Civil Education as a Way to the Civil Society

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Abstract

This study aims to present the great importance of training by the civic education. The problem of the nature, purpose and realization of the civic education is not new, it has been standing and standing before the educational institutions since antiquity to the present days. The starting methodological prerequisite is the assumption that it is necessary, notwithstanding the apparent “clarity”, to use no “default”, but to provide a theoretical-logical and empirical reasoned understanding of the essence and content of concepts outlining a “framework” of the problem of the “civic education”. A good knowledge of the concepts such as society, democracy, citizen, citizenship, etc., and the application of this knowledge is way to the real functioning of the civil society.

Keywords: civil education, civil society, citizen, citizenship.

1. Introduction

The starting methodological prerequisite is the assumption that it is necessary, notwithstanding the apparent “clarity”, to use no “default”, but to provide a theoretical and empirical reasoned understanding of the essence and content of concepts outlining the “framework” of the problem of “civic education”.

It can be assumed that the “framework” includes the following two problem areas:

(a) Coverage content:
- Civil society – citizen, citizenship;
- Legal (Constitution) (see Yankov, 2006);
- Political (state lessons, sex subjects and processes, NGOs), religious, ethnic, intercultural (tolerance), ecological, environmental, health-physiological and sports, virtual;
- Education – learning, upbringing, socialization;
- Educated-ness – literacy, consciousness, criticality, competence, virtuous-ness.

(b) Content-functional contradictions and problems:
- Patriotism (nationalism) – tolerance (own - foreign: national substrate – minorities, immigrants, ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc.) – perhaps this is a major problem;
- Freedom – debt-responsibility; violence (political) – terrorism-restrictions / “Safeguarding Security”;
- Environment, ecology - economy (“life now” – “life in the future”);
- Pluralism – universal values;

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• Globalization – citizens of the nation state – citizens of the world – “from migration to mobility”;
• Virtualization (internet, social networks) – anonymity–pluralism-anti-system.
• Motivation – external impact (“agitation and propaganda”) – personal activity (objectivism – indoctrinism (liberalism – totalitarianism) – here is a second major problem – “technological”.

2. The civic education as a way to the civil society

The object of the civic education is to achieve civic educated-ness. Education is the achievement of “image” – that is, of integrity. The God creates human in his “image” as a whole being, civic education should follow this “model” and achieve the creation of “civic integrity” – the citizen as a person with his “identity”, unity of many characteristics (knowledge, virtues) – knowledgeable, active and creative, looking not only at the past and the present, but also in the future. Civic education not only builds knowledge but also creates motivation by presenting a “vision” for the future.

In terms of the personality, the civic identity is before the questions: Who am I (among others) in the community (with others) and in society? Where do I come from, what do I do, where do I go, and why? What do I aspire to and how can I achieve it?

The paths for this are:
• Learning-ness, through learning (formal and informal);
• Upbringing-ness, through upbringing. P. Balkanski denies the possibility of education in civic education. “Liberalism, despite the nuances, generally divides the school that builds civilian knowledge and the family that educates civil virtues.” (see Balkanski & Zahariev, 1998). In contrast to this thesis is Radev’s thought: “In the school, civic education is related to education in civic upbringing” (see Radev, 2007).

In terms of a society – “model” of socio-cultural identification and the integrity of society (societies):
• Political and national-state loyalty and inclusiveness;
• National-state responsibility and activity – internal and external;
• Validation of national-state integrity (identity) in the regional and global social space and time (history – present – future).

3. Citizenship and citizen

To these concepts we could find several approaches to express and make their meaning more clear through civic education.

Methodological approach is unity of historical and logical.
• On this basis, several concepts of citizenship and the citizen can be outlined: antiquity, medieval, modern and postmodern / relative “discontinuity” – a European phenomenon;
• “Continuity” is ensured through the emergence of the “invariant” essence of the concepts (and phenomena) of citizenship and citizen, namely that they are defined from the antiquity to the present day through the prism of the individual’s place in the politically organized social community in the country.
3.1 Ancient understanding

In terms of Aristotle’s understanding of the Politics principle can be considered as the starting point. Here he categorically, although “in development”, connects citizenship and citizen with the polis (“the city state”) (see Radev, 1994), namely:

a) In terms of the “law”, that is, in legal terms, who is a “citizen” of the polis (unlike slaves, women, men and minors);

b) In terms of “participation” in the life of the polis, i.e. in political terms – the realization of the individual as “zoon politikon”. In this plan, Aristotle puts the possibility of participating in the “power” in the polis as the main characteristic of citizenship: citizens are citizens with regard to their participation in the affairs of the state (to participate in decision-making and to control their observance – i.e. in government and court).

3.2 Mediaeval understanding

In terms of and through the prism of religion, the earthly state follows the celestial – citizenship = allegiance (citizen, citizenship (dependence on institutions), subject, (dependence on person(s))).

3.3 Modern understanding

In terms of the holistic understanding of state secularization, the pluralisation of civilian entities:

a) As political subjects – e.g., parties and state, but ultimately – participation (distribution, influence, control) in power, in “state affairs”, including the emergence of the phenomenon “voter” (and “electorate” – an alternative);

b) As the theoretical-ideological “models” of citizenship – liberal, republican, totalitarian.

Hegel’s understanding is important in this respect, which he introduces into the Philosophy of Law for civil society as “independent” of the state, which is perceived, albeit modified in the second half of the 20th century in liberal democracies (see Hegel, 2018).

3.4 Postmodern understanding

Expanding the “political”:

a) Except in the state – in the “global” society / state / NGO, etc.;

b) In the “virtual” society;

c) The “synopsis” of the political – through the so-called “Global” (demographic, environmental, food, religious, etc.) problems transforming social into political.

4. Purpose of civil education

Depending on the basis of civic education, different goals could be achieved, with the ultimate goal of building a sustainable structure in the minds of young people that they are civil society (see Ivanov, 2000). The basis for the goal can be:

a) “Historicity” of civic education – (1) in each of the four stages of the “paradigm shift” and the “model” and “purpose” of the civic education; and (2) “preservation” and “upgrading” but also “complicating” civic education in history.
b) Civic education “results” in the building of a complete (“educated”) – “virtuous” – a knowledgeable, moral and active personality.

Aristotle, in his books *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* (see Aristotle, 1993), examines in detail the question of the purpose of education and education, which, in his view, cannot be but the construction of “virtue”, which in general can be defined as a unity of knowledge and action of the citizen in the name of achieving the good of the citizens' community in the polis. Here are the following points:

a) The essence of virtue “at all” is “at the same time a synthesis of high moral qualities, a criterion and norm of human behavior, and an ideal of the vital position of man”;

b) The civic virtue is a specific manifestation of the “ideal” and is expressed in the transformation of the “moral placement” into “action” realized in the life of the political community (polis) and bearing “utility” not only of “the citizen” the whole community;

c) The civic virtue is “variational” essentially and historically. Aristotle says “Since there are several types of state apparatus, the virtue of a good citizen is not a single one, and he does not have the virtue of a good man at all, which is one and only perfect. Everyone must have the virtue of a good citizen, but not everyone can have that of the good man, and these two virtues coincide only with one particular citizen – the ruler. The virtue of a good citizen is to be able to govern and obey. The ruler has the same virtues as the ordinary citizen, but he also has wisdom, and the ordinary citizen – a true opinion” (see Aristotle, 1995) (see Ricken, 2001).

5. Models of civic education and citizenship

Models of civic education and citizenship in the modern (postmodern, global) world – in any internal variants (“sub-models”) can be:

- Liberal: – purpose – citizenship based on individual responsibility;
- Republican: – purpose – participatory citizenship;
- Democratic: – objective – based on equality (human rights) citizenship;
- Autocratic: – goal – citizen as a subject;
- Cosmopolitan: – the object based on “global” values (rights and responsibilities) citizenship – here, for example, ecological citizenship, environmental citizenship (see http://enee-cost.eu/), “virtual” citizenship.

6. Conclusions

To summarize, I could outline the following conclusions:

(1) Historicity of understanding for citizenship and civic education;
(2) Object of the civic education is a civic educated-ness;
(3) The civic education is the building of the citizen as a whole person, through education and upbringing, carried out in school, family and social life from childhood to human's old age.

The modern citizen, who is a citizen of the global-virtual world, should have the following characteristics:

- To know the basic characteristics of the contemporary society as:

1. The liberal values: freedoms and human rights; international standards for their nature and realization; institutions and procedures to protect freedoms and rights.
2. The modern democracy: institutions, procedures and democratic freedoms; principles of democracy – rule of law, pluralism, equality, protection of minorities, etc.;

3. The civil society – nature, institutions and powers of the civil sector: relations with the state.

The globalization and the problems which it puts, and also the ways and the possibilities for solving them – are much more understandable with the knowledge of a civil society (see MacIntyre, 1999). The virtualization of modern society – the internet, social networks and their role in the political and social life of 21st century, require the person (see Yankov, 2006):

- To be built as a socially responsible person, distinguished with a civic virtue, which manifests in:
  1. Readiness and ability to participate in public processes – at the school and beyond in the overall life of society;
  2. Ability to critically think and evaluate of the social reality and to make intellectual and morally sound and responsible decisions for practical action, both for the present and for the future of society;
  3. Developing personal attitudes based on the modern legal norms and universal human values.

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References


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