

POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY AS AN INCENTIVE FOR STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In most cases the studies highlight low motivation to study political science among students of non-humanitarian specialties. The article provides strong evidence of the importance of teaching political science in a technical university. It is shown that it contributes to

formation of civic activity of future specialists. It is alleged that the problem of civic education and upbringing of contemporary Russian youth deserves constant and close attention, and at all levels of the power vertical. And it should find an adequate reflection in the educational process of any institution, regardless of its industry.

Keywords: higher education, teaching of political science, civic activity, political socialization, technical university.

Background. Modernization of the political life of Russia, formation of the rule of law, multi-party system and other democratic institutions have put before the higher school the task of teaching students the basics of political science of all specialties, which will help both the political socialization of young people and broaden the horizons of specialists who will be able to analyze their professional problems in the light of political concepts and methods. In the process of studying political science, technical university students need to form a higher political culture, the ability to critically assess the diverse phenomena of political reality, the skills of analytical thinking, the ability to navigate the diversity of information related to the public sphere.

At the same time the development of the problems of political education for students of transport universities, especially for specialties and directions that ensure the implementation of multimodal interstate logistics chains remains crucial. Today, any type of transport can have an outlet to the international level, therefore transport specialists need more complete knowledge and clear guidelines in the field of international politics, civic education and in general political science. These aspects were reflected in the concept of the development of transport education until 2030 and in the project of the Russian University of Transport.

Objective. The objective of the author is to consider political education in the university as an incentive for student civic engagement.

Methods. The author uses general scientific methods, analytical method, evaluation approach.

Results. The emergence of political science as an independent science and academic discipline in the West occurred in peculiar historical conditions and in a certain political context [1–4]. The whole history of political science shows that at least two conditions are necessary for its normal development. First, political science becomes popular, as a rule, when democratization processes take place in society, to which it itself contributes to no small degree. Secondly, the utility for practice from political science is usually directly proportional to its independence and non-engagement. Hence the conclusion: political science is a complex professional sphere that should be dealt with by professionally trained people [3–5].

As it is known, the introduction of political science into the curricula of universities in Russia also occurred in the conditions of democratization of the Soviet and then Russian society. The replacement of the utmost ideologically «scientific communism» with modern political knowledge was designed not only to form a new picture of the world for the young generation of Russians, but also to equip young people with life guides in a practical reality that is different for them [6–8]. Among other things, serious hopes were placed on political science in terms of scientific expertise of decisions taken by the new ruling elite, as well as political socialization of the younger generation on the principles of democracy, civic engagement, etc.

Both of these tasks fully corresponded to the level of requirements set today for the international community of political scientists. Thus, at the World Congress of the International Association for Political Science in Durban (South Africa, June-July 2003), special attention was paid to the problems of development of the political community

and political science in new democracies, as well as influence of political concepts on real management practices [7–9].

To what extent were these expectations justified? Obviously, it is far from full. Since the 1990 State Committee for Science and Technology of the USSR decided to teach political science and sociology in the country's educational institutions, several power strategies have changed.

At the initial stage (the first half of the 90s of the last century), the relations of political science and power could be called allied, or at least partner: the authority that identified itself as democratic, perceived the theoretical postulates set forth in the relevant textbooks and monographs, as approval of their intentions and actions, their necessary legitimization. However, after a number of years, after the unsuccessful reform of the domestic economy and the social sphere, as well as due to the painful split that has arisen in the cultural field, the attitude to political knowledge is changing dramatically [8, 10].

In the second half of the 1990s, political knowledge is already perceived as purely instrumental, where political technologists, which serve the interests of certain political and financial groups and which ignore the canons of moral philosophy, play a decisive role. This becomes not just a source of income (and not a little), but, unfortunately, the norm of communicative culture within a significant part of the professional political science community [11, 12].

Political socialization can be defined as the process of assimilation by the individual of ideological and political values and norms of society and their formation into a conscious system of socio-political attitudes that determine the individual's position and behavior in the political system of society. A politically socialized person is not just interested in politics and participates in it. Possessing high political consciousness, political culture, he acts in the political sphere as a socially active person.

The main difficulty in teaching political science and a technical university, including transportation, is that the motivation for studying political science among nonhumanitarian students is clearly reduced.

An even more significant factor complicating the transfer of scientific achievements through teaching in higher education is the very nature of the development of political science. In the teaching of political science, there is always a danger of localization of political problems, reduction of scientific issues to country specificity and, as a consequence, increase of the relativity of political truths, and on the other – the tendency to excessive universalization of the studied subjects, which leads to the separation of the educational process from political specifics. For Russian universities in general, the educational strategy of priority choice of subjects and subject areas, which primarily reflects the specifics of the development of domestic policy and at the same time meets the needs of the student audience, is preferable to all universities, but on the basis of using theoretical and practical tools that integrate the experience of world knowledge.

Political science belongs to the number of sciences, familiarity with which is included in the necessary set of conditions for formation of personality. Teaching of specialized disciplines of this series is intended to help students of a technical university to rationally and critically

evaluate political phenomena, consciously participate in the political life of the country, in particular, in the election of federal and municipal authorities. The main role of political science in political socialization consists in the formation of political literacy and genuine citizenship of student youth.

There is a reason to hope that the humanitarian and educational potential of political science, the civil sounding of scientific political thought will ensure the worthy presence of political disciplines in the intellectual space of the Russian higher school.

All the unfavorable tendencies that formed and denoted themselves in the discursive field of political knowledge, yet did not prevent it from fulfilling the role of a certain normative reference point for the relatively weak civil society in Russia, which was struggling to maintain and support the public political sphere. Almost fifteen borrowed and mastered foreign developments were simultaneously a time when there was an understanding that Western theories were of little use for explaining Russian processes. These theories were based on other material and explained the realities characteristic of the length of other political and geographical areas. In the domestic context, they can serve only as clues and stimulate their own search. However, we recognize that in the capital and provincial centers of science and education it often proved to be more prestigious, it is easier and more financially beneficial to retell the Western books, rather than fight over the comprehension of living material. Hence, it is appropriate to warn that it is necessary to fear the rejection of a new official science because of its sometimes low suitability for explaining Russian reality.

Political science, in order to preserve its role and purpose in society, must become a critical theory aimed at researching the possibility of an action that overcomes the reality that has lost its moral dimension [5, 6, 9]. If this does not happen, it will not only lose its current status in society, but also inevitably share the fate of other scholastic theoretical constructs such as Soviet-era scientific communism.

As for the students, their awareness of their lack of demand in their own country, the substitution of manipulative PR projects (such as «Nashi», «Mestnye», etc.), full overlapping channels of upward vertical mobility at all levels of the power pyramid are capable of radicalizing critical attitude in their environment. This may encourage some of its representatives to openly protest actions similar to those undertaken by students of Serbia, Georgia or Ukraine in recent years, which played an important role in reconfiguring the policies of their states. It is by no means a fact that such activity will manifest itself in us in legal, conventional forms. Among other things, political forces interested in general destabilization of the situation in Russia can take advantage of this.

Conclusion. In our opinion, the problem of civic education of modern Russian youth deserves much more attention, and at all levels of the power vertical. It is necessary to encourage comprehensive educational and educational activities of universities, student organizations and movements, political youth clubs, youth parliaments existing in a number of regions. It is necessary to unblock channels of upward mobility vertically for the representatives of the younger generation, to representatives of the authorities to enter into open dialogue with young people more resolutely. And from this point of view, it is impossible to reduce the importance of targeted teaching of political disciplines in higher educational institutions, where not only a professional is preparing himself, but also a conscious citizen, a patriot, the creator of the future of his country.

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