

Citizen, sustainable development and education model in Albania

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Abstract

2015 is the last year of the Decade for Education and Sustainable Development worldwide. The conclusions of this great project initiated by UNESCO are expected to give their feedback in the following years. Albania with a new democracy but with great ambitions to catch up the sustainable development, has tried to take part in this project without a concrete strategy. The decade coincided with two reforms in the pre university education (2012 and 2015) and one in higher education. They do not only spotlight the philosophical education but also leave it as a secondary option without objectives. In this sense main purpose of this article is the analysis of the education model in Albania based on these points of view stated above.

Keywords: *Philosophical education, education for sustainable development, good citizen, democracy, civic education.*

Introduction

Democracy in Albania, even though it has almost a quarter century, remains a challenging and unstable democracy. Referring to the fact that democracy comes after a long period of dictatorship (Hoxhist system regarded as the most dictatorial in the Eastern Europe) and the fact that the whole education system was under the pressure of Marxism–Leninism ideology, the need to create and generate qualitative human capital is a vital need.

Albania is a country with a young average age (36); this means that the need to educate young people about the concepts of freedom and as responsible citizens can be considered as challenges of democracy itself. Considering the fact that, today's democratic world, with a vast experience in education with rights and freedoms has reviewed the whole process of education in its institutional curricula (Dewey, 2005). The Albanian need to suit these standards becomes an immediate necessity. Albanian DotNet- sat¹ in our survey has shown us the need for a thorough review of school curriculum and the role of philosophical education in them. Sustainable development would be reachable through global citizenship education and this matter would be done through higher education system. The literature of education is joined with citizenship noticeably (Lee, 2000). Alibeigi (2006) stated that the process of sustainable development is closely connected with some principles:

¹Dot NET-how do young people aged from 16 to 26) mean, they state that "... we believe that one of their defining characteristics is that: 1.They have come together with the age of the Internet. 2. The information has always been free and almost universally available to them; 3. In terms of free technology it is easy to master; 4. It is more like a digital space of common interests than common physical space. 5. They came to the era's boom of the Clinton scandal, 6. When the economy is influenced and even more 7. It is a tendency of refocusing to family.

- principle of Equality between generations;
- principle of Social equality;
- principle of responsibility beyond borders for all.

At the end of the Decade for DESD, (2005-2014), there is a continuous discussion about two dimensions of citizenship, which are considered necessary to be involved in civic education, formal and informal. These two dimensions are also expressed in two composition models of civic qualities:

- DC - Dutiful Citizen and
- AC- Actualizing Citizen.

Let us have a look at two dimensions of citizenship by giving their contents and also evaluating the contrast (Zukin, 2003).

AC, Actualizing Citizen	DC, Dutiful Citizen
Decrease the sense of the government's duty and the high sense of individual goals.	Obligation to participate in government activities.
Voting is more meaningful than other acts, personally defined as consumption, community, volunteering or international. Activism	Voting is the core of democratic action in society.
The loss of confidence to the media and politicians that reinforced negative environment by mass media	Informed about the issues and the government by following the mass media
If favors free networks of community in action -often established or supported by friendships and peer relations, which are held by interactive information technologies	Joined with civil society organizations and / or expressed interests through parties, which typically employ a communication to mobilize supporters.

Table 1

Challenges to civic education in this scheme are obvious. Results have shown that it is necessary to work with the educational system of civic education (mainly in schools) based on the model of QC-citizen of responsibility.

At the same time, recognizing that new generations nowadays may have a more significantly publicly experience, different social and political dimensions from those of their parents, but it does not obviate the need for a reformation of the educational model in the new conditions with a reviewed content. Thus, civic dimension to the environment and its management is a priority of education for sustainable development in this educational global decade.

The debate on these two dimensions is related to the degree of activation of the "social capital" as well as its own development of democracy in this millennium (Bennet & Lance, 2003). Social capital theory has become a promising framework of analysis over past decades (Coleman, 1988; Dika & Singh, 2002; Lin, 2001; Maeroff, 1999). Portes (2000) noted "the concept of social capital is arguably one of the most successful exports from sociology to other social sciences and to public discourse".

These debates go down to academism but conceptually and practically are related to philosophy, sociology, psychology, political sciences. Citizens everywhere in the world, educators as well have obvious complaints particularly for education policy makers. They are based on the reasonable perception that schools or civil society, *have focused their civic activities in ability related to, the vote, voting, participation of target groups and less was made to introduce volunteerism and charity in the education of new generations*

for sustainable development education, in order to ensure the sustainability of democratic societies. The main problem remains: Will we educate “good” and persuasive citizens or active and “rebel” ones?

“It rarely happens that parents push their children to choose their model of success, limiting them and dictating their orientation line. Even the school and university orientation, does not help in detecting specific genius hidden to everyone (Attali, 2015)”

Referring to the duration of curriculum reform, a model that gives us 10 years of educational programming for sustainable development DESD 2004-2015, gives some important steps:

- Analysis based on studies on the effectiveness of thought and action, rather than the quality of citizenship;
- The involvement of comparison even in global developments of these analyzes;
- Open academic debate with civil society;
- Transparency goals of Policymaking;
- Feedback of the public on the objectives and process;
- Monitoring the implementation;
- Strengthening professional career system through qualified teacher in Education for Sustainable Development;
- Support of this platform and open market process of textbooks on these formations.

Can we affirm that nowadays there are standards of conception of “good citizen” as the premise for the production of “social capital,” which precedes the sustainable development of democracy?

If we consider one of the surveys of DESD, will see that its findings dictate the American society the need to change the school curriculum about education and human training. If you diligently follow the results of this study, the differences between the older generation and Dot Nets generation are not very large, but it exists a difference that leads in creating a good citizen. The need to prevent the risk brought a complete new concept of education system. Obviously, the searched dimension for “social capital” is expressed in the backgrounds of moral philosophy, psychology, sociology, physical and mental health, judiciary etc. After this study was engaged in government policy rerun, almost all school curricula aimed reviewing proper educational model for citizens of the new century.

Let us compare the results of this study with the study conducted with students of Tirana (Dot Nets generation, 15-26 years).

First Year Gymnasium

Ranking 1-6	Civic Qualities	Most of the interviewees defined by each attribute
1	Law enforcement	73.3%
2	Volunteering to help others	43.3%
3	Donating money to help others	43.3%
4	Contacting officials and elected members about various issues and problems	46.7%
5	Attention to government policies	50%
6	Participation in voting	63.3%

Second Year Gymnasium

Ranking 1-6	Civic Qualities	Most of the interviewees defined by each attribute
1	Law enforcement	80.6%
2	Volunteering to help others	54.8%
3	Donating money to help others	38.7%
4	Attention to government policies	25.8%
5	Contacting officials and elected members about various issues and problems	41.9%
6	Participation in voting	35.5%

Third Year Gymnasium

Ranking 1-6	Civic Qualities	Most of the interviewees defined by each attribute
1	Law enforcement	78.4%
2	Volunteering to help others	67.6%
3	Donating money to help others	40.5%
4	Contacting officials and elected members about various issues and problems	29.7%
5	Participation in voting	32.4%
6	Attention to government policies	48.6 %

Analyzed in years results:

In the first year students, “Law Enforcement” scored 73.3%. The expression “participation in the vote” scored 63%, according to the “Law” this age group has not captured the official target of taking part in the elections. In the second year we have a different order: 80.6%, who are pro “Law enforcement”, in second place results “Volunteering” with 54.8%, while there is a decrease in “Participation in voting” and “Attention to government policies”. In the third year, the situation is different: in the first place results “Law enforcement” with 78.4%, “Participation in voting” with 32.4% and “Attention to government policies” with 48.6%.

The clearly marked expression “Law Enforcement” is the main expression (even almost the only) of a good citizen. Thus, for our DotNet gymnasium, being a good citizen is enough to follow the laws. “Participation in elections,” is again valued but never presented in civic needs. However, surprisingly there are also other alternatives chosen. Why does this happen?

-Because our students, do not have a family culture of being free in their thoughts. Therefore a large part of them tries to give answers that draw them nearer to the interests of those who develop these questions. This really brings a margin of error in the response. This behavior seems to estimate in later surveys, when accompanying the survey with focus groups, where the results are hardly compatible with the research conducted. Perhaps, the lack of this inherited culture makes the survey’s results in our country having a high margin of error.

-Due to the lack of conceptual clarity of a good citizen and evaluating the legal implementation as the only element or basic quality of a good citizen.

Based on the focus group investigation technique that involves an organized discussion

among individuals (Merton and Kendall, 1946), we implemented a research. The participants must have a specific experience or opinion about the topic investigated, for which the researcher must carefully select them *a priori*. Therefore, the researcher may get a more realistic description of what the participants think, since they reflect on their opinions and maybe even change opinion (Bryman, 2008). Results have been different. From the focus groups, such skills as “Volunteering” or “donate to others” are mostly judged as anachronisms of “the dictatorship”, but these skills are evaluated in the survey with the maximum! This proves that even when students rank high regarding good citizenship, this happens because it exists a “need” to be in the “appearance” of expectations required in these cases, although the students do not have a firm conviction regarding them. The lack of conceptions of a good citizen is observed in the rankings that have become habits in students such as being therefore a “good citizen”. It is worth noting that all surveyed students have not studied philosophy in high school. Let us analyze in practice the data collected from students of Philosophy of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Tirana for the third year and part-time system.

	Law enforcement %	Participation in voting %	Attentive to politics and government %	Contacting officials and elected members about various issues and problems %	Volunteering to help others %	Donating money to help others %
1	80.0	8.33	1.67	1.67	8.33	0.0
2	11.67	20.0	23.33	5.0	35.0	5.0
3	0	35.0	15.0	16.67	13.33	13.33
4	6.67	23.33	18.33	20.0	30.0	8.33
5	1.67	10	23.33	21.67	11.67	31.67
6	0	3.33	18.33	35.0	1.67	41.67
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

As we can notice, “Law Enforcement”, “Participation in voting” and “Volunteering to help others” are ranked from first to third concerning their importance. “Attentive to politics and government” as an expression has an average nearly 4. “Contacting officials and elected members about various issues and problems” and “Donating money to help others” are considered as the fifth in importance. The importance of “Law enforcement” as a civic expression is more heterogeneous (there is greater volatility in the order of the importance to this expression) - the variation coefficient is 0.566.

The thought about the importance of “Donating money to help others” as a civic expression is more homogeneous (there is little volatility in the order of importance of this expression) – with a coefficient of 0,249.

Third Year Philosophy, Bachelor and Part time

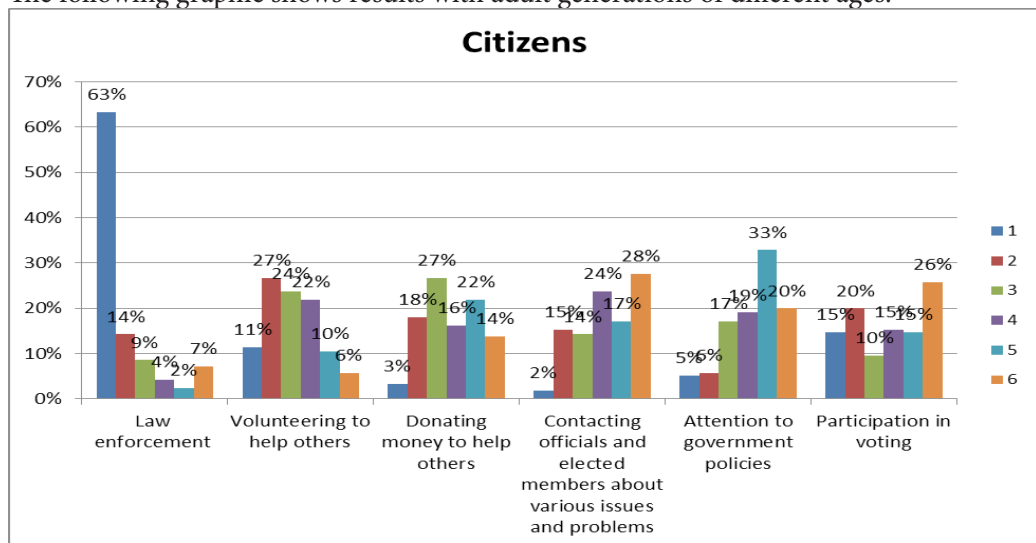
	Law enforcement	Participation in Voting	Attentive to politics and government	Contacting officials and elected members	Volunteering	Donating money
N Valid	60	60	60	60	60	60
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	1.32	3.17	3.93	4.60	3.07	4.92
Std. Deviation	.748	1.210	1.494	1.343	1.274	1.225
Variation Coef.	.566	.381	.380	.292	.414	.249

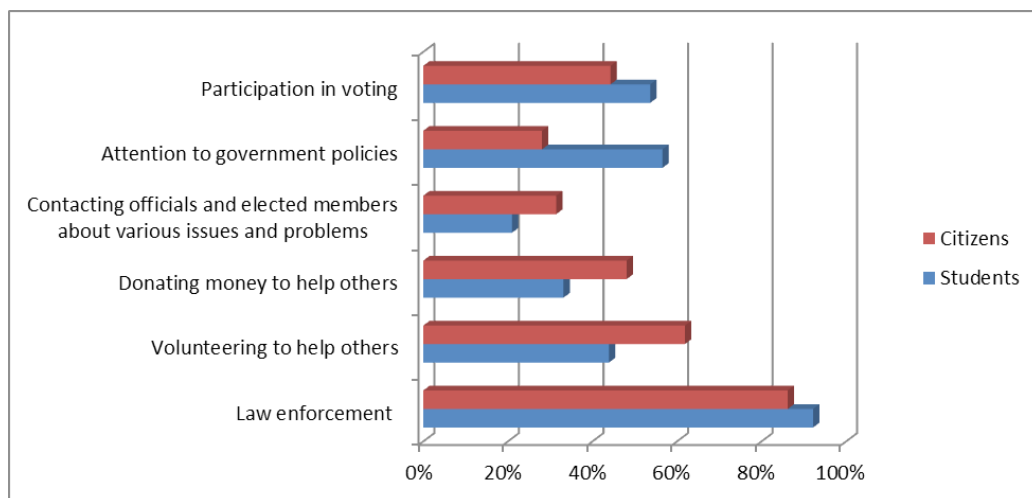
As we can notice there is considerable clarity of thought in students of philosophy on the formation of an educated citizen of the 21st century that resembles comparatively to the UN model (Gardner, 1999).

There is a detail that should be noted: *most of them do not have studied philosophy in high school.*

As it can be seen, education with Philosophy makes a significant difference to the education with the quality of a citizen in the postmodern era, ready to understand the need for sustainable development.

The following graphic shows results with adult generations of different ages.





Consequences

As it can be seen, although there is lack of political culture in the Albanian society, we still find the difference between adult generation and students. What grasps your eye is the fact that young people are more committed to participate in elections, considering this as a civic quality. This result should lead us to two other reasons: a) young people have curiosity to vote for the first time, b) the adults have had disappointing experiences in the process of conducting their votes against and watch it in low percentage.

The same thing must be said even for “Law enforcement”. It has to be appreciated the fact that law enforcement is regarded as the first quality of a responsible citizen. We found significant differences compared to western countries that state as very important “volunteering” or “donating”. These results indicate an approach of an individualistic behavior among youth.

Conclusions

However taking into the consideration the margin of error 3% and referring to focus groups with youngsters and adults we can conclude that: the new generation hasn't got a good approach to “freedom” of thought and truth. This indicates an educational system formed on superficial basis of not sustainable education. Philosophical education is a priority in Albania's conditions. Fragile democracy and the vulnerable economic situation make democracy not sustainable. If the process of education will not follow philosophical education in all its levels, Albanian democracy will lose the chance to develop and catch up with standards of sustainable development.

The comparison with the American studies where the differences between groups were not so big, brings Albania to the need and review of the whole educational curriculum.

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