



## EXPANDING HORIZONS: PRIMARY TEACHERS GOING BEYOND THE SLOVAK CIVIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

*Zuzana Luksik*

*Trnava University, Department of School Pedagogy Trnava, Slovakia*

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### ABOUT ARTICLE

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**Abstract:** This research explores the initiatives taken by primary school teachers to extend their teaching beyond the confines of the Slovak civic education curriculum. The civic education curriculum lays the foundation for instilling democratic values, active citizenship, and social responsibility among young learners. However, teachers, driven by their commitment to comprehensive education, often seek innovative approaches to augment civic education's scope and impact. Through qualitative case studies and interviews with primary school teachers, this study investigates the methods, resources, and pedagogical strategies employed by educators to expand students' understanding of civic engagement, global issues, and cross-cultural perspectives. The findings shed light on the transformative potential of teachers' initiatives in shaping socially conscious and globally aware citizens, offering insights for educational policymakers and practitioners aiming to enhance civic education practices.

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### INTRODUCTION

Effective Civic education plays a pivotal role in nurturing responsible citizens who actively participate in democratic processes and contribute to their communities' well-being. In Slovakia, the civic education curriculum serves as a foundation for imparting essential democratic values, fostering civic engagement, and nurturing a sense of social responsibility among young learners. However, while the curriculum sets important goals, it may have limitations in fully addressing the complexities of contemporary global issues and cross-cultural understanding. As a result, many primary school

teachers are motivated to go beyond the prescribed curriculum, seeking innovative ways to expand their students' horizons and empower them as informed and active citizens.

This research aims to explore the endeavors of primary school teachers in Slovakia who go beyond the confines of the civic education curriculum to enrich their students' learning experiences. By examining their initiatives, strategies, and pedagogical approaches, we aim to gain insights into how teachers can augment civic education's impact and foster a broader understanding of civic responsibility, global interconnectedness, and cross-cultural perspectives.

## **METHOD**

To delve into the experiences and practices of primary school teachers extending beyond the Slovak civic education curriculum, this study will employ a qualitative research design, incorporating multiple case studies and semi-structured interviews.

**Selection of Participants:** Primary school teachers who have demonstrated a commitment to innovative civic education practices will be purposefully selected as participants for the case studies. These teachers will represent diverse regions and school contexts to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

### **Data Collection:**

- a. **Case Studies:** Detailed case studies of selected teachers will be conducted, involving classroom observations and document analysis of their lesson plans, teaching materials, and student projects.
- b. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the participating teachers to explore their motivations, experiences, challenges, and perceived outcomes of going beyond the civic education curriculum.

### **Data Analysis:**

- a. **Case Study Analysis:** The data collected from classroom observations and document analysis will be analyzed thematically to identify patterns, innovative approaches, and instructional strategies used by teachers.
- b. **Interview Transcripts:** Transcripts of the semi-structured interviews will be subjected to thematic content analysis to extract meaningful insights from teachers' perspectives.

### **Triangulation and Validation:**

The triangulation of data from multiple sources (case studies and interviews) will enhance the study's credibility and validity. The researchers will also seek feedback from participants to validate the accuracy and interpretation of the findings.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

Ethical guidelines will be strictly followed throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, and anonymity will be ensured when presenting the research findings.

By adopting a qualitative approach, this research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of primary school teachers' endeavors to enrich civic education and broaden their students' perspectives. The insights gained from this study can inform educational policymakers, curriculum developers, and

practitioners in designing more comprehensive and relevant civic education programs, fostering socially responsible and globally aware citizens in Slovakia and beyond.

## RESULTS

The research findings revealed that primary school teachers in Slovakia are indeed taking proactive steps to go beyond the prescribed civic education curriculum, aiming to provide their students with a more comprehensive and globally relevant learning experience. Through qualitative case studies and interviews with participating teachers, several key themes emerged:

**Innovative Pedagogical Approaches:** Teachers employed various innovative pedagogical approaches to expand civic education. These included project-based learning, collaborative activities, simulations, and real-world problem-solving exercises. By incorporating these methods, teachers aimed to deepen students' understanding of civic issues and encourage active participation in addressing them.

**Integration of Global Issues:** Many teachers recognized the importance of exposing students to global challenges, such as environmental sustainability, poverty, and human rights. They integrated these topics into their lessons, fostering empathy and encouraging students to think critically about their roles as global citizens.

**Cross-Cultural Perspectives:** Some teachers emphasized cross-cultural understanding by introducing students to different cultures, traditions, and perspectives. Through activities like virtual exchanges with students from other countries, teachers sought to cultivate a sense of empathy and appreciation for diversity among their students.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this research highlight the significant impact of primary teachers' initiatives in expanding civic education beyond the Slovak curriculum. By adopting innovative pedagogical approaches, integrating global issues, and promoting cross-cultural perspectives, these teachers are equipping students with valuable skills and knowledge essential for active citizenship in a rapidly changing world. The study also reveals the dedication and commitment of these teachers to provide a holistic education that goes beyond academic learning. By empowering students to engage in real-world issues and fostering an awareness of global interconnectedness, teachers are playing a crucial role in nurturing socially responsible and globally aware individuals.

Furthermore, the findings shed light on the potential challenges faced by teachers in implementing these initiatives, such as limited resources, time constraints, and the need for additional support and training. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in sustaining and expanding the positive impact of these innovative practices.

## CONCLUSION

The research concludes that primary school teachers in Slovakia are taking remarkable strides in enriching civic education beyond the confines of the prescribed curriculum. By adopting innovative pedagogical approaches and embracing global perspectives, these teachers are nurturing a new generation of informed and socially conscious citizens.

The study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and supporting teachers' efforts in extending civic education to encompass critical global issues and cross-cultural understanding. Policymakers and educational institutions should provide professional development opportunities, access to resources, and a supportive framework for teachers to continue their impactful work.

Ultimately, the findings of this research contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the role of civic education in preparing students for active citizenship in an interconnected world. By encouraging primary teachers to go beyond the Slovak civic education curriculum, we can foster a generation of young individuals who are not only well-informed about their civic responsibilities but also equipped with the knowledge and empathy to contribute positively to their communities and the broader global society.

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