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Citizenship In Slovenia: educational goals and statements

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Slovene educational goals for democratic citizenship

An examination of education for citizenship in the context of Slovenia shows that there is no substantial tradition of the explicit teaching of democratic citizenship in schools, or of young people contributing to voluntary and community service. Consequently there is no consistent framework within which to put forward discussion. Civic education or, as it is currently termed, 'Education for Citizenship' is a broad area, fraught with difficulties. Citizenship education - concerned with young people's understanding of society and, in particular, with what pupils learn and understand about the social world they live in - attracts the attention of many groups in Slovene society. These groups have differing perspectives on which aspects of the social should be included in education for citizenship, and divergent views about methods of approach to teaching.

Young people are being incorporated into not only Slovene but also European social life. Social knowledge should be an important part of the curriculum at all stages of schooling. Knowledge of complex social processes and of the individual's position in both family and extended social groups is necessary to understanding and successfully overcome the obstacles that are met in day-to-day life. This is perhaps especially important in countries such as Slovenia, which have undergone huge social changes over the past decade, and which have also influenced the reformation of modern Europe and the wider world.

Rowe (1997) categorised differing perspectives into eight models of citizenship education which have been developed in democratic societies. They are:

- constitutional knowledge
- the patriotic
- the parental
- the value conflict or pluralist
- the empathetic
- the religious
- the school ethos, and
- the community action models.

Though there is general agreement in Slovenia that the development of citizenship education is an important goal, there is no consensus as to how precisely such development should be carried out. The pattern of education for citizenship in Slovenia is of noble intentions that turn into generalised pronouncements. However, the following four points are generally agreed.

1. Citizenship education should be set in social, political and historical contexts, which will act as a reference. Slovenian society is complex and multi-dimensional, and democratic citizenship entails the active participation by individuals in its system of rights and responsibilities.

2. Education for democratic citizenship must teach young people how to exercise those rights and responsibilities. This will involve a broad approach, aimed at including citizenship in all learning environments in a concerted and interactive manner. It should thus be included not only in school curricula but also in the continuing education of all Slovenes, in order to enhance their roles as citizens, voters, parents, members of their local community, consumers of social services, and as the assignors of social roles. Continuity, coherence, independence and coexistence between all members of the society is needed to achieve the goals of the learning community.
3. A democratic culture is an essential prerequisite of education for citizenship. Such a culture is founded on a set of basic social goals and skills (such as social and cultural values, knowledge, education for patriotism, and so on) which should permeate all learning environments and institutions.
4. The overall goal of citizenship education is for students to understand clearly the two inseparable sides of citizenship:
 - (a) citizenship is concerned with and makes possible the integration of the individual into the political framework, and
 - (b) citizenship means the participation of citizens in the institutions of state, law and society. From the point of view of the state, citizenship means loyalty, participation, and service for the benefit of society; from the point of view of the individual, it means personal, individual and wider freedoms, independence in everyday life and in the work market, and political and social control over the authorities.

From this it can be argued that three kinds of education are necessary to acquire the skills of exercising democratic citizenship:

- the acquisition of knowledge (how democracy and democratic institutions work; political, legal and financial processes; citizen's rights, freedoms and responsibilities defined in national and international human rights; democracy in the local community and society as whole; the European and international context of democratic citizenship, etc.)
- the acceptance of shared values (the equal worth of all individuals; respect for oneself and for others; social and individual goals of freedom; solidarity; ethnic, racial, political, cultural, sexual and religious tolerance; the understanding of differences; civic courage, etc) and
- the learning of the practical skills involved in the instrumental and operative exercise of democracy, (non-violent methods of conflict resolution; the ability to argue in defence of one's point of view; the ability to interpret the arguments of others; the recognition and acceptance of social and other differences; sharing responsibilities; developing a critical opinion and the capacity to compare models of truth, etc.).

Two major components of citizenship education can thus be distinguished: one linked to instrumental or procedural aspects, and the other linked to the acceptance of the values of participatory democracy. According to Heater (1992) citizenship (in Slovenia and elsewhere) can be understood as a historical contract between the individual and the state, and is both a social status and a mental attitude. Thus official recognition of the

individual's membership of the Slovene political system is a defining feature of the status of a citizen. When this status evolves into multiple citizenship, it is the mental attitudes or identities assumed by the individual which are important, and such civic status acquires contextual connotations. We thus speak of local, regional, national European or even international citizenship.

Slovene educational goals of the reformed elementary school and the goals for European citizenship

There is no fixed definition of education for citizenship in Slovenia, and some authors doubt the usefulness of attempting such a definition (for example Kos, Marentič-Požarnik, Jogan, Juhant and Divjak). But it is increasingly clear that education for citizenship is needed as a school subject in order to enhance social development. It is needed to develop pupils' potential to the full and to prepare them for Slovenian society and for the wider world. This was recognised in the White Paper *Upbringing and education in the Republic of Slovenia* (1995), which included references to goals such as social and civic education, human right education, politics, values, moral and ethical education.

Marshall defines the value of citizenship education as "the set of practice and activities aimed at making pupils better equipped to participate actively in democratic life by assuming and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society" (1950). It covers responsibilities and rights in school and in preparation for adult life; it supports pupils as they develop from dependent children into independent and creative young people. It is of paramount importance, and the Slovene school system lays the foundations for positive, participative citizenship by:

- helping pupils to acquire and understand essential knowledge, and
- providing them with opportunities and incentives to participate in all aspects of school and wider social life.

Goals dealing with European citizenship are to be found in the 4th and 5th Class Curriculum. The curriculum for the reformed nine-year elementary school includes 175 hours for the subject Society (*Spoznavanje družbe*) for two hours per week - 70 hours in the 4th class and three hours per week (105 hours) in the 5th class. The content of these classes covers significant sociological and ethnological concepts. The curriculum focuses on basic information intended to familiarise pupils with the historical background of national examples: themes deal with the position of children in society and family; their rights in connection with the narrow relationship between child, community and society; national culture focused on local environment, and so on.

From the 6th class onward, goals and themes dealing with citizenship are included in the subjects of Language (Slovenian), History, Geography and Ethics and Society. For example, in geography pupils learn about the role of minorities as bridges between nations (based on examples from Slovenia), about the recognition of the regions of the three neighbour states in which Slovenes live, and about migration processes.

In the 7th class pupils learn about national history; linguistic, ethnic and religious differences in Europe; the European Community and the consequences of free movement for the inhabitants of the EU state members, goods and labour and the results of political conflict for people and the destruction of their environment.

In the 8th class there are no special learning themes devoted to the problems of the European Community from a multinational perspective, but in the 9th class geography lessons are focused on the necessity of economic cooperation with the neighbour states from the national standpoint. The treatment of social aspects is mainly limited to topics on the formation of national identity, such as ecological imbalance in Slovenia, the preservation of national, cultural and historical heritage, and so on.

Conclusion

Economic prosperity enables democracy (Huntington, 1984). Democracy is most likely to develop in prosperous societies where wealth is evenly distributed, the social structure is diversified, autonomous social groups exist and where tolerance, interpersonal trust, co-operation etc. are accepted as fundamental values. Huntington also points to the cultural factor: in Slovenian terms, this is the ability to organise an autonomous civil society that underlies the development of a stable democracy. Societies that lack intermediate structures (for example, of a political or religious nature) are more exposed to authoritarian and totalitarian centralised government. J S Mill's remark, that the tyranny of the majority is a threat to personal freedom is increasingly relevant with development of the global consumerism: society has to be aware of the majority as well as other social, political, religious groups.

The development of the Slovene people expands the possibilities and conditions for people's choices. Three essential factors required to achieve this are

- for people to lead long and healthy lives,
- to be knowledgeable, and
- to have access to the resources needed for decent standard of living.

There are differences in the ways Slovene people evaluate the basic conditions of their own lives: human development encompasses political, economic and social opportunities for creativity, self-respect and a sense of belonging to the community.

Social development in Slovenia is intertwined with a number of other complex areas, such as collective wellbeing, equity and sustainability, all of which lead to the realisation of basic social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. We take an integrated view of human rights, and do not narrow the focus to just civil and political rights. Development is closely connected with human rights. The protecting of these rights focuses on people-centred development, and rights to security, participation, freedom of association and freedom from discrimination. (Human Development Report Slovenia 2000-2001, p 6-15)

The global social goals included in the field of citizenship in the school system help to create long-term prospects for the realisation of human rights and responsibilities. Social and economic development allows the realisation of a worthwhile life. The aims and didactic instruments ensure systematic monitoring of economic and institutional barriers for the realisation of the aims that have been identified, as well as the social resources to best realise them. So citizenship in the Slovene educational curriculum and school system does, in different ways, provide a new *raison d'être* to human development and a broadening of its application.

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