The influence of civic education on young people in Lithuania

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Abstract. This article analyzes the contemporary Lithuanian situation regarding the possible influences of civic education in schools, on young people's understanding of citizenship, on the preparation of young people for becoming good citizens of a democratic society, and on the perception of quality of life in such a society as well as young people's understanding of equal rights and equality in Lithuania. The study is based on current citizenship education models and curriculum for young people and other scientific research articles. Civic education should be based on the application of interactive methods to allow students to discuss actively and perform a variety of creative tasks, analyze, solve challenges, and play. According to educators, newer teaching methods that involve dialogue, active learning, and critical analysis are most acceptable to students. These interactive teaching methods are different from traditional approaches in that the interactive approach encourages the audience to participate and to get involved in the learning process, rather than passively receiving information. Civic education in the Lithuanian education system, through interactive teaching methods, plays an important role in shaping active, participatory citizens in Lithuanian society. Hence, the key objectives of civic education are to enable pupils to learn how to identify critical social, political, economic, national, regional, and global issues, analyze those issues, and participate in a variety of ways to address them.

Keywords: Citizenship, civic education, civic engagement, school, community.

Introduction

In many countries, civic education is given great attention. Current international debate regarding the value and importance of civic education differ on a variety of con-
cepts and approaches, which reflect the countries’ norms, values and traditions, learning differences, levels of democratic development, institutional systems, and resources. On the other hand, most agree that education is more than information, and much more than coaching. Education helps each student discover herself, develop personal responsibility, and internalize values shaped by the ability to make thoughtful, independent choices. In light of the profound socio-cultural changes that have occurred and are still occurring in Central and Eastern European countries, civic education provides added value to developing a democratic state, which is why these countries initially requested assistance from the Director General of UNESCO in the early 1990s to provide special assistance to these countries to develop civic education for formulating new democratic societies. In this area, UNESCO works closely with educational institutions in democratic countries, which is why, in Lithuania, much attention is given to the younger generation regarding civic education. Different democracy and citizenship education projects can promote growth in better understanding democratic and civic society in a number of schools, but the younger generation must make the most of these educational activities.

One of the main goals of educating youth is the education of a student’s personality; in other words, schools must help everyone understand themselves, their identity, and how to find their purpose in life. This is most successfully achieved when a proper school community exists that is actively and effectively working with all members of the community. Parents and guardians regard the school as the best opportunity for personal self-creation and self-authority, which is realized through a consistent and purposeful educational process where the main organizer and promoter of these activities is the teacher (Kavaliauskiene, 2001). To develop an active, participatory citizenship that ascribes to democratic principles and values, members of the school community must be included, especially the teacher. The aim of this research is to reveal the importance of civics lessons on citizenship education. Method: Empirical research was carried out by a specially designed questionnaire. This study used an anonymous closed-form questionnaire as answers to closed questions can be more accurately measured. The questionnaires for students consisted of questions about student and teacher activity and participation in civic education, what skills are needed in solving various problems, and how the project has helped participants to understand citizenship education in schools. These student surveys were conducted in various schools through advance agreement with teachers. The purposes of the surveys were explained to students. Students had the choice to participate or not. Instructions were given, then, to those who agreed to participate in the study. The researcher was available during the entire survey in order to clarify any questions.
Civic Education

A citizen is a full member of a particular state, a sovereign human community (Vitkus, 1998). Citizens of a particular society act as persons (with their needs, rights and duties), as a developer (e.g., a decision-maker responsible for those decisions), and as a participant (with certain abilities, skills, knowledge). Citizen participation is evident in cultural, political, social, economic, and legal relationships and circumstances specific to the public and private spheres (Zaleskiene, 2012).

The formation of the content for civic education in Lithuania was taken from European democratic countries who have experience in educating citizens. The basic idea uniting all the content is the human person and his or her relationship with other people, to society, and to the state (Civic Training within Standards, 2004). Each problem related to civic engagement is considered with respect to three dimensions of student performance (Luksiene, 1996):

- Cognitive: This research dimension directs the students to work with diversified sources of information (e.g., manuals, encyclopedias, reference books, cultural, political, economic, and social information society – public media), school documents (e.g., reports, summaries, school board meeting minutes, etc.), and legal documents (e.g., Lithuanian Constitution, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and others.)
- Communication: This dimension helps develop the ability to communicate with another person, group, institution, collection, or reporting and sharing information verbally and in writing in different contexts relevant to teenagers (e.g., dialogue, dispute or class meeting, declaring and defending their views in terms of the other’s position;
- Participation: This dimension focuses student learning on their social roles within their community (e.g., family, class, school, local community, etc.) to help develop the ability to act not only for oneself but also with a group (e.g., organize a trip, work together on projects, lead a meeting, write protocols, etc.). When considering curriculum, we should take into account the “space” of a person (i.e., his or her immediate environment, the local community, the state, the world, etc.) as well as “time” (i.e., continuity and change: Past, Present, and Future).

The block program defines the content of civic education in the broadest sense. The beginning point can be seen in the idea of the citizen as a person working in society with their needs, rights and duties, as a developer, and as a participant, having certain abilities, skills and knowledge. Human activity is evident in cultural, political, social, economic, legal relationships, and in situations in society that require action.

Various approaches to civic education can seem contradictory. On the one hand, it is can be associated with the democratization of society, while on the other hand, keeping the recent past in mind, civic education can seem similar to the kind of communist
ideological education found during the Soviet period. These tensions by far have had the greatest impact on civic education in post-Soviet societies, including Lithuania, leaving many skeptical perspectives.

For a long time the concept of citizenship has been established and clear. This is called traditional citizenship and can be understood as the efforts to create and save their own country, as well as obedience to the law and participation in elections, political debates, and so on. However, for several decades, an increasingly socially-oriented concept of citizenship has been used, which means a fair performance of his duties, loyalty to his family, and the nation (Zaleskiene, 2008).

The concept of citizenship argues that it is not only knowledge and awareness, it’s more the perception that participation in society is a duty for every citizen who must take care of their own and other’s welfare (Zaleskiene, 2008). R. Grigas describes the concept of citizenship as a person belonging to the State related in a two-way mode with liabilities and responsibilities. The author also adds that citizenship defines human communication skills (Grigas, 2007).

All of these statements show that civic education should be implemented through a very well-thought out plan that includes not only the content of the discipline, but also the installation method.

Emancipative values like tolerance of human diversity, liberty aspirations, trust and respect for others, inclination to civic protest are essential to civic society. Moreover, conformist values like religious involvement, traditional family values, nationalism are essential values for civic education while using a civic discipline approach. These values serve as the basis for a variety of different approaches that open to different perspectives and different educational strategies. Nevertheless, all who are included or involved in civic education activities should agree on the following principles (Poviliunas, 1998):

- For those who will teach civic education preparation is needed. Additional training is essential for all who desire to teach civic education;
- The installation of civic education should be consistent with an open, pluralistic society so that there is no reason to insist on any single mandatory civic educational model, but rather a general model that privileges the individual in civic education is indispensable;
- The introduction of civic education should not be uncritically adopted from elsewhere but rather formulated on the principles of civic education that appeal to the uniqueness of a particular country.
Citizenship education at schools

Civic education is (Zaleskiene, 2008):
• the effective socialization of human relations regarding human rights and multicultural approaches;
• the effective political socialization that strongly advocates for open and civil society;
• the management of fruitful, vital energy of youth;
• built upon cooperative relations rather than desires for dominance;
• acquiring the skills necessary to live in the condition of constant change.

These ideas and formulations can be developed more, but detractors of civic education claim that the entire education system must fit this model. To some extent that may be true, but the answer lies in the ideals of civic education as one of the most important missions of the entire education system. Hence the following methodical recommendations of civic education standards for civic courses are important to consider (Zaleskiene, Vaicekauskiene, 1999):
• Aim to strengthen national identity and national self-esteem;
• Aim to develop commitment to the nation, society and the state;
• Develop a culture of democratization and civil society.

Lithuanian secondary schools seek to develop conscious citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities and who are able to participate in an ever changing society. It helps students realize that the development of democracy in the family, community, nation, country, and world is essential. It is personal for each of our tasks, concern, and responsibility. Coordinately, it is important to foster ethnic identity and respect for fundamental democratic values of human dignity, freedom, equality, justice and legitimacy, tolerance, and solidarity. So the school is necessary to enable students to develop a sense of personal responsibility to play an active role in society and to develop the ability to analyze society, cultural, the government, etc. so that when conflicts arise peaceful solutions can be attained. All of this requires the ability and courage to evaluate freely and consciously by making decisions in an open, pluralistic society (General Civic Education Program, 2004).

General education within the context of civic education is an integral part children and young people share in social education (General Education Standards, 2003), responding to the dimensions of the European Education for Democratic Citizenship(Education for Democratic Citizenship, 2001–2004). The main purpose of civic education is civil consciousness, including self-knowledge, practical experience in the family and community, values, and skills. The school is a kind of a small country where family, government, and law exist. At school, students must understand and fulfill their obligations to uphold their rights and freedoms (Stankaityte, Klangauskas, 1998).

Civic education should help young people acquire civic knowledge and skills in order to develop this knowledge for practical use (Civic Education Program, 2004). This acquired
knowledge should help students understand what civil society is and how it functions, how human and civil liberties, rights, and duties enable citizens to live in a democratic society, and how to respect democratic values and principles and integrate them in life. Civic education also aids students in understanding the rule of law, the relationship between law and justice in society, how to develop a democratic, humanistic and civil society while appreciate their own and other people’s cultural identity and recognize cultural similarities and differences. Moreover, civic education provides the knowledge for how authorities are formed, what are their main features, as well as the cultural, historical, and legal assumptions for the basis of civil society and the state. Civic education can provide the basis for discerning the effects of globalization on people, nations, and states, what is expected regarding personal involvement in the nation’s life opportunities and ways of responsibility for the fate of the nation. Most importantly, civic education provides a foundation for understanding the problems in political, cultural and economic life and for the skills for developing possible solutions.

Civic education also informs students of their basic human rights, how to defend their dignity, beliefs and rights when violated, to know where in civil life to find the necessary information and know when and how to apply the necessary authority and trust in social and political institutions in order to protect and advance human liberty. Part of the process also encourages students to participate in the decision-making of the community, to send a reasoned opinion in writing or orally on socio-political life issues, to organize a meeting or other events, etc., to participate in organized community activities, to read, analyze and evaluate information and interpretations of the media, to distinguish between fact and opinion, to volunteer, to take responsibility for personal actions, to have confidence and a sense of justice in their actions, to pursue their work with integrity, and to take advantage of (if applicable) the impact of democratic means in seeking an agreement, namely dialogue, discussion, negotiation, debate, vote, be able to express their views and argue, and find a constructive solution in the event of a conflict situation.

In order for the goals of civic education to be implemented into the mainstream of schools, students must make use of all the activities related to formal and non-formal education sectors: education content (a separate subject of civic education classes VIII and X, civic ideas for integration into other educational content), community life, extra-curricular activities, and close relationships with the local community.

Currently, civic education in Lithuanian schools is realized through three main approaches:

- The introduction of civil society in separate disciplines in grades 7, 8, and 10.
- The integration of civil society problems into other disciplines in the educational content.
- The development of school autonomy, additional education, scientific organizations and design schools (Kjaegaard, Martineniene, 1997).

Moreover, there are various methods for encouraging a democratic way of life: active meetings, workshops, discussions, values games, and a complex system of “Negotiations,”
“Brainstorming”, “Target,” etc. Success is measured by the attainment of several goals according to a number of principles.

The Content of Civic Education

Civic education has become one of a number of priority education areas in school. Civic education should be a part of the general curriculum of education. The general priorities of civic education include the following:

1) Prepared civic education program becomes the general civic educational guidelines for general education;

2) Standards of civic education should form the public request for school communities (which should be ongoing, namely basic school pupil civil provisions that develop civic skills, the knowledge, to make it more responsible and creative Lithuanian nationality);

3) An intensive and thorough preparation of civic educators, not only teachers who teach in the discipline of civil society, but also the classes of teachers and organizers, social pedagogues, social workers of extracurricular work, whose main work is to mobilize the school community toward cooperation;

4) Original teaching resources for students.

Education reform and curriculum transformation in Lithuanian schools were carried out with respect to civic education in schools, in theory, at the beginning of independence in the early 1990s. These reforms provide a key point for analysis, but the practical implementation of the provisions in question only first occurred in the late nineties. Theoretical civic education provisions set out a universal civic education program, which defined the core of the concept of civic education, which was developed in 1997 by The Ministry of Education and the College of the single civic education program of general education schools (projects began in 1994). A project for civic education standards in the main school was prepared only in 1998.

The implementation of civic education in educational institutions is formally defined by education law as well as the content. Civic education is designed to develop conscious citizens with civic knowledge, attitudes, skills, citizens, and awareness of their behavior and actions. People are born with the right to acquire citizenship, but knowledge and responsible citizenry develops through the family, school, community, and the country.

The Lithuanian school system aims to cultivate conscious citizens who are aware of their responsibilities and rights and who are able to participate in society and public life. This implies a strong moral framework of targeting the core of a democratic society and values such as freedom, equality and solidarity (fraternity), respect for human dignity, tolerance,

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1 Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2013 m. gegužės 27 d. įsakymas Nr. V-459.
and loyalty to a democratic state and the nation. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of world historical developments, policies and institutions, public partnerships and the cultural life of the state, particularly in understanding the perfecting of social cooperation skills and abilities. Hence, the overall aim of civic education is that the citizen will be able to freely and consciously evaluate and make decisions in a pluralistic and constantly changing society. It is therefore necessary to enable students to understand the world of political and cultural realities of life, learn to analyze the diversity of interests and antagonisms of political and social conflicts, and know the particulars of the democratic constitutional system. Failure to grasp these matters will result in decisions that are less than competent decisions.

Civil society aims, then, to cover the practical consciousness of the student, family, class, school and community life experience, the self-knowledge, ethics, and the knowledge of history and moral values. It is particularly important that the whole premise of a democratic worldview, lifestyle and worldview formation – create an inner need to act in accordance with democratic elements. Enabling students to realize that democracy is not a given reality but something that must be grown, developed, and nurtured is essential. Moreover, the individual shares in the task responsibly of taking care of their community, the nation and humanity, both today and in the future. This is the obligation of every generation. No generation is exempt. This kind of purposeful civic education in Lithuanian schools can be assisted by all study subjects. What is essential to successful implementation is a school climate where relationships at all levels employ democratic self-government measures in various forms of organizational cooperation.

Research Results

The questionnaire was distributed for the students who study civic education and teachers who lecture on civics lessons. 270 questionnaires was sent to the students, 153 were returned. For teachers, 100 questionnaires were distributed and 84 were returned. Those numbers will be considered as a general sample (one hundred percent). Respondent reports were processed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) 15.00 package program. The results are presented in graphs and expressed as a percentage. Teacher and student responses to the questions will help to clarify the influence of civic education on Lithuanian youth, help develop a more effective methodology, and better disseminate the ideals of a thriving democracy.

The survey was attended by students and teachers from various schools: Basanavicius High School, Liberty gymnasium, Lentvario Motiejus Simelionis gymnasium, Lithuanian House High School, Mykolas Birziska gymnasium, Daukantas school, Vilnius Abraham Kulviecio High School, Raphael – temporary care homes for children, Vilnius Mindaugas High School, Jonas Ivaskevicius youth school, by using a simple random sample of +/- 5% error.
The survey showed that 49.7 percent of students were involved in group discussions, while 24.2 percent of students gathered relevant information for the project. The remaining 26.1 percent of students attended public opinion presentations. The distribution justifies the notion that students are more actively involved in group discussions. It is likely that such a choice leads to the desire of students to be recognized by peers or simply the wider opportunities to work together with peers, where some desire to realize their leader, organizer, or managerial roles.

61.4 percent of those who participated fully agree that civic education needs to develop leadership skills in schools or in the community. The lowest percentage, 1.3 percent completely agreed that civic education promotes the emergence of innovation and 15.7 percent of respondents agreed that after civics lessons they had a better understanding of diversity (different cultures, etc.). However, 11.1 percent of participants opposed fostering civic lessons to help understand the value of civic education.
Distribution of respondents according to how civic education program helped to actively deepen knowledge about civic society (in percent)

In order to assess the activity of the respondents, students were asked to indicate what skills and knowledge they gained from the curricular sessions. The vast majority of respondents, 56.9 percent, indicated that the civic education classes helped them to talk about the content more freely in the family regarding the problems facing the community. 53.6 percent of respondents indicated they wanted to do something as citizens about those problems. 50.3 percent of respondents also indicated that after civic education classes, they believed it was possible and were prepared to participate as citizens in their community.

Distribution of respondents according to how teachers are actively working with students in the lesson integrating civic education (in percent)
In order to assess the respondent participation in civic education, students were asked to indicate how often they engaged in civic education classes. The vast majority of respondents indicated, 44.6 percent that citizenship lessons took place during the school year; and, 26.5 percent of teachers indicated that citizenship lessons were held every 4–12 weeks. It should be noted that only 8.4 percent of teachers indicated that they taught civics lessons once per semester.

Conclusions

1. Civic education should be integrated into all subjects and extra-curricular activities. The approach to civic education is integrative knowledge about the world, which links political science, sociology, philosophy, law, psychology, cultural, religion, and other matters to achieve a perception that one belongs to an integrative network of social relations;

2. The Civic Education Program in Lithuania enables democratic, humanistic education and promotes capacity building and development of practical work in schools, which shows a young and emerging policy and values, encourages children’s creativity, and provides the opportunity to develop and express their views, orally or otherwise acceptable method, for example, in discussion groups or the presence of other activities.

3. Examination of national skills and attitudes is needed to develop student participation in civic education classes, though it appears that the ability to participate in civic education classes develops students’ independence, devotion to duty, integrity, and teaches personal responsibility for one’s actions. Students are able to participate in civic education and learn to communicate together. They acquire leadership skills, the ability to implement his or her ideas, and increase their motivation.

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Pilietinio ugdymo įtaka Lietuvos jaunimui

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Santrauka

Šiame darbe analizuojamos mokyklos galimybės daryti įtaką pilietinio ugdymo situacijai Lietuvoje, jaunų žmonių supratimui apie pilietiškumą, jaunų žmonių pasiruošimui tapti gerais piliečiais, demokratinės visuomenės suvokimui ir kokybės gyvenimui, jaunų žmonių suvokimui apie lygias teises bei lygybę visuomenėje.

Straipsnis grindžiamas pilietinio švietimo įtaka ugdant jaunuolių pilietiškumą. Remiantis kitų mokslininkų straipsniais ir mokslinėmis įžvalgomis, nustatyta kad pilietinis ugdymas Lietuvos švietimo sistemoje atlieka svarbų vaidmenį.

Pilietinis ugdymas turi būti paremtas interaktyviųjų metodų taikymu, kad mokiniai galėtų aktyviai diskutuoti, atlikti įvairias kūrybines užduotis, analizuoti, spręsti uždavinius, žaisti. Anot edukologų, būtent tokie naujieji mokymo metodai yra labiausiai priimtini mokiniams. Pagrindinis dalykas, kuo skiriasi interaktyvieji mokymo metodai nuo tradicinių, yra tai, kad interaktyviejį metodą auditoriją skatina dalyvauti, įsitraukti į veiksmą, o ne pasyviai stebėti ir stengtis iškalti, atsiminti. „Interaktyvusis mokymasis veikia per patirtį.“

Pilietinis ugdymas integruotas į visus mokomuosius dalykus bei uždavinius veiklą. Laikomasi požiūrio, kad pilietinis ugdymas yra žinių apie supantį pasaulį sistema, kuri sieja politologijos, sociologijos, filosofijos, teisės, psichologijos, kultūrologijos ir kitų dalykų pagrindus, siekiant suprasti, kad žmogus priklauso visuomeninių santykių sistemai.

Pilietinio jaunimo ugdymui svarbiausia yra šeima, mokykla, artimi draugai, neformali sociokultūrinė aplinka bei nevyriausybinės, vaikų ir jaunimo organizacijos. Kiekvienos valstybės gerovė yra tiesiogiai susijusi su piliečių gerove ir išsilavinimu bei vertybėmis pagrįstu savitarpio pasitikėjimu.

Vasarais pilietinio ugdymo uždavinius yra: sudaryti sąlygas mokiniams mokytis surasti savo kelią, kai šalies ir pasaulio politinio, ekonominio, kultūrinio gyvenimo realijos yra kontroversines; išmokty analizuoti ir spręsti politinius bei socialinius konfliktus, kylančius dėl skirtimų ir interesų. Juo labiau, kad konfliktą šiuolaikinė visuomenė supranta kaip „pažangos, civilizacijos ir galų gale pasaulinės pilietinės visuomenės šaltinį“ (Dahrendorf, 1996).

Pilietinio ugdymo programa sudaro sąlygas demokratiniam, humanistiniam ugdymui bei moksleivių gebėjimų uždavinius bei plėtojimui praktiniuose veikloje, kuris atskleidžia bei formuoja jaunulo politines bei vertybines nuostatas, skatina vaikų kūrybingumą, teikia galimybę formuoti ir išreikšti savo nuomonę žodžiu ar kitu priimtinu metodu, diskutuojant grupėmis ar dalyvaujant kitoje veikloje.
Mokiniai, dalyvaudami pilietiniame ugdyme, mokosi bendrauti ir bendradarbiauti. Jie įgyja vadovavimo įgūdžių, gebėjimų įgyvendinti savo idėjas, didėja jų motyvacija.

**Esminiai žodžiai:** pilietiškumas, pilietinis švietimas, pilietinis dalyvavimas, mokykla, bendruomenė.

Įteikta / Received 2013-10-15  
Priimta / Accepted 2013-12-13