

Civic Education for Democratic Citizens: To what extent do Civic Education curricula and textbooks establish foundations for developing active citizens in the Republic of Macedonia?

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- The civic education curriculum in Macedonia is vastly focused on goals targeting the gaining of knowledge while insufficiently encompassing the aspects of ‘skills’, ‘attitudes’ and ‘values’.
- The lack of goals related to ‘attitudes’, ‘values’ and ‘behaviours’ is not likely to lead towards an effective development of democratic and participative practices within the students.
- In order to develop democratic and active citizens, the focus of the curricula needs to be on the real-life and everyday application of the civic education concepts.
- In the planned curriculum revision, policy makers should include less learning goals referring to knowledge of factual information, and more aimed at developing student’s participatory skills, values, attitudes and especially behaviors.

Purpose: The paper presents a review of the process of inclusion of ‘civic education’ as part of the formal education system in the Republic of Macedonia, from its beginnings as project activity in the late 1990’s to its current implementation as a mandatory subject in the primary grades. Comparison is made between what was initially planned and what has been achieved in the area of civic education during this 20-year period, with a critical review on the potential of the subject for developing civic competencies.

Methodology: The findings are based on content-analysis of curriculum goals and textbook tasks, through their classification in an indicators’ matrix of ‘Civic Key Competencies’ (as defined by the EC’s key competence framework for lifelong learning).

Findings: The analysis provides insight into the frequency of curriculum goals and textbook tasks which relate to manifesting ‘civic competencies, from ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’, ‘attitudes’ and ‘values’, to the ‘behavior’ indicators, which should ideally be the goal of civic education.

Research limitations/implications: The research was based on the method of textual analysis, which is inherently open to individual interpretations by the researcher. However, in order to limit arbitrary interpretations and classification of textual information, variables were operationalized on the basis of the indicators of Civic Key Competences (Appendix 1)

Practical implications: Bearing in mind that the country is in the process of revising the civic education curriculum for primary and secondary school, the research has the potential to inform the policy process through providing viable recommendations on the most effective models for developing active citizens.

Keywords: civic education, civic key competencies, curriculum, textbooks

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1 Introduction

The Republic of Macedonia emerged as an independent state in 1991, after the breakup of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, when it begun its transformation from the socialist system towards a market economy. The socialist system was limited with regards to citizen's participation in identifying political issues and engagement in policy making on both local and national levels. In addition to the socio-economic transformation of the society, the country was facing ethnic tensions between the majority ethnic Macedonian population and the non-majority ethnic Albanian population, which culminated with an armed conflict in 2001 and ended with a peace accord. The transition period left the country in a value vacuum and a question for the policymakers - how to develop democratic and active citizens who would contribute towards the democratization of the society, and will maintain a culture of interethnic tolerance and peace?

Bearing in mind the importance of education as a political socialization agent, the need of introducing civic education in the formal education system, as a method for developing democratic citizens, was deemed necessary. In addition, national policymakers and international consultants were aware that the models of implementation are also very important. In particular, merely acquiring knowledge and memorizing facts is insufficient in developing the desired set of values, skills and behaviors required from democratic citizens. Hence, the use of active learning methods, student-centered approach, participation in solving real-life problems and involvement of stakeholders outside of the school were aspects considered as essential for developing democratic values, ability to think critically and collaborate in order to solve actual problems in the community. These are some of the aspects, comprising the Civic Key Competence, which are going to be 'traced' in the analysis of the learning goals and textbook questions/tasks.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the current civic education curriculum and textbooks, with regards to the extent and quality of integrating different aspects comprising the Civic Key Competence, and assessing their potential for developing this competence within students. This would contribute to a more successful revision of the civic education curriculum and textbooks, which are underway by national stakeholders (Biro za razvoj na obrazovaniето [Bureau for Development of Education] and Ministerstvo za obrazovanie i nauka [Ministry of Education and Science], with the aim of encompassing aspects of importance for the further democratic development and multiethnic cohesion of the country. In addition, the paper indirectly evaluates the long-term effectiveness of the policy for introducing civic education, from its introduction as an extra-curricular topic integrated throughout the pre-school and early grade curriculum to its current status as a specific subject taught in middle school.

The paper begins by explaining the history of introducing civic education as a subject in the system of formal education and its current status. It continues through elaboration of the theoretical framework behind the analysis and outlining the methodology used. The main part elaborates the results from the content analysis of curriculum first, and the textbooks later. The conclusion reflects on the main findings and provides recommendations referring to more effective implementation of the civic education subject in primary schools.



2 Background

Political socialization theories (Niemi and Sobieszek, 1977) identify the school (teachers, curriculum, teaching practices) as one of the main agents of political socialization, and Capacci Carneal and Pozniak note that democratic citizenship “can be both taught and practiced through education systems” (2004, p.23). Hence, the national education authorities, with assistance from international organizations¹, agreed that one of the methods for achieving democratic values and behaviors among citizens was to introduce Gragjansko obrazovanie (civic education) as part of the formal education.

The beginnings of this process in Macedonia date back to 1995-96, when the idea of civic education was promoted by external factors and independent university circles (Trajkovski, 2003). However, the national institutions opened up to the idea and to the assistance from foreign institutions in 1998. Trajkovski (2003) outlines the first initiatives in the field, supported by the Open Society Institute; the PHARE, the US Center for Civic Education (CCE) from California; and the Austrian KulturKontakt. He adds that in the frames of the *Education for Civic Society Action Project* (ECSAP), supported by CCE, comprehensive strategy for introducing civic education at all levels of public education was developed by the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, which was partially accepted by the educational authorities. However, the strategy shaped the future activities related to civic education in the country, which begun with a project entitled “Civic Education: Path to a Civil society”, primarily targeting students from pre-school and early grades. It was implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS)², an international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States, and funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The project was implemented in partnership with the Bureau for Educational Development (BED)), part of the Ministry of Education, and the Center for Civic Education (CCE), another US-based nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization. The goal of the project was to strengthen civic society in Macedonia, as a means to reduce ethnic tension (CRS, 2001). In order to achieve this, two main objectives were set: (1) students to acquire the skills to participate in civil society through the introduction of Civic Education into kindergartens and early grades (one to four) through the “Foundations of Democracy” civic education curriculum, and the “Project Citizen” curriculum for middle and upper grade levels and (2) including national and local parent’s associations³ to “develop and formalize mechanisms for participation in educational decision making through their involvement in civic education reform” (CRS, 2002, p.2). Textbooks for grades 1-4 were developed by CRS and for grades 5 and 6 by BED in three teaching languages (Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish) and further adjusted after consultations with all stakeholders. Parents were involved, through the Parent Councils and their awareness was raised through a widely distributed newsletter with project activities (CRS, 2001). Trainings were provided by BED advisors and selected teachers to teachers in general, with a focus on class-teachers and the main focus was for students to gain skills for active participation in the community. The curriculum was designed to be student-centered, with students working to identify a policy issue and a plan for resolving the identified problem (Capacci Carneal and Pozniak, 2004). Correspondingly, teachers were trained in using interactive and participative instructional strategies, including group work and problem-based learning (CRS, 2002)



The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) conducted a mid-term evaluation of the Civic Education project. The evaluation was highly favorable and included several recommendations for improvements including pre-service training at the pedagogical faculties in Skopje and Bitola, civic education standards development, publication of best practices and lessons learned, more colorful textbooks and guidance materials for parents on ways in which they can assist their children in civic education (Allison, 2002). The final evaluation, conducted by the Netherlands National Centre for School Improvement (APS), commended the implementation of the Citizenship Education in all primary schools, but noted that the focus on quantity might have hindered the quality of activities. Evaluators noted that additional work needs to be done to involve parents and to strengthen student's problem-solving skills. (de Haan, Taseva, van't Rood, 2004)

After CRS established the basis of civic educations and set the grounds for its institutionalization, in order to ensure the continuation of the civic education activities, coordination of project activities was taken over by a locally-formed civil society organization, Makedonski Centar za Gragjansko Obrazovanie (Macedonian Civic Education Center/MCEC). They were provided funding by USAID to implement curricula for fifth and sixth grade, under the name "We the People ... Project Citizen". An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Education and Science in 2002 for the civic education lessons to be taught by class teachers as a homeroom subject once every two weeks (CRS, 2002). However, the subject was not assessed, and teachers were not inspected so, this model was unsustainable.

There were conflicting views among stakeholders with regards to the success of this policy arrangement. On one hand, the Ministry of Education was satisfied with the project achievements, their involvement, and especially the development of achievement standards in cooperation with the SQA (Capacci Carneal and Pozniak, 2004). While some of the teachers involved praised the newly introduced topics like the ones referring to responsibility and decision making and the prospects they offer for resolving different school/local/communal problems, others criticized the approach noting that while they have textbooks/guidebooks, they are not instructed how to integrate the topics within other subjects and the material requires specific time and space in order to be implemented successfully. In addition, teachers reported that they had received insufficient training and felt ill-prepared for the teaching process (Fotinovska, 2003, p. 16). A different form of criticism was put forward by local experts with regards to the instructional methods and their potential to develop the required skills within students. Specifically, one expert noted "The subject itself did not offer a new methodology, but something already seen (...) and thus became the opposite of its content. (...) children should learn how to participate in the society. Learn how to organize themselves, state their opinion, follow information. But this does not happen with this subject." (Fotinovska, 2003, p.15)

The attempt to address some of these issues came with the formal introduction of Gragjansko obrazovanie (Civic Education) as a mandatory subject within the national curriculum in the 2008/09 academic year, to be taught by sociologists and/or history teachers in grades seven and eight⁴. For this purpose, curriculum and textbooks were developed by local experts. However, simply introducing a subject is not sufficient: policy makers need to make sure its contents and instructional methods develop civic competencies. The next section assesses the extent to which this has been achieved.



2.1 What is the current standing of the Civic Education subject?

Recognizing the distance civic education has come from its initial phase as a donor-funded project to its current position of curriculum-integrated mandatory subject in primary school, recently there has been an attempt by Macedonian authorities to assess its effectiveness and whether it has achieved its goals.

With regards to the recommendations outlined by the mid-term and end-term project evaluators, SQA and APS accordingly, only one was fully implemented: developing assessment standards for the subject. However, only one (out of five) teaching faculties⁵ introduced CE as a separate subject in the initial teacher training, there are still no materials for parents and there are no publications with lessons learned and/or best practices and the level of development of critical thinking, according to international assessments, is still very low (OECD, 2016). In 2016, the Bureau for Development of Education initiated a study to assess the implementation of civic education in primary schools. An on-line survey with teachers and focus groups with students were conducted, assessing several aspects: teaching methods, curriculum and textbooks (Mickovska, Cheslarov and Mickovska-Raleva, 2016). The main findings indicate that:

- Although the curriculum does not limit the *instructional methods used by teachers*, and actually recommends using various interactive methods, data indicate that traditional methods (monologic and text method) are the ones most frequently used. In this regard, students are more critical compared to their teachers and responded that interactive methods are used less frequently than their teachers. Nevertheless, students appear to have conformed to the most frequently used methods and have assessed: lectures, discussions and group work as the most effective ones. What is concerning is that only 57% of students reported to be able to freely express their opinions during civic education lessons, which in itself undermines one of the main goals of the subject.
- With regards to the *curriculum*, opinions among teachers are mostly positive, with the vast majority of them considering the subject to assist most of the students to achieve the curriculum goals (understanding problems the school and community faces, recognizing problems and developing solutions, and inclusion in the community's activities) and students finding most of the topics important and somewhat interesting. Despite this, only one in two students considered that the subject assisted him/her in achieving the outlined goals.
- While the vast majority of teachers reported using the *textbook* during every lesson, 40% of them consider there are topics, contents and terms which are not age-appropriate or are wrongly presented (i.e. are not in line with the current societal developments). In addition, every second student is critical with regards to the textbook's helpfulness for clarifying and learning the required contents and concepts. (Mickovska, Cheslarov and Mickovska-Raleva, 2016)



The current study aims to further explore some of the issues highlighted above. Specifically, recognizing that teachers in Macedonia are required to closely follow the curriculum and rely on the textbooks as primary sources during lessons, this analysis focuses on assessing these sources.

3 Theoretical framework for the analysis

In trying to assess the long-term effectiveness of the policy for introducing civic education, we need to bear in mind existing studies of similar policies and programs. The assessment of the effectiveness of civic education classes formally began in the 1960s in the USA, with studies indicating that the introduction of civic education topics was not related to development of more democratic values and behaviours. (Torney-Purta, 2000) Several studies conducted in the 1970s clarified the relationship between civic education and democratic values and behaviors. Specifically, they found that simply lecturing students on the content and requiring rote memorization of facts is not likely to result knowledge and interest in politics; but if lessons are organized in an interactive manner, with discussions on political issues, the effects of the civic education were larger (Torney-Purta, 2000).

As discussed above, Niemi and Sobieszek's (1977) review of agents of political socialization also identifies the school as one of the major agents. However, they note that the focus should be placed on secondary schools, as this is the period when students develop greater cognitive awareness. In this regard, they also note that mere transfer of knowledge is insufficient for developing political culture, but such methods need to be combined with other activities, such as group debates or writing assignments.

More recent studies have confirmed this relationship. Finkel's (2000) study of the impact of international civic education programs in developing countries like Dominican Republic and South Africa indicated that some of the programs implemented had an effect on political participation, in particular in the aspects of community problem-solving participation and attendance at local municipal meetings in the Dominican Republic. The effects were larger in cases where participants were more frequently exposed to civic education training and the instructional methods used were active and participatory.

Széger (2012), also emphasizes that research indicates "that identification with democratic values and acquisition of democratic citizenship skills are best achieved via student activities; learning through activities and acquiring a sense of responsibility stemming from the expression of their opinion" (p.6). Based on this, she proposes greater focus on acquiring higher-level competences, such as critical thinking, ability to openly express opinion, social cooperation and responsibility reflection upon real life and the process of learning. In relation to this, Capacci Carneal and Pozniak (2004), add that the effectiveness of civic education programs can be achieved if they apply "participatory methods that reinforce and model how democratic processes should work; offer opportunities for direct political engagement; focus on themes immediately relevant to people's daily lives; and bring parents, teachers, and school administrators into school-based programs so that messages are reinforced outside the classroom" (p.23).

4 Methodology



Bearing in mind the lack of studies on whether civic education has achieved its goal of preparing students to be active and participative citizens in Macedonia, the research aimed to assess this issue through the analysis of policy documents (curriculum and textbooks). Recognizing that instructional methods are one of the most significant factors for developing active citizens, it is important to recognize that the learning goals represent guiding points for teachers to apply certain instructional methods. Hence, the aims of this study are to:

- analyze civic education curricula with regards to how they incorporate different levels of the civic key competences (hereinafter: CKC) in the learning goals
- analyze civic education textbooks, with a focus on how they incorporate different levels of the CKC in the questions/tasks

Hence, the research included the review and classification of (1) curriculum goals (general and specific), (2) tasks outlined in textbooks, (3) questions outlined in textbooks, into a matrix of operationalized civic competency indicators.

4.1 The Concept of Civic Key Competences

The Council of Europe defines the key competences for lifelong learning “as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment” (European Communities, 2007, p.3). Although the establishment of the civic education policy in Macedonia came before the introduction of the European Reference Framework on Competences for Lifelong Learning, the analysis is guided by the definition of civic competence used in this framework. This was considered as most appropriate since the aim of the education system is to prepare students for the future, and the world of tomorrow requires key competences as outlined in the framework. Currently, as Sylvest (2017) argues, in the context of a rise in immigration to the EU and increasing cultural diversity, civic competence assumes particular relevance compared to 2006, when it was initially introduced.

However, the initial definition of the CKC has not been challenged yet. The social and civic competencies, specifically, are defined to

“cover all forms of behavior that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation”

Official Journal of the European Union, 2006, p.7

It can be concluded from the definition that civic competence, as a concept is primarily characterized by terms signifying action, such as ‘participate’ [‘in an effective and constructive way’, fully, actively] and ‘resolve conflict’, although the definition recognizes that ‘knowledge of social and political concepts’ should be the basis for participation. However, it is evident that the



focus is on the behavioral aspects of personality and an active and constructive participation in civic life is considered as the ultimate outcome.

For this research, the concept has been operationalized through Abs and Veldhuis's (2006) framework of civic competences which an 'active citizen' should possess, adapted for the purpose of measuring civic competences in Europe (Hoskins, Vilaba, Van Nijlen and Barber, 2008). The framework incorporates five dimensions of civic competence, encompassing the characteristics of active citizen, from the cognitive to the behavioral level. The complete set of indicators is provided in Appendix 1. Summed up, these include:

- (1) *Knowledge* (e.g. knowledge of democratic institutions, political system, historical and cultural heritage, etc.)
- (2) *Skills* (critical thinking and handling of information, communication skills, peaceful conflict resolution, taking part in political discussions, being able to take a position, evaluate a position/decision, etc.)
- (3) *Attitudes* (e.g. feeling confident to engage politically, trust and loyalty towards democratic principles and institutions, openness towards different opinion, etc.)
- (4) *Values* (e.g. acceptance of rule of law, tolerance and respect towards differences, belief in social justice, belief in the importance of democracy, etc.)
- (5) *Intended behavior* (active in the political community, in the community and the civil society)

4.2 Data-analysis methods

Content analysis was used as a method to assess specific characteristics of textual data and classify them into an indicators' matrix developed on the basis of Abs and Veldhuis's (2006) framework. For this purpose, two matrices were developed, for the:

1. *Analysis of curricula*. The general and specific goals outlined in two curriculum documents for civic education, for eight and ninth grade (BDE, 2008) have been analyzed with regards to their content, and classified within the matrix of civic competencies indicators. Each learning goal has been classified as a separate content-unit.
2. *Analysis of textbooks*. The questions and tasks for students, outlined in two textbooks, one for eight (Ugrinoski and Vasileski) and one for ninth grade (Trajkova Kostovska, Ugrinovski and Vasilevski, 2010) have been analyzed with regards to their content, and classified within the matrix of civic competencies indicators. Each question and each task has been classified as a separate content-unit.



The findings present data in both quantitative manner (as frequencies of textual units, classified with regards to the Civic competence aspect they belong to) and qualitative manner (as examples of textual units belonging to different aspects of the Civic competence).

The nature of the content analysis can be considered both an asset and a limitation. While this type of analysis enables quantifying textual information and making conclusions which go beyond the qualitative interpretation, it is open to biases which stem from the coder's background and understanding of the topic. In order to reduce these biases, concept of Civic competences was operationalized through a very detailed framework (see Annex 1) and the coding was made by the primary researcher, who has a previous background in identifying and analyzing civic competences. In addition, the process did not rely on classifying words, but complete sentences, questions and tasks, focusing on their aim and meaning. In this regard, categorizing curriculum goals was more straightforward assignment since the Civic competence indicators can be rephrased in the form of goals and easily linked to the goals outlined in the curricula. However, classifying textbook questions and tasks was more challenging and required making assumptions with regards to the goals of each question/task, i.e. the types of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviours it can develop within the students.

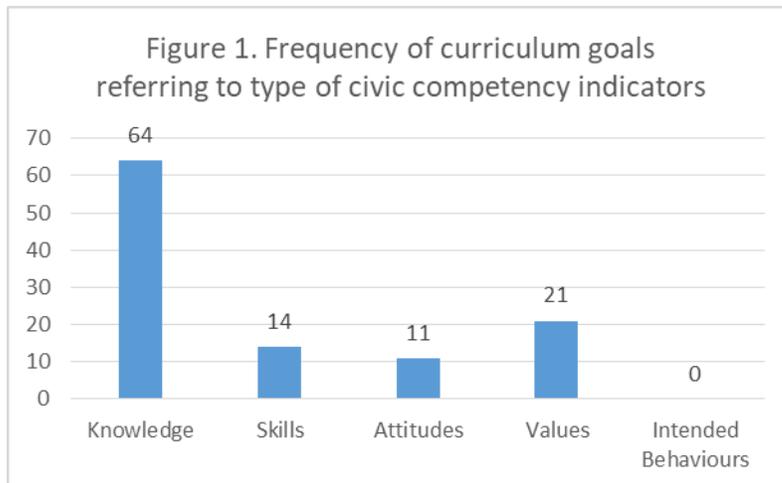
5 Findings

5.1 Classification of curriculum goals

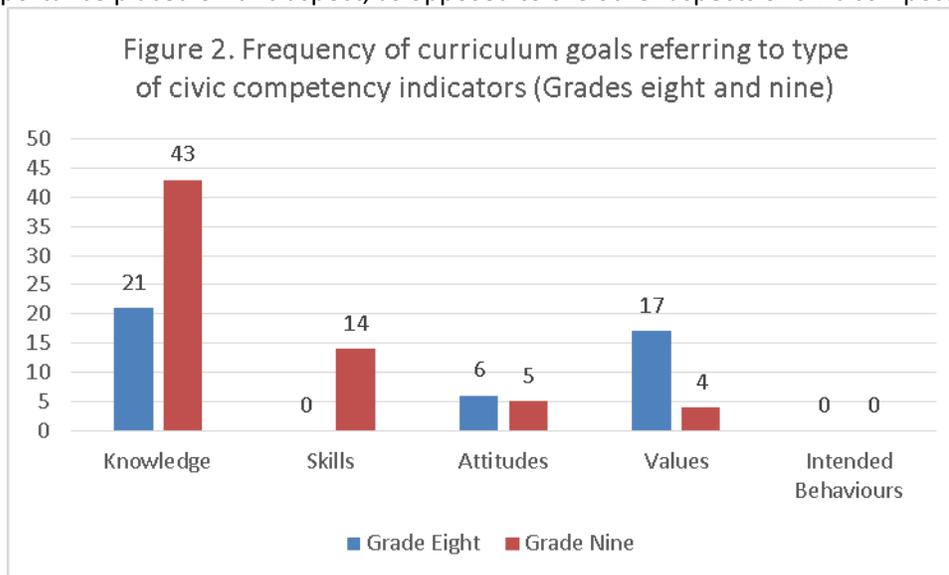
The classification of curriculum goals according to the CKC matrix indicates that the vast majority of goals (64 or 58%) outlined in the two curricula can be classified under the indicators composing the 'knowledge' component of civic competence. While the remaining goals are relatively equally distributed among the indicators composing the aspects of 'skills', 'attitudes' and 'values', none of the goals was found to be related to the 'intended behaviors' indicators (Figure 1). This finding is rather discouraging considering the focus on participatory and behavioral indicators in the Key Competences Framework and the initial goal set at the beginning of the implementation of the civic education policy – developing participative citizens.

However, if curricula for Grade eight and Grade nine are analyzed separately (Figure 2), there is a distinction between the frequency of different types of curriculum goals, with the ones classified under the 'knowledge' indicators being twice as frequent in the ninth grade curriculum, while those classified under the 'values' indicators are four times as frequent in the eighth grade curriculum. Interestingly, none of the outlined learning goals from the eighth grade curriculum have been found to match the 'skills' indicators of the Civic competencies model.





The fact that the bulk of learning goals have been classified under the 'knowledge' indicators suggests that the curriculum is primarily focused on acquiring knowledge and in particular, numerous details linked to the legal and political system of Macedonia and the European Union. Although knowing certain facts is the basis for acquisition of other elements of the competence (skills, values, behaviors), the prevalence of factual knowledge in the curriculum speaks on the importance placed on this aspect, as opposed to the other aspects of civic competence.



More specifically, even though the knowledge aspects of the Civic Key Competences were found to dominate the curriculum goals, not all indicators composing this aspect were equally represented within the curricula. Most frequently, learning goals were found to be related to the indicators titled *Key elements of the political and legal system (human rights, social rights and duties, Parliamentary government, the importance of voting) (local, national, European level)*⁶ (e.g. *To differentiate between the three levels of government*)⁷ and *Basic institutions of democracy, political parties, election programs and the proceedings of elections* (e.g. *To know the*

characteristics of democratic political systems). However, certain knowledge indicators have not been integrated into the curricula through the learning goals, such as *Social relations in society* and *Different cultures in the school and in the country*.

The majority of goals classified under the skills aspect of the civic competence were found to be related to the indicator *To resolve conflicts in a peaceful way* (e.g. *to behave in a way to avoid conflict, to learn to manage a situation when conflict is inevitable*), which is considered positive bearing in mind the history of conflict and intolerance in the region and the country.⁸ However, many other indicators composing the skills aspect of the competence were not found to be included as specific learning goals. These include: *to possess communication skills (to be able to present in verbal and/or written manner your ideas)*, *to be able to critically examine information, to build coalitions, cooperate, interact*, etc. The absence of the latter indicators from the curricula is critical and could threaten the occurrence of the former indicators/learning goals, as peaceful conflict resolution should be based on critical examination of information, ability to communicate ideas clearly, and ability to cooperate.

The attitudes aspect of the framework is composed of only four indicators, and analyzed curricula goals were found to fit into three of them, but were mostly classified under the indicator *to feel responsible for your decisions and actions in particular in relationship to other citizens* (e.g. *to understand that satisfying needs and desires should be in line with rules of the community, To understand the meaning of responsibility and differentiate among responsibility towards oneself, in the family, towards the community, towards the country*). Nevertheless, the absence of goals related to the indicator *to be open to difference, change of own opinion and compromise* is critical, since it prevents the establishment of sincere dialogue, as a precondition for peaceful conflict resolution, which is essential for a transitional country.

Goals related to diverse values indicators of the framework are relatively well represented within the curricula. In this regard, most goals have been classified under the indicators which imply respect of human rights, in particular *respect for differences including gender and religious difference* (e.g. *to be supported to respect those different from him/herself regardless of ethnicity, gender, skin color, religion*) and *respect for human rights (freedom, diversity and equality)* (e.g. *to know and be able to explain the meaning of civil rights and liberties*). From the values indicators, least represented in the curricula are *a belief in the importance of democracy* and *a belief in the need to preserve the environment*. While the first one can be indirectly implied through other goals, the second one is not part of the civic education curriculum, but it is integrated in other subject areas.

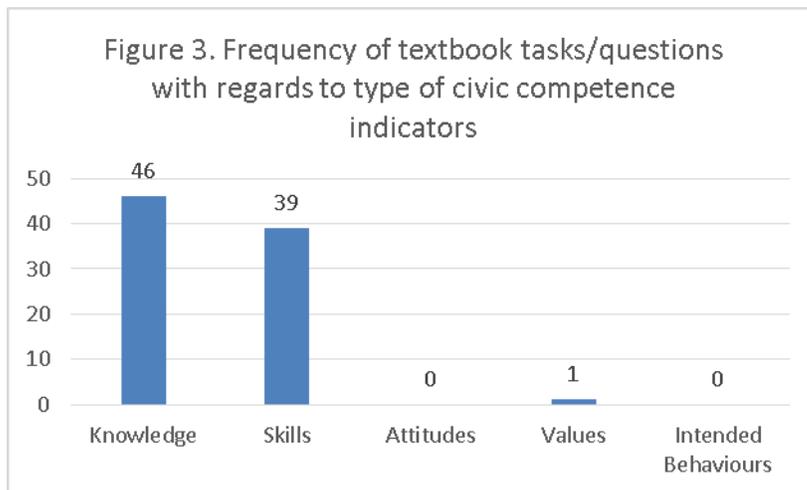
As already noted above, none of the learning goals were found to be directly related to the 'intended behavior' aspect of the civic competence framework. Although intended behavior is implied in the formulation of particular goals, they are not presented in the form used in the indicator framework.

5.2 Classification of textbook questions and tasks

The analysed civic education textbooks typically contain a lesson (planned to be covered during one class) in the form of a narrated text, followed by several questions related to the topic and



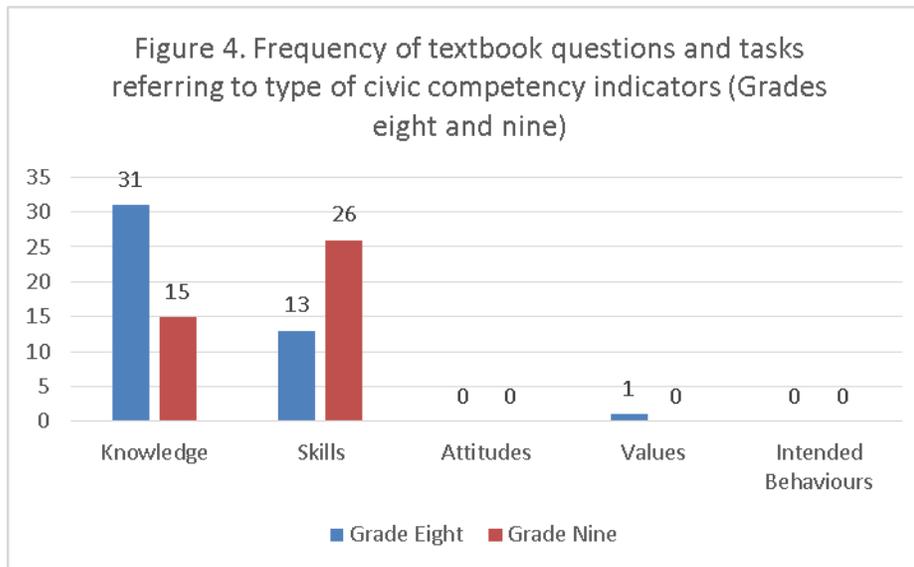
sometimes a task for the student to perform in order to improve his/her skills in particular areas. The current analysis did not refer to the narrative text but the questions and tasks related to the topic the text covers.



Not surprisingly, bearing in mind the previous data on the dominance of ‘knowledge’ indicators in the curricula, the majority of questions and tasks outlined in the textbooks have been classified under the knowledge indicators (Figure 3).

Specifically, the vast majority of questions have been found to require knowledge on the topic previously elaborated in the textbook, which makes the responses easily ‘traceable’ within the text. Nevertheless, certain questions, as well as all tasks/assignments were related to certain indicator, from the skills dimension of the civic competence framework. This was especially evident in the ninth grade textbook, which is ‘rich’ in tasks which require students to critically examine information and evaluate a position. (Figure 4) Only one task/question has been categorized under values’ and none have been included under ‘attitudes’ or ‘intended behaviours’ indicators,

Example for task categorized under ‘values’ indicator: *Based on the information you have at your disposal, try to discover more about the language, customs, tradition of those different from you, in the classroom, in the school, in the neighbourhood. Describe how the cultural differences came about?*⁹



Large numbers of textbook questions can be linked to some form of knowledge indicators. The majority can be classified under the indicator ‘Key elements of the political and legal system (human rights, social rights and duties, Parliamentary government, the importance of voting) (local, national, European level)’ and ‘Basic institutions of democracy, political parties, election programs and the proceedings of elections’, which is in line with the most frequent curriculum goals. Most questions for self-assessment relate to recognizing and stimulating memorization of certain facts. Examples of this are: “*What is a Constitution and what is it for?*” (Grade nine), and: “*State the differences between a direct and representative democracy*” (Grade eight). While basic knowledge of facts is primary for acquiring higher-order competences, focusing only on these types of knowledge elicits remembering and potentially understanding of the content, but may limit the stimulation of higher-order thinking, such as application of knowledge, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

As already mentioned, while skills indicators have been underrepresented in the curriculum analysis, they have been well represented through the textbook analysis. Such indicators include: *To be able to evaluate a position or decision, take a position and defend a position*. With regards to this, the grade nine textbook includes a task requiring students to read about a Government’s decision on banning the use of plastic bags, and evaluate it with regards to different aspects; and *to be capable to critically examine information*, here a grade eight textbook example of task encompassing this indicator is an assignment from students to define personal identity in relation to others and analyze preferred changes in their personal behavior. The two textbooks are rich in assignments through which students can practice the critical and creative thinking, as competencies – prerequisite for the development of critical and active citizen. However, while these assignments can be practiced by students, they are not systematically taken into account when assessing students summatively. Hence, considering that students would focus on learning what they are being assessed for, it is likely to assume that their focus would be on the knowledge aspects of the civic competence.

Only one example of a task which could be classified under the values dimension¹⁰ has been detected in the textbooks (example provided above). It relates to the indicator *Respect for differences including gender and religious differences*, and requires eighth grade students, through a research activity, to analyse the differences in traditions, customs and, language of those different from him/her in the grade/community and try to explain the development of cultural differences.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

It can be concluded that the civic education curriculum is vastly focused on goals targeting the gaining of

knowledge. It incorporates numerous learning goals related to: knowledge of national and international

institutions, the constitution and human rights, while insufficiently encompassing the aspects of 'skills', 'attitudes' and 'values'. This is an issue which needs to be seriously tackled during the curriculum revision, since the development of an active citizen requires initiation of the overall behavioral system (knowledge-skills-values-behaviors).

Nevertheless, it is encouraging that majority of tasks in textbooks provide space for critical thinking and examination of ideas and positions, require from students to construct their knowledge through manipulating with actual or hypothetical data and applying the knowledge in real-life situations. As confirmed by the research (Torney-Purta, 2000; Finkel, 2000; Széger, 2012), these types of activities are likely to lead towards democratically conscious and active citizens. However, students' summative assessment mostly relies on the questions provided in textbooks, the majority of which require reproduction of knowledge and rely on retrieving factual information directly from the text. Considering that students mainly learn what they are being assessed for, it is to be expected that they will primarily focus on acquiring basic knowledge and pay less attention to acquiring higher-order thinking skills, which are essential for application of knowledge in actual situations.

Presented data indicate a disconnection between some of the goals outlined in the curricula and the tasks in the textbooks. This is primarily with regards to the relatively small number of learning goals referring to skills in the curricula, despite the majority of tasks/assignments designed to develop skills in

the textbooks. This gap is especially visible in the Grade nine curriculum. In addition, while the curriculum incorporates learning goals related to the dimensions of 'attitudes' and 'values' from the civic competencies framework, these aspects are not included throughout the textbooks. Therefore, it can be noted that the institutionalization of civic education has departed from its initial emphasis on a student-centered and problem-centered approach and adopted a teacher and assessment-centered approach, strongly prioritizing knowledge over civic skills and especially behaviors.

As studies have already showed (Hoskins, Villalba and Saisana, 2012), this approach is not likely to lead towards an effective "instillation" of democratic and participative practices within the students. Therefore, it may be argued that the current policy framework of civic education does not allow for appropriate development of democratic and active citizens. In particular, in order to



develop such citizens, the focus of the curricula needs to be on the real-life and everyday application of the concepts such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Examples of this might include electing class president, attempting to tackle some injustice in the school or community, using media for discussing school/communal problems. In addition, considering the societal advancement and the fluidity of scientific knowledge, students should also be encouraged to critically re-examine some of the concepts within the civic education curriculum itself.

Those with responsibility for the upcoming revision of the curriculum, should go a step further and consider more combining content referring to factual information with content aimed at developing student's participatory skills, values, attitudes and especially behaviors. In this regard, there will be fewer learning goals which teachers are required to meet, but these will be more strongly related to higher levels of learning and stimulating active participation in the society. Moreover, it is recommended that the curriculum places more emphasis on the following indicators composing the Civic Key Competence:

From the skills framework:

- Ability to distinguish a statement of fact from an opinion
- Ability to critically examine information
- To build coalitions, cooperate, interact
- To be able to live and work in a multicultural environment

From the attitudes framework:

- To feel confident to engage politically
- To be open to difference, change of own opinion and compromise

From the behaviors framework:

- To be active in the political community
- To be active in the community
- To be active in civil society

Eliciting these specific indicators of the civic competence is especially important considering the multicultural fabric of the Macedonian society and its vulnerability to conflict. In this regard, it is necessary for students to deepen their abilities for critically examine information in order to be open to different opinions and compromises; become able to build coalitions and cooperate with citizens with different ethnic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds; actively participate in different aspects of communal life based on the principles of mutual support and cooperation.

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Appendix 1: List of indicators of Civic Key Competences (from: Hoskins, Villalba, Van Nijlen, Barber, 2008. *Measuring Civic Competence in Europe*)

Knowledge:
Key elements of the political and legal system (human rights, social rights and duties, Parliamentary government, the importance of voting) (local, national, European level)
Basic institutions of democracy, political parties, election programmes and the proceedings of elections
The role of the media in personal and social life
Social relations in society
The history and cultural heritage of own country; of predominance of certain norms and values
Different cultures in the school and in the country
Main events, trends and change agents of national, European and world history
The function and work of voluntary groups
Knowledge on current political issues

Skills:
To be able to evaluate a position or decision, take a position and defend a position
To distinguish a statement of fact from an opinion
To resolve conflicts in a peaceful way
To interpret the media messages (interests and value systems that are involved etc.) (critical analysis of the media)
To be capable to critically examine information
To possess communication skills (to be able to present in verbal and/or written manner your ideas)
To be able to monitor and influence policies and decisions including through voting
To use the media in an active way (not as consumer but as producer of media content)
To build coalitions; to co-operate; to interact
To be able to live and work in a multicultural environment
Attitudes:
To feel responsible for your decisions and actions in particular in relationship to other citizens
To feel confident to engage politically
To trust in and have loyalty towards democratic principles and institutions
To be open to difference, change of own opinion and compromise
Values:
Acceptance of the rule of law
A belief in social justice and the equality and equal treatment of citizens
Respect for differences including gender and religious differences
Negative towards prejudice, racism and discrimination
Respect for human rights (freedom, diversity and equality)
Respect for the dignity and freedom of every individual
Tolerance towards difference
A belief in the importance of democracy
A belief in the need to preserve the environment
Intended behaviour:
To be active in the political community
To be active in the community
To be active in civil society

Endnotes

¹ The international assistance during this period came as a result of the requirement for ‘democratization’ after the transition to liberal democracy, and was accepted by national authorities as a necessity.

² Organization which at the time offered their assistance to developing countries and societies in transition.

³ The National Parents Association was established two years before the start of the Civic Education Project, through another CRS project (Parent School Partnership Project).

⁴ Grades eight and nine after the introduction of the ninth-grade primary education concept in 2007. Civic Education teachers in Macedonia can be graduates in the fields of: history, philosophy and sociology

⁵ Faculty of Pedagogy in the frames of the University St. Kliment Ohridski in Bitola

⁶ All indicators are from the ‘Ideal list of civic competence’ provided in Hoskins, Vilaba, Van Nijlen and Barber (2008). See in detail in Appendix 1

⁷ Examples provided in quotes and in italic represent verbatim learning goals from the analyzed curricula

⁸ The fallout of Yugoslavia in 1991, which Macedonia was an integral part of; The ethnic conflict between country’s armed forces and ethnic Albanian rebels in 2001. Trajkovski, 2003; Trajkovski, 2013; Risteska and Daskalovski, 2011

⁹ Civic Education textbook for Grade 8 (p. 38)

¹⁰ For the purpose of developing ethical values, the Macedonian primary-school curriculum also includes the mandatory subject – Ethics [Етика] and the elective subjects: Introduction to Religions [Вовед во религии], Classical Culture of the European Civilization [Класичната култура во европската цивилизација] and Ethics of Religions [Етика на религии], in Grade seven.

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