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Civic Education and Democratic Socialisation: From Passive Subject to Active Citizen in Post-Communist States and Beyond

Several studies suggest that some post-communist states or regions such as, for example, the former German Democratic Republic engage in a narrower form of civic education in schools which focuses on the transmission of facts. They also indicate that such civic education produces citizens more likely to accept the status quo than to criticially analyse and attempt to transform it. This paper posits, however, that this is also the case in the Republic of Ireland, a state with an apparently very different historical background. Attitudinal data from the European/World Values Survey and the European Social Survey is used to investigate this possibility by comparing eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland on key items relating to attitudes towards politics and society. The results provide tentative support for this notion indicating that attitudes in both eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland tend towards the compliance end of the compliance-transformation spectrum underlining the importance of broader forms of civic education for democratic socialisation both in post-communist states and more generally.

Einige Forschungsergebnisse zeigen, dass Staaten, die den Kommunismus durchlaufen haben, eine begrenztere Form von Politikunterricht an Schulen durchführen und auf diese Weise Bürger heranziehen, die dazu tendieren, den Status Quo zu akzeptieren anstatt politische Entscheidungen kritisch zu hinterfragen und die Politik aktiv mitzugestalten. Die Möglichkeit, jedoch, dass dies auch in einem Staat mit einem ganz anderen geschichtlichen Hintergrund, wie zum Beispiel die Republik Irland, der Fall sein könnte, wird zur Diskussion gestellt. Mit Hilfe von Daten zu politischen Einstellungen aus der European/World Values Survey und der European Social Survey soll diese Frage untersucht werden. Die Ergebnisse unterstützen zum Teil diese Idee und zeigen, dass Einstellungen in sowohl der früheren Deutschen Demokratischen Republik als auch in der Republik Irland eher eine Tendenz zu Anpassung aufweisen, was die Wichtigkeit der politischen Bildung für demokratische Sozialization nicht nur in Staaten, die den Kommunismus durchlaufen haben sondern im Allgemeinen betont.

1 Introduction: Broad and narrow forms of civic education

Many researchers are of the view that a continuum exists with regard to the nature of civic education with a broad form located at one end of the continuum and a narrow form at the other (de Weerd, Gemmecke, Rigter, van Rij 2005; Kennelly, Llewellyn 2011; Kerr, Sturman, Schulz, Burge 2010; Neubauer 2012, 89; Wolmuth 2010). A narrow understanding of civic education limits it to the presentation of factual material concerning formal, legal and judicial structures, terms and organisations. Such an approach focuses on the transmission of information on and knowledge of an existing political system, traditions and culture. A broad form of civic education, on the other hand, focuses on equipping the learner with the requisite knowledge and skills needed to reflect on their impact on society as well as on motivating them to critically evaluate existing social and political structures with a view to their transformation

In terms of citizenship, a narrower form of civic education is associated with the concept of "good citizenship" which suggests passivity, acceptance of the status quo and compliance on the part of the individual. In contrast, a broader form is linked to the concept of "active citizenship" which focuses on the notion of citizens' responsibility and the potential for societal transformation (Kennelly & Llewellyn 2011). In pedagogical terms, a narrower form of civic education tends to be content led, teacher-centred and in relative terms is considered to be easier to achieve and to assess in formal classroom settings (Kerr et al. 2010). A broader form, in contrast, is process led, learner-centred and is considered more difficult to assess and achieve in practice.

The cristalization and refinement of these different conceptualisations of civic education have been described as a consequence of the process of transition from communism to democracy, and therefore as an element of the era of post-transition (see for example, Chioncel & Jansen 2004; Neubauer 2012, 90) in which, for example, eastern Germany found itself after reunification with western Germany in 1990. For example, some studies suggest that states post transition from communism to democracy are more likely to display features compatible with a narrower form of civic education than are established democracies and are thus more likely to produce more passive citizens. For example, the final report of RE-ETGACE, a large scale study funded by the European Commission in 2003 and designed to study citizenship and governance education in Europe, particularly in Hungary and Romania, argues that "a number of states which have undergone or are still undergoing the process

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of (post-) transition tend to overemphasise the importance of the 'democratic hardware' or legal structures and institutions, while neglecting the importance of the 'democratic software' defined as socio political relations and mechanisms, which is crucial for informed and collective decision making in contemporary states and societies" (Neubauer 2012, 90).

This paper argues, on the other hand, that a tendency to associate narrower forms of civic education with post-communist societies may represent an oversimplification of the current situation. It argues instead that narrower forms of civic education may also be a feature of many so-called "established" democracies, such as, for example, the Republic of Ireland. Ireland was chosen as a point of comparison for this paper in this case, as, as Section 2 indicates, it would not appear to share many similarities with post-communist states and regions in terms of their recent history and its likely impact on predominant forms of civic education in schools and its likely outcomes in terms of democratic socialisation.

In order to provide a context within which to explore this issue further, the focus of the following section is on the nature of civic education in both Eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland against the backdrop of significant political events which have shaped their respective political landscapes. The third section then uses a combination of attitudinal data and pertinent literature to determine whether the argument that a narrower form of civic education resulting in the education of "good" citizens in terms of passivity, compliance and acceptance of the status quo is prevalent in comparable measure in both eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland.

2 Civic education in (East-) Germany and the Republic of Ireland in historical context

After the German Revolution of 1918–1919 and its surrender in World War I, the Weimar Republic was established in 1918. With the country in the throes of economic depression and experiencing a loss of confidence in parliamentary democracy, the Nazi party overthrew the democratic system of the Weimar Republic of Germany in 1933 paving the way for the second World War. Following Germany's defeat in this war, territory not ceded to Poland or the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was divided into four Allied Zones of Occupation according to the London Protocol of September 1944 which was ratified and extended at the Yalta conference of February 1945 (Fritsch-Bournazel 1992, 1, 73-75).

The American, French and British zones were integrated in May 1949 with the inception of the Federal Republic of Germany, known informally as West Germany[1], in which democracy was re-established for the first time since the Weimar Republic. In order to provide support for this fledgling democracy, a subject known as civic education or Politische Bildung was established in second level schools in the 11 different states or Länder.

The first chancellor of West Germany, Konrad Adenauer, remained in office until 1963. He secured full alignment with the West as well as membership of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. In addition, Adenauer initiated and supported foundation agreements with France that evolved into the present day European Union and created a foundation for the Franco-German alliance in Europe today.

During this time, the nature of civic education in West German schools was dogged by controversy which further intensified throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The controversy centred primarily around the philosophy that should ideally underpin this subject with at least two state elections focussed on whether the primary objective of civic education should be the transmission of traditions and beliefs to the younger generations or whether it should enable them to "change this world by political means" (Reinhardt 2008, 69), viewpoints which can be perceived as representing the polar extremes of the compliance versus transformation comtinuum referred to at the beginning of this paper. The former approach, which can be viewed as aligned with the narrower conceptualisation of civic education, was considered to be the more conservative one with some arguing that it tended towards indoctrination into a particular world view and therefore could not be considered true "education for democracy" (Gagel 1994, 178-220, cit., Reinhardt 2008, 69). The latter approach is more closely aligned with a broader view of civic education.

As a result of the ongoing controversy, in 1976, the Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, the agency responsible for civic education in the state of Baden-Württemberg, set up a working group of key thinkers in the area of civic education and tasked them with the identification of pinciples which in their view should underpin civic education in West German schools. The group agreed several fundamental principles which together became known as the Beutelsbacher Konsens (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung 2011; Sutor 2002). Three of the key principles are:

1. Students may not be forced in the direction of a particular opinion or point of view (Überwältigungsverbot) and thus prevented from forming their own opinions. In the opinion of the expert group, this is the point at which civic education becomes indoctrination or, in their words 'Hier genau verläuft nämlich die Grenze zwischen Politischer Bildung und Indoktrination'.
2. Issues which are controversial in society must be treated as such in the classroom.
3. Students should be given the necessary skills to enable them to analyse a political issue both from a macro perspective and in terms of its direct impact on them personally. [own translation]

While respecting the autonomy of the individual states, or Länder, with regard to questions of educational policy, civic education in a reunited Germany, its official policy documents, guidelines

and curricula continue, in theory at least, to be based today on these principles which tend towards the broader end of the civic education continuum.

In parallel, in the Soviet Zone, or East Germany, a communist German state was established on the 7th of October 1949. It declared itself the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and an inseparable component of the socialist community of states (Fritsch-Bournazel 1992, 9), It also became a member of the Warsaw Pact and has been described as one of several satellite states of the then USSR (for example, Erdmann 2005, 314).

The combination of the GDR's perceived illegitimacy internationally, economic problems, a relatively poorer standard of living and restrictions on travel and freedom of expression enforced by institutions such as the State Security Service, the Staatssicherheitsdienst or Stasi, resulted in 2.7 million East Germans fleeing to West Germany in the 1950s (Funder 2011). Many of those who left the GDR at this time were well-educated, younger people. Frontier barriers were constructed to prevent further emigration. The most prominent of these was the Berlin Wall which was constructed in 1961. Those who attempted to flee across the internal German border after the construction of the Wall risked their lives as East German Border Guards were authorised to use lethal force against escapees, resulting in many deaths.

The principle task assigned to the education system in the GDR was the creation of "socialist personalities" or "..fully fledged personalities, knowledgeable on political, specialist and general scientific matters with a firm class viewpoint and a Marxist-Leninist philosophy of life.." (Schneider 1978, 65). An additional objective was the generation of support for the ruling socialist party, the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland* [Socialist Unity Party of Germany] (SED).

Review of the teaching plans for civic education classes, known as *Staatsbürgerkundeunterricht*, in secondary schools in the GDR (for example *Lehrplan Staatsbürgerkunde* [Teaching Plan Civic education] 1964, *Lehrplan Staatsbürgerkunde* [Teaching Plan Civic education]1988) reveals that the central aim of civic education in the GDR corresponded to that of the education system as a whole, i.e. the development and reinforcement of socialist convictions and the teaching of socialist behaviour. This subject dealt directly with basic questions of socialist ideology, politics and morality and as such was a vital instrument in the hands of the SED. Its most important sub-goals included developing a Marxist philosophy of life among students, creating a belief in their minds of the veracity of communist theories and strengthening their loyalty to the GDR. Resistance to foreign, particularly western, influences was also to be strengthened. Additional objectives included monitoring and evaluating the political beliefs of students and indirect recruitment for the SED. Thus civic education as a whole appears to have been based on conformity, compliance and an unquestioning commitment to the cause of communism (Klapper 1992, 244).

In the late 1980s, inspired by Mikhail Gorbachov's notions of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, a process of democratisation began in the communist states of central and eastern Europe. One of its most dramatic consequences was the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the unification of East and West Germany on the 3rd of October, 1990, as a single, democratic state (see Kirkwood 1991, 7).

Following the collapse of the socialist regime in the GDR and the reunification of East and West Germany on the 3rd of October 1990, civic education in its then form was abolished in eastern Germany and reintroduced as a subject in eastern German schools in March 1990 under several new titles. The-se included *Gesellschaftskunde* (Saxony), *Politische Bildung* (Brandenburg) and *Sozialkunde* (Mecklenburg West Pomerania, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia). Guidelines were published for this subject by the newly created federal states (*Vom Lehrplan zum Rahmenplan* 1992: 13, *Vorläufige Rahmenrichtlinien Sozialkunde Mecklenburg Vorpommern* 1991, 22). These indicated that, in line with the principles of the *Beutelsbacher Konsens* discussed above, there was to be a movement away from the passive acceptance of given truths. Students were instead to be facilitated in becoming critical, mature citizens capable of independent judgement. In other words, a broader form of civic education was called for.

The guidelines also specified additional aims of civic education in schools, i.e. that students are to be made capable of self-realisation and of bearing responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. They are also to be helped to understand the purpose of social and political structures and to use them correctly, as well as to develop a sense of responsibility which would enable them to recognise their rights, responsibilities and obligations in their democratic society.

The objectives or principles underlying civic education were at this point and indeed continue to be, in theory at least, similar across the whole of the reunited Federal Republic of Germany. They are also similar to those currently in force in the Republic of Ireland, the evolution of which are traced in the remainder of this section.

In 1800, a key date in Irish history, the British and Irish governments passed the Acts of Union establishing *The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*, effectively placing Ireland under the rule of the British government until the establishment of the Irish Free State over a century later in 1922. The Irish Free State consisted of 26 of the 32 counties on the island of Ireland and existed against the backdrop of the growth of dictatorships in mainland Europe, for example, in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Germany.

In contrast with these states, Ireland remained democratic. However, many elements of Irish society viewed the Free State as a repressive state imposed by Britain at least until the elections and subsequent change of government in 1932 which some consider signalled its more generalised acceptance. (McDonagh 2003; O'Halloran 1984; O'Halpin 1999).

In 1937 a new Constitution re-established the state as Ireland and it remained neutral throughout World War II and was formally declared a republic in 1949.

In the 1960s, Ireland underwent a major economic change with a series of economic plans produced and free second-level education introduced. The nature of of civic education in these second-level schools had been a challenging issue ever since the foundation of the state. This is partly owing to the fact that the vast majority of schools were and continue to be run by the Catholic Church which did not support the development of a school subject devoted to civic education. Instead, it was felt that moral and personal development were best incorporated into the teaching of religion which was and is taught as a separate school subject in the majority of schools.

In 1966, however, a mandatory, but unexamined, secondary school subject was introduced which was taught independently of religion and which was known as Civics. The primary aims of Civics were described as being 'to inculcate values such as civic responsibility, moral virtue, patriotism, and law abidingness' (Gleeson & Munnelly 2004, 3). In addition, in a document entitled The Rules and Programme for Teachers, the Department of Education in 1967 described Civics as 'teaching the young citizen to recognise and obey lawful authority, to help preserve law, order and discipline, to respect private and public right to property and to be ready to defend the national territory should the need arise' (Gleeson & Munnelly 2003, 3). These guidelines with their emphasis on "law-abidingness" would appear to have directed the subject towards the narrower end of the compliance-transformation continuum referred to in the Introduction to this paper.

In 1973 Ireland sought and gained admission to the European Union. However, global economic problems and conflict within the six northern counties on the island which had remained under British rule, resulted in economic stagnation throughout the 1970s. By the end of this decade, the study of Civics was in decline in Ireland for several reasons. These included a lack of trained teachers and appropriate teaching materials and a perception that it was not as important as other subjects as it was allocated a relatively small amount of class contact time, one 40 minute session per week, and was not formally assessed as part of the examination process (Gleeson & Munnelly, 2004, 4).

A further attempt were made in 1984 to reintroduce civic education in the form of 'Social and Political Studies' which, however, met with resistance this time at a political level as the subject was perceived as trespassing on areas traditionally handled by religion and the family and as having a particular agenda, possibly being driven by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, CND (Gleeson & Munnelly 2004, 4).

Internal economic reforms in the late 1980s combined with inward investment from the European Union resulted in Ireland experiencing one of the world's highest economic growth rates in the late 1990s, a phenomenon which became known as the Celtic Tiger. Real estate prices rose by a factor of between four and ten between 1993 and 2006, in part fuelling the boom. Irish society adopted relatively liberal social policies during this period with the legalisation of divorce, the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the permission of abortion in particular cases. In addition, a series of tribunals investigated alleged malpractices by politicians, the Catholic clergy, judges, hospitals and the police (Gardaí).

It was during this period, in 1993, that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment introduced a pilot programme on Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) to Junior Certificate, sat at approximately age 16 in Ireland. CSPE was then introduced as a mandatory subject in the junior cycle in 1997. Its first and primary stated aim as stated in the official syllabus (CSPE 2012, 2) is as follows:

1.1 Civic, Social and Political Education aims to prepare students for active participatory citizenship. This is achieved through comprehensive explora-tion of the civic, social and political dimensions of their lives at a time when pupils are developing from dependent children into independent young adults. It should produce knowledgeable pupils who can explore, analyse and evaluate, who are skilled and practised in moral and critical apprai-sal, and capable of making decisions and judgements through a reflective citizenship, based on human rights and social responsibilities. Such pupils should be better prepared for living in a world where traditional structures and values are being challenged, and where pupils are being confronted with conflicting interests, imperma-nent structures and constant questioning.

Civic education is not currently taught as an independent subject to senior cycle in Ireland something which is currently at the development phase, however, as part of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's review of senior cycle post primary education in Ireland.

3 Attititudes towards socio-political transformation, and approaches to the teaching of civic education in eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland:

In the introduction to this paper, it was posited that a narrower form of civic education resulting in a more passive, compliant and accepting citizen in political terms which is sometimes associated with post-communist states such as eastern Germany may also find resonance in states with very different backgrounds such as the Republic of Ireland. In this section, attitudinal data from the European/World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Social Survey (ESS) is used in conjunction with relevant reports on teaching practice in civic education to further explore this possibility.

In terms of sourcing relevant attitudinal data, a range of international datasets were considered for this purpose. They include the Civic Education Study of The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, the European/World Values Survey WVS [www.worldvaluessurvey.org] the European Social Survey ESS (http://www.european socialsurvey.org/), the Eurobarometer studies (http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm) and the PISA studies (http://www.oecd.org/pisa). It was decided to focus on the WVS and the ESS for four particular reasons:

Of particular significance was the fact that the two surveys selected contain items directly relevant to the issues at the heart of this paper. As discussed in the introduction, in terms of citizenship, a narrow form of civic education is associated with the concept of "good citizenship" suggesting passivity, acceptance of the status quo and compliance. In contrast, a broader form is linked to the concept of "active citizenship" focusing on the notion of citizens' individual responsibility and the potential for societal transformation. These attitudinal dispositions were assessed on the basis of the following two items from the World Values Survey:

WVS (1999): If you had to choose, which one of the following would you say is the most important: Maintaining order in the nation or giving people more say?

WVS (1999) Would greater respect for authority be a good thing, a bad thing or don't you mind?

And the following single item from the European Social Survey:

ESS (2002): The importance of doing what you are told and following rules.

Viewed as a whole, these items can be viewed as addressing the opposing notions underlying the potential outcomes of the broader and narrower forms of civic education.

In addition, both of these surveys allow the data from Germany to be analysed separately for eastern and western Germany[2]. They also allow the findings to be broken down by age with the focus here on the category containing those aged between 15 and 29. In 1999, the majority of those within this age category, i.e. those between the ages of 16 and 23, in eastern Germany would have experienced at least some of the post-1990 programme of civic education when they participated in the survey while in Ireland, those aged between 19 and 24 would have had experience of Civics or CSPE (Section 2). In 2002, 12 years after German reunification and 9 years after the introduction of civic education into Irish schools, all of the respondents aged between 15 and 29 would have had experience of (reformed) civic education within their respective school systems.

Finally, the WVS surveys are conducted by a prestigious network of social scientists who are members of the non-profit World Values Survey Association based at the *Institute for Futures Studies* (http://www.iffs.se/eng/) in Stockholm in Sweden. The surveys demonstrate a considerable methodological rigour as verified by a research report of the European Commission (De Weerd, Gemmecke, Rigter, van Rij, Coen 2005) which compliments "the extensive procedures that were taken with regard to sampling, the development of instruments and translation, and response rates". More than 256,000 one-hour face to face interviews have been conducted to date under the auspices of the WVS in 87 different societies with a representative sample of at least 1,000 participants in each country. The ESS is also a multicountry survey, which consistently pursues high standards of academic rigour (Jowell, Roberts, Fitzgerald, Eva 2007) and covers more than 20 countries with the dual purpose of monitoring and interpreting public attitudes and values within Europe and investigating how they interact with European institutions and, secondly, advancing research methodologies associated with crossnational survey research in Europe and beyond.

The responses for the items selected can be summarised as follows (with the percentages in the tables rounded to the nearest decimal place):

Table 1: Maintaining order in the nation or giving people more say (WVS)

Year/item	1999	
	Eastern Germany (%)	Republic of Ireland (%)
Maintaining order in the nation	38	36
Giving people more say	35	39

This table indicates that the majority of those living in eastern Germany prioritise the maintenance of order over giving people more say while the opposite is the case in the Republic of Ireland with the majority prioritising giving more say to the people. The differences here are relatively small however if we consider that in the same survey conducted in the western part of Germany 41.3% of respondents aged between 15 and 29 prioritised giving people more say while 26.8% felt that the maintenance of order in the nation was of greater importance.

Table 2: Respect for authority (WVS)

Year/item	1999	
	Eastern Germany (%)	Republic of Ireland (%)
Greater respect for authority would be a good thing.	44	69

The Republic of Ireland tends more strongly away from transformation according to the data presented above (Table 2). At almost 69%, more than two thirds of those questioned feel that "greater respect for authority would be a good thing" compared with just over 44% of respondents aged between 15 and 29 in the five new states of eastern Germany, i.e. the former GDR.

Table 3: Importance of doing what you are told and following rules (ESS 2002)

Country/ Level of agreement	Eastern Germany (%)	Republic of Ireland (%)
Very much like me	6	10
Like me	16	22
Somewhat like me	23	24
A little like me	23	20
Not like me	21	18
Not like me at all	10	4
N	219	428

We can see from this table that a greater number of the respondents in the Republic of Ireland felt that "doing what you are told and following the rules" was a good description of their attitudes to a greater extent than reported by the same age-group in eastern Germany. For example, if you conflate the scale into "for" and "against", with three levels of agreement/disagreement per category, 45% of eastern Germans feel this description applies to them while 56% of the Irish respondents reported feeling this way.

Thus, the information contained in the above tables suggest that the participants in eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland are relatively evenly split regarding the prioritisation of the maintenance of order in their nations and the giving of more say to their people with eastern Germans tending to favour slightly the maintenance of order and the Irish favouring the giving of greater say to the population. Respondents aged between 15 and 29 in the Republic of Ireland, however, displayed considerably more support for increased respect for authority than did eastern Germans and for the related concept of obedience and respect for rules.

Experience of civic education within the school system is of course only one of many factors which could potentially influence attitudes towards politics and society, in general, and position on the compliance-transformation spectrum in particular, although it has been argued that it is potentially a key influence (Torney-Purta et al. 1999) if not the most important factor (Simon & Merrill, 1998 in Wiseman et al. 2011, 564). In addition, trends and comparisons concerning such attitudes can at least be used to consider the extent to which civic education is achieving its own objectives. As we saw in Section 2, these objectives are similar in Ireland and eastern Germany with a focus the facilitation of "active, participatory citizenship" and the education of critical, mature, autonomous citizens who are aware of and capable of fulfilling their obligations towards society. Thus, the data presented here could be interpreted as indicating that a narrower form of civic education may be continuing to play a role in both eastern Germany and the Republic of Ireland.

This interpretation of the attitudinal data is supported by several studies which have investigated classroom practice in civic education both in Ireland and eastern Germany. For example, Bruen (forthcoming) in a study of the aims, content, teaching methodologies and assessment criteria employed for civic education in second level schools in two of the five new eastern German states in 1995 concluded that the focus in terms of teaching methodology and assessment criteria continued to be on the transmission of declarative knowledge and factual information. Similarly, Kötters-König (2001) reporting on a study conducted in the eastern German state of Sachsen-Anhalt involving 1,400 pupils concluded that classroom practice in civic education was dominated by teacher-centred approaches and a focus on the delivery of factual material by the teacher (for similar findings, see also Shiele 1998).

In Ireland, a recent study conducted by the Institute for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) reports that Irish teachers of civic education made relatively little use of learner-centred teaching. In addition, the ICCS findings for Ireland also report that examination questions for civic education focus to a greater extent on the recall of knowledge than on reasoning or analytic processes (Cosgrove et al. 2011, xv). Similarly, Bryan and Bracken (2011, 39) report that active learning methods are "likely to be avoided or watered down" in the civic education classroom in Ireland while Phelan (2001, 584) expressed the view that teachers of civic education in Ireland are not equipped with the requisite knowledge and pedagogical tools which would enable them to resist rather than comply with "existing patterns and structures of teaching, schooling and society".

4 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the attitudinal items from the WVS and the ESS presented in Section 3 indicate a similar tendency towards the compliance end of the compliance-transformation spectrum in both Ireland and eastern Germany, a finding which studies indicate may point to a narrower form of civic education in schools. This assertion is supported by studies on civic education in schools in both regions/states which suggest a tendency towards narrower forms of civic education on the civic education spectrum.

The existence of a narrower form of civic education in schools in the Republic of Ireland and eastern Germany appears in spite of the fact that, as Section 2 indicates, the Republic of Ireland and eastern Germany would not appear to share many commonalities in terms of the recent political history that are likely to impact on the nature of civic education in schools and its outcomes.

Thus, it would appear that a narrower form of civic education is not necessarily the remit of the post-communist region considered by this paper, i.e. eastern Germany. It is also to be found in the Republic of Ireland. Therefore, the suggestion that 'post-communist' equates with a narrower form of

civic education resulting in passive, compliant citizens while "established" democracy automatically equate with a broader form of civic education resulting in more politically engaged citizens is not supported. In reality, the situation is considerably more complex and attempts to classify states and regions, for example, as "emerging" and "established" democracies and to draw conclusions, for example, concerning civic education in the school system and its outcomes in these states and regions must be made with considerable caution.

Finally, if we assume that a movement in the direction of the broader end of the civic education continuum referred to in the introduction to this paper is desirable in order to ensure greater participation in and engagement with political processes, it would appear that there is a need for further reform of civic education in schools in both Ireland and eastern Germany and in all likelihood and, as indicated by the larger scale studies referred to in the previous section, more generally. In particular, there would appear to be a need for the support and facilitation of broader forms of civic education in schools with a concomitant move in the direction of more learner centred, process-led approaches to teaching and learning in this subject. This has undoubtedly far reaching implications particularly in the area of curriculum design, materials development, approaches to assessment, as well as initial teacher education and continuing professional development, areas beyond the scope of this paper but which could fruitfully and in all likelihood will form the basis for much future research.

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Endnotes

[1] The terms East Germany and West Germany are used in this paper to refer to the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany prior to German Unification in 1990. The terms eastern Germany and western Germany refer to these two regions respectively post 1990.

[2] This is not facilitated in the WVS online analysis for its later waves. In addition, the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 versions of the ESS do not permit the responses for the item of interest here to be broken down by age.