

The Civic Education in Greek Kindergartens. The Views and the Practices of Greek Kindergarten Teachers Concerning Civic Education

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of kindergarten teachers on the content of the term citizenship, on the importance of actions associated with citizenship education and on their performance at school and finally on the relation of the kindergarten curriculum to this topic. The survey was conducted in spring of 2013, using a questionnaire with five open questions. In our research took part 171 teachers (kindergarten teachers) who were asked to describe their opinions about citizenship education and its importance the degree of their agreement, the degree of significance of certain proposals as long as ,the degree of frequency in related activities with civic education, as long as the assistance of school curriculum on this . Our findings indicated that the kindergarten teachers knew quite well about citizenship education, and recognized the importance of this approach for kindergarten, performed particular actions (national days, elections , actions on local problems, but they were not satisfied from the “assistance” given by the curriculum.

Keywords: citizenship; curriculum; kindergarten teachers

Introduction

During the past two decades interest in the capacity of citizenship has grown dramatically especially in democratic societies, while significant revival is observed during periods of crisis or major changes. In the modern society of globalisation, which is based on new socioeconomic conditions arising from the technological equipment and the speed of change in all aspects of life, the emergence of new needs, the rapid development of science (Karalis & Ball, wd: 2; Hahn, 2010; Baldwin et al., 2009) lead us to the conclusion that the traditional notion of the term citizenship tends to change. The concept of citizens who pass the largest part of their lives in one country and share a common national identity appears to have started to wane. Completely conflicting events take

place in societies where people have been deprived of their political rights, because they cannot become citizens in their motherland, while others officially possess the capacity of membership of the nation-state, nevertheless they do not enjoy many of their rights. Hence, we are perforce led to a new examination of the notion of citizenship to go with the contemporary reality we experience (CastlesinBanks, 2012: 75).

During the lapse of time many definitions of the term citizen have been given. According to the definition of Goncalves e Silva "A citizen is a person who works against injustice, not for individual recognition or personal advantage but for the benefit of all people. In realizing this task - shattering privileges, ensuring information and competence, acting in favour of all - each person becomes a citizen" (Banks, 2012: 56; Millei & Imre 2009; Nutbrown & Clough, 2008).

Concerning citizenship, Marshall provides the following definition: "Citizenship is a condition provided to all members of a community. All those possessing it have equal rights and obligations. There is no universal principle to define the rights and obligations, making the distinction into three components, civil, political and social" (Marshall & Bottomore, 1995: 62; Millei & Imre, 2009; GOLLOB et al 2010).

However, the concept is not very clear through the definition only, so we present three of its most characteristic models:

The first model is called liberal, according to which citizenship is comprehensible as all rights and obligations which provide each citizen with equality within the political community, but has the disadvantage that the citizen is passive, except for the elections.

The second model views the citizen as a consumer of public services, who, therefore, maintains consumer rights. There is no sense that in this citizen model there is social activity, or democratic character.

The third model, which holds the minority opinion to the public, is that the citizen not only maintains his rights, but is actively involved in shaping the lifestyle, which requires more time and leaves doubts about expediency. (Miller, 2000: 27-28; Marshall, 1950: 10-1; Delanty, 2007: 289-292).

The steady growth in racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in nation-states around the world, and the increasing recognition and legitimization of diversity puts again the focus on issues related to citizenship (Banks, 2012: 55; Hahn, 2010; Baldwin et al, 2009). Nowadays it is universally accepted that societies are composed of different groups that maintain their cultural traditions and historical elements, stressing the unity in diversity (Seefeldt, 2005). A multicultural society functions more harmoniously on the basis of pluralism, which encourages all citizens to participate actively in shaping this society under the shared values, practices and procedures. Education can be a major factor of this task (Nikolaou, 2005; Banks, 2012; Gundara, 2011).

Through education in citizenship, the goal is that young people should express their thoughts clearly, in writing, orally or in many other ways, including both respect for others and self-expression. This process involves the knowledge of

political and social institutions, which is important for people to be able to understand how decisions are made, what is their nature, their obligations, the way they handle them and more importantly the way they can be involved in this. Education for citizenship provides students skills, knowledge, whether it is about skills or about values and behaviors (Berg & Gonçalves, 2007: 326; Banks, 2012; Phillips, 2009; Atubra, 2009; Tassoni, et al 2002; Torney- Purta & Vermeer, 2004).

What happens when we talk about civic education in the early years of formal schooling? Education for citizenship in early childhood coincides with sociological theories of childhood and children's rights (Ailwood, et al, 2011: 641-642; Millei & Imre 2009; Nutbrown & Clough, 2008). Moreover, it offers children early introduction to financial knowledge and welfare support and knowledge of where to go for help when they need it (Phillips 2010; Mitchell 1999; Kerr, 1999; McKinom, 2007).

Children participation is supported firmly in bibliography and it is even considered that the lack of confidence of parents in their children's abilities creates barriers. The citizens' critical participation and acceptance of diversity is essential for democracy. In contemporary free societies different facets of citizenship such as political literacy, social and moral responsibility and community engagement are essential (Crick 1998; Silva-Dias T./Menezes I. 2014:250-251). This means that children must be prepared. Regarding the content of citizenship, Dunne brings the debate on the interdependence as basic value as opposed to individualism in modern neoliberal economies and societies (Dunne, 2006).

Education for citizenship in preschool age is considered nowadays an obvious case (Millei & Imre 2009; Phillips, 2010). It is important to highlight that social, historical, political and educational dimensions are involved in education for citizenship in preschool and elementary school age. Children are often treated as children-citizens, semi-citizens or future citizens, but not as ordinary citizens. From the childrens' perspective on the other hand, it is known that they consider their schools as undemocratic institutions (Lister, 2007).

Citizenship puts children to work together on issues that interest them. It is important that children deal with the problems of communities and so their voices become stronger. According to Adams involvement with problems is essential to learn to be citizens. In early age accession climate means changes in space and teachers. Young children formulate political and cultural preferences from very early age (Phillips L., 2010).

Democratic citizenship requires teaching democratic values for which it is important:

- Teachers to share power and be interested in how students feel.
- Teachers to cultivate practices of respect and concern for children.
- The model of the teacher to cultivate respect for others.
- To support freedom of thought and expression and teachers to support them in this direction with specific activities.
- Children are not oppressed by the power of others.
- Children make decisions essential in a democratic society.

- To create a sense of community.
- To comply with rules (Seefeldt, 2005).

It is important to note that research on political education of children reached the following conclusions:

- The concepts of politics begin to grow in early childhood and are continuous.
- Children view politics individually and positively.
- Political roles can be developed from this age (Brett, Mompoin & Salema, 2009).

Modern sociology of childhood views children as competent citizens. There has been considerable debate on the content of children's citizenship. Several authors have expressed views and suggested various ways to look at it. Specifically, Millie and Imre (2009) argued that the term is problematic because children do not have access to the rights conferred by citizenship, such as freedom of property and the right to vote. Indeed, even for children of foreigners born in a country, the right to vote by birth is not universally recognized in all countries.

Finally, the teachers' role is to help students understand that community and cultural knowledge they bring along to school, which could seem a little bit similar, but at the same time differ from school knowledge and other students' knowledge. Equally important is that teachers help students understand the ways in which values encompass students' knowledge and how to interpret through them the knowledge of school.

Research Methodology and Sample

Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of this research is to assess the views and practices of kindergarten teachers on citizenship education in kindergarten.

The objectives of this research are the investigation of perceptions of kindergarten teachers of the concept of citizenship education, perceptions of the importance of the subject in kindergarten and whether they deal with this, their relevant activities options and how they assess the contribution of curriculum.

Research questions and hypotheses

- Kindergarten teachers do not have a complete picture of what citizenship education is.
- Kindergarten teachers will recognize the value of education for citizenship.
- Activities will focus on key objectives of the curriculum.
- They will not consider the contribution of curriculum in their management satisfactory.

Research sample

The sample consisted of responses from 171 primary school teachers in a questionnaire which consisted of five questions on "Citizenship in kindergarten." The vague wording of the issue serves our basic research specification, i.e.

mainly the recording the axes of thought and expression of kindergarten teachers for the term "citizenship". The sample was selected randomly without prior stratification of subjects. The following table shows the distribution of the sample according to their studies and their years of service, both in homogeneous population classes as well as in mixed ones.

SAMPLE		
	Frequency	Percent
STUDIES A		
Two-year	44	26,5
Four-year	122	73,5
Total	166	100,0
STUDIES B		
Teaching Faculty	50	76,9
Postgraduate	12	18,5
PhD	1	1,5
Other faculty	2	3,1
Total	65	100,0
YEARS OF SERVICE		
1-5 years	13	8,0
6-10 years	34	20,9
11-19 years	56	34,4
20 or more	60	36,8
Total	163	100,0
YEARS IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSES		
1-5 years	32	41,6
6-10 years	23	29,9
11-19 years	13	16,9
20 or more	9	11,7
Total	77	100,0

Table1: *Distribution of subjects according to studies A, B and the years of service, both in homogeneous population classes as well as in mixed ones.*

In table 1 we initially observe that kindergarten teachers with two-year university studies were 44, i.e. 26.5% of total, while those with four year university studies were 122, i.e. 73.5% of total. Subsequently we observe that kindergarten teachers who have attended the teachers' school curriculum programme were 50, i.e. 76.9% of total, teachers with postgraduate studies were 12, i.e. 18.5% of total, while there was 1 teacher with PhD (1.5%) and 3 (3.1%) which had graduated from a second faculty. With respect to years of service, there were 34 kindergarten teachers with 6-10 years of service, i.e. 20.9% of total, 56 teachers with 11-19 years of service, i.e. 34.4% of total and 60 teachers with 20

or more years of service, i.e. 36.8% of total. Finally, with respect to years of service in multicultural classes, there were 32 kindergarten teachers with 1-5 years of service, i.e. 41.5% of total, 23 teachers with 6-10 years of service, i.e. 29.9%, 13 teachers with 11-19 years of service, i.e. 11.9% of total and 9 teachers with 20 or more years of service, i.e. 11.7% of total.

Research tool

In this research the semi-structured questionnaire was chosen as a tool for reviewing and recording the attitudes of teachers towards education for citizenship in kindergarten. The survey was conducted during the academic year 2012-2013, specifically in May 2013.

Questionnaire Presentation

The questionnaire was addressed to kindergarten teachers and included five questions. The first four were open-ended questions, while the last one was closed-ended Likert rating scale (Not at all - a little - So and So - A lot - Very much).

Data analysis

The processing of responses and charting was performed with descriptive statistical analysis, using the statistical package SPSS 15.0.

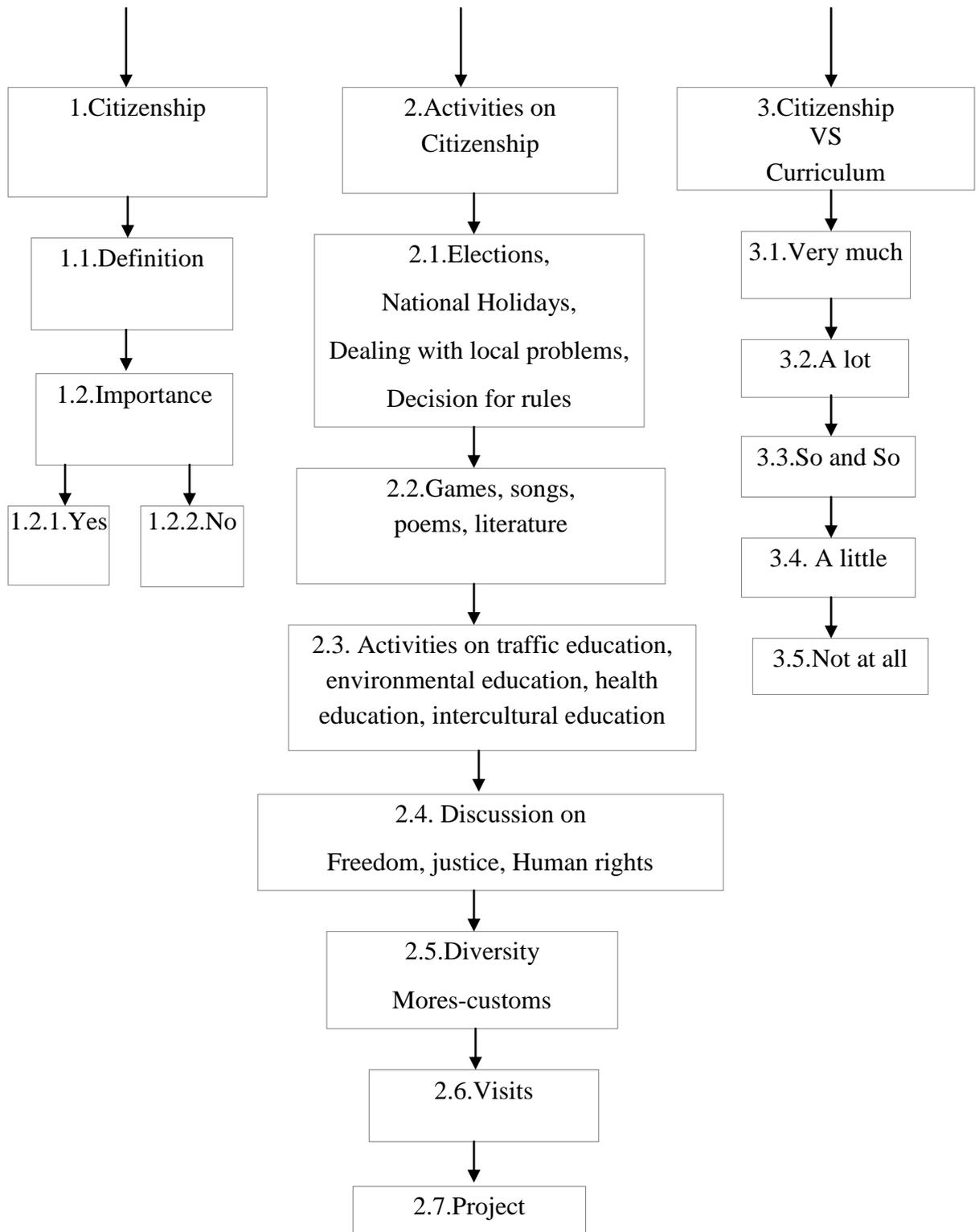
The responses of the subjects were studied according to the principles of Classical Thematic Analysis. The "topic» was used as the unit of analysis (Lasswell & Leites, 1965).

Research results

For methodological and analytical reasons we attempted to form a classification chart, in which we have incorporated in a more or less arbitrary way the entire contents of the reports we studied. We point out that the attempted classification, despite methodological weaknesses, can be particularly useful as it allows us to monitor and utilize more easily the archival material.

The following figure exhibits the thematic classification of the reports content:

EDUCATION ON CITIZENSHIP



Thematic categories

The data analysis of kindergarten teachers' answers showed that the issue triggered their interest with 2704 reports in total. Table 1 presents reports according to studies A & B and the years of service in homogeneous and mixed population classes. Tables 2 and 3 relate to the thematic categories 2 & 3. Table 4 presents reports topics and their appearance rate.

Table 1: *Distribution of reports according to demographic characteristics*

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS		
	Frequency	Percent
STUDIES A		
Two-year	529	24,2
Four-year	1661	75,8
Total	2190	100,0
STUDIES B		
Teaching Faculty	642	79,0
Postgraduate	143	17,6
PhD	13	1,6
Other faculty	15	1,8
Total	813	100,0
YEARS OF SERVICE		
1-5 years	173	8,1
6-10 years	448	21,0
11-19 years	710	33,2
20 or more	805	37,7
Total	2136	100,0
YEARS IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSES		
1-5 years	522	53,2
6-10 years	243	24,8
11-19 years	125	12,7
20 or more	91	9,3
Total	981	100,0

In table 1, with regard to Studies A, we observe that all reports by kindergarten teachers with two-year university studies amounted to 529, i.e. 24.2% of total and reports by teachers with four year university studies to 1661 i.e. 75.8% of total. With regards to Studies B, we observe that all reports by kindergarten teachers who have attended the teachers' school curriculum programme amounted to 642 (79% of total), reports by teachers with postgraduate studies amounted to 143 (17.6% of total), reports by PhD teachers amounted to 13 (1.6% of total) and reports by teachers who have graduated from a second faculty amounted to 15 (1.8% of total). With respect to years of service, we observe that reports by kindergarten teachers with 1-5 years of service amounted to 173 (8.1% of total), reports by teachers with 6-10 years of service amounted to 448 (21% of total), reports by teachers with 11-19 years of service amounted to 710 (33.2% of

total) and reports from teachers with 20 years of service or more amounted to 805 (37.7% of total). Finally with respect to years of service in multicultural classes, we observe that reports according to teachers' years of service amount to 522 (53.2% of total) for 1-5 years of service, 243 (24.8% of total) for 6-10 years, 125 (12.7% of total) for 11-19 years and 91 (9.3% of total) for 20 years or more.

Table 2 : *Distribution of reports according to response (positive / negative)*

YES/NO		
	Frequency	Percent
YES	480	99,6
NO	2	0,4
Total	482	100,0

In table 2, we observe that responses to the question whether kindergarten teachers carry out activities on citizenship are 480 positive (99.6% of total) and 2 negative (0.4% of total).

Table 3: *Distribution of reports according to scale*

SCALE		
	Frequency	Percent
Not at all	121	26,4
A little	31	6,8
So and So	175	38,2
A lot	63	13,8
Very Much	68	14,8
Total	458	100,0

Mean=2,84 &SD=1,354

In table 3, we observe that responses to the question whether kindergarten teachers are covered by the curriculum and the kindergarten teacher guide are 121 "not at all" (26.4%), 31 "A little" (6.8%), 175 "So and So" (38.2%), 63 "a lot" (13.8%) and 68 "Very much" (14.8%).

Three main topics (thematic categories) emerged, while the main topics were specified further to categories using the data obtained.

Table 4: *Topics (thematic categories) on citizenship*

TOPICS		
	N	%
1.Citizenship	1099	49,0
1.1.Definition	617	27,5
1.2.Importance	482	21,5
1.2.1.YES	480	21,4
1.2.2.NO	2	,1
2.Activities on Citizenship	684	30,5
2.1. Elections, National Holidays, Dealing with local problems, Decision	448	20,0

for rules		
2.2. Group games, mimetics, role games, songs, poems, fairytales, literature	46	2,1
2.3. traffic education activities, environmental education, health education, intercultural education	39	1,7
2.4. Discussion on Freedom, justice, Human rights, diversity	99	4,4
2.5.Mores, customs of other people	22	1,0
2.6.Visits to business premises, museums, parents, experts, local authorities	14	,6
2.7.project	15	,7
3.Citizenship VS Curriculum	459	20,5
3.1=very much	68	3,0
3.2=a lot	63	2,8
3.3.So and So	175	7,8
3.4=a little	32	1,4
3.5=not at all	121	5,4
Total	2242	10

Topic 1: *Citizenship*

Is is a fact that we are not born citizens, but we become citizens through a complex process via which education plays a significant role (Karakatsani, 2004). Many definitions have been formulated for citizenship (617 references), however, education for citizenship, can be defined as the education of children from preschool age in order to be able to participate in decisions affecting the community and the broader society. The main objectives of this education is the knowledge of the institutions that govern the operation of the state and the awareness that laws are set and applied in social relations, but in relations among people (Crick, 1998; Osler & Starkey, 2005; UNESCO, 2002 at Dimitriou 2009).

«.. Education aims to prepare children as future citizens with rights and obligations, the participation of children in society, to instill in children concepts such as participation, solidarity, ie social and moral values....».

A constructive social sciences programme contains knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, which are essential for children's participation in the democratic way of life, for their application to social problems and the socialization of children. A social science programme, which is based on the development of scientific culture and research should include all elements of knowledge -physical, social and logical mathematical - and most importantly should encourage children to collect data, interpret, classify and present them (Koutsouvanou, 2005).

«... The shaping of social consciousness and behavior, which is characterized by team spirit and respect aiming to smooth

cohabitation in an organized society ...».

The citizen's way of thinking and action is found that in all cases it should cover three dimensions: the universal (belief in freedom and justice), the pluralistic (social diversity - diversification, pluralism) and critical thinking (Karakatsani, 2004).

«... Education for peace, solidarity, social participation, human rights, intercultural tolerance and sensitivity...».

«... As in all skills that should be to acquired in order to cope with modern society, education for citizenship is an asset as well as a value. The ecumenical and universal human values that link education to citizenship are a supply for the contemporary child and a requisite for the good of humanity and world peace...».

Topic 2: Activities for citizenship

Kindergarten teachers carry out on a daily basis many activities which contribute to the development of citizenship (684 references). They utilize occasions such as national holidays, elections, dealing with local problems, decisions on rules (448 references), also group games, mimetics, role games, songs, poems, fairy tales, literature (46 references), activities of road safety, environmental education, health education, intercultural education (39 reviews), through discussion on freedom, justice, human rights, diversity (99 references), by learning about the manners and customs of other people (22 references), through visits to business premises, museums, parents, experts, local authorities (14 reports). Finally, through projects on issues related to the concept of citizenship (15 references).

«... Organised activities: representation of electoral process, visits to business premises, Citizen service centres and civil services (KEP, post offices etc.), archaeological and cultural sites. Reading texts with corresponding objectives (eg "the person up and the person down"), outings and walks with a view to cultivating traffic education. Letter to the mayor or some other public figure for thanks giving or filing complaints. Spontaneous: Education in companionship, at play, at lunch time, in the use of transport...».

Play, individual or collective, not only is an integral part of the child's life but also is an effective pedagogical method in preschool education. It constitutes a key factor for socialization and the formation of his personality. C.Cooley & H.Mead (1922), consider that play, individual and collective, is a key factor in shaping the social self. The formation of the social self in C.Cooley is closely linked to the integration of the individual in social groups, particularly in the primary ones, ie the family, the community and the group of children of the same age (Kiridis, 1996).

«...Establishment of rules together with the children, team games, role playing games, elections, voting, national holidays, discussions in the group with the speaker listener process, literature on diversity and multiculturalism...».

Also, through drama at school, values, ethics and rights can be dealt, achieving a deeper understanding of the concepts of cultural diversity and recognition, of the concept of transformation of the civilizations, of the collective being, of change, of expression of freedom, of will and of practical democracy (Alkistis, 2008).

Topic 3: Curriculum VS Citizenship

The Curricula are structured proposals relating to the content and form of school knowledge, the way knowledge and processes by which knowledge is acquired and utilized by students should be organized (Dalkos, 1998; Gkلياou, 2003). However, 68 teachers are very much covered by the present curriculum, 63 a lot, 175 so and so, 32 a little and 121 not at all. The role of curriculum is important in the educational process since it is the 'tool' used by the teacher in every day practice and guides education to the development of the kind of person every society wants. Promoting cross-thematic leads to improved curricula quality, given that through this approach basic values are cultivated, essential positive attitudes are acquired and skills required by the modern European knowledge society are developed. The aims of teaching in preschool and compulsory education are: mental development (fostering knowledge, understanding the deeper meaning and purpose of life), moral development (helping students to critically evaluate issues of freedom, equality, justice, human rights), social, economic, civil and cultural development (acquisition of national and cultural identity, understanding the role of different groups, respect for pluralism and diversity) (Karakatsani, 2004).

«... Although the new curriculum is improved compared to the previous one it does not provide specific answers to such issues. It simply provides guidelines. Nevertheless, there is a positive side to this because it enhances the flexibility of kindergarten teacher and the ability to adapt activities to the particular conditions prevailing in each class..».

In the section "Child and Environment" and in particular in the subsection "Man-made environment and interaction" and find goals such as: in an environment rich in stimuli (in the classroom and outside it) children are given opportunities to develop their self-esteem by participating in classroom activities, undertaking initiatives and responsibilities and expressing freely their opinions and experiences. Opportunities are also given to develop collaboration skills to interact, to question, to present and discuss their ideas and to understand the value of teamwork and co-discovery (DEPPS-Cross thematic curriculum framework, 2003).

Important elements are also considered the interaction with the others, and the social rules that define and shape the framework of this interaction (Karakatsani, 2004). Children are encouraged to negotiate any conflicts or tensions arising in cooperation, to evaluate their behavior, to understand their limitations and to be led to commonly accepted rules essential for common cohabitation (DEPPS, 2003). They realize their uniqueness through appropriate activities and they identify similarities and differences with others and they respect them. They learn religious traditions and develop feelings of love and brotherhood for all

creatures of the earth (DEPPS, 2003)

«... The curriculum and the guide should respond to current needs of the teacher. There are vague references in it, not analyzed adequately, nor it touches upon issues currently occupying social reality such as racism, xenophobia, social stereotypes and in general intercultural education and citizen education issues are not touched upon ...».

The experiential participatory processes and methodologies which organize the material around concepts and values related to the concept of citizenship is the best way to help students to become responsible and participatory citizens (Karatzia, 2003).

Conclusions-Discussion

During the 90s the concept of citizenship emerged as a key term in social sciences. Certainly this is not at all new. The renewed interest shown several decades after the thorough elaboration by the British T.H. Marshall in postwar Britain is no coincidence. It is closely related to the social and political conditions in the late 20th century, immigration, the European Union, the fall of communist regimes and the phenomenon of re-emerging nationalism, and new social movements like feminism, while it is also associated with changes in political orientations, e.g. neoliberalism and re-orientation of welfare policies (Marshall, 1995; Gillborn 1992; Coulby & Jones, 1995).

The analysis of teachers' questionnaires provided us with important information about the way in which education professionals approach issues of critical importance for the education of young citizens. The perceptions and visions these teachers transmit to the youngsters they teach, are directly related to the way in which themselves perceive social and political life, moral values, the concept of society and the virtues of the good citizen.

The teachers of primary education surveyed give the following definition of citizenship: *"Education for citizenship is to design appropriate activities and organize a school environment conducive for children to be able to communicate with the world, coexist with others peacefully, respect diversity, resolve problems, and actively participate in learning. Children learn to function independently and responsibly as members of a small community. Education aims to prepare children as future citizens with rights and obligations and the child's participation in society and to instill in children concepts such as participation, solidarity, i.e. social and moral values."* This definition is consistent with the importance of cultivation of political socialization in school as the kindergarten is the place where the child is socialized and contributes to the creation of an integrated entity so that children form behaviors and attitudes.

The coexistence of children in school helps them to understand the problems and to generalize about the political world. Activities contributing to the development of political socialization are: rules of order in general, national holidays (Polytechnic, October 28, March 25), issues concerning the local community (for example who is responsible for repairing the school road),

tradition - mores - customs of the area, visits to museums.

In the Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework and the New Kindergarten Curriculum the approach to civic education and education on human rights is not apparent but takes place in all learning areas and through various activities. Teachers, however, believe that the Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework does not provide for substantial citizenship education. Group cooperation, interdisciplinarity and projects help, but are not a panacea. The curriculum is one-dimensional, single-cultural and superficial and does not help implement activities towards this direction and teachers resort to the use of Internet and additional literature from the market to cover citizen education learning objectives and consider cooperation with other kindergarten teachers a significant advantage. Concepts penetrating curricula such as the concept of teamwork, the individual-community interaction, communication, contribute to the attainment of political socialization in kindergarten. The kindergarten class is approached as a team and emphasis is put on the principles of participation, collective responsibility and interaction.

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