



The History and Current State of civic education in Belarus*

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The latest period of the history of civic education in Belarus is already over 10 years old. In fact, 2006 was a year for reviewing and assessing the results of the activity conducted by our educators and all those involved in the process, as the results of civic education become clear in a real, active situation, when citizens can be expected to show their civic qualities. Also being assessed are the results of the reflection and thinking of those formulating and implementing the aims of civic enlightenment. These reflecting subjects might be politicians, political analysts, leaders of governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the teachers and educators themselves. Thinking cannot permit any self-deception and lies. Reflection and thinking based on objectives and assumptions that derive from unreliable values and logic will produce false conclusions, and therefore errors in implementation. Erroneous reflection conducted in the past paves the way for mistakes to be repeated in the future, means the aims of civic education are unachievable, and results in them being ousted by slogans, ideologems or myths.

The situation in March 2006 and the whole of the preceding period needed from the people of Belarus to take civic action, adopt a position, appreciate the disposition of forces in live political situations, and to act in accordance with common human values. And to take action for victory – genuine action, rather than a pretence of it. Victory was essential (as in the song – one for all), a victory over increasingly strong and stable authoritarianism and totalitarian Soviet thinking, victory of good over evil. The situation in 2005-2006 was a summons to the people of Belarus, who are still, in the twenty-first century and in the heart of Europe, living under authoritarian rule, gradually adapting and becoming accustomed to this way of living, and finding ways to justify both their inactivity and their reluctance to think and define themselves.

Soviet education did not teach people how determine themselves and think independently, but in the early 1990s the people of Belarus were given a chance to dream, to believe and think out loud, to define themselves, to value diversity and take positive action. But the Soviet system needed wholesale reform. This was the SYSTEM. The difficulty was that reforms needed to be based on democratic and humanitarian principles, which were totally unlike, and antagonistic to, communist principles. New democratic approaches and norms needed to be understood and adopted, interpreted and converted into action. This should have been done primarily by those claiming to be leading the democratization of Belarus, in other words, the reformers themselves. But the 1990s made plain the lack of the necessary intellectual, communications, and professional qualifications amongst either the reformers or the majority of the population.

There was a clear shortage of humanitarian, professional and civic education. Naturally, this needed to be remedied, and both state and informal structures did in fact begin to do so. But the result of educational technologies is not always immediately apparent, especially in the field of civic politics and management. It takes years, or even decades. The result can be seen only in certain artificially created conditions, through the organization of a systemic, technological and reflection-based program of activity in the sphere of education. Moreover, the problem of civic education cannot be solved by civil society structures and informal education alone. It is common knowledge that considerable resources, both intellectual and material, are needed. Neither the state nor the new non-governmental organizations had sufficient resources in the early 1990s, so civic education first came into being in an elemental and impulsive way. By the mid-1990s, given the favorable development of events, this elemental force might have



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developed into clear-cut, planned and orderly activity, preserving the diversity and uniqueness of subjects of education, teaching methods and so on. However, for several reasons, this did not happen:

1. The weakness and unclear objectives of structures of the third sector. Informal education was only just being created and taking shape in the 1990s. Educators in the early 1990s were innovators, feeling their way in the dark. Their aims were not yet clear, but the time was right for taking action. The lack of clear aims was a legacy of the Soviet period and continues to affect us even now. So activity preceded aims, instead of which an educational ideologem was formally put forward – the rounded and developed individual given civic education is a citizen. In essence, this is a declaration of some very important things, heavy with meaning. But there has been no considered exposition of their deeper substance.

This formal declaration was taken as sufficient basis for initiating action. But this formal, declarative approach has played a nasty trick on the non-formal education system and in reality, it deters people rather than attracting them to the civic education system. For formalism, played over and over like a cracked record, leaves no room for reflection and investigation of the essence of things. At the same time, the non-formal education system is amassing layer upon layer of assorted intellectual and symbolic ideologems: national rebirth, civil society and politics, private and intellectual property, organizational development and so on.

I do not intend to pass judgment on the way that non-formal education has progressed over the last ten years. The fact of civil illiteracy in 2006 speaks for itself. The superficiality and shallowness of democratic and behavioral norms has been exposed. In 2004 the Agency for Humanitarian Technologies¹ invited representatives of the third sector to join in the process of developing a Strategy for Victory at the 2006 elections. The volume of inter-professional, personal and virtual communications during work on this task rose tenfold. Internet forums effectively became an experimental research arena for the study of the communications reaction to constructive strategic proposals. Real “live” communications confirmed and duplicated the reactions seen on the Internet. What put the brakes on cooperation was the inadequacy of contributions made by “interested” subjects and leaders of the third sector on either the role of civil society, or the interaction of civil society with political subjects. There was plenty to hear. That we haven't got things right, that civil society should not engage in politics, that the third sector is civil society and that it should therefore control politicians. The question of who gives them the right to take control did not even come up for discussion. And why the need to

control, rather than exert influence on politicians' activities? What is meant by politics anyway? A dirty business? The activities of a few prominent individuals within a small circle of people? What sort of procedure is the control of civil society? It was impossible to make out what these leaders thought about the nature of politics, political technology, expertise or strategy.

As a result of this intellectual and procedural mayhem, the opposition and third sector was unable to get to grips with the pressing task of the moment or to get a feel for the situation; it gave rise to displays of imposture, leaving them unable to consolidate and cooperate, to conduct talks, or conclude agreements. On the one hand, words were uttered declaring the principles of democracy, freedom of speech and responsibility. Yet what was actually on show was conformity, subordination, anarchy, egocentrism, a rejection of alternative views, and an inability to listen to and hear opponents, or engage in effective communication. Personal opinion and sentiment, not logically argued judgment, took precedence over dealing with an issue that will determine the fate of the whole country. Yet the principle of humanism was confirmed as a good thing, even though it results in restraint and stagnation instead of addressing current problems. See how everything has been turned head over heels! As far as their way of thinking and behaving are concerned, the structures of the third sector and the opposition are wholly indistinguishable from the representatives of the power still implementing Soviet principles of control.

Some may accuse me of excessive generalization or of being wrongheaded and “unscientific” in these assessments. But Agency experts used one of the most effective methods for studying this situation – the reflective method for the study of action².

We took action, with the aim of winning, already having a Strategy, understanding the difficulty of implementing the given objectives, understanding that victory can only be won collectively and jointly, understanding too that separatism and secrecy are very powerful... But we had no method for how we should actually start to act, to propose and establish communications, to break down barriers. With only a year to go until the elections, it was senseless to start preparing a basis for complex sociological research and then passively to observe what happened. So the method came into being through action in the form of Organizational Activity Games (Kiev, March 2005), discussions, close examination of analytical materials based on monitoring, methodological and educational seminars and so on. Only through such independent and purposeful action is it possible to check and validate research-based hypotheses in a dynamic pre-election situation.

¹ The Agency for Humanitarian Technologies is a public organization established in 1994 under the leadership of methodologist V.V. Matskevich. The Agency's mission is the implementation in Belarus of a cultural policy based on principles of democracy, systemic thinking activity and professionalism. The Agency's main areas of activity are intellectual consulting, expertise and effective action in the spheres of political technology, education, media and business.

² Matskevich V. The study of action // Questions of Methodology, Nr 1-2, 1996.

The effect of such a humanitarian study of action is naturally to produce great changes in the people taking part in the activity. Secrets are uncovered, some people develop, others become more inclined to reflection, some start to act, and others become inhibited or behave according to habit. Those who develop and are capable of change subsequently form the backbone of the leadership corpus of the third sector, set a trend for intelligent activity and become authorities. And such "new" people did appear. They are perhaps not yet very prominent, numerous, thrusting or loud, but they are there and are already having an effect. At the same time, inertia has apparently set into political and civic action, with a powerful resistance to all that is new and untraditional. The forms of civil behavior seen, such as holding Congresses, regional assemblies and elections of sole candidates in breach of democratic procedures, have been strongly reminiscent of 2001.

The reason for the mass inertia and traditionalism in civil behavior can be found in the ideas about and attitudes to all previous forms of civic education. Civic education has substituted new democratic norms for traditional pedagogical methods without any consideration of the mindset of the people of Belarus. It has therefore run up against the deep-rooted old way of life, the appeal of simple, primitive habits and customs, and the power of the state's education policy and its guaranteed resources. This Soviet mindset continues to affect not only the majority of the population but also the leaders themselves. New democratic norms can only take hold if the old ones are dismantled and subjected to criticism, and if new innovatory methods are used to work on people's consciousness, while demonstrating the democratic way of life and putting it into political practice. Civic education is needed to shape and cultivate a type of civic behavior that is not practiced by the majority, and has no firm tradition in Belarusian society. Though inadequate, models for mass democratic and civil behavior in Belarus do exist. Educators in civic education need to examine these models and use them as the substance and material of education. And their own behavior needs to reinforce these models, demonstrating their adherence to the principles of democracy, not so much in words as in deeds.

2. The second reason for the ineffectiveness of civic education in Belarus was the legislative and actual inequality of the subjects of education. The field of civic education involves not only subjects of informal education, but also the state subject. The state has never neglected the problem of civic education and never will. This is determined by the very position of the state as a subject, possessing power. Unlike other subjects, the state has substantial resources for action — manpower, professional, financial and material. And it is due only to its resource of power (the administrative

resource) that the state is able to exist and remain unchanged, whatever organizational or managerial difficulties it might face.

Over the course of the last 15 years, there have been several changes in the state's priorities for its educational aims. But these show a distinct logic:

- 1991 to 1994 — preparation for educational reform and adaptation to Belarus's new independence. Various proposals and versions of the aims of education — from the teaching of thought or national self-determination, to practical skills and so on.
- 1994 to 1997 — formal declaration of reform, and of principles of humanitarianisation and humanisation, a fashion for new educational technologies. In practice — the launch of a revanchist program (reversion), retention of old Soviet educational principles under cover of an expansion of teaching hours, a strengthening of multidisciplinary teaching processes, a curb on the Belarusification and intellectualization of education, and either elimination of private educational establishments or their complete subordination to the state system. Control and scrutiny of the activities of non-governmental educational organizations and the creation of dependency on state decisions, by means of a procedure for registration and re-registration. The beginning of patriotic upbringing processes. Symbolically, this period concluded with the closure of the Soros Fund.
- 1997 to 2006 — gradual and steady roll-out of patriotic upbringing programs. Establishment of the Belarusian Youth Union (BRSU), facultative (optional) courses, obligatory political instruction, ideologization. The assertion that patriotic upbringing is civic education. Standardisation and consolidation of the politics of teaching, elimination of educational processes (in particular, humanitarian)³.

A 10-point system for the assessment of knowledge, and centralized testing, as mechanisms to consolidate trends towards the formalization of teaching; the unreflecting nature of the pedagogical community. A fashion for control and monitoring of the quality of education, which in fact creates a mechanism for fighting dissident thinking. Repeal of all reforms. Complete elimination of the independence and autonomy of educational establishments. Legislative backing for the existing educational system. Skilful use by the state of market mechanisms in education, by means of the compulsory introduction of additional educational services. Total victory for paradigms for modernizing Soviet education Belarus-style. Speeches by Ministry of Education officials are full of talk of universal higher education (?), that retains the principle of social justice; administrative control with respon-

³ In the theory of modern pedagogic, teaching, upbringing and education are quite distinct from each other in their intention and outcomes. Teaching (обучение) is the transmission of knowledge, ability and skills. Education (образование) is the formation of modes of thinking and self-determination. Upbringing (воспитание) — is the process of forming the values and aims that condition standards and modes of behavior.

sibility transferred to the teacher (in reality, a mechanism for collective irresponsibility); the effectiveness of the contract system; the priority of upbringing over teaching, and of the principle of polytechnism over education's humanitarian content. Slowly but surely, the broad sweep of education is being eroded.

Naturally, only a strong subject – with independence of intellect and resources, capable of presenting its own considered program for civic education, attracting a substantial number of pedagogues, adults and students, and acting in line with clear concepts, in a coordinated, open way – can resist such a powerful program of state revanchism. On the intellectual level, but not in terms of resources, this might potentially be a system of non-formal education. But the majority of third sector organizations in Belarus were not established with a view to coordinating their activities with the state sector. The third sector has led its own independent life, other subjects in the field of education have failed to conduct any systemic reflection, and it has not been recognized that the state is staging an aggressive and deliberate policy of revanchism. Many non-governmental organizations still think the state sector is the place for realizing their principles of democratic education. This short-sightedness amongst third sector educators actually means that the specific aims of civic education are failing, and it works in favor of the aims and tasks of the state's totalitarian system. It is becoming extremely difficult to work in the state arena without losing sight of the real aims for democratizing education, or jeopardizing reflective processes and the educators' clear self-determination, unless educators are highly skilled in game-based reflection, with real academic status, and substantial resources. What is more, the state sector has learnt to make clever use of third sector resources by means of procedures for the registration of projects, secret agreements and so on.

The only things with which the third sector can resist the state's policy on patriotic upbringing are the real (not distorted and inverted) substance and purpose of civic education, skilful propaganda, clarification, the confident self-determination of educators and extensive promotion and dissemination of models of democratic behavior. There is therefore a dramatically increased demand for educators to be qualified in the sort of strategic and tactical thinking that embraces not only oneself but all the other subjects in the field – thinking that can consider friends and foes, make a reasonable assessment of one's own actions and those of others, and work out an effective, business-like course of action at any given moment, based on a clear understanding of options, availability of resources and the scope for activity.

3. It would be a mistake to ignore the so-called western factor in the management of the civil sector in Belarus. This western focus is necessary and very important in this post-Soviet period. The lack of resources for civic education in the early 1990s could simply not have been remedied without help from western partners. But

what was needed was a relationship of partnership, not subordination.

Partnership relations assume the existence of two subjects with different objectives, in our case, western organizations and Belarusian organizations. The difference between their aims is dictated by spatial, territorial and regional differences. The partners may be drawn together by a set of common values and principles, for example, a commitment to democracy, globalization, or the protection of the environment. But, as a point of principle, these aims cannot be identical for the western and Belarusian participants in the process. Partnership relations are established through communication, and the identification of differences and common elements in the aims of their activity. As a result of this communication, a zone of responsibility takes shape for each partner, safeguarding specifics (the principle of subsidiarity), and agreements are reached for the exchange and mutual provision of resources to help achieve the aims of both sides.

Belarusian civic organizations' lack of defined aims and structures in the early 1990s produced a situation in which the western partners began to offer not only financial resources, but also their own values and aims. The Belarusian side contributed almost nothing to the aims of these projects, only offering manpower to work on the aims and tasks set by the western side. Belarus thus became the stage for the introduction of democracy, but there was no Belarusian subject, which is fundamentally contrary to the principles of partnership. For a period of 15 years, therefore, no cultural norm for democratic society developed in the third sector. Instead, there developed a destructive tendency for everyone to listen to and indulge their western partners, setting up organizations first and only later thinking about their aims, and adapting to democratic standards which had evolved in the particular conditions prevailing historically in Europe and America, but not in Belarus. A tendency also developed to replace or veil democracy with communist and nationalist principles. At an Organizational Activity Game in Kiev (March 2005) and a seminar of the Association for Civic Education in January 2006, trainers and participants judged this approach to be ill-considered (on both sides), and unsuited to the specific dynamics of the Belarusian situation.

The western partners already have well-established democracy that has been consolidated and practiced over a long historical period. What representatives of western structures actually pass on is not the building blocks of democracy, but the reduced day to day forms and methods of the democratic way of life. And this is in Belarus, which still has no more than the first seedlings of democracy, which need to be strengthened if they are to survive and spread in the face of stiff competition from the traditional Soviet way of life and thinking. Belarus needs to cultivate and consolidate its cultural foundations and sources of democracy, not these secondary forms and traditional working methods. This lack of synchronization between the western and Belarusian part-

ners renders the activity of Belarus's civic organizations ineffective, reinforces the bankruptcy of their aims, strategy and tactics, and creates a climate in which funding is consumed in senseless competition for resources within the third sector. The aim is nothing, the process is all, and we'll get a result somehow or other. Put crudely, this is an amateurish and sloppy approach to humanitarian work. Against this background, it is impossible to see any professionalism or reflective analysis, and these in fact come to be seen as threatening the existence of the third sector as a whole. It's a Belarusian paradox....

The ineffectiveness of such an approach can be seen not only where it affects substance, but also at a formal level. The number of organizations (both registered and unregistered) is stable or increasing, especially during pre-election campaigns, but the number of activists, participants and involved citizens is falling. The scale of civic education could not possibly be described as massive, however much the pedagogues of civic education might redefine themselves as educators, specialists in organizational development, or trainers. The result still has to be measured against the aims, and the aim of civic education is to create mass civic behavior, based on democratic values and discernible in the standard and non-standard behavioral situations that determine the development of history in a concrete region.

Meanwhile, it must be said that there is an alternative to the unreflecting approach which has been evolving in Belarus for over 10 years. It does not involve many people, is not well-resourced and widespread or having much impact, yet it has a serious theoretical basis, wide-ranging applications and integrity, and uses systemic, realistic thinking. The Systemic Thinking Activity (SMD) approach aims to professionalize civic education, based on ideas about the self-determination of the individual, as well as systems of thinking and activity, reflection and artificial development of social systems through projection and planning (G.P.Schedrovitsky) The trend towards the methodologisation of education and the implementation of a cultural policy in Belarus evolved at the end of the 1980s from Organizational Activity Games (held at Staiki and Raubichi), and became widespread in the sphere of state education in the early 1990s⁴.

In 1992, the authors on 'know-how' in educational-methodical complexes, B.V.Palchevsky and L.S.Freedman, were working on the problem of educational standards and understood that in the new conditions it was impossible to address it using traditional methods; serious methodological consultation was needed. Vladimir Matskevich, representative of the methodological movement, was invited to Minsk⁵.

In 1992, the first methodological seminar of leaders in the field of education was held at the Institute for the Improvement of Qualifications (IPK), now known as the

Academy of Post-Diploma Education (APO), and in 1994 the Agency for Humanitarian Technologies came into being as a social organization engaged in consulting and expert analytical activity in the fields of politics, education, business and the media⁶.

Over the last 12 years, within the framework of a systemic thinking activity approach to education, plans have been developed for the reform of Belarusian education in schools, and for professional education (as alternatives to the official system), concepts have been developed for the overhaul of humanitarian education, and for functional literacy, the latter of which in fact predated the introduction of the Bolonsky process in Belarus: there has been a graduate dissertation on the methodology of education (S. Krupnik), and doctoral dissertations on "The modelling of activity by the specialist-professional" (A. Lashuk), and "The theory and practice of training education managers" (S. Matskevich); plans have been developed and implemented for training education managers at the Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO), the Academy of Post-Diploma Education and the Institute for the Improvement of Qualifications (Grodno). At the academic level, new subjects have been developed and introduced to the educational process: "The pedagogic of activity", "Projection and planning in education", and "The theory of systems and activity". In the third sector, methodological education seminars and organizational activity games have repeatedly accompanied political decision-making (Free Trades Unions, Charter-97, the People's University, the Christian party, the "Strategy for Victory" movement). Everywhere that a resource for reflective, non-standard thinking and effective self-determination is needed, methodological services have become relevant and in demand, showing a way forward.

Self-determination, thinking, reflection and behavior can and must be taught – such is the clear message of the activities involved in the sphere of civic education. Civic education is not a market where demand is formed "from below". Educational aims are derived from culture, ideal values and the problematics of the activity situation, not from the mass desires of the people. Demand for education still needs to be cultivated and shaped, as it will not simply appear naturally. This is all the more so with the demand for civic education, as a form of education capable of resisting the traditions of Soviet ideological education. In Belarus, there is simply no mass demand for civic education. Civic education has always been considered unattractive and its intended aims seem complicated, especially when seen against the background of current pedagogical primitivism and collectivism, since it expects both pedagogues and the other participants in the educational process to take personal responsibility for the results of education.

⁴ Krupnik S.A. Methodological approaches in Pedagogics// Pedagogika, 2000, Nr 4.

⁵ Matskevich V.V. Polemical studies on education, Liepaya, 1993.

⁶ Cultural politics, Nr 0, 1994.



A citizen is an active person, having commonly-held human values as well as democratic values, equipped to live in a democracy, and make independent decisions, understanding that the future state of society and his own fate depend upon his decisions and behavior. Where there is no democracy, the citizen is someone capable of building it, and building a corresponding type and system of human relationships, able to recognize and foresee threats to democracy, and to find ways to counter these. The qualities of a citizen can be discerned only in corresponding activity and historical situations – elections, public forums, the courts, defense of rights, communications and so on.

An activity situation is characterized by the time and place of its purposeful action. Not all activity situations require thinking. When they are not occurring for the first time, and have become the norm, habitual or traditional, participants in the situation do not need to exercise their intellectual abilities. But the situation in Belarus, where democracy is not yet the traditional form of life for the people, requires consideration of organizational forms and actions, strategic and tactical skills, reflection, the adoption of a position, and a capacity for effective action in ill-defined circumstances. Hence the technological and systemic approach to civic education – it is only possible to teach civic behavior using thinking activity forms of teaching – and in no other way.

Every technology for education has the following elements: educational aims, a subject and object of education, methodic of instruction, the content of education (the answer to the question of what to teach), a phased organization of the process, and a result. A technology is systemic if all these elements are in harmony, without conflict, and correspond logically with one another. The difficulty with the technology of civic education is that civic education needs to be based on activity or at least to simulate it. But activity can only be set and organized by the subject – the educator. The position of the subject as a reflecting individual, capable of formulating educational aims in a cultured and appropriate way, and translating them into methodic of instruction, organization and control of the educational process, is the most important element of civic education. The individual and the subject of an activity are not identical concepts. The subject of an activity is an amalgam of the self-determined individual, an ideal set of aims and motivations, with corresponding qualifications and competencies. In the absence of any of these factors, the subject lacks substance and is incomplete. Within the technological and activity-based approach, the pupil, student or listener is always an object of education, rather than a subject, since he does not possess the ideal aims of education. In place of aims, students have expectations, requirements, wishes and an incomplete picture of the outcome. The object of education is an individual and he cannot suddenly become a subject. Ownership of the criteria for the success and the totality of educational aims always rests with the pedagogue. Pedagogic activity is carried out by the pedagogue, not the pupil.

The pedagogue, or educator, is the centre and main subject of civic education.

This theoretical position – utterly simple in our view – is beginning to challenge the loudly trumpeted personality-oriented basis of traditional pedagogic, in which there is in fact confusion over who is who and who is responsible for what in education. The pupil has suddenly become the subject, since he is an individual doing something. As a result, pedagogues in schools are hardly teaching at all – pupils are supposed to learn on their own somehow while pedagogues monitor, control and define requirements. The technological structure of the educational process has changed dramatically. There is less time for imparting and transmitting knowledge, and a greater load on pupils. For some reason, this is considered to be the greatest achievement of humanism in pedagogic. The fashion for this type of humanization and humanitarianisation in civic education means its aims are confused with the expectations and interests of those involved in the process; it removes the educator's obligation to reflect on and formulate educational aims derived from our culture and from analysis of the Belarusian situation; it encourages a mindset in which convenient teaching processes are compulsory in civic education, creates a fear of opposing views on the content of education, and so on. As a result, it is not possible to either set or achieve any aims for civic education; they are simply replaced with the transmission of information, the teaching of methods and so on.

Of what kind of activity is the pupil or student a subject? Activity to acquire knowledge, skills and so on, but nothing of a pedagogical nature. Because, within the framework of a defined educational activity, the individual is the object, it is always necessary to consider his psychological features, develop relevant effective teaching methods and so on. On the other hand, the pedagogue, recognizing that he is dealing with a human object, needs to be all the more accurate, correct, precise and reflective in his pedagogical inventions and innovations. Pedagogue and pupil are united only by the common space or place in which all elements of the educational activity intersect and assemble.

When activity-based pedagogic are conducted in a properly principled way, there arises a question of the legitimacy of the role of educator. What gives a pedagogue the right to become an educator in civic education? Only his own civic position, and his energetic, considered and successful action within Belarus's political situation. The right to be an educator must be perpetually demonstrated and validated. Only a democrat can teach democracy, civil illiteracy can only be eradicated by a literate and experienced pedagogue, the organization of teaching activity can only be done by someone who has experienced it for himself, for real, and reflected upon it so that he knows the next step that he has to prepare people for. The teaching of communication can only be done by someone who is not himself afraid of communicating, or of publicity. The whole history of becoming and functioning as a professional edu-

cator must show adherence to principles of democracy and responsibility, with words matching deeds.

For example, one of our social organizations declared its intention to work for educational reform, to develop plans for democratic reform and do work with pedagogues in schools on national rebirth, democracy and so on. This organisation had extensive foreign links, and had studied the implementation of educational reform in Europe. Imagine my surprise, then, when it set up an educational web-site using models for educational reform from many countries but not Belarus (which can offer at least three). At first sight, this might be attributed to unprofessionalism on the part of the project's managers, but when the same thing happens again in similar situations there can only be one conclusion — that the declared principles of democracy and national rebirth are mere words — the reality is all about comfortable jobs, ambition and narrow interests. The inability to see any home-grown sources of development in Belarus, and the constant use of foreign rather than Belarusian conceptual models, is becoming ingrained, though it runs counter to the principles of Belarusification and democratization. It is unacceptable that educators in civic education should live in Belarus and yet not see or think Belarus; to claim to be managing processes in Belarus without even noticing what already exists.

One of the main requirements of the technology of civic education is that it should be appropriate and pragmatic, produce useful results in the real political situation, and show the way forward. Yet where a situation demands planning, for example, for the maiden, people for some reason start teaching ecology, business or anything else that suits them, except what's needed at the maiden. Still worse, the people doing the teaching do not know what is required for the maiden, but seem merely to be people with money somewhere abroad, such as Lithuania. Have we really come to the point where we have to go to Lithuania to learn how to put up a tent? Certainly, we are in a difficult situation, the powers are gradually creating conditions that are antagonistic to the normal organization of the informal educational process. A law on criminal and administrative responsibility for education was enacted in the pre-election period for strategic and tactical reasons. But if we begin to play by the rules and laws of authoritarian control, we will never be able to do anything anywhere. It is foolish to hope that the authoritarian regime will create conditions favorable for civic education. We are in a state of competition, and one which is unequal and hostile. There is no point in waiting for favorable conditions. So we must look for new reflective gaming forms and methods of working, without in any sense rejecting the original aims of civic education. Spineless seeking of psychological comfort in such conditions is inappropriate, even criminal.

Particular attention should be paid to the methodic of civic education. Technology cannot happen without methodic, but they should be selected to correspond

with educational aims, the specifics of the target group and so on. Over the last decade, civic education has accumulated a sizeable archive of teaching methods. The "Educator" journal publishes these with enviable regularity. But the most important requirement of the methodic of teaching is that they should offer an appropriate framework. They themselves have no value if they work without a framework. Methodic is like the kitchen of the educator. On the one hand, he is free to select his methodic, but on the other hand is limited by the precise, contemporaneous and pragmatic nature of his educational aims. For example, the aim of the Organizational Activity Games in Kiev was to develop a strategy for victory and to form the nucleus of a collective subject to implement that strategy. This was relevant at the beginning of 2005, but no later. And the Organizational Activity Games method, with its specific games technology and language is only a form, a means of achieving a given aim.

Unfortunately, sometimes aims are replaced by methodic themselves. Then information is conveyed for the sake of that information, games technology is for the sake of games technology, a Swedish circle is held for the sake of a Swedish circle, and a seminar for the sake of having a seminar. The substance of civic education — the norms and means of civil behavior in situations involving choices — has contradictory elements, is conveyed via the very complex methodic of instruction, and can be absorbed and consolidated only through activity, not words. In the technology of education, everything has its place and meaning. There must be no confusion between the subject and object of education, between methodic and aims, or between the content of education and the teaching material or program. Making distinctions between these elements, bringing them together and making skilful use of them — this is the fundamental technological and systemic requirement of an educator's competence.

March 2006 showed clearly the ineffectiveness of the previous period's civic education systems. But it would be wrong for educators to abandon their aims and work shaping citizens and civil society. On the contrary, this task is more relevant and urgent than ever. After the 2006 elections, almost everything had to be started again from scratch. This has given us extra time, while it is still completely unclear what the next active political events might be. We must make good use of this time. Above all, we must work on our mistakes without making excuses, re-examine the conceptual basis of civic education, redefine what it means to be an educator, how to retrain them and re-equip them with methodological and technical skills. Educators in civic education are becoming leading subjects, and managers of change who need to plan and consolidate the trend towards real democracy in Belarus. To do this, in principle, we have all that we need. We just need to gather it all together and do it in an orderly fashion.

Translated by Chris Ayton (Scotland)

