

INTEGRATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION INTO LOWER- SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Abstract. *There have been dramatic changes in the concepts of democracy in European countries and throughout the world, which have led to the changes in attitudes between a person and a society. Globalisation has brought the culture of stereotypes, multicultural society, migration – these are only some aspects that indicate the growth of importance of civic education at every level of education in the modern world. To choose the most effective methods and forms of civic education, it is essential to analyse world experience and cultural traditions of every country, which are based on the ideals and values, and are the fundament of educational traditions. The aim of this article is to analyse the presence of civic education elements in the lower-secondary school curriculum, and to evaluate the possibilities of possible improvements.*

Keywords: *civic education, democratic values, curriculum.*

Introduction

Following up Alijev inference that school educational process is the basis to transform consciousness of any society to the qualitatively new knowledge, skills and learning principles, it can be indicated that education plays an important role in the development of social culture (Alijev, 2005). The needs that are affected by the changes in the society are implemented in the syllabi, which is the basic element of educational system, and which reflects state, society and environmental influence on the pedagogical process. Western authors consider that the important social aspect is revealed in the discussion with a goal to make relations between education, labour demand and civic concepts (Hursh & Wayne, 2000). However, Voelker suggests that the priority of education is identified through person's social activity, which is generally implemented with changes in the educational process (Voelker, 2008). The close connection between social problems and education has influenced the interpretation of the term. The term used in German resources is 'social upbringing' (Sozialerziehung), English authors use the term 'social education', which undermines the presence of a particular curriculum. The changes in the modern syllabi are generally connected with socially-oriented subjects, which brings about the need to find a balance between 'strictly traditional' – history, geography, political education – and 'more broadly defined' aspects, which

would include art, media and multicultural tendencies. Furthermore, it is essential to activate civic education in schools, to emphasise the development of loyalty, initiative and cooperation of social groups. Voelker considers that the excessive individualisation of the educational process has neglected social motivation (Voelker, 2008). Civic education has lost its importance. It has been substituted by professional needs and aspiration of excellence. Civic education questions have also become a current issue in the education of Latvia. Today, when the new general education (lower-secondary school) curriculum (standards) is being developed, there is a necessity to evaluate the civic education experience the historic and contemporary context. The aim of this article is to analyse the presence of civic education elements in the lower-secondary school curriculum, and to evaluate the possibilities of possible improvements.

Research methods: hermeneutics, analysis of documents.

Civic Education Experience in Latvia

The questions about civic education in the global multicultural society have led to a necessity to evaluate educational opportunities not only for the full terms of content acquisition. Educating a socially active and nationally-minded individual is an essential aim of any civil society. Today's changing society requires development of civic education objectives, integration of modern knowledge, skills and values of every personality. The new research is based on the assessment of the historical experience.

At the beginning of the 20th century Latvia faced many challenges. In the process of creating a new, democratic society the educational system was radically reformed. Having evaluated global experience, Latvian educators persisted that the implementation of social and state needs in the curriculum could not change the educational mission, whose priority is the comprehensive development of the individual. Having tracked public discussion in pedagogical periodicals, as well as the guidelines of the documents, the priorities that reflect the influence of reformative pedagogy on the curriculum in the 20th century were identified. The ideas of reformative pedagogy changed the understanding of the concept of education; they combined education with knowledge, skills, values that the student acquires in school, as well as in the family and society. Thus, education is considered a broad and a comprehensive process that leads to the deliberate understanding of public objectives and values. Development of individual and society becomes the main aim of education. The individual must acquire variety action forms, which would ensure an individual's ability to socialise in the constantly changing society.

Considering the educational purpose, changes affecting the curriculum appear which means that the student inherits the social meaning of the processes, the main forms of activities, people's moral behaviour, the main forms of communication, and other qualities. After five years of elaboration, in 1926 published Latvian folk school syllabi highlight two trends: national and civil. This is evidenced by the change in subject layouts and content: comparing with 1922 folk school syllabus, the content of environmental studies is designed in more detail, with separate themes for rural and urban schools. The aim of the new syllabus is to enhance students' understanding of local social and economic environment. There is an additional indication – students should pay 'serious attention' to outstanding personalities and community, but especially - ethnographic phenomena. Methodological recommendations stress that studies of the local environment should be based on direct experience, personally relevant observations, knowledge and attitudes, teaching more and more objective understanding of their surroundings and involving students in natural sciences, geography, and history. Fundamentally, the main goal of environmental studies is the promotion of positive social experiences through correctional facilities of social environment laying the foundations for social conscience and social development activities. The basic principle of another folk school syllabus's project in Latvia project (1922) is positive and active attitude towards popular culture and mental values, with particular emphasis on the importance of pedagogical work: cognitive activity, practical skills, and the ethical and societal value. Summarising the analysis of the folk school syllabi, it should be admitted that motherland studies are offered as nation-awareness principle, which pervades in the process of learning in all subjects, brought into action a number of civic education tasks:

- the individual's educational and environmental interactions are encouraged with teaching methods;
- complementing students' personal experiences, homeland studies promote positive attitudes towards public and governmental processes, thus encouraging public awareness activity of young citizens of the country;
- highlighting the personal significance, of public process, promotes students' patriotism and civic formation of values.

Updating civic education tasks, the process deliberately targeted at individual's choice of alignment with the needs of society and state development. Weber considers that civic way of thinking is the expression of citizens' spirituality (intelligence), suggesting their ability to participate in public life and to contribute to its development (Weber, 1973). A similar view was expressed in the works of the Latvian 20 – 30 s educators. They particularly emphasised the importance of the formation of national thinking in society

without national experience. There was a discussion among Latvian educators who expressed two different opinions:

- in the absence of statehood experience, school syllabi should contain a separate subject teaching state matters (Svenne, 1929.);
- national thinking is the result of intellectual development of an individual, it should become a basic principle of the new school, without distinguishing it as a separate subject.

The last opinion was supported by the majority of teachers in Latvia, but some were in the midst of disagreement. Part of the teachers stressed that the national education integrates teaching and extra-curricular activities - student self-governments, hobby groups, community organisations, clubs, and cooperatives. A different view was posed by teachers who were convinced that the organisation of the educational process had an important role in the intellectual and the national upbringing. They stressed the need for national parenting issues directly linked to individual subjects, especially - history, Latvian language, geography, military training and sports, job training and agriculture.

In general, in the democratic state formation and consolidation period civic education objectives and content (state structure, organisation and functions, the historical development) and practical (participatory methods and forms) were democratic-value-oriented and provided general intellectual development, where national thinking was expressed in the personal ability to link their freedom of choice with the development patterns of the society. The prevailing opinion among Latvian educators was that this task can be successfully implemented through the development and rearranging the educational process. This opinion was consistently supported by Dauge (Dauge, 1926). A similar view was also expressed by Dreimanis, who believed that there was a need to emphasise civic education tasks in the curriculum, making society and state historical experience personally meaningful (Dreimanis, 1926). Close to this view were Greste, Lancmanis who sought training forms and methods (museums, excursions, local history activities), which meant bringing into proximity the general knowledge of each individual and personal experience, making them more personally meaningful and valuable.

Some educators – Dekens, Taivans, Brods - evaluated national education tasks in the wider context, considering possible the creation of a correctional environment, with strong emphasis on collaboration and self-organisation forms, which successfully realised national instructional elements that could contribute to the practical state action skills.

Civic Education Problems in the Global Society

Looking for solutions to global multicultural society-induced changes, civic education has become a priority in many national education systems in the world. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member States (2002) Recommendations emphasise the family role in civic education, though they do not understate the role of formal and informal education. In 2012, a new Recommendation of the Council of Europe (2012) suggested some additional parameters. Among them is that Member States are encouraged to include democratic citizenship programmes in all of events of education and training whether formal, or informal, including tertiary education level, particularly within teacher education courses. Arbues considers that the content of modern civic education in Europe was affected by important factors, including the 'Third Wave of Democracy', which began after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. The author believes that the expansion of the Western democracies, merging with countries with no experience of modern democracy, set new challenges for civic education. A significant Arbues's indication is that the importance of civic education in European countries is one of the reasons of resistance to global values (Arbués, 2014). Also Harsh and Wayne point out that Western schools have a tendency to maintain the environment that is based in specific traditional values, which leads to the certain isolation from society. The authors believe that the tradition of justifying a conservative lifestyle, distorts the formation of multicultural diversity, which is one of characteristics of democracy (Hursh & Wayne, 2000). The same opinion is posed by Were, who highlights that the traditional culture with its symbols (beliefs, traditions, folklore) no longer provides a full social education (Were, 1987). Hursh and Vayne believe that to ensure the promotion of social awareness and activity, the school should obtain a more open social basis - through the teacher's competence development, 'modern' tradition of family upbringing, religion, interests, and peer environment. Calling it 'active social education', the authors consider classroom setting to be great importance, where a student and a teacher 'discuss, learn, share knowledge and change the world' (Hursh & Vayne, 2000).

By contrast, the United States pedagogical literature view emphasises the need to increase individual and community interrelations as well as mutual accountability that would make a more effective collective public functions. Voelker agrees with the modern democracy beliefs that the overall prosperity provides a benefit to everyone. An individual's social development is oriented to promote the interests of a society, as well as the need to be aware of the results of their individual progress. Thus, from an individual point of view, social development is the social dimension of personality, communication,

development of communication skills; from the public point of view it is an opportunity to acquire a collective cohabitation functions (Voelker, 2008).

Civic Education Elements in Lower-Secondary School Curriculum

To develop the concept of civic education in lower-secondary school, it must be admitted that the experts have made a serious research in world experience and challenges of a changing multicultural society. However, there are some debatable issues - how to connect the individual and social needs—personal progress and national development interests? How should a society without national and long-term democratic experience promote significant modern democratic values? In order to encourage an answer to these and other questions in the future, it is essential to examine what kinds of civic education elements are found in lower-secondary (basic) education curriculum (subject standards). Considering this condition, all subject standards can be divided into four groups:

- socio-cultural competence is eliminated as a requirement (Language);
- elements of civic education interwoven the content (Man and Society - Latvian History, World History, Home Economics and Technology, Sport);
- The course includes civic education content (Social Sciences, Ethics);
- The content reveals practical application aspects (Technology and Science).

It is important to admit that in the field of curriculum ‘Language’ socio-cultural competence convincingly includes important elements of civic education - understanding of the relationship between language and culture, the aspects of social and political status, ethical and emotional significance of mother tongue in the person’s social development. The multi-cultural aspect, which is one of the components of the subject standard for foreign languages, correlates with modern society needs. Traditionally correct is also the society development principle in the field of Technology and Science, which is particularly important for learners in the process of globalisation to create modern values in and foster personification of them.

Most contradictions are found in the field ‘Man and Society’. This is understandable, because the content of this field is directly attributable to the nature of civic education - the individual’s social conscience, social activity, promotion of modern democratic values and acquisition of these values by every individual. It is therefore particularly important for all subjects in this field to foster common perceptions, attitudes and values, not only considering the content, but also methodology. Taking into consideration the abovementioned, the subjects’ contents to be approved are Sport (individual and public physical

and mental health unity) and Home Economics and Technology (practical and ethical importance of individual's and community development). The question appears about teaching Social Science and Ethics, as well as the World and Latvian History as separate subjects. In essence, the contents of Social Science and Ethics correlate, as they integrate the results of the field 'Man and Society'. Past and present global experience demonstrates that the emphasis on current social problems (in this case - civic education) is put through education, encouraging the diversification of educational contents, methods, attracting public resources and thus expanding the educational environment.

It is hoped that in the process of development of the new lower-secondary school curriculum (standard) civic education will be integrated into content as a mainstream competence, promoting development of socially active and nationally conscious personalities.

Conclusions

1. The issues of civic education in the global multicultural society require constant improvement of civic education tasks, integration of modern knowledge, understanding, skills and values in the process of personality development.
2. The beginning of 20th century brought Latvia many challenges. In the process of creating a new, democratic society the educational system was radically reformed. Updating civic education tasks, the process was deliberately targeted at the alignment of individual's choice, the needs of society and state development. There was a discussion among Latvian educators, representing the two views: national education should be implemented through separate subjects, or it should become a fundamental principle of the new school, without distinguishing it as a separate subject.
3. With the changes in the society caused by global multicultural influence, civic education emerged as priority of educational systems in many countries. Along with other activities, civic education elements are implemented at all levels of education - formal, informal, inclusive, and tertiary education curricula.
4. The process the new lower-secondary school curriculum (standard) development should result in civic education as an integrated mainstream competence. It requires both current situation assessment and evaluation of the historical and the modern world experience.

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