



## FORMING COMPONENTS OF CIVIC COMPETENCE

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This study offers and systematizes components and criteria of youth's civic competence. These components and criteria have the potential to promote civic education within the secondary schools of Latvia. Civic education may promote participation in social life. However, it has to be based upon knowledge, common values, certain skills and the determination to actively and democratically fit in within society.

**Keywords:** Civic competence, Civic education, Civic engagement, School.

### Introduction

Nowadays the need for civically responsible society, as well as civic participation is increasing. They improve the long term development of the local community and the country. Sociologist Kenneth P. Wilkinson admits that: “civic participation provides an opportunity for personal development in various levels of the society. The active participation of youngsters can create the functions of the local society. The interaction between youngsters can promote the capacity of the community, as it turns into the more focused process. This process takes place in various levels of the society when youngsters identify their common needs and work together to fulfill them. Interaction is a permanent feature that provides a base for the ecological, cultural, organizational and socially psychological aspects of the community.” (Wilkinson, 1991). The task of the school is to promote these processes by using versatile interdisciplinary methods in the process of education as well as outside of it. In order to promote the long term development of the society a system for promoting the civic participation, education and competence of youngsters is needed (Perkins et al., 2001). The most important part of the promoting of civic participation is done by the schools – civic education promotes competence, thus promoting the development of civic participation. It must be noted that the upbringing within the family plays an important role. That is where the attitude towards civic participation is formed by the example that is set by the parents (World Bank, 2007).

The improvement of civic education can promote the civic participation within the society, It must be noted that the United Nations Organization recommends providing access to good quality formal and informal education and recognizes civic education as an important part of education. (UNESCO, 2011). Executive director for the Society for Research in Child Development and psychologist *Lonnie R. Sherrod* highlights that civic participation has to be just as prioritized as Math. More attention must be directed towards the teaching of the skills of civic participation within schools. Civic education and participation forms and maintains the society as it is the only way a civic society can develop (Sherrod, 2007). It must be noted that civic knowledge promotes the support towards democratic values, political participation and



helps citizens to understand and defend their rights and responsibilities. It also forms an opinion of the individual and directly promotes civic action taking (Galston, 2004).

The aim of this publication is to define and base the criteria and indicators of the forming of civic competence by gathering and analyzing various theories, approaches, concepts. This is done using generally theoretical, empirical, data processing research methods and taking the framework of the educational content of basic education of the Republic of Latvia.

### **The Interpretation Of Civic Education**

The successful inclusion in the society and reaching the goals in person's life is directly connected with the ability to access education. In order to be adaptable for a change for the society there must be high results of civic education from the educational program. An individual has to be ready to participate in the political processes even though the environment is sometimes not encouraging it. By carrying out changes in the general education that fit the requirements of our time it is possible to focus on the potential of development that is provided by civic education. Civic participation provides the ability for an individual to become a citizen that is aware, responsible, critical and active (Jurs, Samusevica, 2013).

Civic participation bears an important role in the forming of a civic society and the promotion of civic participation locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. One of the most historically important goals of education is to prepare people for participation in democracy (Nash, 2003). Therefore, civic education of the new generation is crucially important in schools of general education. A successful civic education can also promote a society of knowledge which is: "a system of human social relations which insures a high level of innovation in which each individual can achieve a high level of participation while learning, using and creating new knowledge." (Koķe, Muraškovska, 2007). Within the complicated and many sided process of education, the realization of civic education cannot be drawn away from the ever-changing reality and the content of education itself. To carry out the civic education in a more successful way: it is necessary to orient it towards developing specific civic competences in schools of general education by using various pedagogical methods. Thus, it is necessary to create a model of civic competence which would promote the orientation of civic education towards the development of specific competences and skills.

A researcher of civic competence John J. Patrick in his theory of civic competences highlights three interconnected components of the acquirement of civic education: civic skills (the advanced ability to make decisions, the analysis of government and citizenship locally and internationally, the advanced skills of civic participation and civic virtues of cooperation), civic knowledge (the learning of systematic basic concepts, the use of case study), civic virtues – the use of literature and experience (Patrick, 1997).

An expert of jurisprudence David Grossman explains civic education through four dimensions (individual, space, society, time), by highlighting individual abilities, ones determination to recognize him/herself as a part of the community locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, the ability to use the past changes, to invest in the future, to live and work together for the benefit of the society (Grossman, 2000).

President of UNESCO – Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education Lourdes R. Quisumbing characterizes civic education through a holistically social approach (individually – the family – local society – nationally – regionally – globally) as a multidimensional content which is formed by:



- civic education – civic beliefs and skills, based upon knowledge;
- education of value – in the formation of an individual position, civic attitude and views;
- environmental education – the process of forming understanding, skill and values that fit the term sustainable (Quisumbing, 2002).

The researchers of the center of civic education of the United States in their report about the policy of education in the United States, with the help of researchers from various universities, have connected civic education with the promotion of the understanding of the ideals of democracy and the determination to abide the values and principles of democracy. The definition of civic education consists of:

- knowledge, that consists of five questions (what is social life, politics and the government? What are the basics of the political system? How does the government carry out the goals of the constitution, values and the principles of democracy? The connections of the citizens of a country with the rest of the world? What is the role of the citizens in democracy?);
- the intellectual skills, skills of participation, through the use of critical thinking, the analysis and synthesis of information, the ability to see and explain the process as a whole;
- civic position between the private and public sectors in which an individual becomes an independent part of the society by abiding political and economic duties, recognizing individual values and human respect, participating in the social life effectively and wisely and by promoting constitutional democracy (Branson, Quigley, 1998).

In the report of the United Nations Organization of science, culture and „*Teachers, Students and Tertiary Level Instructors*” it is highlighted that civic education within the cycle of learning consists of: knowledge (about yourself, others, behavior, culture, history, state e.t.c.), actions (decision making, effective communication, active non-violence), understanding (about yourself, others concepts, motives, crucial questions and processes) and evaluation – reflections of experience, acceptance of yourself and others, respect and evaluation (UNESCO, 2002).

While searching for the common within various researches and explanations (Branson, M., Grossman, D., Patrick, J., Quigley, C., Quisumbing, L.), the author characterizes civic education as a pedagogical process, that is oriented towards the students:

- civic knowledge about the basics of democracy, political participation, human rights, responsibilities, the history and traditions of one's state through the context of the history of the world, by using critical and analytical thinking;
- civic skills in decision-making, teamwork, communication with people that are closely related, skills of civic participation, skills of seeing yourself as a part of a community locally regionally, nationally, internationally;
- civic values, which are based upon a tolerant approach, intercultural dialogue the hearing and accepting of the opinions of others, the forming of one's own position, respect.

Institute for Policy Studies in Education in their report “*Active Learning and Citizenship Education in Europe*.” notes that in order to promote civic education it is necessary to: recognize the active methods of education in which the student is a part of the process, equal to everyone else; insure individual approaches to students by using various methods of studying; orient the process of education towards the widening of the spectrum of the experiences by modeling



various examples of life; be aware of the existing problems within the education and to solve them; be aware that citizenship is a very complicated and many sided (Bauer et al., 2003).

Acknowledging the existing content of education of the Republic of Latvia within the stage of basic education (Rules No. 530. of the Cabinet of Ministers (the standards of basic education, standards of subjects within basic education and the samples of the programs of basic education) it must be noted that in Latvia there is no separate subject “Civic education” – the content of civic education within the stage of basic education is integrated mostly in the subject of “Social sciences” and also highlighted in the subjects “The History of Latvia” and “The History of the World”. At the same time there is no unified approach and understanding of the process of civic education in the schools of general education of Latvia both in the stages of basic and general education.

A similar situation regarding civic education as a separate subject can be seen in other countries as well. In the year 2012 the European Commission confirmed the report of the Information network of the European system of (Eurydice) “Civic Education in Europe”. This report offers information about the following members of the European Union: Iceland, Norway, Croatia and Turkey. The report concludes that: “civic education has been included in the content of education in all of these states. In schools it is taught with three different approaches: as a separate subject, as a part of a different subject or a topic between subjects. The combination of all three of these approaches is often applied. In general the content of civic education consists of a large spectrum of topics. That includes the basic principles of a democratical society, the newest trends of the modern society for example cultural diversity and long term development as well as the international matters of Europe”. The Eurydice research shows exact tendencies of the processes of civic education in Latvia – in a survey of the teachers of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the goal for civic education is seen as the improvement of knowledge about the rights and duties of a citizen (62.8%). Only 4.4% of the teachers think that the goal of civic education is the preparation for the participation in political processes. Teachers in Latvia see the promotion of critical and independent thinking as the main goal for civic education (60.7%), but the effective strategy to overcome racism and xenophobia is seen as less important (1.2%) (Eurydice, 2012).

To implement civic education in the stage of basic education more successfully and to promote civic participation, a model of civic competence that is based upon the existing content of education of the Latvian Republic, has to be created. The professional competence of the teachers is crucial in civic education as well. A pedagogue A. Samuseviča states that: „the process of searching for an optimal methodological solution that matches the task of the modern school can never be finished. New needs and difficulties will always occur in the pedagogical process which requires an innovative methodological approach and a high level of the teacher’s methodological competence.” (Samuseviča, 2000). Every person as a personality is constantly evolving and interacting with the surrounding environment. The improvement of an individual’s skills and knowledge is largely in the hands of the teacher, this applies to civic education as well.

Regarding to the content of the education of the Republic of Latvia, civic education is not a separated subject but more of a complementary tool in the context of the existing subjects. The integrated learning of civic education can be fully carried out by using many sided and interdisciplinary pedagogical methods in the process of education as well as outside of it. This would improve the holistic understanding, connect the theoretical knowledge with a real life and develop the position of the personality within the process of the creation of civic competence. At the same time, it must be noted that a successful civic education cannot be separated from the process of upbringing within the family and the influence of parents and peers.



## The Interpretation Of Civic Competence

The formation of a civic society and the cherishing of democratic values locally, regionally, nationally, internationally are promoted by the successful civic education in schools and families, which is focused on the development of individual civic competences. To organize the introduction of civic education a new model of the creation of civic competence must be created. Unfortunately such a model hasn't been created in Latvia. The creation of a model for the introduction of civic education which uncovers individual criteria and indicators would be an important investment in civic education within the schools of Latvia not only for the stage of basic education but also general education as well.

A model of the creation of civic competence that can be used in schools of general education in the stage of basic education will promote the learning of civic education. This will develop the civic participation and responsibility of the students. The analysis of theory uncovers the many sided explanation of civic competence.

The framework of civic competence can differ, for example it can be formed by:

- knowledge about the political and legal system, democracy, important events, tendencies, changes in the history of the state, Europe and the World, the importance of voluntary work, human rights and duties etc.;
- attitude such as tolerance and respect which is open for change, the ability to adapt, create a compromise, a democratic attitude, a sense of responsibility, political beliefs, loyalty to the principles of democracy, the acceptance of law and human rights, protection of the environment etc.;
- the abilities to participate in political discussions, the understanding of the occurring political processes, the ability to stand for a certain position the ability to interpret and critically assess the information provided by the media by using personal knowledge etc. (Abs, Veldhuis, 2006).

In addition to the knowledge, attitude, skills already mentioned, civic competence includes the understanding of individual values, behaviors and self-upbringing. Civic competence is characterized by a number of components which uncover the level of activity and responsibility of the civic position and its social activities:

- the cognitive component – the forming of a civic position, knowledge about the basic rights and duties of a citizen, knowledge about the history of the state, the skills to analyze social problems, skills in civic participation;
- the component of motivations/values – the sense of patriotism, emotional experiences, the respect for civic values, tolerance, interest about the inner and outer political processes ;
- the component of will – the ability to carry out civic duties, the ability to use civic rights; participation in socially important activities, elections, youth organizations, the ability to work in groups;
- the component of reflections – an adequate and positive self-esteem, the urge for self-education, self-esteem in the civic position, the ability of self-control, a reflexing of the events in the state and society, the understanding and control of the system of individual values (Жупова, 2012).



A different approach to the explanation of the term civic competence shows that it is based upon the competence of studying, emotional competence and social competence which is expressed as the individual freedom of choice (Audigier, 2000). However, the framework of the European civic competence states that it is the attitude of values and participation towards human rights, civic virtues. It is the responsibility of the individual himself/herself. In order to carry this out it is necessary to have the knowledge about democratic processes, critical thinking and the ability to participate in processes of decision-making (Hoskins et al., 2011). From a pedagogical viewpoint civic competence can be characterized as the collection of knowledge, skills, civic attributes and practical actions. It is expressed in the orientation of the civic values of an individual (Котова, 2008). However, in order to promote an active, social, cooperative, and critical environment of studying, regarding civic competence, it is necessary to promote the responsibility of the students by seeing the place of oneself in the society and by acknowledging ones contribution to the society (Himmelman, 2013).

In order to create a model of civic competence that fits the content of education of Latvia, the author looks at two different approaches for the classification of civic competence – The United States and The European Union.

The Center for Engaged Democracy, Merrimack Collegewith the help of some of the leading researchers in this area has created a research “Core competencies in civic engagement” which gathers various approaches for the content of civic competence in the US. It classifies civic competence as:

- expressions of civic knowledge, knowledge about democracy, knowledge about the political system of the state, knowledge about the culture and the identity of the state, understanding of the history of the state and how it connects with the present, civic rights and duties, the role of a person in the process of making decisions and legislation, understanding of the need for resources in the ensuring of a long term future for the society, knowledge about international aspects;
- the ability to cooperate with others, the ability to gather, analyze and present information, the ability to defend an opinion with structured arguments, the ability to listen to others, the ability to defend social justice, the skill of leadership;
- in practical use – to serve the interests of the society, to create a balance between personal and the interests of the group/community, the acknowledgement of human freedom and respect, empathy, openness, tolerance, justice, responsibility, ensures the common benefits of the society;
- practical activity, participating in processes of decision making in every level of politics in the country, involving more people in processes of decision making, integration of knowledge, skills and values in this particular action, solving problems of the society with different partners, compromise, politeness, mutual respect (Brammer et al., 2013). Similar access, in the explanation and interpretation of civil competence is found in European Union, where civil competence is defined as: basic knowledge about democracy, justice, equality, civil rights, including knowledge of contemporary events, as well as the main events and trends in the history of the state, Europe and the world. Knowledge of the main objectives and values of Europe, and comprehension of diversity and identity of cultures in Europe;
- skills, which are related to the ability to effectively cooperate with others. These skills include: critical and creative thinking and constructive participation in the events of community or locality, as well as decision making in every level, including participating in election, from the mid-level to the level of country and Europe;



- treatment – total observance of civil rights and equality, estimation and comprehension of differences in system of values in various religions or ethnic groups. This means both- a sense of belonging to your own place, country, European Union, Europe as a whole and the world, and the desire to participate in democratic decision making in all the levels. It demonstrates the sense of responsibility, understanding and respect to common values. Constructive participation also includes civil activity, social diversity, sustainable development and readiness to respect other values and private life (European Commission, 2007).

To note there are a number of similarities in the previous analyzed explanations of civil competence:

1. knowledge – mostly about the nature of democracy, political system and its expressions in the widest context, about opportunities of civic participation and the history of your own country, which is integral part of making identity;
2. ability to participate in making decisions and other forms of civic participation, cooperating with others and defend your and other people's opinions with facts and arguments;
3. comprehension of values, respecting and accepting political, socio-economic, religious and ethnic beliefs of others.

Basing on analyzed theoretical researches (Abs, J., Veldhuis, R. 2006, Himmelmann, G. 2013, Hoskins, B., Villalba, C., Saisana, M. 2012, Жирова, Б. 2012, Котова, Г. 2008) and the explanations of European commission in description of political competence, author formulates the civic competence as transformation of knowledge, skills, values and experience to specific action, which makes an individual as a democratic, responsible, capacitated and active member of social and public events.

### **The Components And Criteria That Make Up Civic Competence**

Basing on researches that are analyzed above and the knowledge of the content of civic education (Branson, M., Quigley, C. 1998, Grossman, D. 2000, Patrick, J. 1997, Quisumbing, L. 2002), the content of civic competence (Abs, J., Veldhuis, R. 2006, Himmelmann, G. 2013, Hoskins, B., Villalba, C., Saisana, M. 2012, Жирова, Б. 2012, Котова, Г. 2008), as well as knowing the framework of the content of education of the Latvian Republic (Rules No. 530. of the Cabinet of Ministers (the standards of basic education, standards of subjects within basic education and the samples of the programs of basic education in the stage of basic education), to create a well based approach to the given criteria and indicators that are connected with the content of education. The criteria of the components of knowledge that have been highlighted in the context of civic competence of the youth:

- knows the basics of democracy;
- knows the importance of constitution in a democratic society;
- knows the options for civic participation in school, self-government, state, and international events;
- knows the rights and duties of a citizen;
- knows the reasons for forming and the way of operating of the EU, NATO and UN;
- knows the cultural and historical traditions and values of the Latvian people;



- knows the symbols of Latvia.

In order to determine the indicators of the skill criteria in the context of civic competence, it is necessary to explore the interconnected elements that form the expressions of civic participation.

*The research of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Institute for Volunteering “Pathways through participation: What creates and sustains active citizenship?”* divides civic participation into:

- institutional participation – individual or group participation in the solving of problems of the society;
- participation of the society – the democratic participation of citizens in the activities organized by various institutions, organizations;
- individual participation – covers the choices and actions that lead towards a life in a better society (Brodie et al., 2011).

In the research made by the academic David Campbell *“What is education’s impact on civic and social engagement?”* highlights that: civic participation includes a wide and many sided political and civic participation of an individual. It also includes participation in elections and trust on the institutions of the state.” (Campbell, 2006).

The researchers of the International Center for Researching Education of Germany explain civic participation by using four dimensions of this term: political participation, social participation, cultural participation and economical participation (Abs, Veldhuis, 2006), which is based on the many sided cooperation of citizens and government institutions for the common goal of a better quality of life.

By basing on analyzed research in the context of civic competence (Abs, J., Veldhuis, R. 2006, Campbell, D. 2006, un Brodie, E., Hughes, T., Jochum, V., Miller, S., Ockenden, N., Warburton, D. 2011), by taking into consideration the theories of civic competence analyzed above and by taking into consideration the content of education of the Republic of Latvia these criteria have been highlighted as the criteria of skill components in the context in the civic competence of the youth:

- the ability to use knowledge when participating in various activities that are socially important, elections and youth organizations;
- the ability to participate in decision making process;
- the ability to participate in political discussions;
- the ability to defend an opinion with arguments;
- the ability to effectively cooperate with others, participate in teamwork;
- the ability to approach information with critical and analytical thinking;
- intercultural abilities;
- the ability of leadership.

However, the criteria of the component of attitude and values in the context of civic competence of the youth are:

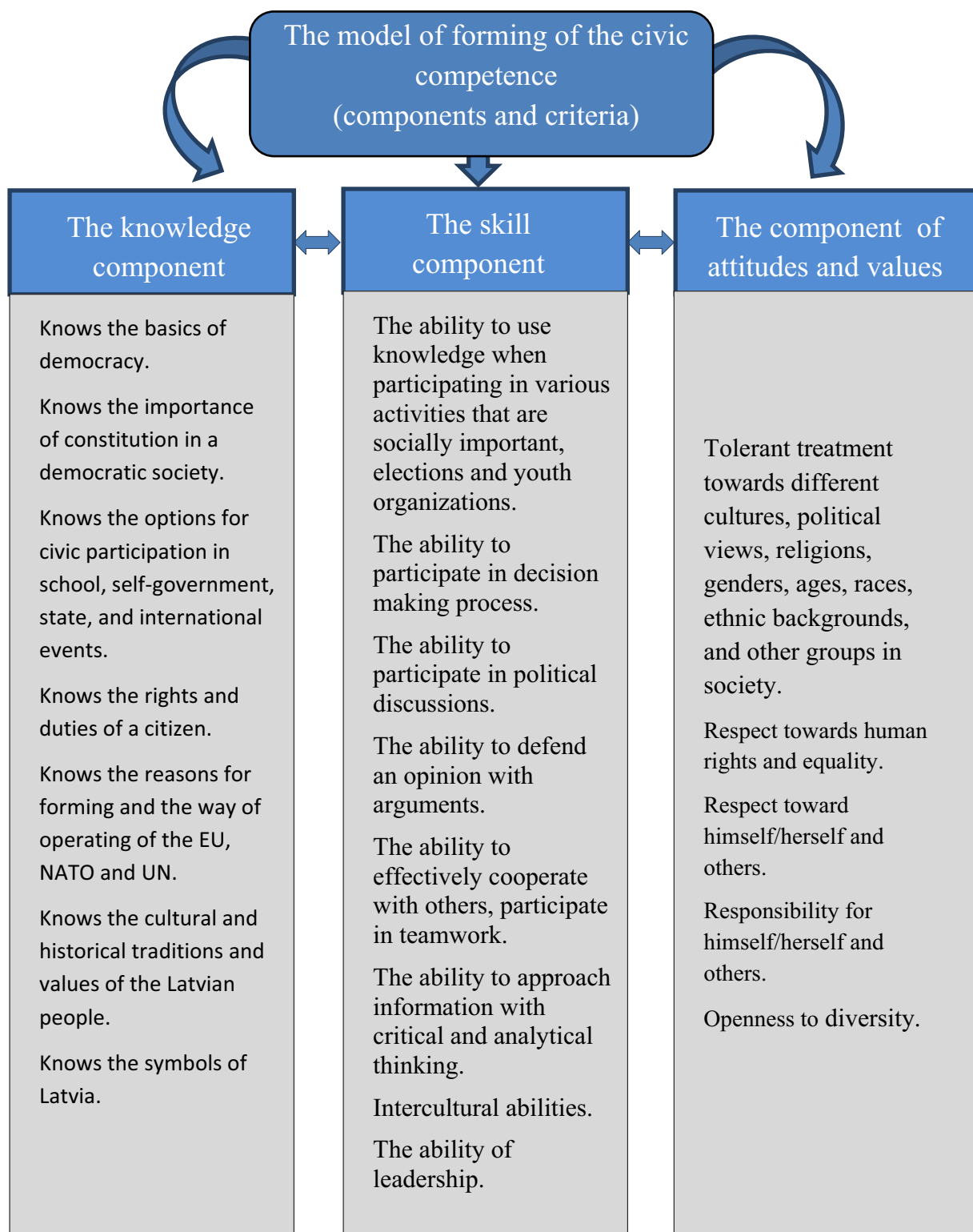
- tolerance towards other cultures, political beliefs, religions, genders, ages, races, ethnic origins and other groups of the society;
- full consideration of human rights and equality;



- self-respect and respect towards others;
- self-responsibility and responsibility towards others;
- openness towards variety.

By successfully carrying out civic education in the stage of basic education, in the context of the created model of the civic competence of youth, by using many sided and interdisciplinary pedagogical methods in the process of education and outside of it the strengthening of a civic society in Latvia will occur. Thus, the author highlights the approbation of the created model of creating civic competence in the pedagogical work of the author by determining particular approaches and methods to promote a more effective learning of civic education in the stage of basic education as the next stage of research for the future.





**Figure no.1. The model of the development of the civil competence - components and criteria..**



## Conclusions

1. Providing civic education as well as the development of civic and social competence is a necessary precondition to develop civic responsibility and capable society.
2. The development of civic competence is a multi-faceted and complex pedagogical process, which can be implemented through civic education, as well as a variety of teaching methods.
3. Through the implementation of civic education in the comprehensive schools of the Republic of Latvia, it is recommended to use an interdisciplinary approach towards the study subjects, Social Sciences, the History of Latvia and the History of the World in the elementary stage, applying appropriate (targeted, science-based and diverse) teaching methods and civic competence in the model.
4. The model of the development of civic competence requires certain knowledge and skills, civic attitudes and values in the existing social environment, thus promoting the civic position of the individual.
5. Theoretical studies confirm that there is no single approach to civic education and explanations of civic competences, while the concepts of civic education and civic competences are not defined in the Republic of Latvia.

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