From Transmission to Constructivism in a Changing Civic Landscape: Competence Frameworks through Dialogic and Embodied Lenses

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This paper examines how Czech reforms in initial teacher education (2020–2025) reframe the teacher's role from a transmitter of knowledge to a relational and reflective professional. This agenda gains urgency as schooling is increasingly tasked with navigating contested values and civic life. The study combines a purposive analysis of key policy and curriculum documents with a dialogic and embodied lens informed by Buber's I–Thou/I–It distinction and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment. The analysis shows how competence frameworks and related reform texts promote constructivist orientations that foreground learner agency, teacher self-reflection, dialogic interaction, and professional identity formation, alongside cooperative and project-based learning and formative, criterion-referenced assessment. At the same time, persistent implementation frictions are identified, including fragmented early-career learning, mismatched expectations between graduates and employers, uneven treatment of media and civic education, and challenges in assessing relational and embodied competences without resorting to reductive checklists. The paper concludes by outlining implications for aligning programme outcomes, learning environments, practicum, and induction with dialogic and embodied competences in civic/social science teacher preparation.

Keywords: civic education, initial teacher education, teacher competence frameworks, constructivist pedagogy, dialogic teaching

Introduction

Contemporary education is increasingly shaped by societal, cultural, and geopolitical dynamics. Value conflicts, overlapping crises, and shifts in the global order have made public reasoning, trust, and democratic participation more contested in everyday life. In such contexts, schooling is not only an instrument of cultural reproduction or economic acceleration; it is also a key site for the formation of civil society and civic identity (Vašutová, 2004, 2007). This expands the teacher's role beyond the transmission of knowledge. Teachers co-construct educational reality, support personal development, and guide processes of socialisation and civic maturation (Nezvalová, 2003).

Recent Czech reform tendencies in initial teacher education (ITE), such as revisions of framework educational programmes, efforts to standardise the teaching profession, and the publication of the Competence Framework for Teacher Education Graduates (MŠMT, 2023), and related reform documents (MŠMT, 2024, 2025), signal

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a need for deeper professionalisation of teacher education. As the Competence Framework itself states, it provides a "shared overarching vision for the quality of teacher education in the Czech Republic" and "supports further professionalization of teacher profession" (MŠMT, 2023, pp. 5–6, author's translation). At the same time, these reforms reframe the teacher not primarily as a transmitter of content but as a reflective, relational, and responsive professional. This article argues that recent Czech competence-based reforms in ITE mark a shift from transmissive to constructivist orientations, but also reveal a persistent tension: relational, reflective, and embodied competences are strongly emphasised in policy yet remain difficult to implement consistently and assess meaningfully in practice.

This tension is particularly important in the preparation of teachers of Civic Education. In a period marked by informational uncertainty and contested public issues, civic education is increasingly expected to foster critical judgment, informed participation, and democratic responsibility (UNESCO, 2015; MŠMT, 2020). If civic competence is formed through intentional education rather than acquired automatically (Staněk, 2024), then the ways in which future teachers are prepared for this task deserve close scholarly attention, especially as work is currently underway on field-specific competence frameworks (MŠMT, 2025, NPI, 2025). Recent research suggests that early professional learning is often fragmented rather than linear (Vlček & Sedová, 2025), which further raises questions about how competence frameworks are interpreted and implemented in practice.

The current reform agenda places particular emphasis on the development of professional competences, systematic self-reflection, and responsiveness to changing social needs, reflecting a broader shift from transmissive instruction toward constructivist approaches (Maňák & Švec, 2003; Zormanová, 2012). The reform discourse is explicitly linked to the development of competences needed for an "active civic, professional and personal life in a changing world" (MŠMT, 2023, p. 5, author's translation).

In Czech ITE, this orientation is expressed most visibly in the Competence Framework, which delineates 18 key competences across six domains for teacher education graduates, beginning teachers, and experienced teachers (MŠMT, 2023; Labischová & Hubálek, 2025). Yet questions remain about how these competences are prioritised, how they relate to broader civic and ethical aims, and whether they sufficiently capture the relational and embodied dimensions of teaching. Concerns also persist regarding the balance between professional and transversal competences and between institutional expectations and the lived realities of beginning teachers (Berková & Holečková, 2022).

Against this background, this article offers a conceptual interpretation of selected Czech ITE reform texts published between 2020 and 2025. It combines purposeful theory synthesis with a purposive corpus of policy and curriculum documents to examine how competence is framed in current reform discourse. The analysis is guided by a dialogic and embodied lens informed by Buber's distinction between I–Thou and I–It and by Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment. In this article, a dialogic lens refers to an analytical focus on mutuality, ethical address, and

reciprocity in teacher–student relations. An embodied lens refers to attention to teaching as a lived and situated practice in which voice, gesture, spatial arrangement, and bodily presence shape pedagogical meaning. These perspectives are used here as sensitising interpretive categories for reading policy texts.

The article makes two contributions. First, it offers a conceptual clarification of competence discourse in contemporary Czech ITE reform. Second, it identifies implications for the design of civic and social science teacher education across coursework, practicum, and induction, including the challenge of how relational and embodied competences can be cultivated and assessed without reducing them to procedural checklists.

Accordingly, the article addresses the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. How is the transmissive-to-constructivist shift reflected in Czech competence frameworks and in selected international civic-education curriculum reference points?

RQ2. How do Buber's dialogic concepts and Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment illuminate the teacher–student relationship and classroom interaction implied by these frameworks?

RQ3. What practical implications follow for the design of teacher-preparation curricula?

Research Design

This article adopts a conceptual and interpretive research design, drawing on purposeful theory synthesis (Jaakkola, 2020). Following Jaakkola (2020), purposeful theory synthesis is understood here as a form of conceptual inquiry that selectively integrates theory and relevant literature in order to clarify a conceptual problem, structure a fragmented field, and derive implications, rather than to test hypotheses empirically. In this study, the approach is used to clarify how competence is framed in recent Czech ITE reform and to develop implications for civic and social science teacher education through dialogic and embodied perspectives.

In the first step, we defined selection criteria for policy and curriculum documents as well as for supporting scholarship. Document selection was guided by: (a) publication date (the Czech reform cycle 2020–2025), (b) relevance and influence on curricular and teacher-education transformations, (c) institutional status (national documents and selected materials used for international reference points), and (d) relevance to civic and social science education.

Consistent with theory-synthesis designs (Jaakkola, 2020), the study does not aim to provide exhaustive coverage or a formal coding of documents. Rather, it seeks to delineate the conceptual domain of competence-based ITE reform and to structure a fragmented field through a clearly specified theoretical lens grounded in dialogic and embodied approaches.

Document Corpus

The document corpus consists of five Czech policy and curriculum texts from the 2020–2025 reform cycle. Documents were selected for their national status, recency, and direct relevance to teacher competence frameworks and civic education. The corpus includes:

- MŠMT. (2020). *Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2030+* [Education policy strategy of the Czech Republic until 2030+].
- MŠMT. (2023). *Kompetenční rámec absolventa a absolventky učitelství* [Competency framework for teacher-education graduates].
- MŠMT. (2024). *Revize rámcového vzdělávacího programu pro základní vzdělávání – hlavní směry revize* [Key directions of the revision of the Framework Educational Programme for Primary Education].
- MŠMT. (2025). *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro základní vzdělávání* [Framework educational programme for primary education].
- NPI. (2025). *Metodická podpora k vzdělávací oblasti Člověk a společnost – Výchova k občanství* [Methodological support for the educational area Human and Society – Civic education].

To articulate the dialogic and embodied lens used in the analysis, we also draw on two foundational philosophical works, which are subsequently extended through relevant research literature:

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2013). *Fenomenologie vnímání* [Phenomenology of perception]. (Original work published 1945)
- Buber, M. (2016). *Já a Ty* [I and Thou]. (Original work published 1923)

Analytical Procedure

This study purposively drew on peer-reviewed scholarship to situate the Czech case within international debates on the constructivist shift in ITE, competence frameworks, dialogic teaching, and embodiment. These international references serve as contextual and interpretive reference points rather than as co-equal objects of analysis. The document corpus was read interpretively, with attention to: (a) how competence is framed, (b) what forms of teacher–student relationship and classroom interaction are implied, and (c) where implementation tensions are likely to emerge. The analysis interpreted the resulting themes through dialogic and embodied perspectives and translated into implications for programme design across coursework, practicum, and induction in civic/social science teacher education.

From Transmission to Constructivism in Czech Competence Frameworks

Within contemporary educational discourse, two broad approaches to teaching are often contrasted: the transmissive and the constructivist. The transmissive approach positions the teacher as the primary bearer of knowledge and emphasises sequential delivery, reproduction, and the efficient introduction of subject matter (Kalhous & Obst, 2009; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). By contrast, constructivist approaches understand learning as an active process in which students build meaning on the

basis of prior knowledge, while the teacher guides inquiry, reflection, and conceptual change (von Glasersfeld, 1995; Zormanová, 2012). This distinction is analytically useful for the present article because recent Czech curricular and competence reforms increasingly align with constructivist assumptions about teaching, learning, and teacher professionalism.

The transmissive approach, often described as traditional or teacher-centred, positions the teacher as the main source of information and authority in the classroom. Content is delivered sequentially, often through frontal instruction, with the expectation that learners will reproduce and retain it as accurately as possible (Kalhous & Obst, 2009; Maňák & Švec, 2003; Zormanová, 2012). By contrast, the constructivist approach assumes that learners do not enter education as blank slates; rather, they bring prior knowledge, experience, and interpretive frameworks that shape how new information is understood (von Glasersfeld, 1995).

In constructivist teaching, the teacher acts less as a transmitter of ready-made knowledge and more as a guide who helps learners work with existing understandings, identify misconceptions, and develop new interpretations through inquiry and reflection (Shapiro, 1994; Bertrand, 1998). Prior and new knowledge are compared and restructured, with emphasis on learner activation, critical thinking, and reflection (Zormanová, 2012). Typical methods include group work, individual work, discussion, and other forms of active learning (Maňák & Švec, 2003). In this respect, the broader reform agenda also supports a more learner-centred orientation. Strategy 2030+ places "a greater emphasis on the individualisation of education in order to develop the potential of each individual" (MŠMT, 2020, p. 8). In this sense, the teacher's role is not only instructional but also relational, as it involves knowing pupils, responding to their needs, and modelling democratic conduct in and beyond the classroom (Kasper & Kasperová, 2025).

On this basis, Table 1 summarises the main differences between transmissive and constructivist approaches and provides a framework for interpreting recent developments in Czech competence-based teacher education.

Table 1

Comparison of the Transmissive and Constructivist Approaches

Dimension	Transmissive Approach	Constructivist Approach
Bearer of information	The teacher as the main source of information and the authority of knowledge.	The student as an active maker of meaning. The teacher as the compass and guide of education.
Teacher-student relationship	Asymmetry of the relationship. The teacher delivers information and the student receives it.	Partnership relationship. Joint creation of instruction where the teacher moderates and facilitates the curriculum.
Information transfer	One-way transmission and exposition of content in sequential steps.	Two-way interaction, discovery, reflection, and work with preconceptions.
Teaching methods	Predominance of frontal exposition, demonstration, guided practice, drill.	Problem-solving instruction, project and cooperative learning, discussion, case studies, portfolio creation, flipped classroom.

Dimension	Transmissive Approach	Constructivist Approach
Organisational forms	Predominantly whole-class work with minimal differences in pace.	Group and individual work conditioned by the specifics of groups and individuals.
Student activity	Predominantly receptive listening, notetaking, reproduction, etc.	The student as an active constructor of knowledge through inquiry, hypothesis testing, collaboration, and reflection.
Main aim of learning	Memorisation and reproduction of facts, procedures, and presented information.	Deep understanding where the student can critically reflect on attained knowledge and information, express connections, and place knowledge in a cross-cutting context.
Assessment	Summative and normative, with emphasis on performance and positive test results.	Formative and criterion-referenced, with emphasis on self-assessment, reflection on work and activity, and peer feedback.
Work with error	Error perceived as a deviation from the norm that must be minimised.	Error perceived as a source of learning that must be analysed preferably with the teacher or with a peer and then corrected.
Risks of the approach	Student passivity during instruction. Illusion of mastered knowledge on the part of the student. Low activation.	Greater time demands on teacher preparation and on student work. Complex and demanding management of instruction.
Strengths	Clarity, efficiency when introducing foundations, suitability for large groups, usefulness for beginning teachers.	Development of critical thinking, creativity, independence, collaboration.

The Czech reform context can be understood as reflecting this broader shift toward constructivist and competence-based approaches. Across recent reform documents, the teacher is increasingly framed not merely as a transmitter of curriculum but as a guide, partner, and reflective professional who responds to student diversity and supports active learning. This shift also implies greater emphasis on dialogic relationships, formative support, and the co-construction of educational meaning.

In summary, the transmissive approach centres on one-way transfer from teacher to learners and locates knowledge primarily in the teacher, the subject matter, or the system. Although this model has certain strengths, especially in the structured introduction of foundational knowledge, current Czech curricular reform signals a move away from it toward more constructivist assumptions. Reform texts also connect curricular change with the learning environment, calling for the creation of educational environments that are "safe, fair, stimulating and sufficiently challenging for all" (MŠMT, 2020, p. 8). Within this orientation, teaching is expected to create conditions in which learners actively interpret, connect, and apply knowledge rather than merely reproduce it.

From a constructivist perspective, deeper understanding emerges through interaction between teacher guidance and student meaning-making. When students' perspectives are systematically elicited and reflected upon, they can provide important formative feedback for both teacher and learner. The teacher builds on

learners' preconceptions, creates space for reflection, and supports further intellectual and personal development (Cocca et al., 2025). Learners do not construct new understanding in isolation; rather, this process is shaped by pedagogical guidance, reflective practice, and, where appropriate, constructive peer interaction. In this sense, the teacher acts as a guide who helps learners orient themselves within educational reality and participate in it more fully.

The Current Curricular Reform and Trajectory of Civic Education in the Czech Republic and International Experience

The ongoing curricular reform represents one of the most significant steps in the Czech education system since the introduction of the Framework Educational Programmes more than two decades ago. It responds to profound societal transformations linked to digitalisation, globalisation, and shifting value orientations among the younger generation (MŠMT, 2024). Particular attention is devoted to civic education, which in a democratic society plays a vital role in shaping active, informed, and responsible citizens (MŠMT, 2025). This broader reform direction is already explicit in Strategy 2030+, whose first strategic objective is to "focus education more on the acquisition of competences needed for an active civic, professional and personal life" (MŠMT, 2020, p. 16).

The reform aims to strengthen a competence- and literacy-based conception of teaching, replacing the previous emphasis on factual knowledge (MŠMT, 2020). Within the educational area "Man and Society," new emphasis is placed on the development of civic, media, digital, and financial literacies. The reform underscores the need for active learning, critical thinking, empathy, and collaborative ability. A key starting point is the connection of school with the community and with the lived realities of pupils (NPI, 2025).

In the revised conception, civic education is oriented toward cultivating democratic culture through experiential learning, project work, and pupil participation. A fundamental principle is learning through citizenship: pupils are to learn civic responsibility not only by studying theory but also through their own experience with decision-making, discussion, and participation in the public life of the school or municipality (Šeďová et al., 2012). This conception presupposes activating pedagogies, formative assessment, and linkage with the local community, which is consistent with international recommendations for civic education. In comparison with foreign examples, reform trends in the Czech Republic mirror several key elements found in the Nordic and Baltic countries as well as the United Kingdom (cf. Bîrzéa, 2005; UNESCO, 2015).

Finland has long advanced a competence-based approach and a high degree of school autonomy. Its national curriculum has been revised and updated in recent years with an emphasis on teacher professionalism and integrated media and ethics education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2024).

Estonia updated its national curriculum with implementation in 2024, placing stress on digital competences and aligning the curriculum with the national strategy

Estonia 2035. Estonia's reform efforts are documented in official texts and Eurydice overviews (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2024).

Scotland's approach ("Curriculum for Excellence") develops the concept of the responsible citizen as one of the core aims of education, which corresponds to the new focus of the Scottish reform of civic education through the values of democracy, equality, and sustainability (Scottish Government, 2011).

From an implementation perspective, several decisive factors are repeatedly highlighted by international experience: systematic support for teachers (pre-service preparation and continuing professional development), sufficient time and material resources for piloting, clear and usable tools for competence assessment, and the creation of communities of practice among schools (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2024). Without these elements, reforms risk remaining formal gestures without real impact on teaching and on pupils' competences. The quality of the teaching profession thus emerges as a key success factor, namely pre-service preparation, mentoring, and the sharing of good practice. In this area, Czech schools have considerable room for further development. The reform simultaneously raises the question of how to assess pupil performance. Formative assessment and pupil self-assessment are tools that can significantly contribute to the development of civic and social competences. These approaches foster pupil autonomy, responsibility, and reflection on the learning process.

The current curricular reform of civic education represents a major opportunity to transform Czech schooling toward greater openness, democratization, and the development of civic skills. Its success, however, will depend not only on the quality of the curriculum itself but above all on the manner of its implementation, on support for teachers, and on systematic evaluation of the reform's effects.

Dialogic Relationships in Teacher Education (Buber)

This section focuses on the relationship between educator and learner and emphasises the preparation of the learner who, within formal education and over time, becomes an educator and teacher. We build on the existentialist philosophy of Martin Buber, which gives this relationship precise theoretical anchoring.

Buber's theory distinguishes two types of relations, *Ich–Du* (I–Thou) and *Ich–Es* (I–It), which can be applied to the teacher and pupil relationship. In the context of current curricular reality, and with reference to the preceding text, we attend to the transformation of the educational process from a transmissive to a constructivist mode, which corresponds to a shift from *Ich–Es* to *Ich–Du* (Buber, 1923/2016). Read in relation to the Czech competence framework, this distinction helps clarify whether teaching competence is understood primarily as technical performance or as the capacity to sustain dialogic, respectful, and ethically responsive relationships in educational practice. This relational orientation is explicit in the Competence Framework, which states that the future teacher "communicates with pupils in an open and partnership-oriented way," "offers each pupil dialogue and cooperation," and "respects their self-concept and need for autonomy" (MŠMT, 2023, p. 68, author's translation).

As the centre of education shifts, the relational focus shifts with it. Positive interactions during crises further foreground the *Ich–Du* relation in ITE: attention to voice, ethical address, and co-presence cultivates the relational climate and diminishes *Ich–Es* tendencies (Slaná Reissmannová, 2021).

The *Ich–Du* relation is grounded in mutuality, present openness, authenticity, and dialogue, which support the growth of both learner and educator (Guilherme & Morgan, 2009). This relationship rests on equality and mutual respect rather than hierarchy. Buber (1923/2016) also notes that *Ich–Du* is not confined to human relations; it may also pertain to nature, to God, or to knowledge.

By contrast, the *Ich–Es* relation is characterised by alienation: one actor perceives the other as an object or as a tool for the attainment of an aim. Equal dialogue is absent and the relation becomes dehumanised (Guilherme & Morgan, 2009). Such as in the transmissive model, the student/pupil is seen as a passive recipient, while the teacher is the authority who passes on knowledge (Bradshaw, 2017).

From the student's/pupil's perspective, *Ich–Es* may also be interpreted as viewing the teacher as an instrument for individual goals such as grades or a degree. Mutual objectification arises and the authenticity of the relation is lost (Morgan & Guilherme, 2012). Buber (1923/2016) does not employ the term *Es–Es* for a mutual objectifying stance, yet he warns against reducing the relation to a purely utilitarian interaction.

In pedagogical contexts, the relationship should be based on mutual dialogue, respect, and equality. Furthermore, collective dialogic decision-making within groups with diverse preferences may reduce an *Ich–Es* stance and affirm the plurality of meaning-making observed in current higher-education samples.

If both actors are able to perceive the other as an equal being, the principles of competence development formulated in recent educational documents can be realised in practice (cf. Buber, 1923/2016; MŠMT, 2023). As competence demands increase, embodied teacher presence and an *Ich–Du* relational climate become necessary. In parallel, anxiety rises, which makes systematic attention to it indispensable (Králová et al., 2024).

Embodiment and Pedagogical Interaction (Merleau-Ponty)

Similar aspects of the educational relation are emphasised by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who foregrounds embodiment as a key element of educational interaction. When such embodied awareness is deliberately cultivated, it may contribute to practical outcomes: improved classroom management, prevention of conflicts and crises, enhanced student motivation, a positive educational climate, and related benefits (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2013).

Beyond classroom practice, recent European mapping of physical literacy, understood as a holistic embodied competence construct with existential and phenomenological underpinnings, shows momentum but uneven uptake. Causes include conceptual and linguistic frictions and limited assessment infrastructure. This comparison is relevant for the Czech case because it shows that embodied dimensions of competence are not difficult only in national reform discourse; they

also pose wider challenges of conceptualisation, implementation, and assessment across European teacher-education contexts (Carl et al., 2023).

Besides awareness of one's own body, awareness of the corporeality of the other also matters, because it enables meaningful dialogue (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2013; He & Ejgil, 2017). The teacher communicates not only content but also posture, voice, and gesture; the student reacts actively. The relation is chiasmatic: meaning is co-created within it, and both actors are transformed through it (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/2004).

On the basis of the foregoing, we regard attention to embodiment in educational spaces as crucial. We observe how the student who becomes a teacher perceives the transformation of educational reality and the relationships within it. We consider the following dimensions:

1. corporeality (body) in space, where the teacher communicates through nonverbal means, for example, gesture, facial expression, proxemics, kinesics, haptics, posture;
2. temporality (time) in instruction, which has a given rhythm, continuity, and expectations that follow conception and structure;
3. relationality (others), in which a climate of trust or of tension arises;
4. spatiality (external world) in the arrangement of the classroom and the participation shaped by the seating plan (Merleau-Ponty, 1964/2004, 1945/2013; Sohn et al., 2017).

Although Buber and Merleau-Ponty proceed from different philosophical traditions, existentialism and phenomenology, their approaches overlap in pedagogical contexts. Table 2 presents their shared premises.

Table 2

Dialogic and Embodied Dimensions in the Teacher-Student Relationship

Aspect	**Martin Buber**	**Maurice Merleau-Ponty**	**Intersection of the Authors**
Fundamental premise of the relation	An existential decision to perceive the other as Thou.	Perceiving the other as bodily presence in a pre-linguistic phase.	Rejection of abstraction and emphasis on concrete encounters in the world.
Approach to the Other	The other as a subjective being equal in value.	The other as an embodied subject, at once perceiving and perceived.	The other is an active participant in the world rather than a passive object.
Dynamics of interaction	Dialogue, openness, presence, relational tension.	Bodily interaction, dialogical meaning, situatedness.	A reciprocal relation co-created by both actors.
Inauthentic dehumanised relation	Ich–Es (I–It) where the other becomes a means or a tool.	Reduction of subjectivity, body treated as instrument, relation as mere transfer.	A shared critique of depersonalisation, isolation, and reductionism in relations.
Apex of the relation	Ich–Du (I–Thou) entry into a reciprocal present	Chiasm a bodily lived reciprocal co-presence	The relation is transformative and enables new

Aspect	Martin Buber	Maurice Merleau-Ponty	Intersection of the Authors
	responsible and transcendent relation touch of eternity.	and mutual transformation.	understanding of self and other.
Pedagogical implication	Teacher and pupil in a living dialogue and responsibility toward the pupil as Thou.	Learning as a bodily grounded experience with transformation of both participants.	The pedagogical relationship is not one-way. It is a space of co-existence growth and mutual sensitivity.

Source: Adapted from Buber (1923/2016) and Merleau-Ponty (1964/2004)

The table illustrates that the key to a high-quality pedagogical relation is the capacity to perceive the other as a whole person. Viewed in this way, the Czech competence framework can be read not only as a list of expected skills, but also as an implicit account of what kind of pedagogical relationship teacher education is meant to cultivate. We underscore the importance of building dialogic relationships in all phases of education within the curricular reality of the Czech Republic. The most significant contribution of the comparison lies in viewing participants as co-creators of educational reality. Teacher and pupil co-create the structure of instruction, and their relationship becomes a space for mutual growth and development.

Across the parts of Table 2 it is evident that the authors share common starting points presented in the column "Intersection of the authors." In line with the earlier discussion of the constructivist approach, we likewise presuppose the uniqueness of the human being, that is, the pupil, within the educational system. Both authors agree that an abstract curriculum, conceived as something passively received by pupils rather than actively lived and co-created, is unacceptable for education. Emphasis is placed on an active, embodied, bilateral reality in which pupils and the teacher alike realise themselves.

This article also discusses the depersonalised and dehumanised relation in which the pupil perceives the teacher instrumentally, as a means of attaining a good grade, while the teacher perceives the pupil as an object for attaining higher evaluation, greater status, respect, or a good reputation. Such a relation is purely instrumental and therefore stands in direct opposition to the theories presented. We regard it as essential that the curriculum and the educational institution function as a space of acceptance and discovery, grounded in respect, relational reciprocity, and mindful awareness of the other in space and time. The approaches of the cited authors provide guidance in this respect.

Discussion

Our analysis indicates a sustained and system-level shift in Czech teacher preparation from transmissive to constructivist orientations, reflected in strategic documents and competence frameworks issued over the 2020–2025 reform cycle (RQ1). Read against the backdrop of current value conflicts and epistemic uncertainty, this shift is not merely pedagogical; it is a policy attempt to redefine what counts as civic professionalism in schooling. These policy moves consistently

elevate relational, reflective, and ethically grounded competences alongside domain knowledge and didactics.

Interpreted through dialogic and embodied lenses (RQ2), the frameworks' aspirations become conceptually legible: Buber's I–Thou relation specifies the quality of pedagogical encounter envisaged, and Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment clarifies why presence, gesture, voice, and spatial arrangements matter for learning and co-creation. Together, these lenses articulate the shift from "teacher as sole transmitter" toward "teacher as relational, ethical, and embodied facilitator."

Finally, implications for curriculum design (RQ3) concern aligning programme outcomes with relational and embodied competences; making dialogic and reflective practices structurally visible in coursework and practicum; and ensuring assessment systems recognise growth in these areas rather than privileging only summative performance. The analysis also highlights areas of progress, persistent tensions, and practical priorities for further development.

Areas of Progress and Persistent Tensions

- **Policy and system level.** The frameworks and revised curricular documents signal clear intent and provide common language for competence development. Yet early professional learning remains fragmented, and alignment between graduate self-perceptions and employer expectations is uneven. Moreover, fields differ in uptake and assessment readiness, i.e. resistance of simple measurement in embodied or relational constructs.
- **Programme design (ITE).** Many programmes now emphasise critical thinking and misinformation literacy, but media education remains inconsistent, with gaps around media economics and agenda-setting. Similarly, dialogic and embodied pedagogies are present but often underspecified at the level of concrete learning designs, assessment rubrics, and mentoring routines. These gaps can create dehumanising "I–It" dynamics (e.g., instrumental views of grades or evaluation) precisely where relational quality is meant to be central. Heightened competency expectations can also raise anxiety among pre-service teachers without commensurate supports.
- **Classroom practice.** At the practicum and early-career stages, time for high-activation lesson design and reflective follow-up is scarce; access to spaces and equipment that enable dialogic and embodied work (e.g., flexible seating, audio-visual tools, outdoor or studio environments) is uneven; and channels for student voice in co-shaping the enacted curriculum are not consistently established. These constraints risk reverting to transmissive routines even when programme rhetoric favours constructivism.

These frictions mirror five recurring "growth blockers" observed in Czech induction: perceived pre-service mastery (overconfidence), lack of understanding (of why methods matter), limiting beliefs, low agency, and external barriers (Vlček & Sedová, 2025). Addressing them requires coordinated action across policy, programmes, and schools.

Implications for Programme Design in Civic/Social Science Teacher Education

The analysis suggests several implications for programme design in civic and social science teacher education. At the level of system architecture, a more diagnostic approach is warranted. Programmes should use qualitative discussions between mentors and trainees to identify specific aggravating mechanisms, such as misunderstandings, limiting beliefs, low agency, or external constraints. Each mechanism can then be paired with a tailored intervention and tracked within continuous improvement cycles (Vlček & Sedová, 2025). In the same vein, establishing an advisory board composed of school leaders, mentor teachers, NGOs, municipalities, and employers may help ensure that curricula are co-shaped with regard to societal needs and the competences expected in graduate profiles.

Within ITE delivery, the use of a validated learner-perception tool at the start and end of practicum to capture relational and embodied competences can strengthen curriculum quality, provided that the results are discussed in structured dialogic debriefs (Cocca et al., 2025; Buber, 1923/2016). Alignment of outcomes, learning tasks, and assessments should be made explicit through course-embedded micro-teaching with self-reflection protocols aligned to the framework, together with deliberate planning for gesture, embodied presence, and the use of space (Bertrand, 1998; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2013).

Another priority is to close persistent gaps in media literacy, alongside critical thinking and misinformation, through targeted gap identification, curricular adjustment, and reflection (Mackenzie, 2023). As digital development accelerates, adopting a metaliteracy stance is essential. Courses for pre-service teachers should cultivate civic-minded, open, and collaborative orientations that align with practicum expectations and current societal contexts (Mackey & Aird, 2021). To protect the relational climate while raising expectations, programmes should combine coaching, peer-feedback cycles, micro-teaching for crisis communication, low-stakes rehearsal, and video-based reflection. These routines can build competence and reduce performance anxiety (Vlček & Sedová, 2025; Králová et al., 2024; Slaná Reissmannová, 2021).

More broadly, these implications point to the need for systemic support for the development of high-quality pedagogical competencies across teacher education. Social change makes such a transformation unavoidable. The growth of pedagogical skills, as a pillar of complex pedagogical competence, must be supported not only in higher education but also from the earliest years of schooling (Flekač, 2024).

Conclusion

This paper analysed how the current Czech ITE defines teacher professionalism and what this requires from programmes and assessment. Recent competence frameworks no longer cast the teacher mainly as a transmitter of curriculum, but as a reflective, relational, ethically accountable and embodied professional. Read through Buber's I–Thou relation and Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment, this framing treats teaching as an encounter between subjects, mediated by voice, gesture, attention and ethical responsibility rather than one-way delivery.

Yet we find a persistent implementation gap. While the policy documents clearly foreground dialogic, embodied, and civic competences, they leave open important questions about how these competences are operationalised, supported, and assessed in practice.

Three programme priorities follow. First, interactional work must become visible and coachable through structured observation, guided video analysis and supported microteaching in psychologically safe feedback conditions. Second, competence descriptors in accreditation, syllabi, practicum and induction must align with what student teachers actually plan, rehearse, enact and are graded on; otherwise relational and embodied competences remain rhetorically central but procedurally optional. Third, civic and media competences should be treated as part of professional identity and ethical responsibility in the classroom, not as detachable add-ons.

Two lines of research are particularly urgent. Methodologically, the field needs valid, developmentally sensitive indicators of dialogic and embodied competence that allow formative feedback without reducing teaching to a checklist. Longitudinally, graduates should be followed into the early career years to see which competences are sustained, adapted or abandoned under real school conditions. Overall, the Czech trajectory points toward a constructivist, dialogic and embodied model of professionalism; its stability will depend on whether programmes and schools can assess it fairly and support beginning teachers to inhabit it in everyday practice.

As global value contests intensify, the credibility of competence-based reforms will depend less on declarative frameworks and more on whether teacher education can sustain dialogic, embodied, and ethically grounded practice in everyday school life.

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