



## The Role of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Education Systems – A Perspective of Educational Reforms in Kosovo

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### *Abstract*

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is a very important organization in providing insight into the impact of educational reforms in a country since it offers good co-operation opportunities between member states whose governments can compare experiences of their educational policies to seek out and identify best practices. According to the organization, the success of educational reforms is demonstrated by the international PISA test conducted with 15-year old students. However, despite the success and failure of students in the PISA test, the benefits of educational reforms can still be seen in various aspects. This paper describes the role of the OECD in educational reforms in general and the benefits of educational reforms in Kosovo based on the research “Concepts of Citizenship in Students of Primary Schools in Kosovo”, despite the poor performance of Kosovar students in the PISA international test.

*Keywords:* OECD, PISA, TALIS, educational reform.

### 1. Introduction

Educational reforms play an important role in the development of human society. Establishing a sound and strong educational ground not only reflects on students but also affects the change of the world in the future. An important role in describing educational reforms and their impact in our present times has been played by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which provides a good opportunity to compare and evaluate the work of teachers and even the success of students. However, despite the great advantages that this organization has in providing a clear and accurate picture around the world, the impact of education reforms depending on their purpose can still be seen. In this case, a concrete example could be Kosovo, which, in order to keep pace with European educational innovations, has undergone continuous educational reforms since 2001, which resulted in the development and implementation of the Curriculum Framework. This Curriculum Framework has radically transformed Kosovo’s education system by changing the teaching approach, the position of

students in the classroom, the teaching content of subjects and also the levels of education of students. To achieve this change, many teacher trainings were conducted by local and international organizations.

- The Importance of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Educational Reforms.
- Research results “Concepts of citizenship for primary school students in Kosovo”.
- Results of Kosovar students in the PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 tests.
- The impact of educational reform in Kosovo.

The goals of the Kosovo Curriculum Framework of 2001 support the attainment of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students required by a democratic citizenship, the fulfilment of which will enable young people to be able to competently engage in the activities of the common public life, to be active and responsible citizens of a democratic and pluralistic society, to cultivate and respect the rights of themselves and others.<sup>1</sup>

This framework was followed by the development of the new curriculum framework in 2011-2012. The results of the research “Citizenship Concepts of Primary School Students in Kosovo”, a project realized in cooperation with the University of Zurich Education and the Kosovo Education Centre (KEC) can help to identify the impact of the Kosovo Curriculum Framework, in addition to the results in the PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 test.

### 1.1 *Aim of study/research*

The aim of the study is to describe the role of the OECD organization in educational reforms and the perception of the impact of educational reform according to its purpose regardless of underperformance of students in the PISA test.

### 1.2 *Objectives of study/research*

- Identification of the role of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in educational reform.
- Description of the research results “Concepts of citizenship for primary school students in Kosovo” regarding the freedom of expression of students during the learning process.
- Description of the research results “Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo” regarding student cooperation during the learning process.
- Analysis of the results of Kosovar students in the PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 test.

### 1.3 *Research questions*

The questions of the research work are:

- What is the role of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in educational reform?

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.see-educoop.net/education\\_in/pdf/curr\\_framework-yug-kos-aln-to6.pdf](http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/curr_framework-yug-kos-aln-to6.pdf).

- What do the results of the research “Citizenship concepts in primary school students in Kosovo” show about the freedom of expression of students during the learning process?
- What do the results of the research “Citizenship concepts of primary school students in Kosovo” show about student cooperation during the learning process?
- What are the results of Kosovar students in the PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 tests?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 *Representative group*

In May 2012, the research “Concepts of citizenship for primary school students in Kosovo” was conducted with students of grade 8 in 171 schools in urban and rural areas in all municipalities of Kosovo. The respondents involved in the research sum to a total of 1700 students of different ethnicities (Albanian, Bosnian, Turkish, Serbian, Gorani, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian). For the purpose of this research, the researcher has used the standardized questionnaire “International Civic and Citizenship Education Study” adapted for the circumstances of Kosovar students.

### 2.2 *Scientific methods*

For the realization of this study, the method of theoretical analysis and descriptive statistical methods were used. The technique that was used is the survey whereas the survey instrument is a standardized questionnaire for students prepared by the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study and adapted to the needs of Kosovar students.

### 2.3 *Data analysis*

#### 2.3.1 *The role of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*

The importance of the OECD is crucial as it not only offers good opportunities for cooperation between its member states but also serves as a mirror and good experience for many other countries in the world that are not its members, which can analyze, improve and evaluate the impacts of educational reforms in their countries.

Some of the OECD publications dedicated to education reform is: *New Insights from TALIS 2013: Teaching and Learning in Primary and upper Secondary Education* (international study program that focuses on the learning environment and working conditions of teachers in schools).<sup>2</sup>

This report provides a broad overview of teachers and school principals at all levels of compulsory education and all the similarities and differences in the issues they face. Some of the issues on which TALIS is focused include:

- Teacher training and their professional development;

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/publications/new-insights-from-talis-2013-9789264226319-en.htm>.

- Teacher evaluation;
  - School climate;
  - School leadership;
  - Pedagogical practices of teachers, etc.<sup>3</sup>
- Education in a glance 2014, OECD indicators. This report provides data on the educational structure and finances and performance of schools in 34 OECD countries.
  - PISA (International Student Assessment Program), tests the competencies of 15-year-old students in science, mathematics and reading. This test was first performed in 2000 in OECD member states and is repeated every three years. The purpose of this assessment is to improve educational policies.<sup>4</sup>
  - Education Policy Perspective 2015. This report provides data on educational reforms in the last seven years in OECD countries to help other countries learn from each other in order to choose the best reforms as needed based on their context).

Education policy perspectives first help educational policy makers to have an overview of educational reforms in the various OECD countries. The report provides an overview of the 450 reforms that have been implemented in OECD countries from 2008-2014.

The report is dedicated to student learning, teacher capacity building and other involved in educational reform. In particular, many OECD countries, teachers' unions and business organizations are involved in implementing educational reform. Reforms require improving students' learning environment and preparing them for the future, and it is emphasized through the following OECD publications:

- *Skills Beyond School, Summary of the Report, 2014*. This report provides data on vocational higher education and training, in order to complement the various economies.
- *Critical Mathematics in Innovative Societies and the Role of Metacognitive Pedagogy, 2014*. This report provides data on how mathematics fosters skills that are appropriate to social innovation.
- *Measuring Innovations in Education, 2014*. This report provides data on teachers' innovations, various pedagogical approaches, and new strategies in order to improve education.
- *Early Childhood Education and Care*. This publication brings benefits to parents, children and society at large. It focuses on the qualities described in 5 policies, offering the possibility of comparison with other international countries. The five targeted policies are:<sup>5</sup>
  - Defining goals, quality and regulations;
  - Design, implementation of curriculum and standards;
  - Improving conditions, workforce, qualifications and training;
  - Engagement of families and the community;
  - Research, monitoring and data collection.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.talis.org.uk/about/index.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.talis.org.uk/about/index.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/startingstrongiiiqualitytoolboxforearlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm>.

All of these reports published by the OECD can serve all countries of the world to select their appropriate educational policies that will also affect student performance.

In this context, it should be noted that the selected results of the international study TALIS, have discovered, compared and found the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment in schools of different countries. TALIS examines teachers' ways of working, assesses teachers' perceptions of the need for their professional development, and promotes teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching in order to bring appropriate pedagogical practice to class. TALIS also examines the role of the school principal, the support he gives to teachers, the factors related to job satisfaction and teacher efficiency. In this regard, we should also mention the international test PISA, the results of which not only reflect the effect of educational reforms in a country but predict the quality of the workforce in a decade later, which enables OECD member state to compare their experience in the field of education, it can even serve as a good model and information for other countries that are not members of the OECD.

In this case, the good model for all OECD countries and other countries can serve the Finnish education system which over the past decade has been ranked in one of the top student success places in PISA.

### 2.3.2 The results of the research "Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo" regarding the freedom of expression of students during the learning process.

The results of the research "Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo", show the benefits of educational reform in various aspects and in particular the impact of the Curriculum Framework implemented in 2001 in Kosovo in changing the approach of teaching from traditional to this contemporary which promotes the freedom of expression of students during the learning process.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of their teachers how much they encourage students during the learning process to express their opinions

Teachers encourage students to express their opinions.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	224	13.2
	Rarely	236	13.9
	Sometimes	351	20.6
	Often	845	49.7
	Total	1656	97.4
Missing	Illegible	7	.4
	No answer	37	2.2
	Total	44	2.6
Total		1700	100.0

Table 1. clearly shows that of all the surveyed students, 49.7% stated that teachers often encourage them to express their opinions, 20.6% of students stated "sometimes", 13.9% of students stated that teachers rarely encourage them to express their opinions and 13.2% of students stated that teachers never encourage them to express their opinion.

Table 2. Students' perceptions of their ability to openly express disagreement with their teachers

Students have the opportunity to openly express disagreement with their teachers.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	209	12.3
	Rarely	280	16.5
	Sometimes	607	35.7
	Often	584	34.4
	Total	1680	98.8
Missing	Illegible	9	.5
	No answer	11	.6
	Total	20	1.2
Total		1700	100.0

According to Table 2 it can be seen that 34.4% of the surveyed students stated that they often have the opportunity to express their disagreement with their teachers, 35.7% of the students have stated sometimes, 16.5% of the students have stated that they are rarely offered such an opportunity and 12.3% of students have stated that they are never offered the opportunity to express disagreement with their teachers.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of their thoughts in class, even when they are different from most other students

Students express their thoughts in class, even when they are different from most other students.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Never	142	8.4
	Rarely	226	13.3
	Sometimes	479	28.2
	Often	820	48.2
	Total	1667	98.1
Missing	Illegible	5	.3
	No answer	28	1.6
	Total	33	1.9
Total		1700	100.0

According to Table 3 it can be seen that 48.2% of the surveyed students stated that they often express their thoughts in class, even when they are different from most other students, 28.2% of the students have stated sometimes, 13.3% of the students have stated that they are rarely offered such an opportunity and 8.4% of students have stated that they are never offered the opportunity to express their thoughts in class, even when they are different from most other students.

2.3.3 Research results “Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo” regarding the possibilities of student cooperation during the learning process.

Table 4. Students’ perceptions about the opportunity given to them by the school to work, learn together in groups with other students

“In school I learned to work in groups with other students”.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Fully agree	1404	82.6
	Partially agree	226	13.3
	Disagree	36	2.1
	Fully disagree	12	.7
Total		1678	98.7
Missing	Illegible	10	.6
	No answer	12	.7
	Total	22	1.3
Total		1700	100.0

Based on Table 4, it can be seen that 82.6% of the students participating in the research have stated that they fully agree that they have learned to work at school, they learn together with other students, 13.3% have stated that they agree, 2.1% of students have stated that they disagree and 0.7% of students stated that they fully disagree that in school they have learned to work together with other students.

Table 5. Students’ perceptions of their awareness of the importance of collaboration to achieve positive change

Positive changes occur when students work together at school.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Fully agree	1332	78.4
	Partially agree	287	16.9
	Disagree	52	3.1
	Fully disagree	6	.4
Total		1677	98.6
Missing	Ilegible	3	.2
	No answer	20	1.2
	Total	23	1.4
Total		1700	100.0

Table 5 shows that 78.4% of respondents stated that they fully agree that positive changes occur when students work together, 16.9% of students have partially agreed, 3.1% disagreed and 0.4% fully disagreed.

Table 6. Students' perceptions of how willing they are to join others, talk to the teacher, if classmates are being treated unfairly

"I am willing to join others, to talk to the teacher, if my classmates are treated unfairly".

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Fully agree	1296	76.2
	Partially agree	280	16.5
	Disagree	73	4.3
	Fully disagree	24	1.4
	Total	1673	98.4
Missing	Ilegible	4	.2
	No answer	23	1.4
	Total	27	1.6
Total		1700	100.0

Table 6 shows that 76.2% of all students participating in the research stated that they fully agree that they are ready to join others to talk to their teacher if any student in their class is treated unfairly, 16.2% partially agree, 4.3% disagree, and 1.4% of students fully disagree.

#### 2.3.4 Results of Kosovar students in the PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 tests

PISA assesses the extent to which 15-year-old students near the end of compulsory education have acquired key knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies. The assessment, which focuses on reading, mathematics, science and problem solving, does not just ascertain whether students can reproduce knowledge; it also examines how well students can extrapolate from what they have learned and apply that knowledge in unfamiliar settings, both in and outside of school. This approach reflects the fact that modern economies reward individuals not for what they know, but for what they can do with what they know.

PISA is an ongoing program that offers insights for education policy and practice, and that helps monitor trends in students' acquisition of knowledge and skills across countries and economies and in different demographic subgroups within each country. PISA results reveal what is possible in education by showing what students in the highest-performing and most rapidly improving school systems can do. The findings allow policy makers around the world to gauge the knowledge and skills of students in their own countries in comparison with those in other countries, set policy targets against measurable goals achieved by other school systems, and learn from policies and practices applied elsewhere.

While PISA cannot identify cause-and-effect relationships between policies/practices and student outcomes, it can show educators, policy makers and the interested public how education systems are similar and different – and what that means for students.<sup>6</sup>

Kosovar students have participated for the first time in the PISA 2015, ranking 68<sup>th</sup> out of a total of 70 participating PISA 2015 countries, leaving behind Algeria and the Dominican Republic.<sup>7</sup>

Kosovar students who have participated in the PISA 2015 assessment have attended the first and secondary years of their education based on the Curriculum Framework of 2001 and

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



the last years according to the Curriculum Framework of 2011-2012. These two Curriculums, despite the small differences in the general purpose of education, they had one thing in common, both emphasized the promotion of the values of democratic citizenship and the rights of Kosovar students.

Therefore, according to the KCF 2011, education in Kosovo aims to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required by a democratic society. This enables young people to be active and responsible citizens, to constructively face differences and challenges, and to respect their rights and the rights of others.<sup>8</sup>

Also, in the PISA 2018 evaluation, Kosovar students achieved almost the same results as in the PISA 2015 evaluation. Thus, in the PISA 2018 assessment, Kosovar students left behind the Dominican Republic and the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Discussion

Kosovo teachers encourage students to freely express their opinions during the learning process. Free expression is a value of democratic citizenship and the right of every individual based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 10 emphasizes Freedom of Expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.<sup>10</sup>

The expression of disagreement of students with teachers is openly confirmed by the research results “Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo”. Although the Kosovo Curriculum Framework has had a great impact on changing the approach of teaching, student position and teacher in the classroom it has again been impossible to completely change the mindset of the teachers, which means that the elements of the traditional school or traditional teaching can be still noticed, which highlights the respect for the teacher’s opinion, the lack of fulfilling the interest of students for learning, etc.

The cooperation between the students during the teaching process is confirmed by the results of the research “Concepts of citizenship of the students of the primary school in Kosovo”.

Group work provides opportunities for students to engage in classroom communication through collaboration. Equally it helps to create an atmosphere without stress and motivation in the classroom, as students work together in small groups instead of competing for recognition or grades. Moreover, each member of the group has something unique to contribute that enables students to connect with each other more easily. Group work has the advantage of engaging students in interactive communication and negotiating understanding that fosters the accompanying, participatory skills and virtues of tolerance and mutual respect that are essential to civic education.

The 2001 curriculum framework and the 2011 curriculum framework have promoted contemporary teaching, aspects of which are collaboration and interaction between students. Traditional approach of teaching has promoted individual student learning, gender differences, the division between ethnic groups and the division between different religious affiliations.

The recognition of students with their rights is confirmed by the results of the research “Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo”. Based on the answers of the respondents, it can be seen that over 90% of them have given a positive answer, since the research

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<sup>8</sup> <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/05/korniza-e-kurrikules11.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Combined\\_Executive\\_Summaries\\_PISA\\_2018.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Combined_Executive_Summaries_PISA_2018.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> <http://prison.eu.org/IMG/pdf/AlbanianAlbanais.pdf>.

has been extended to rural areas. We can therefore state and confirm again the impact of the curricular framework on students' awareness of their rights and injustice that they can encounter.

What can we discuss about the students' results in the PISA 2015 and PISA 2018 tests that assessed students' skills in science, reading, and math? The research "Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo" highlighted the effects of the Curriculum Framework in Kosovo. So, the area where to the general objective of the Curricular Framework was oriented, that area has resulted in students.

If the Curriculum Framework generally aims to promote students "reading comprehension skills, problem solving in mathematics and science," it is understood that students' results on the PISA test will not be lacking. So, the main problems lie in the concretization of the overall purpose of the Curriculum Framework, its understanding by teachers and its transmission to students. If the Curriculum Framework is concrete and understandable by teachers, the students' results in the PISA assessment will not be lacking. Understandably, the implementation of each curriculum framework requires teacher training for new teaching approaches and textbook adaptations.

#### 4. Conclusions

From the results of the research "Concepts of citizenship of primary school students in Kosovo" we can conclude on the positive effects that had the curricular frameworks of Kosovo of 2001 and 2011 in educating students about their rights. These actions are aimed to improve the education system.

The expression of open disagreement of Kosovar students with their teachers shows the transition of the so-called traditional school to the contemporary one. With this we can confirm the impact of educational reform in Kosovo.

The results of the research show that Kosovar students cooperate with each other on learning matters and we can conclude that the Curriculum Framework 2001 has completely influenced the education of students for democratic citizenship and education for rights.

From all this we can conclude that the mission of educational reform can be identified through various researches. Although we can say that the educational reform in Kosovo has not been productive, there are still positive elements, which are worth of being emphasised.

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