

Annex 1. Pact USAID/ENGAGE: Civic Education Sectoral Analysis



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MEMORANDUM

Re: Civic Education: Sectoral Analysis

From: USAID/ENGAGE

Date: September 20, 2020

Executive Summary

This memo is a summary and reflection of interviews and a group discussion conducted with donor representatives, national associations of teachers, and representatives of relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Education and Science (further MOES) and Ministry of Youth and Sport (further MOYS), working towards civic education enhancement in Ukraine. Civic education is a broad concept and encompasses all types of learning both in the system of formal education and extra-curricular educational activities. This analysis concentrates on teaching civic education to youth primarily in schools, and also through after school activities.

This paper aims to analyze whether civic education introduced in schools is effective and reaches its goal of developing teenagers' practical skills and building the civic competences necessary to become active citizens. It also reflects on the current state-of-affairs and investigates further needs for support to civic education by the international donor community and relevant government authorities.

Consultations were conducted with experts from International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions (SACCI) Program in Ukraine, the International Renaissance Foundation, International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Internews, the United Nations Development Program in Ukraine (UNDP), the European Wergeland Center, the Academy of Ukrainian Press, All-Ukrainian Association of Teachers of History and Social Sciences "Nova Doba" (further "Nova Doba"), the National Association of Teachers of Civic Education and Social Sciences, MOES, and MOYS. All the meetings referenced in this analysis were conducted in February 2020. In June 2020, findings and recommendation of the study were presented to the donor community working in the sphere of civic education in Ukraine and their feedback was integrated in this analysis, as well as the new section on adjustments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

Civic education is not a new concept for Ukraine, but over time it was primarily provided by CSOs in the form of extra-curricular civil society activities. In the early 2000s, several optional courses were designed for school children and taught in some schools, but only the New Ukrainian School concept introduced in schools in 2017 defined civic competences as mandatory learning outcomes. The concept envisages the creation and implementation of new competency-based educational standards. Key competences, in turn, include the formation of social and civic competences, which are integrated in all school subjects. Integration of civic education—including education on democracy and human rights—in the curriculum is an important change in today's

school. School educational standards define social and civic competencies as all forms of behavior that are necessary for effective and constructive participation in public life, at work, and in the family; along with cooperation with others and being results-oriented, prevention and resolution of conflicts, and reaching compromises.

The new Law “On Education,” adopted in September 2017, envisages the new educational system of Ukraine and provides a legal framework for implementation of the new education reform. In particular, the Law defines state policy in the field of civic education: *“The state creates conditions for obtaining civic education aimed at forming competencies related to the realization of the person's rights and duties as a member of a society, awareness of values of civil (a free and democratic) society, the rule of law, rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen.”*

For the first time in the history of independent Ukraine, primary and secondary schools have become a key provider of civic education.

Since the beginning of education reform, the MOES has been open to international experiences and ready to adopt best practices. Several experts emphasized remarkable openness and readiness of the MOES to carry out reforms and utilize expertise of international technical assistance programs. International experience and support were much welcomed and appreciated by Ukrainian educators. Many international donors including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union, and bilateral governments used this window of opportunity and supported the education reform.

Civic education materials have been designed for a mandatory 10th grade civic education course, as well as integrated modules for other age groups in existing curricular subjects in primary and high schools. Simultaneously, teachers have been offered trainings on civic education and new interactive methods of teaching both directly and through oblast-level, in-service teaching training centers. Understanding the need for practical application of knowledge received by children in classes, many international donors and Ukrainian CSOs have paid special attention to the creation of a democratic environment in schools, student self-governance, and implementation of community projects.

Civic Education in Schools: The First Step and Long Way Ahead

The New Ukrainian School concept envisages a shift towards a greater number of integrated courses including science, social studies, and native language. Currently, civic education is one of few integrated subjects in the school curriculum covering different topics of social studies, such as basic legal knowledge of how the state functions, economics, democracy and human rights, media literacy, tolerance and diversity, international relations, and Ukraine’s cooperation with international organizations. Discussions on how to further enhance civic education in schools continue. One approach involves introducing more mandatory courses on topics that are currently part of civic education in schools, such as media literacy in the era of disinformation and fake news, or financial literacy in today’s climate of entrepreneurship and a rapidly developing financial and banking sector. Proponents of this approach emphasize the importance of a good knowledge of these topics so that children can better respond to modern challenges. Another approach seems to have more supporters and underlines the current flexibility of teachers to pay more attention to those topics within the civic education course. Also, some of those topics—such as legal aspects of state functioning, financial literacy, and media literacy—are additionally offered to children as optional courses.

All interviewees support the second approach, including those working exclusively on content of separate topics, such as media literacy. They all agree that an integrated approach to civic education complemented by special optional courses is the best strategy. Over time, teachers will learn and practice deeper integration of civic education in other subjects, ensuring that future emerging needs will be well addressed within the course of various subjects. Courses in economy or legal science may be offered to children as part of specialized high school classes as well. Notably, a quickly-changing social and legal environment requires regular revision of the content of that civic education course to ensure that it stays up to date.

At the same time several experts indicate that more attention to civic education shall be provided at the middle school level when schoolchildren have less workload and are not so busy

preparing for graduation exams and entrance to universities. This may be addressed through an additional 8th grade course or via after school activities. At that stage, children demonstrate great interest in teamwork, exploration, and deeper interactions with the world around them through various extra-curricular activities and community projects.

Feedback from schoolteachers indicates that Ukrainians have rather poor understanding of what civic education is and why it is important. School administrators, teachers, parents and school children are not prepared to treat civic education in schools seriously and often confuse it with patriotic education. Experts agree that strategic communication targeting parents and educators could increase better understanding of civic education and why it is important for a child's success and the future of the entire country.

Recommendations for the donor community on possible future interventions include:

- Keep an integrated approach to civic education with a 10th grade mandatory course complimented by optional or specialized courses in grades 10-11.
- Conduct a continuous assessment, evaluation, and a revision mechanism to ensure frequent improvement of the civic education curriculum. Even a comprehensive approach to curriculum planning, the design of educational materials, piloting and its introduction does not end with a one-time intervention.
- Ensure that all young people aged 15-16 years old receive civic education independently of their educational trajectory. Civic education is not clearly mandated in colleges; colleges have it at their discretion as to whether to include civic education in their curriculum;
- Pay more attention towards the promotion of civic education in middle school (grades 5-9) and support to teachers' development of civic competences via their subjects and after school activities.
- Increase better understanding of civic education and its importance, design and implement strategic communication targeted at Ukrainian educators and parents.

Extra-Curricular Activities - The Thread Binding The Student And Community

Civic education is designed to provide practical skills to children and youth. All experts indicated the importance of extra-curricular activities for successful civic education. Extra-curricular civic education helps youth practice skills and gain their first experiences in civic activism.

Extra-curricular civic education for youth conducted by schools, CSOs and youth workers supported by the MOYS is more appreciated in small towns. Communities are more formed in small cities and youth have more options to communicate with the local government, influence its decisions, and address local needs. Results of that "out-of-school activism" are practical, immediate, and thus more engaging and empowering. Amalgamated communities are usually more active and report on many civic education success stories, which may be a result of increased civic activism and empowerment of people after decentralization and targeted support from international donors (e.g. the DOBRE program). The most popular topics for community projects conducted by youth relate to ecological issues (e.g. garbage sorting, cleaning up of territories), improvement of public spaces, and peer-to-peer trainings.

Unfortunately, according to feedback from teachers of civics, there is often a disconnect between schools and CSOs working in a community. In particular, schools are interested in and are looking for such partnerships in small cities but few CSOs operate at the very local level. There are plenty of CSOs in big cities, but schools are more reserved and less interested in cooperation and civic education, generally speaking. They are also less supportive of civic education as a separate subject, believing that it is simple, and children will easily get it on their own. Larger cities have a larger information field but lower engagement levels. So, separate programs targeting larger cities and small towns are needed, as a single approach to schools does not address specific challenges faced there. These observations demonstrate that partnership between schools and CSOs are underestimated and underutilized. A closer collaboration would be beneficial for both sides as it could

lead to better civic education learning outcomes for children and consequently increase civic engagement and awareness, resulting in new activists and volunteers for civic initiatives.

When organizing extra-curricular activities Ukrainian teachers face additional challenges. They are traditionally trained to provide children with knowledge, and they experience difficulties in conveying practical competences such as leadership development, team building, and project management. These topics are very common for CSOs but are not widely available for teachers. CSOs may lead this process, share their knowledge, and offer teachers ideas for extra-curricular projects.

It is also very important to support youth councils and youth advisory boards in communities and student self-governance in schools that allow youth to not only practice their advocacy skills but establish an environment in which each voice is heard. This is an important component of democracy for youth to experience and start practicing.

Recommendations for the donor community on possible future interventions include:

- Support the design of ongoing civic education training programs tailored for different groups.
- Encourage schools and CSOs to establish partnerships. CSOs need to be more proactive in reaching out and working with school children.
- Encourage local government to be more open to cooperation with schools. It is important for school children to visit community sessions, meet with local officials and deputies, and gain their support during the implementation of community projects.
- Offer specially tailored programs to larger cities and rural areas to address their specific challenges.
- Support youth councils and youth advisory boards in communities and student self-governance in schools for children to practice democracy.
- Share ideas for best community projects among teachers.

Improving The Teaching Practices

Civic education is a difficult concept that is not easily understood and requires much research and consideration, especially with respect to teachers. All civic education experts agree that a knowledgeable and experienced teacher is a key element of successful civic education. The first years of mandatory civic education courses in schools have indicated that teachers need constant support in their work. In fact, the re-training of teachers constitutes the biggest challenge to an effective introduction of civic education curriculum in schools.

Over the past several years, international donors were able to reach thousands of teachers around the country with trainings and instructions, but many more teachers need support. And it is not only civic education teachers that require additional training on how to develop civic competences, but teachers of all subjects including those in primary schools that will integrate civic education in their subjects and build civic competences in their children. There is an urgent need to continue supporting teacher training in order to reach all 400,000 teachers in Ukraine and provide them with critical knowledge of how to teach civic education through their subjects, as well as new interactive and innovative teaching methods.

Teachers require constant methodological assistance to improve their teaching practices. They value online trainings and webinars but are more interested in attending offline learning events if they are practical, targeted, and offer tangible results such as new knowledge, skills and innovative tools. They also view such events as important network opportunities for sharing knowledge and regaining commitment and inspiration for improvements. Trainings do not necessarily lead to immediate change in teaching practices, therefore, mentoring and on-going consultations for teachers as well as mechanism for sharing experiences like a community of practice or networking should become part of teacher training programs.

The Ukrainian pedagogical education system has still not adjusted well to equipping teachers with skills to teach integrated subjects. The Ukrainian teacher training system prepares narrow specialists, and as a result, there are difficulties with teaching integrated subjects in schools. This is especially the case in teaching the subjects of science, arts, and civic education. For example, schools

have very good science teachers (e.g. physics, chemistry, and biology) but they are hardly able to integrate and teach all three subjects together. The same is true with civic education. Usually, teachers of history or law teach civic education but often they are the ones lacking knowledge of, for example, financial literacy. More trainings are also needed in media literacy, human rights, and principles of non-discrimination.

Universities have started changing their teacher training curricula and updating them to new school needs. Civic education and methods of its teaching has become part of curricula in nine pedagogical universities, but more work needs to be done to provide all future teachers with necessary knowledge, skills, and practical tools to teach civic education in schools. The new law on education allows universities to train in-service teachers, thus increasing the role of universities in ensuring a consistent quality of civic education instruction. Last year, the MOES initiated higher education reform in Ukraine but it remains to be seen how the Ukrainian high education system will look like in the future. International donors could be supportive and bring the best international practices to Ukrainian universities.

The new law on school education that came in force on March 13, 2020 allows people with higher education to teach in schools even if they have not been educated as teachers. This will give new and fresh blood to schools but there is a need to immediately provide new teachers with trainings to empower them with teaching methods. New civics teachers will need short-term trainings to ensure their work is high quality and provides good educational outcomes. As an alternative, international donors together with MOES may support the development of an online course on how to teach civic education in schools to serve this purpose.

Recommendations for the donor community on possible future interventions include:

- Provide civics teachers with support in forming of their professional community to share experiences and best practices;
- Support specialized conferences and other scientific events on civics to establish a communication, information and learning platform for civics teachers, also facilitating networking. It is important to include the exchange of experience in teaching civic education through various integrational seminars connecting teachers from various oblasts, thus exposing them to new practices and broaden horizons.
- Equip teachers with tools, knowledge and skills to teach integrated subjects. Additional trainings on the economic block of the civic education course, media literacy, human rights, non-discrimination approaches shall be available to teachers. Mentoring and on-going consultations, community of practice and networking for teachers should become part of any teacher training program.
- Provide support to teachers of other subjects on how to build civic competences in children via their subjects.
- Design complex online courses on civic education, its teaching methods and approaches and make them available to teachers. This will offer immediate assistance on teaching methods to new civics teachers with no teaching background.
- Ensure an understandable system of certified in-service teacher training including on civic education.

Impact Of COVID-19 Pandemic On Civic Education

The COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantine introduced in Ukraine in early March 2020 in response to the increased spread of the disease resulted in closure of all schools and universities in Ukraine like in many other countries. The situation with COVID-19 posed many problems for Ukrainian educators and MOES that have been hidden, especially the situation regarding distance learning. The Ukrainian educational system was not prepared to switch to distance education. Teachers were not ready to teach in a remote mode and were under big stress trying to adapt and organize a proper educational process with their children. Many donor representatives indicated that they observed how difficult it was for teachers to adapt to the new reality and that the pandemic had

negative impact on them and on their ability to teach and learn. So, donor community shall be supportive and help teachers to overcome new challenges and adapt to new reality.

To address the COVID-related challenges posted to curricular and extra-curricular civic education many donors turned to online activities, including trainings, consultation, online courses specifically tailored to their target audience, and even summer camps. For example, the European Wergeland center is working on the new online course for teachers on developing civic competencies, which is almost ready for launching on Prometheus, a free learning online platform. This course will help teachers and school administration to develop extracurricular activities, create a democratic environment in schools and learn about existing and new teaching tools to develop civic competences in school children. The UNDP, together with MOYS plans to launch a short online civic education course for youth workers and IREX online courses for 10th grades in the history of Ukraine and world history. IFES decided to add a component on digital literacy to its course for students “Democracy: From Theory to Practice” and partially make the course online, which also helps to reach more universities. British Council, together with EdEra, has already created an online educational learning platform and online course titled “Key Skills” for teachers.

Online courses are very important in ensuring high quality curricular and extra-curricular education during pandemic, especially when it remains unclear when schools will be able to return to their normal offline functioning. However, it shall be noted that often when creating online courses, authors forget about the huge workload and emotional load that arises in teachers, so it is important to take this into account and plan accordingly.

The situation with COVID-19 revealed that the donor community and educators have to appreciate and continue, when allowed, with all those offline activities as they cannot be replaced. The real-life communication cannot be substituted by anything as it increases creativity and interest. That is why when planning future activities, offline activities shall be included when possible.

Recommendations for the donor community on possible future interventions include:

- Increase the number of online courses, which will help teachers, children and their parents but be mindful of the workload caused by those courses.
- Design online courses on school subjects that are mandatory or optional. Online school initiated by MOES in spring 2020 and broadcasted by various TV channels was fragmented and covered only subjects with graduation exams but in the long run all school subjects shall have appropriate online courses.
- Assist schools and teachers in adapting to the new reality.
- Engage with schools via online activities on different issues regarding COVID-19 within curricular and extra-curricular work.

Measuring Learning Outcomes

Monitoring, evaluation and learning are a general practice for all international donors and technical assistance programs. In particular, efforts in civic education are assessed through pre- and post-tests, focus group discussions, teachers’ observations, and social surveys. Results of individual program assessments are very positive but there is a need for a complex assessment of civic education impact on youth values, dispositions, and behavior in the near future. Donors that have been working on extra-curricular civic education for some time indicate that the first changes in youth may be seen no earlier than 3–4 years, while some indicate that positive changes at the level of a school and its practices may be observable after 1.5 years of targeted work with that school. In the next several years, experts anticipate seeing youth with more democratic values.

At the same time, the assessment of teachers’ work is a very important element in measuring learning outcomes. Currently, Ukrainian educators are working on academic standards for middle schools (grades 5–9). New educational standards will serve as benchmarks to assess children’s learning achievements but also guide teachers in planning lessons and keeping them on track. Civic competence is part of standards and civic education learning outcomes spelled out for grades 5–6 and 7–9; thus, teachers of various subjects will be better prepared to integrate civic education in their lessons. In the 2020-2021 school year, standards for grades 10–11 will be designed. They will provide

us with a clearer understanding of what schools aim to achieve with teaching civic education to children. Several years after educational standards are approved and all educators have a clear goal for civic education in schools, it will be an opportune moment to conduct a complex assessment on how schools succeed in reaching civic education goals.

Recommendations for the donor community on possible future interventions include:

- Conduct pre- and post- testing for schoolchildren exposed to the mandatory civic education course.
- Conduct an assessment of civic education achievements vs school standards for 11-graders in 2023.
- Conduct qualitative research on the youth behavior change;
- Conduct feedback surveys on teaching practices of civic education teachers.

Conclusions

During consultations, all experts agreed that it is too early to assess whether the school successfully fulfills its task of educating responsible citizens. More time is needed to see the results of this work. Mandatory civic education in the 10th grade started during the 2018-2019 school year and students that took that course graduate in 2020. Several more years are needed for these children to start their independent life, so we may track changes in their values, dispositions, and practical skills, if any.

The mandatory civic education curricula is a promising institutionalized and potentially sustainable way to teach democracy and thus shape Ukrainian youth. Over the years, national polls show that Ukrainian youth is not so different from older citizens in such important democratic values as tolerance, inclusion, solidarity and corruption perceptions despite being targeted by many international development organizations and donors. Civic education responds to this challenge, enabling the formation of democratic values in children who will grow and become young democratic leaders and responsible citizens. Civic education also enables teens to explore their identities through belonging to a local community, country, and to find their own path in life.

International donors and development organizations are well positioned to provide support to MOES and MOYS in creating all the necessary conditions for the best learning outcomes in civic education—both in classes and through extra-curricular activities—in order to grow active and responsible citizens for the future. This is a great opportunity for Ukrainian civil society and the international community to ensure Ukraine's further democratic development.