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The Diversity of Knowledge Concerning Geographical Areas Based on Surveys Conducted in Institutions of Primary Education in Hungary

Abstract

My study will discuss the Hungarian public education system, more specifically, the knowledge about and the measurement of the concept of geographical areas as they appear in the subject *Hon- és népismeret* [approximately: Our Homeland and Its People(s)] in the Hungarian primary education system. The cultural landscape formed by human activity is an important part of *Hon- és népismeret* education, which also includes knowledge of spatiality, ethnographic geographical areas and maps.

In my research, I was interested what students taking *Hon- és népismeret* courses think and know about geographical areas; moreover, if they can use maps and place major Hungarian and ethnographic geographical areas (provinces) on blind maps. In my search, I have conducted a survey among students learning *Hon- és népismeret* in primary schools in Debrecen with the aim of measuring their knowledge of geographical areas and ethnographic geographical areas, especially related to the use of maps. So, in my study, I present all the tasks of the survey and the students' answers. Furthermore, I describe the method used during the survey and the data processing.

Keywords: landscape, topography, ethnology, education, survey

I. Introduction

The present study will discuss the Hungarian public education system, more specifically, the knowledge about and the measurement of the concept of geographical areas as they appear in the subject *Hon- és népismeret* [approximately:

Our Homeland and Its People(s)] in the Hungarian primary education system.[1] Before sorting out the topic in detail, however, I believe that it is important to describe the Hungarian public education system, primary education, the subject *Hon- és népismeret* and territorial changes in Hungary.

The education system Hungary is directed and supervised at three levels of curricular management. In practice, this means that both central and local decisions are in effect in determining the guidelines for education.[2] Thus, there are different levels for the regulation of the Hungarian public education system. The regulation at the macro, i.e. state, level is represented by *Nemzeti alaptanterv (NAT)* [National Core Curriculum (NCC)], which is revised and amended from time to time (new National Core Curricula were published in the years 1995, 2003, 2007, 2012 and 2020). Therefore, *NAT 2020,* which is currently in force under the Hungarian Public Education Act, is a revised and amended version of *NAT 2012*.[3] This centrally developed and approved document is binding for everyone. It serves as a certain basis for lower-level regulators (framework curriculum, teaching aids) and output requirements (graduation). The peculiarity of this National Core Curriculum is that it defines areas of literacy as well as goals, principles, development tasks and content nodes for each grade.[4] As regards literacy areas, it is important to note that these areas already

[1] This study has been prepared as part of the program of *ELKH-DE Néprajzi Kutatócsoport* [*ELKH-DE* Ethnology Research Group]. Translator's note: The Hungarian term *táj* will be rendered here consistently as "geographical area" (or "landscape" where applicable), while other terms that do not have a referent in English, such as *Nép- és honismeret,* will be left in italicized Hungarian, with an approximate translation offered in square brackets upon their first occurrence in the text.

[2] Molnár 2015.

[3] As a result of the 2010 change of government, new curriculum regulations were introduced. Although *NAT 2012* followed the previous regulations in its basic structural elements, it also contained substantial changes. *NAT 2012* intervened at the level of institutional pedagogical processes, introduced definite content regulation, while in development areas and educational goals, the emphasis on patriotic, national education became a strong direction, weakening the European context at the same time. Concurrently, it restricted the textbook market to a significant extent, as a result of which centrally developed textbooks became mandatory. The complex system of school supervision control has also emerged, one of the important objectives of which was to match the content conveyed by teachers to textbook regulations. Chrappán 2022: 33.; The amendment is apparent in the process control strategy, according to which it defines the subjects and the corresponding compulsory number of classes. This is a fairly significant change because it had been previously regulated by *Kerettanterv* [Framework Curriculum], i.e., a lower level. So *NAT 2020* now defines all the essential elements of content design. Chrappán 2022: 34.

[4] Molnár 2015.

contain subjects in *NAT 2020*. In addition to presenting the areas of literacy, *NAT 2020* comprises and defines both general and basic curricular descriptions of subjects. It prescribes the number of classes, the subjects, the goals to be followed during the course of teaching the subjects and basic competences. In addition, it also identifies and defines knowledge to be acquired as well as skills and attitudes to be developed.[5]

The other important state regulatory document is what is called framework curriculum *(kerettanterv)*.[6] The characteristic feature of framework curricula is that the content prescribed by *NAT* is further detailed in them; yet, they always detail and explain these requirements more clearly with an eye specifically to the given subjects. In addition to giving a general description of the individual subjects, they determine the curricula of the subjects for periods of two years, the relevant student requirements, the proposed activities and they even prescribe the number of lessons broken down to topics.[7]

The medium/intermediate level includes regulatory documents with a focus on schools, which usually means the pedagogical program, the local curriculum, the rules and regulations of the institution and the school house rules. The pedagogical program is also prepared in each school and contains the educational ideals and pedagogical concepts of the local teaching staff as well as the tools required for their implementation.[8]

As regards local curricula, they also describe local characteristics, decisions regarding freely designable subject lessons and content additions. As each school prepares its own local curriculum, there are individual text fragments in them that vary from institution to institution.[9]

The institutional rules and regulations determine, for example, the operating order of the given school, the order regarding the presence of students and employees, the internal control of pedagogical work, the form and order of contacts, the annual work schedule and the handling of extraordinary events.

The school house rules are also applicable at the level of schools, and everyone is also obliged to follow them. Their aim is to determine the manner of exercising certain student rights, the manner in which student obligations are fulfilled, the student's work schedule, the order of curricular and extracurricular

[5] Nahalka 2022: 423–425.

[6] Both are state-determined (*NAT* is introduced by a government decree, framework curricula are promulgated by the minister currently responsible for education) and are accessible to everyone.

[7] Nahalka 2022: 425.

[8] Hoffmann 1994: 50.

[9] Nahalka 2022: 425.

activities, the order of using tools and equipment, premises, and the student behavior expected at extracurricular events.[10]

The third level, i.e. the micro level, includes curricula for subjects by grade within the school. The following regulatory documents can be attached here: syllabuses, thematic plans and lesson plans or lesson notes.

Within the education system, primary education means teaching in 8-grade primary schools, which include primary level (lower school – ISCED[11] 1A) and lower secondary level (upper school – ISCED 2A) (Figure 1).

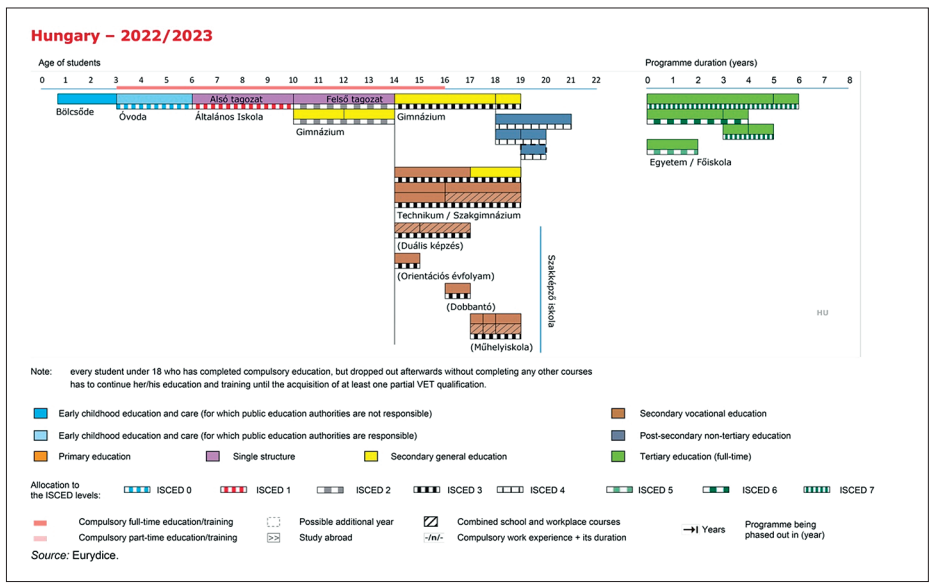


Fig. Nr. 1: *Structure of the National Education System.* [National Education Systems. Hungary] n.d.

Within the primary education system and upper school, I intend to focus on the subtopic of a specific subject. This subject is *Hon- és népismeret.*[12] In the National Core Curriculum, it appears as a compulsory subject in the History and Citizenship teaching area. Depending on institutional decision, the subject

[10] [A Kvassay Jenő Általános Iskola…] 2018: 2.

[11] International Standard Classification of Education.

[12] The subject *Hon- és népismeret* is the public education subject of ethnography, and it is based on Hungarian folk culture. By taking the course, students can get acquainted with our national values, our cultural heritage and the opulent world of folk culture. Through its teaching material, the course contributes to the development of attachment to the homeland and to the strengthening of the sense of national identity. Baksa 2020: 4.

must be taught in one of the four grades (between grade 5 and grade 8) of primary school for one class unit per week. Although the subject is recommended to be taught in grades 5 or 6, it is recommended to teach it as part of a one-year compulsory subject.[13]

The content conveyed by the course is part of the expectation concerning national culture in the 2020 National Core Curriculum, in which strengthening the love of the homeland and appreciating our national heritage play an extremely important part. The course focuses on introducing folk culture, which is achieved through personal approaches and getting to know Hungarian folk customs. Thus, it is possible to explore changes and to discover cause-effect relationships through the processed topics.[14] A part of the instruction of the subject is meant to provide a foundation for teaching civics. At the same time, it is worth noting the issue of subject concentration which, through the knowledge and skills acquired during the learning process, establishes a connection with other subjects, such as Ethics (discussing the relationship between and the system of relations of individuals and groups as well as individuals and communities) and Geography (locality, regionality, sustainability, environmental awareness are all common elements).[15]

The topics to be taught in the subject *Hon- és népismeret* were defined in *NAT 2020* under the following titles: My World, Meeting the Past, Our Heritage, Our Traditions and Our Great Minds. In this thematic division, what comes to the fore are the family, the immediate living environment, the classic peasant household, holidays, special days, lifestyle, homeland and the feeling of attachment to our nation.

One textbook was published for the subject *Hon- és népismeret,* as opposed to the case of *NAT 2012,* where three textbooks were created for the subject, and there was even one written for those with special educational needs. The publication, which reflects the goals of *NAT 2020,* contains countless photographic and graphic illustrations, which is justified by the knowledge level of the targeted age group and the intention to facilitate a thorough understanding of the material by them. The textbook does try to meet the needs of the target age group, which is why we can find sections in it resembling yellow Post-it sheets, which encourage the students to conduct independent research. In addition, there are numerous links included that point to further

[13] Baksa 2020: 5.

[14] Baksa 2020: 4.

[15] Baksa 2020: 5. For presenting its connection to the subject History, see Juhász E. 2022: 106–125.

trivia and additions. There is no workbook to go with the textbook; instead there is an appendix called My Homeland Diary. The diary is a repository of students' own independent collections. It features some guiding definitions related to each major topic that prompt independent research. The structure of the textbook follows the topics defined by *NAT 2020* (My World, Meeting the Past, Our Heritage, Our Traditions and Our Great Minds). Among the three main chapters, I wish to highlight the one titled Our heritage, Our Traditions and Our Great Minds because that is the one that focuses on covering geographical areas such as micro-regions, regions and provinces. In the proposed 8-teaching-unit timeframe, students can get acquainted with the characteristics of *Dunántúl* [Transdanubia], *Alföld* [the Great Plain], *Felföld* [the Highlands], *Erdély* [Transylvania] and *Moldva* [Moldova] and find out about the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, our natural treasures, our built heritage, the list of *hungaricum*s and the achievements and the creators of Hungarian academic and cultural life.[16]

Regarding the personal conditions of teaching the subject *Hon- és népismeret,* I wish to note the availability of teacher training for *Hon- és népismeret* at several universities in Hungary (including *Pécs* and *Debrecen*). I intend to highlight the *Hon- és népismeret* teacher training program offered at the Department of Ethnography of the University of Debrecen, which was launched as the first of its kind in Hungary in 1997 with the term *néprajztanár* [teacher of ethnography] identified as the qualification in the diploma. This program continues to be offered regularly even today.[17] Despite the fact that there are teacher training programs available in *Hon- és népismeret* in Hungary, the subject is still taught in numerous cases by non-specialist teachers (due to a shortage of specialized teachers). As a result, it is common for teachers of history, Hungarian language and literature, singing and music, etc. to be given the task of teaching this subject.

In the *Hon- és népismeret* teaching unit, content related to geographical areas and topographical knowledge is significant, which often manifests itself in the presentation of geographical characteristics, the role of folk features in shaping geographical areas and map illustrations. As pictorial illustrations, these topographic contents and maps are part of the *Hon- és népismeret* textbook, which mainly belong to detailing the geographical areas, the environment and the folk characteristics of the Carpathian Basin and the Hungary.

[16] Baksa 2020: 14.

[17] Kavecsánszki–Keményfi–Bihari Nagy 2020: 554. As of 2012, the so-called undivided teacher training system has been introduced, which is why a double-major teacher training program is available now.

I.1. Territorial changes in Hungary: Notions of space

Space is a unified basic issue of geography, which represents not only a foundation but also fulfils a connecting role, as it has crucial content in a lot of other disciplines. Therefore, it can be stated that space increasingly sensitizes the research issues and applied methods of academic fields. As a consequence of the cooperation of several academic fields, the geographical perspective also takes into account the issue of temporality.[18] The existence of a time horizon proves to be extremely important in the interpretation of Hungarian geography, in which it has examined the spatial imprints of the presence of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin.[19] The concept of Hungarians concerning the geographical area-space-nation relationship changed significantly as a result of the peace treaty ending World War I. Due to the annexation and consequent loss of a significant part of our country, there were efforts in the interwar period to emphasize the close interconnectedness of the geographical area-space-nation triad. In relation to this, it is worth highlighting Jan Assmann's declaration about how space plays the most original, ancient and, at the same time, decisive part in national cultural remembrance.[20] It should be noted that, even before the Paris Peace Treaty, the Carpathian Basin was not just a simple geographical framework (*Kárpátok koszorúja,* verbatim: the wreath of the Carpathian Mountains) for Hungarians, but much rather had a distinctive role. There were also other views, according to which a "greater power" took part in the formation of the natural (sacral) space of the Hungarian nation, and they tried to justify the inviolability of the Hungarian state space and state borders with arguments taken from human geography and physical geography.[21] This perception was further strengthened by the effects of the peace treaty, supplemented with the principle that nature had created Hungary as a unified domain of life through a complete organic correlation.[22] These perceptions seem to confirm that there was a significant emotional attachment to the territory of Hungary before the outcome of the peace treaty that ended the First World War. Moreover, these emotional ties can be associated not only with the entire historical whole of Hungary but with specific geographical areas and rivers as well. In other words, awareness of the national land(scape)

[18] Kenményfi 2009: 3–4.
[19] Kenményfi 2009: 5.
[20] Kenményfi 2010: 111.
[21] Kenményfi 2006: 326; Hajdú 1998: 93–104.
[22] Kenményfi 2009: 7.

and geographical area has a serious identity-strengthening role, especially in the case of individual parts of the country striving for autonomy. Projecting the development of geographical area identity to Hungary, we can also observe this phenomenon, especially in connection with, for example, the Great Plain or the Tisza River.[23] I would also associate this emotional connection with the unified interpretation of geographers between the two world wars. They, despite personal differences and conflicts, also agreed that the Carpathian Basin should be treated in a unified way. In addition, they even tried to justify the reasons for the unity and cohesion of this so-called whole.[24] This approach was embodied in a centric spatial concept. Thus, in addition to language and culture, the knowledge and importance of the so-called "own national space" and its borders became more and more a central topic.

As the interpretation of the relationship between nation/ethnicity and space/state[25] gained cardinal importance after the peace treaty, maps proving the raison d'être of one's own national space appeared in increasing numbers in Hungary. In this context, the preparation of nationality maps assumed a steadily growing role.[26] These Hungarian cartographic products contained significant optical and psychological effects, i.e., the legend and the colors of the maps were prominent. This feature may be observed, for example, in the so-called Carte Rouge map[27] prepared by Pál Teleki, in which he used the color red for indicating the territorial location and distribution of Hungarians (Picture 1).[28]

[23] Csorba–Csatári 2017: 286–288.

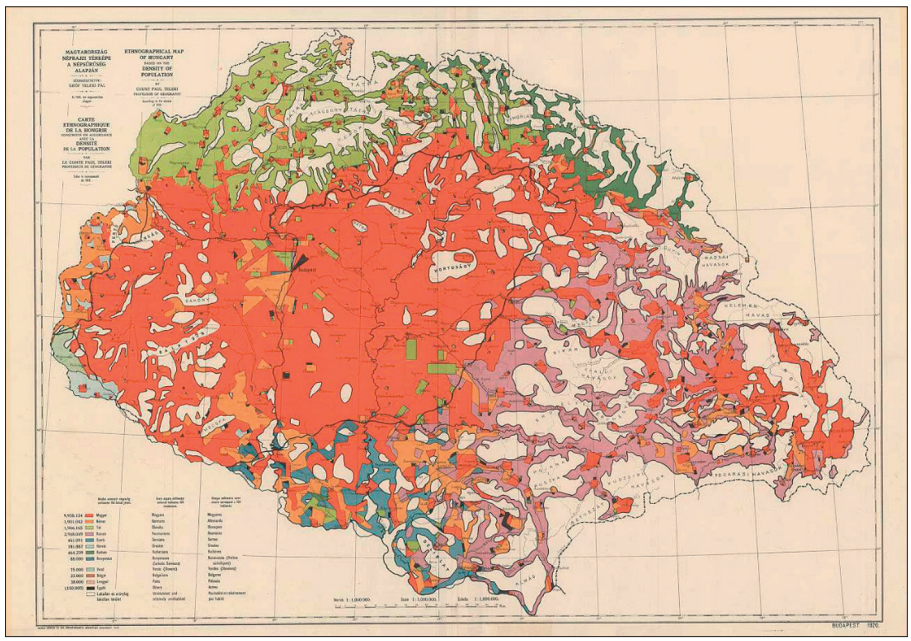
[24] See the works of Béla Bulla, Jenő Cholnoky, Ferenc Fodor, Károly Kogutowicz, Tibor Mendöl, András Rónai and Pál Teleki. For a further discussion of the personal conflicts, see Keményfi 2004: 259–260; Keményfi 2006: 340.

[25] Keményfi 2010: 101–102.

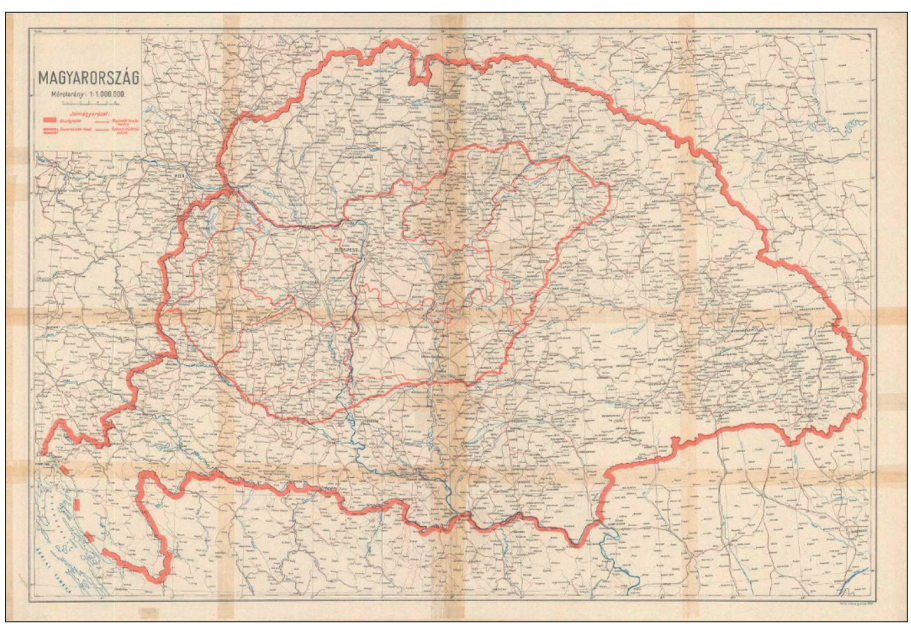
[26] Keményfi 2010: 101–102.

[27] Pál Teleki was a geographer, who prepared the documents (maps, articles and statistics) required for the peace talks held in Versailles (Grande Trianon Palace) after World War I. His name is associated with the ethnic map created in the 1920s by using novel methodological methods, showing the population density of Hungary. The essence of the method is that the given color indicates an area proportional to the population of each ethnicity. So the map made by Pál Teleki is no longer even a map but rather a cartogram, since the colored spots do not always match the area inhabited by the given people. The essence of his method was to indicate 100 members of each people with 1mm/2 colored map surfaces at the place where the given people approximately lived. His aim was to illustrate the difference between the densely populated lowland parts of the Carpathian Basin and the sparsely populated mountainous areas of Transylvania and Slovakia. Kicošev–Kocsis–Durdev 2001: 75. Teleki achieved the emphatic presentation of the territorial location of Hungarians through the choice of the color red. For this reason, the name "red map" is also widely known in connection with this map. Keményfi 2006: 149.

[28] Keményfi 2010: 112.

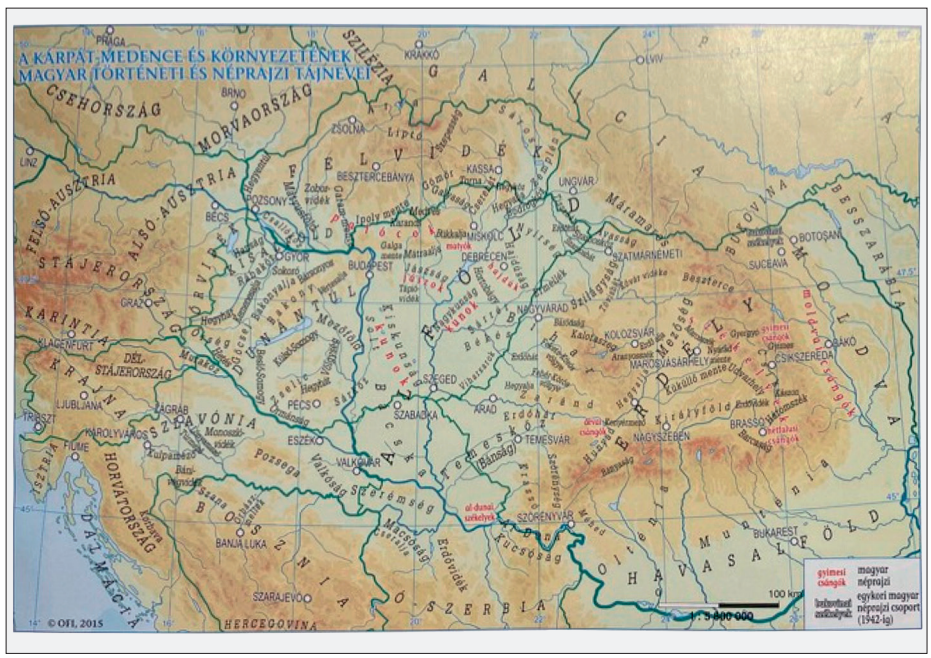


Pic. Nr. 1: *Ethnic map of Hungary based on the density of population.* Teleki 1919.



Pic. Nr. 2: *Map of Hungary, displaying the shift of borders following the peace treaty of 1920 that concluded World War I.* [Magyarország…] 1920.

Nationality maps and maps showing the current territory of the country and the territory of the former (pre-World War) country are also available in Hungarian education. The cartography included in the textbook for the subject *Hon- és népismeret* appears as a kind of illustration of the mediated knowledge contents, amongst which there is quite a number of ones about the Carpathian Basin,[29] for example, in connection with nationalities and ethnographic geographical areas.



Pic. Nr. 3: *Hungarian historical and ethnographic names of geographical areas in the Carpathian Basin and its surroundings.* Balassa–Csüllög 2015: 15.

As we can see, in *Hon- és népismeret* education, the knowledge content conveyed by ethnographic geographical areas and maps is of crucial importance. Thus, the question arose as to what students taking *Hon- és népismeret* courses think and know about geographical areas; moreover, if they can use maps and place major Hungarian and ethnographic geographical areas (provinces) on blind maps. In search of answers to these questions, I have conducted a survey

[29] This means that it does not take the current national borders as a basis but rather focuses on the unity of the Carpathian Basin. For further information on topographical content in the textbook *A Szülőföldünk* [Our Homeland], see: Juhász–Teperics 2022: 45–59.

among students learning *Hon- és népismeret* in primary schools in Debrecen with the aim of measuring their knowledge of geographical areas and ethnographic geographical areas, especially related to the use of maps.

II. Material and method

II. 1. Sampling principle, sample selection

The study conducted in institutions of primary education was conducted using the questionnaire method in the second semester of the 2021/2022 academic year. The sampling strategy used did not focus on the selection of grades but on teaching *Hon- és népismeret*.[30] Therefore, the essential conditions for selecting the target group were the *Hon- és népismeret* class and primary education institution in Debrecen. Based on the group sample, 364 students participated in the survey (Figure 1). Among the schools included in the study, there were schools run by the state, a church or the local university. For the sake of anonymity, I will refer to these schools as School I, School II, School III and School IV hereinafter.

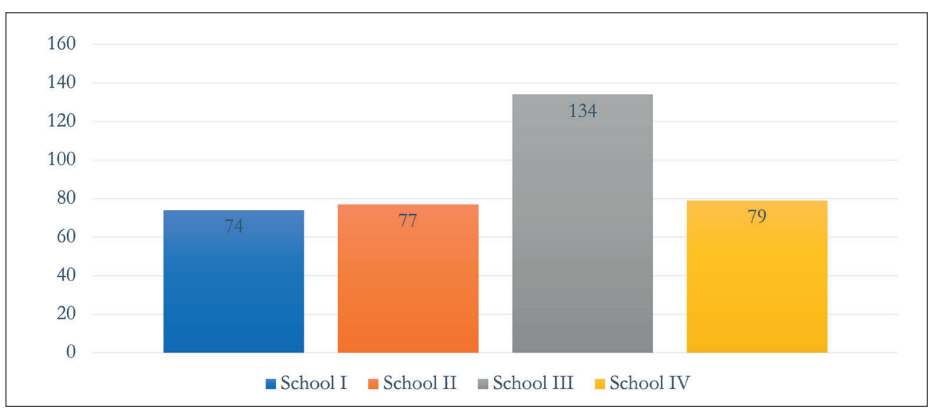


Fig. Nr. 2: *Number of participants per institution.*
(Source: own construction)

Although the age group was not decisive in selecting the target group, the teaching of the subject was concentrated on two grades. The reason lies in the proposal of the 2020 National Core Curriculum and Framework Curriculum,

[30] Cf.: Sántha 2017: 162.

as the subject of *Hon- és népismeret* can be taught in any grade between grade 5 and grade 8, but the Framework Curriculum recommends it for grade 6. Thus, it is not surprising that three of the selected schools taught the subject in grade 6 and one of the selected schools taught the subject in grade 5. The aggregate number of students in grade 6 was 290, while the number of students in grade 5 was 74 (Figure 2). Based on the number of classes in the schools examined, the teaching of *Hon- és népismeret* is more frequent in grade 6 (Figure 3).

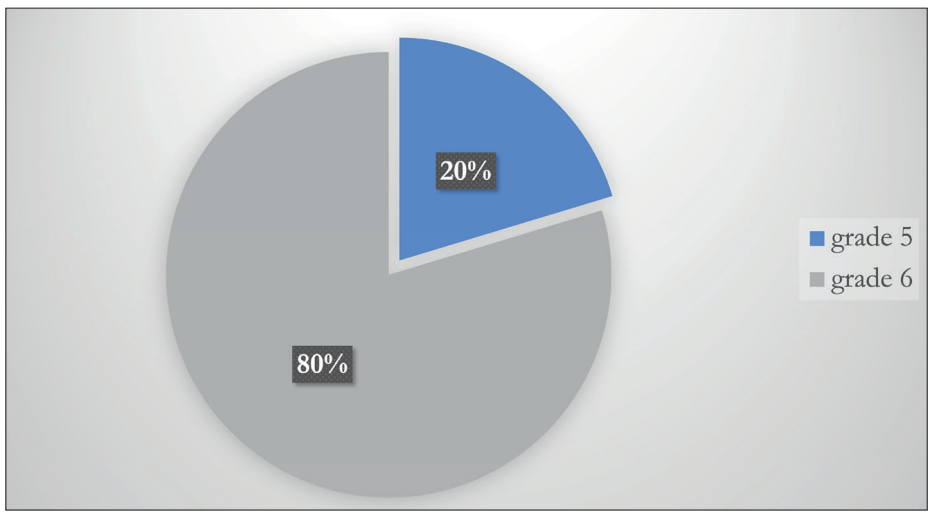


Fig. Nr. 3: *Proportion of participants in the survey by grade.*
(Source: own construction)

II. 2. Method used and data processing

The questionnaire focused thematically on the interpretation of the notion of geographical areas. Structurally, it contained three different types of tasks: mind mapping, pairing and topographic tasks. The questionnaire was completed on paper, voluntarily and anonymously. It consisted of five questions, three of which also measured orientation on the map.[31]

[31] The brevity of the survey was justified by the age group as well as the duration of questionnaire completion. Since the measurement was carried out in one of the *Hon- és népismeret* classes, there would not have been enough time to fill out a longer questionnaire in a one-class-per-week system in addition to covering the current teaching material.

For data analysis of the open-ended question, I used the MAXQDA program. With this software, I was able to analyze the topical part of the questionnaire in a more transparent, structured and accurate fashion. The data processing was carried out using a combined logic procedure with the text analysis program. The combined logic procedure is deductive and inductive, i.e., the study starts with just a few main code systems but, during the analysis, additional sub-codes were developed inductively. Thus, prior to the study, I had compiled a list of codes, in which I defined the main codes based on the students' preliminary studies. I associated the main codes with the sub-codes that belonged together in their meaning. During the analysis of the answers, I considered intra-coding, i.e., recoding, necessary, which meant name clarification and the creation of new main categories. The sub-codes associated with the main codes were grouped by in-vivo encoding using the content analysis software.[32] In the process of computer-aided qualitative data analysis, I structured the codes into categories. In addition to the answers to the open-ended question, I also coded the results of the map tasks. The coded elements were handled and analyzed transparently using an Excel spreadsheet. Regarding the approaches of data analysis, the present study involves quantitative analysis of qualitative data.[33]

III. Results

The information from the measurements is the results, which I will present in the order of the tasks in the questionnaire. Thus, I will cover the presentation of mind mapping, pairing and topographic tasks and the answers to the questions.

Mind map

In the first task of the questionnaire, I asked respondents to write down some definitions about the term *táj* [geographical area]. I did not specify what topics to interpret and use to characterize the term geographical area, which resulted in the only open-ended question in the questionnaire where students could express their knowledge in their own words. Thanks to this, valuable

[32] "This means that the element in the data file will also be the name of the code, i.e., selecting the element and pressing the in-vivo button will also create the code at the same time." Juhász V. 2019: 57.

[33] Sántha 2015: 19.

qualitative information was provided for further quantitative data of the questionnaire.[34] The expressions received for the task were analyzed by thematic coding, using the MAXQDA text analysis software. I started the investigation with the definition of the main codes, so I created the following main and subcategories in the formation of the common code list beforehand:

- environmental elements
- geographical area factors
- cardinal points
- geographical area: ethnographic geographical areas, geographical area synonyms.

The analysis of text corpora was carried out qualitatively, depending on main codes and sub-codes. Although I kept the main and subcategories for the recoding due to very similar topics, it became necessary to add more categories due to the diverse and colorful student responses. During intra-coding, six more pieces were added to the previous four main categories, thus increasing the number of main categories to ten. The following main and subcategories were created by recoding:

- environmental elements: air, water,
- geographical area factors: surface forms, vegetation, wildlife, colors,
- cardinal points: orientation devices,
- geographical area: geographical area / landscape wounds, geographical area hierarchy, dialect, ethnographic geographical areas, geographical area synonyms
- countries
- feelings/sensations,
- activities
- tradition
- visual experience(s),
- other.

The definitions listed and produced by the students could be tracked with the MAXQDA software, as well as the number and frequency of occurrence of identical codes. Thus, quantitative data were already transformed into qualitative data during coding.

The encoding was done manually; examining the data file, I selected the element to be encoded, and then attached it to the pre-created main codes. In addition to manual coding, I also used in-vivo encoding[35] for elements that

[34] Sántha 2021: 108.

[35] Juhász V. 2019: 57. This means that the element in the data will also be the name of the code.

did not fit into any of the main categories. That is why I then created the *other* category.[36]

The recoding process is responsible for the relationship system shown in Figure 4. Although this figure does not show the full size of the hierarchy of codes, it reflects the hierarchy and interconnection of the main and sub-codes.

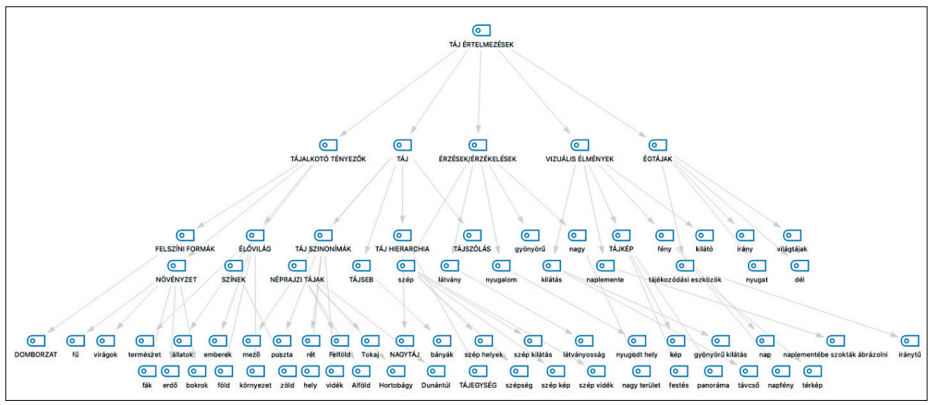


Fig. Nr. 4: *A part of the network of relationships between major codes and subcodes.* (Source: MAXQDA 2022 software)[37]

[36] In this category, there are quite a few diverse items, including, for example, the following: *egzotikusság* [exotic quality], *szívesség* [favor], *szó* [word], *nemzet* [nation], *csakra* [chakra], *ősz* [fall/autumn], *szünet* [vacation], *vonat* [train], *újjászületés* [rebirth], *messzelét* [appr.: being far away], etc.

[37] I created the diagram in the MAXQDA program based on the students' answers. The English translation of the Hungarian words is below: *táj értelmezések* [interpretations of landscape], *tájalkotó tényezők* [landscape-forming factors], *táj* [landscape], *érzések/érzékelések* [feelings]/[sensation], *vizuális élmények* [visual experiences], *égtájak* [points of the compass], *felszíni formák* [surface forms], *élővilág* [wildlife], *táj szinonimák* [landscape synonyms], *táj hierarchia* [landscape hierarchy], *tájszólás* [(regional) dialect], *gyönyörű* [beautiful], *nagy* [big], *tájkép* [landscape], *fény* [light], *kilátó* [viewpoint], *irány* [direction], *világtájak* [quarters], *növényzet* [vegetation], *színek* [colors], *néprajzi tájak* [ethnographic landscapes], *tájseb* [landscape wound], *szép* [nice], *látvány* [sight], *nyugalom* [peace], *kilátás* [view], *naplemente* [sunset], *tájékozódási eszközök* [orientation tools], *nyugat* [west], *dél* [south], *domborzat* [relief], *fű* [grass], *virágok* [flowers], *természet* [nature], *állatok* [animals], *emberek* [people], *mező* [field], *puszta* [rangeland], rét [meadow], *Felföld* [the Highlands], *Tokaj*, *nagytáj* [provinces], *bányák* [mines], *szép helyek* [nice places], *szép kilátás* [nice view], *látványosság* [spectacles], *nyugodt hely* [peaceful place], *kép* [image], *gyönyörű kilátás* [beautiful view], *nap* [sun], *naplementébe szokták ábrázolni* [it is usually represented at sunset], *iránytű* [compass], *fák* [trees], *erdő* [forest], *bokrok* [bushes], *föld* [land], *környezet* [environment], *zöld* [green], *hely* [place], *vidék* [country(side) or rural area], *Alföld* [the Great Plain], *Hortobágy*, *Dunántúl* [Transdanubia], *tájegység* [region], *szépség* [beauty], *szép kép* [nice picture], *szép vidék* [nice countryside], *nagy terület* [large area], *festés* [painting], *panoráma* [panorama], *távcső* [telescope], *napfény* [sunlight], *térkép* [map].

Response facts and figures

I consider the codes worthy of presentation both in quantity and in content. From the students' thoughts about the concept of geographical area, as many as 1456 analyzed words have emerged, which in fact represent 326 coded units due to the similarity of content. There is also a summary table of the frequency of words in the text analysis software, in which the most frequently present terms are listed in descending order and sorted by categories. The software also provides information about how many times collocations have appeared in documents. Based on this, there are 174 terms in the summary that appeared only once in the 364 questionnaires. In contrast, the highest number of mentions were in relation to the terms *hegy* [mountain], *hegyek* [mountains] and *hegység* [mountain range], which appeared in the questionnaires of all of the classes, representing 38.37% of the total code, with 125 mentions.

The examination of the content of responses

In addition to the quantitative indicators of geographical area descriptions, I have also examined the content of the responses, as it seems to be justified already when creating categories, due to the diverse student interpretations of the term geographical area. After the first review of the responses, the recoding was necessary in order to take into account content aspects, i.e. to reinterpret the categories due to the variety of the responses received. The ten categories also hint at and foreshadow the topics.

The tradition category, which is closely related to ethnography, received responses from all of the classes of each school examined. In this case, no specific tradition was highlighted; instead, there were more general terms mentioned, such as various traditions, various folk customs or folk customs. Ethnographic contents include responses related to ethnographic geographical areas, in which mentions of geographical areas such as *Alföld* [Great Plain], *Felföld* [the Highlands] and *Hortobágy* were common.

Most of the categories here are geographical area factors, geographical area synonyms and feelings/sensations. Responses that resemble geographical area descriptions refer to geographical area characterization, since they refer to features that may be observed or experienced regarding the given geographical area.

Geographical area factors such as surface forms, vegetation, wildlife and colors made up a significant part of the responses. In connection with the synonyms of geographical areas, we can find the terms *mező* [field], *vidék* [country(side) or rural area], *hely* [place, location], *puszta* [barren wasteland] in the questionnaires. Water-related concepts such as *folyó* [river], *hó* [snow],

patak [stream], *tenger* [sea], *tó* [lake], *vízesés* [waterfall], *vízszint* [water level] are also part of the pictorial description of the geographical area. It is important to note that the description of geographical area features in this age group, without geographical knowledge, is mainly based on visualization and emotions. The reason for this is that the approach to geographical areas occurs holistically in education and it captures its typicality as a whole. That is to say, in *környezet- és természetismeret* [Environmental and Nature studies] classes, students seek geographical area harmony through the beauty of the geographical area and through their emotions and the formulation of their thoughts.[38] Consequently, in the case of the concept of geographical area, we can most often come across the evocation of visual experiences, emotions and various types of environmental elements.[39] Further content interpretation of the geographical area is characterized by ethnicized and geographical content.

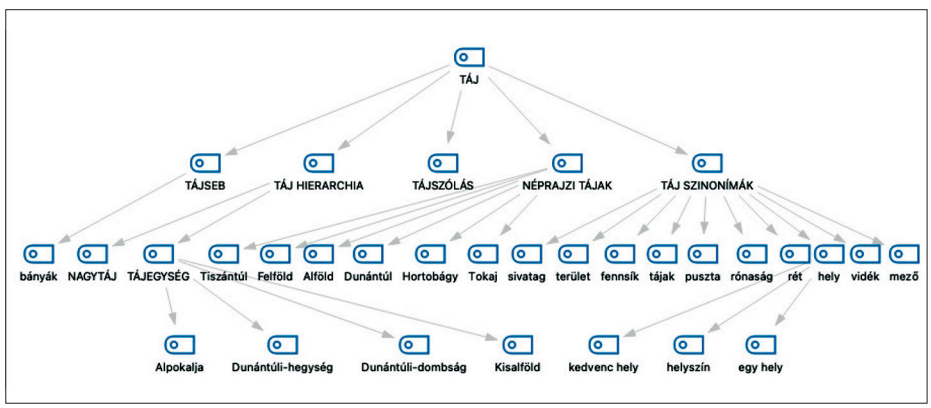


Fig. Nr. 5: *A part of subcategories and codes for the main category of geographical area.* (Source: MAXQDA software)[40]

[38] Makádi 2020: 36.

[39] Tokaji 2010: 87.

[40] I created the diagram in the MAXQDA program based on the student's answers. The English translation of the Hungarian words is below: *táj* [landscape], *tájseb* [landscape wound], *táj hierarchia* [landscape hierarchy], *tájszólás* [(regional) dialect], *néprajzi tájak* [ethnographic landscapes], *táj szinonimák* [landscape synonyms], *bányák* [mines], *nagytáj* [provinces], *tájegység* [region], *Tiszántúl*, *Felföld* [the Highlands], *Alföld* [the Great Plain], *Dunántúl* [Transdanubia], *Hortobágy*, *Tokaj*, *sivatag* [desert], *terület* [area], *fennsík* [plateau], *tájak* [landscapes], *puszta* [rangeland], *rónaság* [plain], *rét* [meadow], *hely* [place], *vidék* [country(side) or rural area], *mező* [field], *Alpokalja* [feet of the Alps], Dunántúl*i-hegység* [Transdanubian Mountain], *Dunántúli-dombság* [Transdanubian Hills], *Kisalföld* [Little Hungarian Plain], *kedvenc hely* [favorite place], *helyszín* [location], *egy hely* [a place].

The representation of the relationship between society and nature by the categories of *tájszólás* [(regional) dialect], *tájsebek* [geographical area/landscape wounds], *hagyományok* [traditions] and *élővilág* [wildlife] is strong in the responses, so the role and impact of the experienced geographical area can be felt in the majority of the student answers. In addition to local interpretations of the term geographical area, non-local geographical area features also appeared in large numbers, e.g., in the terms *hegyek* [mountains], *tenger* [sea], *sivatag* [desert], *vulkán* [volcano] (Figure 5). The role of national borders should also be attached to the relationship between society and nature. The territorial location of states can also mean a kind of geographical area formation, which appears among student geographical area interpretations as well. Based on this, it is not surprising that the proper names Hungary, Austria, Croatia, Japan and the terms *ország/országok* [country/countries] appeared several times in the questionnaire responses.

After the recoding, I created the category of activities – which was also justified by the frequency of related responses – to which I attached the terms *kirándulás* [hiking], *utazás* [traveling], *nyaralás* [vacation] as interpretations related to the term geographical area amongst the actions referring to the use of geographical areas.

In response to the instruction "Write down what comes to your mind about the word geographical area", the students listed not only words related to the concept of geographical area, but also sentences and grammatical structures signifying quality through attributes. As a consequence of this, complex phrases/structures stand out among the codes. The most frequent of these are structures referring to quality, such as *gyönyörű kilátás* [beautiful view], *szép kilátás* [nice view], *szép vidék* [nice countryside] or *szép virágok* [nice flowers]. At the same time, the feeling of freedom, the means of orientation and types of expressions of natural phenomena also appeared in the questionnaires.

Pairing/Matching task

The pairing task was based on the relationship and territorial location of geographical areas and provinces, without the use of a map. With the given questions, I measured actual knowledge, which was equally related to the interpretation of geographical area hierarchy levels.[41] The correct solution required a knowledge of the hierarchy system of geographical areas, which referred to the relationship between geographical area units such as provinces and regions.

[41] In practical education, there is no emphasis on identifying hierarchy levels; only on illustrating the interrelatedness of geographical areas. Makádi 2020: 42.

The interpretation of geographical area hierarchy levels, more precisely, the perception of the interconnectedness of geographical areas is an important part of the *Hon- és népismeret* curriculum. Thus, I considered it essential to create a separate task to measure this knowledge in the questionnaire as well. In the task – taking into account the age group, the prior knowledge and the content of the *Hon- és népismeret* course – I asked for the correct pairing of the regions (*Hajdúság*,[42] *Balaton-felvidék, Kalotaszeg, Gömör*) and provinces (*Alföld* [Great Plain], *Dunántúl* [Transdanubia], *Erdély* [Transylvania], *Felföld* [the Highlands]) listed.[43]

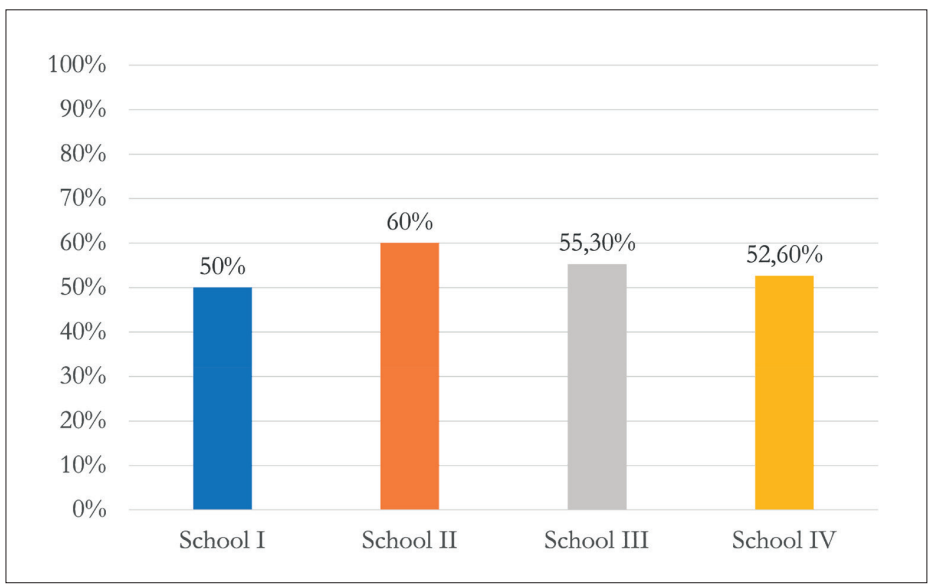


Fig. Nr. 6: *Correct answers to the pairing task percentage by school.*
(Source: own construction)

In the graph showing the knowledge of the hierarchy of ethnographic geographical areas, I present aggregated results based on schools (Figure 6). Based on the values displayed, each school performed with a score above 50%. Among the participants of the survey, the solution with the lowest number of errors belongs to the students of School II, where the number of their correct

[42] I considered it particularly important to include the region of *Hajdúság,* it being the place of residence of the respondents.

[43] It is important to note that only regions that are also common in the *Hon- és népismeret* curriculum were included in the survey.

answers in percentage summary is 60%. Classes in Schools I, III and IV have a higher error rate for the given task (Figure 6). In addition to the aggregate values, the hierarchy of the four provinces and regions examined is presented with school aggregate results broken down by units in Figure 7. In light of the results, I think it is important to highlight a few examples related to pairing. First of all, I would like to emphasize the coherence of the *Alföld – Hajdúság* hierarchy levels, which, despite the fact that it represented the highest number of correct answers, was characteristic of several schools and students that they could not solve the relationship between the province and the region correctly. These partial results were surprising because all participants in the survey live or reside in cities and institutions belonging to *Hajdúság*. The values shown side by side in the graph clearly indicate which province meant a greater problem for the correct pairing. It was typical to swap the geographical location of *Erdély* and *Felföld* and, thus, to mix up the *Kalotaszeg* and *Gömör* regions (Figure 7). Nevertheless, if we compare the results related to the two provinces, the pairing of *Felföld* and *Gömör* represented the biggest factor of error.

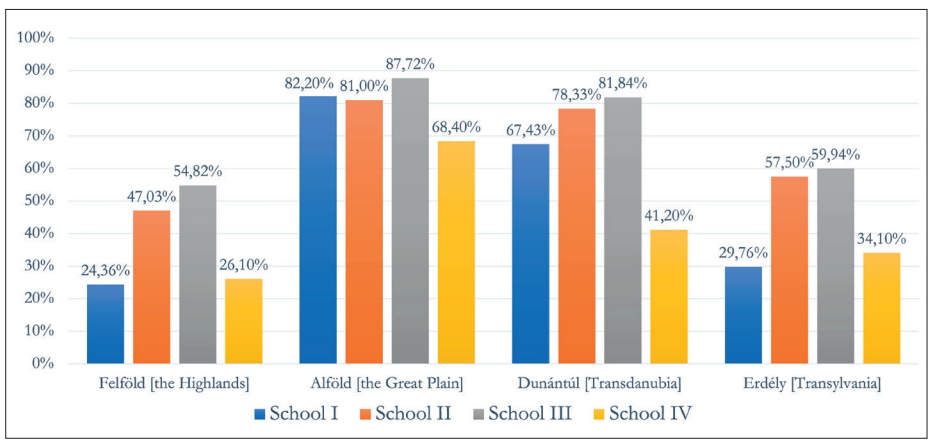


Fig. Nr. 7: *Knowledge of provinces in the pairing task broken down to schools.*
(Source: own construction)

Maps

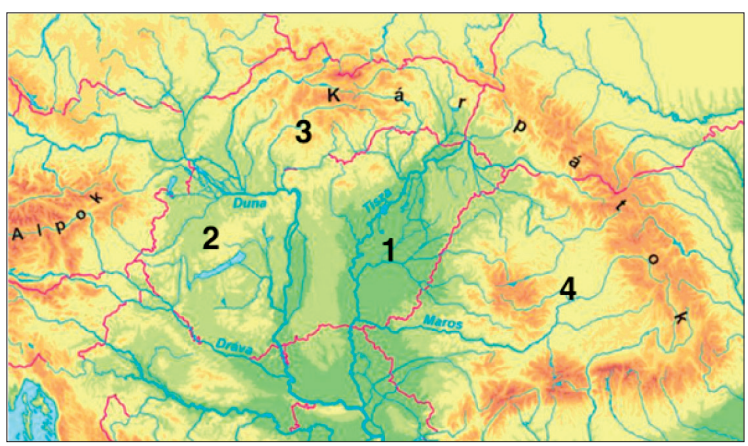
The questions on topographical knowledge in the questionnaire were also illustrated with maps. Since my aim was to assess knowledge about geographical areas, measuring orientation aptitude on maps could not be left out of consideration, mainly because a significant part of the curricula of the *Hon- és népismeret* subject is based on ethnographic geographical areas as provinces. In the survey, map orientation related to a variety of larger geographical areas

or provinces (ethnographic, Hungarian) and neighboring countries was examined. Using the maps that presented the borders, hydrography and the names of the Alps and the Carpathian Mountains, it was expected of the students to answer specific questions concerning the pairing of the areas marked with numbers on the map with the geographical areas and country names provided.

a. ethnographic provinces

In the task requiring information on ethnographic provinces, students had to apply the given map in order to find the right solution. The justification of the task is confirmed by the fact that a knowledge of ethnographic provinces is considered essential for geographical area interpretation used in the subject of *Hon- és népismeret*. Furthermore, the *Hon- és népismeret* curriculum contains chapters and teaching units on ethnographic geographical areas; thus, it can be stated that the geographical area interpretation accepted by ethnography comes to the fore in the case of the subject.[44]

The map sketch used in the survey is a topographical one showing the Carpathian Basin, its main rivers and also the Alps and the Carpathian Mountain Range (Picture 4). At the same time, the map indicates both topography and geographical area boundaries through color-gradual display, the role of which lies in facilitating orientation.[45]



Pic. Nr. 4: *Map used in the third task of the questionnaire.*
[A Kárpát-medence] n.d.

[44] Kósa 1998; Borsos 2011.

[45] Makádi 2020: 45. Its necessity is justified by the intention to help isolate geographical areas, since students do not yet have a thorough and deep knowledge concerning this.

Based on the answers submitted to the task, I have compiled the diagram shown in Figure 8, which clearly indicates the knowledge of the territoriality of ethnographic provinces in the light of the aggregate results of the schools. With the exception of School IV, the correct answer rate is close to or higher than 90%. The highest scores were achieved through the aggregate responses of Grade 6 students in School II (96%) and Grade 6 students in School III (94.6%).

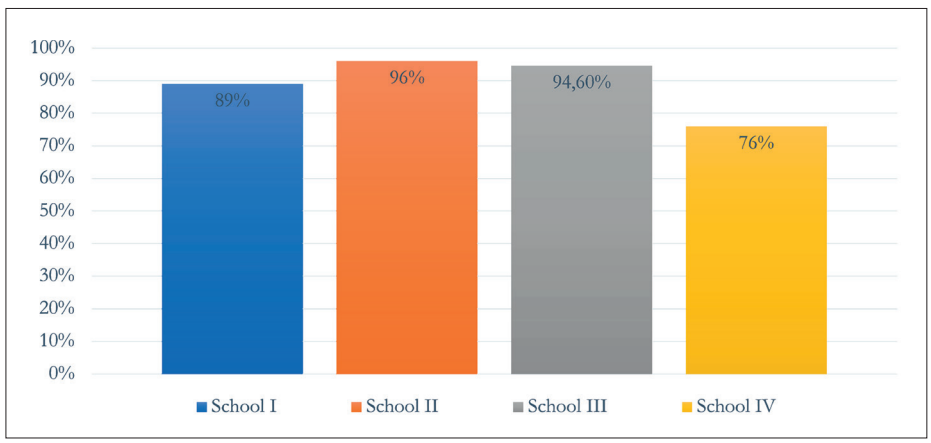


Fig. Nr. 8: *The proportion of percentages reflecting topographical knowledge of ethnographic provinces.* (Source: own construction)

The proportion of correct responses received to this task is shown in a diagram focusing on ethnographic geographical areas and school totals (Figure 9). As it can be seen in the overall graph (Figure 8), knowledge of ethnographic provinces is fairly high in each of the schools surveyed. Among the participants in the survey, the results of the students of school IV are lower (Figure 8), which can also be seen in percentage proportions in the diagram broken down into provinces (Figure 9). It is particularly interesting to note the knowledge about the territoriality of the Great Plain, which shows a result above 90% in the case of schools I, II, III, yet this is the lowest value in the case of school IV in relation to provinces (Figure 9).

Regardless of which school they go to, a high proportion of students consistently appear to know the geographical location of ethnographic provinces. Comparing the schools participating in the survey, we can observe that the low performance of School IV is striking. In connection with the results, it is important to note the error factors which, in the case of this task, occurred in confusing the location of *Dunántúl* [Transdanubia] and *Felföld* [the Highlands],

Erdély [Transylvania] and *Dunántúl* [Transdanubia] as well as *Alföld* [the Great Plain] and *Felföld* [the Highlands].

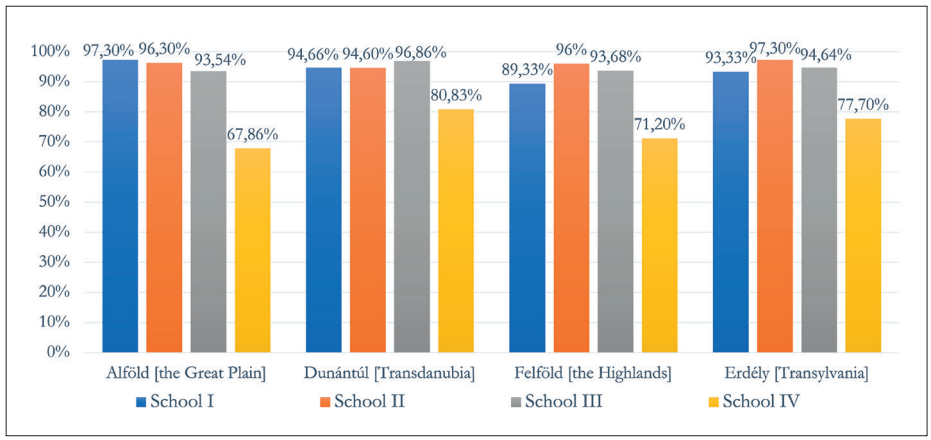


Fig. Nr. 9: *Knowledge of the four provinces.*
(Source: own construction)

I also thought that it would make sense to compare the two grades in terms of this task. Although the diagram in Figure 10 shows that there is no fundamental difference between the two grades, further nuancing of this ratio might not be amiss. Indeed, it is clear from the ratio of correct answers between schools and grades in Figure 9 that the students of School I, in which the subject is taught in grade 5, also have sufficient knowledge of the subject. Consequently, based on the measurement conducted in the survey, it can be stated that acquiring and applying the knowledge concerning the identity and whereabouts of the four ethnographic provinces does not constitute a problem for any of the grades.

b. Provinces in Hungary

The fourth question in the questionnaire was also related to topographical knowledge. In order to respond to the question and instruction "Where are the provinces located? Write the right numbers on the map for the provinces of Hungary", the following geographical areas had to be paired with the numbers given on the sketch map shown in Picture 5: *Alföld* [Great Plain], *Kisalföld* [Small Plain], *Északi-középhegység* [North Hungarian Mountains], *Nyugat-Magyarországi peremvidék* [West Hungarian Periphery], *Dunántúli-középhegység* [Transdanubian Mountains] and *Dunántúli-dombság* [Transdanubian Hills]. The map shows the area of Hungary at present, including hydrography.

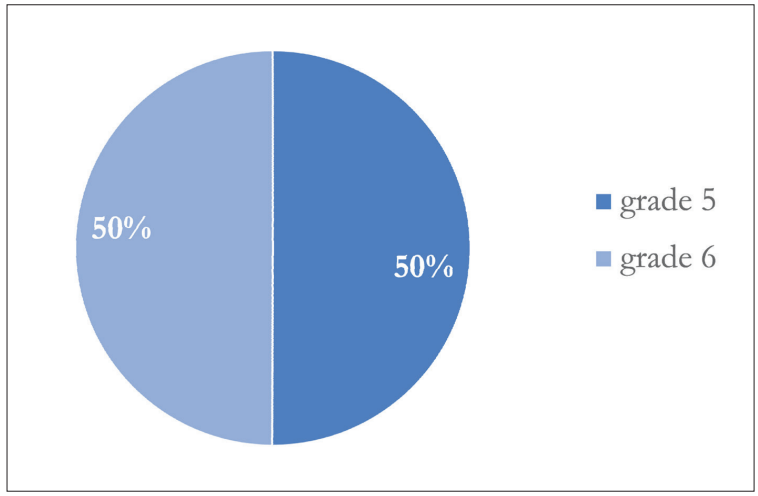
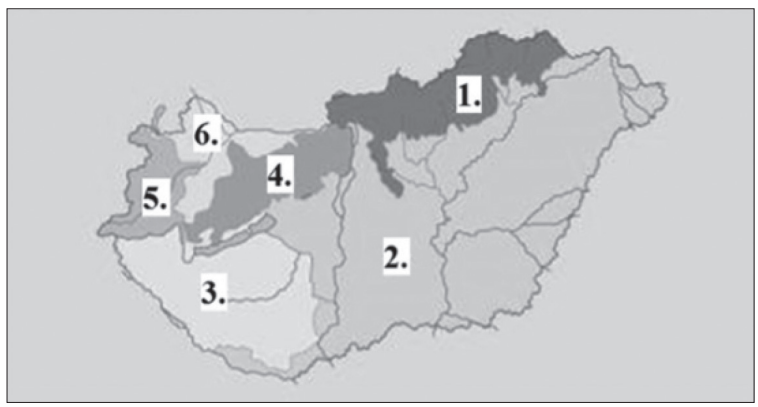


Fig. Nr. 10: *The ratio of correct responses related to ethnographic provinces in the different grades.* (Source: own construction)



Pic. Nr. 5: *Sketch map used in task four of the questionnaire.* [10. Természetismeret 5.] n.d.

The names used in the task are those used currently in grade-school education, although they have changed several times over the years. The latest change in this regard was the reform of the geographical area conceptual system generated by the new national atlas of Hungary, resulting in a new nomenclature and geographical area layout.[46] However, this change, i.e., the geographical area names and layouts unified by the national atlas, has not yet been introduced

[46] Csorba 2020; Csorba–Ádám et al. 2018: 112–129.

into primary education; therefore, I did not take it into account in preparing the questionnaire either.[47]

According to the results of the survey, the task of locating provinces in Hungary generated different results (Figure 11). The graph shows the overall results of the four schools, clearly illustrating the differences in their performance.

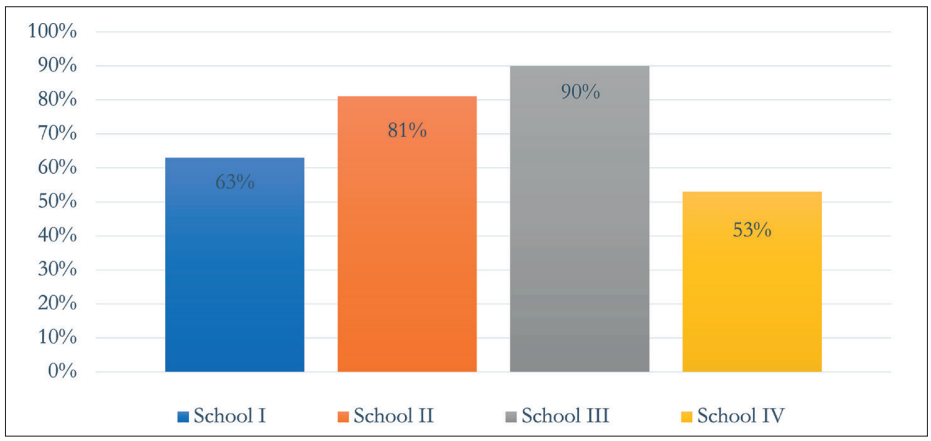


Fig. Nr. 11: *Knowledge of provinces in Hungary.*
(Source: own construction)

Closely related to the results shown in Figure 11 is Figure 12, which presents the exact knowledge about the location of provinces in Hungary broken down to individual schools. The proportions in the aggregate graph (Figure 11) show a greater difference compared to the result of the previous topographic task. At the same time, the summary of the results is nuanced by the diagram shown in Figure 12, which reflects the students' knowledge about the provinces in Hungary. Thus, it can be stated that the students participating in the survey were most familiar with the map representation of the provinces called *Alföld* and *Északi-Középhegység*. Locating *Kisalföld, Nyugat-Magyarországi peremvidék, Dunántúli-dombság* and *Dunántúli-középhegység* correctly on the given map meant a bigger challenge for the students. Incorrect map knowledge concerning the location of these provinces could be observed mainly in the classes of School IV. At the same time, a lower percentage of correct choices was the case in the responses of School I in relation to *Kisalföld, Nyugat-Magyarországi peremvidék* and the *Dunántúli-dombság*. Among error factors, it was common to

[47] Makádi 2020: 40; Csorba 2020.

mix up neighboring provinces, occurring mainly in the case of *Dunántúli-dombság* and *Dunántúli-középhegység*.

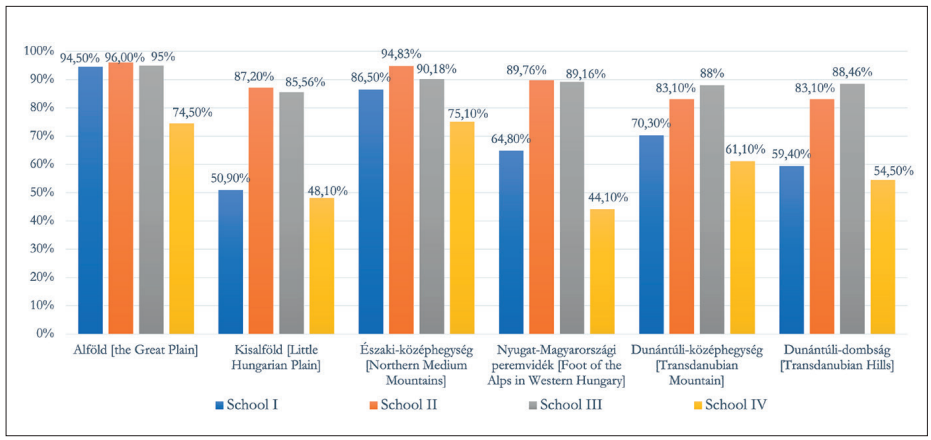


Fig. Nr. 12: *Percentages of knowledge concerning provinces in Hungary broken down to schools.*
(Source: own construction)

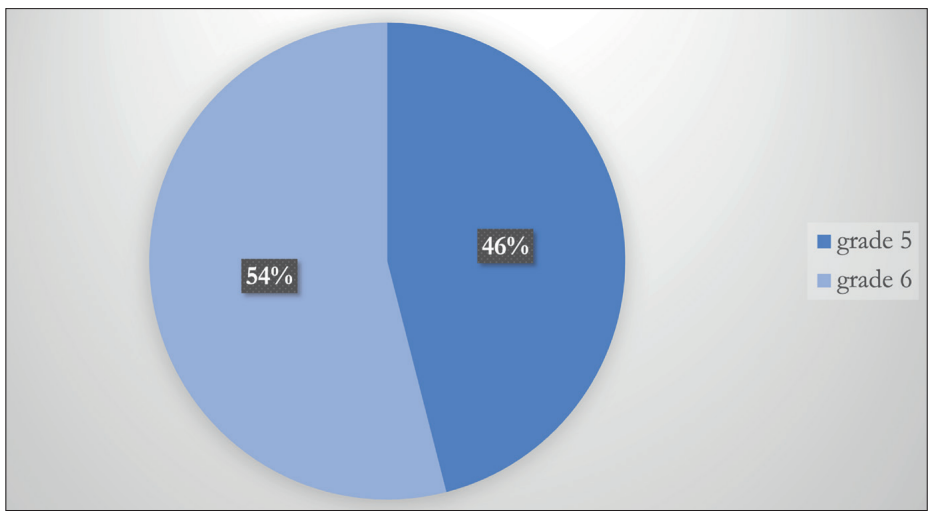


Fig. Nr. 13: *Knowledge concerning provinces in Hungary in the different grades.*
(Source: own construction)

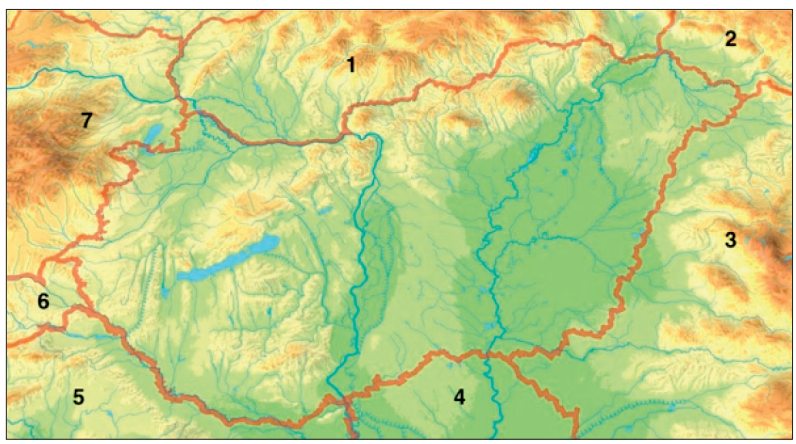
Here, too, I considered it important to compare the results of the two grades (Figure 13). In connection with the knowledge of provinces in Hungary, the difference between the combined results of the two grades can already

be discovered, according to which grade 6 students were able to solve the task with fewer errors (Figure 13).

It is necessary to emphasize that the task was based on knowledge that they had already encountered during their previous studies; thus, the question was not based on any specific knowledge in *Hon- és népismeret*. Nevertheless, this knowledge is essential for a complex understanding of traditions and ethnographic geographical areas.[48]

c. neighboring countries

In the last task of the questionnaire, the topographical knowledge of the students was examined in relation to the identity of neighboring countries around Hungary (Picture 6). The importance of the topic lies in its role in teaching the traditions of the Carpathian Basin. For this reason, it is indispensable in the teaching and learning of *Hon- és népismeret*.



Pic. Nr. 6: *Sketch map used for task five in the questionnaire.*
[Magyarország domborzati térképe] n.d.

In the *Hon- és népismeret* textbook edited according to *NAT 2020*, there is a map about the Carpathian Basin including the neighboring countries around Hungary in the lesson entitled *Historical Evolution of the Composition of Hungarians and the Provinces of the Hungarian-Speaking Region* (Picture 7).[49] The map entitled The Carpathian Basin shows the border changes introduced by the

[48] Consequently, it is not surprising at all that this information is also included in the 2021 edition of the *Hon- és népismeret* textbook. Baksa 2021: 102–103.

[49] Baksa 2021: 81.

Paris Peace Treaty together with the former boundary line before 1920. It is characterized by the fact that it does not present the neighboring countries in their full territorial extent, but rather focuses on the parts of the once unified territory, showing to which neighboring country they were annexed to.

Pic. Nr. 7: The *Carpathian Basin.* Baksa 2021: 81.

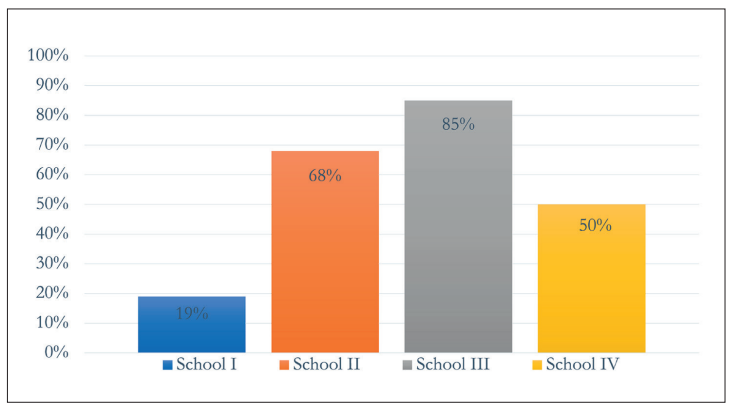


Fig. Nr. 14: *Knowledge of neighboring countries in the individual schools.*
(Source: own construction)

So, in the last assignment in the questionnaire, in relation to neighboring countries, I asked the students to associate the territories of the countries marked with numbers on the given map (Picture 6) with the names of the countries listed. The aggregate values of the results in the students' responses are indicated as percentages in the chart (Figure 14). The values reflecting the performance of the participating schools are quite different: there are quite significant discrepancies between the overall results of the schools. In the

overall standings, School I scored rather poorly, while School III students scored a high percentage.

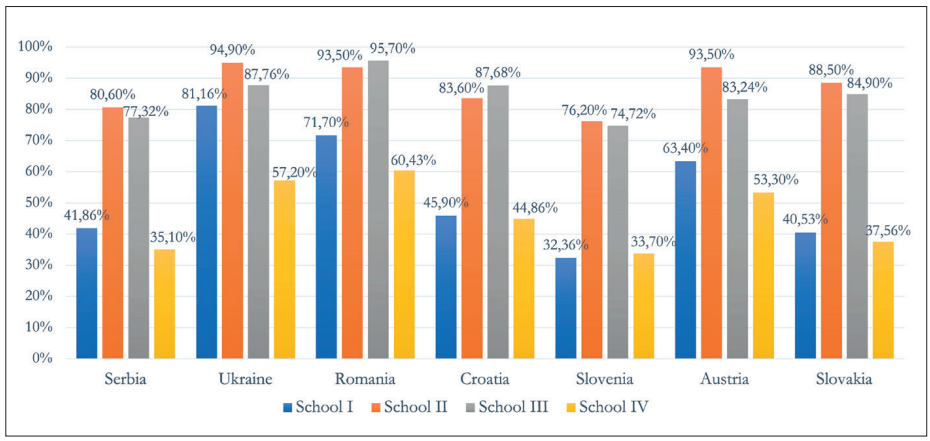


Fig. Nr. 15: *Knowledge of neighboring countries broken down to individual schools.*
(Source: own construction)

Since the overall results of the responses vary so much, it is worth highlighting some typical examples of error factors. For each school, Ukraine and Romania were recognized with the lowest number of errors among the countries listed (Figure 15). The greatest difficulty, shown by its decreasing values, was related to the correct identification of Slovenia. Among the incorrect answers, it was common to confuse neighboring areas, e.g., Croatia with Serbia or Austria with Slovakia.

I also compared the two grades in the case of this topographical task as well (Figure 16). There is a significant difference between the two grades, which reflects a more accurate knowledge of the subject in the 6th grade.

According to the results of the survey, there is a significant difference between the two grades concerning the knowledge of the territories of neighboring countries. The reason for this may be due to students' lack of knowledge, different map scales, lack of knowledge necessary for interpreting the teaching material or a shift of inter-curricular concentration between grades.[50]

[50] In the framework of the Natural Sciences subject in primary school, students start covering the topic of territoriality but they are confronted with further important related information only in later grades. In grades 5 and 6, in Environmental Studies and Nature Studies classes, they learn about continents and then they are given a general geographical overview of their parts. However, they get to cover the material on countries, especially on the countries of our continent, in the Geography subject in grade 7.

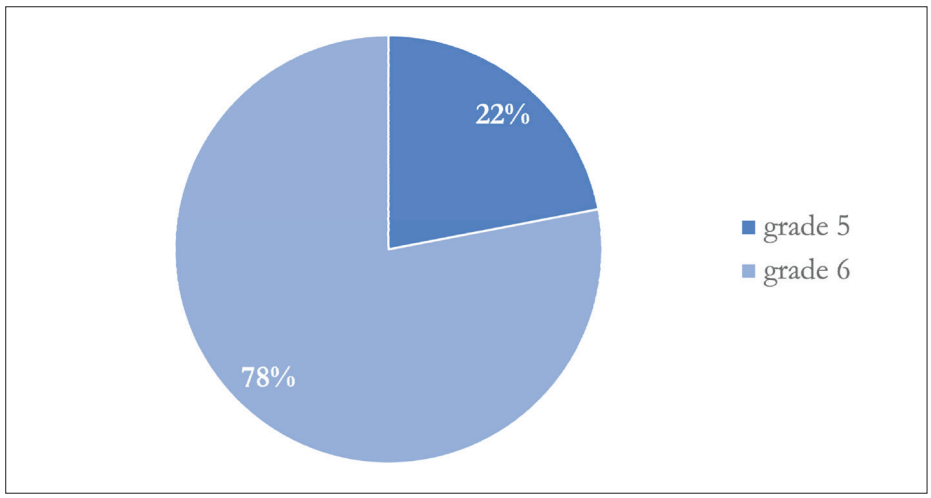


Fig. Nr. 16: *Knowledge of neighboring countries in the different grades.*
(Source: own construction)

IV. Conclusions

The questionnaire-based survey presented in this study aimed at the geographical area knowledge of selected institutions of primary education in Debrecen, in grades 5 and 6. My objective was to map up the knowledge of students taking *Hon- és népismeret* about geographical areas and ethnographic geographical areas as well as the use of maps. Each task of the questionnaire used for measurement generated a wide range of answers. In particular, this is true for the answers to the open-ended question. In this case, thanks to the students' views and interpretations of the concept of geographical areas, the importance of powerful visual knowledge was demonstrated, which is strongly present even in upper school students in relation to the topic surveyed.[51] The reason for this is the fact that their perception and experience so far, i.e., the factors responsible for their relatively developed visual knowledge, were accompanied by the knowledge gained during their primary school studies within the framework of geographical area names and geographical area forming factors.[52]

[51] This visual knowledge represents the territory they know, and functions as a reflection of their internal cognitive map. Tokaji 2010: 87.

[52] In primary education, knowledge about landscapes and geographical areas is mainly ac-

The tasks in the rest of the questionnaire measured actual knowledge about geographical areas; more precisely, they were based on their knowledge of the location of geographical areas and provinces, since the examination of this information can provide relevant information in grades 5 and 6 as well.[53] In the measurement, I considered the questions aiming at topographical knowledge rather important, since the transfer of knowledge in this field is key to understanding the relationships of further knowledge contents. Take, for example, the hierarchical levels of geographical areas. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the formation and development of topographic knowledge is the result of a longer development process.[54] It is exactly for this reason that I consider the focus of *Hon- és népismeret* on spatiality and topography to be significant.

Although the survey was conducted only in four schools in Debrecen among students of *Hon- és népismeret*, it still had several important benefits. On the one hand, it demonstrated the students' strong visual knowledge, while on the other hand, it justified the possibilities of developing the subject in relation to geographical areas, more precisely, the need to develop spatial intelligence, i.e., spatial vision and spatial perception.[55] It also proved the rationale of this subject in the transfer of spatial knowledge, since traditions and the spatiality of geographical areas are an integral part of *Hon- és népismeret* classes. In addition, this knowledge serves as a connecting link between *Hon- és népismeret* and other subjects such as natural sciences, geography and history.

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quired from topographic maps: students use maps to delimit the geographical areas, to determine their location and to identify their natural resources. Makádi 2020: 37. Although the responses to the mind map assignment were diverse and varied, it was not clear from what was written whether the landscape in the map and the actual geographical area were connected in the students' minds or not.

[53] Students begin to get acquainted with some knowledge about domestic landscapes and geographical areas in primary school, even before they have established map knowledge. In grades 5 and 6, they are also expected to be able to list the provinces of Hungary and some geographical areas of lower hierarchical levels. Makádi 2020: 38. *Hon- és népismeret* picks up the same line and strengthens this knowledge not only in relation to Hungary but also to the Carpathian Basin. Since knowledge content about geographical areas appears only in primary school education, familiarization with it – even in the absence of adequate map knowledge – is extremely important for all subjects. Makádi 2020: 40.

[54] Makádi 2005: 91.

[55] Makádi 2013: 3. The chapter entitled Our Heritage, Our Traditions and Our Great Minds in the textbook *Our Homeland* is built on spatial knowledge. The teaching material units of the chapter presenting the provinces of the Carpathian Basin require students to be able to navigate the map, recognize natural geographical landscapes and the hierarchy of the administrative system.; *Hon- és népismeret* classes move from what is closer to what is further

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