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Interconnection of civic education and civic society

This article indicates a growing consensus internationally that human rights principles underpin education for citizenship in multicultural democracies. The article stresses that students should be participating in democracy at school: decision-making about school life, school governance and policy making. The article addresses the importance of deliberation or decision-making discussion, weighing up alternatives to decide the best course of action.

Key words: citizenship, citizenship education, civic society, democracy, social sciences.

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Азаматтық білім беру мен азаматтық қоғам арасындағы байланыс

Бұл мақала азаматтық білім беру мен азаматтық тәрбие арасындағы байланысты қарастырады. Азаматтық білім берудің қоғамға әсерін қарастырып, қорытындыда ұсыныстар ұсынады.

Түйін сөздер: азаматтық, азаматтық тәрбие, азаматтық қоғам, демократия, қоғамдық ғылымдар.

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Взаимосвязь гражданского образования и гражданского общества

Авторы статьи рассматривают связь между гражданским образованием и гражданским обществом, влияние гражданского воспитания на общество и дают в заключении рекомендации по данной теме.

Ключевые слова: гражданство, гражданское воспитание, гражданское общество, демократия, социальные науки.

INTERCONNECTION OF CIVIC EDUCATION AND CIVIC SOCIETY

During the last decade of the twentieth century and at the very beginning of the twenty-first century we have seen a renewed interest in citizenship education. This renewed interest, at both national and international levels, among international organizations, government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can be explained by a number of factors.

First, there is internationally, a broad recognition of a need to address, through education, the challenges presented by continuing injustice and inequalities in the world. This perspective has been strengthened because of a growing awareness of the links between poverty, injustice and inequality in the world on the one hand, and terrorist movements. International organizations and individual nation-states have responded by reviewing how citizenship education and human rights education might be strengthened and renewed. Citizenship education and human rights education are two distinct areas but their aims also converge and overlap.

Kazakhstani educational concepts aimed to mobilize governments to develop specific plans and programs in this field. The UN Human Rights Commission plans to establish a World Program and an international cooperation and government-civil society framework of cooperation on HRE which will build upon the achievements of the Decade:

Convinced that human rights education is a long-term and life-long process by which all people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies, and that human rights education significantly contributes to promoting equality and sustainable development, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes, with a view to developing societies in which all human rights of all are valued and respected. (UN Human Rights Commission Resolution 2004/71)

The aims of the World Program are therefore:

- developing respect for human dignity
- promoting equality and sustainable development
- preventing conflict and human rights violations
- enhancing participation and democratic processes.

These aims are in keeping with the aims of programs of education for democratic citizenship, which are also being developed by international organizations and nation-states. At the 47th session of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) UNESCO International Conference on Education in September 2004, 'education for active and responsible citizenship' was identified among the proposed priorities for action to improve the quality of education for all young people:

In particular, this Conference has allowed us to agree at an international level on several fundamental aspects relative to the construction and reinforcement of our educational policies. There appears to be a need to:

- ensure that all young people acquire the competencies required for personal autonomy and for citizenship, to enter the world of work and social life, with a view to respecting their identity, openness to the world and social and cultural diversity.

- reinforce – through education for active and responsible citizenship – the willingness and the capacity to live together and to build peace in a world characterized by inter-state and internal armed conflicts and by the emergence of all forms of violence and war.

Thus it is the need for citizenship education which will equip young people with skills attitudes for:

- personal autonomy
- employment
- living together
- respecting social and cultural diversity in their communities and globally
- peace-building and peaceful conflict resolution.

Secondly, the processes of globalization and consequent migration are having a direct impact in local communities around the world. Most significantly there is increasing diversity and increasing recognition of diversity in industrialized countries across the globe. Certain tensions exist within multicultural democracies concerning the need to promote national unity or cohesion and the need to accommodate, and indeed support, a range of cultural communities within the nation-state [1]. The tensions between diversity and unity require an educational response and a need to re-think the aims and processes of citizenship education in society:

Increased diversity and increased recognition of diversity require a vigorous reexamination of the ends and means of citizenship education. Multicultural societies are faced with the problem of creating nation-states that recognize and incorporate the di-

versity of their citizens and embrace an overarching set of shared values, ideals, and goals to which all citizens are committed. Only when a nation-state is unified around a set of democratic values such as human rights, justice, and equality can it secure the liberties of cultural, ethnic, language, and religious groups and enable them to experience freedom, justice, and peace. Citizens who understand this unity-diversity tension and act accordingly do not materialize from thin air; they are educated for it. [2]

In the Address of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev to the people of Kazakhstan noted the need not only for skills directly relevant to the workplace, but also skills which would support democracy and social cohesion. They addressed the tensions between diversity and unity (nation-building), and the importance of citizenship education which addressed both these dimensions:

The issue for education is how to develop not only successful individuals with good workplace skills, but also 'democratic citizenship' — an outcome both linked to, and supportive of, social cohesion. Defining the qualities we might wish to see in citizens of democratic societies remains a political and context-dependent task. It might include qualities such as fairness, tolerance and a co-operative approach, recognition of the value of social norms, and a civic spirit. While education and informal learning, in isolation, cannot create model citizens, they can, alongside other factors, make a constructive contribution. Devising a policy response will require clear objectives, keeping a balance between the «nation-building» role of civic education and its role in valuing and recognizing social diversity. At the same time, choice and diversity in educational provision may have to be increased to meet individual needs.

Thirdly, there is a concern in a number of democratic nation-states about levels of political engagement, particularly among the young. Citizenship education is seen as a response to this. For example, a Korean educator notes how:

Most people today find the greatest happiness in their family life, work, religion or leisure, not in politics. Political participation is seen as an occasional, often burdensome, activity necessary to ensure that government respects and supports people's freedom to pursue their personal projects and attachments. The assumption that politics is primarily a means to protect and promote private life underlies most modern views of citizenship. This attitude may reflect the impoverishment of public life ... it also demonstrates the enrichment of private life, given the increased prominence of

romantic love and the nuclear family; increased prosperity; and modern beliefs in the dignity of labor. The call for active citizenship must compete with the powerful attractions of private life. [3]

The writer goes on to argue that ‘nothing is more important to citizenship education than proper schooling, but schooling is no longer enough’ and advocates engagement in the organizations of civil society, including co-operatives, professional organizations, environmental groups, neighborhood and charitable organizations and support groups as a way of learning for citizenship. One of the proposed solutions, in addition to providing space in the formal school curriculum for citizenship education, was ‘to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves’

Fourthly, the emphasis on citizenship education is closely linked to a tendency, in many countries, to blame youth for the problems and challenges facing society as a whole. Thus, citizenship education is often seen as a means of addressing a perceived deficit among the young whether this relates to low levels of voting (inevitably interpreted as political apathy), violence or anti-social behavior. In France, for example, the government has placed a renewed emphasis on citizenship education in response to public concerns about anti-social behavior and violence in schools [4]

Fifthly, and finally, there are concerns about the growth of anti-democratic and racist movements which serve to undermine democracy. Citizenship education is seen as a means of strengthening democracy by challenging such anti-democratic movements and attitudes and promoting antiracism. In this spirit, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan convened a number of preparatory meetings in order to develop this issue in Kazakhstan. That also claimed that:

Kazakhstan is a community of shared values, multicultural in its past, present and future; ... Full and effective implementation of all human rights without any discrimination or distinction, as enshrined in Kazakhstani and other international human rights instruments, must be secured; Racism and racial discrimination are serious violations of human rights in the contemporary world and must be combated by all lawful means; Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance threaten democratic societies and their fundamental values; Stability and peace in Kazakhstan and throughout the world can only be built on tolerance

and respect for diversity; ...All initiatives aiming at greater political, social and cultural participation, especially of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, should be encouraged. [5]

Amongst specific measures recommended, education is seen as having a leading role. Governments committed themselves to give particular attention to education and awareness-raising in all sectors of society to promote a climate of tolerance, respect for human rights and cultural diversity, including introducing and strengthening such measures among young people.

1. It is agreed that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment. [6]

It then observes the key role which education for democratic citizenship is already playing in the education reform programs in many member states, before outlining the actors who necessarily work alongside school in realizing EDC and the contribution which EDC makes to cohesion in contexts of diversity, to gender equality and to enhancing curricular and pedagogy:

Noting the central role already accorded to education for democratic citizenship in the educational reforms under way in many member states, and its key position in international co-operation for peace and stability in Kazakhstan.

Education for democratic citizenship should be seen as embracing any formal, non-formal or informal educational activity, including that of the family, enabling an individual to act throughout his or her life as an active and responsible citizen respectful of the rights of others; ... [it is] a factor for social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and solidarity, that it contributes to promoting the principle of equality

between men and women, and that it encourages the establishment of harmonious and peaceful relations within and among peoples, as well as the defense and development of democratic society and culture.

Citizens in democratic multicultural nation-states endorse the overarching ideals of the nation-state such as human rights, justice, and equality and are committed to the maintenance and perpetuation of these ideals. Democratic citizens are also willing and able to take action to close the gap between these ideals and practices that violate them, such as social, racial, cultural, and economic inequality. Consequently, an important goal of citizenship education in a democratic multicultural society is to help students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to make reflective decisions and to take action in order to make their nation-state more democratic and just. [7]

In case of Kazakhstan, civic education drew from a variety of subjects. The researchers noted that civic education may be structured as a single definitive subject, as a field integrated into the social sciences or into the curriculum, or primarily as an extra-curricular activity. They observed that the extracurricular form is the least popular among

teachers, and that civic education integrating into other social sciences was most popular.

In conclusion, we recommend some ideas to governments, national and regional education authorities concerning civic education activities in society. As Kazakhstan is on the way of renewing content of civic education and Kazakhstan people need to be managed by such systematic influence from the side of Government.

Recommendations:

To governments, national and regional education authorities

1. Establish a policy that expresses clearly for ordinary citizens why citizenship education is important.

2. Promote the policy so that it is understood by teachers, parents and the wider community.

3. Work with teacher unions and a range of cultural communities when developing materials.

4. Train specialist teachers of citizenship so as to build a cadre of well-informed and enthusiastic professionals.

5. Support the continuing professional development of teachers from other disciplines, who may be required to teach citizenship.

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