THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

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Abstract: The paper implies the absence of the topics (directly or indirectly) connected to human dignity in education and underlines the relevance of "education on human dignity" in democratic system. Namely, the paper considers human dignity as a core of democratic political culture and explains that educational process might have a great impact on "educational development of human dignity". According to the main characteristics of the democratic system, the objectives of "education on human dignity" ought to go in line with citizenship education. Moreover, the paper suggests "education on human dignity" to be an integral part of citizenship education and reveals a model for this type of education consisting of three main parts: "education about human dignity", "education through human dignity" and "education for human dignity". The suggested model helps students to internalize values and develop their personality and identity. In this way, the education in democratic society tends to consider human beings both as citizens as well as individuals.

Key Words: schools, teaching, citizenship education, democracy, human dignity.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In contemporary society one can perceive the absence of the topic of human dignity in education. Bowie (2011) states: "While philosophical and theological ideas of dignity are applied and theorized about in law and bio-ethics, it is difficult to find such examples in education." Human dignity rarely appears in connection with education, more or less in terms of children's fundamental rights and importance of a learning environment which would protect children's human dignity and human rights. Meanwhile, in educational process there is a lack of direct theorization about human dignity and its integration into the curriculum. As a result, it can happen that students during education do not come across the questions of what is human; what is human dignity; could human dignity be described as something that belongs to every human being, or as something that is culturally relative and socially conditioned, etc.

Despite the extensive scholarly literature, there still exist inconsistencies regarding the theorizing about human dignity. On one hand, there are certain allegations that all the people are not born with human dignity and that it is possible to lose it (for example, Dupre, 2009), and that it should thereby be the subject of special protection; on the other hand, there is the idea that human dignity represents an inherent and essential part of a human being (for example, Miguel, 2002), therefore, it cannot be taken away by other people. The lack of consensus indicates that further research is necessary. To this end, it is essential to educate the younger generations, so that they can enhance the development of the science on human dignity in the future. In addition, "educating on human dignity" contributes to recognizing different perspectives and views on human dignity and developing critical thinking on this topic. This is even more important considering the significant role of human dignity in democratic societies and its meaning for decreasing unequal treatment. As normative architecture of democratic society derives from the concept of human dignity, the educational institutions should encourage theorizing about human dignity and connect it with its practical perspective. Relationship between education and the cultural platform of society is thus mutually reinforcing.

This paper explains the meaning of human dignity for democratic political culture and implies the impact of educational institutions within the democratic system. Thereby it reveals so-called "education on human dignity" stating that this type of education should be an integral part of citizenship education. The author interprets the goals of education on human dignity and explain that they should go in line with the objectives of citizenship

education. Finally, the author develops a model of "education on human dignity" consisting of three main components: "education about human dignity", "education through human dignity" and "education for human dignity". The author explains the relationship between those components aiming to consider every human being both as citizen and individual within democratic society. The paper shows that educational approach should be improved in order to guarantee higher incorporation of human dignity in education. Raising awareness about human dignity enables better realizing of elements of democratic society, thus, educational system should intensively strive for this goal.

2. THE MEANING OF HUMAN DIGNITY FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY:

Democratic political culture is composed of several more or less compatible and interrelated elements, e.g. tolerance, equality, solidarity, responsibility, etc. These elements are based on the concept of human dignity. The later represents the foundation of a stabilised, well-functioning democratic system, for mutual relations within democratic society and at the same time for self-realization of each individual as a part of democratic society. Therefore fostering the concept of dignity would contribute to the encouragement of other democratic elements.

Human dignity, representing the very foundation of democratic political culture is significantly reflected on legal ground at international, regional and national level. In this regard the author refers to the notion that international law should be deeply rooted in the respect for human dignity (Capps, 2009). This thinking goes in line with international legal documents that mention human dignity and place it as their foundation. Especially since 1945, the mentioning of human dignity has enormously increased (as a reflection of atrocities committed during the Second World War) and commonly spread in international and humanitarian legal instruments. Development of the concept of human dignity on an international level influences the regional and national legal documents as well. Nowadays, the society regards it as a widely spread and endorsed concept.

Therefore, relation between human dignity and democracy is often considered as self-evident. This is particularly relevant in countries that only relatively recently launched democratization process, as is in the case of »new democracies« from Central and Eastern Europe that quarter of century ago stepped onto the path of comprehensive change directed at the establishment of an institutional system as seen in advanced Western societies. These countries were for almost half a century ruled by communist regimes. These regimes were characterized by complete monopoly of communist nomenclature and its control over all spheres of society. With their centralizing, egalitarian and homogenizing orientation and repressive activities toward the citizens they hindered competition, pluralism and freedom. As other types of authoritarianism, mode of functioning of these regimes violated the human dignity. Although democratization in Central and Eastern European countries has been accepted with a broad national consensus, there are still many structural and cultural remnants present in these societies. In this regard, notion of the importance of human dignity as foundation of democratic political culture has to be fostered, nurtured and institutionalized. This can contribute to fortification of democratic political culture.

Human dignity implies a respectable status[1] of a person or the status of human absolute intrinsic value. It belongs to a human being due to the mere fact that he/she is placed into a group of human beings. It stems from human nature as such and distinguishes human beings from members of other species. We can identify it as a kind of metaphysical element which is inseparably linked to humans, and as such existing in any space and time (and therefore universal). Despite the fact that every human being is endowed with human dignity, it depends to what extent human dignity is realized/implemented in the case of a particular individual. This means that it is not necessary that every human being, determined with the human dignity, simultaneously enjoys the full extent of it. Namely, the extent of realization of human dignity is the result of man's relation to oneself (self-respect) and man's relation to fellow men (and vice-versa). Thereby it is important to ensure the protection of human dignity in order to be realized in a highest possible level. That is why democracy plays a considerable role while placing

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[1] *Status* indicates position; state of belonging to a particular rank, type or group with all the rights, obligations and potential characteristics resulting from this position. Status is *respectable* if it is a major status with a considerable weight, to which its holder, as well as a fellow man need to answer with respect (see Formosa and Mackenzie, 2014, 877).

human dignity at the core of this system. Democratic system constitutionally recognizes human dignity and thus guarantee its effective implementation as well as human rights which derive from the human dignity. Hence democracy and human dignity are inseparably link aiming to build democratic political culture, ensure common good and self-realization of each individual. There is many ways to foster the meaning of human dignity in democracy. The author assets that a substantial step towards this goal could be carried out by schools as agents of political socialization.

3. "EDUCATION ON HUMAN DIGNITY" AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION:

Numerous research (for examples see Gainous and Martens, 2012; Gainous and Martens, 2013) illustrate the connection between educational attainment and increased political knowledge, as well as citizenship engagement and greater basic democratic norms. Thereby, it is important to explain to the students that democracy is not a given reality but something that needs to be grown, developed and nurtured. Students should identify an inner need to act in accordance with democratic elements. Moreover, they should develop the responsibility of taking care of their community, nation and humanity (Saveikaitė, 2014). Thus, citizenship education is not only about preparing students to become well informed, knowledgeable and active citizens, but also about developing critical thinking, communicational and cognitive skills; enhancing human values in order to respect themselves and fellow men. However, Hoskins et al. (2006, 10-11) stress that "active citizenship" overlaps with the concept of social values and is not restricted to political dimension. Rather, it "ranges from cultural and political to environmental activities, on local, regional, national, European and international levels." Hoskins et al. (ibid.) identify 4 dimensions of active citizenship: Political Life, Civil Society, Community Life and Values.

Many different terms have been used in attempting to describe the educational experiences that deal with the task of developing democratic-minded citizens, for instance civic education, citizenship education, social education, moral education and democratic education (Cohen, 2013). Despite the fact that nowadays both the term citizenship education and civic education are broadly used in literature, we should make a clear distinction between them. According to IEA (2009, 22), civic education focuses on knowledge and understanding of formal institutions and processes of civic life (such as voting in elections). Kerr (1999) describes it as content-led and knowledge-based education aiming to inform through the provision and transmission of information. It does not offer many opportunities or encouragements for student interaction and initiative. On the other hand, citizenship education aims to acquire knowledge and understanding as well as develop values and dispositions, skills and attitudes. It contains a broad mixture of teaching and learning approaches that encourage student's interaction through discussion and debate, project work and other forms of learning and participative experiences (Kerr, 1999; see also McLaughlin, 1992). Therefore, citizenship education should consider human beings as citizens (entitled to the civil and political rights recognized by the national constitution of the country concerned) as well as individuals (subjects of ethics and law, endowed with dignity and rights inherent in the human condition) (UNESCO, 1998). Regarding both considerations, human dignity is substantial – it is recognized and provided to citizens by national constitutions, but it also belongs to individuals just for the reason that they are human beings.

Levinson (2014) argues that there are two primary reasons why citizenship education is necessary in any country. First, citizenship is of primary importance for those who do not want to sink into a "state of nature" characterized by "the war of all against all" (Hobbes, 2003), while citizenship education is also necessary to perpetuate the state itself. Namely, there is no reason to think that human beings born under any particular government will naturally come to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to maintain it. Second, Levinson states that citizenship education is necessary to realize (i.e. internalize and act upon) states' civic ideals, such as equality, mutual respect, etc. This article argues that all these civic ideals are grounded on human dignity, therefore citizenship education is inevitably important for the realization of human dignity.

According to EACEA (2012), citizenship education includes four main aspects (goals): (1) political literacy, (2) critical thinking and analytical skills, (3) attitudes and values and behaviours, (4) active participation. Our analysis is based on the finding that "education on human dignity" should represent an integral part of each of these objectives:

1. *Political literacy* enables students to learn about the concept of human dignity and its relation to human rights and democracy; national constitutions; citizens' rights and responsibilities; social issues, etc.
2. Since critical thinking is crucial for development of political literacy, it could help students to analyse and critically assess the theory, events, experiences and behaviours related to human dignity. Thus, the goal of *critical thinking and analytical skills* complements the goal of political literacy.
3. Developing the *attitudes, values and behaviours* encourages students' sense for respect towards themselves and respect towards other people – as crucial components of the realization of human dignity. This objective may comprise mutual understanding, social and moral responsibilities, and help develop a spirit of equality, solidarity and tolerance.
4. The goal of *active participation* enables students to actively participate in their communities. Thereby, students could put into practice knowledge and skills as well as values, attitudes and behaviours (primarily those connected to human dignity) that they have acquired through achieving goals (1), (2), (3).

The next table elucidates the objectives of »education on human dignity« that go in line with general objectives of citizenship education. Therefore the author argues that »education on human dignity« ought to be a considerable and integral part of citizenship education.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION	EDUCATION ON HUMAN DIGNITY
OBJECTIVES EACEA (2012)	**OBJECTIVES**
(1) to develop political literacy - knowledge of basic facts and understanding of key concepts (social, political and civic institutions; human rights; national constitutions; citizens' rights and responsibilities; social issues etc.)	(1) to gain theoretical knowledge on the concept of human dignity as well as its relation to human rights and democracy (in particular from philosophical, political and legal perspective)
(2) to acquire critical thinking and analytical skills	(2) to analyse and critically assess all the aspects of human dignity
(3) to develop certain values, attitudes and behaviour	(3) to develop the sense for respect towards themselves and respect towards other people – as crucial components of the realization of human dignity
(4) to encourage active participation and engagement at school and community levels	(4) to put into practice knowledge and skills as well as values, attitudes and behaviours connected to human dignity that have been acquired through achieving goals (1), (2), (3)

Table: Objectives of »education on human dignity« as an integral part of citizenship education

4. THE MODEL OF "EDUCATION ON HUMAN DIGNITY" :

As stated in the third chapter, education is more than just information. It helps students to discover themselves, to internalize values, to develop their personal responsibilities and to understand their personality and identity (Saveikaitė, 2014). Thus, we should foster not only education *about* citizenship complemented by education *through* citizenship, but especially tend to achieve education *for* citizenship.[2] The last sentence leads us to the

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[2] Education about citizenship focuses on providing students with sufficient knowledge and understanding of national history and the structures and processes of government and political life.
Education through citizenship involves student's learning by doing, through active, participative experiences in the school or local community and beyond.

idea that "education on human dignity" as an integral part of citizenship education should include three components:

1. *Education about human dignity* provides theoretical knowledge on the concept of human dignity, as well as its relation to the main elements of democratic political culture. Mainly it consists of the theoretical teaching approach and includes explicit as well as implicit teaching on human dignity.

2. *Education through human dignity* provides learning by doing: active participation and engagement in schools and communities. It includes different activities, such as extra-curricular activities, visits, project work, etc. Mainly it consists of the experimental/practical teaching approach and is usually more connected to implicit than to explicit teaching on human dignity.

3. *Education for human dignity* provides mainly classroom discussions and reflections of students, by using interactive methods, creative tasks, analyzing and solving of problems. Mainly it consists of combination of the theoretical and practical teaching approaches and includes explicit as well as implicit teaching on human dignity. Usually (but not necessarily always) the effect is greatest if the education about human dignity and education for human dignity are preliminarily conducted. Namely, on the basis of a good theoretical knowledge and rich practical experiences students can better reflect on human dignity and discuss it. Thereby, education for human dignity offers analyses and assessments of all aspects of human dignity and equips students with respect towards oneself and towards other people.
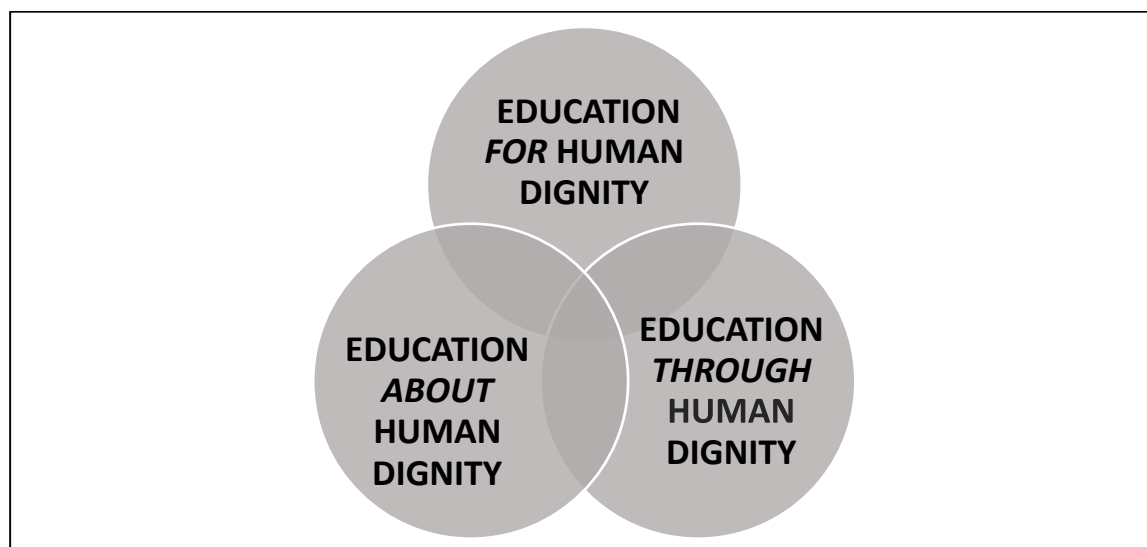

Diagram 1: Main components of the *»education on human dignity«*

All three described components mutually complement one another. Implementation of one of the components causes a more efficient implementation of the other two. They could also be present one without the other but in order to provide for a better effect of education on human dignity they should coexist.

5. CONCLUSION:

Curricula should not be based solely on the acquisition of knowledge but it is important to incorporate general human values in order to stimulate respect for human's personality regardless his/her position in the society, religious beliefs, personal characteristics, etc. The education on human dignity as an integral part of citizenship education could significantly contribute to this goal. The paper suggests that education on human dignity should consist of three components which should be considered in order to reach better implementation of the entire model. In this way, youth might start to believe in human principles that are taught in schools and behave in accordance with human dignity.

Education for citizenship encompasses the education about and through citizenship and involves equipping students with a set of tools (knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes, values and dispositions) (Kerr 1999).

Therefore, the quest for human dignity ought to be the main component of educational process within democratic system. Not money, not influence and not power – the human being should be the goal of democratic society. Above all, education should strive for the following principle: be human and fight for the humanity. And fostering the education on human dignity in schools is only one (but crucial!) step on the way to achieving this goal.

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