



Qendra për Arsim e Kosovës
Kosova Education Center

KEC

REPORT

OF A RESEARCH ACTIVITY DEVELOPED UNDER THE PROJECT
“Concepts of Citizenship among Primary School Students in Kosovo”

Bahtie Gërbeshi

Petrit Tahiri

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Authors:

Bahtie Gërbeshi and Petrit Tahiri

Field researchers:

Petrit Tahiri

Eda Vula

Bahtie Gërbeshi

Hatixhe Ismajli

Jehona Rrustemi

This project was implemented in partnership with:



1. INTRODUCTION

In Kosovo, during the last decade, numerous changes have been made in all areas of life. One of the areas where there has been a significant change is the area of education. In this regard, particular attention was paid to reforming the education system. Reforms have been made with the help of various government organizations and non-governmental, international and local organizations. The reforms are focused on many aspects. These aspects include construction of schools, professional training of teachers (through various training), curricula development, improvement of quality in education, etc. The dynamics of educational development reforms are directly linked with the involvement of competent persons and their willingness /commitment to contribute in this regard.

The intentions of the Kosovar society are to be a democratic society. In order to reach this goal there is a need to cultivate democratic values. Cultivation of these values is impossible without civic education.

Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) is very important for the advancement of democratic processes in our country. The main purpose of EDC is preparation and training of new generations to be relevant factors for helping democratic process in the community where they live and beyond.

Education for Democratic Citizenship means to learn throughout life, in all circumstances and in every form of human activity. Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Ministers Rec (2002) 12 for Education for Democratic Citizenship, makes clear that all levels and lines of the education system must engage in the implementation of the EDC within the curriculum, whether as a specific school subjects, as an integrated subject in the context of other materials, or other programming topic. The recommendation stresses the need for multidisciplinary approaches to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills required to enable people to be shared in a pluralistic and democratic society.

Based on this, it is important to remember that EDC:

- Must be the foundation of reform and implementation of educational policies;
- Is an important factor for innovation in the field of organization and management of educational systems, curricula and teaching methods.¹

EDC includes a number of learning facilities, both in the context of state institutions as well as outside. Education for Democratic Citizenship plays an essential role in educational reforms being carried out in many European Countries. EDC considered as priority the education policies of these countries. These and other reasons influence educational policy in Kosovo to focus on civic education with greater seriousness.

¹ Recommendation Rec (2002) 12 of the EC Committee of Ministers to member states for EDC.

Lately, here in Kosovo, there have been different debates held on the issue of citizenship, resulting from the fact that one of the very important issues for the citizens of Kosovo, is also upgrading the knowledge of the concepts that directly relate to citizenship. Concepts are useful tools for students. They help students more easily understand and remember new information.

We can say that, on one hand, concepts of citizenship are used especially as efforts to stabilize and modify certain practices involving our schools, and on the other hand, the aim to achieve general citizen education through them. Also, knowledge of concepts helps students to recognize the changes taking place in recent years in Kosovo. Although most of the newer/latest studies in various social fields, agree with the opinion that our society has changed radically, in Kosovo there is still much work to be done. In addition, the theoretical concept of citizenship has changed. These changes derive not only from different cultural and social traditions, but they also reflect different ways of assessing Kosovo's society.

It should be emphasized that the knowledge of the concepts of citizenship is impossible without concrete steps. This means that Kosovo society must focus on its specific contribution. In this regard, a concrete contribution is the project: "Concepts of Citizenship among Primary School Students in Kosovo"

Regarding the scientific field research, we can say that in terms of field studies and research, as of now we are not satisfied. Therefore, the research project "Concepts of Citizenship among Primary School Students in Kosovo", is of great importance. This project will be unique and will help the development of democratic processes, not only in Kosovo's schools, but also in Kosovo society in general.

2. THE PROJECT IMPORTANCE

The "Concepts of Citizenship among Primary School Students in Kosovo" project is implemented in close cooperation with three institutions: Kosova Education Center (KEC), University of Zurich and Faculty of Education of University of Prishtina.

This project started in October 2009 and since then a number of activities including research activities have been conducted. The research which was done in the first phase of the phase of the project indicated that the need for this type of research in Kosovo is really large, not just as a need but rather a necessity. This research will be further completed in the next coming phases of this project whereby we will be able to see the concrete results of the work done. These results will serve as a fact-proof of the need and the importance of this initiative/project.

The main objective of the research was to gather as much information as we can on the different concepts, fields of interest and increase e knowledge for civic and citizenship education. So this research had as a goal to measure the level of basic information of students on civic and citizenship education concepts. The research also contributed to the raising of the awareness on the fact that having information on civic/citizenship is

important in all areas of democracy. The end results of this project will help in the advancement of civic/citizenship education in Kosovo, since the main substance of Education of Democratic Citizenship is the concept of democracy and citizenship.

A survey was done to carry out this activity. A questionnaire was developed for the survey, it was the "INTERNATIONAL CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION STUDY", this is a questionnaire from a project which is implemented in many countries. The questionnaire with the permission for the original authors was revised and modified as per the Kosovo context.

Since democracy is one of the main concepts in this area and is present in any context of democratic civic education, a considerable amount of questions in the questionnaire had to do with democracy. The questionnaire included all the most important concepts which deal with citizenship.

The questionnaire was distributed to the students of four (4) schools. There were some specific questionnaires which were developed for teachers. After the completion of the questionnaires small focus-groups were organized with the students. The data from the questionnaire was collected and a database was created. The SPSS program was used to develop and analyze the data.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

We will provide some of the statistical data which have come out from this research carried out in the school of Kosovo. As mentioned before the students and the teacher participate in the project, in order to obtain as much information as possible on the role of the teachers for Civic Education the survey included questions as follows:

- *Can students openly express their disagreements with the teachers on different subjects of political and social nature?*
- *Are students encouraged to decide themselves on different subjects?*
- *How much attention is paid to facts and information like for example dates of important historical or political events?*

There were also questions which related to obtaining information of the level of professional knowledge of the teachers.

On the question of:

Teachers lecture and the students take notes

56.1% of the students answered "often", 27.2% answered "sometimes", 14.0% answered as "rarely", 0.9% answered "never" and 1.8% have answered "they don't know".

On the question of:

If teachers encourage the students to discuss different subjects of political and social nature 60% of the students answered positively.

And on the question: *When different issues are discussed in the classroom the teachers present their different opinions*, the students have provided different answers. The answers have been presented below (table 1):

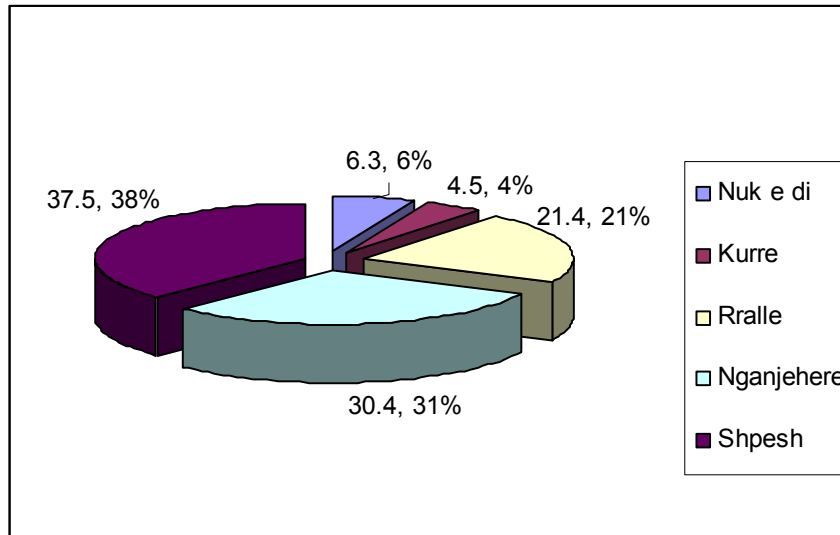


Table 1.

The school is and remains the main place for Education of Democratic Citizenship. The school is a public institution and is directly linked to the public interests. The school offers education and opportunities; it increases the social and cultural skills of people as part of a complex education environment.

Most of the students, 96.1% of students have expressed that school has been the main factor of them to determined that people have different opinions and 2.3% of students did not agree with this (table 2).

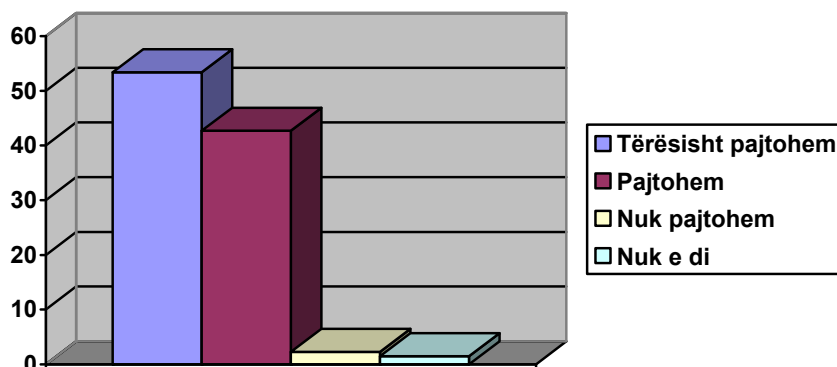


Table 2

Also, 97.6% of students have answered positively to the questions: If school is the place where they have learns to work together? 1.5% of students did not agree to that they learn to work in groups in the school, etc.

Problem Solving in the society was another subject which was part of the questionnaire and about 92.1% have answered positively. They thought that they have learnt in school how to solve problems in the society and 5.4% were of the opinion that they have not learnt this in school; they have not contributed to problem solving.

On the question: *I have learned at school to be a patriot citizen and loyal to my country* 84.4% of the students have answered positively that school was the place where they learned about patriotism and loyalty to their country, 14% of the students did not agree with that.

On the question: *I have learned at school how to protect the environment* most of the students have answered positively, 94.6% and 3.9% of the students have answered negatively, they have stated that they have not learned about environment protection at school.

On the question: *I have learned at school to care about what happens in other countries*, the following answers were give: 72.1% of the students answered positively and 21.7% have answered negatively.

The questionnaire included also a question on voting and the importance of voting. 80.6% of the students have answered positively that they have learn in school about the importance of voting in the local/municipal elections and general elections, whereas e 15.5% of the students denied that they have learned in school about the elections and their importance.

Most of the students 93.1% have answered positively and think that electing a group leader would be very useful for the improvement of the quality in school, 2.3% have no knowledge on this and 3.8% of the students see no added value to the fact of electing a representative/leader of the group for the improvement of the quality in school.

The group work is seen by many students as very useful for positive changes in school, 96.9% of them have answered positively and 1.5% did no understand the question and don't see any added value to the group work.

Organizing into groups of students in order to solve problems was sees as very positive by 93% of the students, 1.5% did not understand the question and 5.4% do not see the students groups influencing problem-solving.

According to most of the students supporting each other is very important, 93% have answered positive to this. The students seemed to understand their rights and feel free to seek their rights, 6.1% of the students answered negatively and 0.76% did not understand the question.

On the issue of school development most of the students are willing to work together. 91.4% of them have answered positively to this, 3.8% did not understand the question and only 4.7% see the school development from a more individual perspective.

The students are interested in solving the problems they have at school, about 90.7% of them have answered positively to this, 2.3% did not understand the question and only 6.9% of them showed no interest of the problems at school.

Also, most of the students have felt that they are ready to give opinion on certain problems at school, 85.2% of them have answered positively to this, 7% of them did not understand the question and 7.7% of them did not show any readiness to give their opinion on the different problems at school.

On the question regarding the freedom of speech and the right to an opinion, which is one of the main principles of democracy, the Kosovar students have shown that they do have background information on this. If 86.5% of the respondents have answered positively provides a clear picture that the freedom of opinion is an essential part of democracy and is appreciated by eh students.

When people seek their political and social rights, based on the data from the questionnaire, we have understood that the students are interested a lot on their wellbeing and their active participation to initiate change in their society (Table 3).

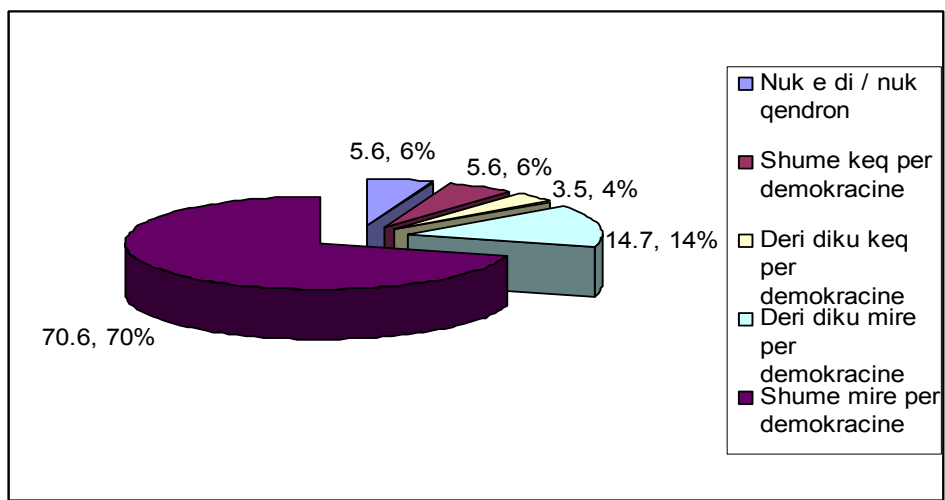


Table 3.

On the issue of the political parties committing to support women to become political leaders according to the students this is a very good step forward for democracy. Based on this we can see that the students consider this as very important segment for the progress of democratic processes. Data from the questionnaire are very forthcoming. The results are: 52.4% of students think it's very good for democracy, 20.0% feel it is somewhat good for democracy, 10.3% say it is somewhat bad for democracy, 12.4% say

it is very bad for democracy and 4.8% do not know whether to assess it as good or bad.

Of course the result of research shows that gender equality is considered positively for democracy, because according to the Declaration on Human Rights all women are equal with men and there should be no gender discrimination. Also, in our society efforts are being made to empower women in politics and decision-making positions. One of the principles of EDC relates specifically to the rights and responsibilities, strengthening participation and respect for diversity.

On the question of *courts and judges being affected by politics*, the students did not understand the question.

According to the majority of students it is very bad for democracy if judges and courts are influenced by politics. However, in this case, out of the total 134 surveyed students, 20 of them (13.5%) responded that they do not know the answer. So, this has prompted us to think that there is lack of understanding of this conceptual framework.

When asked about *the partition (segregation) between state and religion, whether it is considered good or bad for democracy*, the students gave different answers. Only 7.8% of students think it's very good for democracy and, 60.3% think that's bad for democracy, etc. This brings to our attention some other dimensions of citizenship. The shifting of a society from a social and institutional arrangement to another requires more commitment, especially of persons responsible for education in this regard. Matters of state-religion relations require attention and greater dedication. Having this in mind, it is not surprising that the responses of students on the state-religion segregation are seen as very bad element for democracy. In this segment one should focus greater attention, particularly to the basic concepts.

On the question of *people going into political parties in order to influence government*, we also have a lack of understanding of the conceptual framework. 20.3% of students did not understand the question because they have don't understand clearly the terms "going into politics" and "influence" and because of lack of knowledge of policy development processes.

Regarding the human rights students are more informed. However, their responses to the question: *When people refuse to enforce a law that violates human rights, how is this considered for democracy?* - The questions are quite interesting. Only 34.2% of students think it's very good for democracy, while 51.4% of them think that it is bad for democracy. Around 6.8% are not sure, and 7.5% do not know the answer.

On the question: *When the newspapers are not allowed to publish articles that might offend various groups (ethnic groups, immigrant, religious, racial, national etc.),* the students were divided into two almost opposite groups because half of them gave a positive answer and the other half negative.

If the positive responses of students were roughly equal to their negative responses (very bad / good for democracy) then this is a signal that the students do understand the democratic values but their level of understanding is superficial. In his case additional knowledge-based concepts are required. International Institute for Education Advancement (IEA) has concluded that: "Students in most countries understand democratic values and institutions; however, the depth of understanding is often superficial²

On another question of *newspapers being independent from government control (of state politics)*, students gave these answers (Table 4).

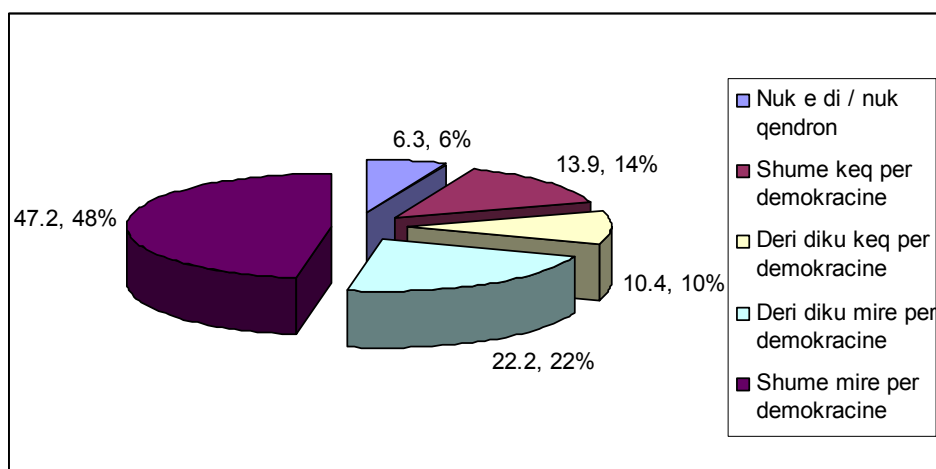


Table 4.

When asked about *people protesting peacefully against a law which they believe is wrong*, students gave different answers. The data from this question can be used as arguments as well as opinions of students who are able to exercise influence in society. They are also characterized by being responsible in the way of their action as citizens. 78.4% of respondents are confident that should react to laws that are unjust. This is a result that shows that the principles of civic education are known to society. One of the principles of education for democratic citizenship which strengthens civil society is the the work to make its citizens better informed about social issues and to provide them with democratic skills.

Also, one of the other principles is aiming at preparing youth and adults to participate in a democratic society, which would establish a democratic culture.

Citizens of each State have the right to know what are their rights under the law, they also have the right to know their legal responsibilities to the state and to other fellow

² Torney-Purta, J. et al., gjej originalin....

citizens. Education for democratic citizenship is based on the fundamental principles of human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law, and is an important tool in the fight against violence, xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and intolerance, it helps social cohesion, social justice and the common good, it strengthens civil society, it well-informs its citizens in social matters and provides to them democratic skills/habits. It should also be flexible depending on the historical, national, social and cultural contexts.

3. CONCLUSION

The research conducted under the project Concepts of Citizenship among Primary School Students in Kosovo was only a pilot research, conducted in four schools of Prishtina. The results of this research show us that the situation of key concepts of citizenship and citizenship education is satisfactory. This is due to the work done by governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) must have the primary role in this process, as it can and should provide proper curriculum and trained teachers, in order to successfully implement citizenship education in our schools.

Although, based on data obtained from this mini-project the situation of key concepts of citizenship and citizenship education is generally satisfactory, we have to be reserved in our conclusions, because of two reasons. First, these data can not be representative for all students of Kosovo, as the research was conducted only in Pristina schools. Second, all schools involved in the research are urban schools. This makes us aware of the need to expand this research in all territory of Kosovo. Such an expansion would help MEST to introduce proper changes in the curriculum, as changes must be introduced in full compliance with the needs of the clients, identified from the field work through the research. Also, such a research would help the Faculty of Education to develop and orient its programmes toward the needs of the Kosovo students.