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## “This is how you do it in Germany, but we do it our way”

### Different Notions of Citizenship Education in the Russian-German Exchange of Young Professionals

Citizenship education is a widespread concept of lifelong learning important for democratic participation. The research shows a great variety in approaches to citizenship education depending on socio-political contexts (Bîrzéa 2004, 17; Kerr, Nelson 2005, 10). This study is based on participative evaluation (Bergold 2007; Cousins, Earl 1992) accompanying the German-Russian training and exchange program regarding non-formal citizenship education. Through content analysis of interviews and artifacts we explore views of citizenship education and strategies that the actors use to deal with the various assumptions in this field of education. In Germany democracy, participation and critical thinking are emphasized, in contrast to Russia, where, depending on the organizational structure, the patriotic upbringing is exercised. Four ways of dealing with the conflicting assumptions and practices are identified in the issue-focused exchange of young professionals. They are the individual construction of the German and Russian ways of citizenship education, enrichment of individual understanding, reduction of the perceived differences and conformity with ones environment juggling with declared and practiced notions.

*Citizenship education* ist ein verbreitetes Konzept des lebenslangen Lernens mit dem Ziel, demokratisch orientierte Partizipation zu fördern. Laut Forschung variieren die Ansätze von *citizenship education* in Abhängigkeit vom soziopolitischen Kontext (Bîrzéa 2004: 17; Kerr/ Nelson 2005: 10). Die vorliegende Untersuchung basiert auf einer partizipativen Evaluation (Bergold 2007; Cousins/ Earl 1992), die im deutsch-russischen Fachkräfteaustausch zum Thema *citizenship education* durchgeführt wurde. Durch die qualitative Inhaltsanalyse von Interviews und Artefakten werden die Auffassungen der Akteure von *citizenship education* untersucht und ihre Strategien im Umgang mit differierenden Annahmen rekonstruiert. Die Befunde zeigen: Die deutsche Befragtengruppe betont Demokratie, Partizipation und kritisches Denken, während in vielen russischen Organisationen (abhängig von strukturellen Rahmenbedingungen) eine patriotische Erziehung praktiziert wird. Vier Wege im Umgang mit widersprüchlichen Auffassungen und Praktiken werden im Rahmen der untersuchten themenorientierten Austauschmaßnahme eruiert. Diese sind die Konstruktion eines deutschen und russischen Ansatzes von *citizenship education*, die Entwicklung eines individuellen Verständnisses, die Reduktion der wahrgenommenen Differenzen sowie die Anpassung an das Umfeld, bei der deklarierte und handlungsrelevante Annahmen einander widersprechen können.

#### Keywords

non-formale Bildung, citizenship education, politische Bildung, Russland, Deutschland, themenorientierter Fachkräfteaustausch, non-formal education, citizenship education, Russia, Germany, international exchange of professionals

#### 1. Introduction

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the number of international programs aimed at promoting democracy in Eastern Europe has been increasing. Over the last few years the infrastructural support of the non-governmental organizations (NGO) and dissemination of democratic ideas through citizenship education as well as the qualification of stakeholders prevalent in the early 1990s (cf. Johnson 1996) is being replaced by the idea of well-balanced partnership based on dialog and consideration of the contexts.

Citizenship education is being increasingly emphasized as a lifelong learning concept supporting the vitality of civil society and participation of citizens in democratic decision-making processes. This educational area is strongly determined by the sociopolitical

situation and hence adopts different forms and approaches in different contexts (Bîrzéa 2004, 14; Kerr, Nelson 2005, 10). In Russia, the shift from democracy towards the authoritarian state is indicated in several studies (Freedom House 2009; Gerrits 2010; USAID 2009). Behind the democratic rhetoric antidemocratic practices are hidden. Some scholars claim that Western actors are partly responsible for the shift in Russia as they elide this fact for a long time despite of warning voices (cf. Saari 2009; Stewart 2009). In addition, the ignorance of societal context and local tradition by the Western donors as well as selecting only Western-minded NGOs for cooperation caused the promoted civil society in Russia to drift away from the Russian society and reality (Saari 2009, 739).

The Western concepts of civil society and citizenship education are based on the liberal-democratic tradition, which underline the role of NGOs (Stewart 2009, 813) and the individual self-interest and responsibility (cf. Jarvis 2008). On the contrary, Russian political discourse has been dominated by words like stability, statehood, order, sovereignty, power or patriotism (cf. Shevtsova 2005, 164). The ruling elite



supports and encourages „useful“ civic activity and tries to establish civil society by being suspicious of critically thinking persons and independent NGOs “with Western connections” (cf. Saari 2009, 744).

Against this background, the cooperation based on partnership between Germany and Russia in the field of citizenship education appears to be challenging in its implementation. The study analyzes the practice of non-formal citizenship education in the German-Russian context and thus focuses on notions of this educational area and strategies of dealing with their diversity.

## 2. Theoretical and empirical premises

### 2.1 Educating citizens in national and post-national frameworks

It is acknowledged that liberal-democratic institutions need interested, educated and participating citizens. The fostering of the democratic way of life is an important aim of citizenship education. While the Western European states strive for the strengthening of civil society and the shift from representative towards participative and discursive democracy (cf. Hanberger 2006, 19; Kerr 2008), different significance to civil society and citizens' participation is ascribed within the democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, the democratic quality of citizenship education in transitional states differs from that of Western European societies (cf. Hippe 2008).

In Germany, the term *politische Bildung* 'political education' is used dominantly to describe the field of citizenship education. In its contemporary form political education emerged and developed as a reaction to the age of National Socialism. The upbringing and education of critically thinking and participating citizens for the construction of a democratic society are seen as the way out of indoctrination and dictatorship. The so called Consensus of Beutelsbach declares general principles for political education. It forbids indoctrination and invites to foster critical thinking through the discussion of controversial issues as well as to support the ability to participate and to influence ones environment (cf. Sander 2005, 18). The well-developed field of non-formal education characterizes the German political education, though there is not much empirical research about the practice in this area (Hafeneger 2005, 699; Lüders, Behr 2005, 387 ff.; Sander 2005, 30 f.). The European programs, such as education for democratic citizenship and human rights of the Council of Europe (Huddleston 2004; Kerr 2003) or active citizenship education of the European commission (2007) provide a post-national framework for the landscape of political education in Germany and are based on the notion of participation, human rights and critical reflection of the state authority.

In Russia, in spite of the activities of the Council of Europe, the patriotic upbringing seems to become

the priority within the citizenship education in recent years (cf. Froumin 2004; Janmaat, Piattoeva 2007; Muckle 2003; Simons 2004; Zimenkova 2008). A second well-funded program for patriotic upbringing of Russian citizens is being implemented (Pravitel'stvo Rossijskoj Federacii 2005). The fostering of youth participation is declared in the state youth policy, but it is understood as an instrument for self-development and self-fulfillment rather than in terms of support for the political or social involvement (Pravitel'stvo Rossijskoj Federacii 2006, § IV). *Graždanskoe obrazovanie* 'civic education' is still present as a term. However, its content is often interpreted as the knowledge transmission about democratic institutions, rights and duties of a citizen has a strong reference to patriotism. For the formal education, the researchers report the domination of the teacher-centered teaching, top-down approach, lecturing and memorization (cf. Froumin 2004; Schmidt 2003). Froumin states “almost no example of EDC [education for democratic citizenship] being present in the field of lifelong learning” (Froumin 2004, 105).

Based on these observations, the main difference between the notion of citizenship education in Russia and in Germany can be assumed on the axis between 'education for citizenship' within a national framework and 'citizenship education' within a post-national framework (cf. Forrester 2003; Lucas 2001; Janmaat, Piattoeva 2007, 531 f.). While for Germany the concepts of critical thinking, respect of human rights and active citizenship seem to be relevant, the state educational policy in Russia aims to bring up law-abiding citizens who are aware of their rights and duties to their fatherland. It can be assumed that the international cooperation provides an environment where the different notions, values and aims of citizenship education can become apparent. The professional affiliation to a special view of citizenship education can position an individual or institution as discriminated or privileged in the particular social and political context.

### 2.2 Issue-focused exchange of young professionals

The issue-focused exchange is a relatively new format of the international youth work. Normally the exchange programs are designed as two encounters in participants' countries of origin aimed at getting to know other methods and approaches, exchanging opinions and networking. Such programs address professionals from the particular area and centre this occupational field. Frequently, the development of intercultural and antiracist competence is pointed out as another important goal of these programs (cf. Fiesenhahn 2001; Leiprecht 2006a). In contrast an issue-focused program highlights one topic and enhances participants' discussion and reflection about it (cf. Thimmel, Riß 2010). Migrations, Diversity, Environ-

ment, conflict management or citizenship education are examples of possible focuses.

The systematic research in the field of international professionals' exchange is rare. The available findings originate from corresponding evaluation projects (cf. Demiröz, Görbil 2007; Leiprecht 2006b; Thimmel, Riß 2010). Most of them describe effects and try to formulate success conditions or quality criteria of exchange projects. The existent reports concentrate on cooperation projects, where power divide, political situation and socioeconomic background of countries and institutions approximate. There is a lack of studies in the Russian-German programs, particularly in the citizenship-education-focused exchange.

### 3. Design of the study

#### 3.1 Context, aim and questions of the research

This study is embedded in the evaluation of a year-long training and exchange program for young professionals from Russia and Germany in the age between 22 and 30. The citizenship education was the main issue focused on during the qualification. The program, which started in August 2009, is composed of three modules and includes participants' development and implementation of their own local or international citizenship education projects. The second module is finished and the project implementation phase has begun at the moment. The program was conceived by two partner organizations from Germany (Theodor-Heuss-College, European Youth Education and Meeting Center) and two from Russia (Institute for Civil Engagement, Federal Youth Center Orlyonok). All institutions are declared to working in the field of non-formal citizenship education, their structural specificity oscillating between state institutions and non-governmental organizations. The program participants are active in non-formal youth education and are from both Russia and Germany though the latter primarily started the program during the second module. For this reason, the participants from Russia are being focused on in this article.

The study intends to explore how the socio-political contexts influence the professional's notions of citizenship education and its implementation on the one side and how these possible different understandings of the occupational field are managed within an exchange program on the other side. From this background the study asks:

- how do Russian program participants, trainers and partner organization (program actors) define and implement citizenship education (in Russian *graždanskoe obrazovanie*),
- how do program participants and actors deal with the possible conceptual differences in understanding of citizenship education.

#### 3.2 Participative evaluation as the research strategy

During the training and exchange program for young professionals from Germany and Russia participative evaluation strategy has been applied as a part of program monitoring. This approach, which is mostly based on the tradition of action research (cf. Dick 2004; Fals Borda 2001), uses results for the improvement of the evaluated practice. Generally participative evaluation can be characterized as "applied social research that involves a partnership between trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision makers, organizational members with program responsibility or people with a vital interest in the program" (Cousins, Earl 1992, 399 f.). House (2005) identifies three basic principles common for the participatory evaluation strategies: the principle of inclusion, dialogue and deliberation. As all stakeholders are involved in the process of evaluation and their needs are crucial for the formulation of research questions, participative evaluation appears to be particularly appropriate for the context of citizenship education (Ulrich, Wenzel 2003).

The participative evaluation in the present program aimed primarily at its description and analysis as well as at increasing the program quality during the implementation. As participative evaluation is a cyclic process, it can provide answers to many research questions (Bergold 2007). The focus of the first phase of evaluation lay on (1) mission, values and main work principles of the partner organizations; (2) program expectations of the partners; (3) understandings and approaches in citizenship education ("*politische Bildung*" in Germany and "*graždanskoe obrazovanie*" in Russia) of partner organizations and program participants. In the second phase the following topics were approached: (1) characteristics of the program participants and the role of their structural background for the program; (2) balance between methods, content and personal development of the program participants; (3) dynamics of cooperation between the program partners; (4) development and changes in the notions of citizenship education. To address the research questions posed in this article the evaluation process focused on the understandings of citizenship education is pointed out.

Stakeholders from German and Russian partner organizations as well as the program participants were involved in the evaluation process. The core team includes two research experts from Germany and one from Russia, who presented the current status quo of the evaluation to the experts of practice (program partner, trainer, program participants) and moderated the discussion of the results and propositions for the next phase. The methods of the data collection in every phase of the participative evaluation varied according to the formulated research questions. Hence,

participative evaluation responded to the program dynamic, it addressed the changing needs of the practice and made the direct implementation of the research results possible.

### 3.3 Data collection and analysis

The first evaluation step was carried out by using a questionnaire for the partners in Germany and Russia referring to the ways of understanding and implementation citizenship education in their organizations. In particular, the answers to the questions “How would you define the mission of your organization?”, “What are the values important to your organization?”, “Which methods do you use?”, “How important is citizenship education for your organization?” and “How do you understand citizenship education in your organization?” were being focused on in the analysis. This evaluation step was completed through the answers of participants to the question “How do you understand citizenship education?” posed in the application form. Thus, the data corpus includes the answers of 22 program participants from Russia, five program partner institutions and of one member of the trainer team.

The data for the second evaluation step was collected in qualitative interviews during the second module, which took part in Germany and enabled the first contact between participants from Russia and Germany. The basis of analysis presented here is a group interview with six program participants from Russia and four interviews with trainers and program partners. The interview guide integrates questions about the notions of citizenship education and participants’ experiences in the training program. In the interview with trainers the findings of the first evaluation step focusing on different understandings of citizenship education were clustered and commented.

The analysis of the data is guided by the tradition of qualitative social research, which involves such principals as openness, communicability, process orientation, reflexivity, explication and flexibility (cf. Lamnek 2005). As this study draws on empirical material, it has an explorative character and implies the inductive way of generating analytical categories.

The audio data from the second step was transcribed in the original language of the interview and coded with MAXQDA software (Kuckartz 2005) following the principles of the qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2003). In this article, the categories referring to the understanding of citizenship education and the strategies of dealing with different views on citizenship education are pointed out.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Similarities and differences in notions of citizenship education

The first step of the evaluation documents the notions of citizenship education by the program actors

and participants before the training program started. The differences in views on citizenship education revealed by the data show that the notions vary according to the visions, competences and values of citizens to be educated.

All German partner institutions as well as the trainer team act in the tradition of *politische Bildung* ‘political education’. The European Youth Education and Meeting Center explicates the definition of the Association of German Educational Organizations (2006) which declares the aim of political education as the training of democratic practices for sustainable democratic culture. According to this document, political education promotes democratic values and critical thinking, fosters debate about diversity and the relationship between the individual and society. It encourages social and political participation and keeps the victims of the wars in human memory.

The understanding of citizenship education as identified by the Russian partner organizations is heterogeneous. The Institute for Civic Engagement, an NGO developed within different European cooperation projects, shows the clear orientation to the concept of education for democratic citizenship as formulated by the Council of Europe. The acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for active participation are emphasized, the exercising of one’s own rights and responsibilities are seen as necessary. The reference to democracy is similar to the German partners and trainers. The Federal Youth Center Orlyonok applies two terms without a clear distinction between them. They are *graždanskoe vospitanie* ‘civic upbringing’ and *graždansko-patrioti eskoe vospitanie* ‘civic and patriotic upbringing’. Thus, the domestic issue is accentuated and citizenship is defined within a national framework. The educational aims vary between the fostering of socially active citizens and orthodox patriots.

At the beginning of the training program, Russian participants associate citizenship education with the following aspects and terms:

Patriotism, love of the fatherland and knowledge about Russia or a particular region appears to be a present characteristic. The terms are *graždanskoe obrazovanie* ‘civic education’ and *graždanskoe vospitanie* ‘civic upbringing’. While the education and upbringing of the active citizens is highlighted, the citizenship often gets a strong national or regional emphasis:

“To love your homeland and people around you” (Irina, 10-10)

“[...] the awareness of history and traditions of your home region and country, knowledge about the state and the social constitution of the Russian society” (Anna, 5-5)



The view on citizenship education as the upbringing of active, participating citizens dominates the data of the participants. This involvement has been assumed to express itself in the social participation and responsibility for one's own life and society. It is further determined by the readiness and skills for the active creation of the environment. One of the participants describes in his application the ideal citizen as a result of citizenship education as

"[...] individuals, who are ready (have a wish and necessary competences) to exercise their rights and fulfill their interests, to be subjects in social life and to influence their environment, to feel responsible for one's own life and community" (Sergej, 4-4)

The understanding of a citizen within a social context makes the development of social competences as an aim of citizenship education logical. According to the program participants this means being able to communicate and to cooperate, to be empathetic and to dispose of the leadership skills are necessary goals of citizenship education as well.

"From my point of view civic education has to include those directions which develop the individual skills connected with social relations" (Irina, 4-4)

Moreover, legal education and awareness about the rights and duties are strongly emphasized. In most cases legal education concerns the transfer of "knowledge about the political and legal basis of life in Russian society and state" (Lena, 99-99). Furthermore, civic education is declared as having the ethical or moral components including the values of compassion to others, freedom, tolerance, pluralism or patriotism.

"[...] such moral values as patriotism, respect and compassion to others are the essential base for civil society which could be taken as a fundament for civic education" (Vladimir, 6-6)

The cautious references to democracy and democratic principles are included in a few statements. Human rights and diversity issues are barely mentioned in the participants' data.

In addition to the diverse conceptions of citizenship education, a difference in understanding of the non-formal learning process is apparent. While the German partners and the Institute for Civic Engagement attach great importance to the partnership and participation of the learners, the Federal Youth Center Orlyonok as well as the Russian program participants show the rather hierarchical notion of the relationship between the learner and the trainer. The instructor makes decisions about the attitudes and values to be brought up and knowledge to be transmitted, while the learner takes the passive, receiving role.

#### 4.2 Four ways of dealing with conceptual differences

While after the first step of evaluation a palette of different conceptualizations was reconstructed and presented to the program actors and trainers by evaluators, in the second step this issue is perceived and discussed explicitly by all stakeholders. Both participants and program actors address the topic of different views on citizenship education in interviews and within the seminar. The core of differences is frequently led back to the values which characterize assumptions of ideal citizens and their education. The distinctions are particularly highlighted when the German participants' group joins the program and the young professionals from Russia experience the one-day-apprenticeships in institutions of the non-formal citizenship education in Germany. The collected data provides references to four ways of dealing with the situations, where the conceptual plurality of citizenship education manifests itself. They are *enrichment of individual understanding, distinction of different ways of citizenship education, reduction of the perceived difference, conformity with environment juggling with declared and practiced notions*.

By *enrichment of individual understanding* the individual shows interest, openness and readiness to reflect upon and to integrate the new understanding or its elements in his or her own view on citizenship education. This strategy can be observed during the group interview with participants, when the willingness to exchange the ideas about values in citizenship education is expressed:

"Igor' was talking a lot about values and I think, I have to talk to him [...] I think he and his opinion could enrich our project (laugh)" (Olga, 115-115)

The quoted participant is new to the field of non-formal citizenship education and her pre-conceptions seems to be less rigid. On the contrary, the views of other interviewees often appear to be fixed, the clustering of the new information into the "German" and "Russian" or "individual" way of seeing citizenship education is common. This strategy allows for the structuring and understanding of differences without questioning the position itself. Within this strategy two subgroups of views can be identified. *The different ways of citizenship education* can be considered as equally legitimate results of the historical development of society, as the following sequence from an interview with a trainer and representative of the Federal Centre Orlyonok illustrates:

"[...] since the administration of Putin and Medvedev took office, Russia is getting a new face. It means it forms its face concerning national identity, concerning foreign affairs [...] that's why patriotism and national focus are things which are present today [...] Democracy and critical thinking are focused on in Germany and this

focus was formulated and formed after the tragedy of the second world war" (Vera, 34-38)

This way of dealing with differences in views on citizenship education can often lead to the construction of national homogeneity according to some issues, terms and approaches, as the quoted interview with one of the trainers from Germany shows:

"I learned about topics and issues in which Russian institutions are engaged [...] I have the impression that many of them go in for patriotism.. I got an understanding of what leadership means because it's always a part of our debate [...] leadership similar to patriotism troubles us" (Steffen, 36-36)

While the previous respondent sees the perceived distinctions in defining patriotism and leadership as the way out of trouble, another trainer tries a rational explanation through the specificity of educational policy:

"[...] if we look into the values, which are important for the European Union, and they are accordingly transmitted to the documents of European youth policy, and then we look at what's happening in Russia, we'll see completely different things and it's really a good issue to think about" (Alina, 25-25)

The pluralism in the individual approaches to citizenship education is apparent in the statement of one of the participants who describes the subjective choice as a legitimate criterion for the basic orientation in educational activity:

"[...] everybody has to develop his own approach, I bring up patriots and this is my approach, Sergej can say I don't bring up patriots, I bring up citizens, and this is his approach" (Elena, 58-58)

The other subgroup includes assumptions which appraise different ways of understanding and doing citizenship education. In this case a particular view on citizenship education is considered to be more sensible, more appropriate or more correct. Except for one participant (last quotation), this approach is often observable in statements of the trainers. The Western European values are often implicitly considered to be superior to the views voiced by Russian participants. The presented pedagogical mission is reminiscent of the re-education or missionary.

"Many participants understand it [citizenship education] as the transmission of legal knowledge... and patriotism.. though we don't talk much about it.. maybe we have to, so that they understand, that this is *not* the point" (Dace, 63-63)

"[...] while Germans are talking about tolerance as the acceptance of everybody's equal rights, Russians are talking about tolerance as.. I don't know.. like 'we put everybody together and long live peace in the whole world' (ironically)" (Alina, 11-11)

"[...] there are some good organizations which are using the European approach [...] like things connected with civil values, with anti... xenophobic and anti-homophobic things, again things referring to democracy and to democratic ways of decision making, er.. referring to ideas about human rights" (Igor', 25-27)

The third strategy – *reduction of the perceived difference* – expresses itself as awareness of the variety in views on citizenship education on the one side and attempt to accentuate one's own view and to illuminate or at least not to see this variety on the other side. It makes this strategy rather similar to that previously presented. It shows itself repeatedly in the trainer's statements:

"We know, that patriotism in Russia is of crucial importance, I see many programs which support it, but this is not a part of what we are doing.. it's even not in our vocabulary and we are very cautious about it" (Laima, 61-61)

The last identified strategy is named *conformity with environment juggling with declared and practice notions*. It is based predominantly on the observations of the trainer team and indicates the discrepancies in citizenship education values as declared and practiced. The trainers describe participants as knowing about and showing the conformity with the main democratic values and principles, but often acting inconsistently with these values.

"[...] everything was going well with the values until we had a simulation in which one participant, they were even more, they started to say that homosexuals have to be castrated [...] and when before we were talking about what democratic values and tolerance are, nobody showed any disagreement, all of them were saying, yes-yes we agree" (Alina, 39-39)

The democratic values and principles are often considered to be something separated from one's own personality, something abstract, something to know *about*. The participants accentuate the importance of active and responsible citizenship while not transferring these principles into their own learning process and staying consumers, as in the description of another trainer:

"I'm also talking about the responsibility for the seminar contents which we transmit. We sent the seminar program and no comments, no questions... They don't see that they can influence something [...] Or they are not courageous enough to intervene. And if they criticize, they do it at the end, but without any suggestions [...] they can say what doesn't suit, but not how to improve or what they actually want" (Dace, 18-18)

## 5. Discussion

The results of the study indicate the differences in basic values of citizenship education as well as in assumptions about learning as understood and prac-



ticed by Russian and German respondents. While in Russia, depending on the organizational structure, more patriotic upbringing is exercised, democracy, participation and critical thinking are highlighted in Germany. Thus, it can be stated that the observed importance of patriotism, the moral base of citizenship, non-political activism or an uncritical view of the state in the notions of respondents from Russia correspond with the priorities on a governmental level, social discourses and educational practices discussed elsewhere (cf. Froumin 2004; Janmaat, Piattoeva 2007; Muckle 2003; Simons 2004; Zimenkova 2008). However, it is important to mention, that this tendency is not to be over-generalized. The exceptions in the sample illustrate the relevance of the individual and organizational responsibility by the positioning toward the policy of the state.

The notion of a learning process is another distinguishing feature. The hierarchical understanding of the relationship between the learner and the trainer seems to apply rather to the Russian institutions, while in Germany in the same field more partnership interaction is promoted. The international comparisons characterize the teaching culture in Russia as authoritarian and reproduction-oriented (cf. Froumin 2004; Schmidt 2003), according to the study findings the practice of non-formal education seems to adopt the same patterns as seen in the formal context. This statement again has to be relativized in order to consider the Russian non-governmental organizations mostly developed through international cooperation and hence referring to the European tradition of learning in the non-formal contexts.

The analysis led to four strategies of dealing with conflicting notions of citizenship education. They are the individual construction of the German and Russian ways of citizenship education, the enrichment of individual understanding, the reduction of the perceived differences and the conformity with the juggling of ones environment with declared and practiced notions. It can be further assumed, that every strategy has different consequences for the learning process within the exchange program though they can not be specified at the actual evaluation step.

To understand the findings, their contextualization appears to be necessary. Russia's political system is no longer on the way toward democracy, but has drifted into the group of authoritarian states (Freedom House 2009) with a facade democracy (Gerrits 2010, 35). This is why the greatest challenge of the present education program consists in this dilemma – how to translate a citizenship education concept based on liberal democratic values into the context of authoritarianism. In the atmosphere of

hostility toward independent civil society, it is logical that most of the participants representing NGOs are dependent on state funding and are loyal to the needs of the state, so that they contribute to achieving the aims of the national educational policy. In this way, the often stressed patriotism can create the basis of shared norms and ideas which supports the legitimacy of the regime.

In this context, it is challenging for an exchange program to focus on citizenship education. The Western citizenship education concepts can not be implemented in Russia as an effort of democracy promotion without attention to the local circumstances (cf. Stewart 2009). The needs of the local partners and professional experiences of program participants should be taken into consideration. At the same time, the label of the international cooperation should not be misused to legitimate antidemocratic practices. The explication and negotiation of differences in approaches and assumptions may help to manage these challenges.

Some comments on the research strategy must be mentioned as well. The effectiveness of the participative evaluation requires some crucial conditions, which are often bonded to the limits of this method. Plottu and Plottu (2009, 350) suggest that evaluation participants “must be informed of, motivated and trained for the evaluation; and the evaluative process must then be supervised”. Such actions presuppose huge monetary and personal resources as well as enough time for conceptualization, preparation and realization of the evaluation, which in the reality could not be guaranteed in the whole extension. The equal participation in the evaluation process of every stakeholder can not be imposed for instance because of the different capacity of the program partners and participants. Another problem can be reflected in the implementation of new findings into the training and exchange program, which was sometimes restrained because of monetary and structural resources or upon mentioned socio-political conditions. On the other hand the whole capability of the participative evaluation strategy was not utilized in the actual time frame, so that effects according to empowerment of the participants through the evaluation process can be partly observed, but were not controlled.

Due to the limited sample the presented study does not claim to be representative. However, it provides a contribution to the development of the particular training program and calls the attention of the practitioners and scientists to the challenges of the socio-politically determined diversity within an international cooperation based on partnership and not proselytism.

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