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## **CIVIC EDUCATION IN UKRAINE**

Democratic modernization involves a process of social transformation in which policy formation to facilitate changes in political and civic culture must occur alongside economic and technological development. Indeed, civic and political culture is an important indicator of constitutional order and social stability.

National security, respect for law and order and the success of policy are determined by citizens' readiness to obey these laws and at the same time to monitor and criticize the authorities [2].

Ukraine is the same size as Texas with a population as large as France. It is situated strategically between Russia and the rest Europe. This country continues to face numerous challenges and barriers in its successful transition to democracy and market economics.

These problems include a weak economy, regional centrifugal forces, and nascent state institutions. Ukraine's prospects to be a sovereign, stable, secure and prosperous democracy depend not only on politicians' activity, but also on ordinary citizens. Ukraine is entering a special transitional phase when its future will be resolved in the presidential elections of October 1999. A final and likely decisive battle between center-right and left will be fought during the next several months. It is difficult to expect much progress in economic transformation and improvement in the quality of life, but the main changes at this time will take place in the sphere of citizens' consciousness[1].

The success of democratization in Ukraine depends mostly now on strengthening civil society. To influence the real development of the situation in Ukraine it is necessary to place our stakes not on this or that political person, but on the people as a whole, on improving men's and women's political culture and citizens education, as well as cultivating the values of open society. Civic education is one way to develop civil society since it is able to provide an essential antidote to political destabilization, confrontation, and threats to national security. As a society in transition, Ukraine strongly needs a developed system of civic education[3].

This kind of education system is a powerful means for political socialization, involving the individual in the political system, and

strengthening civil society on the basis of equality, mutual responsibility, and civil self-respect. Civic education must help people overcome political apathy, teach more peaceful forms of political and civic behavior, and help provide tools to solve social problems in non-violent ways.

For a long time we had one-party propaganda instead of real education for citizens. The consequences of long term totalitarian rule and the absence of nonparty civic education was the provinciality and hostility of public opinion and its adherence to ideological principles and uncompromising disagreement. After the Soviet system collapsed, in most NIS, multi-party propaganda took the place of the communist ideological monopoly but no nation-wide structure for political education was established. Now we urgently need to fill this gap[4].

We need to eliminate the vacuum of integrative influence but at the same time avoid substituting state civic education for one party's propaganda. Sometimes attempts are made to convert education for citizenship, in particular on voting, into agitation for one or another politician or party.

Because of the ideological domination of one party in the past, it is very difficult for many educators to understand today that goal of civic education is actually democratic consciousness and just elementary political competence. We need to demonstrate the difference between political propaganda and civic education. The legal and equal existence of various ideological and political positions of parties may be balanced by an integrative state, which upholds the common interest (not only of one group). One of the ways the state may do this is through civic education conducted by nonpolitical institutions. Citizens may be trained for public life.

Teaching such essential topics as human and civil rights, the constitution, and voting helps entrench the philosophy of liberty in the hearts of youth, particularly respect for human rights and the limitation of power by the constitution. This liberal education is the only way to create the free and critical intelligence required for citizenship. It is of extreme importance for Ukraine.

The following statistics characterize the current state of civic education and democratic consciousness in Ukraine. More than 57% of students think that a strong leader can be more beneficial than law; almost 42% of students do not know what to do if their rights are violated; and if there is a violation, 8% would agree to take part in the illegal use of force. All of this shows the absence of appropriate democratic behavior and the philosophy of liberty[1].

The difficulties in studying the Ukrainian Constitution are connected with a tendency to view the constitution as a magic wand, Archimedes' lever, a panacea capable of instantly improving our lives. The basic idea of constitutionalism, which defines a state's fundamental law primarily as an instrument to limit power, is distorted by a notion widespread among people that power grants or allocates citizens' rights and freedoms through the constitution. We may overcome this gap in the perception of the constitution through new, democratic civic education.

Concerning elections as a subject of civic education the problem in most cases is connected with the new way of voting in parliamentary elections. For the first time since independence candidates compete under party banners. Half of the seats are directly elected in single districts, and the other half is allotted by proportional representation.

During the last elections in March 1998, more than 30 parties and movements ran, with as many as 30 candidates contesting some seats. Some 6,000 candidates ran in total. This unusual and complicated voting system means a lot of effort is required to teach citizens to participate in the election campaign and to convince them that this participation is extremely important for building an open society[2].

Financing the development of civic education in Ukraine is a serious problem. Numerous programs in post-soviet societies are supported through American, Canadian and European foundations and organizations. These programs assist Ukrainian educators in developing a framework for civic education and advancing democratic values. But our further development should have more sustainable character. Therefore, building private sector support for this process is essential for civic education in Ukraine.

In order to develop materials, training, and concepts of citizenship on our own ground and make them more effective it's necessary to mobilize broad support for civic education from government, financial institutions, and for-profit companies.

Since the Department of Political Culture in Administration of the President of Ukraine was established, the efforts to give to the development of civic education in Ukraine a completed and systematic character have been undertaken. These efforts have not ceased even after the Department of Political Culture was abolished. Problems of civic education have come to scholars', politicians' and educators' attention in Ukraine during the last few years. At the same time there have been many initiatives at the grassroots level[3].

The objectives of the activity for the development of citizens' political culture and civic education are directed at improving civic

education and strengthening civil society, creating a network of civic education organizations in Ukraine, providing the civic education system with an appropriate framework, curricula, and other materials, and producing and sharing new forms of education for cultivating democratic values. Many events, often separate, are planned and indeed have already been carried out by government, local authorities, scholars, and educators.

The Action Plan for Civic Education Improvement in Ukraine is currently being developed. Its philosophy is the cultivation of the principles and values of constitutional democracy and open society. The Plan consists of three main parts: research projects, curriculum development, and civic education institutional development. Every part includes separate, appropriate programs and projects.

The Plan is a set of projects to be realized by state bodies, non-governmental organizations, teachers' communities and volunteers. The Research projects provide for Assessment of the state and challenges of civic education in Ukraine by means of documentary analysis, interviews with teachers, students, local authorities and executives, and analysis of the opinion poll, identification of content and methods of civic education in transforming societies, studying of the civic education experience of sustainable democracies, conduction of conferences, seminars, workshops and so on, developing policy recommendations for all levels of Ukrainian governance[4].

The Curriculum development part of Action Plan involves the creation of a civic education framework -- the standards and values of education for democracy, teacher training, foreign educators' fellowships to assist our teachers' professional development, radio- and TV programs for citizenship education, series of articles and collections of materials and the preparation of textbooks, their translation and publication. An important separate part of the Action Plan is voters' education[3].

The Civic education institutional development provides for the establishment of a regional network of resource centers, teachers' professional organizations, and NGOs as a means for sharing the best practices in this field. At the same time the idea of gathering of civic education organizations into an appropriate association may be take place. This part of Plan provides for gathering the support of Ukrainian business, and securing Internet access for various groups of educators to provide an opportunity to discuss and share information. Collaboration with USA, Canadian and European universities, which have programs for cooperation with NIS, is also envisaged.

A significant event has been the founding of the Institute for Civic Education. The non-government organization Education for Democracy Foundation has already been created and undertakes various activities. It was established by a group of scholars and educators as a resource center to improve teaching about democracy and civics, assist in the formation of civil society, and facilitate the development of democratic awareness and citizens' politic culture, their increased, informed, and responsible participation. The Foundation's goals are:

- investigation of the issues of a democratic civic culture;
- cultivation of the ideals and values of democracy;
- initiation of new forms of civic education;
- support of other non-profitable civic education associations' projects;
- dissemination of education materials, texts, standards, and modern world experience of civic education;
- curriculum development;
- organization of conferences, public lectures, work-shops, teacher training;
- democracy participation skills training;
- publications on democracy and education[2].

To achieve this goal and to assist education for citizenship Education for Democracy conducts research programs, disseminates experience and new forms of education based on democratic values, assists an intersectional partnership, as well as local civic education NGOs. In 1998 as a result of the Foundation's activity several essays and articles appeared in newspapers and journals on issues of political culture, and a textbook on elections was published. A round-table for educators and authorities was carried out, and scientific conference was conducted. Research of the state of political culture of citizens of Ukraine is going on at this time.

The listserve UkrCivNet has been established. The supplement 'Education for Democracy' to the newspaper 'Education' is published periodically. Foundation's activity has the support and cooperation of the Administration of President of Ukraine, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth in several projects implementation. Education for Democracy has good connections and collaboration with several foreign and international civic education organizations[1].

The civic education development process may begin from the nationwide discussion of appropriate issues. Such discussion is called to attract public attention to the problems of civic education, to motivate the

solution of these problems, and to promote distribution of the appropriate information. The development of civic education, through curricula teacher training will result in a strengthened civil society, as well as democratization and stability in Ukraine.

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