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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FOSTERING CIVIC IDENTITY AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ЗАСАДИ ФОРМУВАННЯ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ УЧНІВСЬКОЇ МОЛОДІ У СПОЛУЧЕНОМУ КОРОЛІВСТВІ

Contemporary democratic transformations, globalization, digitalization, and increasing cultural diversity have intensified the importance of fostering civic identity among young people as a key objective of modern education. Against this background, the British model of citizenship education has attracted considerable scholarly attention due to its comprehensive, competence-oriented, and value-based approach to preparing students for active participation in democratic society. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical foundations and pedagogical mechanisms underlying the formation of civic identity among school students in the United Kingdom. The research is based on a set of interrelated theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, generalization, and systematization of scholarly literature, as well as documentary analysis of official policy and curriculum documents of the United Kingdom, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the European Union. The study demonstrates that the British model conceptualizes civic identity as a multidimensional construct integrating democratic values, political literacy, social responsibility, critical thinking, and active civic participation. Particular attention is given to the compulsory "Citizenship" curriculum in England, the implementation of the "British Values" framework, cross-curricular integration, democratic school culture, and experiential learning as complementary mechanisms for civic identity formation. The analysis also reveals significant differences in the implementation of citizenship education across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, reflecting the devolved structure of the UK education system while maintaining a common commitment to democracy, human rights, and social cohesion. Furthermore, the study highlights the growing importance of digital citizenship, media literacy, and intercultural competence in response to contemporary societal challenges. It is concluded that the effectiveness of the British model derives from the interaction of curriculum content, school ethos, democratic participation, and sustained cooperation among educational institutions, governmental agencies, and professional organizations. The findings may contribute to comparative education research and provide valuable insights for the modernization of citizenship education in Ukraine within the context of European integration and democratic development.

Key words: civic identity, citizenship education, civic competences, British Values, National curriculum, democratic culture, school students, cross-curricular approach.

Сучасні демократичні трансформації, глобалізація, цифровізація суспільства та посилення культурного різноманіття актуалізують проблему формування громадянської ідентичності молодого покоління як одного з пріоритетних завдань сучасної освіти. У цьому контексті британська модель громадянської освіти привертає значну увагу дослідників завдяки її комплексному, компетентісно орієнтованому та ціннісному підходу до підготовки учнівської молоді до активної участі в демократичному суспільстві. Метою статті є здійснення комплексного аналізу теоретичних засад і педагогічних механізмів формування громадянської ідентичності учнівської молоді у Сполученому Королівстві. Дослідження ґрунтується на комплексі взаємопов'язаних теоретичних методів, зокрема аналізі, синтезі, узагальненні та систематизації наукових джерел, а також документальному аналізу офіційних нормативно-правових і програмних документів Сполученого Королівства, Ради Європи, UNESCO та Європейського Союзу. Встановлено, що британська модель розглядає громадянську ідентичність як багатовимірний конструкт, який інтегрує демократичні цінності, політичну

грамотність, соціальну відповідальність, критичне мислення та активну громадянську участь. Особливу увагу приділено обов'язковому навчальному предмету «Громадянськість» в Англії, реалізації концепції «Британські цінності», міжпредметній інтеграції, демократичній культурі школи та практико орієнтованому навчанню як взаємодоповнювальним механізмам формування громадянської ідентичності. Аналіз також засвідчив наявність суттєвих відмінностей у реалізації громадянської освіти в Англії, Шотландії, Уельсі та Північній Ірландії, що відображає деволюційну модель управління освітою у Великій Британії за збереження спільної орієнтації на демократію, права людини та соціальну згуртованість. Окрему увагу приділено зростаючій ролі цифрової громадянськості, медіаграмотності та міжкультурної компетентності у відповідь на сучасні суспільні виклики. Зроблено висновок, що ефективність британської моделі забезпечується взаємодією змісту освіти, демократичного шкільного середовища, практик громадянської участі та сталого партнерства між закладами освіти, державними інституціями й професійними організаціями. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані у порівняльно-педагогічних дослідженнях і становлять практичний інтерес для модернізації громадянської освіти в Україні в умовах європейської інтеграції та розвитку демократичного суспільства.

Ключові слова: громадянська ідентичність, громадянська освіта, громадянські компетентності, британські цінності, громадянськість, Національний курикулум Англії, демократична культура, учнівська молодь, міжпредметна інтеграція.

Introduction. In the context of contemporary democratic transformations, globalization, the digitalization of society, and increasing intercultural interaction, the issue of fostering civic identity has become particularly significant. Growing social mobility, the expansion of multicultural environments, the spread of disinformation and information manipulation, as well as emerging security challenges, have intensified the need to educate citizens capable of critical thinking, responsible civic engagement, the protection of democratic values, and adherence to the principles of the rule of law, respect for human rights, and social responsibility.

Under these circumstances, citizenship education has evolved beyond its traditional function of transmitting knowledge about the state and society. Instead, it has become increasingly oriented toward the development of civic competences, democratic culture, social participation, and a sustainable civic identity. Consequently, the international educational discourse has witnessed a shift from a knowledge-based model of citizenship education to a competence-based approach that integrates curricular, educational, and experiential learning activities.

Within this context, the experience of the United Kingdom is of particular scholarly interest, as it has developed a comprehensive model for fostering the civic identity of school students over the past decades. This model combines cross-curricular integration, education grounded in the principles of “British Values” concept, the cultivation of a democratic school culture, and the systematic engagement of students in democratic and civic participation practices. The analysis of the British experience is important not only from the perspective of comparative education but also for identifying effective approaches to enhancing citizenship education in Ukraine in the context of European integration and post-war recovery.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Analysis of the contemporary scholarly discourse indicates that research on civic identity has evolved from a traditional understanding of citizenship education as a means of transmitting political and legal knowledge toward a competence-based paradigm aimed at developing active, responsible, and socially engaged citizens. Whereas earlier studies primarily emphasized knowledge acquisition concerning the state, political institutions, and legal systems, contemporary scholarship conceptualizes civic identity as a multidimensional construct emerging from the interaction of cognitive, value-based, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of personality.

The theoretical foundations of this paradigm are reflected in the works of J. Arthur, I. Davies та C. Hahn [1], C. Hahn [13], D. Heater [14], O. Ichilov [15], who interpret citizenship education as a strategic mechanism for strengthening democratic societies. Despite differences in their methodological perspectives, these scholars share the view that civic identity results from the integration of political literacy, civic responsibility, democratic values, and active participation in public life. Collectively, these studies demonstrate a clear transition from an information-oriented understanding of citizenship education toward the development of civic competences and democratic participation.

The conceptual foundations of the British model of citizenship education were established by The Crick Report [21], which marked a turning point in educational policy in England. The report fundamentally redefined the objectives of citizenship education by placing equal emphasis on social and moral responsibility, political literacy, and active community participation alongside the acquisition of civic knowledge. Consequently, it laid the foundation for the contemporary competence-based approach,

according to which civic identity is developed not only through formal instruction but also through authentic experiences of democratic participation. Nevertheless, subsequent scholarly discussions have demonstrated that, despite its systematic character, the Crick model remained primarily focused on citizenship within the national context. More recent approaches have expanded this perspective by incorporating global, intercultural, and digital dimensions of citizenship, reflecting the changing social and political realities of the twenty-first century [21].

These principles have been further developed in the policy documents of the Department for Education [6–8], which illustrate the evolution of British educational policy from a subject-oriented curriculum toward a comprehensive framework of citizenship education. The analysis of these documents demonstrates that the concept of British Values is not treated as a separate curricular component but rather as an integrative value framework underpinning the entire educational process. Democratic principles, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance are promoted through the integration of classroom learning, extracurricular activities, cross-curricular teaching, and students' participation in school governance. Compared with broader European approaches, however, the British model places greater emphasis on strengthening national civic identity, whereas international organisations increasingly advocate balancing national citizenship with global citizenship and intercultural competence.

A comparative analysis of the policy frameworks developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission demonstrates a gradual expansion of the traditional concept of citizenship education toward the broader notion of a democratic culture. While the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education [3] defines citizenship education as a lifelong process of developing knowledge, skills, and values necessary for democratic participation, the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture [4; 5] proposes a comprehensive competence model integrating values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding. Likewise, the Eurydice report [9] highlights the transition of European education systems toward integrated models of citizenship education that increasingly incorporate digital citizenship, media literacy, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, and democratic resilience.

An important direction in contemporary research concerns the reconceptualisation of civic identity under conditions of globalisation. UNESCO's *Global*

Citizenship Education framework [22] broadens the national perspective of citizenship education by emphasising global responsibility, a culture of peace, intercultural understanding, sustainable development, and shared responsibility for addressing global challenges. Consequently, international educational policy increasingly promotes the integration of national and global civic identities as complementary dimensions of preparing individuals for life in an interconnected world.

Recent scholarship has also reconsidered the mechanisms through which civic identity is developed. L. Jerome and B. Kisby [16] examine citizenship education in relation to character education and moral development, arguing that effective civic formation requires the integration of cognitive, ethical, and behavioural dimensions. By contrast, A. Osler and H. Starkey [18] advocate a model of cosmopolitan citizenship centred on human rights, cultural diversity, and social justice. A. Peterson, I. Durrant, B. Bentley, and S. Monteiro [19], meanwhile, argue for a transition from traditional patriotic education toward active citizenship based on democratic participation, critical thinking, and collective responsibility for addressing societal and global challenges. Taken together, these perspectives reveal two complementary tendencies in contemporary citizenship education: strengthening democratic values and moral responsibility while simultaneously fostering learners' agency, civic engagement, and global competence.

More recent studies further demonstrate that citizenship education is increasingly associated with the development of digital citizenship, democratic resilience, and information literacy. In digitally mediated societies, civic identity extends beyond political participation to encompass responsible online behaviour, critical evaluation of information, resistance to disinformation, and ethical engagement in digital environments. These emerging dimensions have become particularly significant in the context of rapid technological change and contemporary security challenges.

Within the Ukrainian scholarly context, citizenship education has likewise attracted growing academic attention. The studies by Ukrainian scholars [10–12] provide a systematic analysis of international models of citizenship education, global educational initiatives, and mechanisms for developing global competence. Particular emphasis is placed on the interrelationship between citizenship education, democratic culture, value formation, and international academic cooperation. In a joint

study, S. Fedorenko and C. Mirra [10] conceptualise civic engagement as a key factor in fostering solidarity, social responsibility, and active citizenship among young people. Furthermore, the work of S. Fedorenko, H. Voronina, and K. Zhurba [11] expands understanding of civic identity formation by examining the interconnections among national identity, family upbringing, and socialisation processes.

Therefore, the reviewed literature demonstrates a clear evolution from knowledge-oriented models of citizenship education toward a competence-based paradigm centred on democratic values, civic participation, critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, digital citizenship, and global responsibility. However, despite the substantial body of research devoted to citizenship education, previous studies have predominantly examined individual components of the British model, such as British values, civic competences, democratic culture, or student participation. Considerably less attention has been devoted to analysing how these elements function collectively as an integrated pedagogical system for fostering civic identity among school students. This research gap is particularly evident in Ukrainian comparative education scholarship and highlights the need for a comprehensive analysis of the British experience.

The aim of the article. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical foundations and pedagogical mechanisms underlying the formation of civic identity among school students in the United Kingdom. Specifically, the study seeks to: 1) to analyse contemporary scholarly approaches to the concepts of civic identity and citizenship education within the British academic discourse; 2) to characterise the theoretical foundations of civic identity formation in the British school education system; 3) to examine the principal pedagogical mechanisms for fostering civic identity in British secondary schools; 4) to analyse the content of the *Citizenship* curriculum in England and determine its role in fostering the civic identity of school student

Research Methods. This study is based on a set of interrelated theoretical research methods. Analysis, synthesis, generalisation, and systematisation of scholarly sources were employed to examine contemporary theoretical approaches to civic identity formation and citizenship education. Documentary analysis encompassed official legislative, policy, and curriculum documents of the United Kingdom, including The Crick Report, the National Curriculum for England, and policy documents issued by the Department for Education, as well as key documents of the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and the

European Union. This approach made it possible to identify the conceptual foundations and pedagogical mechanisms underlying the formation of civic identity.

Results & Discussion. In the contemporary academic discourse [11; 14; 18; 20], civic identity is conceptualised as an integrative personal characteristic that reflects an individual's awareness of belonging to the state and society, commitment to democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as readiness to participate responsibly in civic and political life. This perspective is grounded in the understanding of civic identity as a dynamic process through which active, responsible, and socially conscious citizens are developed, enabling them to engage constructively within a democratic society.

A distinctive feature of the British model is its emphasis on fostering civic identity, which is founded on shared democratic values irrespective of an individual's ethnic, cultural, or religious background. Within this framework, civic identity is understood as a sense of belonging to a political community united by the principles of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance. These principles constitute the conceptual foundation of the UK's policy on citizenship education and are implemented through the framework of the concept "British Values", which represents an integral component of the national education policy. The British Values framework seeks to cultivate a democratic culture, promote respect for human rights, encourage social responsibility, strengthen civic engagement, and prepare students to live and participate effectively in a multicultural society [7].

Although citizenship education across the United Kingdom is underpinned by shared democratic values, its content and implementation mechanisms are shaped by the educational policies of the individual constituent nations, as education is a devolved area of governance. Consequently, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have developed their own legislative and policy frameworks, curricula, and institutional approaches to fostering civic identity among school students [14].

In England, citizenship education is delivered through the compulsory subject "Citizenship", which forms part of the National Curriculum for England and is mandatory for students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Educational policy in this area is coordinated by the Department for Education (DfE), which defines the curriculum for citizenship education, supports the implementation of the British

Values framework, and promotes the development of democratic culture in schools.

In Scotland, Citizenship is not offered as a separate subject. Instead, civic identity is fostered through the Curriculum for Excellence, which integrates citizenship education across all curriculum areas. Particular emphasis is placed on developing Responsible Citizenship, promoting human rights, social justice, sustainable development, and intercultural understanding. Government policy is coordinated by the Education and Skills Directorate of the Scottish Government, while pedagogical guidance and implementation support are provided by Education Scotland.

In Wales, citizenship education is embedded within the Curriculum for Wales, introduced in 2022. One of the curriculum's four overarching purposes is to develop ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world. Civic identity formation is integrated into the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, encompassing history, geography, religion, values and ethics, business studies, and the social sciences. Responsibility for educational policy rests with the Education Directorate of the Welsh Government.

In Northern Ireland, citizenship education is incorporated into the compulsory subject Learning for Life and Work (LLW), within which Local and Global Citizenship constitutes one of the core learning strands. The curriculum is designed to foster democratic culture, respect for human rights, political literacy, intercultural dialogue, and peaceful conflict resolution – an emphasis that reflects the region's historical and socio-political context. Overall responsibility for educational policy is held by the Department of Education of Northern Ireland.

The analysis of educational policies across the constituent nations of the United Kingdom demonstrates that, despite a shared commitment to promoting democratic values, human rights, active citizenship, and social responsibility, each education system has developed its own model of fostering civic identity. England places particular emphasis on the compulsory subject "Citizenship" and the British Values framework; Scotland and Wales prioritise cross-curricular integration of citizenship education; whereas Northern Ireland combines citizenship education with peacebuilding, mutual understanding, and social cohesion. This diversity illustrates both the flexibility of the British educational model and its capacity to respond to the historical, sociocultural, and political contexts of each constituent nation.

One of the principal mechanisms for fostering civic identity in England is citizenship education,

which is a compulsory subject for students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 (ages 11–16). The curriculum is prescribed by the National Curriculum for England and is designed to develop the knowledge, skills, values, and competences required for active participation in a democratic society [6].

According to the National Curriculum for England [6], the principal objectives of citizenship education are to:

- develop students' understanding of the political system of the United Kingdom;
- promote knowledge of the principles of democracy and the functioning of Parliament;
- provide an understanding of the legal system;
- develop students' ability to analyse social and political issues;
- foster critical thinking, reasoned debate, and evidence-based decision-making;
- prepare students for active citizenship and meaningful participation in democratic society.

The "Citizenship" curriculum syllabus encompasses a broad range of thematic areas designed to promote the comprehensive development of students' civic competences, which are as follows: Democracy and the Electoral Process; Human Rights; Government and Parliament; Legal Responsibility; Financial and Economic Literacy; Media Literacy; Cultural Diversity; Social Justice; Global Issues [2].

Rather than focusing solely on the transmission of civic knowledge, the aforementioned curriculum adopts a competence-oriented approach that integrates political understanding, democratic values, critical thinking, and practical civic engagement. This reflects a broader shift in British citizenship education from knowledge acquisition toward the development of informed, responsible, and active citizens capable of participating effectively in democratic society.

A distinctive characteristic of the British model of civic identity formation is its integrative and cross-curricular nature. Unlike educational systems in which citizenship education is confined to a single subject, the British approach systematically embeds civic themes across multiple curriculum areas. Such integration ensures the continuity of civic learning throughout compulsory education while enabling students to explore democratic values within diverse social, cultural, historical, and political contexts [6; 7].

For example, History enables students to examine the development of democratic institutions, constitutional traditions, and the evolution of human

rights and civil liberties. Through Religious Education, learners develop respect for cultural and religious diversity, intercultural dialogue, and tolerance. Geography promotes understanding of global interdependence, sustainable development, environmental challenges, and global citizenship, while the Social Sciences provide opportunities to analyse social structures, public institutions, and mechanisms of civic participation. A particularly important role is played by Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE), which supports the development of personal, social, health-related, and economic competences that underpin responsible decision-making, ethical behaviour, and active participation in community life [8].

From a pedagogical perspective, cross-curricular integration facilitates the transition from the acquisition of theoretical knowledge to the development of authentic civic experience. Citizenship education therefore extends beyond the boundaries of an individual school subject and becomes a transversal dimension of the educational process, linking academic learning with democratic values, social responsibility, and active civic participation. This integrated approach strengthens the coherence of civic learning and contributes to the formation of civic identity as a multidimensional educational outcome rather than as the product of a single curriculum area.

Overall, the British education system implements a comprehensive model of civic identity formation based on the interaction of several mutually reinforcing components: the compulsory subject “Citizenship”, cross-curricular integration, the British Values framework, a democratic school ethos, and authentic opportunities for civic participation. Consequently, the primary objective of this model is not merely to enhance students’ political and legal literacy but to foster democratic dispositions, social responsibility, critical thinking, respect for cultural diversity, and the capacity for active participation in democratic society.

An important contribution to maintaining the quality of citizenship education and disseminating effective pedagogical practices is made by the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT (<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/>)), the United Kingdom’s leading professional organisation for citizenship educators. Established in 2001 following the introduction of Citizenship into the National Curriculum for England, ACT provides professional and methodological support for citizenship education, promotes teachers’ professional development,

develops innovative teaching resources, and encourages research-informed pedagogical practice.

ACT serves as a national professional platform bringing together teachers, researchers, educational experts, policymakers, and representatives of public institutions. Its activities include professional development programmes, national conferences, webinars, specialist consultations, and the publication of the peer-reviewed professional journal *Teaching Citizenship*. The Association also develops curriculum resources, pedagogical guidance, and assessment tools that support the effective implementation of citizenship education across schools.

A distinctive feature of ACT’s work is its close collaboration with governmental bodies and democratic institutions. The Association provides expert advice to the Department for Education on curriculum development and the implementation of the National Curriculum for England; collaborates with the Home Office in developing educational resources on civic security, democratic participation, and community resilience; and works with the Welsh Government on initiatives to strengthen citizenship education. In addition, ACT maintains strategic partnerships with the UK Parliament Education and Engagement Service, the Electoral Commission, parliamentary committees, and other national educational organisations. These partnerships ensure that the professional educational community actively contributes to the continuous improvement of citizenship education policy and practice.

ACT’s 2024–2030 Strategic Plan identifies equitable access to high-quality citizenship education, the promotion of democratic culture, the strengthening of active citizenship, and the enhancement of teachers’ professional competence as its principal priorities. The Association’s activities therefore demonstrate that the effectiveness of the British model of citizenship education depends not only on governmental policy and statutory curriculum requirements but also on sustained collaboration with the professional educational community. This partnership-based approach represents one of the defining characteristics of the British system and constitutes an important factor in its long-term sustainability and continuous development.

The analysis of the British education system makes it possible to identify several defining characteristics of civic identity formation among school students.

First, civic identity formation is characterised by a holistic and systemic approach. Rather than being confined to a single curriculum subject, citizenship

education permeates the entire educational process and is embedded within school culture, extracurricular activities, democratic governance, and everyday educational practice. Such an approach ensures continuity in the development of civic competences and reinforces the relationship between formal learning and students' lived experiences.

Second, the British model demonstrates a strong emphasis on the experiential dimension of citizenship education. Students are encouraged to engage actively in community initiatives, school governance, volunteering, debates, and other forms of democratic participation, thereby transforming theoretical knowledge into authentic civic practice.

Third, the model adopts a multicultural and inclusive perspective that reflects the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of contemporary British society. Civic identity is therefore constructed not through cultural homogeneity but through commitment to shared democratic values, mutual respect, tolerance, and social cohesion.

Fourth, the development of critical thinking and political literacy constitutes a central pedagogical objective. Students are expected to analyse social and political issues critically, evaluate information from diverse sources, construct evidence-based arguments, and make informed democratic decisions.

Finally, contemporary citizenship education increasingly incorporates the principles of digital citizenship. Particular attention is devoted to media literacy, digital ethics, responsible online participation, and the critical evaluation of digital information, reflecting the growing importance of civic engagement within digitally mediated societies.

Conclusions & Research Prospects. The findings of this study indicate that the formation of civic identity among school students in the United Kingdom represents a purposeful, coherent, and multidimensional educational process implemented through

the curriculum, school ethos, extracurricular activities, and democratic practices embedded within everyday school life. The British model is underpinned by democratic values, the rule of law, respect for human rights, cultural diversity, and active civic participation, all of which collectively shape students' civic identity.

The analysis further demonstrates that British citizenship education extends beyond the transmission of political and legal knowledge toward a competence-based educational model that integrates political literacy, social responsibility, critical thinking, democratic participation, and intercultural understanding. Within this framework, the British Values concept performs an integrative function by establishing a shared value foundation that supports social cohesion while acknowledging the multicultural character of British society.

An important characteristic of the British model is the interaction of several complementary pedagogical mechanisms, including the compulsory Citizenship curriculum, cross-curricular integration, democratic school culture, experiential learning, and sustained collaboration between educational institutions, governmental agencies, and professional organisations such as the Association for Citizenship Teaching. Their combined implementation contributes to the development of civic identity as a dynamic and multidimensional construct rather than merely an educational outcome.

The findings also suggest that the British experience provides valuable insights for comparative education research and may inform the further development of citizenship education in other national contexts. In particular, future research should explore the possibilities of adapting selected elements of the British model to the Ukrainian education system in the context of European integration, democratic transformation, and post-war educational reconstruction.

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