

Teaching About Money, Cultural Heritage and Citizenship in Slovakia

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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Definition of Citizenship Education	5
Grade Level	7
General Essential Questions	7
Discussion	11
References	12
Appendices	14

Abstract

One crucial role of the teacher of citizenship education is to facilitate and help legitimize the “pupils’ voice” in the classroom. The teacher should abdicate the “talking head” role and replace it with one that encourages and validates pupil ownership of knowledge. The **purpose** of this paper is to share some practical ways in which a module on citizenship education may be taught to students in the middle and high school levels in Slovakia. **Methodology.** This module was made possible by a United States Department of Education grant to participate in a summer history and culture seminar in Slovakia. The seminar helped to familiarize the author with various aspects of life in Slovakia including history, economics, politics, culture, and education. The **methodology** consisted of collecting material from various workshops, lectures, documents and interviews during the seminar. The author decided to work on a project in which the national bank, the national currency, history, and cultural heritage could all be used to teach about citizenship in Slovakian schools. The **result** was the development of a teaching module using all of the previously mentioned material. One **conclusion** is that the teaching module on money, cultural heritage and citizenship education is a significant addition to the body of literature on teaching citizenship in the schools. The **outcome** is a description on how the module may be used by teachers in a middle or high school classroom to teach about citizenship education using Slovakian coins and bank notes. The author’s **recommendation** is for the adaptation of this module using national currencies to teach about citizenship education in different countries. The first unit introduces the use of Slovakian banknotes and coins to teach about the country’s cultural heritage. The second unit is a lesson on the functions and roles of the National Bank of Slovakia. The third unit is titled, “The Petition Letter” and is an exercise in which students debate the contents of a fictitious letter calling for the elimination of motifs and illustrations on banknotes and coins in Slovakia. The author provided notes, lesson plans, references, and teaching suggestions to aid the teacher.

Teaching About Money, Cultural Heritage and Citizenship in Slovakia

Introduction.

Slovakia is a newly independent central European country which joined the European Union in 2004. Material presented in this paper was researched in 2003 during a Fulbright – Hays seminar attended by the author. The legacy of a one party ideological indoctrination in communist times had an impact on Slovakia in the development of citizenship education. After independence, no organized or coherent education for citizenship under democracy emerged. Civic or citizenship education in the state schools was not designated as such, although individual teachers were doing their own thing. Citizenship education is a multidisciplinary subject that facilitates the promotion of a shared vision in democracy in which all citizens understand, appreciate, and engage actively in civic and political life. Some of the ways in which they do this involve taking responsibility for building communities, contributing their diverse talents and energies to solve local and national problems, deliberating about public issues, influencing public policy, voting, and pursuing the common good. The module was specifically developed to be shared with teachers in Slovak schools. However, it may be also be adapted to suit classes in Grades 9-12 in other countries. Slovakia is a country in transition to democracy from Communism.

The country became independent in 1992 and after a decade of independence, it is still necessary to teach citizenship education to the young in this newly democratic country using historical markers depicting the country's cultural heritage (Kirschbaum, 1999; Liptak, 2002). Slovakia commissioned a national report on cultural policy in 2003, which accentuated the importance of culture in the quest for nationhood (Kovak, Smatlak, and Zmeckek, 2003).

[Insert Map of Slovakia Here]

Schools are the main institutions in which education for citizenship can take place. “They are important institutions in which young minds are developed in areas

relating to civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Schools have the capacity and mandate to reach a lot of young people; they are systematically and directly responsible for imparting citizen norms. They are equipped to address the cognitive aspects of good citizenship – civic and political knowledge and related skills such as critical thinking and deliberation. They are communities in which young people learn to interact, argue, and work together with others, an important condition for the future citizenship (CIRCLE, 2002).

The definition of citizenship education is anomalous in this article. (Crick, 1999 and Kerr, D 1999c) wrote about efforts in England to assess and redefine the concept of citizenship education in a post-modern context centered on four new dimensions under the following - rights and responsibilities, access, belonging, and other identities. The British Conservative government in the late 1980's and early 1990's touted "active citizenship" in which individuals took up their civil responsibilities, rather than abdicating them to the government. That policy called for the greater private ownership and privacy on consumer rights in all areas of life including education. The new Labor government which assumed power in 1997 had a different emphasis. It championed a "civic morality" in which individuals acted as caring people who are aware of the views and needs of others, and who are motivated to contribute positively to the wider society.

This new emphasis also called for values and community action approaches. There were three strands for effective citizenship education. The first stressed the teaching of social and moral responsibility in children with regard to their behaviors to each other and to others. The second was community involvement and service to the community. The third stressed political literacy and making oneself effective in public life, and learning about conflict resolution and decision making at the local, national, European, or global levels.

Other writers who have contributed to the citizenship education dialog in England include (Marshall, 1950) who stressed the civic, the political, and the social dimensions of the concept. Janoski (1998) is credited with providing a missing element in Marshall's trilogy, namely, the participative element in citizenship education. The English have been working on four main areas in the development of citizenship education. The first is drawing up more detailed advice and guidance on Citizenship for schools and teachers.

The second is to fund the production of resources to fill gaps, in relation to Citizenship curriculum Order, identified by teachers. The third is to encourage the growth of professional and training ‘communities of practice’ in Citizenship. The fourth is to set up a stronger knowledge and research base for citizenship education (Kerr, D. (1999a).

There does not appear to be very distinct differentiation between “civic” and “citizenship education” in the example from England, and the author has used the terms coterminously in this paper. Several non-school institutions such as political parties, non-profit organizations, unions, and activist religious denominations have grown smaller or are no longer recruiting as many youth to their ranks in the United States. Moreover, the general tone of political rhetoric is particularly distasteful to youth, who see political campaigns and elections dominated by big money, media spin, and candidates who run against politics and government. Confidence that government officials listen to “people like me” has eroded over the past half century, especially among young people (ages 18-25).who used to be more confident.

Research shows that people with more education are more likely to vote, to follow and understand current events, and to join voluntary associations than those in the same generation with less education. Schools can help by providing quality civic education. National assessments indicate that classroom discussions of issues, courses in history and government that engage students in active learning, and other forms of civic education in schools can improve students civic knowledge, skills, and intentions to vote and volunteer.

Efforts in England to teach citizenship education in the schools have centralized the process and there is now help for teachers in that country who want to develop citizenship education curricula. Other European countries may follow the lead of the British and develop their own national frameworks for citizenship education. Schools in Slovakia have not on their own developed specific curricula on citizenship education. National leaders appear to be preoccupied with other issues and may not show a willingness to dabble with citizenship education anytime soon. Teachers are independently struggling with the development of citizenship education units in their respective disciplines. The author hopes that this article will contribute to the body of literature on teaching about citizenship education in Slovakia.

Grade level:

The module may be adapted to teach lessons in middle school and high school. One of the distinguishing facets of nationhood is the national currency. Many countries have used banknotes and coins to highlight the national heritage with imprints of places of historical national significance, or by photographs of distinguished citizens or national heroes. Interestingly enough, most people in the population use the currency without paying any attention to what is printed on it.

Five Essential Questions and Author's Suggested Responses**1. What is the relevance of a national currency to nationalism and citizenship in a newly democratic country?**

The National currency is one symbol of a country's independence and new countries are quick to facilitate the issuing of a national currency as a national status symbol. National currencies are legal tender in the countries that issue them and the National or Central Bank is usually the solely authorized issuing agency. National Banks go to many lengths to ensure that the national currency is immune from counterfeiting. They also regulate the circumstances in which money is used, transferred or converted within and without (National Bank of Slovakia, 2004).

Because of globalization and the dominance of major currencies such as the Dollar and the Euro, small countries face the challenge of converting their respective currencies to the major currencies for a price. On the other hand, using the international currencies will simplify the decision making process of the corporate sector, and the elimination of conversion costs will result in huge savings. Government spokespersons and officials of the central bank of Slovakia said that they had worked together to make the transition less painful. The \$28 billion economy needs to meet stricter conditions to continue growing, even without the promise of the Euro.

2. Why are depictions of a country's cultural heritage in the national currency significant in teaching about citizenship?

Slovakia is a new small country that has struggled to be recognized by the outside world for centuries. The Slovaks have been "colonized by the Magyars and the Germans.

They coexisted with the Czechs under communism and later had a chance to become an independent nation. It is like finding yourself and then trumpeting your individuality (Liptak, 2002).

Identifying and recognizing cultural and historical events and national heroes are effective ways to coalesce different segments of the society into a national consciousness. “Slovakia published the declaration of the Slovak Parliament on the Protection of Cultural Heritage and a law on the preservation of monuments, and heritage. This attests to a realization that the development of culture is important in any democracy. The government launched the process of public administration decentralization, which in culture brought the gradual transfer of cultural organizations to the jurisdiction of regional elected governments. Unfortunately the transfer was done rather haphazardly, and revealed the general lack of preparation of the players involved in decentralization. A major consequence of this is that adequate financial resources are unavailable to facilitate the teaching and development of culture (Kovac, Smatlak, and Zmecek, 2003.)

3. Why are schools important places to teach about democracy and citizenship?

The educational system represents a unique phenomenon of each nation’s culture. Its contemporary development is a natural continuation of changes that this area of human activities has undergone over the ages. It is important to self-reflect on the historical past and make deductions that may enhance progress in the educational future.

Students spend a lot of their young lives in school. The school has traditionally been looked upon as a place in which values are molded. The school carries a heavy responsibility in teaching children about positive interpersonal relationship. Miller (1990) espoused an interdisciplinary approach to teaching moving from social history, the study of institutions and movements, to the cultural history, an explanation of the world view that underlies and gives meaning to institutions and movements.

4. Do schools have a civic mission? The answer is yes (Carnegie Corporation of New York and CIRCLE 2002). The material in this publication postulates that “citizenship education promotes a shared vision of democracy in which all citizens understand, appreciate, and engage actively in civic and political life. Citizens take responsibility for building communities, and contributing their diverse talents and energies to solve local

and national problems. They deliberate about public issues, influence public policy, vote, and pursue the common good.

5. How can teachers in classrooms use the national currency to teach about citizenship?

This module will suggest a simple way in which classroom teachers in grades 9-12 can teach about citizenship using resources provided by the National Bank of Slovakia. Since banks in other countries have similar resources, the procedures used in this module may be adapted to suit lessons related to different countries and their respective currencies. The module can be divided into several units.

How can a small country maintain its national cohesiveness at the same time that it is joining a mega union of European states? One answer may be in the teaching of the country's cultural heritage in schools. Civic education or citizenship education is not taught as a subject in Slovakia, although school teachers are free to develop units in individual subjects such as English, history, or religious knowledge dealing with some issue of education for democratic citizenship.

Banknotes and coins issued by the National Bank of Slovakia bearing motifs, imprints, and illustrations of national historical events, places, or national heroes present possibilities for the teaching of the cultural heritage and citizenship to secondary school students in Slovakia. The notes and coins are impressive and beautiful, and it appeared that a lot of creative energy was spent by artists, graphic designers, and printers to produce such high quality money.

Portraits of historical figures such as the diplomat, politician, and astronomer Milan, Rastislav Stefanic were imprinted on the 5,000 Slovak Crown Banknote (see Appendix 7). Likewise, The Tatra Peak Krivan, the symbol of Slovak national sovereignty and the protection of its historical territory are imprinted on one side of the 20 Haller coin (see Appendix 8). Lessons may be developed using these resources to teach about citizenship education in Slovakia.

Citizenship education is an amorphous term. It is multidisciplinary, and can lend itself to different interpretations in different political systems and countries. The Carnegie Corporation of New York and CIRCLE (2003) postulate that citizenship Education facilitates the promotion of a shared vision in democracy in which all citizens understand,

appreciate, and engage actively in civic and political life. They take responsibility for building communities, contribute their diverse talents and energies to solve local and national problems, deliberate about public issues, influence public policy, vote, and pursue the common good.

Good citizenship involves the inculcation and practice of civic values. “Values and valuing are integral elements of knowing, and of social activity. Through social activity we internalize and become transmitters of norms in our society. Through social activity we receive feedback on how others perceive our judgments and decisions, and given this information, we shape and reshape our values. Valuing and values are learned; because of that, they may be taught. Students may be taught how to express their values and feelings ... they may be taught how to analyze and assign value to known or anticipated consequences. They may be taught some principles by which they can assign value more successfully and more responsibly.

Value clarification can facilitate the development of student skills in six areas of human interaction – communicating, empathizing, problem solving, assenting and dissenting, decision making, and personal consistency. Students may be helped by classroom teachers to communicate their ideas, beliefs, values, and feelings. They should be encouraged to express and examine their beliefs, values, and feelings in a social setting. On the other hand, they should be encouraged to confront, discuss, and debate beliefs that differ from their own (Casteel and Stahl, 1975).

Students may be helped through classroom activities to empathize with other persons, especially those whose circumstances may differ significantly from their own. Students may be encouraged in the classroom to resolve problems amicably in groups or pairs as they arise. Value clarification enhances student’s abilities to agree and disagree as members of a social group. The process enhances the ability of students to engage in decision making. Democracy creates opportunities for individuals to experience conflict because they must choose between alternative decisions which have different outcomes. Each outcome has consequences some of which are pleasant and some of which are not. To be able to make a decision between equally valued outcomes, a person must be able to analyze and weigh consequences. In the area of personal consistency, value clarification enhances the student’s ability to hold and use consistent beliefs and disbeliefs.

Discussion

The title of the module suggested that there is a connection between cultural heritage, money, and citizenship education. Money is very important as a legal tender in any country. That is why each new country has its own currency. Citizens of each country need to understand the values of banknotes and coins, and to determine whether they are genuine or counterfeit. The National Bank has the constitutional responsibility to safeguard the stability of the currency and to ensure the smooth running of transaction within the country and also of transnational transactions between a country and others.

Evaluate the knowledge learned by your students about the history of Slovakia. Evaluate what your students learned about the role of the National Bank of Slovakia in a market economy. Responsible citizenship entails that people should know the various values of banknotes and coins and use them in daily exchange. Test your student's knowledge of the denominations of the various banknotes and coins. Knowledge about the cultural and historical heritage is important because it legitimizes one pride in the citizenship of a particular country. It also helps citizens to appreciate the significance of the past, a past that contributed to the developments of the present.

Evaluate your students' knowledge about the significance of the illustrative motifs of different historical periods on the back of each coin. Evaluate what your students learned about the life, times, and achievements of personalities on the front of the banknotes such as that of Milan, Ratislav, Stefanik on the 5000Koruna banknote. The back shows Stefanik's grave on Bradlo Hill. Facsimiles of Slovakian banknotes and coins may be found in the Website of the National Bank of Slovakia listed in the references below.

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 22. Content for this article are derived from the author’s participation in the Fulbright-Hays 2003 Seminar in Slovakia and The Czech Republic.

Appendix 1. Slovakia's Borders



Source: CIA World Fact Book (2003).

Appendix 2. Lesson Outline

Audience: These lessons may be taught in middle or secondary school levels in history, geography, economics, or social studies.

Unit 1. The first part involves a teaching of the historical and cultural development of Slovakia from early times to the time of independence using Slovak banknotes and coins.

Unit 2. The second unit involves the teaching of the functions of the National Bank of Slovakia.

Unit 3. The third unit is an exercise containing three parts.

The teacher reads a petition letter intended to do away with motifs and illustrations on Slovak banknotes and coins.

a. The teacher asks the class to form two committees to research and prepare pro and con responses to the petition letter to a third group who would vote on how convincing each presentation was.

b. The teacher requests that the third committee to research and report on the meaning of citizenship education to the first and second committees. These two committee members will evaluate the quality of the citizenship education report using a grade scheme.

c. The teacher will evaluate a general class essay titled “Reflections on the petition letter. The class as a group will write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper about the citizenship education activity they just experienced, how they felt it went, and what they learned from it.

Note: Teachers may use more than three units to teach this lesson.

Appendix 3. SAFE Lesson Plan Format

The following is a suggested lesson plan format for the exercise. Each activity may be conducted as a unit using a similar or different lesson plan format.

Lesson Plan Format:

The SAFE Model Lesson Plan: Title of Lesson:

Money and Cultural Heritage in Slovakia: A Citizenship Education Simulation.

Audience: Middle and Secondary School Students.

Outcomes(s): What will students be able to do?

1. Study the historical and cultural development of Slovakia from early times to independence.
2. Discuss the imprints and motifs in Slovak banknotes and coins.
3. Study the origins, composition and functions of the National Bank of Slovakia.
4. Participate in committees, research specific topics and report on decisions.
5. Discuss the meaning of citizenship education.
6. Engage in group evaluation.
7. Write report and reflection on the simulation.
8. Develop and submit a summary of experience for newspaper publication.

Appendix 4. SAFE Lesson Plan Procedures

1. Distribute a set of Slovakia banknotes and coins to your students. Copies are provided in the appendix for your use.
2. Divide the class into three equal groups. Inform them that you had received this letter from an important member of their community and that you consider it important enough to warrant class debate on its merit or demerits.
3. Read the letter aloud and pass out individual copies to each student. Randomly divide the class into three groups.
4. Group one will research the merits of the petition and submit a report to group three.
5. Group two will research the demerits of the petition and submit a report to group three.
6. Group three will vote on what position was best. Group three will also research the definition of citizenship education and present a report to both groups one and two.
7. Facilitate student research on the history and cultural heritage of Slovakia with particular attention to the events, historical places and faces depicted in the coins and banknotes. You may assist them in using the Library or the World –Wide - Web.
8. All students in the class will write a ten page essay on “Reflections on the Petition Simulation.” Facilitate the research and report writing of group three on citizenship education.

Stimulus (How do I use specific material?)

1. Ask students how much they know about the history and cultural heritage of Slovakia. Teach unit on the history and cultural heritage of Slovakia.
2. Ask students whether they ever looked at the motifs and illustrations on Slovakian National banknotes and coins.

3. Pass out copies of Slovakia banknotes and coins. Ask students to study the motifs and illustration on each banknote and coin.
4. Ask them what they know about the National Bank of Slovakia. Introduce unit on Slovakia banknotes and coins.
5. Ask them what they understand by citizenship education. Teach introductory unit on citizenship education.

Activity (What will students do?)

Students will work in three groups.

1. Group one will research the merits of the petition letter, write a report and present it to group three.
2. Group two will research the demerits of the petition letter, write a report and present it to group three.
3. Group three will vote on which group was most convincing.
4. Group three will research the meaning of citizenship education and write and present a report to groups one and two.
5. All groups will write a ten page essay titled “Reflections on the Petition Simulation.”
6. This will be graded by the teacher on content, sentence structure, coherence, and clarity.

Follow-up (Individual, pairs, small group, large group suggestions.)

Large group.

1. A general class discussion on the petition simulation will follow. The teacher will summarize the reports of the three committees and ask students for feedback.
2. Students may write a group letter to the daily newspaper summarizing their experiences.

Assessment (Performance criteria for success of lesson based on objectives[s].)

Groups will be evaluated on a scale of 1 – 5 (Scale 1 is the lowest, and scale 5 the highest).

1. Topic was poorly researched and presentation was very unconvincing based on the material
2. Topic was inadequately researched and presentation was unconvincing.
3. Topic was researched somewhat and presentation was adequate. Conclusion was somewhat convincing based on material presented.
4. Topic was well researched and adequately presented. Conclusion was convincing based on the material.
5. Topic was thoroughly researched and coherently presented. Conclusion was very convincing based on the material.

Evaluation of culminating essay of each student titled “Reflections on the Petition Simulation.”

The following weights are suggested:

Content – 40 points.

Sentence structure – 30 points

Coherence – 20 points

Clarity – 10 points.

SAFE Lesson Plan Source: Tiedt, Pamela, and Tiedt, Iris, M (2002) Multicultural Teaching: A Handbook of Activities, Information, and Resources. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, p. 55,

Resources:

Author notes on the history and culture of Slovakia.

Publications of the National Bank of Slovakia.

Sample copies of Slovak banknotes and coins.

References

Internet links.

Appendix 5. Notes for the teacher

The teacher may use the following suggested questions on the historical and Cultural Heritage of Slovakia:

1. Is it important in the twenty-first century to teach, or learn about Slovak history and cultural heritage?
 2. If your answer is yes, why, and if it is no, why not?
 3. Identify three significant events in Slovak history that you consider worthy of teaching to the young.
 4. Make a case for each of your selections.
 5. Is there any connection between historical and cultural heritage and national independence? If you say yes, what are these connections?
 6. Does learning about Slovak historical and cultural heritage have any relevance to Slovakian citizenship? Explain your answer.
 7. Should schools teach about responsible citizenship? Why, or why not?
 8. Are depictions or illustrations of historical and cultural events and places. or of Slovakian historical heroes relevant on banknotes and coins.? Give reasons for your answer.
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Appendix 6. Suggested Questions on the National Bank of Slovakia

Facilitate student research on the functions and duties of the National Bank of Slovakia. Assist them to use library and Internet resources as well as publications from the National Bank.

Some questions to use when teaching about the National Bank of Slovakia.

1. When was the National Bank of Slovakia established and how?
2. What are the functions of the Bank?
3. Is there a relationship between having a National Bank and Slovak independence? Explain your answer.
4. Why do you think the National Bank uses motifs and illustrations of historical and cultural events and places on its banknotes and coins?
5. Have you ever cared about the meanings of the motifs and illustrations on Slovak banknotes and coins? Why, or why not?
6. Would you rather use plain coins and banknotes without those motifs and illustrations?
7. Do you feel a sense of national consciousness when you use Slovak money?
8. Should schools teach about the functions of the National Bank?

During the second class period, ask the pro-petition committee to present its argument - 10 minutes. Likewise, ask the anti- petition committee to present its case against the petition 10. minutes. Ask the class to vote on the two positions.

Note: Teach lesson on the functions of the National Bank of Slovakia

Appendix 7: Petition Letter

“Dear Fellow High School Students:

I intend to send out a petition to the Board of Directors and the President of the National Bank of Slovakia to remove all illustrations and motifs from all Slovak coins. I believe that such decorations cost money and are wasteful. Furthermore, people do not pay any attention to them. People just use the coins because they have to. All the Bank should do is give us unadorned coins with the denominations imprinted on them..

Also, I am petitioning the Board and the President of the Bank to remove illustrations of historical and cultural relics and portraits of historical figures from all banknotes. Our culture and history have nothing to do with the use of money. People do not pay any attention to such decorations. These decorations are financially wasteful. We tax payers have to pay for something we do not really need. All they have to do is print the banknote denomination on a piece of paper, and it will work just as well as the adorned banknotes we currently use. I will need your help in collecting 50,000 signatures to send with the petition.

Thank you,

Lidovan Matsek

Note: The name is fictitious. The content of the letter is made up.

Appendix 8: 5000 Koruna



"Issued May 22, 1995, Portrait of a Slovak hero Milan Rastislav Štefánik, born on July 21, 1880, in village called Kosariska, tragically died in Ivanka pri Dunaji (close to Bratislava) on May 4, 1919. He was an important diplomat, statesman, politician, soldier and an astronomer. The portrait is complimented on the left side by artistic elements showing sun and half moon characterizing part of his life that he dedicated to research and observation of astronomy. On the back side is the picture of his final resting place, monument of M. R. Štefánik at Bradlo. Overlapping the picture is apart of Big Bear constellation and on the right side top and bottom are pictures of flowers: Poniklec Velkokvety."

Source: <http://www.slovakheritage.org/Money/5000note.htm>. Downloaded from the Internet on April 12, 2005.

Appendix 9. 50 Slovenskych Korun



"A renaissance polygonal tower, part of the Devin's castle ruins from great Moravian Empire, was erected on castle hill projection overlooking the confluence of the Morava and Danube rivers. Located close to Bratislava."

Source: <http://www.slovakheritage.org/Money/5000note.htm>. Downloaded from the Internet on April 12, 2005.