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## **The Talk-and-Action Approach to Citizenship Education An Outline of a Methodology of Critical Studies in Citizenship Education**

### **Abstract**

The present research on the development of citizenship education in (transformation) countries fails to acknowledge that systems of citizenship education are political organisations by nature. This research does not analyse citizenship education (CE) as a multi-level, multi-actor and multi-interest system with multiple environments. The diverse environmental and internal demands addressed to CE actors are also ignored. This paper sees CE as situated and developing in a tension field of diverse and contradicting demands to which each organised CE actor has to respond simultaneously. This especially holds for post-socialist transformation countries but applies as well to “old” democracies which, like the aforementioned, are confronted with the challenges of Europeanisation and migration. A multi-level actor-centred approach, acknowledging actor-specific perspectives, as suggested in this article, is essential for understanding the complex interplay of demands and reactions (talk, decision and action) of different actors and hence the change of CE under the conditions of societal change or transformation.

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### **Keywords**

Citizenship education, transformation, Europeanisation, new institutionalism

### **1. Introduction**

For two decades, citizenship education<sup>1</sup> as an organised practice for the education of young citizens all over Europe (COM 2005, 7<sup>2</sup>) has been confronted with processes of

<sup>1</sup> Herewith we refer to the concepts of civics, aiming at, school education for young people, which seeks to ensure that they become active and responsible citizens capable of contributing to the development and well-being of the society in which they live“ (Euridyce 2005, 10).

<sup>2</sup> See also other initiatives like European Year of Citizenship through Education (<http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/Themes/ECD/>), the division for Democratic Citizenship Education

change and transformation: In the “old” democracies, citizenship education (CE) faces the challenge of change induced by globalisation, Europeanisation and migration. Additionally, CE in the “new” democracies in transformation countries has presumably undergone a transformation from non-democratic education and education for non-democratic participation towards new democratic forms of CE or is expected to fulfil this educational transformation process (Eurydice 2005; CoE 2004; Dürr 2004; Dürr et al. 2000; Hedtke/Zimenkova/Hippe 2007; Radiukiewicz/Grabowska-Lusinska 2007; Jover/Naval 2007; Georgi 2005). On the surface, citizenship education in all European countries seems to converge to some key ideas and shared policies, or even to a common concept. In-depth analyses, however, will paint a very varied picture of the past and present processes of change and transformation of citizenship education. Actually, CE in European countries and even within one single country is characterised by a rather high degree of explicit or implicit diversity. CE is being influenced by different actors within the respective systems of CE and from their environments (Hedtke/Zimenkova/Hippe 2007, 13), all of them having their special, partly contradicting ideas of, and interests in, citizens’ upbringing (e.g. ministries of education, local authorities, local communities, religious organisations, different types of NGOs etc.). Against this backdrop, we see multiple and contradicting claims as a typical feature of citizenship education in pluralist democracies and particularly in countries experiencing a historic transformation of state, economy, society and – in some cases – of nation, too. Policy-centred approaches to citizenship education which mainly focus on conceptions, their implementation and remaining gaps of compliance mostly ignore the highly complex and moving structure of often inconsistent expectations, demands and requirements and varying reactions and replies to them. But citizenship education is shaped like a broken country providing lots of niches inhabited by a rich diversity of systems, policies, actors, coalitions, approaches and practices.

Therefore, the main theoretical challenge is to conceptualise the existing systems of citizenship education as a political and pluralist issue *by nature* which does *not* lose its political and controversial character when leaving the sphere of parliaments, parties and ministries, and entering the world of educational administration and schools. This assumed, the main methodological challenge is to operationalise structure, change and fundamental transformation of citizenship education in terms of actors, interests, expectations, perceptions, demands, means and actions. An appropriate methodology has to help to reveal what conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education emerge from these dynamic, manifold and sometimes even contradictory processes of change and transformation in the field of CE (Hippe 2008). It has to disclose how different actors cope with conflicting conceptions, expectations and interests towards CE. It has to allow grasping the plurality, multiperspectivity and complexity of citizenship education systems induced by the different demands stemming from actors’ activities on the international, national, federal, regional or local level. Beyond a mere comparison of present and past policy papers and educational structures, this methodology must support the analysis of the concrete dynamics and directions of change and transformation as seen by the actors themselves. In short, we need methodology to reconstruct systems of citizenship education as complex multi-level,

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of the Council of Europe ([http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Default_en.asp)), the citizenship education projects of the European Commission ([http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.html)) and diverse national initiatives. Education for Democracy and Democratic Participation is a compulsory part of the national curricula of the most European Countries, see CoE 2002 country reports.

multi-actor and multi-ideological systems (cf. for France e.g. Pair 2007) comprising differing beliefs, concepts, interests, means and practices.

Given the diversity and inconsistency of demands and expectations, considering the leeway of interpretation and scope for action left by policy papers, implementation rules and administrative orders, and taking into account the actors' capability to adapt and re-define concepts and guidelines and to perform compliance without actually complying, we expect citizenship education to reflect these ambiguities and inconsistencies at all levels and within every organisational unit; this especially holds for governmentally organised and hierarchically structured forms of CE. Diverse and conflicting demands from the environment of citizenship education are the main challenge politicians, administrators and educators are confronted with. That is why we want to explain how actors of citizenship education perceive their respective worlds, other actors included, and how their beliefs of what is going on outside influence how they behave inside their organisations and how they turn to the public. We want to know how these actors try to cope with inconsistent demands from their environments. We want to find out how they manage to comply simultaneously with international standards of citizenship education, to adapt to specific national trajectories of citizenship and education and to fulfil demands of regional and local actors, too.

We believe that this is only possible if we identify for each selected CE actor ("focal actor") the relevant actors from other CE levels and environments who put demands on the CE actor in focus. Then, the focal actor's interpretation of these demands and her reaction to them has to be described and analysed. Only proceeding in this way we may reconstruct the complex structure of influences and expectations, interdependencies and interpretation within the system of CE by which its inconsistencies occur and harden. Furthermore, we are able to trace the emergence of CE conceptions as well as the development of specific paths of the CE in transformational contexts from the actors' perspectives.

The main mistake to be avoided in such a study is to take the assumption of linearity and uniformity in structure and development of citizenship education for granted. This idea – be it an implicit background imagination or an explicit administrative assumption – is often to be found in pictures of CE, presented on the international or national level, which are simply to be applied at all lower levels of CE, understood simply as a question of successful management. As far as we know, none of the (panel) studies done so far applied an approach which acknowledges non-linearity and inconsistency as an essential feature of citizenship education, or at least as a potential form to be taken into account.

In this article we suggest some key aspects of a methodology which allows describing and analysing the characteristic diversity and inconsistency of citizenship education and tracing its non-linear, intricate development emerging from a multitude of actors and interests, approaches and concepts, expectations and demands, interpretations and (re-)actions. We suggest applying an institutionalist theory for this methodology which originally was designed to analyse organisations which are confronted with inconsistent demands from their environment (Brunsson 2002).

## 2. CE as European research field: main challenges and problems

As we have already shown earlier (Hedtke/Zimenkova/Hippe 2007), citizenship education in Europe seems to be a flourishing field, with many international and national actors, active in it (EC, EU, UNESCO, national ministries and other education authorities, NGOs, etc.), developing (Eurydice 2005, 7-8; Hettlage 2000; Amadeo et al. 2002, 105-172; Krek et al. 2006; Salema 2006) and monitoring it (CoE 2004; Eurydice 2005).

Some general tendencies make CE especially fascinating as a research field. In the first place these are globalisation, Europeanisation (and simultaneous processes of nation-identity building, like e.g. in Estonia and Ukraine) and the historic political, economic and societal transformation from socialist systems. Further and closely connected to these processes, phenomena like migration, the emergence of new forms of citizenship<sup>3</sup> or the building of new elites may deeply influence conceptions and practices of CE.

These phenomena change the societal structures in a rather radical way. Any new order needs some kind of acceptance, above all in democratic societies. Hence, societal actors promoting new order(s) or benefiting from them are interested in bringing people to support these order(s) aiming at producing legitimacy. Citizenship education, not only as a branch of school education, but as non-school activities, adult education and as life long learning<sup>4</sup>, too, is seen as an important instrument for establishing such legitimacy<sup>5</sup>. This especially holds for CE in transformation countries which recently underwent a sudden, deep and fundamental institutional change of historic dimensions which, in many fields, is not yet completed.

Certainly, the influence of transformation, globalisation, Europeanisation (and migration) on CE was incidentally addressed by many authors (cf. country reports like CoE 2002 and 2004; Eurydice 2005; Schiffauer et. al (Ed.) 2002; Georgi 2005; Bergmeier 2000; Brumlik 1997), but there are barely any studies dedicated to a thorough analysis of how transformation has already shaped and still is shaping citizenship education down to the classroom, and of how key actors at all levels of CE are coping with the seemingly deep changes and the bulk of demands and expectations they feel confronted with.

Processes of migration, globalisation, and post-socialist transformation change the societal structures, and are often regarded as bringing about the necessity to revise the socialisation programmes for young and new citizens. As far as new societal structures are observed as needing additional efforts of legitimisation, usually citizenship education is considered and recommended as an appropriate instrument for providing acceptance and hence legitimacy. On the one hand, it is not well known if and to what extent CE can contribute to, influence, or even change the structures of societal order or established forms of durable inequalities (Tilly 1998), as for example produced by

<sup>3</sup> Citizenship within and beyond the national state borders, like e.g. global ecological citizenship (Falk 1994) or technological citizenship (Frankenfeld 1992).

<sup>4</sup> See the definition of Education for Democratic Citizenship by the Council of Europe: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/What\\_is\\_EDC/GlossaryKeyTerms\\_en.asp#P207\\_8117](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/What_is_EDC/GlossaryKeyTerms_en.asp#P207_8117)

<sup>5</sup> Most of the programmes mention social cohesion and harmonious co-existence within the society as explicit goals (Eurydice 2005, 10; Hettlage 2000), also concentrating on the active participation (e.g. Amadeo et al. 2002, 105-172; Krek et al. 2006; Salema 2006), which, however, mostly to be understood as participation through accepting of the existing societal and political structures, not the revision of these structures through the citizens (Westheimer 2004; Zimenkova 2008).

economic stratification, migration laws, welfare structures or political system. On the other hand it is beyond controversy that CE is part and parcel of the established – or chosen – political, economic and societal order and expected to produce acceptance and legitimacy for it.

Furthermore, societal stratification and differentiation as well as individual and collective capacities and opportunities of taking part in societal life and of co-designing the society are being discursively (co-)constructed in the processes of political socialization in schools (and enculturation, Schiffauer 2002). CE might also appear to be an important mechanism of (re)production of the social inequalities including unequal opportunities of participation. Thus, CE could serve as an instrument for producing support for the existing order and – on the contrary – for supplying young citizens with the capacity and means to revise this order. CE provides young citizens with the established perception of their citizen role and related opportunities and, in general, school socialisation is meant to prepare youngsters for the life within the society (ibid, 1).

Regarded as a means to provide – or refuse – acceptance and legitimacy, citizenship education is inevitably subjected to political and societal influences and controversies. This supports our approach of focusing on divergent demands and emergent inconsistencies on the different level of the CE systems. Therefore, in contrast to other school subjects e.g. from the field of natural sciences, CE is indissolubly intertwined with political struggle and political change, especially in its fundamental form of transformation. Consequently, we regard actors of citizenship education in principle as political actors acting – at least to a certain extent – politically in a political environment. This is one reason why schools can be seen as tending to display some key features of political organisations. Then we have to find out who are the influential actors of change or stability, what are their beliefs, interests, strategies, decisions and actions and which shared or contested pictures and practices of citizenship, democracy, participation, societal order, inequalities etc. emerge from their acting within the CE system.

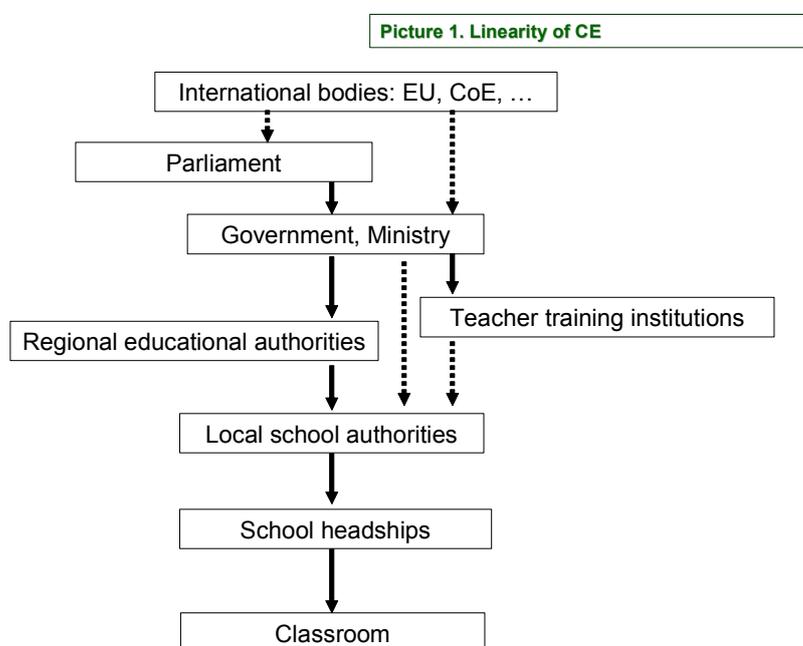
Obviously, citizenship education is not limited to school practices. But focusing on the first outline of an unusual methodology on CE as organised in the institutionalised school system allows starting research on solid and rather well investigated ground, and provides comparability within a country as well as between several countries. Even more important: As we want to understand which overall results are emerging from the individual actors' perceptions and actions *within* an *organised* system, schools and their environments are first choice. Later, of course, with this methodology being proven and refined, other fields of civic education should be analysed.

Though an extensive monitoring of CE and its development in Europe is not lacking (CoE 2002, 2004; EUYOUNG 2005; Eurydice 2005; IEA 1999 with a follow up study in 2009), there are most serious research gaps in the research done so far. Most comparative reports and case studies barely consider specifics of transformation, although studying CE in transformation countries (Hedtke/Zimenkova/Hippe 2007, 11). The same applies to not considering theories and empirical studies of globalisation or Europeanisation while studying CE in western European countries. The other research gap, more relevant for our research here, is that national overviews of citizenship education provided within the frame of reports from the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Commission (EC) seem to be more or less close to the viewpoints of the respective governments. This entails an understanding of CE as a mainly managerial project belonging to the implementation phase of the policy cycle, a tendency to focus

on implementation of, and compliance to, policies chosen and to ignore national and regional differences and distinctive features of transformation countries. With very few exceptions only (e.g. Schiffauer 2002), these weaknesses prevail in recent research.

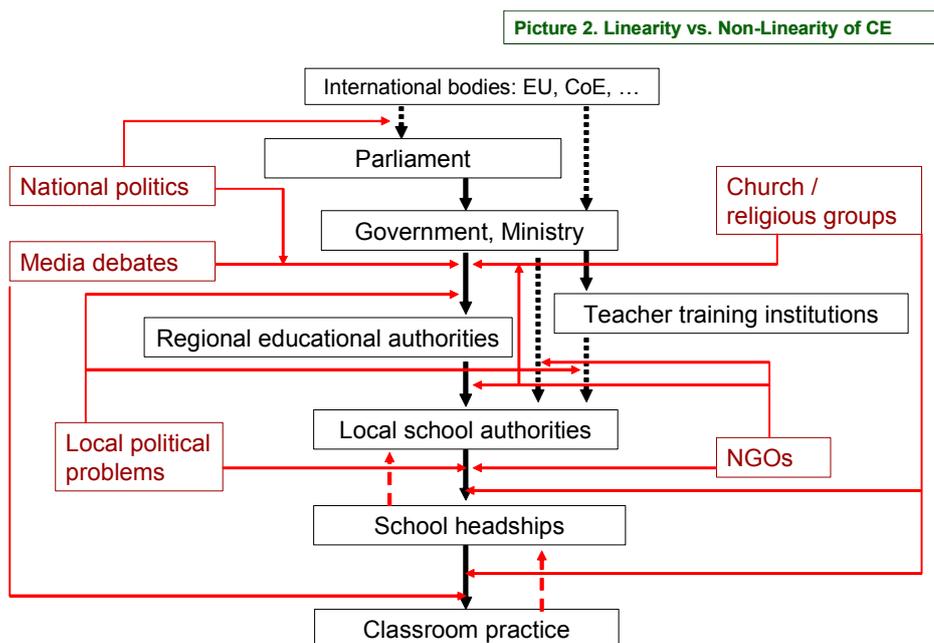
Understanding CE as a managerial project of realising international or national CE policies implies the idea of a linear, top-down implementation from the international to the national levels and further down within a more or less hierarchically organised system. In such a view, the influence of other actors and thus also national, regional and local specifics of CE are being ignored. In addition, the possibility to learn in which direction(s) the different systems of citizenship education are developing (if we allow them to develop not only towards an increasing compliancy with the international norms of CE) is missing.

To put it graphically, the studies done so far implicitly work with a more or less simplified picture of CE development and implementation depending on a clear structure of actors as illustrated in figure 1.



(Figure 1: **Imagined linearity of a citizenship education system**).

But with most real world cases and critical research, this picture outlines CE in a dangerously simplified way, preventing a differentiated understanding of how CE is being regulated and influenced in reality. It is non-linearity, complexity, ambiguity and multi-level structure which have to be grasped and analysed by critical approaches to research on CE (see figure 2). How should an appropriate research be designed? A methodological design which is able to reveal the complex interconnectedness of the respective CE systems and their development has to be selected or developed.



(Figure 2: **Real complexity of a citizenship education system**).

### 3. A complexity-conscious research methodology

CE systems of European countries are in general subjected to the influence of different actors, interests and demands; in addition, they are currently experiencing new challenges emerging from fundamental post-socialist transformation and from intensified Europeanisation and globalisation. If this diagnosis is right, a methodology is needed to analyse the complex interplay of CE systems, CE actors and their environments.

#### **Demands, change and awareness of inconsistencies**

We suppose that understandings of citizenship, images of citizens and models of becoming a citizen provided within citizenship education might, and even must, change on their way through the organisations and groups of actors inside a CE system, and that the values, norms, contents, rules, material and methods of civic education and the guidelines for acting within the frame of civic education might and must differ and vary (organisational reshaping).

Our hypothesis, roughly formulated, is that citizenship education is continuously developing and changing, especially under the conditions of post-socialist transformation, globalisation, Europeanisation (and accompanying phenomena such as intensified and accelerated economic change, ousting of old and emerging of new elites, re-establishing of national identity, migration etc.). Due to this continuous development and unusual change, and due to related political and societal reactions CE actors have become aware of, they experience much more intensively than in “normal” times all the different or even inconsistent expectations and demands addressed to them by their environment. In quiet times, when change is perceived as small, slow or even absent, constellations of actors and demands are understood as

being more or less stable and necessary reactions may appear as a matter of routine. Nevertheless, inconsistency of demands exists, although without moving and therefore kept in silence. But when times are changing, new demands may arise, increasing the inconsistency of expectations or challenging existent patterns of reaction. Under these conditions, actors are likely to realize and reflect environmental demands, and to assess if their reactions are still appropriate. Therefore, the current situation of CE in Europe – including old as well as young democracies – provides a good opportunity for research interested in understanding the complex CE systems and their environments focusing on its multiple key actors.

We assume that the pressure of inconsistent demands is characteristic to all actors of CE on all institutional levels, starting from (inter)-national educational programmes and projects down to the classroom practice, from EU-directorates, national parliaments and ministries, academic teacher training departments, down to local education authorities, school headship, parents' council and divisional management in schools – all observed by media and civil society associations.

We suppose that citizenship education as such is perceived as a highly political and controversial issue. Inconsistent or even contradicting claims on citizenship education prevail in politics and society as well as in educational science. Different ideas about good governance, good citizenship, good education and good schools are attached to scope, forms and content of citizenship education (Westheimer/Kahne, 2004; Westheimer 2004; Hoskins 2006; Ross 2005; Eikel/de Haan 2007). Citizenship education is used to symbolise core issues of national political debates and is closely related to the understanding of the nation's present and past identity (to put it more precisely: the respective prevailing public opinion). Citizenship education is about how the relationship between the governing and the governed actually is and how it ideally should be. In addition, citizenship and citizenship education have been transgressing the national borders for about fifteen years and have become an international issue<sup>6</sup>. National governments have to present their political approaches on international meetings, they are monitored by international bodies and non-governmental organisations, and find themselves compared with others and sometimes criticised by the international press. In short, every organisation dealing with citizenship education (and every single actor, too) finds itself observed and confronted with highly inconsistent, controversial, dynamic and unreliable demands from its environment.

We claim that citizenship education all over Europe is experiencing processes of intensified change or even transformation, for instance transformation from the authoritarian to a more (or less) democratic type of citizenship education (Eurydice 2005; CoE 2004; Dürr 2004; Dürr et al. 2000; Radiukiewicz/Grabowska-Lusinska 2007; Reinhardt 2007) or changes shifting CE from the national idea to a more universal one (e.g. from national education to education of European citizens<sup>7</sup>, to education towards

<sup>6</sup> Best seen in the context of international agencies of the CE, cf. [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Default_en.asp), [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.html). It can also be seen from the international cooperation practices of the national education authorities, the unions of governmental (more links under [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Links/Default\\_en.asp#P465\\_16718](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Links/Default_en.asp#P465_16718)) and non-governmental CE providers (like Politea [http://www.politeia.net/about\\_us/Members](http://www.politeia.net/about_us/Members))

<sup>7</sup> This however identifies only a general path of the development; we are far from claiming this development is straight and faces no global problems (for a (somewhat) pessimistic view on European citizenship see Bellamy/Castiglione/Shaw 2006; for a rather optimistic view on the global citizenship see Hayward 2006; Saiz 2005; van Steenbergen 1994

global human rights<sup>8</sup>, etc.). This kind of change and transformation does not only mean some structural and organisational changes or minor changes in the teaching culture, but deeper changes in the images of citizenship, legitimacies of governmental structures, and descriptions of active citizenship (cf. e.g. Hedtke/Zimenkova/Hippe 2007; Zimenkova 2008). In the process of societal transformation, CE is put under pressure of the transformation as well, for it provides young citizens with the notion of their role in the (changing or changed) society, creates legitimacies of the current political order or gives the young citizens instruments to participate in the political change. Different political, media or educational actors on different levels (international, national, local) influence this process and bring their different interests and hopes into the process of CE, and hence different, even contradictory expectations and demands towards the actors of the CE (Hedtke/Zimenkova/Hippe 2007).

### **Talk, decision and action as inconsistent reactions to inconsistent demands**

Following Nils Brunsson (2002; 2003), we claim that, confronted with inconsistent demands, organisations as actors of CE are forced to produce inconsistent or even contradicting reactions to these demands in order to maintain their integrity as an organisation. This means that actors of CE are likely to use inconsistent reactions as a response to inconsistent demands in order to be able to reply to all of them simultaneously. Brunsson (2002; 2003) suggests three possible forms of such reactions: “talk”, “decision” and “action”. These forms might – and with regard to inconsistent societal demands even must – be inconsistent or even contradictory to one another, and consequently the expectation of consistent policies and politics (linearity, uniformity) must be an illusion. “Talk” about e.g. intended/claimed democratic transformation of citizenship education or fostering multiculturalism as a new main focus of CE concepts, superseding concepts designed for culturally and ethnically homogeneous group of nation-state-citizens might differ a lot from “decisions” made and, in turn, “action” may not correspond to what was seemingly decided to be done. We assume that these complications, tensions and contradictions, manifested in inconsistent reactions, primarily reflect inconsistent and even confusing environments. These environments, again, are mostly met in form of other organisations as collective actors.

Of course, there are further factors nourishing tensions between talk and action, starting from rigid structures, scarcity of resources, inability of different actors to adjust their traditional activities to new political objectives as well as the existence of parallel objectives of citizenship education etc. strongly influencing citizenship education organisations on all levels. But most of these, too, may be analysed as resulting from inconsistent demands from the environment(s) the respective organisations are dependent upon (or made responsible for). Even out of the membership of educational organisations (which may be perceived as its internal environment), inconsistent claims are regularly made about what the organisation should think, talk, decide, and do. Thus, citizenship education in form of “action” might show less transformation towards democratisation (or towards “active citizenship” or non-nationalistic citizenship) than started or stated discursively on the level of public talk, or just the other way round. Only by differentiating between different organised actors of citizenship education as well as differentiating between talk, decision and action for the respective realm of each

<sup>8</sup> Fritzsche 2007

CE actor, can we grasp the fine grained dynamics which display the change or transformation of citizenship education.

### **Educational organisations as political organisations**

From this perspective, establishing, sustaining or reforming CE is not about choosing and using appropriate techniques to linearly implement a more or less elaborate and coherent concept of rules, content and methods. On the contrary, realising citizenship education is about coping with at least partly incompatible demands from divergent, more or less politically charged environments.

This holds as well for educational organisations in general. Managerial, administrative and teaching bodies of the educational system find themselves in a demanding environment. As a rule, it is characterised by plural, different, conflicting, contradictory or inconsistent expectations and claims brought forward by political and administrative actors and societal interest groups. As all organisations, educational organisations have to legitimate their existence and activities to the public, they have to find an answer to their different stakeholders' different demands – which is by no way an easy task. These features are by no means unique for educational organisations in general or for citizenship education in particular, they are rather a quite normal and even expanding phenomenon which applies to other areas of public management, too. Nevertheless, as the education system is linked with politics and society in many fields and many ways, educational organisations do depend on their environments to a particularly high degree. That is why they are a very good example of what Brunsson calls *political organisation* (Brunsson 2002, 19-31). The specifics of the educational system consist, on the one hand, of being in its very existence legitimised through society's perceived and accepted needs for socialisation (Dewey 2000; Marshall 1976) and the following obligation of the educational system to fulfil society's expectations as far as necessary. On the other hand, the educational system has an exclusive and longstanding although temporary access to *all* members of society and hence in principle enjoys the possibility of forming and altering society through forming its younger members.

Complex and plural environments, international institutional interconnectedness, fuzzy tasks and blurred organisational borders and responses of organisations to these features are topics of a broad literature in political science, organisation theory and neo-institutionalism (e.g. Lipson 2006). Besides contradicting demands, conflicts between an existing organisational culture and new policies imposed from outside are a common problem educational organisations may face in the context of intensified change or transformation with regard to citizenship education. For example, it is anything but natural that the actually prevailing school and teaching culture in a certain country is fitting well to the idea of an education for democratic citizenship.

### **The approach of Organised Hypocrisy**

All this may result in occasional or systematic gaps between rhetoric and activities of an organisation, a divergence of its talk, decision and action. *Talk* is a communicational activity, designed for the announcement of a future action, for the legitimization of non-acting or postponing action, or for stating a necessity of acting, hence signaling that an organisation perceived the problem as such and intends to find a solution. In short, talk is a communicational activity, a substitute for action, "decreasing the likelihood of

corresponding action” (Brunsson 2003, 204), but as well making easier action differing from the talk’s content. In its turn, *action* is a “real” activity which “takes place in the here and now” (Brunsson 2002, 28), results in “products” and may be connected to any change of the given state-of-the-art. Talk and action are linked together by *decision* (Brunsson 2002, 173). Decisions are a “special type of talk that indicates a will to act or the choice of action” (Brunsson 2003, 201). They are a coupling mechanism between talk and action which can, according to the situation, be closer to talk or to action (ibd.). As we understand educational organisations as political organisations, we expect two roles of decision-making to prevail: decisions as attributions of responsibility, and decisions as legitimisations of decision-makers and organisations (Brunsson 2002, 188-189). These tensions or contradictions between talk and action of an organisation, which are normally an unavoidable result of structure and impact of the organisation’s environment, can be understood as a kind of *organised* hypocrisy:

“In short, *organized* hypocrisy, as distinct from ordinary hypocrisy, refers to inconsistent – decoupled and compensatory – responses to conflicting external normative and material pressures. Conflicts between external reform demands and internal organizational culture are not, however, the sole or even primary source of organized hypocrisy. Organized hypocrisy also arises as an organizational response to conflicting external normative and material pressures. Reform programmes may be initiated from within an organization, to managing irreconcilable demands (not necessarily for reform) from the organizational environment. Because the external pressures to which they respond are inconsistent, the responses must be decoupled – causally unrelated – to avoid interfering with each other. If this is accomplished through symbolic reform rhetoric decoupled from implementing action, the reform initiative is itself a manifestation of organized hypocrisy” (Lipson 2006, 3-4).

We suggest working with the revised neo-institutionalist conception of organised hypocrisy (Brunsson 2003) in order to grasp the interconnectedness of political change or transformation, conceptual change and organisational reshaping of citizenship education. Brunsson focuses his approach on organisations as collective actors, not as individual rulers, and sees them as heterogeneous and open systems with permeable boundaries which are crucially dependent on interactions with, and legitimisation from, their environments (Brunsson 2002, 20-23; Lipson 2006, 11-12). The social agency of these organisations originates from their social environments; they are constituted by their environments. Brunsson’s notion of organisation fits rather well into the characteristics of organisations at all levels of the educational system.

The conception of organised hypocrisy provides the possibility to grasp and explain inconsistencies within the political, administrative or educational organisation involved without being forced to accept normative implications like the denunciation of such inconsistencies as failure or even as individual or collective intention to deceive. On the contrary, organised hypocrisy is an emergent feature consisting of the results of the reactions of collective actors or organisations to the different and even contradictory expectations they meet in their environments, and which they assess as noteworthy and imperative, forcing some reaction of the actor in terms of talk or action. Brunsson declares the strategy of organised hypocrisy as – in certain situations – the only possible solution that may lead to a settlement of conflicting demands towards the organisation. We do not attribute the hypocrisy to conceptual failings, administrative inefficiency, weakness of character or to teachers’ dullness. We suppose that these forms of organised hypocrisy as a result, not as an intention, are inevitable as they mirror the inconsistent environments of the actors of citizenship education.

This idea easily applies to political or semi-political bodies which are typically exposed to a multitude of stakeholders with divergent ideas and requirements. As citizenship is about the core of modern politics within the frame of the nation state, citizenship and citizenship education are in the centre of mostly controversial normative and political debates. At the same time, a certain consensus on a picture of citizenship and hence citizenship education is of pivotal importance for the identity, or phrased less ambitiously: the coherence of a population within a state.

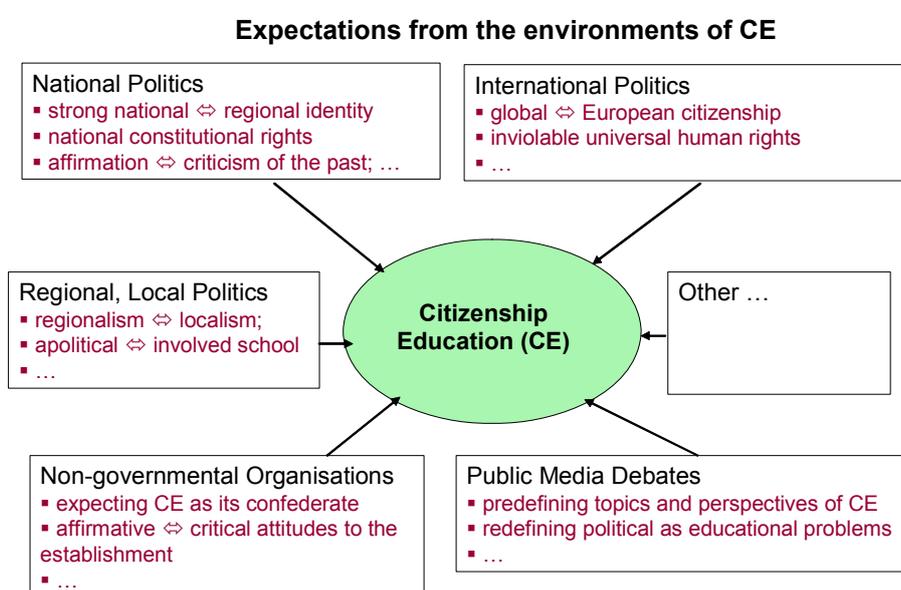
As organised actors of civic education typically must react to at least partly confronting demands, the potential fruitfulness of the organised hypocrisy approach is immediately obvious. Organised civic education is entangled in different (national and international) political systems, different understandings of democracy, normative concepts of citizenship education and its institutions set by supranational bodies like UNESCO, European Union or European Council and civil society organisations like Amnesty International or Soros Foundation, as well as backed by monitoring systems and benchmarking reports by the same bodies, different levels of education, and last but not least different educational goals, topics and curricula (stemming from international, national and local authorities) or lack of such curricula. These features are perceived as at least partly confronting demands and the resulting tensions appear on each level of civic education (from general political debate up to/down to classroom situation). This wide variety of demands and tensions, as well as the perceptions, interpretations and reactions of the main organisations as actors and the main actors in organisations to these demands, has to be described and analysed. Here, any form of reaction is meant: talk and decision as well as action.

We use the notions of *talk, decision and action* as an analytic instrument in order to study the dynamics of civic education within the scope of organised actors responsible for this field. Studying civic education by using the talk / action framework allows to closely take into account the differentiation between the *discursive response(s)* of a civic education organisation to the challenge of its environment (political debate, new law, new international/national regulations, new curriculum, etc.), *concretisation of the response* (statement or decision in favour of one of the possible alternative solutions, claiming a certain time frame for future activities) and its *real activities*, bringing about any concrete changes in structure, reach, content, material or every-day-practices of civic education or more generally changes in educating citizens. For contexts of post-socialist transformation, differentiating between talk, decision and action should help to show the existing interdependencies between the political transformation of a country, including its political discourse on the one hand, and the own-dynamics of citizenship education and images of citizenship existing in the school education system on the other hand. By using the notions talk, decision and action and the approach of organised hypocrisy we can empirically grasp and analytically describe the complex connection of demanded, pressed, proclaimed, accepted, refused, reshaped or realised transformation in citizenship education, be it in terms of talk, decision or action.

For example, an educational authority may proclaim to change concepts, contents or practices of civic education under pressure from its environment without actually changing its actions in civic education (due to the financial and structural difficulties of implementation, scarcity of human resources or due to the sincere conviction that the traditional way of educating is a more promising one, and the proposed transformation would either be only superficial in any case, not changing given sustainable structures, or would threaten proven good ways of educating) and thus staying *de facto* unchanged (compliant talk, hidden inaction). The other way round, some schools may

introduce some conceptual change in civic education towards active and participatory citizenship, multiculturalism, tolerance etc., supported by local groups of civil society, without communicating it within the CE system or to the public because they do not fit into the official guidelines of educational policy (strategic silence, hidden action). Another common pattern are formal decisions in contrast to real practices; for instance, an educational authority may decide to change teaching culture in schools from an authoritative to a participatory style, which may be, for example, understood (or intentionally misunderstood) by local key actors as window-dressing or remaining without consequences, as neither appropriate education for educators nor means for monitoring classrooms practices are provided. Which types of organised hypocrisy and which combinations of talk, decision and action are relevant in our field is an empirical question.

pic. 3 Exemplary expectations, assigned to CE actors



(Figure 3: Exemplary expectations assigned to actors of citizenship education)

### A methodology for the approach of Organised Hypocrisy

How can we apply the “*talk and action approach*” to the organisational field of civic education? The differentiation between *talk*, *decision* and *action* seems to be well-known and self-evident as an every-day phenomenon which is normally perceived as the more or less moral problem of personal hypocrisy. But Brunsson’s approach does neither refer to personal behaviour nor to moral categories; it is applicable to organisations and their dilemmatic relationship to their environments (Brunsson 2002, 33). The talk and action-approach does not refer to differences which can be observed between different actors, e.g. a ministry of education and its school advisory boards, the first producing talk and the second performing action which may correspond or not. The question is not if a hierarchically organised educational system is able to bring all subordinated units to execute just the goals and programmes (talk) formulated and ordered by the superior institution or body. This would concern questions like the effectiveness of an administrative hierarchy or, seen from a top-down perspective, the controllability of an educational system or, viewed from bottom-up, the avoidability of

unwanted instructions. These are differences, tensions and possible contradictions between different actors, bodies or organisations.

Unlike these *external* differences between talk of one actor and deviating action of another one (or vice versa), the difference *talk / decision / action* used in our research framework marks *internal* differences within the realm of one and the same corporate actor. Talk produced and communicated by a certain actor is compared with the decisions and actions the same actor is performing. The *talk / decision / action* difference related to one corporate actor is not only the starting point, but the primary frame of analysis. We want to grasp the double dynamics of relevant changes in an actor's environment, e.g. fundamental political changes in the context of post-socialist transformation processes, and of related organisational reshaping by focusing research on the meso- and micro-level of organised actors. They normally dispose of a certain degree of autonomy within their organisational field although resting in principle dependent on their environment. In absence of a certain latitude of thinking and scope of action, the notion of *action* as opposed to *talk and/or decision* doesn't make much sense. If an actor has nothing to decide as there are no alternatives to be chosen, talk, action and decision cannot be in conflict. From the view of our approach, talk, decision and action fall into one and the same more or less organised area of responsibility. The differentiation of talk / action only holds if that condition is met.

In order to describe what happens to the images of citizens and ideas of citizenship education within the field of each actor of the system of the citizenship education, we have to describe the reaction of the actors to the inconsistent demands and expectations. Thus, we can explain the change of citizenship education by the change of expectations and demands *as perceived and acknowledged by the respective actor*. An actor-centred approach using the analytical scheme of talk / decision / action will provide us with a differentiated picture of the dynamics of citizenship education, embracing on the one hand all levels of citizenship education and on the other hand avoiding the assumption that citizenship education functions as a homogeneous single actor, acting consequently following the talk in order to bring it down from the level of national educational authorities to the classroom situation. Again, this presupposes to abandon the idea of linearity, top-down implementation, and consistency of each actor's actions.

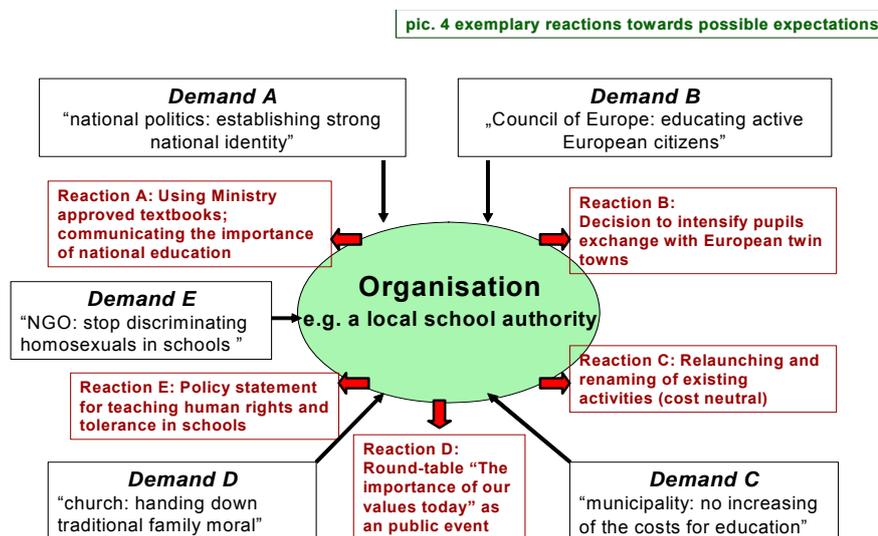
How can we empirically identify and observe talk, decision and action in organisations dealing with citizenship education?

- We understand *talk* to be any *spoken/written statements*, relevant for the given system (political talk, media debates, public reviews of the ministries, self-presentation of the educational programmes in parliament and in the media, speeches at political, administrative or educational meetings, mission and policy statements, making appeals in favour of civic education, preamble of curricula, school programmes, etc.), describing or explaining aims, tasks and forms of citizen upbringing, outlining some general consequences, however neither binding nor measurable, without indicated responsibilities, lacking a clear defined time frame/or with a long-term frame, etc.), rather stressing the necessity of civic education, its general perspective and goals, displaying political commitment to the issues or a general goodwill to solve the problems/reconstruct the civic education, etc.;
- We understand *decisions* to be a “special type of talk that indicates a will to act or the choice of action” (Brunsson 2003, 201). Decisions can, according to the situation, be closer to talk or to action (ibd.). Decisions serve as a coupling

mechanism between talk and action; they function as a mechanism for not yet acting, but are much more precise and specific than *talk* as indicated above (e.g. making public a decision to intensify students exchange within two years, to introduce courses in multicultural training; to employ 20% of teachers of different national backgrounds within next 5 years, etc.). Decisions can be differentiated from talk due to temporal limits (e.g. deadline for implementation), and the grade of concretisation (they rather describe the whole procedure, and are less general or rhetorical, than talk);

- We understand *actions* to be some outcomes, which can be grasped, which are implemented in a way that actors change their previous behaviour, whether these outcomes are announced or not, e.g. passing a new law, launching a new educational programme, the revision of the curricula with respect to concrete educational aims and competencies, contents of teaching and learning, perceivable activities of teachers and students within schools and in their environments, types of tasks for students, types of exams, forms of evaluation, the implementation of programmes at the school level, e.g. the introduction of a new subject or cross-curricular schedules, the definition of annualised hours to be taught, obligatory topics to be dealt with in classes, use of specific didactic instruments, methods and materials in the classroom.
- Of course, talk, decision and action are always context related. As mentioned above, the notion of action always refers to that which is within the radius of the respective actor. That is why the analysis has to take into account which types of action a specific actor is able to dispose of.

Just to give an example of a possible differentiation between different types of reactions, we present here an illustrative, maybe even exemplary structure of responses, corresponding to the demands already presented in figure 3:



(Figure 4:

Exemplary reactions of CE actors towards possible expectations)

## Methodological steps of the talk-and-action approach

The methodological procedure of an analysis using the talk-and-action approach, as we suggest it, has the following design:

### 1. *Description of the institutional frame of a system of citizenship education*

- Background information on the formal institutional structure of organised citizenship education in a country is provided by the country reports on CE presented by international bodies like the Council of Europe or the European Commission or research institutes (cf. e.g. Amadeo et al. 2002; CoE 2002; Eurydice 2005; IEA 1999). These reports can be used to draw an outline of the presumed structure of relevant actors and sometimes even of the prevailing interests.

The following actor-centred analysis will complete and amplify this outline by describing informal institutions of CE like systems of beliefs and loyalties, images of teachers' professionalism, implicit rules of communication and common classroom cultures and by revealing existing networks of CE actors.

### 2. *Identification of relevant actors*

- The relevant actors of the field of citizenship education to be analysed have to be detected. We suggest a macro-micro order, starting with the international actors of CE (on the European level), followed by the national-regional-local hierarchy of the educational system. Depending on the research design, the analysis can, however, start as well with a focal actor of the CE system or an actor not involved in the organisational structure of the CE like a NGOs or an organisation of vocational training, etc..
- On the level of each actor the research has to identify relevant environmental actors by using interviews who are supposed to influence the CE development (thus reconstructing the structure of influences, see e.g. figure 2);
- Which actors are to be classified as "relevant" and to be included into the analysis depends first from their formal position within the system of CE, and secondly from the perception of other actors within (and outside) the field. Naturally, an actor-centred approach as preferred here strongly emphasizes the second criteria of relevance. A Ministry of The Interior in charge of citizenship education is a relevant actor by its position, whereas a teachers' union may be regarded as relevant actor if it has CE on its agenda.

The research should result in a differentiated picture of the network of formally relevant and informally influential actors *as seen* by the actors themselves; this picture, of course, must include the actors' beliefs and conceptions of CE, their talk, decisions and actions and – which is the core element of our approach – the perception of all this by other actors guiding their reactions.

- Both steps of identifying relevant actors must be prepared (and controlled) by a review of literature and document analysis which are expected to provide information for a preliminary presentation of the likely structure of CE actors. For this preparatory step and for a final, empirically based description of the actor structure of the CE system analysed, techniques of network analysis should be used.

### 3. *Selection of topics suitable for the study of change and transformation of CE*

- Exemplary topics which are relevant for the interviews with CE actors, for the analysis of educational projects, programmes, teaching materials, and for the selection of the classroom observations (if needed) are to be defined. Of course, these exemplary topics of citizenship education have to be a relevant part of curricula, textbooks and/or teaching practice. The topics have to be controversial to a certain extent, and they should be most likely related to expected change or transformation in the country investigated and thus suitable for tracing relevant changes in the citizenship education<sup>9</sup>. Analysing different kinds of data on the topics chosen and making them subject of the interviews with focal and environmental actors will provide the possibility to discover (inconsistent) demands and central tensions of the CE and their perception by the selected CE actor. Selecting appropriate exemplary topics is inevitable in order to reasonably limit the scope of the data to be analysed, to make an in-depth-analysis possible and to keep the interviews comparable with respect to the content of CE.
- Past and current change and transformation of CE can be reconstructed from the perspective of the actors by motivating them in the interviews to look back on the development of CE and of the exemplary topics. An actor-centred analysis will reveal whether actor-specific representations of past and current change and transformation in CE and of dealing with relevant CE typical topics exist or not. It goes without saying that change and transformation can be best observed in longitudinal studies.

### 4. *Identification of demands addressed to, and perceived by, CE actors*

- From the analysis of interviews and of teaching materials etc., most relevant tensions the citizenship education actors are confronted with will be detected; these tensions will not necessarily reflect just the topics selected for the interviews. For example, in the context of coping with the past, one of the central tensions of the CE might be to critically teach about the national past in the multinational society. Hence the inconsistent demands might be to educate schoolchildren in critical view on their own history vs. to make them internalise its history as their own and then critically analyse it vs. to keep traditional nation-state based teaching curricula, and so on (more relevant for immigration states, Georgi 2005; Bergmeier 2000; Brumlik 1997). The same topic of coping with the past in some post communist state might recover the basic tension of teaching critical attitude to the past under the pressure of re-establishing national identity. Hence, the inconsistent demands might be teaching critical attitudes to the past vs. picking up the glorious moment of the past in order to teach patriotic love to one's own country and /or to re-establish national identity etc. (cf. Karpenko 2008 in this issue of the JSSE).
- Different demands from environmental actors have to be reconstructed. These demands might refer to the different exemplary topics (as illustrated in the figures 2 and 3 like national identity, or Human Rights, others might be of financial matter restricting the scope for action of schools).

<sup>9</sup> Thorsten Hippe (2008) suggests such topics for the study of CE in post-communist and post-authoritarian transformation countries: international relations, current institutions and norms, dictatorial / authoritarian political structures and / or human rights violations in the history of the country, differences in society (plurality). Depending on the specifics of the country sample: post-communist countries; immigration countries, etc. the relevant topics might differ.

### 5. Description of reactions and differentiation between types of reactions

- Then, the reactions of the respective actor to the demands perceived and assessed as deserving or even forcing an answer are to be identified. Here a thorough differentiation between talk, decision and action as different types of reactions is crucial for observing all reactions of this actor and their reference to the demands. Capable actors, in turn, have learned to find out if a demand is meant as talk, decision or action and are able to react differently to different types of demand. By interviewing the actors it can be learned how they institutionally frame the demands of others and their own reactions e.g. by referring to formal authority, own interest, tactical aspects, common routines or meaning of CE.
- Current explicit expectations and demands addressed to and perceived by CE actors can be taken as indicators of change. Even if they are “only” focussing on actual deviations from an established and broadly acknowledged frame of CE, they may signal some unintended or intended change from below, originating from inside or outside the system. The analysis of demands, perceptions and reactions allows painting a differentiated picture of change, transformation and development of CE in its complexity. By observing which expectations and demands are addressed to the actor, who the relevant environmental actors are, and how the actor reacts on these demands, structures of actors, influences, relevancies and finally mechanisms of change and transformation of CE can be revealed. This makes a continuous reflection on non-linearity and heterogeneity as well as on actors’ leeway of interpretation and scope for action compulsory.

In order to differentiate between different types of reaction, we suggest the following questions (following research results, the list may be amplified) for separating talk, decision and action from one another:

- Is a statement oriented towards any clearly defined activity within a certain time frame, or does it rather provide vague promises, stressing a more general necessity to act in a certain context (decision vs. talk);
- Are there any concrete actions besides the rhetoric? (action vs. decision / talk);
- Is the time frame, defined for a decision, clearly defined in the close future? Could the results be grasped and evaluated in the conceivable way, or does the utterance operate rather with blurred results and/or a wide-scale time frame for actually realizing the decision? (action vs. decision)

A demonstration how the methodology of talk-and-action may be used for research on citizenship education is given in the appendix to this paper (see below).

### 4. Conclusion

Summing up, we want to stress that the understanding of the widespread phenomenon of more or less deep differences between CE policies and CE practices as an “implementation gap” is flawed as it ignores characteristic features of pluralist societies as well as those of their education system. They mainly fail to acknowledge that CE systems are *political* organisations by nature and that CE itself is of necessarily political character, not reducible to only teaching *about* politics, policies and politics. They tend to ignore the main features of organised citizenship education which we see in the non-linearity, plurality and complexity of a multi-level and multi-actor system, the actors of which see themselves confronted with a big variety of demands and a high degree of

inconsistency, Therefore, that is our point, the phenomena interpreted as “missing implementation” and shortcomings have to be regarded actually as indicators of a system working in a complex and contested environment producing inconsistent expectations and inconsistent reactions. To be able to do this, an appropriate methodology has to be developed, an outline of which we have tried to present in this article.

In brief, research on a system of citizenship education should start with a social science based assumption that diversity and even confusion within a specific social system may best be understood as a mirror of the respective society and its key actors. We do not believe that our understanding of how organised citizenship education really works will be improved if we use a technical approach assuming that the methods of executing administrative decisions top-down have to be improved because up to now they have partly failed. Having this in mind, an appropriate research design, based on a multi-level actor-centred approach which acknowledges actor-specific perspectives, will help to reveal conceptions of citizenship, democracy, tolerance, participation etc., to understand the complex interplay of perceptions and talk, decision and action of different actors and the main causes of change (and stability) of CE under the conditions of societal change or transformation.

We believe our institutionalist approach labelled “talk-and-action approach” to be suitable for analysing the development of CE systems, the direction of this development and the agencies behind it. Only by observing who the relevant environmental actors are, how they are perceived by the CE actor in the focus of analysis, which demands and expectations they address to the focal actor, which of them he acknowledges, how he reacts to them and how, in turn, these reactions are perceived again by environmental actors, the structures of influences, relevancies, networks and finally the mechanisms of the development and transformation of citizenship education can be adequately reconstructed.

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## Appendix:

### A brief demonstration of an application of the talk-and-action approach

In order to show some rough exemplary application of the methodology, we exemplarily reconstruct the structure of different demands and reactions of a case-project (on the school level). The goal of this reconstruction is

- a) to demonstrate empirically the field of tension of demands (and relevant actors of the environment), applied to a citizenship education actor;
- b) to show how one important conception of CE – in this example the “democratic school development” is being altered in the context of different reactions to inconsistent demands.

Certainly, in order to analyse this case comprehensively, the type – an actor’s published official self-report – and amount of data – analysed here is not sufficient. What had to be done in addition were interviews with this focal actor and relevant actors from her environment for a better understanding of the key talk-and-action patterns of this case. Nevertheless, this example can serve to demonstrate the applicability and fruitful application of the talk-and-action methodology, even if data for a more in-depth analysis is not available.

We take one best practice self-report about the implementation of democratic learning in German schools as our data. The report is taken from the German National and Federal States cooperation programme “Live and Learn Democracy” (“Demokratie leben und lernen”, a programme for democratic school development), from the brochure with country reports (best practice); we have chosen the case of Baden-Württemberg<sup>10</sup>, just as an illustrative case for the application of the talk-and-action methodology.

The presentation of the selected project from Baden-Württemberg has the title: “Schoolchildren help other schoolchildren – Service-Learning<sup>11</sup> in the Eduard-Spranger-School in Reutlingen”

The description starts with the abstract:

“The Eduard-Spranger-School in Reutlingen is situated in a so called socially deprived area [“sozialer Brennpunkt”]. School management and teachers took this as a challenge for the democratic school development and initiated the Service-Learning project as cooperation of the schoolchildren from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade with the youth migration services: pupils of the Mittelstufe [grades 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>] support the pupils of the elementary school [1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade] to learn and assist their families by the communication and mutual understanding with the school. A project all the participants profit from (DLL 2004, 12).”

In this very beginning sequence, the actors and special demands and challenges this school – the focal actor of our case study – is confronted with, are listed: “sozialer Brennpunkt” [socially deprived area] is a specific German term<sup>12</sup>, describing the socio-economic situation of the community, negatively influencing the living and development

<sup>10</sup> Brochure “Demokratie leben und lernen“, 2004, pp. 12-14; <http://www.blk-demokratie.de/fileadmin/public/download/Broschuere.pdf> visited 10.06.08

<sup>11</sup> Service-Learning is used in English, as an established term (however without any references to the idea of this conception)

<sup>12</sup> German Union of the Cities (Deutscher Städtetag, 1979) defines the “sozialer Brennpunkt” as the living areas, in which “those factors are cumulated, which influence negatively the living circumstances of the inhabitants and especially the development chances of children and youth” (quat. Meyers Lexikonverlag (2007), *Bibliographisches Institut & F. A. Brockhaus AG*) [http://lexikon.meyers.de/index.php?title=Sozialer\\_Brennpunkt&oldid=125202](http://lexikon.meyers.de/index.php?title=Sozialer_Brennpunkt&oldid=125202)) visited 10.06.08

of the (young) people. In the common language use, these areas are characterised by high unemployment rates, low living standards and low income of the inhabitants, (partly) high proportion of migrants and (partly) higher crime rates.

*Demand 1: Mutual understanding and social cohesion*

The authors of the report, who are members of the case school, distance themselves from the description of the socially deprived area, by putting it as “so called” – through this distancing it becomes clear that the expectation to act as a school in a “socially deprived area” is not a genuine self-expectation of the school. What kind of acting is expected, and who addresses this expectation towards the school? The deep analysis of the text<sup>13</sup>, which cannot be reproduced here due to the lack of space, and the operating with the (city) authority language, putting the school into the context of the socially problematic living area, indicates that the communal authorities have their own interest in school activities. The school, as a natural agent, should bring together not only schoolchildren, but their parents – who might, due to their migration background, lack social networks and/or experience social disadvantages and being not integrated in any other societal contexts – can be used as agency for improving mutual understanding, social cohesion and finally thus the life quality in this district.

*Demand 2: Democratic school development*

One further challenge or demand we see in the formulation “challenge for the democratic school development”: As it is formulated here, and in the context of the brochure, it is clear that “democratic school development” is a kind of a subordinate goal a school has to comply with. Putting the context knowledge into our analysis we learn that the project “Live and Learn Democracy” is a common programme of the federal states of Germany and of national education authorities who put their expectations on the project participants – schools from different regions of Germany. Hence, we have a second expectation, put from outside on the school.

From demands 1 and 2 a tension seems to develop, at least the combination of both is seen as a challenge.

The democratic school development is placed within the frame of the “Live and Learn Democracy” programme which is set as a superordinate goal. The meaning of this term, however, is being transformed throughout the chain of the reactions towards the different demands.

*Demand 3: Service Learning*

The development of the Service-Learning project seems to reflect one further expectation, or to be part of the general expectations as expressed in the “Live and Learn Democracy” programme. The fact that the actor faces environmental expectations here becomes clearer through the usage of the English term as well as through putting it as a stable term without explication. The term seems to reproduce some didactic approach which is seen as favourable and innovative as such. We see here the expectation of the (third?) external actor to introduce into the school the method of learning through engagement. Following further investigations, the school appeared to be a member of the school network for service learning<sup>14</sup>, a network actor,

<sup>13</sup> The analysis is based on the reconstruction of the latent meaning structures (sequential analysis; Oevermann 1979, 1993; Wernet 2000),

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.servicelearning.de/>

not belonging to the hierarchical structure of the CE which obviously has its own expectations from the case school.

It is important to point here to the fact that this network of Service-Learning does not precisely define what Service-Learning is. Service-Learning appears to be not meant as an elaborated didactic conception, but rather as a basis for the association of loosely bound projects, oriented towards establishing roots for the societal engagement of the young people within school life and connecting it to curricula. Young people should learn through the Service-Learning that engagement in the community is worth doing<sup>15</sup>. Due to the fact that the school has the possibility to present the project in two networks (Service-Learning Network and “Live and Learn Democracy” Network), we can see that this project is used for self-presentation and networking. We might speculate at this point that the participation in such projects is an expectation, addressed to the school by the (local) school authorities, for it improves the proficiency of this school’s pupils. The other possibility would be that this school might have imposed this expectation on itself in order to state its proficiency. This might be a reaction to the implicit demand of the (local) school authorities or the community which wishes to have an “innovative” school in this problematic district. Finally, the Eduard-Spranger-School school might have its own expectation of getting special proficiency in order to persuade the students and their teachers of the schools’ commitment and response to the specific problems of the students and their families. Due to lack of further material we only choose exemplarily one of the possible demands.

#### *Demand 4: Improvement of pupils’ performance*

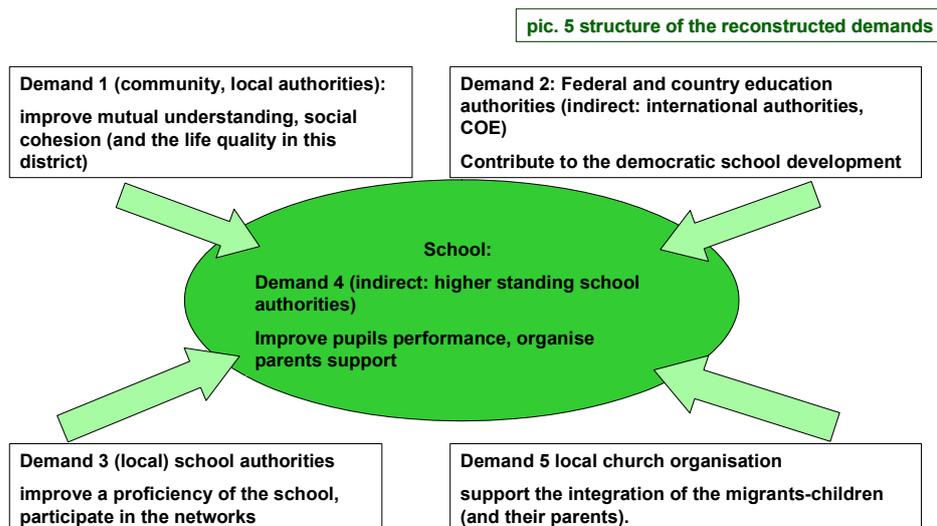
The project is a service project and the ones who are to be supported by it are pupils of the primary school (with migration background) and their families. Services take place not only in form of learning to support these pupils, but in providing opportunities of communication and understanding with their families. Here we are confronted with the own demand and expectation of the school: to improve the performance of the pupils with migration background (which, in turn, might be a reaction of some demands from higher standing school authorities, though), and provide a better communication with the parents who may experience language and communication problems. The school has two expectations towards itself which fit perfectly to the education task: improving the pupils’ performance and providing support and unproblematic communication with the parents of the schoolchildren.

#### *Demand 5: Helping migrants to integrate*

And here we see one more demand, coming from local church services for young migrants: support for the integration of the migrant-children and their parents. At least we can understand the cooperation with these services as an implicit demand.

Hence, this seemingly simple case comprises a rather complex structure of expectations demands – and we have confined our analysis to those which are obvious or explicitly mentioned; there might be more which are implicitly relevant for this school. Again, we give a graphic illustration in figure 5.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.servicelearning.de/index.php?id=15>



(Figure 5: **Structure of the reconstructed demands** )

How does the school react on these demands, and how does the idea of democratic school development (the primarily goal of the project) change in the chain of the reactions?

The description of the project starts with the sequence:

“For Peter Kick, the principal of the Eduard-Spranger-School in Reutlingen, the democratic school development [must be] oriented towards the needs and requirements of the schoolchildren. Through the amount of 45 to 55% of the schoolchildren with migrations background, and many schoolchildren living in temporary government housing [asylum seekers hostels] and other compatible “problem zones” of our society, the school ranks to the so called schools in socially deprived areas. Correspondingly big is the amount of the language and learning problems already experienced by those entering the school.. Someone has reading problems, the other problems with arithmetic (DLL 2004, 12).”

We see that the theoretical conception of the democratic school development is re-interpreted by the principal in order to combine the demands of the school members, as the principal perceives them, and the general goal of the democratic school development. At the same time the demands of the local community are addressed through the dramatisation of the home situation of the schoolchildren. We see that the classical scheme of the socialisation with two relevant actors – home / school – does not apply to these children and the task of the school is getting clearer. The school is set as a fix point in the life of schoolchildren who do not have stability in their homes (asylum seekers’ hostels). Putting these problems into the context of “our society” is a reaction to the demand 1; it instrumentalises school not only as an agent of socialisation and learning, but as an agent of integration and providing stability, replacing to a certain extent home structures.

Now, this general task of society and politics has to be re-interpreted in termini suitable for school activities. Learning problems, resulting from the life circumstances, are addressed here as a challenge a school has to cope with. The school cannot count on the support of the parents for its teaching tasks: the school beginners are on a lower level as expected as normal by the school.

These problems are, as we learn from the further description of the project, the starting point of the project development. The project has the following design:

“In the frame of the social internship, suggested by the students of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and integrated into the curriculum, in the year 2003/2004 ten students of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade took care of the pupils of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade as school mentors. At least one time per week they visit the family of their “sponsored child” [godson], help him to learn reading, writing and arithmetics, support the parents, who only speak little German, during the parent-teacher conference, by the translation of the official papers, and explain to them unknown teaching and learning methods, [used] in school.

Bayram Ceran, who is himself from Turkey, is aware of the problems, which are not only caused by the language. A lot of families “are culturally not familiar with the playful school culture, which is by meantime common for the primarily schools, so they often do not understand the teaching methods”, explains the social worker. Reading together at home or writing dictations does not take place. The home tasks are hardly ever controlled by the parents. In this very area apply the competences of the school mentors. Eight of the ten students also have bicultural background; they speak German and Turkish, German and Italian or German and Russian fluently. And they are aware of the language- and cultural understanding difficulties. “I can understand these problems very well, [in such situation] one has to help”, describes one of the mentors his motivation to participate in the project. (DLL 2004, 13).”

The good will of the participants and the institutionalisation of the project in the school curricula as an internship are very important here. But at the same time, the project, as described here, exceeds the competences both of the school and of the mentors. Their task is not only to support the primarily school pupils in their school tasks, and even not only to ease the communication between (non-German speaking) parents and teachers. They are also translators for official documents and thus they take over a function of integration into the society. They take over the cultural function of integrating the parents into different learning cultures; they play a role of cultural mediators. And they cover a field which is relevant not only for the school career of migrant children.

It might appear that the school and its schoolchildren are established in taking over an important societal function and take up tasks which could and should be also – and primarily – taken by local authorities.

Interesting is that (as described further in the project) school mentors get multicultural trainings, and that the social workers first establish trust relations with the families. So, here we have a service project where the clients do not recognise the educational problem and those providing the societally desired service have to be first taught how to do it (so we cannot say, they are simply instrumentalising the competences they possess already through their bi-cultural background).

What does the project reach? Describing the results, it says:

“The successes of the work done can be already seen. One of the supervised pupils was able to reduce considerably his reading problems, and does not have to take up extensive and costly logopaedic supervision. The mother of the other child says: “Now I

like to visit the school". The goal of the project, to build the bridges of understanding and communication is thus reached, as well as an important part of the democratic school development: "the foreign families get more equal rights and voice", explains Michaela Menicetti [social worker] her understanding of democracy. Thanks to the mediation work of the school mentors, they now actively participate in the school life. But the project provides also for the mentors an increase of their democratic competences: they work up their bicultural identity and introduce it productively into the community [life]. That is what Peter Kick [principal] calls "societal competences" of his students, and what he puts as a goal of his democratic school development. (DLL 2004, 14)"

From this sequence we learn at least one more possible demand:

*Demand 6: Cost cutting*

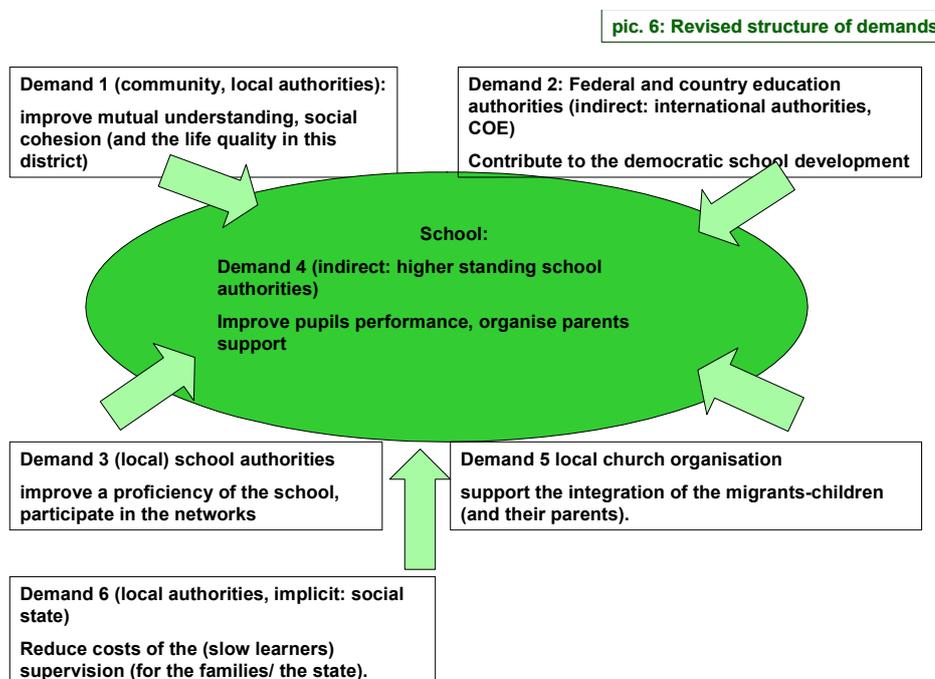
The costs of the slow learners' support and supervision have to be reduced, for the families themselves and for the state. This by-product can partly be an implicit demand, addressed by the social system and its corporate actors to the school.

We also have to revise a bit the 4<sup>th</sup> demand, as addressed by the school to itself:

*Demand 4 (revised):*

Improve the pupils' performance, provide support and unproblematic communication with the parents of the schoolchildren, provide equal rights and voice to the migrant families, make them familiar with the school culture, increase confidence between teachers and parents.

Now a graphical reconstruction of demands in this case would look the following way:



(Figure 6: **Revised structure of the demands** )

Finally, from the previous sequence, we learn what is understood as a success of the project. On the first place it is the integration of the migrant families into the school life, their confidence in the school methods and in the school as such. Students' learning the community services is defined as an explicit goal of the democratic education<sup>16</sup>.

Let us shortly summarise the reactions toward the different demands, and then reconstruct the change of the "democratic school development" concept throughout the reactions of the school towards different demands.

#### *Reactions to demand 1*

*Talk* (rhetoric): By de facto working on a specific school problem (parents do not trust teachers), the project states to contribute to "building bridges of understanding". Integration and reducing the problematic of "sozialer Brennpunkt" (socially deprived area) is not in the competency of the school. Rhetorically the project however takes up this task.

*Actions*: The only action done definitively in this direction is the mentors' support to the parents in the translation of official documents. However, this does not directly increase integration; it rather solves some bureaucratic problems.

*The meaning of the term "democratic school development" in this context*: "Societal competences" of the students are seen as a part of the democratic school development. These competences mean the motivation for the community services as well as instrumentalisation of multiculturalism. The goal of the project is addressed as "building bridges for communication and understanding". The collective social problematic, as a part of the "sozialer Brennpunkt" terminology, is redefined and reduced here to individual cultural and language problems; the task of democratic school development is to improve the mutual understanding (in the community) on the level of individual cultural tolerance and language competences.

#### *Reactions to demand 2*

*Talk*: Taking up the rhetoric of the democratic school development, this school declares the participation in the programme and common work the main superordinate goal. However, the activities within the project are oriented towards solutions to the concrete goals of the school, finally directed towards the improvement of the students' performance and establishing an atmosphere of trust with the parents entailing their acceptance of the teaching and learning methods used in the school.

*Decision and Action*: The school decides that the schoolchildren should learn practical skills and integrate them into the classroom practice. Two actions have been undertaken:

*Actions*: The school takes part with an own project in the frame programme of "Live and Learn Democracy" to be developed, realised and evaluated within a defined period of time. At the same time the school makes a service-learning project that allows schoolchildren (school mediators) to learn practical skills and to bring them back to the everyday school practice. The school administration decided to combine both actions in one and the same project. The original activity, very familiar to the core goals of schools not only in socially deprived environments, was to improve the "societal"

<sup>16</sup> Having analysed this example we did not go into the debate, whether service learning rather shifts a focus away from the roots of the societal problems, and thus avoids addressing politics and polity (Westheimer 2004, 243)

competences of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. De facto, their services are instrumentalised to solve genuine school problems (obviously not necessarily connected to the idea of democratisation). Both goals and projects, service-learning as directly benefiting the school and showing the school's commitment to democratic development, are coupled – and in this case even equated – by these actions.

*The meaning of the “democratic school development” in this context:* It is being explicitly said that this concept is a matter of interpretation (by the school principal, by the social worker). It is explicated as providing students with societal competences (understood as self-perception within the community and community services), equal participation and voice to the migrant families in the schools, improvement of the language and learn performance of the schoolchildren with migration background, parental support of the school activities, and parent trust to the teachers (which apparently cannot be the primary goal of the whole programme “Live and Learn Democracy” all over Germany).

#### *Reactions to demand 3*

*Talk:* The school claims the participation in the innovative projects and networks and the development of special projects.

*Action:* One project, emerging out of the necessity to improve the performance of the school beginners with migration background is labelled as a project within the frame of “Live and Learn Democracy” and attached to the conception of Service-learning. The same project is used for entering two networks: the project network of “Live and Learn Democracy” and the network of schools working with the Service-Learning conception.

*The meaning of the “democratic school development” in this context:* The term is re-interpreted in order to instrumentalise the project, reacting to the school's essential needs, for the improvement of the school proficiency.

#### *Reactions to demand 4*

*Talk:* Rhetorically the genuine task of improving the performance is hardly addressed; the necessity of parents' support is interpreted not as a school need but merely as a service, suggested for the parents so that they become more integrated into the society.

*Actions:* All activities within the project are (also) oriented towards the improvement of the pupils' performance and securing parents' understanding and support of the school activities and methods.

*The meaning of the “democratic school development” in this context:* Community service, integration into the community, usage of the pupil mediators for increasing the degree of integration, of confidence between parents and teachers and for fostering, a positive attitude of parents towards the school.

#### *Reactions to demand 5*

*Talk:* On the rhetorical level, the necessity of providing migrant families with voice in school (parent-teacher conferences) is claimed.

*Action:* The integration is only a by-product of the project. In the process of assimilation of the migrant families to the German school culture, some kind of cultural integration might take place.

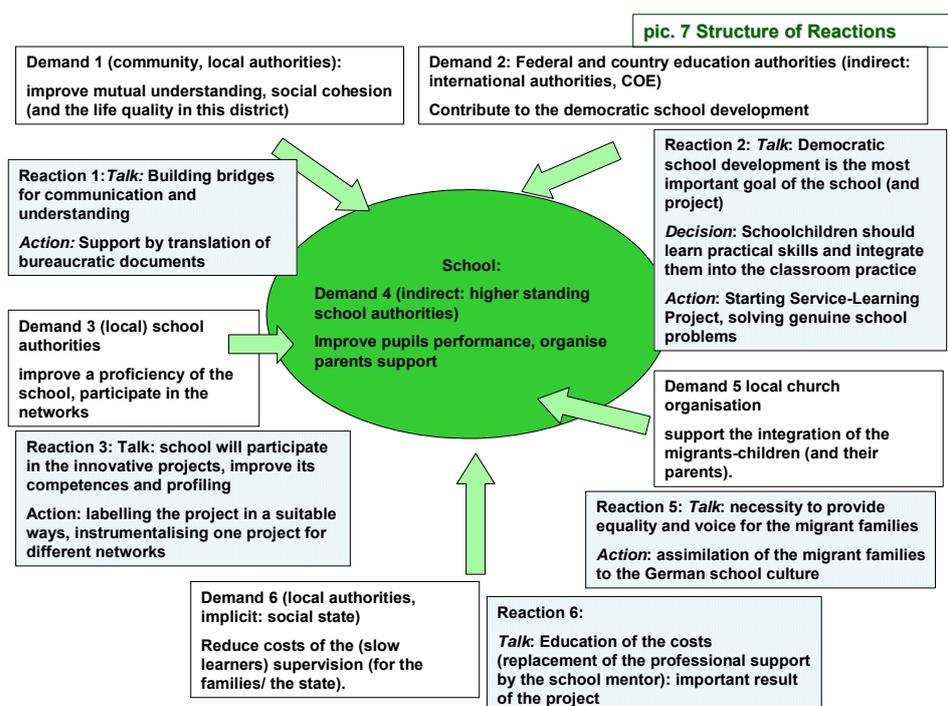
*The meaning of the “democratic school development” in this context:* The basis for the participation in the project is the instinctive wish to help and support (here: migrant

families) as “natural” to schoolchildren who themselves have a migration background. So, partly the school democratisation is understood as mutual help, community services, and self-instrumentalisation for help (and self-perception in the categories of community usefulness). Furthermore, democratisation of school is understood as increasing participation and voice of the migrant families, as increasing their understanding and perception of the methods used in schools (we skip here the analysis of the fact that no kind of school culture, as familiar in the migrant families, seems to be worth of implementation in schools). Democratic school development seems to be a task of assimilating the migrant families within German school culture.

### Reactions to demand 6

*Talk:* This very implicit goal is explicated in the talk of the project success.

*The meaning of the “democratic school development” in this context:* The role of the school, as supporter of the state and a willing cost cutter, is integrated into the concept of democratic school development.



(Figure 7: **Structure of possible reactions** )

*Preliminary conclusion: The development of the “democratic school development” conception within the structure of inconsistent demands and reactions*

We have presented the (only document-based!) analysis of this rather simple case study in order to illustrate what we mean by non-linearity, complexity, diversity of demands and types of reaction, networks of actors and re-actors, leeway and scope for action and tangles of meaning. We have tried to show that using the talk-and-action

approach methodologically helps to better understand how systems of citizenship education work and how change occurs and is used by diverse actors for their respective interests.

The conception of the democratic school development, which was first referred to as a settled managerial conception, provided by the higher authorities, is being re-interpreted throughout the actions performed in the course of this particular project. We could learn about the meaning of this conception, as used by international and national programmes on the democratic school development (Hoskins 2006, 2; Eurydice 2005, 10; DDL 2004, 7 ff). One important meaning would be the learning of tolerance and harmonious co-existence within the school and society (Zimenkova 2008).

*The interplay of re-interpretation of the democratic school development concept works as following:* Though addressing “bridges for communication and understanding”, the school’s conception factually refers to cultural and language competences only, thus restricting the conception of democratisation to certain practices of tolerant co-existing. Concerning the students, not their competences to direct participation and co-decision are promoted, but their “societal competences”, understood as motivation for community services, capacity of (self-) instrumentalisation for the community as well as (positive) instrumentalisation of multiculturalism. Participation of the migrant families in the school life is explicitly addressed; though, the prerequisite of their participation is a kind of assimilation to the culture of German school practices and the positive attitude of the migrant’s parents to the school and school culture. The conception of the democratic school development is being interpreted in a way which allows to see the improvement of language and learning performances of the schoolchildren with migration background (good performance of all students is an essential need of each school, which is not necessarily linked to the level of the schools’ democratisation) as a part of the democratic school development. Within the democratic school development concept, a school seeks to position itself as a supporter of the state and reducer of (community) costs.

We see, then, that the meaning of the termini, the teaching conceptions as such (this surely applies also to the images of citizens and citizenship, provided within the CE system) alter due to the demands, addressed to each CE actor from its environment (and even from himself).