

Civic Education in Contemporary Russia

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Background

Schooling in Russia will impact 33.6 million young people, from preschoolers to Ph.D. candidates. It also affects some 54 million parents and 5.7 million teachers. Those 93.3 million citizens represent roughly 63 percent of the population in the Russian Federation . (1) Capital investments in education have been declining for two decades. Buildings have deteriorated, libraries are antiquated, and laboratory equipment is becoming unusable. Pay in Russia averaged 4,841 roubles in the first quarter of 2003 and 5,124 roubles in March. Real income of Russia's population grew 28.3% in December, 2003. With income per capita in Russia currently amounting to \$155 per month, the COMCON research agency suggested that \$155 be taken as the dividing line between lower class and lower-middle class. For comparison, the same figures for Spain and Poland currently stand at \$940 and \$236 respectively.

Davydova reported the average income per month in 1992 was \$5 to \$6, while in 1997 it was \$100. "Now we have \$160 to \$180 as the average income of a Russian, with the figures in Moscow, Salekhard or Tyumen reaching \$500 to \$600." (2)

1 Source: **Interfax, Moscow** http://www.marxist.com/Russia/rich_and_poor.html

2 Angelina Davydova, "Experts Gather in Search Of Elusive Middle Class", St. Petersburg Times December 10, 2002

Russia is making a historic transition from one political system to another, the average citizen still has a low understanding of how a participatory democracy functions or his or her role in it. The Communist party was in power for seventy years. I was fortunate to have visited the Young Pioneer Camps in Russia in 1987. These Pioneers were training to be the model the Soviet citizen. Marxist/Leninist Ideologs controled ideology-based apparatus that relied on propaganda in order to safeguard mass support for the political line of the party. I visited Russian schools this year and found Russia's democratic transition has taken place in a relatively few number of years. Many of the students never experienced the Soviet system. Many of the imposing goals of the early 1990s, such as the development of a free market economy, are becoming part of today's reality.

This paper will describe the current efforts by Russian Educators to provide civic education to their students.



Krasnoyarsk pictured above is the center for Civic education.

In the last ten years, Universe School 101, Krasnoyark, Siberia under the leadership of Dr. Isak Froumin has made many efforts to introduce and develop civic education programs. Isak Froumin, the founder of modern Civic Education in Krasnoyark, states “ It is a complex system of various types of instructional activites that focus on legal, political and ethical education. The goal of citizenship education in my opinion is: to stimulate the active participation of citizens in the civil society and in political decision-making within a constitutional democracy.” (3)

Isak Froumin was for many years a professor at Krasnoyarsk State University and Director of the Universe School 106 in Krasnoyarsk. He currently works for the World Bank in Moscow and is the author of *Vvedenie v teoriu i praktiku demokraticeskogo obrazovaniia* [Democratic Education in Theory and Practice] (Krasnoyarsk 1997). New approaches to the teaching of civics were developed in Krasnoyarsk schools. The Siberian success is the project is linking civic education and community service.

3 Isak D. Froumin, Inter-regional Conference “Civic Education in Russia on the threshold of the New Millenium” Moscow, Russia May 17-19, 1999

Julia Rozanova reported the results of the Russian-Canadian applied research project 1999-2000. She states “ that a direct transfer of the best Western know-how, philosophy and methodological practices of civic and political education into Russia is **both impossible and inefficient.** “ (4) A team of Russian high school teachers went for an internship to Canada, where they met their Canadian counterparts, participated in the Russian-Canadian Teachers Forum, and met several professionals, members of parliament and representatives of Canadian government. Special training sessions that focused on both content and methodology of civic education were held.

The Democracy Education Exchange Project (DEEP) Russian Initiative directed by Howard Mehlinger, Indiana University, and Janet Vaillant, Davis Center, Harvard University identified the leaders of civic education in Russia at the Bekasovo conference December 10-12, 2001. The conference members recommended the following:

Develop common terminology, find conceptual clarity in order To determine the boundaries of civic education Develop strategic planning committees, coordinate work

Develop aspects of civic education within the traditional disciplines and establish public education campaign to boost support for civic education

Work on new standards Research demand for civic education and develop a data base for civic education and seek consensus on minimal standards for civic education

Develop comprehensive program for education reform with civic Education one of its components

Develop database of experts on civic education (Russian and international) (6)

The DEEP project promoted the understanding of democratic ideals among Russia’s youth. It helped Russian teachers to design and teach civic education courses. The most important finding to emerge from the study is that **course design and quality of instruction** are critical to the success of civic education programs.

The study found that civic education programs are most effective when sessions are frequent. There appears to be a “threshold effect” in terms of number of courses, where one or two sessions have little to no impact, but, when the number increases to three or more, significant change occurs. Methods are participatory. Breakout groups, dramatizations, role-plays, problem solving activities, simulations, and mock political or judicial activities led to far greater levels of positive change than did more passive teaching methods such as lectures or the distribution of materials. Teachers are knowledgeable and inspiring. Not surprisingly, teachers who fail to engage their students have little success in transmitting information about democratic knowledge, values, or ways to participate effectively in the democratic political process. (5)

4 Julia Rozanova. “Civic and Political Education in Contemporary Russia: Challenges to Learning Democracy and Good Governance. Can International Academic Cooperation Make a Difference”<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/webcountry.nsf/vLUDocEn/E8C815571DBD8AA185256BCE0045C8D3#1>

5 Report on the Bekasovo Planning Conference on Civic Education in Russia December 10-12, 2001

6 Ibid., page2

One of the most innovative projects is aimed at civics teachers from middle schools in Samara. The Samara region is situated in the centre of the European part of Russia.

The targeted number of Samara teachers were 96. They created a thematic web page housed on the Center for Education Development's web site. Students have active school-based service learning program. and they apply what is learned in the classroom to a community experience. This seminar series, which focuses on preparing civics teachers from middle schools throughout Samara.



Civitas-Russia was established in 1995 as a U.S.-Russian partnership in civic education. Today, it is one of the largest coalitions of civic education programs and organizations in Russia. Its components in Russia include: a professional association of 10,000 members with a weekly newspaper supplement; good working relations with federal and regional ministries; an extensive in-service teacher education program with a teacher's guide and mobile seminars; a model pre-service teacher education program with a sequence of courses and accompanying textbooks; a national co-curricular program adopted by the Federal Ministry of Education; a variety of publications for classroom use; and national dissemination through the Teacher's Newspaper of Russia ***Uchitelskaya Gazeta*** with a circulation of 100,000 . The Russia partnership is funded partly through a 4.7 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education administered by the Center for Civic Education of Calabasas, CA. (7)

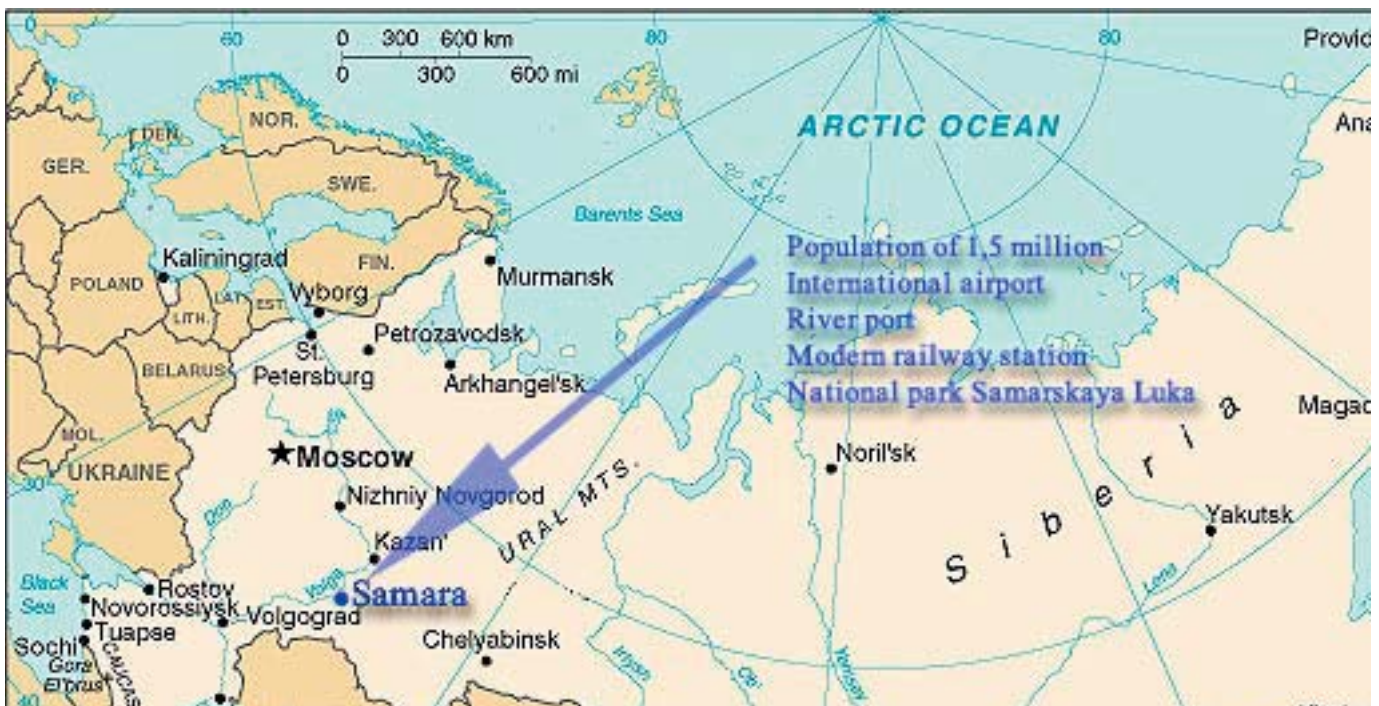
The Gazeta has published 10,000 copies of the Center's National Standards for Civics and Government and the International Framework for Education in Democracy. (8)

7 Stephen L. Schechter, Civitas@Russia, , Council for Citizenship Education, Russell Sage College, 45 Ferry Street, Troy, NY 12180, http://www.osdfsnationalconference.org/presentations/Workshop_Helping%20to%20Build%20a%20Democratic%20Society.pdf

8. *ibid.*, page 3

Project Harmony awarded mini-grants to thirteen Internet development projects in Togliatti and Samara. These projects range from training seminars for civics teachers to seminars for businesswomen. All thirteen projects were implemented by June 2000.

The Samara Region is located on a wide bend in the Volga River, the “Mother of Russia”. From its headwaters near Moscow to the Caspian Sea, it meanders an incredible 3,690 km (2,290 mi), making it Europe’s longest river. The city of Togliatti is a major center of Russia’s automotive industry and the second largest city in the Samara oblast—one of three key regions designated by the U.S. and Russian governments for their joint “Regional Investment Initiative.” Togliatti was never closed to foreigners during the Soviet era and today the municipal administration welcomes foreign firms to help diversify the city’s economy. Situated 1,000 kilometers southeast of Moscow on the Volga River, Togliatti has one of Russia’s highest standards of living. (9)



Project Harmony Program won the competition in 2003 and was invited with pupils to participate in Internet-based Project-The Global Democracy Dialogues-in the fall of 2003. This Internet-based Project was developed in conjunction with the Democracy Education Exchange Project, funded by a grant from the United States Department of Education’s Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (10)

9)Laurel Henderson, **REGIONAL CORNER: TOGLIATTI, RUSSIA**, January 1998, <http://www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/bulletin/9801reg.htm>

10 Internet Access and Training Program, Project Harmony Inc, <http://artinfo.ru/eva/EVA2000M/2000/eng/Harmony/product1.htm> Mini-Grant Recipients <http://www.projectharmony.org/programs/internet/past/sriip/grants.html>

Over the past decade, civic education has become a major component of USAID democracy programming. The program is authorized in accordance with the Freedom Support Act, as amended. By the end of the 1990s, USAID spending on civic education had reached roughly \$30 million a year, with the total for the decade approaching \$232 million. In spite of heavy investment by USAID and other international donors, relatively little is known about the impact of civic education programs on democratic behaviors and attitudes, particularly in developing countries. (11)

What Can American Educators learn from the Russians? We must put Civic Education on the front burner and give students an appreciation of the fundamental values and principals essential to the preservation of democracy.

Effective approaches to civic education are diverse, but all have the following characteristics:

- . ■ A deliberate, intentional focus on civic outcomes such as students’ propensity to vote, to work on local problems, to join voluntary associations, and to follow the news.
- . ■ Explicit advocacy of civic and political engagement. In the process of teaching civic education, educators should encourage their students to participate personally in politics and civil society, including at the local level, although without advocating a particular position or party.
- . ■ Active learning opportunities that offer students the chance to engage in discussions of issues and take part in activities that can help put a “real life” perspective on what is learned in class. These activities can range from collaborative or independent research projects and presentations to simulations, mock trials and elections, service-learning projects, and participation in the student government.
- . ■ An emphasis on the ideas and principles that are essential to constitutional democracy, such as those found in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, and how they influence our schools, religious congregations, the workplace, and local, state, and national governments. Students should grasp the relationship between these documents and the problems, opportunities, controversies, rights, and responsibilities that matter to them in the present.

11 **Approaches to Civic Education:** Lessons Learned, document identification number (PN-ACP-331) Office of Democracy and Governance Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance U.S. Agency for International Development Washington, DC 20523-3100