

Project-based learning as a pedagogical condition of stimulating the development of students' civic competence

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Annotation. The article studies the project-based learning as an effective pedagogical condition for stimulating the development of students' civic competence and outlines its potential within the contemporary educational environment of a higher education institution. The stated purpose is achieved through a comprehensive theoretical analysis of scientific sources and the generalization of pedagogical experience.

The study clarifies the essence of the students' civic competence as an integral socio-psychological, pedagogical and personal quality. It specifies its structure composed of four interrelated components: cognitive, value-based, personal, and activity-related. Each of these components performs an independent function while ensuring the integrity of the process of developing students' civic position. The role of pedagogical conditions as a determining factor in the effectiveness of this process within the educational environment of a higher education institution is theoretically substantiated.

It is proven that project-based learning possesses significant didactic, educational, and social potential and can be regarded as an effective pedagogical condition for stimulating the development of students' civic competence. Participation in social, volunteer, and educational-research projects supports the development of civic values, social responsibility, critical thinking, initiative, communication skills, teamwork abilities, and an active civic stance among students. Project activity ensures the organic integration of theoretical knowledge with practical socially significant experience and promotes students' personal involvement in solving real community problems.

The study results confirm that the purposeful implementation of project-based learning in the educational process of a higher education institution ensures a real transition from a declarative approach to a practice-oriented development of students' civic competence, thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of civic education of student youth.

Keywords: civic competence, student youth, project-based learning, pedagogical conditions, higher education institution.

Проектна діяльність як педагогічна умова стимулювання формування громадянської компетентності студентів

Анотація. У статті теоретично обґрунтовано використання проектної діяльності як педагогічної умови стимулювання формування громадянської компетентності

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студентів в освітньому середовищі закладу вищої освіти. Проаналізовано сучасні наукові підходи до трактування сутності громадянської компетентності студентів та уточнено її структурну композицію, яка охоплює когнітивний, ціннісний, особистісний і діяльнісний компоненти. Розкрито зміст поняття «педагогічні умови формування громадянської компетентності студентів в освітньому середовищі закладу вищої освіти». З'ясовано, що проектна діяльність має високий дидактичний і виховний потенціал завдяки поєднанню теорії з практикою та орієнтації на вирішення суспільно значущих проблем. Доведено, що участь студентів в соціальних, волонтерських і навчально-дослідницьких проектах сприяє формуванню активної громадянської позиції, відповідальності та критичного мислення студентської молоді.

Ключові слова: громадянська компетентність, студентська молодь, проектна діяльність, педагогічні умови, заклад вищої освіти.

Introduction

The openness and sustainability of any democratic society directly depend on the level of civic competence of its members. Under the conditions of globalization, rapid socio-political change, and the growing role of civic engagement, an individual's ability to participate consciously in public life, think critically, make responsible decisions, and adhere to legal and moral norms becomes particularly significant. Today, Ukraine is defending its statehood, democratic values, and European vector of development under the conditions of full-scale armed aggression by the Russian Federation. And the development of the youth's civic competence acquires not only educational but also strategic state-building importance. It is active, conscious, and responsible youth that is regarded as the driving force behind social transformation, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and the country's post-war reconstruction.

Students constitute a significant proportion of the Ukrainian youth, which places the higher education system under special responsibility for developing the civic competence of future specialists. State standards of higher education usually define general competencies that include the ability to exercise one's rights and duties as a member of society, understand the values of a democratic society, the principles of the rule of law, respect for human rights and freedoms, and assume responsibility for the sustainable development of the state. However, in practice, the process of developing civic competence in the educational environment of higher education institutions is often fragmented, situational, and declarative, and largely depends on the initiative of individual teachers, the availability of appropriate methodological support, and the pedagogical conditions for its implementation.

In scientific and pedagogical discourse, a considerable number of studies have been devoted to the investigation of pedagogical conditions aimed at developing civic competence, particularly among pupils [1; 2; 3], university students [4], and future teachers [5]. At the same time, an analysis of scientific sources reveals that employing project-based learning as an integral pedagogical condition for stimulating the development of students' civic competence has been studied fragmentarily and requires further theoretical substantiation and practical elaboration. The mechanisms for integrating project technologies into the system of professional training, as well as their potential for developing the cognitive, value-based, personal, and activity-related components of students' civic competence, remain insufficiently explored.

The article aims to exploit the potential of project-based learning as a pedagogical condition for stimulating the development of students' civic competence and to outline its possibilities within the modern educational environment of higher education institutions.

In accordance with the stated aim, the following objectives are defined:

1. to analyze scientific approaches to interpreting the essence of civic competence and the peculiarities of its development among students;

2. to clarify the content and structure of civic competence as an integral quality of a future specialist;
3. to characterize the project-based learning as a pedagogical technology and determine its potential in stimulating the development of students' civic competence;
4. to outline the main directions for implementing project-based learning in the educational process of higher education institutions for the purpose of developing students' civic competence.

Results

The concept of *civic competence* is the subject of scholarly inquiry across various fields of knowledge. In educational and pedagogical discourse, civic competence, on the one hand, is viewed as the outcome of civic education acquired within formal, non-formal, and informal learning environments, and it is manifested in an individual's behavior and civic engagement. On the other hand, civic competence is regarded as one of the key competences that determines an individual's ability to apply the knowledge gained and the skills, abilities, value orientations, and attitudes formed during the learning process to actively, responsibly, and consciously participate in the life of civil society.

The analysis of contemporary scholarly sources devoted to studying the essence and structure of civic competence shows that there is still no unified approach to defining this concept and identifying its structural components [6; 7; 8]. Thus, the theoretical analysis reveals three leading methodological approaches to understanding the essence and structure of civic competence: the competence-based, socio-activity, and psychological and pedagogical approaches.

The *competence-based approach* regards civic competence as a vital integrative competence that is primarily developed within the educational environment and is the result of the teaching and educational process. According to this approach, civic competence is revealed through a set of civic knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Thus, the development of civic competence is understood as preparing an individual for conscious, active, and constructive participation in the life of civil society [9; 10].

The *socio-activity approach* emphasizes that the key features of civic competence are an individual's readiness and ability to participate in socio-political processes, such as elections, public discussions, protest movements, and volunteer activities. In this context, civic competence acquires a socially determined character and is shaped under the influence of state ideology, the system of civic education, culture, political institutions, and socially significant events. Its essence is associated with political awareness, understanding of legislation, a critical attitude toward government activities, and commitment to democratic principles [11; 12].

According to the *psychological and pedagogical approach*, civic competence is a complex of a person's psychological characteristics, including awareness of their role as a citizen capable of empathy, reflection, moral choice, and responsible interaction with others. Within this approach, the development of civic competence is aimed at the harmonious development of a person as an active and morally responsible member of civil society. Such a person embodies qualities of honesty, responsibility, initiative, respect, self-respect, and empathy, which determine intrinsic motivation for civic participation [6; 13].

The synthesis of the approaches makes it possible to interpret students' civic competence as a complex scientific and pedagogical phenomenon, the description of which requires a comprehensive approach. On this basis, civic competence is an integral, qualitatively distinct, psychologically conditioned characteristic of the individual. It is manifested in their conscious need, readiness, and ability to act effectively in civil society, being guided by universal and democratic values, legal awareness, social responsibility, and tolerance. Accordingly, in the structure of students' civic competence, we propose to distinguish four key components: cognitive, value-based, personal, and activity-related (see Fig. 1).

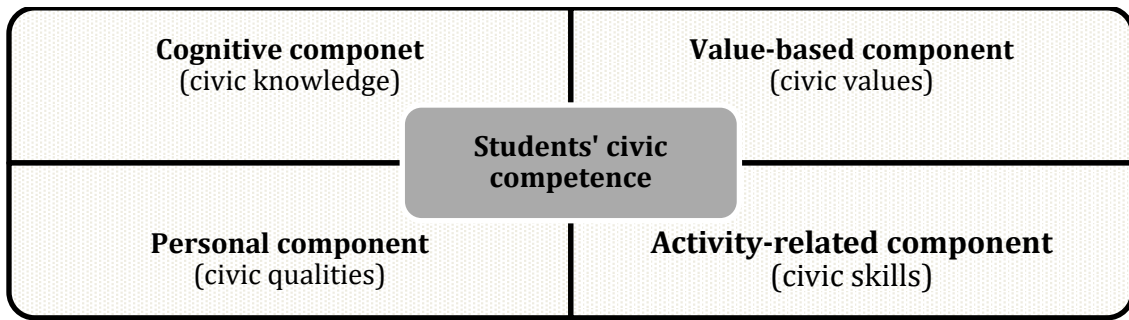


Fig. 1. Structure of the students' civic competence

The *cognitive component* forms the foundation of students' civic competence and encompasses a system of civic knowledge necessary for an individual to be a member of a democratic society. This includes philosophical and cultural knowledge (ideas about morality, values, the purpose of human life, world and national cultural heritage, etc.); political and legal knowledge (understanding the structure of authorities, legislation, citizens' rights and duties, and mechanisms for the protection of rights); economic knowledge (the basics of a market economy, financial literacy, and the economic law); and social knowledge (rules of effective communication and conflict resolution).

The *value-based component* reflects a system of beliefs and civic values that determine an individual's life orientations and motivate social activity. It encompasses universal, democratic, and national values such as dignity, freedom, justice, respect for the rule of law, patriotism, responsibility, tolerance, and intercultural understanding.

The *personal component* is manifested through the psychological and personal qualities of the citizen, including responsibility, honesty, initiative, empathy, self-respect, patriotism, civic consciousness, discipline, and readiness to protect the rights and interests of the state and society.

The *activity-related component* encompasses civic skills and behavioral models necessary for a person's active interaction with society and state institutions. These include the ability to think critically, formulate one's own position, defend rights and freedoms, comply with the law, participate in public life, exert civic influence on public authorities, communicate effectively, and act in accordance with democratic and legal norms.

Thus, students' civic competence is an integral, psychologically conditioned quality of a person that is manifested in their readiness and ability to act responsibly, effectively, and proactively in a democratic society, guided by values, legal culture, social responsibility, and tolerance. Its development occurs under the influence of education, socialization, experience of interpersonal interaction, and self-development. Students' civic competence development implies the formation of cognitive, value-based, personal, and activity-related components that ensure the education of socially mature, responsible, and active citizens.

We believe that the accomplishment of this important task is possible through the well-designed creation and purposeful implementation of pedagogical conditions within the educational environment of a higher education institution. In particular, Koval notes that it is natural that the effectiveness of any system primarily depends on the conditions under which it functions. For a pedagogical system, an adequate selection of pedagogical conditions can ensure not only stable indicators of individual pedagogical outcomes but also a consistent improvement in the overall quality of education [14].

In scientific and pedagogical discourse, Vitvytska distinguishes two main approaches to the interpretation of pedagogical conditions as a scientific and pedagogical concept. The first approach considers pedagogical conditions as a set of educational influences and the possibilities of the material and spatial environments that encompass the content, context, methods, and forms of educational activities. The second approach interprets pedagogical

conditions as circumstances necessary for constructing an educational system consisting of external and internal elements. The external elements contribute to the procedural aspect of the functioning and development of the educational system, whereas the internal elements ensure the learners' development [15].

Thus, within the context of this pedagogical study, the concept of pedagogical conditions for the development of students' civic competence in the educational environment of a higher education institution is understood as a set of specially created circumstances within the educational environment of a higher education institution under which the development of students' civic competence takes place and upon which the effectiveness of enhancing the levels of development of its cognitive, value-based, activity-related, and personal components depends.

Undoubtedly, the selection, design, and implementation of pedagogical conditions for the development of students' civic competence in the educational environment of a higher education institution require a thorough analysis of the relevant scientific and pedagogical literature as well as the involvement of experts. Therefore, the collaboration with experts has ensured the identification of a number of pedagogical conditions for the development of students' civic competence in the educational environment of a higher education institution. Specifically, the experts emphasized the high didactic potential of project-based learning as a pedagogical condition for stimulating the development of students' civic competence.

In the pedagogical context, the concept of stimulation is understood as the purposeful influence of a teacher on the internal motivation of a student, aimed at activating their cognitive activities, enhancing interest in new knowledge, and increasing the overall effectiveness of the learning process. As a rule, these objectives are achieved by creating a set of conditions that encourage students to act through interest, emotions, positive reinforcement, rewards, and other factors. Thus, the essence of stimulation lies not in external coercion by the teacher but in the creation of such circumstances that shape the internal need of a student for activity and self-development.

To reveal the essence of stimulating the development of civic competence through project-based learning as a pedagogical condition, it is necessary to generalize knowledge about project-based learning itself as an innovative educational technology that is now widely used in the system of higher education in Ukraine. From a scientific perspective, project-based learning is regarded as a type of active human activity in which intellectual, organizational, and practical actions are organically integrated and aimed at creating a new product [16]. Accordingly, project-based activity is defined as a system of various practical actions of an individual (group, team) aimed at creating a certain product [17]. It is important to note that these actions are not sporadic in nature but constitute a structured, pre-planned, and personally managed process that includes the stages of initiation, planning, implementation, monitoring, and completion.

In the strictly pedagogical context, project-based learning is regarded as both a method and a form of organizing students' learning and cognitive activity, the essence of which lies in the organic integration of theoretical knowledge with practical activity while working on a project, i.e. a task that has practical or social significance and requires independent information search, analysis, problem-solving, and presentation of results. In particular, Volkova notes, "Project-based activity combines two aspects of the cognitive process: the teaching method as a didactic category (a set of techniques and actions for mastering a certain field of practical and theoretical knowledge; a tool of the cognitive process) and a means of practical application of acquired knowledge and skills for solving specific real-life problems in the course of joint activity" [18, p. 335]. As a result of project-based learning, students develop the ability to act actively and creatively and to apply knowledge in real or near-real situations, thus integrating interdisciplinary links.

In view of the above, it should be emphasized that in our study project-based learning is considered in a broad and narrow sense. In the broad sense, project-based learning is an intellectually productive activity of a student that combines cognitive activity, creativity, and independence and is aimed at creating a practical product – the so-called ‘project.’ In this regard, Mochan aptly notes, “Project-based activity represents a special type of activity aimed at the systematic integration of theory and practice in educational activity, the search for and practical exploration of specific tasks, and the development of skills for solving creative projects through the deepening and expansion of knowledge, abilities, and research skills” (19, p. 569). In the narrow sense, project-based learning is a didactic approach to the educational and upbringing processes in a higher education institution. In particular, Vasylichuk states that project-based learning is an educational technology aimed at enabling students to acquire knowledge in close connection with real life practice, and at developing specific skills and abilities through the systematic organization of problem-oriented learning inquiry. Besides, it is a means of development, learning, and upbringing that allows learners to acquire specific skills [20].

Thus, project-based learning is implemented through the application of the project method in the educational process of a higher education institution. In the scientific and pedagogical literature, the project method is defined in various ways: as a method of inquiry-based work and organization of the educational process through which students acquire new knowledge and develop skills while planning and performing practice-oriented tasks (projects) [18]; as a pedagogical technology that presupposes the practical application of acquired knowledge, mainly through independent educational activity [21]; and as a specially organized collaborative approach in which students acquire and practically apply knowledge and skills to identify and solve real problems through a long-term research process [22], etc.

A number of scientific and pedagogical studies indicate that the didactic potential of project-based learning and the project method is multifaceted [22; 23]. First of all, project-based learning enable learners to develop such specific skills as planning work while preliminarily calculating possible outcomes; using a wide range of information sources, selecting and mastering the necessary knowledge from the information field; independently collecting, systematizing, and accumulating material; comparing facts and substantiating one’s own opinion; establishing social contacts; creating a ‘final product’ as a material result of project activity; presenting the created product to an audience; and evaluating oneself and others. Moreover, the use of project-based learning and the project method makes it possible to take into account students’ abilities, interests, and individual needs. It fosters critical and creative thinking, teaches how to overcome conflict situations, develops the ability to make decisions and assume responsibility for them. Furthermore, project-based learning promotes tolerance toward alternative viewpoints and encourages self-education and self-development.

Thus, we believe that project-based learning is an effective tool for developing students’ civic competence in the educational environment of a higher education institution. Its essence lies in creating such organizational and pedagogical prerequisites in the educational environment of a higher education institution that encourage students’ active engagement in project-based learning aimed at solving socially significant problems and meeting community needs. This implies:

- the development of students’ intrinsic motivation to participate in projects with a social, civic, or legal focus;
- the integration of educational and upbringing objectives within project-based learning to ensure the synthesis of theoretical knowledge and practical skills;
- the creation of conditions for the development of values, attitudes, and behavioral models that reflect civic position, responsibility, tolerance, communicativeness, cooperation, and decision-making ability;

- the involvement of students in planning, implementing, and presenting projects, which promotes the development of critical thinking and the ability to argue and defend one's position;
- pedagogical support and mentoring that help students consciously choose civic themes and appropriate project-based technologies.

In implementing the above pedagogical condition for the development of students' civic competence in the educational environment of a higher education institution, the main emphasis is placed on increasing the level of development of a number of students' civic skills and abilities, in particular: information analysis and critical thinking, effective interaction with public authorities, exercising and protecting one's rights and freedoms, fulfilling civic duties to the community and the state, active, responsible, and effective participation in socio-political life, applying constructive communication strategies and resolving conflict situations, and making decisions based on the values and norms of civil society.

In turn, the implementation of the pedagogical condition of stimulating the development of students' civic competence through project-based learning involves the organization and conduct of various social, volunteer, and research projects, as well as the initiation of student project competitions on civic topics, etc. Thus, we believe that in the current context of constant social, economic, and political challenges faced by the Ukrainian society during wartime, motivating students to participate in social and volunteer projects is an important condition for the development of civic qualities in the younger generation.

As a rule, a social project is termed as a planned social innovation aimed at creating, renewing, or supporting material or spiritual values within a certain environment. A social project has clearly defined spatial, temporal, and resource boundaries and exerts a positive impact on people. Its development and implementation in socio-pedagogical activity require the performance of a complex set of tasks of informational, analytical, organizational, legal, financial, personnel-related, material and technical, expert, and forecasting nature. With regard to volunteer projects, we agree with the view of Horinov and Drapushko, according to which volunteering is not merely an altruistic gesture but an important resource of society and an element of national identity, civil society, and security. Although scholars do not provide a precise definition of a volunteer project, their works allow us to conclude that it is an organized, voluntary, non-profit, and socially oriented initiative within which volunteers perform a series of interconnected actions to provide assistance, supported by resources and framed by time limits, in order to achieve a positive effect for those in need of help [25].

Therefore, social and volunteer projects are initiatives aimed at finding ways to solve socially significant problems, developing communities, and supporting people. These projects address specific social issues (improving living conditions, education, healthcare, environmental protection, etc.) and may have an educational, formative, and socio-integrative effect on participants. These two types of projects intersect; however, they differ in that social projects are typically financed through grants, budgetary programs, or charitable donations. Accordingly, social projects may be implemented by state institutions, public organizations, businesses, or individual initiative groups, including student groups. In turn, volunteer projects are based on the voluntary and unpaid activities of their participants.

For example, within the framework of students' extracurricular activities in the educational environment of a higher education institution, students may be invited to organize and participate in a volunteer project entitled "*Students for Veterans.*" Its aim is to support veterans and their families, as well as to develop students' social and patriotic responsibility. In this regard, its objectives include organizing informational meetings with veterans, assisting in the implementation of rehabilitation activities, and conducting aid-collection campaigns. The expected outcomes include increasing students' awareness of veterans' issues, fostering an active civic stance, and developing students' communication and organizational skills.

The pedagogical condition of stimulating the development of students' civic competence through project-based learning can also be realized through students' completion of an educational and research project. This is a form of organizing a learning activity in which students, individually or in groups, investigate a particular problem using scientific methods of inquiry in order to obtain new knowledge and to present a practical or theoretical result. For instance, the educational and research project entitled *"The Culture of Memory: History, People, and Symbols of the Native Land"* contributes to the development of students' historical memory and patriotism through the study, interpretation, and popularization of historical sites and events in their region. Moreover, the implementation of this project enables students to deepen their knowledge of the history and culture, to establish a civic position and a sense of pride and responsibility for preserving historical heritage, and to promote cultural heritage among young people.

Thus, the successful implementation of the pedagogical condition aimed at stimulating the development of students' civic competence through project-based learning requires the creation of favorable organizational and pedagogical prerequisites within the educational environment of a higher education institution that encourage students' active engagement in project-based activity aimed at solving socially significant problems and meeting community needs through their participation in social, volunteer, or educational and research projects.

Conclusions

As a result of the theoretical analysis, it has been established that students' civic competence is a complex, integral socio-psychological and pedagogical phenomenon that combines a student's readiness and ability to act responsibly, consciously, and proactively in a democratic society, guided by legal norms as well as universal and national values. Its structure is formed by four interrelated components: cognitive, value-based, personal, and activity-related. Each of these performs an independent function while simultaneously ensuring the integrity of the process of forming the civic position of the future specialist.

It has been substantiated that the effectiveness of developing students' civic competence directly depends on the purposeful creation of pedagogical conditions within the educational environment of a higher education institution. Project-based learning has been identified as a pedagogical condition with a high didactic, educational, and socializing potential and as a means of stimulating the development of students' civic competence. It ensures the organic integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience and contributes to the development of critical thinking, initiative, responsibility, communication skills, and social interaction skills.

It has been determined that the implementation of the pedagogical condition of stimulating the development of students' civic competence through project-based learning involves: the generating of students' intrinsic motivation to participate in socially significant initiatives; the integration of educational and upbringing objectives; the fostering of civic values and behavioral models; the involvement of students in all stages of project work; and the provision of pedagogical support and mentoring. Accordingly, it has been established that the greatest educational effect in the development of students' civic competence is ensured by social, volunteer, as well as educational and research projects aimed at solving real problems, supporting socially vulnerable groups, and preserving national cultural and historical heritage.

It is concluded that under the conditions of contemporary social and wartime challenges, the active involvement of students in project-based learning is an effective pedagogical tool and an important factor in educating a socially mature, patriotically oriented, and responsible generation of citizens of Ukraine.

Prospects for further research are seen in the experimental verification of the effectiveness of implementing project-based learning as a pedagogical condition for stimulating the development of students' civic competence, as well as in the provision of methodological

support for its systematic implementation in the educational process of a higher education institution.

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