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Citizenship Education in Azerbaijan

Reference information: A brief history of civic education
In 1905, it became possible to set up first civic education and public organizations controlled from Moscow, when the Russian government opened the first Muslim charitable organization in Baku. However, media, book printing, and theatre in the national language were still either forbidden by censors or were subject to constant harassment by Russian functionaries. Persons of non-Russian ethnicities, who were disparagingly referred to as "the indigenous" by the Russian government officials, did not have access to education.

On 28 May 1918 in Tbilisi the Republic of Azerbaijan was proclaimed. It is symbolical that the first Minister of Public Enlightenment and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established on 28 May 1918 pursuant to a decision of the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It wasn't fortuitous that the first sprouts of civic education appeared in 1918-1920. The first significant event in the area of public education was the nationalization of schools, which meant a transition to education in the native Turkish language. However, that didn't lead to an encroachment on other nationalities' rights to education in their own languages, e.g. Russian, Armenian, Arabic, or German.

Definition of civic education
The Law on Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted on 19 June 2009 didn't stipulate a definition of civic education. However, Article 4 of the law states: "The main purpose of education in the Republic of Azerbaijan is: to educate citizens who are conscious of their duty to the Azerbaijani state, who respect the people's national traditions and democratic principles, human rights and freedoms, true ideals of patriotism, and independent and creative thought; to prepare citizens who safeguard and develop national spiritual and universal values, who possess a broad worldview, who are capable of appreciating initiatives and innovations, who master theoretical knowledge and practical skills for a modern and competitive economy; to provide for a systemic transfer of knowledge, abilities, and skills, and to constantly improve competencies; to prepare students for public life and effective labor activities".

Informal civic education
It is worth noting that the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918-1920 also took heed to setting up schools for adult education. Starting from 1 November 1919, evening classes for adults and children were made available at the Mikhailov Senior Primary School for the following groups: 1) the illiterate – primary school; 2) people desiring to go through a senior primary school program with or without the French or German languages; 3) teacher training classes: courses for those whose intention was to become a junior or senior primary school teacher, drawing teacher, drafting teacher, or calligraphy teacher; 4) courses for pharmacy apprentices, preparatory courses for enrollment in teacher training institutions, seminars, technical colleges, a military college, nautical classes, school for ship mechanics, school for medical assistants, a telegraph school, railway courses, and all classes of the city's academic institutions, as well as remedial classes; 5) preparatory classes for students enrolling in accounting courses; 6) a special department for workers: geometric drafting in technical work.

Of course, educational authorities gave preference to the native population when creating classes for adults. Starting from 15 March 1920, in Building 7 of the primary school, the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan began evening classes for Muslims. Both literate and illiterate Azerbaijani were accepted for these courses.

The course organizers did not lose sight of also involving Azerbaijani women. 24 March 1919 marked the inauguration of courses for women in the Azerbaijan National Gymnasium.

Pursuant to the current Law on Education, informal education is a form of education provided through a wide range of courses, study groups, and individual studies. Informal education doesn't end with state diplomas and certificates.
In accordance with the aforementioned law, the building of the former Professional Lyceum No. 9 was remodeled to house the IT STEP Academy, opened on 14 September 2016 in Baku. The Academy can accommodate up to 2,100 students, aged 8 to 55. At present, 210 people applied for training at the IT STEP Academy. The number of students is expected to reach 500 by the end of the year. The Academy will run 17 computer classes, robotics classes, an art studio, 4 specialized graphic design laboratories, and photo studios.

Another educational institution – the State Agency for Services to Citizens and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan – launched a pilot project entitled "Fellow Students Service". School advisors will be chosen by the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations ASAN. The project is aimed at improving education management and engaging parents in the activities of general education institutions. In the 1st stage, the project will be implemented in 30 general education schools in Baku.

The primary tasks of the school advisers will be to provide a safe environment for teachers and students, render first-aid and psychological support, conduct regular educational and diagnostic activities with students, parents, faculty, staff, and the management of educational institutions.

Legal environment
In addition to the aforementioned Law on Education, in October 2013 President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev approved the State Strategy for the Development of Education in Azerbaijan. The Strategy makes special mention of the interconnection between educational curricula, requirements, and the priorities of the country's socioeconomic development. Therefore, along with academic studies, today's major priority is practical knowledge, abilities, and skills. The main objective of modern secondary school is to educate citizens who can make decisions, solve problems, and think critically.

Stakeholders
The Law on Education lists the following participants in the educational process: learners are children, schoolchildren, students, cadets, listeners, undergraduates, doctoral candidates, and others; instructors (pedagogical workers) are teachers, assistants, consultants, educators, teacher assistants, educator assistants, leaders of pre-conscription training, speech pathologists, speech therapists, industrial training experts, applied psychologists, sociology teachers, leaders of associations for schoolchildren, teaching method specialists, study group leaders, musical directors of education institutions, researchers at educational institutions, engineers and auxiliary academic workers directly involved in pedagogical processes, nannies, instructors, librarians at educational institutions, publishers and editors, workers in leading subdivisions of educational institutions' management bodies, heads of education institutions and bodies involved in educational work, concert masters and private tutors working in education institutions, social workers, healthcare workers, and workers at other bodies directly involved in pedagogical activities; parents and other legal representatives; education management bodies and municipalities; other individuals and legal entities participating in the educational process.

Other stakeholders are the republic's authorities, businesses, and the civil society of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which comprise the foundation of the Azerbaijani state.

Problems
In the Republic of Azerbaijan, the leadership of "advanced" schools already understand that there is no future in limiting themselves to the bounds of their own educational institution. Such schools cooperate with various international organizations and foundations as part of pilot projects, create networks, including online networks, and participate in a large number of international competitions.

However, overall Azerbaijani schools still remain outside academic research. Yet Azerbaijani schools are open to a close social circle. Indeed, except for the pilot educational institutions, there are no close working relationships with NGOs or businesses. Despite the fact that for the third year already the country has held the Students of Tomorrow competition, it mainly covers pilot schools and lyceums.
3. Newspaper "Golos Rossii" [Voice of Russia], 1919, 7 November
4. Newspaper "Azerbaydzhan" [The Azerbaijan], 1920, 17 March
5. Newspaper "Azerbaydzhan" [The Azerbaijan], 1919, 23 October