THE ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS TOWARDS CIVIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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> *There is no more dynamic social figur*
> *in modern history than the Citizen.*
> Ralf Dahrendorf (1974)

A b s t r a c t

Schools and education are one of the most sensitive and important issues for the transmission of cultural knowledge and development of attitudes towards one's own and other groups, as well as towards civil society, human rights and public life in general. Historically, school and family have been used to promote dominant values, beliefs and ways of life. In this way, education for civil society and human rights can and should be thought continuously through school life and not only through specific curriculum. Education for civil society and human rights is therefore an essential element which should be interwoven into all areas of learning and life. The aim of this study was to examine the attitudes and opinions of primary and high school students and their teachers towards civic education at school, family environment and local community. The sample comprised 208 primary school students, 106 high school students and 111 teachers. The values like *rights, obligations, responsibilities, democracy, freedom* and *peace* were examined in relation to *subjects' gender, age* and *level of school* (primary and high). The results show the statistically significant difference in the freedom of decision-making in local community between female and male students of primary and high school. Regarding school level, there is statistically significant difference between primary and high school students. Primary school students show higher degree in freedom to make decisions at school than high school students. Teachers of primary schools have more positive attitudes towards introducing human rights and civic education in teaching curriculum than teacher of high schools. Moreover, there is a statistically significant difference in the level of attitudes towards introducing human rights and civic education in teaching curriculum in relation to age: younger teachers have more positive attitudes toward those values than their older colleague's.

Key words: *civic education, human rights, rights, obligations, responsibilities, democracy, freedom, peace*

Introduction

The rapid changes in the developed world have not only led to changes in organizational thinking and working environments, but also in human values, beliefs and behaviours that guide the thoughts and actions of billions of people throughout the world. The field of education, like all other sectors of society, is presently being profoundly challenged by a rapidly changing global connections, interactions and dependencies. What is emerging is a world of intense cultural exchanges in which both democratic advancement and transition are possible if based on the recognition of, adherence to and active promotion of human rights, the diversity of cultures and the rule of law, all of which becomes essential for contemporary citizenship.

Today, number of classrooms in European schools have a great variety of pupils who come from different backgrounds and have different needs. They may, as well, experience school in different ways. What is essential for these pupils to know and to be able to do when they leave school? What kind of education or training do they need as persons and citizens?

If we agree that one of the most important functions of education is to promote the culture of democracy and human rights, than the primary objectives of schools programme should be to establish a high level of awareness of how to share fundamental values in order to develop a free, tolerant and just society. Understanding and assisting democratic development means acquiring basic skills, including ability to think critically, communicate effectively and resolve problems without violence. Negotiating with others cooperatively, open-minded discourses and communicative processes are the competencies that need to become the basic personality characteristics of democratic citizens. This leads us to think of the necessity to promoting democratic citizenship through not merely civic education, but a civic education which is interlinked with human rights education, peace education and intercultural education.

1. Civic education and education for democratic citizenship

Since the last decade of the XX century there has been a rapidly growing interest throughout the world in the development and implementation of educational program in schools designed to help young people become competent and responsible citizens in a democratic society[1]. Acquiring knowledge and skills has become essential for an

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[1] In Western Europe, the German Federal Center for Civic Education has been engaged for decades in the promotion of educational programs supporting democracy in West and in part in East Germany; in 1995, the United States Information Agency (USIA) made civic education a priority for its Washington office and its United States Information Service posts (USIS) located in nations throughout the world. Funding from the USIA supported a meeting Civitas@Prague that was attended by over 450 civic educators and private and public sector leaders from 52 nations. This meeting culminated in the establishment of a membership organization entitled Civitas International, a non-governmental agency with offices in Strasbourg, France. The Center was one of the founding organizations of Civitas International. The term "civitas" was used according its Latin meanings, a

informed, efficient and responsible citizen. Today, more than ever before, young people need to understand how democracy works and how they can help to keep it and improve it.

Civic education is understood and taught in various ways which is the reason why international comparisons of conceptual and practical approaches are often difficult to make. In addition, the field is rapidly growing. During last 10–15 years, civic education has become one of the central objectives in many schools, especially in the context of promoting interdisciplinary and practice-orientated projects, making civic education not merely a school subject but a way of school life.

According to Oesterreich (2003), civic education may be understood in at least two ways. In a more narrow sense civic education means the *acquisition of knowledge of the basic democratic institutions and regulations*, while in a broader sense it means the *acquisition of competences that enables participation and democratic action*. In its latter use it includes *social learning* and *political socialization*.

For Spajić-Vrkaš, V. (2001) civic education represents a particular field of education that has, especially in the last couple of decades, been implemented in formal and non-formal educational settings. In schools is may appear as a teaching principle, separate school subject or cross-curricular activity. Whether implemented formally or informally, civic education aims to promote informed, active and responsible citizenship in the context of modern democracies.

Education for democratic citizenship (EDC) is a set of practices and activities that target both young people and adults with a view to equip them for active participation in a democratic decision-making through assuming and exercising ones' own rights and responsibilities (Bîrzea, 1996, p.8). This approach is, therefore, based on the notion of rights and responsibilities of citizens, as well as on their participation in civil society (Council of Europe, 1997). More precisely, education for democratic citizenship is based on *knowledge*, *skills* and *personal commitment*. It starts from the presumption that only an *informed* and *knowledgeable citizen* may efficiently meet the needs of an expanding civil society. In short, EDC means learning what the citizen is and how one becomes the citizen, how he/she exercises his/her citizen's rights, and how he/she assumes citizen's responsibilities that are the pillars of a democratic culture (Council of Europe, 2004).

The central notion in learning for democratic citizenship is an *empowered citizen* who is responsible for his/her autonomous actions and relations with other citizens, groups and institutions of a civil society (Council of Europe, 1999). This implies that

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community of people devoted to civic education to support democracy. Today, the term "civitas" is used by many groups affiliated with Civitas International and the Center to identify their programs, e.g. Civitas@Bosnia and Herzegovina, Civitas Hungary, Civitas Nigeria etc., and about 90 centers from throughout the world are members of Civitas International (www.civiced.org). The Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), Council of Europe, includes all practices and activities designed to help young people and adults participate actively in democratic life by accepting and exercising their rights and responsibilities in society. The Council of Europe's EDC project was set up in 1997 with the aim to find out which values and skills individuals require in order to become participating citizens.

the quality outcomes of learning for democratic citizenship depend to a great extent on the societies' resources and institutional provisions. This relates primarily to *teachers' professional knowledge and skills* in dealing with individual differences as well as to their capabilities to give and to receive information openly and with respect for their students' future roles in society (Council of Europe, 1999). It is primarily concerned with finding efficient ways for preparing a citizen to meet the challenges and risk of a changing democracy by promoting his o her knowledge and skills necessary for a *productive* and *responsible involvement* in matters of common concern (Düerr, Spajić-Vrkaš, Ferreira Martins, 2000). As such, education for democratic citizenship is expected to be included not only in school curricula but also and especially in the system of permanent education of all citizens.

1. 2. Differences and similarities between civic education and education for democratic citizenship

The aim of civic education is sometimes reduced to a political literacy understood in the context of a state-based political education. To overcome these limits, Düerr, Spajić-Vrkaš and Ferreira Martins point out at the need to delineate between citizens' commitment to a state-based democracy and their recognition of and commitment to the universal principles of human rights, the rule of law, pluralism, equality and civil society, since these values may be differently conceptualised and implemented in different societies, non-democratic as well as democratic.

To solve but one dimension of the problem, UNESCO uses the term "civic education with an international dimension". In the Recommendation on Education for Democratic Citizenship of the Council of Europe (2000) civic education is linked to the four dimensions of citizenship: *human rights, democracy, development* and *peace*, as well as to a set of educational principles, such *as pluralism, multi-level perspective, institutional integrity, holistic approach* and *cultural literacy*.

If civic education is understood in terms of preparing young people for informed, active and responsible participation in democracy based on the respect for universal human rights, equality, justice and pluralism its goals are similar to the ones of education for democratic citizenship. On the contrary, if civic education is understood as political education which aims to prepare young people to be loyal citizens to democratic regimes that are structurally blind to inequality, social exclusion, lawlessness and assimilationism, than the differences between these two approaches are too significant to be easily ignored (Düerr, Spajić–Vrkaš and Ferriera, 2000).

2. Civic education and human rights education

Despite an increased interest in human rights issues in schools in the last few years, human rights education still remains an umbrella–term for a number of out–of – school programmes and actions that focus on promoting human dignity (Andreopoulos,

Claude, 1997). Unfortunately, despite the varieties of programmes offered and the fact that human rights have become the main political ideology of our time, human rights education is still unrecognised in a great number of European schools. Most of these programmes have been developed by national or international NGOs, which tend to raise awareness of individuals and groups of people on universality, indivisibility and inalienability of their universal and fundamental rights and freedoms.

Human rights education is at the heart of civic education and education for democratic citizenship. Rights and responsibilities of citizens, their awareness of and their commitment to universal human rights and freedoms, equality, the rule of law and pluralism are the core of any civic education and education for democratic citizenship.

3. What are the key components of civic education?

What are the key components of civic education which that contribute to the advancement of citizens and democratic society? In order to answer this question we shall focus on two approaches. One has been developed by Margaret Stimman Branson and the Civitas and the other has emerged in the context of the Council of Europe project on Education for Democratic Citizenship. Stimman Branson (1998) lists three components of civic education: *civic knowledge, civic skills* and *civic dispositions (values, attitudes)*, while the inventory of the Council of Europe includes *knowledge, skills, attitudes and values* (Grindall, K. 1997).

3. 1. Civic knowledge or cognitive dimension

According to Branson, refers to the content or subject- matter in teaching or learning. It says what citizens ought to know. However, this component is more than an acquisition of facts relating to the function of a particular government[2]. It refers to an adequate understanding of political processes going on in the society, understanding of the purpose of the government and the constitution through which this purpose is carried out. Citizens who understand the functioning of the government can act as individuals and as members of groups to see whether their rights are protected, whether democratic procedures are observed and whether the common good is promoted. Besides, civic knowledge includes principles of democratic theory, operations of

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[2] *Government* describes the political, economic and administrative processes carried out by the political party that is in power. This can be called the government sector. The term *governance* includes the government sector but adds two more sector, business and civil society. Good governance means an institution's activities are transparent and open to public examination (http://wwwglobaled.ausaid.gov.au/secondary).

Civil society describes the ways in which people come together and organise themselves around common interests. Organisations formed out of these common interests are called "civil society organisations" (http://wwwglobaled.ausaid.gov.au/secondary).

democratic governance and modes of behaviour of a democratic citizenship. In addition, it involves concepts and data about democracy in the learner's country and may also include comparison with other countries.

It is expected that citizens understand that only through civic understanding and active involvement in political life the quality of life in their neighbourhoods, communities and nations may be improved. If they want their voices to be heard, they must become active participants in the political processes of their towns, nations, regions and the world.

Formal instruction in civics, government, law, history and democracy is seen as a way to increasing civic knowledge. Thus, such instruction needs to begin in the earliest grades of elementary school and continue to include the university.

3. 2. Civic skills: intellectual and participatory

The second key component of civic education, a cording to Branson, are *civic skills,* including *intellectual* and *participatory* skills. *Intellectual (or cognitive) skills* in civic education are inseparable from the content. They[3] are essential for an informed, efficient and responsible citizenship as they include cognitive operations necessary to understand, explain, compare and evaluate principles and practices of the government and citizenship. It is sometimes pointed out that such skills are primarily *critical thinking skills.* To be able to think critically about a political issue, one must have an understanding of the issue, its history and its contemporary relevance.

Equally important are *participatory* skills that involve actions by citizens to monitor and influence public policies and to resolve public issues. Democracy is based on collective decision making. If citizens are to be part of that decision-making process, they must acquire the skills necessary for civic engagement. Those skills include: *interacting with other citizens to promote personal and common interest; monitoring public events and issues; deliberating about public policy issues; influencing policy decisions on public issues* and *implementing and monitoring public policy decisions* (Branson, 1998). Together, the cognitive and participatory skills involve the citizen's use of knowledge to think and act competently in response to the ongoing challenges of democratic governance and citizenship.

Civic skills are not developed in a single program or in a single course taken in school. They develop slowly over time and through classroom practice and active participation in students' governmental and other types of local organizing. A number of studies have confirmed that pre-adult opportunities to acquire civic skills affect participation in civic life (Verba, Scholzman, Brady, 1995; Kirlin, 2002).

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[3] The National Standards for Civics and Government (1994) and the Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) categorize these skills under three headings: 1. *identifying and describing; 2. explaining and analysing; 3. evaluating, taking and defending positions on public issues.*

3. 3. Civic dispositions or civic virtues

A third key of civic education are *civic dispositions* or *civic virtues.* They involve traits of character necessary for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizenship. These terms refer to the traits of civic virtues and public character which contribute to the maintenance and improvement of democratic society. Traits of private character such as moral responsibility, self-discipline and respect for the worth and dignity of every individual are imperative, while public spiritedness, civility, respect for the rule of law, critical mindedness and willingness to listen, negotiate and compromise are indispensable to democracy's success (Stimman Branson, 2004). Civic dispositions, like civic skills, develop slowly over time and as a result of what one learns and experiences in the home, school, community and organizations of civil society.

The Council of Europe and the EDC Project (Education for Democratic Citizenship) views democratic citizenship not only as a formal status but also ability to act effectively, responsibly and creatively as citizens. Regardless of the type and level of education, profession or age, each individual must acquire *core competencies*[4] for democratic citizenship. EDC inventories proposed a following competencies:

1. *knowledge* (international society and organisations, international co-responsibility, structure and function of social institutions and rules for participation);

2. *skills* (cooperation, manage and resolve conflicts, participation, critical thinking, creative thinking, reflection, dialogue, etc.);

3. *attitudes* (respect for oneself and others – respect for the minority opinion, confidence and trust in oneself and others), and

4. *values* (equality of opportunity, human rights and rationality, intellectual freedom, tolerance, solidarity, independence and coexistence, cooperation, inclusion, understanding of and respect for others and the environment (Grindall, K. 1997).

5. According to Düerr, Spajić–Vrkaš and Ferreira Martins (2000) education for democratic citizenship promotes a three-dimensional development on an individual:

– *cognitive* (understanding of concepts and values of democracy and their functioning, such as: *human rights and freedoms, democracy and democratic principles, citizen, civil society, globalisation* and *development*),

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[4] In the '90s, under the influence of business and employment bodies, the world of education began to take a growing interest in competencies (Popé, Tanguy, 1994). As a result, the curriculum reform movement has given up the useless follow-up of knowledge and has focused on long-lasting competencies, valid over a longer period of time.

– *social* (acquisition of skills and competencies that enable the individual for efficient social relation and actions in various settings and throughout his or her life-span, like: *skills of critical and argumentative thinking, creative and productive skills, knowledge application skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, democratic leadership skills*, *skills of negotiating and compromising*, etc.) and

– *affective* (internalisation of concepts as values that are the basis for pro-social attitudes and actions, as: *commitment to the principle of the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights and freedom, commitment to the rule of law, justice, equality and equity in a world of differences; commitment to peace and to participative, non-violent and constructive solution of social problems, belief in the importance of personal responsibility and accountability*, etc.).

4. Civic education at school

Most teachers would agree that teaching children to be active participants in a democratic society is an important goal of education. Basic content or subject-matter and fundamental cognitive processes are interrelated in teaching and learning. Teachers recognize that if learners would think critically and act effectively and virtuously in response to public issues, they must, primarily understand the concepts, its origins, the alternative responses and the likely consequences of these responses.

In our opinion, teaching democratic values and principles in a classroom is not enough. If children have to learn what it really means to be an active member of a democratic society, these principles must become an integral part of everyday life in the classroom. Whether learning math, creating rules or planning a field trip, students must feel that they are recognised and that their voices are heard and responded to. They must feel respected and experience respect for others. They must feel valued as individuals but they must understand the importance of their contribution to the group.

Civic education is nowadays in Europe most widely implemented approach both in formal education, as a separate school subject or cross-curricular and in non-formal programmes. It aims at promoting active and responsible citizenship in the context of modern democracies. Apart from promoting knowledge on functioning of democracy and the role of citizens in a democratic society, civic education stresses the importance of citizens' active participation in decision-making processes and their responsibility for the future of civil society (Torney-Purta, Schwille, Amadeo 1999).

So, the best way to teach democracy is to provide opportunities to practice it in schools and communities. Both academic content and process – civic knowledge, virtues and skills – must be taught and learned together to fulfil the mission of civic education, which is the development of individuals with the capacity to establish, maintain and improve democratic governance and citizenship in their country and throughout the world. This can be accomplished by using *participatory methods* and *active learning* so that students experience participation in a real democracy. Only if civic education programs are well-designed and well taught, if they use participatory methods, stress learning by doing and focus on issues that have direct relevance to

participants' daily lives, it can have a significant and positive impact on democratic participation and attitudes.

Although schools carry particular and historic responsibility for the development of civic competency and responsibility, we mustn't forget other important influences, such as family, religious institutions, media, peer groups, local communities, NGO etc. In any way, schools fulfil that responsibility through *formal* and *informal* education beginning in the earliest years and continuing through entire educational process. *Formal education* provide a basic understanding of civic life, politics and government, while *informal education* should enable citizens to understand the workings of their own and other political systems, as well as the relationship of the politics and government of their own country through "extra" or co-curricular activities.

There are some recommendations regardless of the ways of how to improve civic education at school and most of them concern *participatory methods*. Using participatory approaches (role playing, dramatizations, small group exercises, group discussion etc.) are more effective tools for imparting knowledge about democratic practices and values than traditional teaching methods especially because students may view themselves as actors and not only as passive recipients. Furthermore, if we have the opportunity to link individuals directly with local authorities, NGO or engage them in local problem-solving activities, it would be much more than simply using some types of the participatory method (Center for Democracy and Governance Bureau for Global Programs, 2001, p.22).

In any way, more interactive, cooperative and participatory learning activities in the classroom and out-of-school, are needed for students in order to assist them in developing essential skills for democracy, stimulate their civic interests and improve their knowledge and skills, as well as their sense of efficacy.

In the other hand, participatory methods require well-informed and skilled teachers who are able to improve the quality of democracy. Unfortunately, in many cases, teachers are simply assigned to teach civic education for which they have no interest, experience or qualification. Appropriate teacher training is necessary to ensure the development of civic education.

5. Method

5. 1. The aim of the research

The aim of this research was to present the most relevant empirical data on attitudes and opinions of primary and high school students and their teachers from the City of Rijeka (Croatia) towards civic education at school, family environment and local community.

5. 2. The sample

The research was conducted on a stratified sample of 314 students and 111 teachers, from the City of Rijeka, Croatia. There were 208 (66.2%) students of the 7th and 8[th grade] and 106 (33.8%) students from the 3rd and 4th grade of secondary school. There were 167 (53.2%) male and 147 (46.8%) female examinees.
The sample of teachers consisted of 111 teachers, 20 (18%) of which were male and 91 (82%) were female. The teachers were between 21 to 63 years of age (M = 43.86; SD = 9.99). The average years of teaching experience was 18 (SD = 9.99). Out of 111 teachers, there were 36 (32.4%) with two-year college diploma and 75 (67.6%) teachers had university degree. Out of a total number of teachers, 81 (73%) of them worked in elementary school, while 30 (27%) of them were employed in secondary school.

5. 3. Research instrument

The instrument was designed in the form of a questionnaire for the purpose of this research.

Two types of questionnaires were used: one for students and another for teachers. Both of them were fully constructed for the purpose of this research.

Each instrument has 11 items. A Likert–type scale was used for four statement containing five categories of choice (from "1 = never" to "5 = ever"). In these four statements students were asked to asses the following:

1. *the level of freedom in decision-making in everyday life* in their local community; family; school/class and peer-group;

2. *the level of freedom in expressing their own opinions* in their local community; family; school/class and in peer-group;

3. *the level of activity in their local community* related to environment, helpless and disabled people, elderly people, unemployed, youthful care, housing and health care, services;

4. *the level of one's own motivation for active participation in solving above mentioned problems in the local community*.

In addition, 6 items were formulated as open–ended questions. Students were asked to give their opinion in relation to the following values: *equality at home, at school and in their society, rights and obligations of citizens, their own obligations at home and at school, their rights at home and school*.

Finally, students were asked to define *democracy* by linking it to the list consisting the following concepts: *freedom, equality, the rule of law, respect for diversity, the rights of minorities, peace* and *the participation of people in government*.

Their task was to rank 7 concepts from the one that was the closest synonym with democracy to the one that was the least synonym with democracy.

The questionnaire designed for teachers contained 10 items. The aim of this questionnaire was to solicit the attitudes and opinions of teachers about civic education and human rights education. Teachers were asked about their personal understanding of the terms *democracy* and *civic education*. They were also asked to indicate what aspects of civic education students should learn in school. In addition, teachers' attitudes towards the most preferable teaching approaches for civic education and human rights education in the curriculum as well as the most desirable time to start such education were also surveyed. Finally, teachers were asked about the most efficient models of teacher in-service training in civic education and human rights.

6. Results

6. 1. Students

The results show statistically significant difference *between female* and *male students* in their assessment of freedom in decision–making in their local community (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 21.46, p < .0001). Male students have expressed a higher perception of freedom than their female peers (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 10.39, p < .005). There are also significant differences in motivation for active participation in local community between the female and male students. Girls show higher motivation for active participation in society than boys.

One possible explanation of the differences between female and male students in the above two items may be related to culturally-based gender differences. It is well known that some aspects of children's and later adolescent's gender roles are learned in early childhood through modelling after significant others and through reinforcement. Children are selective in what they imitate and internalise. Many development psychologists believe that children are intrinsically motivated to acquire the values, interests, behaviours, as well as stereotypes consistent with their own gender (Snowman, Biehler, 2003, 136). Although now girls are more encouraged to acquire more active skills (Slavin, 1997), a tradition of femininity that connotes passivity, nurturance and the ability to fit in still prevails in many societies.

In reference to *school level,* we have found statistically significant difference between elementary and secondary school students. Elementary school students tend to have higher perception of freedom to make decisions at school than secondary school students (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 11.29, p < .03). Furthermore, elementary school students show higher perceptions of freedom to express their own attitudes and opinions in local community than secondary school students (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 14.92, p < .01). Finally, elementary school students express more motivation for active involvement in resolving local community problems than secondary school students (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 12.72, p < 02).

These differences may be linked to the fact that, recently, more and more attention has been given to these issues in elementary schools in Croatia (more learning about the key concepts, more open communication, more collaboration among teachers, students and their parents), that are not satisfactorily transferred to the secondary school level. Teachers and students in elementary school have more closely relationship as well as more opportunity to promote and realised their ideas than students and their teachers in secondary schools. This could explain why elementary school students have higher perception of freedom to make decisions at school than secondary school students. Also, more encouragement from elementary school teachers and parents in implementing students' ideas in everyday life, may be the explanation why elementary school students express higher motivation for resolving problems in local community than secondary school students.

Secondary school students tend to see their local community as actively involved in helping elderly and helpless people (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 10.12, p < .04) as well as disabled people more than elementary school students (Chi–square $_{(4)}$ = 10.11, p < .04).

Adolescents are highly sensitive to the values of their society, its political and economic tensions and unwritten rules than students in elementary school. Students of secondary school are in the process of developing plans and expectations about their own future. These expectations depend, in part, on the cultural and historical setting in which they live. Furthermore, adolescents are vulnerable to various social crises, like violence, wars, religious movements, economic problems, etc. In general, social situation affects adolescents much more than younger children. The younger feel the impact, e.g., of economic crisis or violence mostly through their parents' unemployment or long-term absence. Such events have direct influence on adolescent, who must confront, absorb, and react to them. The moral growth that occurs during adolescence helps teenagers recognize the value of community action and concern for others (Craig, Kermis, 1995, 624).

Table 1: The mean and range of concepts associated with democracy

Terms	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Freedom	657	2.13	1.63	1
Equality	994	3.22	1.83	2
Participation of people in the government	1285	4.16	1.97	3
Rule of law	1367	4.42	1.89	4
Peace	1395	4.51	1.92	5
Respect for diversity	1431	4.63	1.57	6
Rights of minorities	1520	4.92	1.60	7

One of the aims of this research was to *identify the terms that are associated with the concept* of *democracy* in a hierarchical way. Students were asked to think about the most appropriate concept that defines democracy and to rank each one of them from the

most important (number 1) to the least important (number 7). The concepts were: *freedom, equality, rule of law, respect for differences, minority rights, widespread representation of people in government* and *peace* (Table 1).

From the table we can see that elementary and secondary school students link democracy mostly with freedom (M = 1.63) and equality (M = 1.83) and that they see respect for diversity and the rights for minority as the furthest from democracy. The data presented in Table 1 could be explained, in part, as a reflection of problems in Croatia, especially problems of a socio-economic nature (unemployment, insufficient economic development, etc.) that most often youth perceive as social inequalities and injustice. Furthermore, students' perception of freedom to express their own attitudes, opinions and make decisions at the school are not very high and even less in the local community. On the other hand, these values belong to the classical liberal–democratic principles, which for young people is very important and to which they are very sensitive, if they are not respected in society (Ilišin, Radin, 2002; 185; Spajić–Vrkaš, Ilišin, 2005; 92–93).

6. 2. Teachers

There is statistically significant difference among *teachers* of *different age* in the way of seeing *the role of civic education and human rights at school*. Older teachers tend to link civic education more with extra-curricular activities than their younger colleagues (Chi–square $_{(1)}$ = 5.28, p < .03) who think that civic education may as well be taught through formal programs. Such attitudes of older teachers may be the outcome of, in the one hand, their lack of proper qualification or, in the other hand, their concern about students being too much burdened with other "more important subjects-matters" (mathematics, languages, history, geography, etc) to which civic education simply "does not match".

Regarding the *best form (way)* of presenting the contents of civic education at the school, we obtained the follows results. There is a significant difference among teachers in their attitudes about the *best way of presenting the contents of civic education and human rights with the use of new technologies*. Secondary school teachers are more interested in presenting these contents by e-mail, Internet, CDs than teacher of primary school (Chi–square $_{(1)}$ = 3.93, p < .05). In our opinion, probably one of the reason why teachers of primary school are not interested in such types of presentation can be explain by the fact that they generally tend to see the use of new technologies as an additional burden in their work due to their weak and preparation in this field. According to the previous researches the more appropriate approaches in teaching civic education at school are active learning styles (debates, research projects, workshops, CDs, Internet, DVD, etc.) than lectures or seminars. The topics in civic education have to be presented in a way that enables students to develop the skills of active participation and cooperation with others. Unfortunately, a number of our teachers seem not to share this view.

Conclusion

Today, more than ever before, our young people need to understand how democracy works and how they can help to keep and improve it. Unfortunately, civic education is still considered as the appendix to school life. In school system, reading, writing and mathematics are seen as the most important subjects in the curriculum. No one argues that these subjects have become less important than before but, in our opinion, the core of learning has to be broadened. It should include knowledge and skills needed to support civic understanding and engagement from elementary school to the university level. It is important to systematically promote education for democratic citizens from the very beginning of school life and adopt new interactive teaching strategies in the curriculum, developing pupils' sense of their rights and responsibilities. Equally important issue is the training of teachers to convey democratic citizenship messages and to provide a democratic citizenship climate in their schools.

Finally, good civic education or education for democratic citizenship and human rights must assist every young person in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills pertinent to efficient functioning as an individual and as a citizen in a local setting, national society and the world community.

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STAVOVI UČENIKA I NASTAVNIKA O GRAĐANSKOM ODGOJU I LJUDSKIM PRAVIMA

S a ž e t a k

Škola i obrazovanje predstavljaju jedan od najosjetljivijih i najvažnijih čimbenika u prenošenju znanja i razvoju stavova prema drugome i drugima te prema civilnome društvu, ljudskim pravima i životu uopće. Škola i obitelj povijesno su primjeri institucija koje promiču dominantne vrijednosti, vjerovanja i način života. Odgoj za građansko društvo i ljudska prava trebali bi biti sastavnim dijelom školskoga okruženja, a ne samo nastavnih programa. Odgoj i obrazovanje za građansko društvo i ljudska prava neizostavni su dio ne samo školskoga poučavanja već i cjeloživotnoga obrazovanja. Cilj je ovoga rada ispitati stavove i mišljenja učenika osnovne i srednje škole i njihovih učitelja o građanskome odgoju u školi, obiteljskome okruženju i lokalnoj zajednici. Uzorak istraživanja čini 208 učenika osnovnih škola, 106 učenika srednjih škola i 111 nastavnika. Vrijednosti kao što su *prava, obveze, odgovornosti, demokracija, sloboda* i *mir* ispitane su u odnosu na *spol, godine* i *stupanj školovanja učenika* (osnovna i srednja škola). Dobiveni rezultati pokazuju statistički značajnu razliku u donošenju odluka u lokalnoj zajednici između muških i ženskih ispitanika osnovne i srednje škole. S obzirom na stupanj školovanja postoji statistička značajna razlika između ispitanika osnovne i srednje škole. Učenici osnovne škole pokazuju veći stupanj u slobodi odlučivanja nego učenici srednje škole. Učitelji osnovne škole

imaju pozitivnije stavove o uvođenju sadražaja o ljudskim pravima i građanskome odgoju u nastavne programe od nastavnika u srednjim školama. Statistički značajna razlika pokazala se i u iskazivanju stavova prema uvođenju ljudskih prava i građanskoga odgoja u nastavnome programu s obzirom na životnu dob nastavnika: mlađi nastavnici iskazuju pozitivnije stavove prema uvođenju tih sadržaja u nastavni program, za razliku od njihovih starijih kolega.

Ključne riječi: *građanski odgoj, ljudska prava, obveze, odgovornosti, demokracija, sloboda, mir*

GLI ATTEGGIAMENTI DEGLI ALUNNI E DEGLI INSEGNANTI SULL'EDUCAZIONE CIVICA ED I DIRITTI UMANI

R i a s s u n t o

La scuola e l'istruzione sono le istituzioni più sensibili e importanti nel trasmettere i saperi e gli atteggiamenti sia nei confronti degli altri e dei loro diritti umani, che verso la società e la vita in generale. Da sempre la famiglia e la scuola cercano di promuovere i valori, le credenze, le abitudini e gli stili di vita dominanti nella società. L' educazione civica e il rispetto dei diritti umani dovrebbero costituire parte integrante della vita scolastica e non soltanto dei programmi d'insegnamento, come pure far parte obbligatoria dell'educazione permanente. L'obiettivo di questa ricerca era esaminare quali sono gli atteggiamenti e le opinioni degli alunni e dei loro insegnanti riguardo all' educazione civica a scuola, in famiglia e nella comunità locale. Complessivamente sono stati intervistati 208 alunni delle scuole elementari, 106 alunni delle scuole medie superiori e 111 insegnanti. Sono stati presi in esame valori essenziali riguardanti i *diritti*, gli *obblighi*, le *responsabilità*, la *democrazia*, la *libertà* e la *pace,* in relazione al *sesso*, all'*età* e al *livello di istruzione* degli alunni (scuole primarie e secondarie). I risultati ottenuti indicano una differenza statisticamente significativa tra le decisioni prese dai soggetti femminili rispetto a quelle maschili sia della scuola elementare che della media superiore nell'ambito della comunità locale. Secondo il livello d'istruzione, si nota una differenza significativa tra gli alunni delle scuole elementari e quelli delle medie superiori. Gli alunni delle scuole elementari dimostrano maggiore livello di libertà nelle decisioni rispetto agli alunni delle scuole medie superiori. Gli insegnanti delle scuole elementari sono più propensi a introdurre nella programmazione contenuti sui diritti umani e sull'educazione civica, rispetto agli insegnanti delle scuole medie superiori. Inoltre, risulta esserci una differenza statisticamente significativa negli atteggiamenti verso l'introduzione dell'educazione civica e del rispetto per i diritti umani nei programmi scolastici, secondo l'età degli insegnanti: quelli più giovani gradiscono maggiormente l'introduzione di questi argomenti nei programmi d'insegnamento rispetto ai loro colleghi più anziani.

Parole chiave: *educazione civica, diritti umani, doveri, responsabilità, democrazia, libertà, pace*