expresses the capability of the country of creating a gender equal ratio in writing and reading competencies (Global Gender Gap Report 2015). The examined indicators are: gender ratios of those who are (1) able to read, enrolled in (2) primary education, (3) secondary education, (4) higher education in a certain country. Political partial index (POL) investigates: (1) the ratio of women and men in the parliament (2) among ministers (3) gender ratio of those who were Head of Government or Head of State in the past 50 years. Comparing the data of World Economic Forum with Hungarian statistics reveals a 10% stagnant ratio of women in parliamentary politics since the change of regime⁵. Results related to education (which are better compared to V4) are based on the following data in Hungary.

⁴ The 4 consolidated indicators: (1) economic opportunities, (2) participation in education, (3) healthcare and (4) the possession of political positions.

⁵ In municipal decision making in Hungary the ratio of women are higher than this, in 2014 it has reached 30% nationwide in average. (the calculation is based on www.valasztas.hu).

Table 2.: edited based on Hungarian central Statistical Office data (2012)

Population based on qualification and gender, those of appropriate age in percentage, 2011 (%)		
	women	men
completed at least primary education (age group above the age of 15)	93,5	96,9
acquired at least a General Certificate of Secondary Education (age group above the age of 18)	52,1	45,5
completed at least higher education (college/university) (age group above the age of 25)	19,7	18,2

Table 3.: edited based on Hungarian Central Statistical Office data (2012)

Population dispersal based on the highest completed qualification, per age groups and gender, 2011 (%)		
	women	men
18-24 General Certificate of Secondary Education	57	49
18-24 college/university	9	4,3
25-39 General Certificate of Secondary Education	35,8	31,2
25-39 egyetem/főiskola stb	31,8	20,6

Cited data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office reveal higher qualification among women compared to men nowadays⁶. Effective practice of decision making positions needs exactly adequate qualification and necessary competencies. Although the expansion of women observed in education did not bring along the proportionate participation of women in decision making⁷, education determines the chances of women to possess positions, and widens the competent base.

Previous research studies (Nagy 2005, Koncz 2006, Vámosi 2014, Zádori et. al. 2016) confirm that the disadvantaged situation of women stems from their social status that has a great impact on competencies. Success, power and decisiveness (as the values of a competitive society) are interpreted as characters of men. Competencies of women were linked to household works and childcare for centuries, which do not comply with open competition. Rights of women are often limited by themselves they can hardly say no and seem insecure in public. In the background lays a weak self-confidence, undetermined personality and self-esteem. Also the social environment ensures the reproduction of 'traditional characters of women'. Limitations in career development, wage and salary differences (Vámosi 2013, Nemeskéri et al. 2016) confirm the 'inferior value' of women that most women approve. They cannot look over their mistakes, nor can their surroundings (Koncz, 2006, 156-162). The public opinion in Hungary, with a slow change, still accepts traditional division of roles (Nagy, 2005), in which political position is not necessarily a suitable career for women. Thus, it does not inspire the greater presence of women in public life and the supportive behaviour of the political elite (Koncz, 2006, 293-94).

⁶Due to horizontal segregation in higher education, however, there are differences between university/college departments and faculties.

⁷ Reaching critical mass (Dahlerup, 30% ratio in political decision making processes) may be a result of a long, multi-generational process (Koncz, 2006, 236).

Research results – Qualitative research of public socialization

If we would like to discover gender equality in education then the process of socialization has to be observed that has a great importance in the successfulness of students. ‘*The educational function of school and equality are based on the successfulness of socialization in schools.*’ Nikitscher, 2015, 7) It is important to note the existence of gender stereotypes in education (in its content), because fix gender roles may determine socialization in school even if the school declares not to make any difference between boys and girls. These may have a negative effect due to limiting the choices and development of the students. (Kereszty 2014, 264-67). ‘*Apart from factual knowledge these express several other concepts towards the children, and both the content and the process of transition are influenced by their own socialization attitude, prejudices and everyday problems*’ (Trencsényi, 1988). Thus, the role of educators is of utmost importance and they provide a model for the students,

Based on relevant literature we asked eight former or present teachers in leading positions (Principal, Vice Principal, Head of Institution), in rural schools of the county of Baranya. The ratio of men and women in our sample is equal (4-4 persons), as well as the ratio of educators experienced in local politics and having no public role (4-4 persons). The questions of the interviews were based on the role of socialization in school (including the opportunities to develop an active civil attitude), the role of educational model, and the opinions on politics. In the research a dominant difference between the opinion of teachers with double identity and the socialization patterns of ‘only’ educators was expected.

The interviews have revealed that education to life, forming own opinions, responsible civil attitude and patriotic education were present regarding the role of school in socialization. A minor difference could be observed considering teachers with no public role who emphasized the continuation of socialization in the family and the promotion of adaptation to public standards. In two schools we have learned that a student-council exists. (Both principals were among those respondents who had a mandate in the city council).

An important difference is that in one case the student-council links students into the life of the school, whereas in the other the student representative of the school is linked to the representatives of the local (city) council.

‘They are invited to the city council and have a seat at the table of representatives’ (48-year-old female teacher, former Deputy Mayor)

All questioned teachers thought that the personality of the educator serves as a model for the students of the 21st century and they could name an educator from their personal life to who they could look up back then. Attention should be turned to the facts that 3 out of the 4 teachers with public role named an educational model of double identity, whereas the other 4 respondents remembered ‘only’ credible teachers who had no political role. None of the teachers experienced in local politics consider himself/herself a politician (although two of them used to be Deputy Mayors), which I consider as a main result of the research. This can be partially explained by the fact that their motivation for taking up a public role was based unanimously on a high level and effective representation of interests (of the school).

‘I could not accomplish results as an educator, I needed a public role.’ (48-year-old female teacher, former Deputy Mayor)

'I had no intention to become a politician, but I wanted to take part in decision making.' (75-year-old retired teacher, former Deputy Mayor)

'..I started to use (initiating the renovation of a hall) my political past' (46-year-old female teacher, council representative)

The interviews have undoubtedly revealed that the educator role is stronger than the other, and the life of teachers are determined by mostly school activities.

'I am not a politician, because politics is a very small part of my life' 'I do not emphasize my public role, it does not appear in the teaching staff' (46-year-old female teacher, representative)

'I was not suitable to become a politician. An educator has to be honest, which means failure to a politician.' (75-year-old retired teacher, former Deputy Mayor)

'I'm not a politician, I have a political career because I felt peripheral.' (48-year-old female teacher, former Deputy Mayor)

In another part of the interview we investigated the opinions considering the knowledge and competencies necessary for a successful political career. Related to this first we asked the teachers to list competencies necessary for public life. The answers were various: logical (in 2 cases), negotiating power (in 2 cases), empathic (in 3 cases), education and expertise (in 3 cases), devoted, correct. Following that we presented the 6 basic competencies from the literature⁸, of which we asked for opinions and ranking. The result of the ranking was the following: 7 out of 8 respondents mentioned political view as the last (moreover one of them thought it to be definitely harmful to have one). Regarding that all representative teachers gained a mandate as the representative of a national party this is remarkably interesting. Teachers with a public role pointed out communication skills as the most important, whereas teachers thought the same of intellectual skills. Contacting skills had a middle position (2. and 3. rank). Leading and motivational skills, and also flexibility were equally ranked to the 4. and 5. positions by the respondents.

The last part of the interviews considered the political role of women, and social gender roles and conceits. The greatest difference in opinions of the respondents has been experienced regarding this topic, but this was not related to public roles but to biological gender. Whilst all female teachers thought the role of women in politics important (in higher ratio than the current), among men only one teacher with double identity thought the same. For the reason of greater public participation greater numerical participation in society, representation of different approaches of genders, differences in mentality, and better tone in politics were mentioned.

'Women are important in public life, yes, half of mankind are women.' *'Women have different approaches, different viewpoints and answers.'* *'If a woman appears in the Vatican, one moderates his behaviour.'* (75-year-old retired teacher, former Deputy Mayor)

⁸ National and international literature (Koncz, 2006 and International Labour Office) also cites the principle of Silvester J. published in 2003, based on which the 6 basic competencies of a successful politician are political belief, communicational skills, intellectual skills, connecting skills, leading and motivational skills, flexibility.

'Yes, female politicians are important...they have another kind of viewpoint' (46-year-old female teacher, representative)

'Women have another way of thinking, they can accept more, and observe several aspects at the same time' (58-year-old female teacher with no public role)

'More women should be present in politics but not in all fields, there are some where they are not considered human...it is interesting that women are more sensitive such as in the topic of abortion if a man decides in it.' (51-year-old female teacher with no public role)

In the cases of two male respondents out of the other three the opinion on traditional gender roles were characteristic that also represents the opinion in Hungary from several aspects.

'Politicians are men, women have a greater role in the family...female politicians are not accepted by the society either, the life of female politicians is deteriorated by this role. Leadership is for men, because it requires a whole person. The role of women in childcare is deteriorated.' (51-year-old teacher with no public role)

'Mothers' role in the family is important, society needs strong families, women focus on career and become masculine in politics. Politics could be more gentle if more female politicians were present, but it is not made for them.' (42-year-old teacher, representative)

The third male teacher expressed some kind of uncertainty.

'There could be more women in politics, if they take this up, women do not want this, only those focusing on their career, there are field where it would be beneficial' (53-year-old teacher with no public role)

Summary

Interviews of educators with double role and leading position have revealed that in the opinion of teachers a conscious distance keeping from the conflicting world of politics can be consistently traced. Attention should be turned to such distancing of the leaders of educational institutions, since political role is rejected even by those who had a definite leading public role (Deputy Mayor) throughout several periods and a committed preference of a party. Despite this all principals have found active civil development (or at least patriotic education) important in school socialization that gives hope in the long run. We have found some definitely good examples of teachers admitting (regardless of public role) the importance of strengthening the opinion-former attitude of students (operation of student-council, supporting class 'chairmen') Regarding gender equality focus of the research results are not so promising, because the most of male respondents accept traditional social roles. Although it is positive that female teachers, regardless of public roles, provide a positive, supporting background and model for the students, that may enhance the promotion of equality.

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