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FACTORS AFFECTING GLOBAL COMPETENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The landscape of Macedonian high schools is quite diverse. Some of the high schools are quite multiethnic and multicultural. In most cases, high school students with aspirations to study abroad enroll in private high schools. Furthermore, 98.55% of all high school students study English as a first mandatory foreign language; German, French and Italian are considered secondary foreign languages students choose from. On the other side, one of the greatest promoters of non-formal education in Macedonia is the NGO sector assisted by foreign donations. All these factors listed above influence the global competencies students have and their decisions to study abroad. The results presented in this proposal rest on a comparative study which focused on high school students in their second, third and fourth year coming from public and private schools in Southwestern Macedonia. The choice of the students was made very carefully – almost the same number of students coming from public and private high schools participated in the survey. The research offers a quantitative analysis of the findings obtained via the PISA 2018 Global Competence Questionnaire related to the global competence Macedonian high schools students possess. The findings are quite significant and reveal that although students from private high schools can more easily explain global processes and issues than students from public high schools, the overall percentage of all students that could do this easily is less than 50%. These high school students don't feel like world citizens and don't think they can make a difference in the world.

Key words: global competence; high school students; external factors; OECD; PISA-2018-Global-Competence-Questionnaire

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INTRODUCTION

The supporters of the global competence education strongly believe that today's students need to be able to draw on and combine the disciplinary knowledge and modes of thinking acquired in schools to ask questions, analyze data and arguments, explain phenomena, and develop a position concerning a local, global or cultural issue". This means on the way of becoming world citizens students nowadays should be "aware of the cultural values and beliefs of people around them, create opportunities to take informed, reflective action and have their voices heard.

In 2015, 193 countries committed to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. This motivated numerous education institutions and organizations around the world to work really hard in implementing these goals in today's classrooms, finding the educators the most responsible for empowering students on this path. On the other side, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) included global competence in its metrics for quality, equity and effectiveness in education for the first time ever in 2018. PISA conceives of global competence as a multidimensional, lifelong learning goal. Globally competent individuals can examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainability and collective wellbeing.

This research offers a quantitative analysis of the findings obtained via the PISA 2018 Global Competence Questionnaire related to the global competences Macedonian high schools students possess. The results presented rest on a comparative study which focused on a group of high school students coming from public and private schools in Southwestern Macedonia. The group is composed of high school students who are in their second, third and fourth year of high school in three cities in Southwestern Macedonia: Bitola, Ohrid and Struga;

This research aims to demonstrate the advantages students have when they study in private high schools, participate in youth development NGO programs or study abroad preparation program and what impact that has on their level of self confidence, open-mindedness, and readiness to embrace challenges. Their entire approach to the learning process in general changes considerably due to the valuable experience they gain in the process of learning about other cultures and societies.

Educational advisers, NGO representatives and various stakeholders working on the topic of supporting global competence development in youth will be able to learn more about some of the unique approaches to global competence education Macedonian formal and non-formal educational institutions use and practice and share their best practices and contribute to further develop tools, methods or practices that can be used and transferred in other countries and contexts.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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Although we may inhabit different geographies, cultures, families and political systems with distant others, we are increasingly bound together by a single fate and shared identity. In a world that is smaller and yet more complex than ever before, our educational challenge is to understand and to value our differences and our commonalities, our separateness and our togetherness (Slimbach, 2010).

The issue nowadays is that nowhere do policymakers or educators have ready answers about how to embed global competence in schools and learning. A big part of the problem is that there is no clear definition of what global competence should embrace, and how to make it measurable for educational policy and practice.

Andreas Schleicher, the Director for the Directorate for Education and Skills at OECD and coordinator of PISA, believes that promoting global education is essential for three key goals:

- Develop intercultural awareness and respectful interactions in increasingly diverse societies to limit cultural prejudices and prevent violent conflicts;
- Support employability by helping young people more easily adapt, apply and transfer their skills and knowledge to new cultural contexts;
- Form new generations who care about global issues and get engaged to solve social, political, economic and environmental challenges.

Veronica Boix Mansilla, principal investigator with Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education, worked closely with OECD analyst Mario Piacentini and a small expert team, including doctors Martyn Barrett, Darla Deardorff, and Hye-Won Lee in the construction of the PISA framework. Up to now the PISA assessment focused on math, science and reading. From 2018, it is expected that the new PISA global competence tests will impact curriculums in schools around the world.

Macedonia's PISA score has fallen since the last time it participated (2000). Macedonia is now ranked fifteenth out of the sixteen peer countries that also participated in PISA 2015. In 2000, Macedonia was ranked fifth out of eight among its peers. Since 2000, Albania, Indonesia, and Peru have overtaken Macedonia in terms of their PISA scores.

Achieving global competence through education will require significant changes in the classroom. Some national curricula now put emphasis on education for sustainable development and intercultural education. Many teachers also encourage students to analyze and reflect on the root causes of global issues, and share ideas on possible solutions. However, progress has been uneven and good practices have not been shared sufficiently at the international level.

METHODOLOGY

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The global competence assessment in PISA 2018 is composed of two parts: a cognitive assessment and a background questionnaire. The cognitive assessment is designed to elicit students' capacities to critically examine global issues; recognize outside influences on perspectives and world views; understand how to communicate with others in intercultural contexts; and identify and compare different courses of action to address global and intercultural issues. In the background questionnaire, students will be asked to report how familiar they are with global issues; how developed their linguistic and communication skills are; to what extent they hold certain attitudes, such as respect for people from different cultural backgrounds; and what opportunities they have at school to develop global competence.

This research draws on a quantitative analysis of the PISA background questionnaire conducted among high school students from public and private high schools in Macedonia. In fact, the results are obtained via a comparative analysis of the responses of students from public vs. students from private high schools.

With the questionnaires we were able to collect rich international data on important social skills and attitudes, such as adaptability, openness, respect, and civic engagement. 55 students in total responded to the survey – 31 students coming from public and 24 students from private schools. Respondents come from the following public high schools: Josip Broz Tito – Bitola (17), Niko Nestor-Struga (6), Sv. Kliment Ohridski – Ohrid (2) and Ibrahim Temo-Struga (5) and from one private high school Yahya Kemal College in Struga (24). 45 of the respondents are Macedonians, 5 are Albanians and 5 are Turkish. Students' home towns include: Bitola, Ohrid, Struga, Kichevo, Demir Hisar and Resen. 30% of the students live in another town than their home town in order to attend high school.

The PISA questionnaire consisted of 15 questions with 80 sub-questions in total. The survey was conducted online and it was carried out in a period of one week.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Our findings confirm students from private high school can more easily explain global processes and issues than students from public high schools. Nevertheless, the overall percentage of all students that could do this easily is less than 50%.

In terms of civic activism, we are dealing with a dormant youth. More than 50% of the students are not aware in the benefits of purchasing products for ethical and environmental reasons; around 60% of the students do not sign environmental or social petitions; more than 80% of the students got the information through Facebook or Twitter. 70% of the students do not boycott products for political, ethical or environmental reasons. Students are more active when it comes to dealing with gender issues and activities for environmental protection.

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Students' interest in other cultures, religions and traditions is high though. More than 60% of all students reported that they are interested to learn how people from different countries live and how people from various cultures see the world.

In terms of students' contact with people from other countries, most of the students from private schools have contact with foreigners at school and in their circle of friends whereas more than 80% students from public schools reported that they have contact with people from other countries in their circle of friends and less at school or in their neighborhoods.

When speaking about tackling world's problems, majority of the respondents don't see themselves as citizens of the world. Less than 50% of the students feel responsibility to do something about poor living conditions in other countries. Less than 30% of all students strongly agree that their behavior can impact people from other countries. Less than 33% of all students agree that they can do something about the problems of the world. Less than 45% of the students strongly agree that it is important to them to look after the global environment.

In terms of immigration issues, around 50% of students from public schools agree with statements that immigrant children have the same opportunities for education that other children in the country have, that immigrants should have the rights to vote in elections and that immigrants should have the same rights as everyone else in the country. Students from private school seem more conservative on this question and their answers vary on each of these statements.

In terms of language competences, around 45% of all students said that they and their parents speak four or more languages well enough to converse with others, including the language they speak at home. Students from private schools learn more foreign languages than students from public schools.

In high percentage, students, both from private and public schools, stated that at school they learn about interconnectedness of countries' economies, how to solve problems, about different cultures, celebrate cultural diversity or participate in classroom discussion about world events. But, the big issue at the current educational system in Macedonia is that only a third of the students at private schools reported that they are invited to share their opinion on international news during classes or 22% of the students at public schools do this. More than a half of the students said that they don't analyze global issues together at class and over 80% of the students clarified that they don't read or discuss international news during class.

Finally, almost half of the students reported that some of their teachers have misconceptions about the history of some cultural groups and blame people of some cultural groups for problems faced by Macedonia.

CONCLUSION

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What makes the new OECD PISA framework exciting, in my view, is not only its clear potential to help us gauge how 15-year-olds today think about pressing issues of local, global, and intercultural significance, but also its power to inform educational practice in every region of the world,” said Boix Mansilla.

With that being said, the recommendation is that the new PISA framework will give us the opportunity to learn a lot about what schools and teachers in different countries are doing to promote the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that make people globally competent. As to a possible further research, it’ll be really interesting to examine school principals and teachers on these same questions and topics and measure their global competence levels as a starting point for any relevant changes that need to be undertaken in this direction in future.

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