

# CIVIC EDUCATION AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Ivan P. Ivanov

## 1. The Essence of Civic Education

Civic and intercultural education overlap in some respects but differ in others. Both terms are largely debatable. This necessitates an overview of the main theoretical issues involved.

**Civic education** is basically defined as systematic *institutional-political socialization of young people*. It familiarizes people with their rights and duties, and cultivates civic consciousness, skills and virtues. Civic education is also associated with the identity of individuals - group, ethnocultural, national, global - and solves the problems caused by their differences from the identities of other people (intercultural aspect). That is precisely where it overlaps with **intercultural education** as a trend in contemporary educational systems.

Civic education has two main **social functions**: *reproductive (stabilizing, conservative)*, associated with the reproduction and assertion of the existing social relations for the purpose of consolidating political power and constitutional order; and *constructive (reformative)* - innovative, direct or indirect contribution of young people to the establishment of new principles in politics, the economy and lifestyle.

Educators differ over the **essence** of civic education. There are two theses in both the international and the Bulgarian academic communities.

**The first** conforms to the collectivistic (holistic) paradigm and expert (enlightening) educational culture, which views education as a means of cultivating socially valuable civic qualities and virtues in the young generation, which help the elite in governance. This thesis goes back to Democritus and Plato, and the concept of the *republican citizen*. It requires a sense of belonging to a particular political community; loyalty to the motherland (the law, the government); priority of civic duties over private interests. This view is traditional in Bulgaria, and has been upheld by almost all authors since 1892. Today it is championed by D. Kolarova (Kolarova 1997), P. Balkanski and Z. Zahariev (Balkanski, Zahariev 1998).

**The second** is a variant of the individualistic (subjectivistic) paradigm and of engineering-communicative education culture, treating education as a means of developing

individual gifts. The theoretical premises of this thesis is the idea of the *liberal citizen*, as expounded by John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson. It gives priority to individual rights and liberties, equality of all people, independence of duties from circumstance; to recognition of the fundamental differences between them. This approach is typical of the Anglo-Saxon countries and Protestant culture, as well as of the ideas of liberal education. In Bulgaria, it was upheld by D. Katsarov in the 1930s, and is now championed by R. Vulchev (Vulchev 1994).

**In historical terms**, the civic principle in the education of young people dates back to ancient times (Democritus, Confucius, Aristotle). It was particularly strong in the 19th century, when it was associated with the educational practices of the nation-state. The prime concerns were teaching civic and ethical knowledge, history, national language through subjects such as history, native language, political science, law and civic doctrines. Those practices remained prevalent until the mid-20th century.

The individualistic-pragmatic concept of civic education based on liberalism and the harmonization of private and public interests eventually gathered momentum in the 20th century. Issues such as the universality of human rights, the environment, the weakening of the nation-state as a result of the development of supra-national structures, ideological pluralism and globalism became dominant, and were no longer dealt with by a particular subject but by the entire curriculum.

The interrelated components of civic education are civic knowledge, civic skills and civic virtues (John J. Patrick).

**Civic knowledge** consists of fundamental ideas and information that learners must know and use to become effective and responsible citizens of a democracy.

**Civic skills** enable citizens to think and act according to their individual rights and in the name of the common good. They are two types: *intellectual (cognitive)*, enabling the learner to understand, explain, compare, and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship; and *participatory*, involving actions by citizens to participate in the resolution of public issues. They are associated with definite civic skills and competences: of decision-making; team work; conflict resolution, attainment of understanding; action in conditions of stress, conflicts and emergencies; intercultural relations with the others; personal contribution to civic initiatives and public life.

**Civic virtues** are the character traits required for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizenship: self-discipline, civility, compassion, tolerance, respect for the worth and dignity of each person, integrity and patriotism.

The **factors for civic education** vary by nature. The main factors are **directly** relevant to the civic identity of the learner: family (nuclear and extended); school (teachers, curricula, participation); peers (in and outside school); neighbours, youth organizations, workplace; general public (political leaders, climate). Other factors have an **indirect** impact: political, legal, economic and religious processes, institutions and values; socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, gender stratification; correlation of social values (individualism and collectivism, power and subordination); allies and enemies (the respective

country's international positions); heroes, symbols and myths in the national and local communities; the mass media (institutions and values).

## **2. Common Elements of Civic and Intercultural Education**

The relation between civic and intercultural education in terms of concepts, theories and practices may be interpreted in various ways: the two may be regarded as equal, subordinate or independent. This study proceeds from the presumption that they are subordinate, with civic education playing the leading and definitive role. Civic education emerged first, and interculturality is just one, albeit among the most important, of the dimensions of civic relations. On the other hand, in the modern world it is impossible to form a full-fledged citizen beyond the system of intercultural education.

The relation between civic and intercultural education is codified in a number of documents of the UN and European international organizations, starting with Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Next come the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 13[1]); the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 29[30]); the CSCE Helsinki Document (Art. VI); the 1974 UNESCO recommendations on imbuing the content of education with a spirit of understanding, cooperation and friendship among peoples, education in the spirit of fundamental human rights and freedoms [La raccomandazione dell'UNESCO in materia d'educazione, cooperazione e pacificazione internazionale, d'educazione ai diritti umani e alle liberta fondamentali (Paris, 19.11.1974)]; Resolution (78) 41 of the Council of Europe

Committee of Ministers on the teaching of human rights of 1978 [Comitato dei ministri del Consiglio d'Europa: Risoluzione (78)41 sull'insegnamento dei diritti umani (25.10.1978)]; The Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (85) 7 on the Teaching and Learning of Human Rights in Schools; the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities; the 1994 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Art. 12, 13 and 14).

An analysis of the cited documents and of concrete programmes on civic and intercultural education shows that they are in the following relationship.

### **2.1. Common values**

A contrastive analysis of the programmes indicates that the values of intercultural education are also values of civic education. They are the following: peace and condemnation of war, brotherhood of people; condemnation of political demagoguery, fascism, racism and nationalism; equality and condemnation of inequality, recognition of equal rights of all people on Earth; empathy, development of human sensitivity, understanding the others, compassion and sympathy for other people's feelings; solidarity, contribution to the establishment of a more humane society; respect, non-violence against human nature, care and respect for the culture of "the Others"; strategy of communication in a spirit of tolerance, eliminating segregation.

Of course, civic education upholds a broader range of values, including civic-legal values such as democratic participation, patriotism, national identity and civic activism.

### **2.2. Common Principles**

The principles (also called "criteria of achieving civic education" and "global guidelines") are fundamental tenets in civic education theory. They should be taken into account in planning the content, strategies of teaching and institutional organization of school.

The Todesco civic education project of the International Conference on Education (ICE) of 1994 is a case study of harmonization of the principles of intercultural and civic education. This project harmonizes three of all five fundamental principles: *pluralism* (official recognition of the worth of differences, intercultural dialogue), *multi-level perspectives* (local, national, regional, global level) and *cultural congruence* (due

consideration for a number of factors - demographic, political, technological...) (UNESCO... 1996).

### **2.3. Common Elements of the Curriculum**

There are several **elements in the curriculum** of intercultural education that are directly linked with civic education.

*Political.* The purpose is to provide an adequate idea of the contemporary democratic system, which excludes all forms of discrimination.

*Linguistic.* The main issues are the respective national language, bilingualism and foreign-language training.

*Ethical.* The purpose is to teach the values of each culture; elimination of discrimination in all spheres of social life; respect for human rights, humanism, tolerance, etc.

*Ideological.* The main issue is to combine the compulsory nature of civic values and value-related freedom typical of interculturality.

*Historical.* The priority is on overcoming national provincialism and limitation; identifying the historical causes for the emergence of differences among cultures.

*Economic.* The purpose is to understand the main relationship between democracy, pluralism, market and freedom.

*Social.* Advancing the ideas of community and differentiation (ethnicities, classes, strata...), interdependent, full-fledged relations, impossibility of upsetting social harmony by means of social engineering.

*Humanitarian.* A curriculum from the sphere of cultural anthropology (learning how a culture is constituted, the verbal and nonverbal instruments of cultural communication), learning the distinctive features of the different religions and cultures: music; dance; theatre; diet, food; holidays, rituals, etc.; psychology (familiarization with psychological stereotypes and prejudices) etc.

***Through a number of extra- and para-curricular activities, intercultural education indirectly fulfills the tasks of civic education.*** The various forms of the educational process (curricular, para-curricular and extracurricular) contribute to the acquisition of civic skills. Group forms play a leading role, as team work eventually changes the student's way of thinking, rejecting confrontation with other cultures and fostering reciprocity and cooperation.

*The different programmes on civic education include different elements of intercultural education.*

1. The elements of intercultural education are implicit in the main international programmes on civic education. In the ICE's Todesco project, these are four subject areas: human rights, democracy, development and peace. Similarly, in the Report of the International Commission [chaired by Jacques Delors] on Education for the Twenty-first Century, they are the established rules in society; human rights; tolerance; peace (Learning... 1998).

2. A number of countries in postcommunist Europe are implementing civic education programmes which include elements of intercultural education. For instance, in the Czech Republic (the CECR Project) the curriculum has an anticommunist, religious and nationalist orientation. In Latvia, the DAC civic education course has a strong intercultural aspect in the sections on "Democratic Society" and "International Relations." Hungary is applying the programme "Education for Democracy: Let's Build and Live in the Civil Society," which lists "pluralistic and intercultural education" as one of the six priorities of the reform in education.

3. **The Bulgarian experience.** There are several civic education programmes in Bulgaria. The two most popular ones differ in their approach to intercultural education.

The *programme of P. Balkanski and Z. Zahariev* focuses on the national and implicitly contrasts majority and minorities. The ethnocultural and, in particular, the intercultural aspects are ignored altogether. For example, the ethnic community is omitted as a community; the theme "National Identity of the Bulgarian Citizen" is treated from a nationalist perspective. So is the theme of "Differences and Contradictions in Bulgarian Society," with an implicit conflict between majority and minority. Interculturality is treated at a global, state-to-state level only. The theme "Bulgaria's Contribution to World Culture" ignores the contribution of ethnic minorities and bespeaks ignorance about their cultures; cultural identification is unilateral, wholly confined to the Slavic world. The different cultures and dialogue skills are compared only from the perspective of Bulgarian culture.

According to the *programme of R. Vulchev*, the main objectives of "inter-cultural moral training" ("*mezhdoukulturnoto vuzpitanie*," the term used by the authors) may be recognized as objectives of civic education too. This idea is good, but it is overambitious and unrealistic. It is hard to presume that all tasks of civic education may be solved by means of inter-cultural moral training. Besides, the programme obviously targets a

particular type of children only (disadvantaged and minority). The effort to blunt differences is particularly objectionable, i.e. "inter-cultural moral training" is supposed to promote uniformity.

### **3. Variants of Civic and Intercultural Education**

#### **3.1. Permanent Civic and Intercultural Education**

The main idea in the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century is that the education of each citizen should span their whole life and become part of the system of civil society and democracy. This means that education should be approached as a global phenomenon - formation of a system of permanent civic and intercultural education.

Interculturality has experimental significance in **preschool and elementary school**. The main purpose is to help the child become aware of diversity and acquire experience in group activities requiring planning and cooperation - to become aware of the community and to experience common successes and failures. The idea is to convince children of the worth of group experience (acquired on the basis mainly of games and other group activities) in comparison with the strictly individualistic orientation. The curriculum raises the issues of individual rights, civic values and collective welfare; their protection by the government; cultural and political differentiation in the world. Language acquisition is a prime objective.

**Secondary school** should solve the main tasks of civic education: formation of civic knowledge, skills and virtues. This is effected through training in all subjects, as well as through para- and extracurricular activities. Students acquire further experience from team work, inter-group contacts and growing ethnocultural tolerance as they become aware of differences; ultimately, this eliminates prejudices and discrimination.

**Adult civic education** is necessary because of the variance in the civic knowledge and the diversity (educational, ethnocultural, etc.) of the population, as well as of the dynamic changes in the political environment. The priority is not so much on protection of civil rights as on participation in political processes at various levels (local and global), as well as cultivation of civic virtues as a basis for civic behaviour: interest in public issues and affairs; tolerant, caring and considerate attitude to fellow citizens (intercultural aspect);

integrity, kindness and tact, helpfulness to the others; formation of civic conscience. These are also the priorities in the programmes of adult civic education (Judith A. Boss).

### **3.2. Civic Education for Global Understanding**

The term civic education for global understanding means civic education in the conditions of globalization, multiculturalism and a growing sense of responsibility to the planet at large (Charles Titus). This concept is quite different from the traditional one. The idea is that the global problems of humanity in recent years, including the disposal and regulation of nuclear weapons, the world-wide difficulties of environmental pollution, shortages of natural resources, and a rapidly emerging interdependent world economy, have in one way or another transformed the lives of all people - as a result of which we need a "global civic culture." This calls for changes in the traditional subject matter and teaching methods of social sciences, with a focus on the global aspects of history, the economy, politics and geography. The intercultural trends in education have a pivotal role in this respect.

### **3.3. Peace Education**

According to the theoreticians of peace education, it has moved well beyond the Utopian dreams of its 19th century founders (pacifist education) to realize very practical applications for the 21st century (Marcia L. Johnson).

Peace education as we know it evolved in the 1980s, when it took the form of "conflict resolution." Programmes were developed to train young people in solving topical issues through communication and negotiation strategies. These programmes include such elements as *training in cross-cultural issues*, interpersonal communication, awareness of the nature of conflicts (types, scenarios, roles) and development of negotiating and decision-making skills.

In the 1990s peace education has spread across the curriculum, providing opportunities for students to tackle vital issues from numerous perspectives. A globalist *aspect* has been included in the curriculum - environmental issues, information and telecommunications knowledge and skills (the Internet). Teaching respect and tolerance for cultural differences and those who are different has become a primary educational focus.

### **3.4. Civic and Intercultural Education Through Social Activities**

A number of authors in different countries have established a decline in young people's civic involvement in the name of the welfare of their country or community in recent decades. This has been blamed on the lack of spare time; the absence of parental approval; non-awareness of the duties of the citizen in a democratic society (contrary to full awareness of their individual rights and freedoms); mistrust of political institutions and leaders; dominance of an individualistic ideology devaluating service to the community and the country.

Civic education should presumably help change those attitudes, fostering the awareness that by serving and working for the community, you are working for yourself (Judith A. Boss). Citizens achieve their individual interests through voluntary **civic participation** in governmental programmes and voluntary established nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) - charity, religious, sports, environmental, artistic, etc. Through them they acquire knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes that are at the core of democracy. Many of the voluntary associations of civil society counter-balance the abuse of power by the government.

The civic educational system employs certain social forms of training. Participation in them is implicitly relevant to interculturalism, since it confronts students with the need of decision-making and action in a multicultural environment on a day-to-day basis.

**Experiential learning**, or learning by doing, is a classical form of civic education - along with outdoor education, i.e. education that is not bound to school settings. These forms use the student's whole environment (natural, social and cultural) as a source of knowledge. The main idea is to promote learning from experience and enrichment of nearly any subject in the curriculum.

Four main types of outdoor education are employed in the civic education of students:

**Adventure education.** Adventure education aims to teach environmental awareness and build self-confidence; self-control, self-discipline, independence and assertiveness; interpersonal competences (*intercultural approach*); leadership skills; and decision-making skills through activities that include a certain amount of stress or risk.

**Cultural journalism.** Cultural journalism studies the living environment, mainly in the past (magazines and books with *local history commemorative pamphlets, folklore and ethnological studies*, etc.) for the purpose of teaching students to protect the collective civic traditions. The presumption is that in a society that promotes individualism in countless

ways, understanding the value of certain civic traditions can provide the basis for cooperation and mutual support.

**Participatory research.** Participatory research studies the life of different communities, their problems and concerns. It involves "field studies" of issues subjected to group discussion for the purpose of proposing decisions and involving students in this process (*intercultural aspect*).

**Service learning.** Civic responsibility also entails a willingness to engage in community service, as well as political activism. Service learning is one form of outdoor education that has been well developed in recent decades, with a number of organizations offering resources: Scouts, Red Cross, as well as the Pioneer Children and Komsomol organizations in communist Bulgaria. It is a bridge between school, community, family and young people.

Programmes on planned involvement of young people in public activities have been developed on this basis and coordinated by schools and the respective institutions. These projects are integrated into the curricula and associated with civic education. This enables students to use their social experience for critical reflection in the classroom during discussions on the role of the citizen in society.

Service learning is also a bridge to parents. To judge from experience, many parents who are indifferent to their children's school and upbringing (especially to the purely academic aspect) readily offer advice and even become personally involved in students' social activities. This applies especially to the less educated, people with social problems similar to those tackled by their children, as well as to parents who were public activists themselves. The parents thus take an interest in school and become a very important part of the educational process.

### **3.5. Civic and Intercultural Education and Leadership**

The traditional charismatic or authoritarian leader does not meet the theoretical or practical standards of democratic civil society, which requires decentralized and participatory leadership with specific competences, aimed at structuring and guiding civic activities that are essential for a community determined to organize itself, to pursue goals and priorities, make decisions, resolve conflicts and attain those goals.

A number of countries have special programmes developing leadership skills in civil society. They include conceptual, motivational, ethical and behavioural (associated with

skills) components, and usually last two or three years. Much of their content is *intercultural*. This applies to aspects such as leadership in the formation of a point of view on group identity and future objectives; assistance in harmonized community decision-making; intra-group conflict resolution; establishment of group legitimacy; coalition with other groups.

### **3.6. Civic and Intercultural Education and Language and Literature Training**

**Language and literature training** also contribute to civic education, since they form the civic identity and character.

Students should be acquainted with literary works that shed light on the national history and values. This should help them build their civic identity. In reading, students should take national pride but also realize that the progress of history is not faultless. A good literary curriculum provides a balance of the national social and political experience.

Literature training should help character-building with clear moral and intellectual value dimensions by familiarizing students with respective literary role models, symbols of civic virtues such as freedom of choice; individual initiative, responsibility and conscience; courage, hope, optimism, ambition; patriotism; family values; self-criticism; concern for the country's environment; indignation at social injustice.

The literary curriculum should also teach students about the life of people in other countries or communities that are different from their own one (*intercultural aspect*), while placing an emphasis on universal cultural values.

**Civic education for non-speakers of the official language.** There is an urgent need for civic education of children who do not speak the official language. Those children enter school with family role models that are often in conflict with their new school environment. The reason is that the conditions at school (school culture, rules, student and civic rights and duties) are different from those in their family. That is why they have a vital need of civic education in order to live in harmony with the civic institutions.

Learning the official language (Bulgarian, in our case) is an important element of the civic educational process. Language is a prime expressive device and an essential component of culture. Students reach certain levels of language competence by studying subject matter relevant to understanding political principles and methods, and by learning values and skills essential in effective citizen participation.

Hence language teachers are required to update their knowledge and skills on the basis of social and political sciences. For their part, in introducing the respective terms, social sciences teachers should include language when teaching students from minority cultures. Both groups of teachers may thus benefit from expanding knowledge in the sphere of civic education and its relation to intercultural education.

The preferred methods and means of training are demonstrations, object lessons, role play and compulsory use of new words (terms of civic education) in the active vocabulary.

Elementary school and social sciences teachers can benefit from the professional expertise in the sphere of intercultural education. Students can be taught to take a more sensitive and effective approach to cultural diversity in the classroom, so as to get a better understanding of the importance of the respective issue at the national and global levels.

### **References**

1. Balkanski, P. and Z. Zahariev. 1998. *Vuvedenie v grazhdanskoto obrazovanie* [An Introduction to Civic Education]. Sofia.IK "Laska"
2. Kolarova, D. 1997. "*Grazhdansko obrazovanie v srednoto ouchilishte*" ["Civic Education at Secondary School"].- In: *Posoki*, No. 2, 3.
3. "Learning: the Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission [chaired by Jacques Delors] on Education for the Twenty-first Century." 1998.Sofia.
4. "*UNESCO: grazhdansko obrazovanie*" ["UNESCO: Civic Education"] 1996.- In: *Compass*, No. 5-6.
5. Vulchev, R. 1994. *Kniga za Ouchitelya* [A Handbook for Teachers]. Sofia.