



Between global and local: civic competences in geography education in Poland

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Abstract. Changes in the contemporary world determine the need for changes in the ways young people are educated. Geography as a school subject is particularly relevant in this case. The change may be determined by the scope of civic education, as it fosters the provision of knowledge, the development of skills and attitudes in terms of engagement with the place of life – at different spatial scales. The study analyses the Polish geography national curriculum, verifying the possibilities for developing civic competences proposed by the [Council of Europe \(2016\)](#). Our study used a qualitative analysis of the national geography curriculum at all educational stages, in particular content analysis, as well as some quantitative procedures. We focused on the relationship between citizenship and geography education, the frequency of civic competences, and the sense of belonging included in geography national curricula. The study reveals that the curriculum is strongly national-oriented in the context of developing civic competences. It also shows the challenge to develop civic competences on a global scale.

Keywords: citizenship education, civic competence, geography education, curriculum.

Introduction

Geography education may contribute to citizenship education by developing a sense of belonging to space and place ([Schmidt, 2011](#); [Kim & Lee, 2019](#)). From this perspective, geography offers a ‘mapping’ to citizenship education that allows students to position themselves in relation to space, other people, and places. The possibility of identification with the space and place affects students’ understanding of their status, feelings, and engagement possibilities at local, national, and global levels. The connections between geography and citizenship education have been recognized in literature for a long time ([Wilks, 2010](#)). For instance, by the mid-1960s, [Czekańska \(1964\)](#) emphasized the importance of geography education in developing active and responsible citizens. [Huckle \(1997\)](#) indicates the relationships between geography education and youth identity formation, the development of commitment to social justice and democracy, and social engagement. [Lambert \(2002\)](#) exposes the role of geography education in developing an ‘informed citizen’. Recent research by [Studemeyer \(2015\)](#), [Cohen \(2018\)](#), [Gaudelli & Schmidt \(2018\)](#), [Cheng & Holton \(2019\)](#), [Kim \(2020\)](#), [Rock \(2022\)](#), [Cheema & Hiller \(2024\)](#) has contributed to developing comparative perspectives on citizenship and geography education studies. Active citizenship and public participation in geographical education are the result

of mass interest in environmental problems, especially in urbanised and protected areas (Hayward et al., 2015; Chang & Kidman, 2018; De Miguel González, 2020; Banwo & Beaud, 2023; Oliver et al., 2023). Growing evidence suggests that geography education can be fundamental in developing national and global-oriented citizens, local and global awareness, and sustainable development.

At the overt level, the school curricula are the teaching plans designed by the policy-makers to achieve national/state education goals. However, at the hidden level, school curricula can be understood in terms of social control and domination of political ideologies (Apple, 2004). From this perspective, school curricula – supervised mostly by the nation-state – are prepared to achieve the goals of an ‘ideal citizen’ that aligns with the interests of the ‘dominant group’. School curricula act as a ‘narration of the nation’ (Ross, 2000), and through the school subjects, prospective students learn who they are and where they belong to. School geography, history, literature, and civics allow students to define themselves, their place, and their space for action and living.

Citizenship Education and Geography Education – Theoretical Background

The contemporary sociological, educational, and political theory of citizenship is not limited to the simple relationship between the state and the individual but is also understood in terms of developing identities, social and political engagement, and participation (Kerr, 2000; Annette, 2009; Weinberg & Flinders, 2019). New models and concepts of citizenship, from intimate to global, come to the fore. Some scholars suggest that national citizenship will be replaced by a cosmopolitan, post-national, or even entirely new concept (Delanty, 2000). Consequently, citizenship is a complex, wide-ranging, and capacious concept that offers new citizen roles and develops new civic competence, far beyond the political and legal dimensions. For instance, Osler and Starkey (2006) understand citizenship as a status, feeling, and practice. Status refers mainly to the legal aspects of citizenship regulated by the particular state (e.g. to grant citizenship or hold a passport). The feeling is connected with the sense of belonging to a particular community (e.g. local, national, global) not only in legal terms but also in an individual’s emotions. Citizenship as a practice is an engagement at local, national, or global level. The level of global citizenship refers to the extent to which an individual perceives themselves as part of a community that transcends national boundaries, engaging with political, social, economic, cultural, and ethical issues on a global scale. According to Oxley and Morris (2013), it encompasses diverse conceptions – from cosmopolitan (political, moral, economic, and cultural) to advocacy-based (social, critical, environmental, and spiritual) – highlighting the multidimensionality and complexity of citizenship in a global context. Ultimately, global citizenship can be understood as an interpretative framework that enables the analysis and shaping of an individual’s relationship with the world from a transnational perspective. All of these aspects of citizenship relate to geography education because defining a sense of belonging – both as a legal status and attachment – is one of the goals of geography education.

The processual character of citizenship and globalization poses new challenges to school geography education. One of these challenges is the issue of understanding how citizenship is (re)constructed by place and space and how place and space affect citizenship, especially in the times of ‘multi-belonging’ (Sarno, 2011; Schmidt, 2011). Not

only is citizenship in a state of flux today, but also the understanding of places, that are subject to change due to 'ongoing interaction and contestation' (Schmidt, 2011, p. 108). Globalization transforms understanding of the concepts of 'nation-state', 'territory', and 'border', that can no longer be perceived 'in terms of its materiality' (Esteves, 2012).

The literature concerning the interconnections between geography and citizenship education emphasizes the knowledge and skills that develop national (patriotic), global-oriented, critical thinking, and problem-solving citizens (Schmidt, 2011). Although some studies suggest that most educational systems' curricula emphasize national issues usually limited to civic knowledge (Hong, 2018), there is also evidence that the European curricula incorporate a multi-level concept of citizenship (Philippou et al., 2009). Recognizing the local, national, and supranational/global levels of citizenship in school curricula is necessary to educate responsible and engaged citizens who understand global challenges and problems.

One of the aims of citizenship education is to develop engaged and responsible citizens and support the ideals of democracy. To achieve the aims of citizenship education and sustain democratic ideals, it is postulated to incorporate the balance between knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes (Weinberg & Flinders, 2019). School curricula are prescribed sets of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that students need to internalize. In the sense of citizenship and civic competence, the school curricula define the place of students' sense of belonging (local, national, global) and develop particular feelings toward that place, which will result in civic engagement. The level of civic engagement depends on the incorporated approach to citizenship education. The maximal and minimal interpretations of citizenship proposed by McLaughlin (1992) have been widely recognized in the theory and research of citizenship. A narrow understanding of citizenship characterizes the 'minimal' approach. The prospective citizens are taught mainly to be law-abiding. Since maximal interpretations include a broader definition of citizenship, maximal citizens are encouraged to be highly active and engaged. This orientation is also characterized by knowledge transmission, but students are motivated to investigate how the components of citizenship are carried out at local, national, or global levels (Kerr, 2000). Thus, citizenship education can be either limited to achieve 'minimal' citizenship through knowledge transmission, or oriented towards developing highly active and engaged citizens. However, minimalist and maximalist interpretations constitute a continuum and do not oppose each other (McLaughlin, 1992). Kerr (2000) suggests that differences in interpretations of minimal/maximal citizenship may stem from the distinction between education 'about,' 'through,' and 'for' citizenship. Education 'about' citizenship focuses mainly on sufficient knowledge transmission and providing learners with an understanding of national history and the ways government and political life are organized. Education 'through' citizenship includes active learning methods and encourages students to engage in different communities (e.g., school, local, national, global). Education 'for' citizenship includes two prior strands, but additionally equips students with a 'set of tools (knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes, values, and dispositions) which enable them to participate actively and sensibly in the roles and responsibilities they encounter in their adult lives' (Kerr, 2000, p. 12). Education 'for' citizenship may also be perceived in terms of the whole educational experience of students. This strand aligns with Dewey's concept suggesting that a healthy democratic system can develop when schools not only teach about democracy, but also transition into democratic organizations.

It is worth noting that citizenship education may be provided in the school system as a separate curriculum, cross-curricular activities, or as a part of school policy and ethos (Paludan & Prinds, 1999; Gaffney & Silke, 2024; Hämäläinen, 2024; Huckle, 2024). Depending on the society, its tradition, culture, and level of democracy, the national and school curricula emphasize different elements, such as democratic values, civic virtues, human rights, political literacy, respecting cultural diversity, and others (Yemini et al., 2018; Sabzalian, 2019; Howard & Freeman, 2020; Moon, 2021; Kester, 2022; Hanif, 2023; O’Flaherty et al., 2024). Thus, our study is intended to recognize which of these elements are incorporated into the national curriculum of geography education in Poland.

Materials and methods

For this study, we use qualitative analysis of the national curriculum for geography at all educational stages. The revision of curricular studies indicates that the content analysis technique (Krippendorf, 2003) is broadly adopted by researchers (Faas, 2011; Figueiredo et al., 2016; Kus & Mert, 2021; Salinas et al., 2022). Although we also use some quantitative procedures (e.g. to establish types of civic competences and the frequency of their occurrence in the national curriculum), we mainly employ the qualitative approach. Using content analysis allows us to identify civic competences proposed by the Council of Europe (2016) and investigate into levels of citizenship promoted in the national curriculum. It also enables us to find the relationships between citizenship and geography education in the national curriculum. Content analysis is defined as a research technique “for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorf, 2003, p. 18). Using the aforementioned technique, we focus on the relationship between citizenship and geography education, the frequency and nature of civic competences, levels of citizenship, and the sense of belonging included in national curricula for geography.

Investigation objectives

In order to find the relationship between citizenship and geography education, we refer to 20 key civic competences proposed by the Council of Europe (2016). We pose the following questions:

- 1) Which civic competences are included in the national curriculum for geography in Poland and how do they relate to the scope of geography education?
- 2) Which competences are the most and least promoted and valued?
- 3) Which level of citizenship (local, national, or supranational) is promoted?

Having answers to these questions we proceed to identify what kind of citizenship (local, national, supranational/global) is most and least accentuated in geography education.

Sample, selection and representativeness

Geography education is compulsory in primary education (grades 5-8) and in secondary education in Poland. According to the national curriculum geography education is divided into physical, socio-economic, and regional geography at all levels. The national curricu-

lum in Poland is a strategic document issued and approved by the Ministry of Education. We analyse the national curriculum for geographic education at primary school and secondary school (Regulation Act, 2018).

Information collection tools and information processing

In the first stage of the analysis, we identified civic competences in the national curriculum, referring to those listed in the Council of Europe (2016) document. The competences include values (respect for human rights, democracy, and diversity), attitudes (openness, respect, civic responsibility), skills (critical thinking, communication, collaboration), and knowledge with critical understanding (awareness of self, others, and social-political systems) that enable effective participation in democratic life. Their purpose is to develop citizens capable of respecting human rights, fostering intercultural dialogue, and acting responsibly in support of justice, equality, and sustainable development. Then, we counted all appeared competencies and listed them in the table. If the competence was associated with the level of citizenship (local, national, global), we also noted it. The local level refers to the competences developed in/for the closest setting/environment (e.g. region, local community, school, etc.). The national includes the competences developed in/for the country, while supranational includes those competences that students are equipped with to understand and act beyond national borders. At the same time, it should be noted that the general formulations in the Polish core curriculum sometimes refer to very broad categories (e.g., natural environment, cultural environment, pro-ecological activities, group work, communication skills, the significance of social solidarity, the need for engagement and participation), which allows them to be classified across more than one scale. We also distinguished 'direct' and 'indirect' references to citizenship education in the national curriculum. The 'direct' content of the curriculum explicitly included the Council of Europe's civic competences, such as values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding. 'Indirect' content also referred to these competences; however, the included words were different. We did not include ambiguous content that did not refer directly to the scope of citizenship education. We received a ranking of the most frequent competences in the curricula and the promoted citizenship levels.

The second stage focused on the search for patterns emerging in textual analysis to uncover the strands ('about,' 'through,' and 'for'). Using Kerr's proposal, we could identify education 'about,' 'through,' and 'for' citizenship and civic competences. Every selected statement referring to the citizenship or civic competences in curricula was analysed and interpreted as 'about,' 'through,' and 'for' at local, national, and supranational/global levels. The result of the adopted procedure was a table containing the frequency of civic competences, levels of citizenship, and qualitative data referring to the strands of citizenship and geography education.

Results and discussion

We identified 31 references in the national curriculum for geography, both in primary (18) and secondary (13) school curricula related to civic competences in the direct (20) and indirect (11) form (Tab. 1).

Most civic competences refer to national or local issues, however, we also identified references to the global aspects. An overview of civic competences in the national curriculum juxtaposed with those in the proposal of the Council of Europe are provided in tables 1 and 2.

The civic competences at both levels of education are identified mainly in the sphere of attitudes. The curriculum for primary education includes the recommendations of the Council of Europe competences concerning the issues of openness to cultural otherness, respect, and responsibility. We identified three statements in the curriculum that correspond with the openness to cultural otherness. However, the emphasis is put on the national identity, which is the starting point to understand the otherness e.g. 'a well-established awareness of one's own value and roots, as well as the territorial identity, developed through geography education about one's own region and homeland, becomes the foundation for understating other nations and culture without the threat of losing one's own identity today'. Openness to otherness is also understood as doing away with stereotypes and respecting other cultures and religions. The aforementioned curricular statement emphasizes that respect for the otherness is possible when national identity and values are preserved. The responsibility is connected with developing the sense of belonging to the 'small homeland'. Students are also encouraged to develop awareness about their possible impact on Poland's socio-economic and cultural development. Although the issue of sustainability is included in the curriculum, it is limited to the national and local level in the context of civic competences, e.g., student is expected to develop an attitude of co-responsibility for Poland's natural environment. There is no reference in the curriculum to taking action and responsibility within the supranational/global contexts.

There are also relatively few references to the supranational or global dimension in the curriculum for the secondary school level. Similarly to the earlier stage of education, the emphasis is put on the local and national identity. We distinguished the civic competences that match the 'respect', 'responsibility', and 'openness to cultural otherness'. Respect is understood broadly and refers to local, national, and global dimensions: 'Attitudes of social solidarity, respect, and empathy towards representatives of other nations and ethnic groups, adopting patriotic, communal, and civic attitudes, understanding the non-utilitarian values of selected elements of the natural and cultural environment, and developing inquiry to search for the truth, goodness, and beauty, should be developed'. Although most of the civic competences are included in the sphere of attitudes, we recognize that the process of teaching is aimed at cognitive aspects and in the strand 'about' attitudes. Referring to [Kerr's \(2000\)](#) proposal, it can be concluded that citizenship education within geography education is focused mainly on the strands 'about' and 'for' civic competences in locality and nationality. From that perspective, the minimal orientation of citizenship education is included in geography education. Referring to the continuum of 'minimal – maximal' citizenship education, geography curricula in the context of citizenship education is located on the minimal end.

Taking responsibility or civic actions are limited to the local and national dimensions only. Although we identified the reference to the responsibility for the 'natural environment of the Earth', a question remains whether it is possible to take broader responsibility without global orientation in developing civic competences. It is worth noticing, then, that the core values such as respect, solidarity, and empathy are to be developed within the distinction between 'Poles' and 'the representatives of other nations'. From

that perspective, similarly to the primary education curriculum, the national orientation is emphasized in secondary geography education.

In the sphere of skills, we identified five references in the national curriculum for primary education that match the proposals of the Council of Europe. The knowledge about a 'small homeland' and one's own region comes to the fore as a vital factor in taking everyday civic actions. Analytical and critical thinking skills are identified in the national curriculum in the passage "assessing socio-cultural and economic phenomena and processes taking place in Poland and various regions of the world". It must be noted that this statement is one of the few that relate to the supranational or global problems. Co-operation skills are developed through 'undertaking constructive cooperation and developing the communication skills'. We did not find the civic competences in the curriculum that would match conflict resolution skills, listening and observing skills, empathy, and adaptability.

Unlike in the curriculum for primary education which does not include a reference to empathy, in the curriculum for secondary education, students are expected to counteract racial discrimination, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance in the world. Students are also expected to give examples of exclusion from social and economic life and its impact on the state economy. This reference can also be juxtaposed with the Council of Europe's emphasis on justice, equality, and fairness. This is one of the few examples that include supranational concerns. While in the other passages of the curriculum, there's a clear distinction between national (Polish) and global levels, sensitive issues become primarily a global concern. This approach sanitizes the curriculum from inconvenient facts and topics, confirming at the same time the national orientation of the curriculum.

It shouldn't be surprising then that in the national-oriented curriculum, the homogeneity and unity of the nation are promoted (Wertsh, 1997), so the issues of social and intercultural conflicts resolution are not taken into account at any level of geography education. This poses a serious omission, since studies suggest that geography lessons can successfully incorporate the issues of conflict resolution, management, and peace education (Ferriera, 2002; Okpala & Okolo, 2002; Engelen & Budke, 2023).

Although we have identified the reference to 'cultural diversity' in the curriculum for both levels of education, it is rather a signalisation of the issue, not the aim of developing intercultural competence. As the earlier study suggests, the previous curricula for geography education also did not include the appreciation of cultural diversity (Awramiuk, 2011). We did not find any references that could match with 'valuing cultural diversity' and did not identify a direct reference to 'cultural diversity' or 'cultural pluralism' in the supranational context. The problem of 'socio-cultural' diversity in Poland is included at the secondary level of education. However, there are a few references to respect towards 'other cultures' or 'religions' at both levels. An interesting example of analysing different cultures comes from the primary school curriculum, where students are to break the stereotypes about Africa. One of the reasons to include Africa (*nota bene* Africa is presented as a homogenous continent) could be the mythologized image of the continent in the Polish literature (Chodubski, 2006), the stereotyped image of people living in Africa in geography textbooks (Popow, 2016) or stereotyped image carried out in media (Ndiaye & Ndiaye, 2014). However, students are imposed with the existing stereotypes about Africa without recognizing and appreciating cultural diversity at the same time.

Table 1. Civic competences in the Polish geography curriculum at primary education

Competences		Record*	Scale**	NoR***	Total
Category	Council of Europe Competence	References in the National Curriculum for Geography Education			
Values	Valuing human dignity and human rights	–	–	0	1
	Valuing cultural diversity	–	–	0	
	Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, the rule of law	Developing a sense of identity and demonstrating patriotic, community, and civic attitudes	D N	1	
	Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views, and practices	A well-established awareness of one's own value and roots, as well as the territorial identity, developed through geography education about one's own region and homeland. becomes the foundation for understanding other nations and cultures without the threat of losing one's own identity today	D N, G	3	
Attitudes		Breaking down stereotypes and fostering attitudes of respect, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of other cultures while maintaining a sense of the value of one's own nation's cultural heritage and one's own identity	D N, G		
		Demonstrate an attitude of interest and respect for other cultures and religions	D G		
	Respect	Adopting an attitude of respect for the natural and cultural environment and understanding the need for rational management	D L, N, G	2	
		Adopting an attitude of respect and understanding of other cultures while maintaining a sense of the value of one's own country's cultural heritage	D N, G		
	Civic-mindedness	–	–	0	9
	Responsibility	Geography, including fieldwork, should contribute to understanding the meaning and conditions of implementing the principle of sustainable development through (...)a sense of responsibility for creating order and beauty in the places of living	D L, N	3	
		Assuming an attitude of shared responsibility for Poland's natural environment	D N		
Identification with the “small homeland”and a sense of shared responsibility for shaping the spatial order and its development		D L			
Self-efficacy	Awareness that one can have an impact on the future of socio-economic and cultural development of Poland	ID N	1		
Tolerance of ambiguity	–	–	0		

Competences		Record*	Scale**	NOR***	Total
Category	Council of Europe Competence				
Skills	References in the National Curriculum for Geography Education				
	Autonomous learning skills	Acquiring geographic knowledge about the "small homeland" and one's own region and bringing geographic cognition to the "here and now" gives education a concrete dimension that can easily be translated into practical activities in the student's everyday life	ID L	2	
	Analytical and critical thinking skills	Taking on new challenges and rational pro-environmental and social activities	D L, N, G		
	Skills of listening and observing	Assessing socio-cultural and economic phenomena and processes taking place in Poland and in various regions of the world	D N, G	1	
	Empathy	—	—	0	
	Flexibility and adaptability	—	—	0	
	Linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills	—	—	0	
	Co-operation skills	Undertaking constructive collaboration and developing communication skills	D L, N, G	2	
	Conflict resolution skills	Using group work as much as possible creates conditions for the development of communication and cooperation skills, and develops a sense of responsibility	D L, N, G		
	Knowledge and critical understanding of self	—	—	0	
Knowledge and critical understanding	Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication	—	—	0	
	Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment and sustainability	Understanding the natural, socio-economic, and cultural diversity of the world	ID G		
		Breaking stereotypes about the perception of Africa	ID G	3	
		Explaining the causes and assessing the phenomenon of huge amounts of food waste using the example of the United States	ID G		

* Direct (D) or indirect (ID), ** local (L), regional (R), global (G), *** number of records

Table 2. Civic competences in the Polish geography curriculum at secondary education

Competences		Record*	Scale**	NoR***	Total
Category	Council of Europe Competence				
Values	Valuing human dignity and human rights	–	–	0	3
	Valuing cultural diversity	–	–	0	
	Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law	Attitudes of social solidarity, respect, and empathy towards representatives of other nations and ethnic groups, adopting patriotic, communal, and civic attitudes, understanding the non-utilitarian values of selected elements of the natural and cultural environment, and developing inquiry to search for the truth, goodness, and beauty, should be developed	D	L, N, G	
		Recognizing the value of social participation activities for local and regional development, including improving the quality of life	ID	L, N	
		The meaning of social solidarity, the need for social engagement and participation, and the development of civic attitudes	D	L, N, G	
Attitudes	Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views, and practices	Developing patriotic, communal, and civic attitudes; overcoming stereotypes, and developing attitudes of solidarity, respect, and empathy towards Poles and representatives of other nations and communities	D	L, N, G	1
	Respect	Attitudes of social solidarity, respect, and empathy towards representatives of other nations and ethnic groups, developing patriotic, communal, and civic attitudes (...) should be shaped	D	L, N, G	1
	Civic-mindedness	–	–	–	0
	Responsibility	Adopting an attitude of shared responsibility for the Earth's natural environment	D	G	2
		Belief in the need for responsible participation in social and civic life for local, regional and Polish development	D	L, N	
		–	–	–	
	Self-efficacy	–	–	–	0
	Tolerance of ambiguity	–	–	–	0

Competences		Record*	Scale**	NOR***	Total
Category	Council of Europe Competence	References in the National Curriculum for Geography Education			
Skills	Autonomous learning skills	–	–	0	
	Analytical and critical thinking skills	Understanding the role of economic sectors in civilization development; the processes of globalisation, international cooperation, the knowledge economy, and the information society; demonstrating the importance of human capital in economic development; discussing the examples and consequences of the development of the information society	ID G	1	
	Skills of listening and observing	–	–	0	
	Empathy	Attitudes of social solidarity, respect, and empathy towards representatives of other nations and ethnic groups	D L, N, G	2	3
	Flexibility and adaptability	Justifying the need to counter racial discrimination, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance in the world and provide examples of the impact of exclusion of population groups on the social and economic life of countries	ID L, N, G		
	Linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual skills	–	–	0	
	Co-operation skills	–	–	0	
	Conflict resolution skills	–	–	0	
	Knowledge and critical understanding of self	–	–	0	
	Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication	–	–	0	
Knowledge and critical understanding	Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, religions, history, media, economies, environment and sustainability	Presenting regional differences in individuals' organization involvement in Poland	ID N		3
		Analysing data about the regional differences in poverty, formulating and verifying hypotheses on its causes, proposing actions to reduce poverty and social exclusion in Poland, and demonstrating the importance of social solidarity in solving this problem	ID N	3	
		Distinguishing between refugees and economic migration and describing the problems of refugees, including children, using selected examples from Europe and other regions of the world	ID G		

* Direct (D) or indirect (ID), ** local (L), regional (R), global (G), *** number of records

Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, the appreciation of the 'otherness' in the curricula is expressed and connected within the context of the preservation of national issues and identity. The absence of global aspects of cultural diversity in geography education positioned its content as national and ethnocentric-oriented. The lack of appreciation of cultural diversity in geography education limited the development of world-minded citizens who will be able to recognize the complexity of the globalized world, interconnections between regions and nations, or the issues of sustainability. Without respecting cultural pluralism, it is not possible to take responsibility and actions in the global dimension. However, we are aware that pedagogical practices have a more significant impact on the learning process than the content of the curriculum (Merryfield et al., 2008).

The values of patriotism, community, and civic are included in the curriculum of geography education. From this perspective, the civic competences are developed mostly 'about' and 'for' the local community and the nation. There are no direct references to democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law at both levels of education. It is understandable that geography education is not about democracy or the rule of law; the problems of justice, fairness, and equality can be incorporated into this subject. We also did not recognize any reference that matched the competences of 'valuing human dignity and human rights'.

Geography education is about developing foremost the local (territorial) and national identity at both levels of education in Poland. The so-called 'small homeland' (pl. *mała ojczyzna*) becomes a core of building national identity at the primary stage of education. It stands in line with the traditional approach to geography education, where elementary knowledge is acquired through observing one's own surroundings (Szczęsna & Wojtanowicz 2005, p. 278). However, it must be noticed that locally and nationally oriented curricula do not respond to the main demands of international agreements on geographical education (e.g. International Geographical Union, 2013, 2016). In the light of these documents, the main objective is to develop the competences needed to know and understand the modern world. The emphasis is on the balance between local, national, regional (continental), and global levels. Moreover, geography is a core school subject that should play a strategic role in shaping responsible, active citizenship and social, economic, and environmental sustainability. However, this function can only be fulfilled with a simultaneous understanding of the places, environments, and cultures in which people coexist, taking into account the principles of mutual respect for cultural diversity at local, regional, or global scales (International Geographical Union, 2000). According to Kerr's (2000) proposal, citizenship education within geography education may be recognized as the one elaborating 'about' and 'for' local community and nation (homeland/fatherland, pl. *ojczyzna*). The knowledge-based Polish curriculum for geography education is oriented toward civic education, not citizenship. It includes the strands 'about' and 'for' citizenship and civic competences limited to the locality and nationality. From that perspective, we recognize that civic education is included within geography education. According to such a model, civic competences are not fully developed in the schools because they are regarded as a place for preparing prospective citizens and not as a place for becoming citizens. In other words, minimal orientation in citizenship education and knowledge-based curriculum obviously create the space for civic education but not for civic actions.

Conclusions

Our study identifies the following civic competences in the national curriculum for geography education: openness to cultural otherness, respect, responsibility, valuing democracy, knowledge, and critical understanding of the world. However, the study confirms the nation-oriented approach and lack of balance between national/local and global issues. National and patriotic orientation is a foundation for building identity and a starting point for developing civic competences. Thus, civic competences are developing students' understanding 'about' and 'for' the local community and nation, with little regard to supranational and global issues. Our study confirms the nation-oriented character of the curriculum for geography education as well as the inadequacy of addressing the global perspective (Aleksiak & Kuleta-Hulboj, 2020). However, this study tries to fill the gap in citizenship and geography education studies, revealing that civic competences are included in the geography curriculum.

If geography education is about developing a sense of belonging, the Polish curricula position students within localness and nationality. The Polish curriculum is nation-oriented, and there is no direct reference to developing a global orientation in terms of equity, social justice, interconnectedness, or sustainability. It would be naïve to suggest that global orientation could be reached without the development of a national and local sense of belonging. The national school systems and curricula are an essential factor in the nation-building process, the vehicle to sustain and reproduce the unity and stability of the nation. However, in the complex and interconnected reality, it is also important to incorporate 'a delicate balance of diversity and unity' (Banks et al., 2001) into the school curricula to sustain the democratic ideals.

It is likely that the arrangements made at the beginning of the 21st century are becoming insufficient in view of the dynamic geopolitical (international conflicts, refugees, famine) and environmental (climate change effects) changes taking place in the last few years. The educational potential of geography as a science can explain the transformations mentioned above; however, they must be adequately addressed in the pedagogical practice. It seems crucial to include more explicitly developing civic competences in geography education, especially in environmental, social, and cultural conflict resolution. Particularly important are the competences aimed at preventing environmental causes of conflicts (e.g. access to water, clean air, natural resources), or respect for cultures (e.g. racial conflicts, religious causes) from the point of view of global disturbances.

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