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NETWORK CREATION AS THE PRECONDITION OF OPTIMIZATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Abstract

After Lithuania has become an EU member state, it has stepped into a new educational space with new problems and challenges. Objectives of Lithuanian educational system in the sphere of civic education of young generation are described in the general context of educational reform; an idea of necessity to renovate the very understanding of civic education is being formulated. The concept of civic education in this article is being analyzed trying to model a partnership network which would unite all educational and other organizations, having equivalent or correlating goals and interested in promotion of civic education in the country. The stages of co-operating network are described.

KEY WORDS: civility, civic education, and civic society, network.

Introduction

In the context of global challenges that Lithuania is facing, since May 1, 2004 when it became an EU member state, the concepts of civic education, civic society, democracy issues have acquired new meanings. Lithuanian education has entered into a new educational space where there are many new possibilities as well as problems and challenges.

In the conditions of increasing globalization and parallel processes of the regional integration (EU integration), researchers are faced with the necessity to give a new consideration and redefine the relationship of a person and a state, discuss the problems of reconciliation of national identity and newly forming supranational European civic identity, trying to foresee what changes national communities and their citizens will have to go through in a rapidly changing world environment. In this

context of global challenges and new possibilities there is a common worry about the civic education of the society. It acquires new importance and new meanings. It becomes important to answer the following questions: How do we define a citizen of today in a new political and social space? Is the citizenship only the legal and social expression of a person's relationship with the state? Does it have any value and worth for us? What are its resources in a contemporary society? What new meaning does a phenomenon of civic consciousness acquire?

These questions are important to answer not only for Lithuania, but also for other countries of central and Eastern Europe, whose societies have undergone similar essential economical and political life changes. The wave of so called "velvet" revolutions in these parts of Europe has brought into the center of public discourse not only the values of democratic society development but also the issues and problems of creation the civic society, the need to define civic education and identify the problems it is facing. The civic society today is understood (as well as it was understood in the past) as an alternative to the existing totalitarian and authoritarian regimes [8; 43]. The civic maturity of the societies of these countries has become the main factor causing the downfall of communism in the former Baltic republics and the states that belonged to or were in the orbit of the Soviet Empire.

It is worth mentioning that despite the successes that our state has achieved on its way of integration into the European Union and the NATO, the formation of civic society in Lithuania still remains a rather complicated one. For there still exist a hypertrophied orientation of many ordinary citizens to concrete political leaders, the intrigues of the ruling elite and their opponents, the electoral nihilism of the voters, the efforts of the state functionaries to avoid criticism and responsibility, frequent ignoring of cultural, educational, scientific values on the part of authority. It is well known that the civic society cannot be created if its citizens are not civilly mature. That is why the role of social and educational sciences in particular becomes more important. Their task is to theoretically reconstruct concepts (citizenship, civic education, civility, civic society formation, etc.) and using the systemic approach try to redefine them as well as the civic education, which is viewed as an

important strategic task of the national level –the formation of national civic society development strategy, in the implementation of which there would be united the complex efforts and actions of all the state and social institutions involved and interested in promoting civic consciousness development of our people.

There is no common understanding of the concept of civic education. One of the definitions expresses an orientation towards the development of democratic values. In the other definition a citizen is perceived as a patriot promoting Lithuanian traditions. Poviliūnas (2000) in his article "Educational policies, human rights teaching and a hidden concept of education" describes the existing situation in civic education as ambiguous and demanding to be reasonably solved. Šaulauskas (2000) defines two stages in the process of civic society development in Lithuania. The first one, which started in 1990 when Lithuania regained her independence, till 1992 is a revolutionary stage. It was marked by a quick formation of the structural framework of the civic society. This period is characterized by a great level of civic activities.

In the second – an evolutionary stage – the tempo of the development of civic society decreased. The restitutional and continuation orientations grew weaker but innovational and imitation orientation became stronger. In the first stage the public activeness was political in character, whereas in the second stage –a socio– cultural one. The revolutionary stage has provoked the process of crisis of values and caused their re-evaluation. It has also increased the social exclusion. Could the development of civic education in Lithuania in the period of independence undertake a different route?

The problems of civic education as well as the traditions of civic education were investigated by western researchers Seligman, (2004), Siedentop, (2003), Torney- Purta (2002), Riesenberg (1992). Lithuanian researchers Poviliūnas (2001), Šaulauskas (2000), Grigas (2002), Zaleskienė (2004), Kvieskienė (2003), Raudys (2003, 2004) analysed the development of civic society, different aspects of civility and social exclusion. They also discuss the civic education processes in Lithuania.

The novelty of the issue discussed in this paper, is that civic education is being analysed trying to find the ways of optimization of the process as

well as the possibilities to concord formal, non-formal and informal aspects of civic education, trying to model a partnership network which would unite all educational and other organizations, having equivalent or correlating goals and interested in promotion of civic education in the country.

The article aims at defining the preconditions of creating the network, which would help to optimize the process of civic education in Lithuania.

The object of research presented in this paper is the civic education analysed through an inter-institutional networking perspective. The research was conducted using the following **research methods**: literature analysis, statistical data analysis, and modeling.

The search for an optimal model of civic education

When Lithuania for the second time in the twentieth century regained its independence, it had to step into the world of rapidly changing values and new challenges. The processes of globalization and internationalization, the choice of new western political, legal, security priorities and the necessity to have them internalized in the consciousness of society, raised the issues of necessity to reform all the education system and the general comprehensive school, the educative content of its curriculum in particular. It was agreed that the essential task in reforming the Lithuanian educational system is based on "the development of independent, mature people, who would be able to continuously develop their abilities lifelong, particularly the abilities to reconcile personal aims and the aims of the civic community, so that to create the foundation for the independent and creative life of the nation" [20; 7]. Among the other important educational aims described in the Law of Education of Lithuanian Republic there is "the development of citizenship, the understanding of personal duties and responsibilities for one's family, nation, society and the state as well as the need to participate in the cultural, social and political life of the republic".

Many of the ideas about the reviving of the national identity, the national culture and the national language, like the slogans about the creation of the democratic state and civic society, were born long before the Independence. They have become important elements of the new concept of civic education.

In the first legal documents in the National School Development Concept (1988) and later in the Concept of Education of Lithuania (1992) there was an effort made to define the concept of civic education and its importance for educating the youth. When formulating the concept the educational researchers were faced with the problems of values and the existing contemporary diversity of views on civic education in the world (Zaleskienė 2004). In 1991 the first Civic Education Program was created for the Lithuanian school. It was developed by M. Lukšienė. In it there were discussed cultural, moral, psychological preconditions of civic education and the importance of the knowledge about democracy and its implementation into the educative process.

In the first stage of our educational reform there was the relation of citizenry and patriotism often stressed, but as Šliogeris says, „these things can be related, but in some cases they are incompatible, they can contradict each other, for a good patriot can be a very bad citizen and the contrary, so sometimes a good citizen may and even must fight against a blunt and stupid patriotism" [19; 24]. The civic education was described as the education permeating all the subjects taught at school and all the school life. It is devoted "to learning, understanding and preserving the historic and cultural heritage of Lithuanian nation, to promoting love for the Motherland, it has to develop the national identity and national consciousness, the understanding of tendencies of social development and the essence of democratic society, ... to develop a mature national, European and a citizen-of-the-world consciousness" [Common Comprehensive School Curricula; 253–265]. The created system of civic education had to consist of several parts: civic topics integrated into all subject curricula, a new separate subject discipline of Civics was introduced in the 7th, 8th and 10th forms. An important element of this system was the development of democratic school community and the promotion of its self-governing.

The idea of civic consciousness and civic culture was further developed in the next stages of school reform, when "Common Curricula" (1994), "Civic Education Standards" (1997) were adopted and the curriculum "Foundations of the Civic Society" was developed for the 1st and the 2nd gymnasium forms. Based on these documents there started to appear

integrated classes, courses, textbooks, student books and teacher guides, civic education projects, which promoted the development of civic society [11; 49–50]. In the year of 1999 there appeared "Methodological Recommendations of how to Apply Civic Education Standards". It is stated in them that the goal of contemporary civic education is to strengthen the national identity and national self-respect; to develop the self-commitment to one's nation, society, state; to strive at democratization of the society educating civic culture [22; 15].

It is obvious that the accents in the civic education concept are gradually moved from the interpretation of it as purely national, patriotic development to a more European, democratic understanding of civic education.

Terence H. McLaughlin speaking about a contemporary western understanding of civility points out the following characteristics: giving the individual the identity; having the virtues required from a citizen; expecting the political involvement of a citizen; raising in advance the social requirements to a citizen [26; 73]. This definition corresponds to the positions of Baubock (2001) and Tawil (2001) stressing the social aspects of civility in modern society. They also support the thesis that traditional civic society as the associations of independent citizens and their public interactions should be replenished by a component of political interaction in the society [6; 6]. This definition does not contradict the position expressed in the above-mentioned Recommendations, that civic education is not the same as political education, for political culture is a part of civic culture. The latter includes a lot of non-political individuals and non-political aspects of social life.

The importance given to civic education in the post communist countries can be proved by the research on young people values made in 1994. The research data showed that in those countries the list of the importance of values made by young people was as follows: civility (75%), democracy (63%), national consciousness (50%), international mutual understanding (50%), human rights (25%). So we see that civility as a value in the post communist space is considered to be quite important for the young, in spite of the fact that this concept is differently

understood in different countries. The conclusion made by the researchers was that none of the ten investigated countries could not implement the main goal of the civics discipline defined in these countries – to concord the patriotism, love for the Motherland with such democratic values as granting equal rights to people belonging to different national groups, tolerance and freedom of criticizing the government [9; 125]. It can be stated that the concord of educational goals of patriotism as an immanent quality of the civic culture with the other ones is hardly possible. From this the following conclusion can be drawn that civic education is a permanent process of formation of new civic qualities and the search for new educational conceptions.

The research of the young people carried on in 28 countries (including Lithuania) by the International association on educational achievement evaluation as part of a big international research on civic education in 1996–2001. The research data demonstrated a new tendency growing in the attitudes of the teenagers, they consider the socially oriented civic values to be the most important, the values close to the civic features defined by T. H. Marshall and Terence H. McLaughlin. It becomes clear that in the uniting Europe the traditionally existing values (obedience to laws, voting in the elections, participation in the activities of political organizations) are less important to the young people of today but they have marked such values as giving the necessary support to people in need, participation in social work required by the society and the like, as more important to them [21; 43–47].

The civility is the antipode only for the totalitarian society organization, so after Lithuania has joined the European Union and the NATO and has become a member of the international family enjoying equal rights, but at the same time it tries to preserve the political constituents of civility and expands them, because Europe is uniting not into a unified oneness, but into a community of nations, cultures and languages [2; 7]. The civic education becomes an important part of a whole system of the family and society education. Having in mind that education itself is considered to be an important means of political and cultural integration of European countries [10; 94]. In this context the words said by Viviane Reding member of the European Commission

on education, culture and the youth, acquire a new meaning "An active citizen is educated only when the young can see the results of their personal efforts. Only actively participating in the life of the school and region, as well as in the activities of associations they acquire the experience and self-confidence which are valuable now and will be valuable in the future when making further steps in the public life and at a European level" [13; 7].

After Lithuania became an EU member state, the change of the content of civic education and search for new forms, corresponding to the present political, economical and social realities, have become important elements of educational reform. There is also the necessity to solve the problem for Lithuania and the other EU states – how in the context of integration processes, which promote new public spirit, not to lose the national identity, national culture, national consciousness and other values which were preserved by Lithuania during the years of occupation, which were protected from assimilation and other negative influences. In the processes of internationalization and globalization civic values of the young are not protected from new threats, for it is on this value baggage the future of the state and all the Europe depends. There is also the problem of forming a new educational strategy for the development of a citizen of the future. The increasing European integration makes it important to help the person and the society to meet the challenges of today and be able to use all the newly opening possibilities. This aim can be achieved only developing the necessary skills, abilities, competencies to a free and responsible person, working on the maturing of active civility, orienting to the needs of a free market economy and an open civic society, having no ideological monopoly [20; 21–22].

It must be mentioned that in the conditions of the European integration processes the concept of citizenship acquires a new meaning. In the educational process it is important to clarify the concept of European identity and answer the question whether the idea of Europe will manage to unite diverse experiences of Lithuania and other EU states. In this context it is important to clarify the problem of relationship and differences of the national and international identity, because few

Lithuanians are able to transform their national identity into a conscious civility. How to concord the education of national values with the aim of the construction of European identity of Lithuanians? These questions have to be answered now as well.

The concord of national, international, European and civic aspects in value education is important for all the society and its education system. It becomes obvious that in the conditions of changing contemporary political, economical and social realities, there is a need for coordinated action of all the levels of educational system, dealing with civic education, actions of all the involved institutions: the family, the mass media, NGOs, the church, encouraging them to look for new forms and strategies of teaching civics, introducing new and integrated curricula into the study process of civic education.

The creation of a new society is the process of educating the people thinking and acting in a new way. According to the research data carried in Lithuania not long ago there are about more than a quarter of all the population (28.7%) loyal to democratic values. It is slightly higher than in Romania (22.6 %), but much lower than in other CEE countries, including Latvia (31. 2 %) and Estonia (55. 3%) [3]. It also showed that people have little knowledge about the system in which they live. They often have a vague understanding of managerial elements of the government. For this reason their attitudes towards democracy as a way of management is rather vague too. It is the task of civic education to help people to understand a complex political and social situation, which can be performed only by qualified, competent teachers, having non-standard views on the educative process and its content, who are able to encourage the formation of public spirit. That is why the sociocultural and civic competencies, which include development of a new world view, authenticity of relationship with the world, tolerance, become more important than the subject competencies. In order to educate a citizen a teacher should be able to promote students' authenticity and independence of the worldview, their openness to the world, ability to communicate and cooperate with the others, provide help to those in need. Without this features it is hardly possible to educate a civic person. Civility is a dialogue with oneself and the others, so a person should

develop the ability to better understand oneself and other people, tolerate the existing diversity in Europe. This is one of the most essential goals of Lithuanian educational system.

On July 5, 2004 there was a General Civic Education Program approved of by the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuanian Republic. It defines the main strategies of formal and non-formal civic education in the country at the national level and presents a concrete implementation plan. In it a lot of attention is given to development of democratic values and promotion of them in a school community. The school community culture should work on promoting civility and democracy actively discussing and solving school and local community problems. Aim at creating the effective learning environment and implementing the civic education standards, a teacher, implementing this program, has the possibility to consider the needs of a school community. In this program a lot of attention is given to non-formal civic education activities: projects, organizing the celebration of events having cultural value, promotion of principles and skills of school self-governance, which develop students', teachers', parents' democratic life experiences.

This program also stresses the cooperation of state and social institutions, but definite contours of that cooperation are not drawn. For this reason we think that this cooperation in civic education should be promoted by trying to apply a modified network model developed by Targamadzė and Kaušylienė (2002) (see Figure I). This school network model was created for the educative stimulation of the young people. This modified logical scheme of cooperation network would make it possible to modernize the civic education at school, would make it more effective and would promote the cooperation of different educational institutions.

At the 1st stage an initiative group is formed, which may include representatives from different organizations interested in the network creation. At the 2nd stage this or some other group formed out of competent people should perform situation analyses of each potential network member organizations, based on common criteria developed (for instance, they may be organization mission, strategic aims, vision,

holistic organization competencies etc.). At the 3rd stage the conception of the cooperation network is developed as well as a detailed mission and future vision. All this is discussed and corrected if necessary by potential network partners. It is important that they all have a clear network conception, mission and in the least an overlapping vision. The 4th stage is the stage of formation a strategic network development group It is important that it is made of competent specialists, for in the 5th stage there would be a network strategy developed, and to perform this task you need not only to generate a great variety of strategy alternatives but also have ability to chose out of it the most optimal one. In the 6th stage different alternatives of the presented network strategy are discussed and it is corrected if necessary. Sometimes a new group should be formed for this purpose. Only the last stage begins during which there are definite steps made following the strategic plan. All the activities carried on at different stages should demonstrate the cooperative and coordinated efforts of all the institutions involved. Each stage is important and cannot be avoided. Only then the cooperation network would be effective and promote civility development on national and on international level.

Conclusions

1. After the restitution of independence in the Lithuanian state civic education has become one of the most important elements of young generation education. It was aimed at promotion national patriotic values. The Lithuanian school, which has laid foundation of civic self-determination to a few generations of the Lithuanian society during the inter war period, plays a special role in educating a citizen, a patriot of the country.

2. In the context of The European integration processes, there was a necessity to redefine the concept of civic education in Lithuania. There is still a problem of creating the educational strategy, which would deal with the development of both a European citizen and a Lithuanian patriot. There is also a problem how to reconcile national identity, patriotism and Europeanism in the process of civic education. It is obvious that it can be achieved by common efforts of all the levels of

educational system, as well as the mass media, the church and the family institutions involved in civic education. Subject competencies and an active civic position of the teachers are also of great importance.

3. The implementation of civic education in general comprehensive schools is a difficult, multi-complex process. It seems that there exist the necessary preconditions – there are documents, programs developed, teachers work on improving their competencies, they are searching for new educative forms and technologies- but civic education still remains problematic, new scenarios of its implementation are being searched.

4. One of the possibilities to optimize civic education could be achieved through the cooperation network creation in which formal, non-formal, informal educational institutions as well as state and non-governmental organizations, involved in civic education, participate. A modeling network consists of seven interrelated stages.

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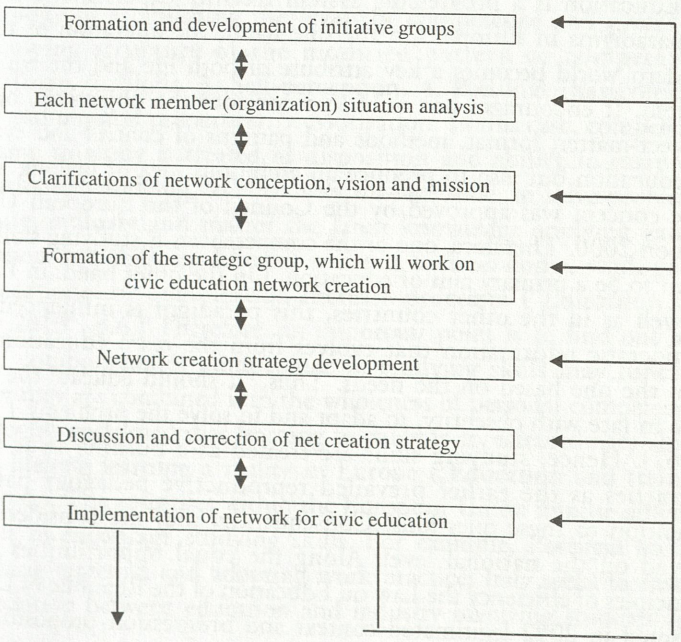
Figure I

The scheme of the strategic model of a civic education optimization network