

Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts

Slovak High School Literature Textbooks, Questioning Gender Roles,
and Democracy

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Jana Bordováčová

Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts

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and Democracy

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Jana Bordováčová

Declaration of originality

I hereby declare, that this bachelor thesis is the work of my own and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All literature used is attributed and cited in references. Artificial intelligence tools have not been used when writing this bachelor thesis.

In Bratislava, February 14, 2025

Jana Bordováčová

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Abstract

Author: Jana Bordováčová

Thesis Title: Slovak High School Literature Textbooks, Questioning Gender Roles, and Democracy

University: Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts

Thesis Advisor: Mária Dudžáková, MSc.

Head of the Defense Committee: prof. František Novosád, CSc.

Members of the Defense Committee: doc. Samuel Abrahám, PhD., prof. František

Novosád, CSc., Mgr. Dagmar Kusá, PhD., prof. Silvia Miháliková

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In a world full of disinformation, critical thinking is crucial to the preservation of democracy. The best way to gain critical thinking is through education. Literature classes are especially important to critical thinking, as that is where students learn to study and analyse texts. Gendered characters are depicted in many texts students study in these classes. Gender as a social notion has evolved over time, and the roles of women and men are seen differently in the present day than in the past. That is also visible in the texts students are to read. In order to learn to question and analyse it, the exercises connected to these texts need to either ask students directly to focus on the depictions of gendered characters, or at least be open to students bringing it up in a discussion. The stereotypes are an example of inequality, which is contrary to democracy, and as such, should not happen. In this thesis, the way this is examined is through content analysis of textbooks recommended by the Slovak Ministry of Education for the use in high school literature classes. The content analysis is evaluated through Nussbaum's capability approach and Fricker's hermeneutical justice to see whether the exercises in the textbooks encourage questioning gender roles and thus enable students to reach their full potential of thought. Nussbaum's approach was chosen because it is well-defined and codified, and fit well with the structure of hermeneutical justice by Fricker.

Abstrakt

Autor bakalárskej práce: Jana Bordováčová

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Vedúca bakalárskej práce: Mária Dudžáková, MSc.

Predseda komisie pre obhajoby bakalárskych prác: prof. František Novosád, CSc.

Členstvo komisie pre obhajoby bakalárskych prác: doc. Samuel Abrahám, PhD., prof.

František Novosád, CSc., Mgr. Dagmar Kusá, PhD., prof. Silvia Miháliková

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Pre zachovanie demokracie vo svete plnom dezinformácií má kritické myslenie kľúčový význam. Jedným z najdostupnejších spôsobov ako sa naučiť kriticky myslieť je prostredníctvom vzdelávania. Pre dosiahnutie tohto cieľa sú obzvlášť výhodnou príležitosťou hodiny literatúry, keďže na nich sa študentstvo prostredníctvom textov, ktoré číta, stretáva s rôznymi spoločenskými javmi.

Rod ako sociálny koncept sa vyvíja v čase a rodové roly žien a mužov sú dnes videné inak ako v minulosti. Prostredníctvom literatúry tak študentstvo dostáva príležitosť sledovať tento vývoj. Okrem toho, analyzovaním postáv a situácií, v ktorých sa postavy ocitajú, noriem, ktoré ich konanie ovplyvňujú, má študentstvo možnosť tieto normy aj konfrontovať či až spochybňovať – v bezpečnom prostredí vzdelávacieho procesu. Aby sa toto všetko mohlo diať, úlohy a otázky nadväzujúce na študijné texty, musia od študentstva vyžadovať zameranie sa na rodovo podmienené správanie a ukotvenie postáv, alebo aspoň podnecovať študentstvo k diskusii o týchto témach. Inak sa stereotypné vyobrazenia stanú nástrojom normalizovania takéhoto správania, čo nie je v súlade s rodovou rovnosťou, ktorá je jedným z ukazovateľov zdravia demokracie.

Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce bolo preskúmať, či a ako je študentstvo slovenských stredných škôl vedené k analýze rodových rolí a stereotypov. Toto sme realizovali cez obsahovú analýzu učebníc odporúčaných Ministerstvom školstva SR pre použitie na hodinách literatúry na stredných školách. Pomocou konceptov spôsobilostí podľa Marthy Nussbaum a hermeneutickej spravodlivosti od Mirandy Fricker sme teda chceli zistiť, či pracovné zadania v učebniciach podporujú kritické zamýšľanie sa nad rodovými stereotypmi a umožňujú tak študentstvu dosiahnuť plný potenciál svojho myslenia.

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Introduction

When I was in high school, we would read mandatory readings and many classmates always found it boring and unrelatable. The teacher accepted that is how we felt about those books, and then when we were about to read *Tri gaštanové kone* (Three auburn horses) by Margita Figuli, she told us we would like this book, that it was like a fairytale. That was the expectation I was holding when I was opening the book.

The book surprised me negatively, because while I was expecting something fairy-tale like, it was full of negative attitudes towards women even from the protagonist. The good guy that we were supposed to be rooting for, was behaving as if a woman he was in a relationship with was his property. When we had discussions about this in class, and I mentioned this, it was not met with understanding. Most still viewed it as a fairy tale, even after hearing out my criticism.

Tri gaštanové kone is far from the only story that depicts negative attitudes towards women, which are a real problem even today. My teacher did not necessarily invite us to question them when they were in the text. But my former teacher is not the person based on who we should judge the educational system, and I could not say that the educational system in Slovakia was bad because it was mandating the students read literature that contains negative attitudes towards women without questioning it whatsoever.

Critical thinking is a crucial skill for existing in a world full of mis- and disinformation, such as ours. Without that skill, we are more likely to believe in various disinformation campaigns, and one of the ways to hone this skill is through analysing texts.

Reading, understanding, and analysing texts is a significant part of what is done and taught in literature classes. Slovakia has a list of mandatory and recommended readings, but not what is supposed to be taught around it (at least not publicly easily available). Which is why the best source of information on what the ministry wants to be taught would be the textbooks that they approve. After all, choosing which way to direct the students' attention in reading can have an impact on what they notice in the reading. By doing this, certain things can be amplified or made invisible.

Education and critical thinking are crucial for the preservation of democracy, and, by extension, human rights. Equality is also an important aspect of democracy. As such, education that has the goal of leading to democratic thinking also needs to incorporate equality. After all, rights of vulnerable groups, including gender equality, are indicators of the quality of democracy. Education can also be such indicator.

Equality is a key aspect of human rights, which exist to improve people's lives. In the capability approach, as defined by Sen (2001) and Nussbaum (2011), equality and dignity are crucial, and the capability approach focuses on what people actually can do. In Nussbaum's framework, the central capabilities are to be legally granted through human rights. Those central capabilities include knowledge and thinking, and as such, schools and education are crucial to it.

Slovak educational system is scoring lower than many other EU countries, and Slovak democracy is also flawed (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023; World Population Review, n.d.). Men and women in Slovakia still only enjoy equality nominally, but in real life there is inequality (Bútorová, 2008). These concepts may be connected through the education system not tackling gender issues sufficiently well, but rather reproducing harmful gender stereotypes.

Research question: Ako učebnice literatúry pre slovenské stredné školy adresujú diškurz o rodových rolách? / How do high school literature textbooks address the discourse about gender roles?

Literature review

Education and democracy

Education systems and their guidelines exist in order to prepare children for their future lives as adults. That includes theoretical knowledge of each subject, but also skills and values which require an interdisciplinary approach (Štátny pedagogický ústav, 2015). Each country's education system is slightly different, because the circumstances differ. Nonetheless, a comparison is possible, as the skills students gain are testable. PISA testing is an example of such comparison, comparing skills in mathematics, reading, and science among students from OECD (and other) countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). In 2022, out of the OECD countries, the best results in mathematics were reached by Japan (536 points), in reading by Ireland (516), and in science by Japan (547). The OECD average was 472 points in mathematics, 476 points in reading, and 485 in science. In comparison, Slovakia scored 464 points in mathematics, 447 points in reading, and 462 points in science. Slovak scores are below the OECD average. It is not just according to PISA testing, though. There were fourteen EU countries that ranked higher than Slovakia in all the ranking systems used by Rankedex (n.d.) and in *Education Rankings by Country 2024* (n.d.). Based on that, Slovaks are disadvantaged when it comes to education. An important part of education is, according to the Slovak curriculum, also instilling certain values in students (Národný inštitút vzdelávania a mládeže, 2022). In the Slovak context, those values include respect towards human rights and democratic values (Národný inštitút vzdelávania a mládeže, 2022; Štátny pedagogický ústav, 2015; Štátny pedagogický ústav, n.d.). Critical thinking is one of the key competencies of graduates, and it is also a necessity for democracy (Nussbaum, 2016; Štátny pedagogický ústav, n.d.).

Democracy is a system of governance in which people have the main power to decide who governs them (Council of Europe, n. d.). In Nussbaum's framework (2011), the health of democracy depends on the abilities of (future) voters to make responsible decisions. Responsible decisions in this case inherently include compassion - not deciding in a way that would only benefit oneself, but also others (Nussbaum, 2016). Taking care of the less privileged and improving their conditions is therefore for Nussbaum a crucial part of democracy. After all, democracy is thus far the only system in which the

government can change if the people are not satisfied with it (Sen, 2001). Equality and treatment of marginalised communities, including women, is part of evaluating the quality of democracy for OECD and Freedom House (Freedom House, 2024; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024). Based on that, the equal treatment of vulnerable people and communities is an important aspect of democracy. Slovakia is a democracy, but according to the World Population Review, it is a flawed democracy (World Population Review, n.d.). That would imply something is not working. While Slovakia did score 90/100 points in Freedom House's assessment of the quality of democracy, a significant portion of the 10 points Slovakia lost was due to its treatment of marginalised groups, including women. According to the UN, democracy is a system that provides the environment in which human rights can function and be protected (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). The Vienna Declaration goes even further, claiming that human rights are a fundamental part of democracy (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1993).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights claims that all people are equal (United Nations, 1948). Equality is considered an important aspect of modern, democratic societies (United Nations, n.d.). On top of that, there are other legal documents proposing the rights and protections of specific vulnerable groups, such as women or children (United Nations, 1979; United Nations, 1990). However, there are more aspects to equality than law. By law, discrimination can be illegal, but that does not stop other ways in which inequality is seen, such as stereotypes (Fricker, 2007). Textbooks often depict and thus reproduce such behaviours (Osad'án et al., 2018).

Gender in Slovakia

Gender equality is the equal treatment of people no matter their gender. It includes laws, but also other dimensions, such as the social one.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "gender" must be defined. Gender is a way of social classification, including the gender roles that are often constructed based on biological differences (Verdery, 1994; Bútorová, 2008). In the Slovak context, gender is

more often than not viewed as a binary, which means that gender equality is in many cases considered to be equality only between men and women. Therefore, this thesis is also working with gender as a binary, since non-binary people are not included in the content of the educational process.

Socialisation of young children then depends on this biological division and thus it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: children are trained to act in a certain way according to their biological characteristics (Bartky, 1998; Bútorová, 2008). The cultural and social notions and expectations of gender are not consistent around the world, and thus, in the context of this thesis, the Slovak cultural context shall be utilised. According to the Slovak cultural context, which stems heavily from Christianity, the role of men is to be a figure of authority within the family, as well as being a breadwinner, while the role of women is to take care of the household and their family members, as well as being a pleasant companion (Bútorová, 2008; Škorvanková, 2019; Sokačová, 2009). These roles are called gender roles and they are connected to the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity embody the traits and characteristics connected with gender roles: if a woman's role is to take care of the home and people in it, then feminine traits will be those that help her excel at those duties, like being caring, gentle, or understanding (Bútorová, 2008). On the other hand, if a man's role is to lead and make money, masculine traits will be determination, leadership, and dominance - those that help him fulfill the role (Bútorová, 2008). The traits and roles complement each other. Gender stereotypes shall be understood as preconceptions about people due to their genders, as well as expectations to act in compliance with gender roles. However, since these notions are cultural and social, they change over time.

Over the course of history, the area of Slovakia belonged to several different countries which had different systems of governance impacted by different ideologies. The notion of Slovakness or Slovak nation started being visible through the Slovak National Revival in the 19th century. At this time, the area of today's Slovakia belonged to Hungary.

During the strife for the various rights of Slovaks (depending on the specific era), the overarching attitude towards women was rather conservative. Women being mothers was seen as a service and duty to the Slovak nation (Škorvanková, 2018). Thus one can assume

that the rights of women were not overly important to the men who were fighting for the rights of Slovaks. Since many advocates for Slovak rights were writers, the attitudes of the times are also reflected in the texts that students often read and analyse. It is important to remember that Slovakia did not exist yet, and these advocates lived in 19th century's Hungary.

In 19th century's Hungary, women were part of public society to some degree - through societies or organisations (later also through trade unions that allowed them to join) (Pető, 2001). These organisations, often charity-focused, were also tied with the idea of women as caretakers, or with a religious aspect. They were not coordinated based on their missions, and the aims were not overly political (Pető, 2001). Towards the end of the 19th century, women were slowly becoming a bigger part of societies also through their jobs (despite attempted restraints) (Nóbik, 2017). They established organisations focused on the elimination of discriminatory laws against women (especially fighting for voting laws) (Pető, 2001). However, in Hungary, universal suffrage was not guaranteed to men either prior to 1918 (Lengyelová, 2006). The whole movement for women's rights has transformed post 1918, however, at that point Slovakia was no longer part of Hungary, but a part of Czechoslovakia instead.

The First Czechoslovak Republic was a democracy. It granted men and women equal civil and political rights, and it also abolished formal barriers that women were facing if they wanted to pursue education or work (Škorvanková, 2018). During this era, the number of women and girls who were working, studying at universities or high schools, increased (Škorvanková, 2018).

However, this situation was not eternal. In 1938, Slovakia led by the HSĽS party, gained autonomy and immediately started actively attempting to limit women's rights by imposing legal restrictions on women's presence in public life, including on employing married women (Škorvanková, 2018; Škorvanková, 2019). The rhetoric used to justify restriction of women's rights mentioned God and Christian order - God made women to stay at home and be mothers (Škorvanková, 2019). During this time, restrictions were imposed also on education of women (Škorvanková, 2018). This only accelerated after Slovak State was created in March 1939. The ideal place for women as declared by the

state was at home as mothers and housewives, married women were let go from their places of employment, and limits were imposed on the education of women (Škorvanková, 2018). Through the limits on education, it was also possible to limit access to employment of women, and even during the course of education, the role of women as mothers was emphasised (Škorvanková, 2018).

After Czechoslovakia was reunited following the end of the Second World War, it quickly fell under the Soviet sphere of influence and so began the roughly 40-year long era of socialism. Liberation of women was part of the liberation of the working class, which pushed women into the working sphere and thus changed the status quo, in which women (particularly women in Slovakia) were encouraged (by policies) to stay at home (Wagnerová, 2009). However, women working did not eliminate other forms of inequality, such as unequal distribution of household tasks and caretaking, or accessibility of position in management (Wagnerová, 2009). Women and men were made equal by law in 1949 (Wagnerová, 2009). However, the theoretical model the socialist party claimed, which intended on liberating women from the unpaid labour in their households, or as caretakers (which was also seen as ideal previously), was never actually put into practice (Wagnerová, 2009). These tasks were still seen as women's jobs (Verdery, 1994). In practice, women became more educated than before, and thus qualified to work in more positions. Women's identities, however, were workers first and mothers/caretakers second, but they were still mothers and caretakers (Wagnerová, 2009). Later, in the 1960s, the dogmatic approach towards the role of women changed for a more realistic one, also following research linking psychological disorders and inability to build a strong emotional bond with someone, with the caretaking facilities where children were often put while their mothers worked (Wagnerová, 2009). This led to a change of outlook on raising children and transported it back to families, also through enabling women to stay at home longer (Wagnerová, 2009). In practice, there were policies and measures that gave women more rights and capabilities to exist in the public sphere, but that was still heavily gender-segregated (Verdery, 1994; Wagnerová, 2009).

Following the Velvet revolution in 1989, the past regime has left certain marks on the Czech and Slovak societies. On the one hand, women were educated, incorporated into the workforce, and self-reliant (Wagnerová, 2009). However, for many people, things that were regarded as positive during the socialist regime were negative (following the logic

that the socialist regime was bad, therefore things it brought upon were also bad), and that included the rights of women and their presence in the workforce (Maďarová, 2017; Sokačová, 2009). Czechoslovak elites living abroad were also often critical of feminism, and that possibly contributed to women's rights and feminism not being seen as important, and some even wishing that women "went back to the kitchen" (Balcárková, 2020; Sokačová, 2009). Another thing that possibly contributed to this notion was the Catholic church, as the activities of the Slovak Catholic Church and various other Christian groups still fight against feminism (Maďarová, 2015; Wallace-Lorencová, 2003).

The notions that women should be housewives and stay at home mothers while men make money still exists in Slovakia (European Commission, 2019). But even if the idea disappeared, the division would still likely work in practice, as, according to Bútorová (2008), even in cases when people thought more equally divided duties were ideal, they were not actually practicing that.

Slovakia nominally has equality of women and men, and has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). One part of the Convention notes that signatory states are to take measures to eliminate not just discrimination against women in the legal perspective, but in social and cultural ones as well, including gender stereotypes, with examples of the measures including revising textbooks (United Nations, 1979). Equality between men and women is part of the Slovak curriculum (Národný inštitút vzdelávania a mládeže, 2022). However, Slovak textbooks include stereotypical depictions of genders (Bosá, 2004). Slovakia also is not party to the Istanbul Convention, which is a convention by Council of Europe against violence against women (Council of Europe, 2023).

Capability Approach and Hermeneutical Justice

Legality is far from the only determinant in people's actual abilities . (Sen, 2001) Capability approach takes that into account. Capability approach is multidisciplinary and can be applied to a variety of social sciences (Robeyns, 2017). Its main purpose is to be able to evaluate what people can actually choose to do, while human agency and the element of choice are crucial (Sen, 2001). Rather than focusing just on what one is

allowed to do by law, the focus is on their actual abilities. If, for instance, one is allowed by law to be educated, but it is not free and they come from a poor family, it may not be possible for them to get education, even if they are not prevented by law. This approach can be used in a multitude of disciplines and contexts, and for a variety of purposes, and it is highly adaptable to what one needs - which is why it is called an approach rather than a theory (Robeyns, 2017).

The element of agency is crucial in this approach, because it means freedom to choose (Sen, 2001). This freedom is connected to the conventional human rights and freedoms (Nussbaum, 2011). It also implies certain political and civil rights, and social and economical arrangements (Sen, 2001). Lack of freedom is contradicting the capability approach, and that includes discrimination or non-democratic governments (Sen, 2001).

In the capability approach, we need to understand the terms “capability” and “functioning”. Capability is what one can do, functioning is a realised capability (Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 2001). For instance, one could have the opportunity to study robotics in high school without any hurdles to overcome should they desire to do so (capability), and thus would face a choice. If this person wanted to study robotics and chose to do so, then this capability would turn into functioning. If they decided against it, then it would not be a functioning.

Martha Nussbaum in her book *Creating Capabilities* (2011) defined ten central capabilities she believed to be crucial in order for one to live a life with dignity. These capabilities are sorted into categories as such: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; control over one’s environment. While phrased rather vaguely, among these capabilities, there are several concepts that might be familiar to us through human rights. Those are not mutually exclusive, since h, according to Nussbaum, the language of human rights is crucial to these capabilities, to show the importance of that matter.

However, not all capabilities can be translated into human rights exactly. While education is a human right (United Nations, 1948; United Nations, 1979; United Nations, 1990), Nussbaum (2011) does not just mention education, but also the ability to think while being informed and educated appropriately - which is not exactly translatable into a legal

document. However, it does mean that in order for a human to lead a life with dignity, they need to be able to think informed thoughts supported by education.

In Nussbaum's (2016) framework, education is also crucial for a healthy democracy. Not only from the perspective of human rights (respect to human rights and democracy are interconnected (Council of Europe, n.d.; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1993; United Nations, n.d.)), and education is a right (United Nations, 1948; United Nations, 1979; United Nations, 1990), but also for keeping the democracy running in a productive, healthy manner (Nussbaum, 2016). Nussbaum specifically mentioned education in which class discussions and essays with thorough feedback are regular. In order for this to happen, students need to be given tools to learn to do it, without that, not all would have the capability.

Thus we arrive at the second concept of this sub-chapter: hermeneutical justice and injustice. Hermeneutical injustice is a sub-type of epistemic injustice, which focuses on injustice as far as knowledge is concerned (Fricker, 2007). Hermeneutical injustice is essentially about the unjust lack of ability to understand or explain one's experiences (for instance, because the words that exist are not accurate and lead to misunderstanding). The capability to think while being informed and educated (Nussbaum, 2011) should also include the ability to express one's experiences accurately, otherwise the capability cannot be fully realised. Hermeneutical justice is counteracting hermeneutical injustice, so if hermeneutical injustice is not knowing a word for one's experience, hermeneutical justice would be knowing this word. Making sense of one's feelings and experiences is part of justice according to Fricker (2007), and is part of the ten central capabilities as defined by Nussbaum (2011), therefore these concepts are connected. If Fricker's concept of hermeneutical justice is connected to the one of Nussbaum's central capabilities, then it should also work the other way round. This specific capability in Nussbaum's list relates to education, since education helps people make sense of the world. Thus, education has to be part of hermeneutical justice or injustice. If we are not taught about specific concepts or words that would make sense of our experiences fully, then we do not have the capability of thinking in an informed, educated way. Capability approach and hermeneutical injustice are interconnected and they shall be viewed as such in the context of this work.

If functioning is a realised capability (Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 2001), then hermeneutical justice (being able to make sense of one's experiences (Fricker, 2007) is a functioning. The possibility of hermeneutical justice would be a capability that falls under one of the ten central capabilities as Nussbaum codified it (2011), and actual hermeneutical justice would be its realised possibility, thus a functioning.

The language of hermeneutical justice and injustice adds an important normative framework. While Nussbaum's notion (2011) of human dignity in the ten central capabilities is crucial, so is the notion of injustice when some of the central capabilities are not able to be fulfilled. If someone is affected by hermeneutical injustice, they are wronged, and the just thing to do is to right this wrong (Fricker, 2007). Hermeneutical injustice can be solved, and hermeneutical justice can be realised, through education.

Hermeneutical injustice can be solved, and hermeneutical justice can be realised, through education.

Discourse and norm creation

Invisibility is connected to some types of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007). If a word labelling certain experience is unknown (or invisible) to someone who experienced it, they cannot use it to understand their experience. Therefore, the experience remains invisible. Foucault's idea of censorship corresponds with this proposal. Invisibility leads to silence, which in turn makes the object upon which this silence is imposed, disappear (Foucault, 1978).

Part of this invisibility is also delegating topics to their spaces, and pushing them out from others (Foucault, 1978). The division of spaces into the private space (for women) and public space (for men) is an example of this (Baluchová, 2010; Bútorová, 2008). Women are thus less visible than men. According to Baluchová (2010), there is an imbalance in the presence of men and women represented in media, with men being much more present.

Another issue with media are the stereotypical depictions of genders (Baluchová, 2010). Those conform with the cultural ideas of masculinity and femininity as defined above, and occur in storytelling media such as books or TV shows, but also beyond, according to Baluchová. Additionally, they are also present in textbooks that are used in schools (Baluchová, 2010; Osad'an et al., 2018). Literature textbooks as books that focus on analysis of media (in this case literary books) would then face both problems at the same time.

The textbooks, which have been approved by the state, model students into whatever behavior the state deems most appropriate (Bosá, 2004). If gender roles, norms, and stereotypes are shown and taught unquestioningly, then they are being used in the codification of the behavior (Bosá, 2004; Osad'an et al., 2018). However, if roles and stereotypes are present but questioned, according to Bosá, they lose their power and thus do not codify the behavior.

Gender equality is one of the aspects that can help determine the health of a democracy (Freedom House, 2024). However, there is more to equality than just law (Sen, 2001). In Slovakia, by law, men and women are equal (and this equality is also considered an important value in the curriculum) (Národný inštitút vzdelávania a mládeže, 2022). Still, stereotypes are present in the mindset of people (Bútorová, 2008). These stereotypes also occur in textbooks used in schools, and unless they are questioned, they keep their power (Bosá, 2004). According to Nussbaum (2016), discussions in class (especially about art and literature) are crucial for education towards a healthy democracy. Those are values the Slovak educational system covets. However, students need to be given tools to discuss and analyse the materials they encounter in classrooms. Without the tools, they are not guaranteed to have the capability to do those tasks, and thus be educated in a manner that is needed for a healthy democracy. This thesis proposes a hypothesis that Slovak high school literature textbooks do not give students tools to analyse or question gender roles, norms, and stereotypes. Questioning of these roles, norms, and stereotypes contributes to gender equality which is crucial for the quality of democracy.

Methodology

Goal of the thesis

The goal of the thesis is to analyse the textbooks that are being used in high school literature classes and are, at the moment of writing, approved and sponsored by the Ministry of Education (thus one can suppose the ministry finds them and their content appropriate and in line with the objectives) from the perspective of gender roles and stereotypes. This is to be achieved by doing a content analysis of those textbooks. The results of it shall be further analysed through the operationalised lens of capability approach combined with hermeneutical justice, to see whether the textbooks (and by extension, the ministry) actually support and encourage students to analyse the depictions of gender roles and stereotypes.

Content analysis

Content analysis was chosen as the ideal approach because of the goal of the thesis. It is one thing for the Ministry of Education to state their goals verbally and formally, but putting it to practice is another thing. Textbooks are a way through which the Ministry of Education can realise their vision which was created in the curriculum as of November 2024. Ministry of Education approves textbooks and accompanying titles and should the schools want to buy these books for their students, the Ministry subsidises it partially (Ministerstvo školstva, výskumu, vývoja a mládeže Slovenskej republiky, n.d.). The Ministry of Education has a list of textbooks that are approved for these purposes. High school literature textbooks that the Ministry has approved have been published by six different publishers and they include several sets of textbooks which are designed to lead the students and their teachers throughout all the years of high school, but there are also additional books (such as preparatory materials for exams, books with just the texts and accompanying exercises, or exercise books).

Since the goal of the thesis was to analyse the textbooks used in literature classes in Slovak high schools for the aforementioned reasons, content analysis was the natural choice. The point of content analysis is to note and analyse patterns in communication (Luo, 2019). Due to its nature requiring only one person (the researcher), it is more

flexible than research methods such as surveys or interviews which rely on other people. However, it can be time-consuming and subjective to a certain degree, despite safety measures (Luo, 2019). To prevent the effects of subjectivity as much as possible in this thesis, the categories were defined as precisely as possible.

Material for analysis

The material chosen for the analysis consists of several literature textbooks and accompanying books that have been approved by the Slovak Ministry of Education for the use in high schools. The method of choosing the specific books was searching through the list of Ministry-approved textbooks and additional books for literature for high schools and then checking the accessibility of each. The Ministry of Education has approved tens of books and collections of texts for high school literature classes published by several publishers (among others, by Orbis Pictus Istropolitana, TAKTIK and Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo - Mladé Letá). To analyse them, however, one needs to have access to the material (ideally in a virtual format rather than a physical one due to financial and spatial reasons). It was challenging to find textbooks that were available for free (for very understandable reasons, as it costs money to write them, publish them and produce them). For this reason, the books that were eventually chosen to be analysed were the ones published by Orbis Pictus Istropolitana, as they are (as of 2024) available online for free after one registers with their website. The books are:

- Literatúra pre 1. Ročník SŠ (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Lábaj, published in 2020)
- Literatúra pre 2. Ročník SŠ (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Mezelová, published in 2020)
- Literatúra pre 3. Ročník SŠ (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Mezelová, published in 2020)
- Literatúra pre 4. Ročník SŠ (by Caltíková, Štarková, Polakovičová, Mezelová, published in 2020)
- Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 1 (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Lábaj, published in 2020)
- Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 2 (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Mezelová, published in 2013)

- Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 3 (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Mezelová, published in 2014)
- Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 4 (by Polakovičová, Caltíková, Štarková, Mezelová, published in 2013)

The textbooks (those starting with the word “Literatúra”) include several categories of content, according to their guide in the first book. Apart from the texts and exercises tied to the excerpts, they include social and historical context of the excerpts, literary context, theory, a summary of the literary piece if applicable (if the text cannot be included in its entirety in the book due to its length, for instance), a short section about the author, if applicable, interesting facts about a topic related to the text or era, tasks for broadening the perspectives (ideas on what to read or watch tied to the topic), and some connection to visual art, if applicable. The textbooks go over literature chronologically, they are divided into segments, and after each of those, there is a brief quiz to prepare students for an exam. This examination segment generally includes one or two texts from the era the segment was about, and the students are tasked with analysing it. This is similar to some of the questions in the segments, tied to the excerpts of pieces of literature. However, the questions in the quiz are generally simpler and clearer, either asking for a short answer, or to pick out of four options, unlike the exercises connected to the excerpts. Those also include similar questions, but, since they are to be used during the class or studying time, they may include discussion topics or presentation assignments. The discussion or presentation topics are generally somehow tied to the excerpt, either by analysing the topics touched upon in the excerpt, or by asking to analyse those specific excerpts (or parts of them). Some of the exercises are not connected to specific excerpts of mandatory readings, but to the whole books. In very rare cases, the exercises are not connected to any text (in those cases, they are usually about a specific era).

The books with texts and exercises (Zbierka textov a úloh) are shorter than the textbooks, since they include additional texts and exercises but not the social, historical, or literary context, and they also contain fewer texts than the textbooks. These are to be used alongside the textbooks, serving similarly to workbooks. Occasionally, an exercise in the textbook calls for a comparison with a text from the workbook or vice versa.

For the topic of this bachelor thesis, the most crucial part to analyse were the exercises, which were generally tied to the various excerpts, but there were also several standalone exercises. These exercises were designed in order to make the students think about and analyse the literature they were reading. They provide a starting point for it, an idea of what to look for or into when analysing literature (or other media that the books' authors added as an example). Naturally, in order to be able to fully analyse these exercises, one needs to be familiar with the excerpts they are tied to. Those could be analysed as well, but that would be answering a different question, focusing more on the aspect of which literature is chosen to be taught at high schools. In the framework of this research, the excerpts provide a context for the questions that are being asked or omitted from the exercises, but themselves are not analysed beyond adding this contextual understanding.

What can also bring additional content pertinent to this research are the sections focusing on the social and historical backgrounds, authors' sections, or the section for interesting pieces of information. Those are mostly offering information rather than inspiring class activities or projects, but nonetheless they can inspire a student to think about certain aspects of existence, such as gender, in the context of whichever excerpt they are reading.

Majority of the analysis focuses on the exercises tied to texts, but texts that are not tied to exercises are included as well.

Analysis

The gathering of the data is done through looking over the books and answering three questions about each excerpt, the questions and exercises tied to it. Those three questions are: 1) Does the text mention any gendered characters? 2) In what way were genders/gendered characters depicted? 3) How was gender addressed in the exercises?

The first question (whether the text contains mentions of gendered characters) has two possible answers - yes and no. If the answer is no, the second question (about how were gendered characters depicted) is skipped.

The second question (in what way were the gendered characters depicted) has four possible answers, their coding ranging from 1 to 4. Originally, it ranged from 1 to 3 only, with 1 standing for lack of discernible biases, 2 for implicit gender norms or stereotypes, and 3 for explicit stereotypes and norms, or those that were enforced violently. The distinction between codes 2 and 3 in cases of no violence is specifically about whether the text mentions gender roles or stereotypes with obligation. If it does, like in *Statky-Zmätky* by Tajovský (where a female character is told she is supposed to do whatever her husband wants her to do by another character), then it is code 3. If it just describes how someone behaves, or the obligation is connected to a different issue than gender, the code is 2, like in *Demokrati* by Jesenský, where a male character wants to pursue a relationship with a female character, but feels they cannot due to their different social classes. However, upon the beginning of the analysis, these codes were not sufficient. Another category had to be added for texts that mention gendered character(s) but those characters are only of one gender, meaning the second gender was not mentioned in the texts at all. This category became answer 4.

The third question is about the way exercises deal with gender and it is applied to all exercises. There were four possible answers, coding them from 1 to 4. If the exercises do not mention gender in any way, and they do not encourage discussion on a topic to which gender is related, the code is 1. If the exercise allows discussion about gender but does not specifically prompt it, the code is 2. For instance, the exercises tied to *Demokrati* by Jesenský (used in the textbook for third year's students) asked students to discuss how different characters perceived the issue of equality. While it mentions characters, it does not explicitly ask about gendered aspects, those may be brought up connected with equality. If the exercise prompts to question gender roles and stereotypes related to characters, it is code 3. For instance, exercises tied to *Simplicius Simplicissimus* by von Grimmelshausen (used in the workbook for first year's students) include prompts to discussion about a female character dressing up as a boy to "keep her virtue" and the connection of virtue and virginity. If the exercise prompts to question gender issues in general, the code is 4. An example of that was in exercises connected to *Dievča v rozkvet* by Smrek and *Dravý pocit* by Lukáč in the third year's textbook. Students were prompted to discuss the women's position in society, or their idea about a relationship between a man and a woman.

Some exercises were connected to multiple texts. Those cases were counted as if they were two identical sets of exercises, because it was easier to do it that way to compare the rates of different answers to question 2 and question 3. On the other hand, some exercises were not connected to any texts. In that case, the first two questions were not answered, only the third one. Occasionally, exercises were connected to a book from mandatory reading, in which case the second question (about the depiction of gendered characters within the excerpt) was not answered because there was no excerpt.

After gathering and coding the information, statistics were made. First, the focus was on each separate book. For each book, there were counts of each code for each question. Then the statistics for the proportions of codes under the third question were filtered based on whether the analysed exercises were connected to a text with gendered character(s), without gendered character(s), or no text at all. The following subchapters (First years' books - Fourth years' books) include charts showing these statistics for each book. In these charts, for the sake of readability, abbreviated names for categories had to be used. The charts in these subchapters all follow the same pattern, which shall be explained in this section.

Question 1 refers to whether the excerpt includes gendered character(s). The answers are then X gendered and Y not gendered, meaning that X texts include gendered character(s) and Y texts do not. Question 2 refers to how were gendered characters depicted in the excerpts that include gendered characters, and it was only applied to the texts that included gendered character(s). Codes for Q2 refer to the codes of this question, 1 meaning there was no discernible bias, 2 meaning gender roles were depicted in an implicit manner, 3 meaning gender roles were explicit or violently enforced, and 4 meaning there were characters of only one gender. All refers to the number of all texts in this category for easier comparison. Question 3 all refers to whether/how did the exercises address gendered issues in all the exercises without any filter applied. Code for Q3 refer to the codes for this question. 1 means there were no prompts or opening for discussion of gendered issues, 2 meaning there was an opening for discussion of gendered issues if the students brought it up, 3 meaning that there was a prompt for discussion of gendered characters, and 4 meaning there was a prompt for discussion of gendered issues not related to characters. All, again, refers to the number of all texts in this category for easier comparison. The following names for columns refer to the various filters through which

results of Question 3 were put. Question 3 G refers to the results of question 3 but only for the exercises tied to gendered texts. Question 3 non-G refers to the results of question 3 but only for exercises tied to texts that were not gendered. Question 3 free refers to the results of question 3 but only for exercises that were not tied to any texts.

Following that, there is a second layer of analysis, which was done on the level of types of books (textbooks, exercise books, or both of them together). This analysis compares the results of how were genders depicted in the excerpts (question 2) to how was gender addressed in the questions tied to the excerpts (question 3). This is done in the sub-chapter Analysis Overview, and it includes 3 charts which follow a specific pattern explained below.

Q2 stands for “Question 2” (how were genders depicted in the excerpt), with codes 1 (no discernible bias), 2 (implicit bias/gender roles), 3 (explicit/violently enforced gender roles/bias) and 4 (only characters of one gender depicted). Question 3 refers to how the exercises address gendered issues, with codes 1 (no prompt or opening for a class discussion of these issues), 2 (opening for a class discussion of these issues if the students bring it up), 3 (prompt for analysis of gendered characters’ behavior), and 4 (prompt for analysis of gender issues in general). Active prompt refers to question 3 codes 3 and 4 (in which the books specifically prompt students to analyse gender issues).

All charts include percentage rates, which are rounded to the first decimal.

After the information on the content of the books has been gathered, the data shall be analysed to see how, or whether the textbooks dealt with the question of gender roles and stereotypes. The analysis shall focus on the exercises with the texts providing context. The analysis is to be done through the lens of the capability approach combined with hermeneutical justice - specifically questioning whether the students are given the tools to question gender issues related to the excerpts, and how effective the tools are. Ideally, there should be a balance between the rates of texts enforcing gender roles harshly, and the amount of prompts asking students to question gender roles.

First years' books

The first year's textbook (*Literatúra pre 1. ročník SŠ*) covers the biggest timespan of literature from all the books, from Antiquity to Classicism.

In the Figure 1, the full overview of the analysis of this textbook is visible. While all texts were noted in the research, along with all the exercises, not all the texts were connected to exercises, and not all exercises were connected to texts. Additionally, the book also included exercises for entire books (parts of mandatory/recommended reading), which also contributed to the discrepancy in numbers between gendered texts and questions.

The reason there are 72 gendered texts but only 71 are analysed in Question 2 is that one of the texts is a book rather than an excerpt.

Based on the chart, the largest proportion of gendered texts only include reference to one gendered character (33,8%), which in the case of this textbook is only men. The largest proportion of exercise blocks also does not encourage or enable discussion of gender-related issues (63,3%), the proportion of which changes based on which kind of text (if any) the exercise block is tied to (50,7% with gendered texts, 72,7% with (unaligned) exercises not connected to any text, and 92,6% with non gendered texts). Since the majority of exercise blocks are tied to gendered texts, that percentage is dragging the overall numbers down. Exercise blocks tied to gendered texts include the majority of prompts to question gendered characters or notions in general (only one prompt being found in a different section).

Figure 1*First Year Textbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
99 texts	100	all	71	100	all	109	100	71	100	27	100	11	100
72 gendered	72,7	1	21	29,6	1	69	63,3	36	50,7	25	92,6	8	72,7
27 not gendered	27,3	2	17	23,9	2	22	20,2	18	16,5	2	7,4	2	18,2
		3	9	12,7	3	11	10,1	10	14,1	0	0	1	9,1
		4	24	33,8	4	7	6,4	7	9,9	0	0	0	0

In the case of the exercise book (*Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 1*), the rates are rather similar. That is likely because this book is supplementary to the textbook analysed above. The most crucial difference in the context of this bachelor's thesis is that while the majority of exercise blocks prompting students to question gendered notions either in the context of characters or in general is still in exercise blocks tied to gendered texts, there were three exercise blocks outside of those that prompted such questioning. Additionally, two of these composed half of the exercise blocks not tied to any text, which meant that half of unaligned exercise blocks prompted some form of questioning of gendered notions. More than 50% of all exercise blocks do not prompt or enable analysis or discussion of gendered issues, though.

Figure 2*First Year Workbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
48 texts	100	all	37	100	all	52	100	37	100	11	100	4	100
37 gendered	77,1	1	11	29,7	1	27	51,9	15	40,5	10	90,9	2	50
11 not gendered	22,9	2	8	21,6	2	13	25	13	35,1	0	0	0	0
		3	2	5,4	3	6	11,5	5	13,5	0	0	1	25
		4	16	43,2	4	6	11,5	4	10,8	1	9,1	1	25

Second year books

The students' book for the second year of high schools (*Literatúra pre 2. ročník SŠ*) covers literature of pre-romanticism, romanticism, post-romanticism, and realism.

In this book, the most prevalent type of gendered texts is no longer code 4 (only including one gender) but code 2 (implicit gender norms being present). Only one gender is mentioned in 20% of the texts (14) and in 2 of them, women are present or mentioned, the rest mention only men. Less than 50% of exercise blocks do not enable any discussion on gendered notions, though only 21% actively encourage such questioning (the rest are open to it but do not encourage it - code 2). Interestingly, 2 exercise blocks that encourage questioning of gendered notions in general are not tied to any text (the author expected this to happen in exercises connected with gendered texts).

Figure 3*Second Year Textbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
93 texts	100	all	70	100	all	100	100	72	100	21	100	7	100
72 gendered	77,4	1	20	28,6	1	49	49	24	33,3	20	95,2	5	71,4
21 non gendered	22,6	2	26	37,1	2	30	30	29	40,3	1	4,8	0	0
		3	10	14,3	3	13	13	13	18,1	0	0	0	0
		4	14	20,0	4	8	8	6	8,3	0	0	2	28,6

In the exercise book for the second year (*Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 2*), there are only 3 not gendered texts (8,6%), and no exercises are unaligned. Proportionally, the most prevalent type of gendered texts is code 2 (implicit gender norms), but code 1 (no discernible gender norms) and code 4 (only characters of one gender) are also rather prevalent (and both have the same prevalence). This book is less encouraging to questioning gendered notions than the previous ones, only explicitly encouraging doing so in 2 instances (code 3 and 4 of Question 3 together).

Figure 4*Second Year Workbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
35 texts	100	all	32	100	all	35	100	32	100	3	100	0	0
32 gendered	91,4	1	9	28,1	1	26	74,3	23	71,9	3	100	0	0
3 not gendered	8,6	2	11	34,4	2	7	20	7	21,9	0	0	0	0
		3	3	9,4	3	1	2,9	1	3,1	0	0	0	0
		4	9	28,1	4	1	2,9	1	3,1	0	0	0	0

Third years books

In the third year, students tackle topics of changes of literary realism, literary modernism, modern Slovak poetry, and return to the social function of literature, with the assistance of *Literatúra pre 3. ročník SŠ*. Almost half of the gendered texts include implicit gender norms, with almost one third including only those of one gender (in the case of this textbook, it was only men).

Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ (74,2%) of exercise blocks encouraged zero questioning of gendered notions nor did they allow students to bring it up in discussions. 12 exercise blocks (13,5%) enabled students to bring up gender issues on their own, which is more than the codes 3 and 4 (encouraging students to question gendered notions related to characters, and in general) combined. All cases of encouragement towards questioning gendered notions occurred in exercise blocks tied to gendered texts.

Figure 5*Third Year Textbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
80 texts	100	all	58	100	all	89	100	63	100	17	100	9	100
63 gendered	78,8	1	12	20,7	1	66	74,2	43	68,3	16	94,1	7	77,8
17 non gendered	21,3	2	27	46,6	2	12	13,5	9	14,3	1	5,9	2	22,2
		3	2	3,4	3	8	9	8	12,7	0	0	0	0
		4	17	29,3	4	3	3,4	3	4,8	0	0	0	0

In *Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 3* there are, again, no blocks of exercises that are not tied to any texts. More than half of gendered texts include implicit bias.

In this exercise book, there are no exercise blocks that prompt any questioning of gendered notions (neither tied to specific characters nor in general). Roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ (25,7%) are open to such concerns being raised by students in a discussion. All of those exercise blocks are tied to gendered texts (and make up more than $\frac{1}{3}$ (36%) of exercise blocks tied to gendered texts).

Figure 6*Third Year's Workbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free
35 texts	100	all	25	100	all	35	100	25	0	10	100	0
25 gendered	71,4	1	9	36	1	26	74,3	16	64	10	100	0
10 not gendered	28,6	2	13	52	2	9	25,7	9	36	0	0	0
		3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		4	3	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Fourth year books

In the fourth year, the topics in the *Literatúra pre 4. ročník SŠ* are “continuing the tradition of realism”, literature in totalitarian conditions, post-modernist literature, and contemporary Slovak literature.

In this book, very few exercise blocks are unaligned (4). Out of gendered texts, 24 (45,3%) include implicit gender norms, which is proportionally the largest part.

Vast majority of exercise blocks do not prompt the students to analyse or question gendered notions, with 67,4% not enabling students to even bring it up in discussions. Only in 5 exercise blocks was there encouragement (2 cases for analysing gendered notions of characters, and 3 for analysing gendered notions not tied to characters), altogether less than 6%. All of those occurred in exercise blocks tied to gendered texts.

Figure 7*Fourth Year Textbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
82 texts	100	all	53	100	all	86	100	58	100	24	100	4	100
58 gendered	70,7	1	16	30,2	1	58	67,4	38	65,5	20	83,3	0	0
24 not gendered	41,4	2	24	45,3	2	23	26,7	15	25,9	4	16,7	4	100
		3	2	3,8	3	2	2,3	2	3,4	0	0	0	0
		4	11	20,8	4	3	3,5	3	5,2	0	0	0	0

In the exercise book for fourth year students (*Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 4*), there are, again, no exercise blocks that are not tied to any text. Proportionally, the largest amount of gendered texts include implicit gender norms (40%), followed closely by texts that have no discernible gender bias (36%).

In total, only 2 exercise blocks encourage students to analyse and question gendered notions, one in relation to characters and one overall. Majority of the exercise blocks did not allow any questioning of gender, not even if the students brought it up themselves in a discussion.

Figure 8*Fourth Year Workbook Data*

Question 1	%	Code for Q2	Question 2	%	Code for Q3	Question 3 all	%	Question 3 G	%	Question 3 non-G	%	Question 3 free	%
38 texts	100	all	25	100	all	38	100	25	100	13	100	0	0
25 gendered	65,8	1	9	36	1	27	71,1	16	64	11	84,6	0	0
13 not gendered	34,2	2	10	40	2	9	23,7	7	28	2	15,4	0	0
		3	1	4	3	1	2,6	1	4	0	0	0	0
		4	5	20	4	1	2,6	1	4	0	0	0	0

Analysis overview

The books provide an overview of literature relevant to Slovakia over multiple historical eras. As society evolved, so did its perceptions of gender, and therefore the depictions also differ. Supposing the representation of texts in these books is representative for the various eras, it is logical that the ratios for the codes in Question 2 change in the books. In the books for first graders, the largest portion of gendered texts include only references to character(s) of one gender, men. In the rest of the books, the largest portions of gendered texts were those that included implicit expectations (such as *Bratova ruka* by Kalinčiak, *Demokrati* by Jesenský or *Kým kohút nezaspieva* by Bukovčan).

Out of the eight books, five had the rates of gender bias (combined codes 2, 3, and 4 for Question 2) within 2 percentage points around 70%, ranging from 69,8% to 71,9%. The highest rate of gender bias of all eight books was in *Literatúra pre 3. ročník SŠ* and it was 79,3%. The lowest rates were shared by *Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 3* and *Zbierka textov a úloh z literatúry 4* at 64%.

Altogether, there were 370 exercise blocks tied to gendered texts. Of those, 263 (71,7%) texts included gender bias as defined above. The most prevalent category was with implicit gender bias (36,8%).

Among all the books, only one allowed questioning of gendered notions in more than 50% of exercise blocks, the *Literatúra pre 2. ročník SŠ*. Looking at all the charts, one thing is visible - in the books for upper grades, there are fewer exercise blocks that prompt questioning of gender-related topics. This is especially visible in the exercise books (*Zbierka úloh z literatúry*). The exercise books overall encouraged less questioning of gender-related topics than the textbooks. When texts from all books were taken into account, looking at the code of gender presentation in the texts - 1 (no discernible gender bias), 2 (implicit gender norms present), 3 (explicit or violently enforced gender norms present), 4 (only mentions of one gender)) and the exercises connected to them revealed more information.

In the tables below, Q2 refers to Question 2 (the depiction of gender in texts) and the numbers under it correspond to the codes (1-4). Question 3 is about whether, and how, is gender addressed in the exercises, also with corresponding codes 1-4. Active prompt refers to the exercise blocks in which the book specifically prompted students to analyse gender issues (codes 3 and 4). The highest rate of active prompts is in the exercise blocks connected to texts which include explicit gender norms or norms that are imposed violently (code 3). The percentages vary depending on the type of book the table is about. When compared to the numbers for all the books, the exercise books have lower percentage of active prompts for exercise blocks except those that were tied to texts with only one gender mentioned.

Figure 9

All Books Data

		Question 3									
Q2		1		2		3		4		Active prompt	
1	108	64	59,3%	29	26,9%	11	10,2%	3	2,8%	14	13%
2	136	66	48,5%	45	33,1%	13	9,6%	12	8,8%	25	18,4%
3	29	8	27,6%	6	20,7%	8	27,6%	7	24,1%	15	51,7%
4	98	70	71,4%	21	21,4%	5	5,1%	2	2%	7	7,1%

Figure 10

Textbooks Data

		Question 3									
Q2		1		2		3		4		Active prompt	
1	70	40	57,1%	18	25,7%	10	14,3%	1	1,4%	11	15,7%
2	94	45	47,9%	28	29,9%	10	10,6%	11	11,7%	21	22,3%
3	23	6	26,1%	4	17,4%	6	26,1%	7	30,4%	13	56,5%
4	65	47	72,3%	15	23,1%	3	4,6%	0	0%	3	4,6%

Figure 11

Exercise Books Data

		Question 3									
Q2		1		2		3		4		Active prompt	
1	38	24	63,2%	11	28,9%	1	2,6%	2	5,3%	3	7,9%
2	42	21	50%	17	40,5%	3	7,1%	1	2,1%	4	9,5%
3	6	2	33,3%	2	33,3%	2	33,3%	0	0%	2	33,3%
4	33	23	69,7%	6	18,2%	2	6,1%	2	6,1%	4	12,1%

Thesis result and Discussion

The hypothesis for this paper was that the Slovak high school textbooks do not give students the tools to analyse gender-related issues and that might have a negative effect on the quality of democracy. However, the textbooks do give students these tools to a certain degree, therefore the hypothesis was disproven.

Based on the analysis as seen in the previous chapter, one can see that the percentages of exercise blocks that encourage students to question gender-related issues, or even bring it up themselves in a discussion, is lower in books for the third and fourth graders. In the books for third and fourth graders, however, one can see higher rates of texts that include implicit gender norms, though the rates of explicit or violently enforced gender norms are lower than in the books for first and second graders. While there are without doubt exercises that prompt questioning of gender-related issues or enable discussions on such topics, the rates are rather low compared to the rates of texts that show gender bias (codes 2, 3, and 4 for question 2). The numbers are not balanced.

The students are given tools to analyse gender issues at the beginning of their studies. As they grow older, the tools are disappearing, despite the fact that the rates of texts that include implicit gender norms are higher. One could argue that this is to enable the students to come up with the topics of gender in the class discussions on their own. However, there is no visible pattern by which one can safely say that the rates of discussion questions are higher. Therefore, it cannot be stated that students are expected to bring gender issues up in discussions themselves as they get older. It just appears there are fewer opportunities for discussion as the students grow older.

Effectively, as the students grow up, they have fewer opportunities to discuss and analyse gender issues in relation to literature. In some of the exercise books, gender issues are not brought up at all in the exercise blocks. Ignoring and not addressing gender norms and stereotypes just makes them invisible, and does not foster a discussion, which is necessary for democracy (Bosá, 2004; Nussbaum, 2016). Additionally, the texts in the books include topics such as relational issues, sexuality, or army and war, and by not putting names on these realities or discussing them, and by ignoring them, one could argue the students are disadvantaged should they encounter

such issues at some point in their lives. This disadvantage would be a form of epistemic injustice, specifically hermeneutical injustice, as the student would be at risk of lacking the ability to understand their experience (Fricker, 2007).

Hermeneutical injustice is combated through education, which is why analysing the various gendered issues in literature textbooks is important. If that is not done, the stereotypes that are depicted keep their strength (Bosá, 2004). They are also contradictory to equality and human rights documents such as CEDAW (UN, 1979). This, combined with the lack of tools for analysis of the gender aspects of literature, creates a system, in which, according to the Ministry of Education (in charge of approving the books), analysing gender issues is not prioritised. That has real life ramifications on enforcing gender stereotypes and achieving gender equality.

According to Nussbaum (2016), literature is among the classes that need to be taught with a lot of discussions and writing, encouraging critical thinking about the matters. The Slovak educational system encourages a certain amount of discussion, but due to the lack of balance between texts with gender bias and exercises that encourage analysis of gender issues, students are not enabled to fully engage with the material. That then means that students are not prepared for a life in a healthy democracy.

The rights of vulnerable groups are a crucial indicator of the quality of democracy. Specifically due to lack of those Slovakia lost points in Freedom House's democracy quality ranking (2024). Conservative groups in Slovakia often find issue with aspects of gender equality (Maďarová, 2015). That is not to say that the textbooks are what is causing it, but that they are part of the environment that is not sufficiently for equality, and thus non-democratic.

An aspect which could be further analysed is what is actually happening in the classrooms, rather than textbooks. Alternatively, the content analysis could take into consideration context of each of the texts within the analysis, however, that was beyond the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

Education is crucial for people to be prepared for their lives, and it is considered a human right (United Nations, 1948; United Nations, 1979; United Nations, 1990). Human rights, for which equality is a central factor, can thus far only be reliably observed in a democratic regime (Council of Europe, n.d.; United Nations, n.d.). Education thus plays a major role in preserving the health of democracy (Nussbaum, 2016). The Slovak curriculum includes the values of respect to human rights and democracy at its centre (Národný inštitút vzdelávania a mládeže, 2022; Štátny pedagogický ústav, 2015; Štátny pedagogický ústav, n.d.). Rights of vulnerable groups, including women, are indicators of the health of democracy (Freedom House, 2024; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2024). As such, education systems need to also take that into account when preparing curricula.

Curricula, and especially materials used in education, can spread further various stereotypes, such as gender stereotypes, and thus cement them (Bosá, 2004). Textbooks, along with other media, are creating norms, not only through showing certain desirable behaviours and character traits, but also through not showing others that are not desirable (Bútorová, 2008; Foucault, 1978). This creates invisibility of the behaviours and traits that are not shown. By making the undesirable invisible, it makes people less likely to know about it or understand it, thus participating in hermeneutical injustice.

Hermeneutical injustice is defined as injustice occurring when someone is unable to understand or explain their experiences due to a knowledge gap which occurred due to injustice, such as discrimination (Fricker, 2007). It can be connected with Nussbaum's (2011) capability approach, which also focuses on justice, and includes knowledge-based capabilities. Capability approach in general focuses on what people can actually do, not just what they are legally allowed to do, or what they might have the economic means to do (Sen, 2001). Nussbaum's framework is connected to human rights as well, seeing human rights as a legal expression of the central capabilities. Dignity and equality are at the centre of capability approach (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2001).

Equality includes gender equality, in Slovak contexts also known as equality of men and women. Due to the Slovak context of this thesis, gender is understood as a binary division

of population into men and women, and gender roles are viewed as biologically-based (Bútorová, 2008). Certain traits and characteristics are connected with each gender, grouped into the concepts of femininity and masculinity. Throughout the more recent Slovak history, women and men were not equal. That was the case even during eras which officially stated that men and women are equal, and contributed to women's rights and capabilities. Even today, despite Slovakia being party to a variety of international treaties and other legal documents binding them to work towards gender equality, it is not guaranteed (Bútorová, 2008; European Commission, 2019).

Gender equality is an indicator of quality of democracy, and while Slovakia legally has it, de facto there is still gender discrimination (Freedom House, 2024; Bútorová, 2008). Because of this, Slovakia lost several points in the evaluation of the health of democracy (Freedom House, n.d.). However, education is another aspect of democracy, and, in comparison with many other EU countries, Slovakia is scoring low in quality of education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). Since education can also aid in spreading gender stereotypes, one could wonder if the students are being given the tools to consider gender related issues critically (Bosá, 2004). The hypothesis of this thesis is that they are not, and that this can negatively impact the quality of democracy.

The context analysis this thesis is using has focused on books that the Slovak Ministry of Education has approved to be used by high school students in literature classes. The books include a textbook and a workbook for each grade, and the two types of books are supposed to be used together. The focus of evaluation were primarily the exercises, which in these books were typically tied to readings. However, the readings were also examined to a certain degree, to provide some context for the environment of the books.

Each text was evaluated through two questions: first about whether there are any gendered characters (yes or no), second about how were the gendered characters depicted. The second question required an answer between 1 and 4, 1 meaning there was no discernible gender bias, 2 if the bias was implicit, 3 if the bias was explicit or violently enforced, and 4 if there were only characters of one gender. Each exercise block was then evaluated through asking how were gender issues addressed in the exercises (1 stood for no prompt to think or discuss gender, nor any ability to bring up gender as a point in a discussion, 2 stood for students being able to bring up gender related to a discussion question but the

exercise did not prompt that, 3 for exercise prompting analysis of gender issues related directly to characters, and 4 for exercise prompting analysis of gender issues not related to characters).

According to the analysis, in the beginning of their studies, students were prompted to think about gender more than in their later years, despite the proportion of texts containing implicit bias rising. However, even in the most favourable cases, the rates of texts that included instances of gender bias (answering anything but 1 to question 2) are not balanced with the rates of texts that encourage analysis of gender issues, or even just enable the discussion.

As such, students in the upper years are not given the tools to analyse gender issues they encounter in literature classes. Those texts also include serious topics such as relationships or sexuality, and without discussion and analysis, not only can they further gender biases, but also participate in hermeneutical injustice by not naming the issue.

Therefore, while the Ministry-approved books do encourage certain level of discussion and analysis of gender issues (proving the hypothesis false), the rate at which they do that is insufficient. And thus, the students are not sufficiently being prepared for a life in a healthy democracy (Nussbaum 2016). Furthering inequality is also against CEDAW, which Slovakia signed. Therefore, not only is the risk of endangering democracy directly present, but also it is against Slovakia's international agreements. Additionally, inequality, including gender inequality itself, is a threat to democracy. As such, even though the first half of the hypothesis was proven false, the concern about the health of democracy is still substantiated.

Resumé

Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce bolo zistiť, do akej miery je študentstvo slovenských stredných škôl podnecované skúmať a analyzovať rodové roly v literárnych textoch. Pri analýze sme kládli dôraz na úlohy, ktoré na texty nadväzovali, nie na samotné literárne diela. Predpokladali sme, že naša práca ukáže, že analyzované učebnice neposkytujú študentstvu nástroje na ciele diskusiu o rodových rolách, normách a stereotypoch, čo môže mať negatívny efekt na kvalitu demokracie na Slovensku.

Vzdelávanie a demokracia sú úzko prepojené. Bez vzdelávania kvalitná demokracia nevie fungovať, pretože vzdelávanie dáva ľuďom možnosť zapojiť sa do demokratického chodu spoločnosti - najprv cez schopnosť čítať a písať, potom aj cez kritické myslenie (ktoré s čítaním súvisí). Slovensko sa nachádza na posledných priečkach v rebríčkoch kvality vzdelávania v porovnaní s inými krajinami OECD, a na základe World Population Review Slovensko je demokraciou, ale s vadami.

Rod a vnímanie rodov na Slovensku sa počas histórie vyvíjalo. Napríklad počas Slovenského národného obrodzenia dochádzalo k diskriminácii a diferencovaniu rolí žien a mužov - kým muži mali byť činní vo verejnom živote, ženy mali byť doma a starať sa o domácnosť. V oboch prípadoch malo ísť o službu národu. Obzvlášť viditeľné rozdiely v ponímaní spoločenských rolí boli aj počas obdobia druhej svetovej vojny, kedy boli prijaté opatrenia na to, aby pracovalo čo najmenej žien. Napriek tomu, že ženy (ako robotníčky) boli v rámci ideológie počas obdobia komunizmu vnímané rovnocenne s mužmi, v každodennom živote to tak nefungovalo, i keď sa podmienky žien jednoznačne zlepšili. A napriek tomu, že demokracia, rovnosť a ľudské práva sú úzko prepojené, po Nežnej revolúcii a následnej demokratizácii nastal z pohľadu rodovej rovnosti istý regres. Tento fakt možno prisúdiť jednak k odporu voči predchádzajúcemu režimu (a tomu, čo priniesol), ako aj k rastúcemu vplyvu konzervatívnych cirkví.

Rod je definovaný ako spôsob sociálnej klasifikácie a sociálny konštrukt, ktorý sa v slovenskom kontexte často považuje za biologicky daný - na rod sa nahliada binárne a každému sa prisudzujú isté roly a stereotypy. Maskulinita a femininita sú ich stelesnením. Rodové roly sú v tejto práci chápané ako sociálne roly prisudzované ľuďom na základe ich predpokladaného rodu. Rodové stereotypy sú tu zasa očakávaniami a domnienkami odvíjajúcimi sa od rodu.

Femininita a maskulinita sú v literárnych textoch a podobne aj v masmédiách často vyobrazované stereotypne, pričom rozdelenie na súkromnú sféru (kam patria ženy) a verejnú sféru (kam patria muži) je opäť prítomné. Nezobrazovaním marginalizovaných skupín a javov ich médiá vlastne zneviditeľňujú, čím napomáhajú vzniku hermeneutickej nespravodlivosti. Podobné to je aj v školských učebniciach.

V tejto práci sme sa rozhodli spojiť koncept hermeneutickej nespravodlivosti s konceptom spôsobilostí. Ten druhý sa používa na analýzu toho, čo je človek skutočne schopný dosiahnuť, pričom okrem ekonomických a legálnych možností zohľadňuje aj tie spoločenské, historické a ďalšie. Martha Nussbaum vo svojej knihe “Creating Capabilities” kodifikovala desať hlavných spôsobilostí, bez ktorých človek nedokáže viesť dôstojný život. Vzdelanie síce nie je medzi nimi doslova menované, no niektoré z nich sa bez neho dosiahnuť nedajú (napríklad spôsobilosť “Zmysly, predstavivosť, myslenie” alebo “Praktické uvažovanie”).

Hermeneutická nespravodlivosť je podtypom epistemickej nespravodlivosti. Tá je podľa Mirandy Fricker nespravodlivosťou súvisiacou s nevedomosťou alebo neznalosťou. O hermeneutickej nespravodlivosti hovoríme vtedy, keď ľudia nedokážu pomenovať svoje zážitky, a teda im ani porozumieť. Ak je úlohou vzdelávania pomáhať ľuďom chápať svet, tak vzdelávanie musí byť dostatočne pripravené čeliť komplexitám dnešného sveta. Ak teda niektoré koncepty či slová nie sú zahrnuté do vyučovacieho procesu, alebo v ňom nie sú riadne vysvetlené, spôsobilosť myslieť informovane nedokáže byť naplnená.

Predmetom obsahovej analýzy tejto práce bolo osem kníh vydaných vydavateľstvom Orbis Pictus Istropolitana. Išlo o štyri učebnice a štyri zbierky úloh. Pre každý ročník strednej školy bola určená jedna učebnica a jedna zbierka úloh. Každá z týchto kníh obsahuje bloky úloh týkajúcich sa spravidla prečítaných textov. Texty v knihách sme rozdelili do 2 kategórií – podľa (ne)prítomnosti postáv konkrétnej rodovej príslušnosti. Ak úryvok takúto postavu zobrazoval, podľa miery explicitnosti vyobrazenia rodových rolí a stereotypov sme ich následne rozdelili do 4 skupín. Ak úryvok takúto osobu nezobrazoval, takéto delenie sme neaplikovali a prešli sme na analýzu nadväzujúcich úloh. Tie sme tiež rozdelili do 4 skupín, tentokrát podľa miery adresnosti úlohy na rodovú problematiku.

V ideálnom stave by medzi dátami z textov a dátami z úloh bola istá rovnováha.

V knihách pre nižšie ročníky bola viditeľná istá miera rovnováhy, ale texty a úlohy pre vyššie ročníky už túto problematiku adresujú menej často. Texty v rámci učebníc stále zahŕňali postavy s istou rodovou stereotypizáciou (najväčší rozdiel medzi ročníkmi bolo to, že v prvej učebnici a zbierke úloh boli najčastejšie texty zobrazujúce len postavy jedného rodu, spravidla mužov, pričom neskôr to boli prevažne implicitne vyjadrené rodové stereotypy či očakávania). Podnety na diskusiu týkajúce sa konkrétne rodovej problematiky sa však vytrácali, a neskôr boli zriedkavé aj samotné podnety na diskusiu bez rodovej problematiky.

Takéto výsledky nie sú v súlade s konceptom spôsobilostí a hermeneutickou spravodlivosťou. Študentstvo tak pripravujeme o príležitosť kriticky nahliadať na spoločenské javy, ktoré literatúra reflektuje. A pritom práve tento kritický pohľad a kladenie otázok k zobrazeným aj zamlčaným javom, sú pre demokratickú spoločnosť kľúčové.

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