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## **THE VALUE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN PRACTICES OF STUDENT GOVERNING BODY**

***Надія ІВАНЕНКО (Кіровоград, Україна)***

*У статті розглядається сутність громадянського виховання через моральні цінності, мета студентського самоврядування як посередника між студентами та адміністрацією, як джерела зміцнення університетського середовища. Актуалізується цінність громадянської позиції як зв'язку між особистим та універсальним.*

***Ключові слова:** громадянське виховання, моральні цінності, студентське самоврядування, університетське середовище, вирішення, відповідальність, особисте, універсальне.*

*The article views the goal of citizenship education through moral values, the aim of student council as a liaison between the student body and the administration and the source of fostering and strengthening University community. The value of citizenship is described as a connection between the particular and the universal.*

*Key words: citizenship education, moral values, student governing body, University community, decision-making, responsibility, particular, universal.*

Developing citizenship is a gradual dissemination, a number of learning experiences which encourages constructive meetings with the needs, values, rights and varying perspectives of others. This process should encourage learners to understand the role they can play in influencing the social and political environment, and the ways in which they interact with other members of their communities.

This process should begin in families and educational establishments, which are the earliest and most immediate communities that young people become members of. The article views the development of educational establishments as communities in which all members have a share, should be seen as city states, composed of citizens with their own interests, rights and responsibilities.

All universities embody a set of values. These values contribute to an overall ideal of transparency, achievement, shared responsibility and mutual respect between students, teachers, staff and parents. It is necessary to give way to opportunities for debate, reflection and shared decision-making. Educators should not feel threatened by this shift of power and responsibility, should not resist the idea that decision-making authority should lie with the students. The positive impact on motivation, responsibility and behaviour among students should be seen there.

Tools for developing such an ideal include Student Councils and behaviour policies which are genuinely the joint responsibility of staff and students.

Student Council is an organization that is comprised of student leaders who represent their fellow students and department / university. It has a highly active and functional role. Its purpose is not to govern the students, but to serve as a liaison between the student body and the administration. Additionally, the Council seeks to foster and strengthen University spirit and pride. Throughout the year the Student Council members contribute positively back to their University and community in a variety of ways. They actively participate in University wide initiatives, lend their hands to community causes, and see democracy in action. While representing their University the student leaders will gain responsibility, increased pride in their educational establishment, and an overall awareness of events at a local and / or global level.

As a rule many educational establishments publish statements about their values and missions, especially as they become more adept at marketing themselves to the outside world. It symbolises a careful process of reflection, discussion and synthesis, which has been actively considered by every member of the University community. As a set of rules, it has limited value. But as a contribution to a shared ideal, and to the strengthening of positive norms of behaviour and the reasons which lie behind them, it is a much greater achievement. It marks a point where rules overlap with norms, and shows that responsibility for sustaining those norms lies with every individual.

Some education establishments have extended this process even further, consulting members of their wider community on their statement of values, sustaining it. With this part come a series of rights and responsibilities. These can be expressed in formal rules of conduct and in the expectations that a student should fulfil in coming to University. But they are most effective when they also become internalised norms governing behaviour and relationships. Young people's ability to take an active part in these processes is strengthened, as in any other form of learning, by practice.

It is a common complaint among teachers that when they have given students a chance to say what they want, or to make decisions for themselves, they immediately begin to behave irresponsibly, making unrealistic demands, failing to complete the tasks they set themselves, and omitting to set the ground rules they need to accomplish their objectives. But this is hardly surprising when such opportunities are isolated moments in a longer experience characterised by control and the removal of choice.

The capacity to take responsibility for oneself and to recognise the needs and interests of others is acquired progressively, through repeated experience, careful guidance and reflection. Virtue, the exercise of character and the practise of ethical conduct, is built out of experience rather than

instilled as a set of rules or abstract values, and, as Aristotle pointed out, such experience comes from active participation in the rules and norms governing an institution or a community. Over time, such experience bears fruit, often in unexpected ways. An example from the Faculty of Foreign Languages Department comes from the interaction of the approach to conflict resolution and the student council. In conflict resolution, the department has been developing a method through which students are encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and communicate their complaint directly to the peer that they have been fighting or arguing with, rather than submitting their version of a story to a staff member and then being expected to wait by the time-pressed adult's instant judgement of the merits of the case. The student council, meanwhile, has been developing its capacity to identify issues of concern to students, and search for solutions and new approaches.

So, learning to be a moral agent, and to be a citizen, begins in the family and the educational establishment. But surely citizenship extends beyond these institutions. The goal of citizenship education is to enable young people to develop into active, responsible citizens in the wider world. Schools and universities are the institutions which contain a young person's activity for most of their first two decades, but they also live in the wider world. They are members of numerous communities, and their experiences and sources of learning are far richer and more diverse than school-based learning opportunities, however good those might be. As young people grow into the wider world, it is appropriate to seek opportunities to extend their problem-solving abilities, their concern for others, and their exercise of ethical conduct beyond the school gates and university walls.

This can be done in numerous ways, some of which have already been set out earlier [5]. Without prescribing how this should happen, the article suggests three principles:

- 1) the issues with which young people engage should be ones which matter to them, and which they are responsible for identifying;
- 2) they should be rooted in aspects of citizenship which are manifested in the local environment that young people encounter every day;
- 3) learning about citizenship should be both active and practical. It should involve active engagement in practical activities which tackle problems or issues that young people have identified as being important.

Beyond this, the possibilities are almost too numerous to categorise. Current examples include raising money for disabled or cancer-ill people; a county-wide anti-litter campaign, which lobbies local councils, produces information and awareness-raising materials, and advises local groups on strategies to reduce litter and mess; an oral history project in the town, where young people interviewed grandparents and other elders to find out about holocaust of 1932-33 and record their experiences, and then produced a book based on their interviews; neighbourhood crime-prevention initiatives; and projects to help younger students with homework, supervising after-classes clubs and providing peer tutoring and listening services. Journalism projects, like University and department's students' newspapers, also involve practical citizenship. Their stories involve investigating issues and questions which very often relate young people to wider communities and to society, such as students' study and travel abroad, participating in the national debating championships, or the prejudices surrounding young people with HIV.

First, they involve collaboration. Organising such projects will always involve contacting people outside the school, asking them for information, advice or help. Working on a project team involves breaking a project down into different tasks, agreeing on who will perform each task, and planning how the different components will come together to achieve the full set of objectives. Participants must establish different roles within a team, understand the roles of others, and understand the norms of collaboration. They must also often seek to persuade others that what they are doing is useful, and secure appropriate help from other individuals.

Second, they require young people to set their own goals. Rather than slotting into a predefined framework of activity and achievement, participants must define for themselves what counts as an achievement, and then assess how far they have attained it.

Third, the process of deciding what counts as an important issue should also require young people to reflect not only on why it is important to them, but also on how it might affect other members of their communities. This is a crucial element of citizenship, and of developing emotional

maturity, since it requires empathy and the capacity to appreciate the perspectives of others. It is not an automatic part of the process. It is perfectly possible for young people to decide on an issue which appeals or matters to them, and then rush into doing something about it without really thinking about how it matters to others. But most cases show young people thinking about how they can help other people, as well as pursuing something which interests and motivates them. It is also a component that teachers and other adults can assist with, prompting reflection about what a particular project will mean to others, and encouraging young people to take others' perspectives into account.

Moral decision-making and citizenship require that an individual can take into account the needs and perspectives of others. Organising and acting in the real world requires young people to confront these perspectives, to compare them with their own, and to examine the ways in which what they do alters or reinforces the perceptions of others. This combination, of practical action, direct experience and reflection, is the foundation of responsibility.

Overall, the aim of this kind of activity should be to help young people to understand the public and moral spheres of their lives, to learn to be effective in them, and to help build trust. The role of trust in underpinning healthy civil society, as well as economic activity, has become the focus of mutual goals and expectations, was a crucial determination both of the effectiveness of government institutions and of citizens' satisfaction with them. Francis Fukuyama, in his influential book "Trust" (1995), showed that levels of trust in different societies had a measurable effect on economic performance. In particular, high levels of trust help facilitate the growth of large-scale economic organisation.

Fukuyama's criterion for success is what he calls the level of 'spontaneous sociability', the capacity to collaborate effectively with people who are relative strangers. Even in relatively prosperous, high-trust communities, the ability to engage with others, establish common goals and collaborate, is crucial to young people's prospects. In more depressed, disadvantaged communities this need is even more urgent [3: 27].

We would suggest that the opportunity to interact, to collaborate, and to present one's achievements to others in the communities beyond school, family and immediate peer group is a crucial opportunity for building trust.

One of the deepest historical divides in educational thinking is between the idea that education systems should prepare young people for adult life by controlling them, teaching discipline through domination in order to transfer the knowledge, skills and values which society considers necessary, and the idea, which can be traced back as far as Rousseau, that education is the process by which each individual creates their own reality, flowering spontaneously into the world. This divide has seen some bitter conflicts. But the implication of this research is that the dichotomy is false. Without clear knowledge of the values, principles and institutions on which our moral and civic life is founded, young people will not develop the moral fluency they need in order to be responsible moral agents.

Understanding authority, history and the value of the past is essential. Being familiar with the framework of rules is also vital. But culture, values and societies all change. Without the opportunity to help shape their own modes of action, to apply values in real-life situations, and to play an appropriate part in making decisions, the risk is that young people will grow up demotivated, disconnected and unable to make a full contribution to their social and political environment.

So, the kinds of citizenship learning we have described is open-ended, project-based activity which requires young people to

- formulate their goals;
- work as a team to achieve them;
- approach and persuade others whose help or permission they might need; and
- review and present the results of their work

Educators can support young people in becoming both more sophisticated and more effective citizens. The constellation of contacts, both individual and institutional, which a young person will experience during his / her formative years would be far broader and richer than those he / she currently meets through family, friends and school.



As far as these outward-facing activities impact on the life of the university, young people should be able to draw confidence, insight and self-esteem from their activities as members of the University community. Wider citizenship projects help to establish and sustain a network of contacts which can bring significant benefits to educational institutions, giving them access to information and resources and helping to legitimise what they do by making it more transparent.

The practice of citizenship can be described as a connection between the particular and the universal. Through everyday activities such as voting, debating, consulting and working for others, people can connect their lives, their concerns and their abilities to the abstract concepts and beliefs which help to define our civic and political universe - concepts such as democracy and the rule of law, beliefs such as the inviolability of human rights or the importance of treating others with respect.

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#### ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

**Надія Іваненко** – кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри практики германських мов, заступник декана з навчально-виховної роботи факультету іноземних мов Кіровоградського державного педагогічного університету ім. В. Винниченка.

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