

Teachers Civic Education and Their Methodological Skills Affect Student Engagement in Civic Participation

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Abstract

Civic education is important, because the society needs people to contribute in the most effective way. The teacher plays an important role in encouraging pupils to civic actions. The aim of this study is find out the relationship between teachers civic education and their methodological skills in students civic participation. The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS 20) was used for data analysis. Questionnaires were administered to 34 teachers who give social education subject in 6th-9th grade and 414 students of these teachers, in Durres and Elbasan. The factorial analysis of the questionnaire on teachers civic education discovered two important factors: civic responsibility and civic values, while according to teachers' methodological skills discovered three factors: the quality of the class, learning and student assessment. It was also observed that there is a positive relationship between teachers' civic education and their methodological skills with students' civic participation, which it was reported by teachers or perceived by students. There is a significant statistical relationship between teachers civic education and students civic participation: $r = .40$ ($p < 0.01$), which is stronger than teachers methodological skills and students civic participation: $r = .28$ ($p < 0.01$). According to the findings of this study should be increased teachers training programs at local and national level. A great importance should be given to civic education in the school curriculum and universities should recognize their responsibilities in preparing future teachers.

Keywords: Civic education, methodological skills, civic participation.

1. Introduction

The main purpose of education for the democratic civilization is to develop, strengthen and protect the democratic culture of the rights and responsibilities, as the foundation of the efficient voluntary and stable actions of citizens. As such an action, education is closely linked to the acknowledgement and obligation to the common democratic values; to the institutions and the procedures that guarantee their further protection and development. Among others education aims to offer continuous chances in order to obtain, implement and distribute information, values, expressions and proper practices in all formal and informal educative environments. Reports of Birzea, 1996 (Education for Democratic Citizenship, document DECS/CIT, (1996)1, Veldhius, 1997 (document DECS/CIT(1997) 23 and Audigier, 1999. (EUD/CIT (1999) 53, Hahn (1998), in a comparative study of education for the civil rights found that there are statistical changes between the countries according to the teaching traditions and cultural norms. This article explains that methods and civil education programs can not be used without any adoption from one country to another and are expected to function successfully, as each country has its particular conditions.

Raising the citizens in the civil levels is achieved by preparing them for a conscious participation and responsibilities in the political and social life. This preparation, mainly based in values and principles of democracy should be understood as being equipped with knowledge, intellectual expressions and phrases of democratic actions (Democratic Civil Education in Albania, pg.21).

The active civilization is a important issue in the Lisbon program. The European Commission promoted three main pillars, one of them is "learning for an active citizenship". In the detailed work program for following the education and training systems in Europe, the European Council has formulated 13 objectives related to the Lisbon program, where the objective 2.3 has to do with "The support of active citizenship, equal chances and social cohesion". The main mentioned issues in the work program related to the active citizenship are "To ensure that the education of the democratic values and participation from all is promoted effectively in order to prepare people for active citizenship" (Indicators for Monitoring Active Citizenship and Citizenship Education, 2005, pg. 7).

Education for the democratic civilization goes beyond the school boundaries, challenging the separation of between formal and informal education. There should be more objective conclusions in the direction of evaluating the

different lacking that our schools have on education and formal formation of citizens, the impact of this formation in the level of active participation of students in civil activities. "Based on these general purposes, the civil education aims to prepare future citizens, skilled to perform their civil duty and to enable successfully the future challenges by actively participating in social life" (Social Studies on November 20, 1998, CA, USA). It is easy to identify the problems, but is very difficult to ask for changes in reality.

The society sees the school as an institution that plays an important role in education and civil preparation of the students. For this it is necessary not only the civil education teacher's contribution, but the active involvement of all school teachers. "The integrated curriculum is a guide for all those who want to see more out of the classrooms, for all those who want to break the artificial barriers, for those who want to enhance the curiosity, inspiration, interest, fantasy, imagination of the students and further more" (Pedagogical journal Nr.4, University of Toronto, Canada, 2007, pg.69).

Another problem has to do with the fact that what is the amount of information given to the students, how do teachers work with them in schools in order to prepare the students as active citizens of the future. The success of education for an active and democratic citizenship depends mainly from the teaching profession, where the teacher should support and encourage the students to be active citizens, informed and responsible. Teaching civil education from teacher without proper specialization, the lack of seriousness in the assessment of this subject contribution, using this subject to complete the normal teaching hours in different schools, the lack of training for civil education teachers, limited knowledge not only in theory but also in practical actual activities, underestimation of this subject from the administrators, teachers and parents makes this study very necessary.

In the curriculum model of the preuniversity education in the Republic of Albania, one of the main competencies for long life learning is the civil competency. The student commits to the common good. The student actively and responsibly participates in issues of the public interest. The student promotes and enhances beneficial changes in personal life, society and environment (curriculum Model of Preuniversity Education, 2014, pg.15).

European societies change from one another from the number and degree of the complexity of conditions and educative services that they offer on teaching democratic civilization. In these situations, without independent choices, the individual becomes less responsible for learning. This is the reason that the mutual responsibility of the individual and society has an important place in the area of long life learning. (Strategies for learning the democratic civilization, Strasburg, pg. 19).

Professor David Kerr (NFER), director and scientific collaborator, in his discussion in the International Conference of Budapest, on November 11th 2011, on the topic of "Europe of the active citizen. Evaluation, political responsibility, and orientation for the education of active citizen" among other things stated that an important direction for future research is to find the relations, the cognitive dimensions and precise analyses of the relations between the knowledge and participation.

In the Card of the European Council on education for civil citizenship and the human rights, approved within the recommendation CM/Rec (2010)7 of the Minister's Committee among others is stated: "Member countries should start to urge research on education for a democratic citizenship and human rights, to know the actual situation in this field and to offer teachers, policymakers, education institutions, school administrators, students, non profit organizations and youth organization comparing information which will help every one of them to measure and increase the effectiveness of their work and practices. This research should include the research on curriculum, new contemporary practices, teaching methods and evaluation indicators" (Recommendations CM/Rec (2010)7 of the Minister's Committee pg. 14).

In 1999, which was a very busy period of the political and educative agenda in England, the Center of Curriculum and training in England, (CCE) drafted a thematic study on the right for citizenship. This study was drafted to enrich INCA by examining six aspects of education on the right for citizenship; the curriculum, its organization and structure, teaching methods and learning, specialization and teacher's training, the use of texts and other resources, evaluations, actual and future development. These aspects of education of the right to citizenship are important for our country's conditions too, and are taken into consideration from the researchers of this area.

At the same time, one of the main objectives stated in the Youth European Strategy 2010-2018 is the promotion of active citizenship, social involvement and solidarity of all youth (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pdf/doc1648_en.pdf [available from 7 May 2012]).

The strategy offers various lines of action which are related to the development of the civilization in the activities of formal and informal education, such as "participation in the civil life and representing democracy". "In 2011, apart from this, there were two important events' this year was the European Year of Voluntary Activity, the promotion of active citizenship, and the Hungarian presidency chose education for active citizenship as a main theme of the debate among Ministers of Education in a informal meeting conducted in March" (Education of citizens in Europe, 2012, pg.7).

2. Methodology

To analyze the data we used the statistical packet of social sciences (SPSS, 20). The questionnaires are conducted during January-February 2013. They are completed in schools but not during the teaching hours. There were 34 civil education teachers of grades of 6-9 from Durres and Elbasan, who participated in the study. We also interviewed 414 students. The sample was randomly selected.

From 34 teachers, 25 were females (73.5%) and 9 males (26.5%). The participants were 9 civil education teachers from the elementary and middle schools "Xhafer Kongoli", "Sule Harri", "Alush Lleshanaku" in the district of Elbasan, and 25 civil education teachers from 6-9 grades of elementary and middle schools and 299 students of schools such as "Eftali Koçi", "B.Curri 1", "B.Curri 2", "Neim Babameto", "Marie Kaçulini", "Nene Tereza", "Vasil Ziu", "Qemal Mici", Rade, Manez, Armadh of the district of Durres.

The demographic data of the students: from 414 students, 238 were females or 57.5% and were 176 males, or 42.5%. The teacher's questionnaires contained 44 questions and the students' questionnaires contained 34 questions. The rating of variables were the same for both questionnaires.

3. Results and Discussion

To analyze the data we used the elements of descriptive statistics, such as descriptive mean, standard deviation, verse and normal distribution. Below we have presented the descriptive analyses and the distribution of values of the degree of teachers' civil formation according to the students' reports after removing the problematic variables.

	Descriptive data									
	N	Mean	Mediana	Moda	Stand Dev	Min	Max	Q1	Q2	Q3
Civil formation of the teachers	414	33.4	34	36	4.2	16	40	31	34	37
Methodological formation	413	34.3	34	37	5.3	14	50	31	34	38

For the degree of "civil citizenship" initially we automatically divided the factors, by searching the Eigen value bigger than 1. For the factorial analyses using Varimax, only two factors had the criteria of Keiser bigger than 1 and explained up to 46.9% of the variance of this degree. In the following table we present the two factors together with the proper statements and each individual impact on the index of civil formation.

The values of factors of the factor analyses: Communnality, Eingen values and variance percentages for each statement of the degree of civil formation.

Nr	Statements	Factors values		Communnality
		Factor 1	Factor 2	
1	Statement 8	0.750		0.565
2	Statement 7	0.619		0.425
3	Statement 4	0.608		0.400
4	Statement 6	0.601		0.385
5	Statement 3	0.584		0.399
6	Statement 1		0.824	0.687
7	Statement 22		0.738	0.575
8	Statement 2		0.489	0.321
Eigen values		2.751	1.005	
Variance %		34.386	12.564	

From the factorial analyses of the questionnaire of the citizen's formation we discovered two factors: the civil responsibilities, which is measured by statements (8, 7, 4, 6, 3) and civil values which are measured by statements, (1, 22, 2). Q3 shows the degree of support form teachers to the students and the help the teachers give in problem solving, Q4 shows the degree of teacher's tolerance, how the teacher takes into consideration the student's thinking, Q6 shows how open is the teacher with the students in accepting their thinking, Q7 shows the fact that how much does the teacher stimulates the students in taking initiatives, Q8 shows how collaborative is the teacher with the municipalities for problem solving. In the table question Q1 shows what the students think for the academic scientific formation of their civil education teachers, Q 2 shows the mastery of the civil rights from the teachers and the transmission of this knowledge to the students, Q 22 shows the relation the students have with the civil education teachers. The factorial analyses was

conducted for 8 questions with the Varimax method. The test Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin, which measures the suitability of the sample, is $KMO = 0.8$ ($p = 0.0000$) ($KMO > 0.5$). According to Kaiser recommendations (1974) the values 0.8 - 0.9 are very good values for the adoptability of the sample.

From the correlation analyses of the degree that measures the methodological formation we did not see any high correlation coefficient ($r > 0.9$).

The descriptive statistics for variables of methodological formation					
Nr	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Missing
1	Q10	4.05	0.936	414	0
2	Q 11	4.22	1.017	414	0
3	Q 12	3.60	1.132	414	0
4	Q 13	4.32	1.001	414	0
5	Q 15	3.12	1.337	414	0
6	Q 16	3.59	1.268	414	0
7	Q 18	4.00	1.160	414	0
8	Q 19	4.23	1.029	414	0
9	Q 20	1.58	0.776	414	1
10	Q 21	1.63	0.821	414	0

a. For each variable, the missing values are replaced with reported mean

In the above table, question Q10 shows the way the teacher knows the subject and what are the possibilities to give the students different alternatives, Q11 shows how does the teacher make the class interesting for the students, Q12 shows the use of methods of teaching project from the civil education teacher, Q13 shows the space the teacher creates in the classroom for discussion, Q15 shows the use of additional materials from the teacher, Q16 shows if the teacher gives extra material to the students, Q18 shows the fact that the teacher communicates the grades to the students, Q19 shows the bases of the student's evaluation from the teacher, based on theoretical or practice knowledge. Q20 shows the ways of evaluation the teacher uses with students in this subject, and Q21 shows the methods of teaching more frequently used in the subject of civil education.

Degree	Factor	Nr i of statements	Alfa of Chronbach-ut	N
Civil formation		8	0.73	414
	Civil commitment	5	0.67	414
	Civil values	3	0.54	414
Methodological formation		10	0.67	414
	Quality of teaching hour	4	0.57	414
	Teaching methods	2	0.76	414
	Evaluation methods	4	0.48	414

Even in this case the factorial analyses was conducted for 10 statements with the Varimax method. The test Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin, which measures the suitability of the sample is $KMO = 0.7$ ($p = 0.0000$) ($KMO > 0.5$). According to Kaiser recommendations (1974), values 0.7-0.8 are good values for the suitability of the sample. From the factorial analyses of the degree of methodological formation we discovered three factors; the quality of the teaching hour, measured by statements (15, 12, 11, 16), learning, measured by statements (20, 21) and students' evaluation measured by (18, 19, 10, 13).

From the factorial analyses of the questionnaires for the civil formation of the teachers we discovered two important factors: civil commitment and civil values, while for the methodological formation we discovered three factors: the quality of teaching hour, teaching methods and students' evaluation.

4. Conclusions

This study is very important as it represents a serious attempt to see the role that schools play in the preparation of students as active citizens of society. The evaluation of indicators and the ways through which we can interfere in their improvement is important for the increase of these indicators in the future. There are possibilities that students might learn about democracy through active participation in the school of life. But this participation is different in different countries, as it is affected from a range of factors.

From the results of the study we noticed that there exists a positive relationship between the civil formation of the teachers and civil participation of the students, this being reported from the teachers or perceived from the students. Only a person with healthy civil formation may feel the responsibility to participate in social life. It is found that when the teachers have extended knowledge of the contents, they feel better and tend to make students participate in discussions and research (Report, Guardian of Democracy, 2003, pg. 38). In this study the correlation coefficient between the methodological formation of the teachers reported from the students and civil participation of the students reported from the students is higher: $r = .28$ ($p < 0.01$). This correlation coefficient shows a linear positive moderate relation between the methodological formation of the teachers and civil participation of the students.

In other words, the civil formation and methodological formation have important statistical relations with civil participation of the students. This relation is stronger than the relation between civil formation of the teachers and civil participation of the students: $r = .40$ ($p < 0.01$), than between the methodological formation and civil participation of the students: $r = .28$ ($p < 0.01$).

5. Recommendations

The schools are still not successful in having quality indicators for active participation of the students, which is clearly shown in our study. This area is very difficult to be successful and it requires continuing contributions and engagement from many actors.

This phenomenon is noted in the lack of participation on civil actions, indifference in the school environment, not being responsible for various school and community problems, the lack of collaboration between different acting units, the lack of motivation and desire to participate.

Starting from the fact that the rate of students' participation in civil actions is under the average rate, this being evidenced by this study, there is the need to assess the possibilities of improving this situation in the future. Students' participation is closely linked to the certain indicators such as civil formation of the teachers, civil values that the teachers possess and transmit to their students, quality of teaching hour offered from the civil education teachers, taking civil responsibilities and students' evaluation, which all bring the need to assess the possibilities to interfere and improve these indicators in the future.

A great importance should be given to the civil education in the school curriculum planning, as the civil education subject needs to be supported from a series of extra and cross curricular activities in order to make this subject more real, in order for the students to create individual experiences and to be actors of their own life, and to explore new ways of active citizenship in school and community.

Starting from the fact that the teachers of civil education subject do not have the proper academic formation during their university education, it is necessary to continuously train them through local and national programs, so they can be professionally trained and reflect the changes in the official curriculum.

The curriculum model of the civil education subject should not be assessed in the same way as other subjects from the teachers. During the evaluation for this subject, the teacher should take into consideration not only answering of the students in the classrooms, but also the practical implementation of the obtained knowledge and active participation in social life. They should have knowledge and updated practices related to the active citizenship of the students in school and community by exploring new ways.

It is of great importance to include education and civil formation in the university programs of teaching faculties, because students aside from academic formation should also have education and civil formation. Universities should be responsible for the preparation of future teachers.

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