

STUDENTS' EDUCATION ON EQUAL RIGHTS IN THE LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KOSOVO

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Abstract

The aspiration to protect human dignity presents the core of the concept for human rights. Human rights set the foundations of freedom, justice and peace. They are general moral norms which oblige the individual as well as the society to perform fair and ethical actions in the social circle. Respect for human rights enables the full progress of the society. Although, Kosovar society is in its transitional phase, the education reforms have led to the change of Kosovo Curriculum Framework which aims to build up knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required by the democratic society. The Curriculum Framework enables young people to be active and responsible citizens capable to constructively face the differences and challenges in the Kosovar society. Our research is based on the perceptions and attitudes of students for equal rights and responsibilities in the society. The objective of the research is collection of information for the level of awareness of students on their rights in different contexts and relations. The sample has a heterogenic character and consists of students of different ethnic, gender, social and religious affiliation. The research is conducted with students of grade 8 in 171 schools in different municipalities of Kosovo with a total of 1700 respondents. This research was conducted through a standardised questionnaire from ‘ ‘International civic and citizenship education study’ ’⁴, adapted to the needs of our research.

⁴<http://iccs.acer.edu.au/>

The results of the research will reflect the perceptions, convictions and attitudes of students on equal rights and universal values in the democratic society. The research will highlight different opinions and attitudes of students conditional on their ethnic, gender and social affiliation. The final results of the research are relevant indicators necessitating the awareness of educational institutions for the promotion of democratic values and their implementations inside and outside school life.

Key words: civic education, equal rights, gender equity, equity of ethnical groups, right for education.

Introduction:

All human beings are born free and equal in terms of equality and their rights. Stemming from human nature, human rights establish basic standards without which people cannot live with dignity. Human rights as "basic standards - norms of behaviour, action and communication"⁵, ensure that no one is discriminated unfairly for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious and philosophical convictions, economic, educational, social situation, or ancestry. Several local and international organizations have contributed to promote the Education for Democratic Citizenship in Kosovo, and through various projects and activities, have worked on the awareness of the students on the importance of Civic Education in the development of Kosovo society. In this context, within the project "*Concepts of citizenship among the students of schools of Kosovo*" a research was conducted in cooperation with the Kosovo Education Centre, University of Education in Zurich (PHZH) and the Faculty of Education in Pristina.

Aim of study/research:

The aim of the research is the analysis of data based on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of students about equal rights and responsibilities in society, in different contexts and relations.

Research questions:

⁵The Rights of the Child (2004). Manual for the Rights of the Child, KEC, Prishtina, pg. 15

The questions of the research work are:

1. How much do student support equal rights between men and women in Kosovar society?
2. How much do students agree that men and women should be paid equally when working in the same job?
3. How much do students agree that men are more skilful than women to lead political functions?
4. On what level do students support ethnical groups to run in political elections?
5. How much do students agree with equal rights and opportunities for all ethnic groups in Kosovo?

Representative group

The representative group consists of 171 schools of urban and rural areas in the territory of Kosovo. The respondents are 1700 students of grade 8 and of different ethnic background (Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian, Serbian, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian).

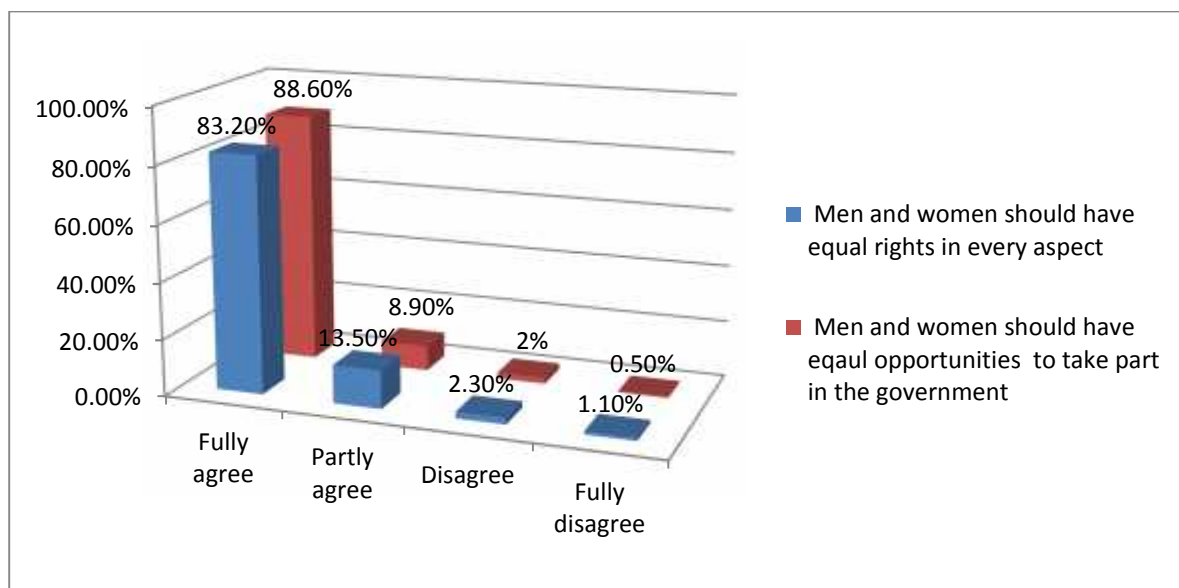
Scientific methods:

During the research conducted on the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of students about equal rights and responsibilities in society, we used the methods of theoretical analysis, comparative method and statistical method. The technique we used is the survey whereas the survey instrument is a standardized questionnaire for students prepared by "International Civic and Citizenship Education Study" and adapted to the needs of Kosovar students.

Data analysis:

1. Equal rights between men and women

To understand the stand of students about: a/the equal rights of men and women to participate in government, b / equal rights of men and women in every aspect, we have surveyed all students who are involved in this research. Students expressed freely their views on these matters. The results obtained are presented in the following histogram.

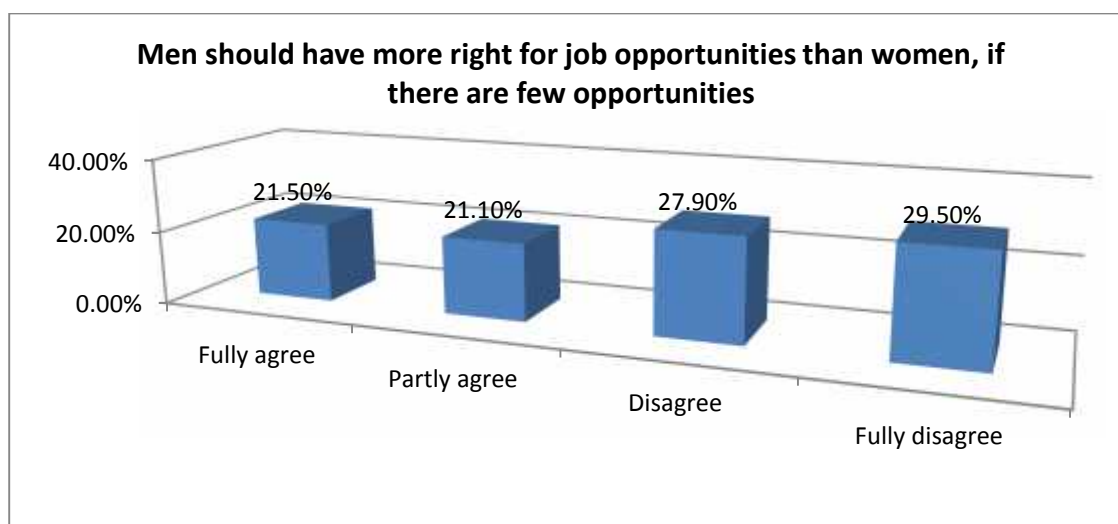


Histogram no.1.Equal rights between men and women

Referring to the above data we conclude that the majority of students, respectively, 83.2%, "fully agree" that men and women should have equal rights in every aspect, 13.5% "partially agree", 2.3% "disagree" and 1.1% of them stated that they "fully disagree". Regarding the equal participation of both genders in the government, 88.6% of students reported that they "fully agree" that men and women should have equal opportunities to participate in the government, 8.9% "partially agree", 2% "disagree" and 0.5% of students "fully disagree". The obtained results present a relevant indicator that students are aware that the respect for human rights and gender equality supports the stability and the overall development of our society.

2. Unequal rights between men and women

In order to find out the opinion of students regarding the following: a / men should have more rights than women for job opportunities when there are few opportunities, we conducted the survey which resulted in some differences about the convictions and stands of students about these rights in favour of men. The data obtained is presented in the histogram no.2.



Histogram no.2.Unequal rights between men and women

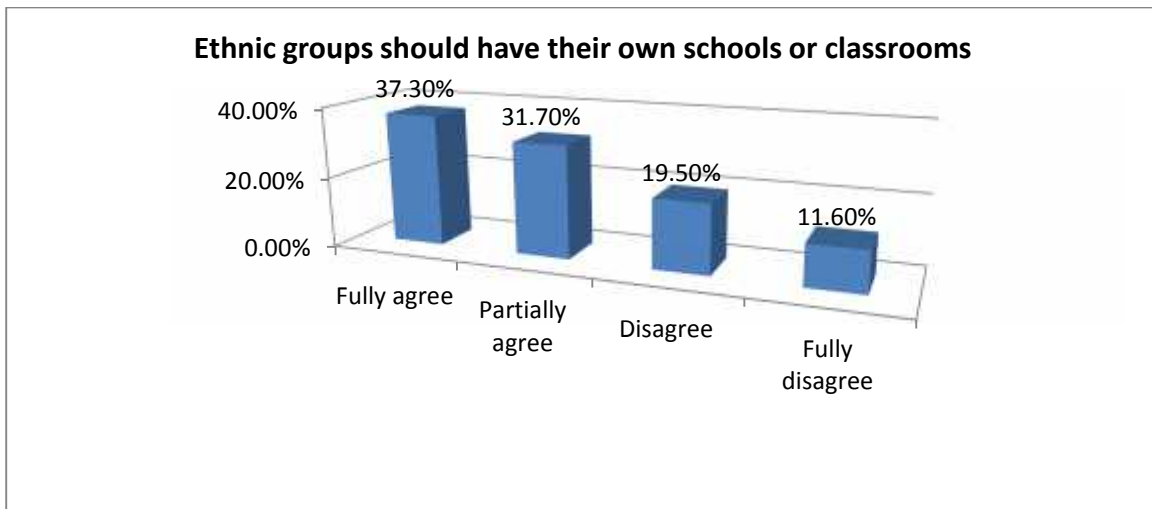
The results presented in the histogram above show that 21.5% of students "fully agree" that men have more right job opportunities than women if there are few opportunities, 21.1% "partially agree", 27.9% "disagree" and 29.5% of them "fully disagree". The results obtained are not at the desired level because most of the students agreed that men have more right for job opportunities than women. This deficiency can be caused also by the fact that in textbooks on the subject of civic education there are insufficient information regarding the unequal rights between men and women.

3. The rights and equal opportunities of ethnic groups in Kosovo

The rights and freedoms of ethnic groups in Kosovo are determined by the Constitution and by International Acts. The protection of the rights of ethnic minorities is an integral part of the legal order of Kosovo⁶. The Convention on Human Rights concerning the Rights of Ethnic Groups, states: "the children of minorities should be entitled to their own culture, religion and language."⁷ Given these facts, students have expressed in the questionnaire different views about the rights and equal opportunities for all ethnic groups living in Kosovo.

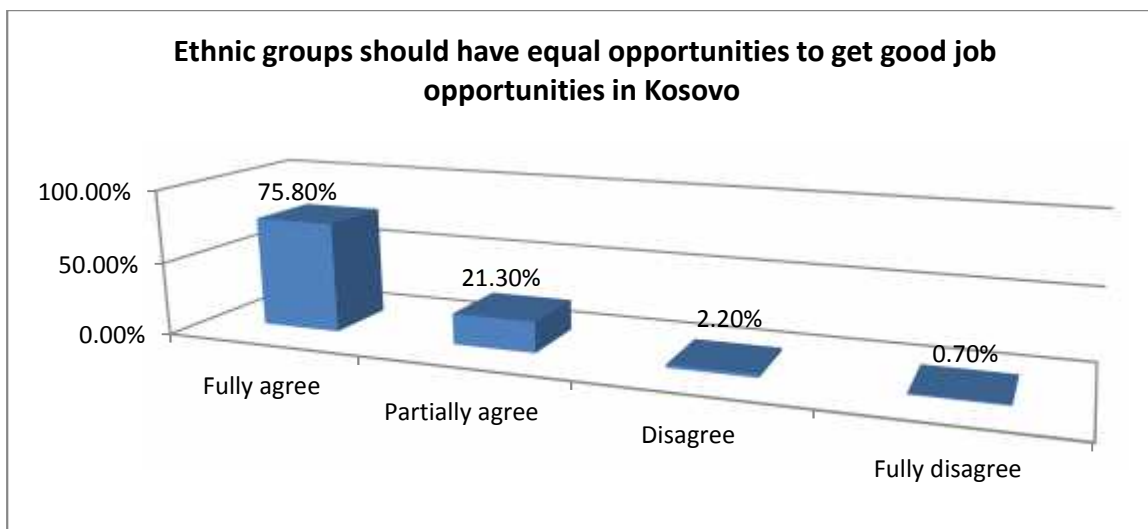
⁶<http://sq.wikibooks.org>

⁷, Sylhasi, V. (2008). Education for the Rights of the Child, Prishtina, pg.48-49



Histogram no. 3. The rights of ethnic groups for education

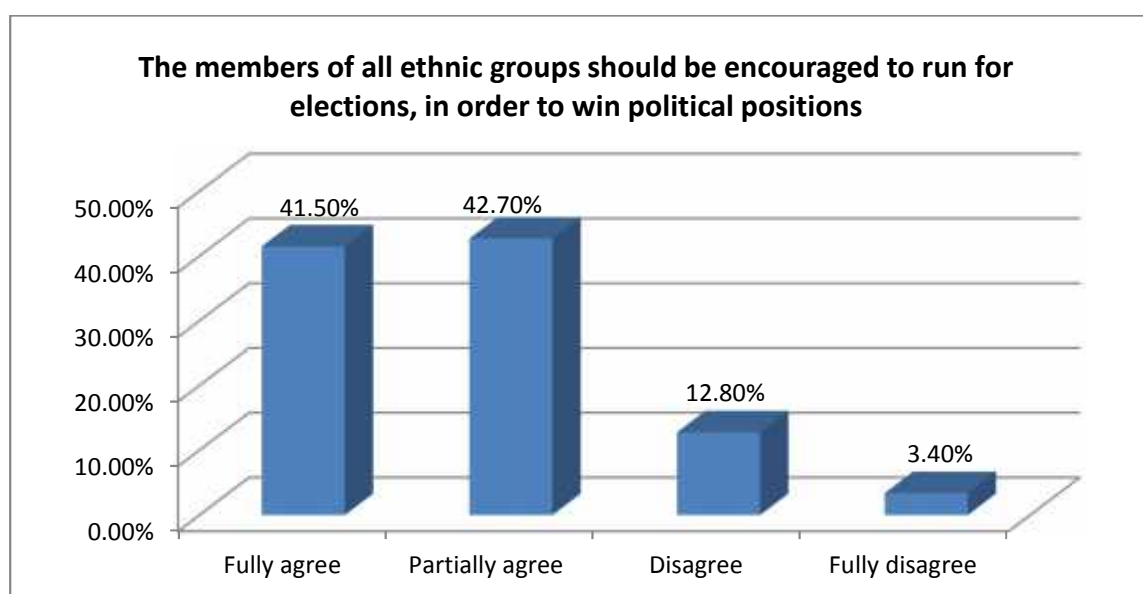
The histogram no.3 shows that out of the total number of surveyed students, 37.3% "fully agree" that ethnic groups should have their own schools or classes, 31.7% "partially agree" with this statement, 19.5% "disagree" and 11.6% "fully disagree". The data highlights the fact that students lack information about the importance of education, the manner and the conditions of education of ethnic groups. Students also expressed their opinion for the rights of ethnic groups for job opportunities. The collected data are presented below.



Histogram no. 4. The rights of ethnic groups to find jobs

The collected data show that 75.8% of students "fully agree" that ethnic groups should have equal opportunities for good jobs, 21.3% stated "partially agree", 2.2% "disagree" and 0.7% "fully disagree". Based on the above results, we can say that the requirements to establish an

inclusive education system of a high quality, based on justice, equality and respect for diversity is essential. Elections are an important part of any civilized society, which has direct impact on the policymaking of a country and the elections are necessary if we are to develop democracy and citizenship in the society. Given that about 5% of ethnic groups that live in Kosovo⁸, the Kosovo Government is making constructive efforts to integrate ethnic groups in central and local institutions of the country and by competing in political elections, the ethnic groups can advocate their interests within these institutions. To that end, we asked the students how much they agree that ethnic groups should run elections to gain political positions.



Histogram no.5. The rights of ethnic groups to run for elections and to win political positions

The data presented above show that 41.5% of students "fully agree" that ethnic groups are eligible to run for elections to gain political positions, 42.7% stated "partially agree", 12.8% "disagree" and 3.4% "fully disagree". Based on these results we can say that students did not express satisfactory degree of tolerance and understanding for the fact that ethnic groups should enjoy their political and civil rights to improve their wellbeing.

⁸ <http://www.kas.de>

Conclusions:

Based on the Curriculum Framework of Kosovo and on the literature in the area of civic education, but also based on the final findings that came out from the research "Concepts of citizenship among the students of the schools of Kosovo", the following conclusions can be reached:

1. According to the data, it is found that students support the changes that are taking place in the recent years in Kosovo. In this context, the fact that about 80% of students think that men and women should have equal rights in the country where they live, is very positive. Students are aware that equal participation of men and women in public decision-making is a human right and a necessary condition for a better functioning of the democratic society.
2. Final data have determined that most of the students think that men have more rights for job opportunities than women if there are few opportunities. These opinions and stands of the students have resulted not only from the lack of complete information in textbooks and overloaded theoretical knowledge but also from the insufficient number of classes in the subject of Civic Education.
3. Results of the research show that students have not given the desired responses in terms of the rights of ethnic groups for their own education and the right to run and win political positions. Analysis of data makes plain the fact that these data are conditioned by their ethnicity, gender and social. Final results should influence the change of education policies, especially in the multidisciplinary approach to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills required for a common life in a democratic society.

Recommendations:

From the results presented above, we recommend:

1. Do awareness to the educational institutions to enhance democratic values and their implementation inside and outside school life. Schools should, through their syllabus and extracurricular activities, influence the promotion and development of specific skills related to social behaviour.
2. Revise textbooks on the subject of Civic Education. Here is it emphasized the need, first of all, to simplify the learning contents, to be enriched by explanations about concepts, lessons to be illustrated with photos and the instruction to be given only by the subject

teachers. In this way, students will become more independent and more practical, and the learning outcome of the subject will not be only the theoretical knowledge but also the practical and concrete behaviour.

3. Favour the cross curricular connection of Civic Education with other teaching subjects. According to the Curriculum Framework, the cross curricular approach enables the achievement of success criteria during the lesson unit and also affects cognitive, affective and psycho-motoric development of students.
4. Organise more training and seminars for teachers of Civic Education in order to contribute more effectively in the classroom, for a better environment and for a sustainable development. Education reforms require professional development of teachers for the implementation of the new teaching methodology and interactive learning in accordance with the content, learning outcomes and assignments for democratic citizenship.
5. Increase the contribution of different civil society organizations and other governmental and non-governmental mechanisms, through various projects and formal and informal activities, to promote civic education of students.

In the end, we believe that education for democratic citizenship influences affects the development of the students' personality. The enhancement of school functions for the implementation of democratic values in curricular and extra-curricular activities, increases the commitment of students to respect human rights, mutual respect and to be active citizens in a democratic society.

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