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The Development of the Ethical Ideals of Senior Form Students as the Basis of Citizenship

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Introduction

Latvia's contradictory behaviour in joining of the international context of world culture has created social and psychological tension in the sphere of upbringing.

The media propaganda of pseudo-values like 'force', 'mystery', 'wealth', 'sex', and 'individualism' has caused confusion and passiveness in educators. At the same time, it has been very successful among the young people as it has appealed to the natural hereditary instincts, to human nature and does not require the efforts needed to reach the level of contemporary world culture.

In these conditions, the determining of the content of education aimed at the formation of the ethical ideals of secondary school students and the development of citizenship have become topical issues.

The purpose of this article is to consider the development of citizenship on the basis of ethical ideals and characterize the organization of the educational process needed for the formation of citizenship.

Specific Features of the Development of Citizenship among Senior Form Students

Citizenship is an integrative feature of a personality, which enables an individual to feel as being part of the processes taking place in the country and to take pride in his/her state as its citizen.

The development of citizenship implies the development of a qualitatively new kind of functional education – ethical ideals, which acquire a generalized form during the period of youth. The replacement of a particular ideal with a generalized one is the evidence of the formation of ethical convictions, which represent conscious ethical demands to a personality manifesting themselves as certain principles.

The formation of ideals is also connected with the development of basic ethical feelings: self-respect, dignity, etc. These feelings appear as a result of the development of self-consciousness and self-evaluation as a human need to try to reach the level of one's ideals. The development of feelings related to citizenship, for instance, patriotism, interest in social issues, and aspiration for communication also takes place.

The generalization of life experience, ethical motives, and convictions lead to the development of an ethical world outlook, which results in qualitative changes in the system of an individual's needs and aspirations. They become integrated and acquire a

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certain order. What is more, ethical motives start playing the dominant part in this system (Vygotsky 1984).

This hierarchy ensures the moral stability of a personality and determines its direction, which helps an individual to manifest his/her ethical position and citizenship in each particular life situation.

This is one of the criteria of developed citizenship. The formation of an ethical world outlook also leads to the new relationship between ethical norms and behaviour. In the previous age group, due to the immaturity of ethical consciousness, the development of ethical feelings preceded the development of ethical behaviour, which could result in the discrepancy between high moral aspirations of the pupils and their actual behaviour. In the senior forms, young people are able to consciously control their behaviour. There appears to be a striving for self-development as the basic independent form of activity aimed at the formation of those personal qualities which correspond to the moral views and convictions of an individual. There is also an experience of one's as a citizen, which enables the students to implement the basic human values constituting the core of their world outlook in practice, to choose their individual behaviour, and to express their own attitude to society and to themselves in the form of certain actions (Kon 1989).

The formation of the world outlook leads to one more important consequence – the stabilization of students' personal qualities and the formation of character. However, personal qualities start to develop at a very early age and are based on the acquisition of certain forms of and motives corresponding to them. At the beginning, they manifest themselves on a situational basis, and then gradually under the influence of the world outlook, they develop into stable features of character. It happens as a result of a conscious positive attitude to the respective ethical and legal norms. Citizenship as a personal characteristic can also be both situational and a stable feature of character.

Citizenship as an integrative characteristic of a personality comprises such features as an interest in the matters of social and political life, a need for communication, the ability and skills to cooperate, responsibility, the knowledge of social norms and rules, and the ability to formulate one's own attitude to the phenomena of social life. Citizenship is a certain value-based attitude to the state, to its people and culture. To prevent negative consequences in one's interaction with society and to ensure the socialization of an individual as a citizen, it is important to know the laws and rules of a certain society and to use them effectively in order to achieve one's own goals. This also implies the readiness and ability to undertake responsibility in the conditions provided by a particular society.

The Citizenship of a Senior Form Student

The experimental work aimed at studying the attitude of senior form students to citizenship was carried out in a lyceum. A questionnaire was used to test for the determination of the maturity of a personality which was developed by Gilbuh in 1995.

The present article will present the analysis of two questions of the test as they characterize the attitude of the respondents.

Only 30% of the senior form lyceum students would like to continue their education in Latvia; 70% of the respondents said they would like to go abroad to work and to stay there if they had such an opportunity. The countries mentioned were the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Russia.

The answers to the second question were also interesting. The students were asked: 'Do you take interest in the information about social-economic and political changes in other countries?'

The respondents were offered the following answers:

- I take absolutely no interest in this kind of information,
- I am too busy dealing with my own problems to think about the problems existing in other parts of the world,
- I do it very seldom and as a matter of chance,
- I take minimum interest in these issues,
- I do it with pleasure, but I do not draw any conclusions referring to my own country,
- I try to understand conditions in other countries in order to compare them with the situation in my own country and to improve it,
- I cannot answer this question.

The respondents' answers to this question can be divided into the following groups:

Two people out of twenty (10%) try to understand the conditions in other countries in order to compare them with the situation in Latvia and hope that the life here will improve.

Eight respondents (40%) answered that they were too busy dealing with their own problems to think about the problems existing in other parts of the world.

Eight respondents (40%) take minimum interest in these issues.

Two people (10%) do it with pleasure, but do not draw any specific conclusions referring to their own country.

The analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire demonstrates that the level of development of the qualities of patriotism and social responsibility, which are the indicators of citizenship, is insufficient. The senior form lyceum students take little interest in social and political events in their country and abroad, but they were ready to be cooperative and demonstrated their striving for communication.

Along with the high number of respondents demonstrating a mediocre level of the development of citizenship (53%), a considerable number of those questioned showed a low level of development of ethical positions and citizenship (40%). These students take no interest in social and political events, display little need for communication, and demonstrate a low level of development of the qualities of patriotism and social responsibility.

Only 7% of the senior form students among those questioned possessed high levels of the development of citizenship. This was demonstrated by high levels of social responsibility. The students possessing high levels of the development of citizenship take an active interest in the matters of social and political life and demonstrate their initiative in organizing different cooperative activities in the group. The character of cooperation was determined by their constant readiness to help.

The experimental work aimed at the development of citizenship was focused on the formation of a value-based attitude to ethical and legal norms, which constitute the content of citizenship. The content of education was organized on the basis of universal human culture. Moreover, the content of culture determined the content of education. The lyceum students were encouraged to engage in independent activity oriented to achieving some socially meaningful result.

The freedom of choice of young developing personalities constituted the basis of the pedagogic approach to the solution of educational problems. One of the forms in which the development of citizenship took place in practice was the participation of senior lyceum students in projects. The participation in the project 'Genealogical Tree' was particularly important for the development of students' civic position. The aim of the project was to study students' family trees, as well as family and national traditions.

During the project, students collected information about their family members and ancestors in order to make their genealogical family tree. In order to do this, they had to make enquiries in the archives. In such a way, the ties between different generations were preserved, and students' interest in the history of their family and nation was stimulated. Some of the students' research had scientific and scholarly value.

It was very important that the present project integrated the knowledge of different school subjects: history, art, psychology, and literature. The importance of the contribution of students' ancestors and family members in the development of Latvia created a sense of pride in their own families and their country.

Conclusion

The development of citizenship as a personality characteristic depends not only on the efforts of a teacher/educator, but also on the actual situation in the society, the level of the development of democracy, and humanism. The key features for the formation of citizenship are instilled during adolescence and early youth on the basis of the experience acquired in the family, at school, and from the social environment. The further development of citizenship takes place during the life of an individual.

Citizenship education affirms the humane approach to the development of a personality. It is based on a person's individual needs and the possibilities to satisfy them as a result of overcoming the alienation of people from the institutions of power and authority, as well as on the changing of priorities in favour of education and culture.

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