Greek Secondary Education Teacher's Views on Citizenship Education[1]

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Abstract

Today, more than ever, it is imperative for active and critically minded citizens. In a world governed by an economic, political and social crisis, change may be the result of active citizenship. Naturally, education can't be impartial, but it has to help in this direction, since it has an important role in the transmission of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to make citizens effective within the global community. That is why I considered it appropriate to investigate the attitudes of teachers, the pillars of the educational process, regarding the issue of citizenship, both the theoretical and the practical level. The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of citizenship and its functionality as an educational tool in the classroom. In particular, their views on citizenship, education on citizenship and the way they were taught were studied. The survey was conducted in the Spring of 2018 in secondary schools among schoolteachers, and the research tool was a questionnaire, which consisted of closed-ended questions. The research involved 214 teachers.

Keywords

citizenship, citizenship education, active citizenship, intercultural education

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INCLUSION

The reality of the new era is characterized by a multitude of contradictions, uncertainty and fluidity. Nation-states are weakened and are largely unable to control the economic, ecological, cultural and political arbitrariness that is taking place on a global scale. The result is a widespread debate and depreciation of policy.

The presence of citizenship education is long and the implementation of it varied. In the recent years, more research has been conducted on citizenship education due to:

- Ethnic conflicts and nationalism.
- Global insecurity.
- The development of technology, information and communication.
- Environmental problems.
- Migration flows.
- New forms of collective identities.
- The demand for individual autonomy and new forms of equality.
- The weakening of social cohesion and solidarity.
- Disappointed by the existing political system, the rulers and the political institutions.
- Increasing interdependence both locally and globally

  (Gollob, Krapf, Ólafsdóttir & Weidinger, 2010, p.12).

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the views of secondary education teachers regarding citizenship education and its approaches. The work is divided into two parts: the theoretical and the research part. The theoretical part initially attempts to conceptualize citizenship. There is a brief historical overview and definitions are given. The following describes citizenship education. Next, intercultural education, ethical education, a brief reference to international citizenship programs, and ways to teach citizenship education are mentioned. Finally, the role of the teacher in citizenship education is analyzed. In the research part of the study the research methodology is presented, its main purpose is defined, assumptions and research questions, the research tool and how the data are analyzed. Afterwards, the statistical analysis of the data is carried out through the IBM SPSS Statistics statistical package and a check is performed for the influence of the socio-cultural characteristics as well as for the correlations between the questionnaire axes. Finally, the conclusions and observations on the research findings are included.

THE MEANING OF CITIZENSHIP IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

A citizen in the full sense of the word is one who is active in the way the community develops either through political activity or through political participation. But to determine exactly what kind of citizens we want our children to be, we have to avoid issues related to nationality as well as the nature and boundaries of the political community to which one belongs. One task in citizenship education is to explain how different levels of identity have acted in history and how they are now linked (Miller, ed. By Pearce and Hallgarten, 2000, p. 34). The concept of citizen was born in ancient Greece in the context of the "city". Citizen education begins in ancient Greece, especially through the works of Aristotle. Citizens of a state must be educated in order to integrate themselves in the structure of the state. The dominant group enjoyed privileges and participated in state law (Heater, 2004 p. 4).

According to Karakatsani (2004, p. 13), citizenship has two dimensions: a legal one and a psychological one. The law is defined by laws and decrees but also by the rights of the citizen and the corresponding practice associated with the concept of democracy. Psychology is about one's knowledge, intuitions, opinions, perceptions, attitudes, values, practices, attitudes and behavior towards political groups, as well as all the duties and rights resulting from the relationship and connection with various political state formations.

There are three types of citizenship (Veugeleres, 2007):

- Adaptation citizen places great importance on discipline and social awareness and relatively little on autonomy.

- Individualized citizenship places great importance on discipline and autonomy and relatively little on social awareness.

- Critical-democratic citizen places great importance on autonomy and social awareness and relatively limited on discipline.

Students have to conquer democratic values at school if we ever hope to change the political, social and economic structures of stratified societies and nation states because they will be the future citizens and leaders. Also, Banks (2004, στο Sleeter & Grant, 2007, p.197) believes that a responsible teacher has to create a democratic atmoshere in order to develop the meaning of participation in students (Freire, 2011, p.146). In addition, political education has as its object the transmission of knowledge and the development of those principles and values related to social and political life (Karakatsanou, 2004, p. 32). Furthermore, citizenship education has to cultivate the deliberative engagement which is the ability and willingness to make judgments, think of other considerations and think of as a member of the community (Snir and Eylon (2017, pp. 585-600). Also, the

students have to develop the ability to exercise human rights responsibly in their adult lives (Eurycide, 2012).

PURPOSE AND SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

What is Citizenship? How do secondary education teachers understand this concept? Does their teaching have practical application in the classroom? Our society needs critically-minded and active citizens, and the need of society for such citizens is as necessary as ever. The role of education in shaping future citizens who not only think but act too is essential.

Thinking about the role of education, someone wonders and wants to search deeper into whether secondary education teachers understand the concept of citizenship and how often they implement activities through which they will teach that concept to their students and explore if they are based on the goals of education for their citizenship. Therefore, research grounded in this area of inquiry could give answers to what is happening in Greek educational reality. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the views of secondary education teachers regarding their knowledge and practices of citizenship education within and outside the classroom.

In order to investigate teachers' views on citizenship education, it was necessary to develop a questionnaire based on the following objectives:

1. To investigate teachers' knowledge of the concepts of active citizenship and citizenship education.

2. To investigate teachers' views on how to teach citizenship education.

3. To explore the practices by which teachers approach citizenship within and outside the classroom.

4. Identifying the frequency with which they implement classroom actions referring to citizenship education.

RESEARCH CASES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that arise from the general purpose of the research are the following:

1. Are teachers aware of the concept of citizenship and what are the general characteristics of an active citizen?

2. What is the opinion of teachers on how to teach citizenship education?

3. How often do they implement activities in their classroom that relate to the objectives of citizenship education?

In order to investigate the original research questions, the following assumptions were drawn up for study:

Assumption 1:   We assume that gender affects teachers' knowledge of citizenship education, their views on how to teach it, and how often or not teachers perform actions within their classroom related to citizenship education

Assumption 2:   We suppose that age influences teachers' knowledge of citizenship education, their views on how to teach it, and how often or not teachers perform actions within their classroom related to citizenship education.

Assumption 3:   We assume that studies influence teachers' knowledge of citizenship education, their views on how to teach it, and how often or not teachers perform actions within their classroom related to citizenship education.

Assumption 4:   We assume that ideological inclusion influences teachers' knowledge of citizenship education, their views on how to teach it, and how often or not teachers perform actions within their classroom related to citizenship education.

Assumption 5:   We assume how politicized you are by influencing teachers' knowledge of citizenship education, their views on how to teach it, and how often or not teachers perform actions within their classroom that are relevant with citizenship education.

METHOD

The questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate research tool to collect the information. It was designed to explore teachers' views on citizenship education and was based on research assumptions previously formulated. I chose this tool for collecting research material because I wanted to explore a topic - citizenship - that is not widely known in the Greek educational community, and thus I wanted to reduce anxiety and the likelihood that respondents would refuse to answer a subject they think they don't know.

A large sample of questionnaires should be closed, structured and numerical. On the contrary, the smaller the sample, the more open, less structured and in words a questionnaire can be. Structured and closed-ended questions enable the generation of response frequencies and statistical analysis and allow comparisons between sample groups (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008, p. 414,417). They capture the extent and intensity of the responses. Hierarchy scales also provide a wide range of differentiated responses and provide quantitative data (Cohen,

Manion, & Morrison, 2008, pp. 425-426). The questions in the questionnaire were randomized so that there were no correlations between them.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Having thoroughly analyzed the reasons why we chose this particular topic for this work, it is now necessary to refer to the methods and materials that we intend to use in conducting the research, to which the questionnaire that we present below corresponds.

GOAL

The target population we were focusing on was secondary education teachers. The sampling method was simple random sampling, in which each member of the population in question has the same probability of being selected and each choice is completely independent of the other (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008: 164-165). As part of our study of the sampling method, I was concerned about the extent to which the sample is important to be representative of the population under study to be reliable. On the basis of the sampling methods, I chose the simple random, seeking to have a sample based on the probability theory. The completed questionnaires were 214. The questionnaire is divided into 4 axes: demographic data, characteristics of the active citizen, citizenship education, citizenship approach.

COLLECTION OF RESEARCH DATA

Questionnaires were distributed with my personal contribution to schools in the Prefecture of Halkidiki, Thessaloniki, Athens and Sidirokastro Serres and Orestiada. At the same time, through the google docs application, I sent my questionnaire to teachers from different regions of Greece. The validity of the questionnaire was secured electronically through the obligation to answer all questions in order to be completed and sent to the e-mail. The duration was from May 20 to May 30, 2018.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

B. Characteristics of Active Citizen

We observe that the 41.1% often discusses what an active citizen means, what his rights and obligations are. The 30.8% participates in volunteer / solidarity programs. The 36.6% rarely and the 36% sometimes responded that students, through group formation and role-taking, offer solutions to social problems. The 28.5% often and the 21.5% rarely responded that students have the ability to

criticize their actions, their beliefs and thoughts. Also, the 42.5% often, 22.9% sometimes and the 9.3% rarely during the lesson we approach current social problems and we ask the students to approach them from all sides with critical thinking.

As a result, we notice that the majority of teachers agree with the general characteristics of active citizenship and citizenship. After all, the active citizen is responsible for himself, cares for his health, well-being, personal well-being and development. In addition, he is the one who is informed about the public, searches for information, filters the news, participates in public discussion in traditional modern ways, forms critical thinking and takes a stand.

He also knows his rights and obligations, expresses his views and actively participates in the political and social structures of opinion or decision-making, such as self-governing bodies, parties, trade unions, various associations, as well as informal colleges (social, political or cultural), scientific associations, etc. Finally, it is interested in protecting the natural environment, not polluting, adopts practices that promote green, save energy, pay attention to water consumption, recycle, move by public transport or bicycle. He asserts his rights in the public sphere, pursues public expression and infrastructure in his neighborhood and country, preserves open spaces and green spaces in public spaces, as well as cultural heritage (Crick, 1998. Hodgson, 2008. UNESCO, 2002). It embraces diversity, embraces human rights, assists its fellow citizens, adheres to the rules laid down for their convenience and is open to the city's immigrants, seeking their social integration. It is a pleasant research finding that most educators endorse the principles of active citizenship (Orr,1992, p.22).

Of course, the fact that a strong 32.2% disagree with the view that the education system provides the values and tools for students to be active citizens is clearly worthy of reference to the need for a deeper education-oriented education reform for the citizenship.

C. Citizenship Education

The majority of the sample believes that citizenship education should be an approach to other subjects rather than just being a separate lesson or being taught in the project. We have to point out that almost half of the teachers in the sample disagreed that there should be outside the curriculum. This result shows that teachers follow the curriculum guidelines and the don't decline so much.

D. Approach to Citizenship

The results shows that the 20.6% rarely and the 29.4% often encourage the use of classroom dialogue to solve problems. The 46.3% always encourage pupils to speak only the Greek language in order to become more readily accepted and integrated into the Greek society. Also, the 21.5% rare, 18.7% rarely and the 36.4% often perform activities where we highlight the parity of cultures. Although, the 28% sometimes and the 15.4% always emphasize the importance of the Greek nation to create feelings of patriotism among students when teaching history. However, the 36% often, the 22% always and the 8.9% never stress the importance of historical phenomena for societies when teaching history.

We estimate that teachers respond positively to the approaches of citizenship education. However, the exception is the tenth approach which is negative, because almost half of the teachers never encourage students to speak only other language than the Greek language in order to be accepted and quickly integrated into Greek society. This shows an assimilative educational approach for students from different cultural backgrounds. Their own voice, culture, language is lost. Teachers do not take into account the cultural capital that students carry and how it helps to integrate and engage them. Students from different cultural backgrounds cannot identify with a curriculum that supports the knowledge and values of strong groups (Cummins, 2005, p.163).

From the above we conclude that the importance of patriotism goes far beyond the importance of history as a historical phenomenon for societies. History is taught in a way that promotes similarities internally and promote differences externally. A linear narrative about the glorious past with particular features of an invariable 'homogeneous' Hellenism (Avdella, 2005, p. 15). Fragoudakis (2007, p. 33) states that teaching the historicity of national ideas not only does not diminish their importance, but will create a respect for younger ones. This is because only understanding and distance will help students to understand that these ideas do not belong to the present or the future but only allow for respect. That is why self-righteous patriotism inspired by the virtues of justice and tolerance can be the foundation of unity in any liberal democratic society, within a multi-centered (rather than ethnocentric) view that recognizes multiple nations / cultures within a single political community and civil society. rights (Petrou, 2011).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, most educators agree that it is the active citizen who takes social action to solve social problems, being the critical thinker and an informed and responsible person. Also, most educators agree that it is the active citizen who is involved in decision making, who develops with himself dialogue with people around him or her about their problems, who is well informed and demonstrates the values of diversity and respect. However, most teachers disagree with the fact that the education system provides students with the values and tools to be active citizens.

Teachers' views on citizenship education were also examined. The majority of teachers stated that they agree that citizenship education should be an approach to other subjects, you should teach as a separate lesson or project. While most teachers disagree that there should be a non-curriculum.

Furthermore, most teachers in the classroom often discuss social issues, during the lesson we approach topical social problems and ask students to approach them from all sides with critical thinking, talk with students in class about what being an active citizen means, what their rights and obligations are, stress the importance of student participation and participation in the electoral process, and engage students in campaigns to raise awareness on important issues.

It is noteworthy that most teachers stated that they always encourage students to speak only the Greek language in the classroom, as this will make them more quickly accepted and integrated into Greek society. While, sometimes, the majority of teachers have stated that students create solutions to social problems through group building and role-play and during the lessons students have the opportunity to critique their actions, beliefs and thoughts.

If we consider the correlation between the "educational level" with the variables "we are doing activities where we promote the parity of other cultures", "in teaching history, emphasize the importance of the Greek nation" and "engage with students in campaigns to raise citizens' awareness on important issues, "with values from 0.244-0.268.This result shows that the educational level is important with the meaning of citizenship education.

Therefore, we realize that the politicization of teachers has a practical effect on action such as volunteer programs and educational programs with other schools in Europe. At the same time, we observe that the educational level has an impact on awareness raising campaigns and on reducing the cultural assimilation effort of pupils, as they also show other cultures in their teaching.

The variables "ideological integration" and "How politicised are you?" are correlated moderately with the variables describing the characteristics of active citizenship, because the correlation coefficient receives values from $0.2 \leq |r| < 0.4$.

Finally, this section showed that the majority of teachers stated that sometimes in teaching history, they emphasized the importance of the Greek nation in creating patriotism feelings for students and stated that often in teaching history, they emphasized the importance of history as a historical phenomenon for societies.

From the above we conclude that the importance of patriotism goes far beyond the importance of history as a historical phenomenon for societies. History is taught in a way that promotes similarities internally and promote differences externally. A linear narrative about the glorious past with particular features of an invariable 'homogeneous' Hellenism (Avdella, 2005, p. 15). Students should see

through the teachers' perspective the story as a cultural mosaic that will facilitate the exploitation of the cultural culture of all immigrants living around the world and remove the fear of mythical purity (Fragoudakis, 2007, p. 41).

SUGGESTIONS

The Interdisciplinary Approach to Citizenship Education as proposed by the Council of Europe (2012, p. 26) should be taught. Other topics related to citizenship such as democracy, human rights, intercultural education, nutrition and health, driving behavior and safety, communication, patriotism are also included during the course. This way, students will be provided with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be able to address the above issues and be prepared. In addition the implementation of democratic processes in practice. Also, teachers and students have to develop collective work related to life and social problems in order to help students understand how cultural, ethnic, religious, global identity interweaves in a dynamic way and become cosmopolitans to act and make decisions about global problems (Banks, 2008).

The curriculum in Greece according to the Council of Europe (2012, p. 34) has no development of state and communication skills. Therefore, there has to be a proper develop of these skills:

- Active learning.
- Interactive learning.
- Related learning.
- Critical learning.
- Participatory learning.
- Development of critical research, respect for diversity, active empathy.
- Upgrading student councils.
- Interdisciplinary approach to citizenship education.

The theory of constructivism is a relatively new widely accepted pedagogical theory, derived from the interpretivist theory of learning in which learners are helped to interpret and construct their own important representations and understandings. During apprenticeships, the understanding of the world is achieved by combining new experiences with those already acquired. Learners build knowledge by interpreting reality based on their own culture and experience and acquire knowledge through communication and interaction with others. Exploratory knowledge acquisition refers to the reconstruction of the concepts of objective reality within a given environment. It leads to an understanding of how these meanings are linked to form a single whole.

Constructivism aims at recognizing one's particular structures of knowledge, their intellectual reconstruction, so that a world understood by the questioner's mind, even if this world is distant from reality. It aims to satisfy the one who asks for reality to the level that he or she can understand.

Constructivism views learning as a personalized process:

- Students associate old with new knowledge.

- Students bring their experiences to the classroom.

- Gender, class, age, ethnicity, and religious beliefs give each student a unique perspective.

In addition, parental involvement will improve citizenship education. This can be done in the form of regular school meetings, permanent counseling for parents in need of support or training courses organized by government authorities and civil society organizations. Magos (2007, p. 5) proposes differentiated pedagogy where students work as a team, utilizing elements of each student's personality, abilities, motivations, and ways of learning. Therefore, the learning process makes sense both for the whole class and for each individual student. This creates a challenge for students. Students also adopt a researcher role: constructing questionnaires, conducting interviews, observation and bibliographic research discover new areas of knowledge, formulate opinions, develop critical reflection, review previous perceptions and attitudes.

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