EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN ALBANIA
CHAPTER - I

Albania in the path towards democracy:
Achievements & problems

Chapter objectives

- Gain deeper knowledge of the historical framework within which democratic changes in Albania were initiated.
- Better understand the dimensions and characteristics of democratic movement in the ‘90s.
- List socio-political changes in the beginning of the ‘90s.
- Identify mistakes committed in the path toward democracy in Albania.
- Give arguments for dilemmas accompanying transition from communism to democracy.
- Bring arguments to support that new democracies face individual, collective and institutional resistance.

Albania’s separation from 50 years of communist past began in the last decade of the century that we just left behind. It was the outcome of a long process, which was initiated by individuals and later involved social groups, social institutions, and governmental structures. This development occurred in the historical context of East European changes, the events in Timishoara, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and Gorbachev’s reforms in ex-Soviet Union.

Changes in Eastern Europe affected and conditioned the liberalization of communist party structures in Albania, as well as helped individuals and groups of individuals to realize that communism, as a system, was struggling for survival after exhausting all its means and possibilities for existence.

Albanians storming the embassies in July 1990, and the first refugees longing for European democracy marked the beginning of the collapse of communist “idols.” Individuals and social groups started to break free from communist thinking and outlook, and rebelled against its “taboos”. People were blaspheming communism without being subjected to the typical extreme communist punishments. It became obvious that communism and its fundamental structures had started to lose their power.

Future aspirations were being shaped, but individuals and social groups were not yet ready to formulate concrete objectives. They demanded freedom of expression, political freedom, and rights, yet, they were a long way from formulating demands related to other domains, such as social, economic, cultural rights, and the like. Individuals and social groups leading this initiative for change were still under a double pressure--their past experiences, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the theoretical models of the future as were presented by the system we had just left behind.

In spite of that, the alternative was clear to all social groups and categories: communism was dead. Our country’s future development would be shaped after western models. However, achievement of this goal required concrete and well-defined ways and means, something that
was difficult to find in the prevailing climate of “chaos” and “complexity”. Albanian citizens were caught between dream and reality, between their wishes and the long and winding path of making them come true.

The ‘90s had demolished the idols of communism, but citizens were in search of new ones. Used to the communist idols for so many years, they needed new idols to lead them toward a democratic future, still hard to define. And the new idol of leadership was no longer one single individual, but an entirely new political force, which was not mature enough to formulate goals.

The developments during the last century’s decade, could not completely separate the country from communism. However, they marked the beginning of separation from feudal concepts and practices and from the way communism was understood and implemented in Albania. This constituted one of the most important victories for the political consciousness of Albanian society, which underwent essential transformation.

The Democratic Party won almost 33% of constituencies in the first general elections on March 31st, 1991. It was the first party in opposition to the ruling Party of Labour, which established political pluralism and opened the path to other opposition parties in Albania. Consequently, the political power in the hands of the Party of Labour was restricted significantly. As a result of all of these developments, essential changes occurred, including the following:

• Abolition of the 1987 Constitution of the People’s Republic of Albania, and approval of a “Constitutional Law Package”.
• Approval of Election Law compatible with the existence and activity of new political forces in Albania.

Elections of March 22nd, 1992 gave the power to Democratic Party and its right wing allies. The left wing, represented by the Socialist Party, only managed to win 24% of the votes. The outcome of these elections marked a definite political separation from communism. Now it was time to start the implementation process of free market economy laws; liberalization of prices and private property; and the privatization of land, houses, and means of production. Albania had finally and irreversibly taken the path toward democracy.

In spite of the amount and quality of changes that occurred in Albanian society, including the governmental structures, in the beginning of the ‘90s, the past continued for more than a decade to manifest itself in different forms in the behavior of the individuals, as well as in the social and governmental structures.

The period between 1990 and 1997 confirmed in Albania that democracy, as a socio-political system, was not easy to either establish or consolidate in a country that is historically lacking a democratic tradition, and a well-developed economy. The events of 1997 confirmed a number of realities: we had not yet separated completely from the past; we had committed several mistakes in our path toward democracy; we had implemented democracy not with cool heads, but within an atmosphere of tensions and political emotions that had a negative impact on expected outcomes; and we came up with changes in politics and government, as well as in our institutions and the economy, that were inadequate. For a long time, political forces kept on projecting repeatedly the “monster” of communism as an argument to oppose what might have been sound initiatives coming from other political directions. On top of all
this, the Democratic Party was unable to manage the first post-communist opportunity for peaceful transition of government.

Unfortunately, after every failure, resulting from an improper understanding of democracy, the old communist government mentalities and practices emerged as a way to overcome the related problems. The communist methodology was the only one we knew how to apply in the resolution of conflicts and problems. In fact, the failures associated with our efforts to establish democracy were not due to either the concept or the practices of democracy itself, but due to the way we understood democracy and the means and methods we were applying to achieve it within the context of the Albanian reality.

The first transition years provided ample opportunities for radical changes toward the metamorphosis of individuals, groups, and institutions. This would include all social institutions in society—the family, the most consolidated institution of that time, religion, the school, the mass media, the organization of the state, and others.

After five decades of abolition, the institution of religion was re-established in Albania. It was evident that in the course of time this institution had lost ground, and its relationship with the faithful had faded away. Consequently, it could hardly play the role religious institutions usually play in times of important historic changes. Like all other institutions, religion was also coping with its own internal changes and reformation. Religious entities were trying to formulate new goals of their own in an entirely new social environment.

Social institutions appeared to be regaining their freedom for development, but they still lacked the mechanism to correctly manage and use that freedom. As they were trying to reap the benefits of freedom, there was the risk of social institutions going too far abusing freedom to the point of contributing toward bringing about the tyranny of anarchy. Though in a different way, anarchy is just as bad as the extreme authoritarian rule of the past. At times during the initial years of Albanian democracy, conditions appeared as if the country was in a status of anarchy.

Basic socio-political structures of the communist society, such as the cooperatives of the peasantry, the working class, governmental institutions, and the communist party organizations—the Democratic Front, Women’s Union, and others, soon lost their mission and stopped functioning. The cooperatives ceased to exist, and the workers were no longer obligated to show up for work. The so-called common properties of the cooperatives, which were built by the workers themselves, were abandoned and most of them were destroyed. State ownership and the concept of “collective properties” were no longer acceptable, and demands were voiced for the restitution of private properties and the privatization of economic institutions and facilities.

The print and electronic media broke away from communist slogans, and started to promote new patterns of thinking and judgment concerning social phenomena. The mass media were no longer controlled by the totalitarian state.

Political pluralism in the form of new political parties provided individuals with the opportunity to take part in different political organizations, and to formulate new ideas for the future of their communities and the country. This new political environment also raised the aspirations of ethnic minorities, which organized their own political parties and defined their political objectives and demands. All these changes were formally adopted with the approval
of a package of laws on human rights and freedoms. This package constituted the first step toward the institutionalization of democracy in Albania.

A parallel and important development was the emergence of the nongovernmental organizations. The first ones were founded during the first years of democracy. They provided opportunities for individuals to organize in order to pursue their social, political, and cultural interests. They also served as watchdogs and pressure agents for the state and its structures to make sure they are responsive to the needs and wishes of the people. The establishment of the Center for Human Rights Education, and the Helsinki Committee for the protection of human rights are two examples of nongovernmental organizations. All of them together confirm that our society’s civic dimensions have expanded, and the democratic processes became irreversible.

Another indication of the democratization movement was the freedom the people gained to live wherever they wished. Population mobility, especially rural population mobility towards the urban areas, was a significant development. People were able to fulfill their aspirations to organize their lives in a new pattern, far from the interference of a totalitarian state, which, up to then, controlled their lives. However, it is important to underline that population mobility was a spontaneous process and had its problems. It was not preceded by preliminary studies, which could have helped the government to plan for the accommodation of the new arrivals in the cities. As it will be discussed in chapter 3, this spontaneous movement of people complicated matters for both, newcomers and urban residents, and a difficult situation emerged for both groups.

Migration of great numbers of Albanians to other countries was also a characteristic of the transition years. Migration helped Albanian society to extenuate some of its economic problems. It also contributed in establishing cultural, social, and economic ties with western countries, especially the two neighbor countries of Greece and Italy, which were the destinations chosen by most of Albanian migrants.

Albanian transition from communism to democracy is taking much more time and intellectual investments than anticipated. Transition provided Albanian individuals and groups with major challenges and opportunities, but, unfortunately, solutions to most of the problems are still elusive.

Generalizations

Albanian transition has already taken a long period of time—approximately 13 years, thus far. We still have situations in our society attesting to the fact that we are still in a transitional state. Theoretically speaking, however, 13 years is not too long of a period for a nation that is lacking in democratic experience. We need to have a positive attitude and a strong belief that we will succeed in bringing democracy to Albania.

Though the last 13 years have been difficult in our search for a democratic way of life, they also have been instructive. They taught us to formulate a number of generalizations that can guide us as we move forward toward the consolidation of our democracy. Two such generalizations are outlined below. If we are aware of them, we might be able to avoid some mistakes and move faster, and more systematically, toward our goal of democratization.
First generalization

Transition from communism to democracy goes through dilemmas. Resolving dilemmas seems to be the only possible way to achieve the goal of transition from communism to democracy. These dilemmas involve the thinking of individuals, the relations between groups, and the mentality of government and other institutions in our society.

History teaches us that every society that has gone through a change from one social system to another has experienced a somewhat lengthy transitional period. In dealing with the problems of transition, there is always the risk for the government of the new order to be overthrown by lingering forces of the old regime. Consequently, it is important that politicians, in cooperation with those in society distinguished for their wisdom, develop and adopt a package of laws to guide transition.

Second generalization

Democracy faces individual, collective, and institutional resistance. The ‘90s opened a new page for individuals and institutions in Albania, and inspired them to formulate new goals for a different and much better life. This marked a turning point in the history of Albania. Turning points, however, are times when aspirations and goals advocated by those looking for change generate strong emotions in those still attached to the past. It is natural for certain individuals and groups to tend to project their future on the basis of what they know and their own experiences. It is difficult for them to project their future beyond this framework, and as a result, tend to resist change. This resistance can be conscious, unconscious, individual or collective. We must learn to face resistance, but not give up.

Need for democratic citizenship education

Education makes democracy possible and indispensable.
Education creates people who understand their own duties and common good.

Fullan

Following the collapse of communism, the school was also subject to the same intense reforms that the entire Albanian society experienced. Although its mission for nearly five decades had been the formation of the "new man," the school continued to be an institution with students from a diverse background. The differences derived from the economic status, social strata, cultural background, and religious orientation of each child. In spite of the differences, all children had similar desires and interests, had the ability to learn, and they were mostly free of prejudice.

From this perspective, the school was considered to be the most appropriate place in which to begin planting the seeds of democratic citizenship. The school provided conditions and opportunities to implement democratic citizenship education through the traditional methods of learning as well as through making it possible for the children to experience democracy in the school environment.
The school is like a community with several smaller and diverse communities within it, including various student organizations such as study groups, clubs, and other small associations. These smaller school communities provide good opportunities for the students to pursue their interests. Such experiences help them to shape their character.

Then, there are the teachers in each school whose primary concern is the development of each student. Teachers in any socio-political system constitute a decisive factor in the development of children and youth. They impart knowledge, but they also lead the students to become good citizens. In doing so, and in spite of their personal ideologies, most teachers are guided by the aspirations and wishes of the parents, and society in general. At the present time, most Albanian teachers demonstrate a strong desire to assist in the democratization of their country. They feel empowered to do so by the obvious desire of the overall Albanian society to move in that direction. This is not to say, however, that there are no pockets of resistance among the teachers. It is difficult for some of them to abandon old ways acquired during fifty years of communist dictatorship.

It is safe to say that most teachers are striving these days to inspire students, and to develop in them a common “spirit,” and S-P-I-R-I-T stands for:

- S – Sincerity
- P – Passion
- I – Innovation
- R – Risk taking
- I – Inclusion
- T – Thinking

It is obvious that the role of the teachers is critical during this period of society’s effort to democratize. If the effort is to succeed, Albanian teachers must become heavily involved, more so than they have been thus far. As a matter of fact, those already committed to democracy should have already been recruited to play a leadership role in the democratization processes, while those still resisting it should have been provided with opportunities to learn about and experience the democratic process. The law on pre-university education, approved in 1993, allowed this. Article 1 underlined the immediate need for democratic citizenship education in order to enable society to break away from the communist framework. It was extremely important at that time to abandon communist education and undertake curriculum changes that would focus on democratic citizenship education.

**What is democratic citizenship education?**

There are several answers to this question that need to be carefully considered and sorted out. There are different definitions and perspectives regarding democratic citizenship education. In most societies, democratic citizenship education is mainly for children and youth, but in Albania, a country without a democratic tradition, democratic citizenship education is, at this point of transition, for everyone.

◊ Think and reflect over the following definitions.
◊ Give your own opinion by making your choice.
Democratic citizenship education is a process by which individual and group initiatives are taken to enable everyone to understand and serve the common good as defined by the people in a particular society.

- Democratic citizenship education is a process by which everyone learns to respect human rights and freedoms, and obeys the laws that are democratically designed and adopted to protect human rights.
- Democratic citizenship education is a process by which people learn how to translate theoretical knowledge about democracy into practicing democratic values and skills.
- Democratic citizenship education is a process by which people learn to value civility, and have the opportunity to practice it responsibly in their relationships with other members of their community.
- Democratic citizenship education is a process by which people learn to take individual initiatives in order to serve democracy in any way they feel they can make a contribution.
- Democratic citizenship education is a process by which people learn to act without prejudice.
- Democratic citizenship education teaches people how to participate in deliberation for making decisions that have to do with the common good.
- Democratic citizenship education is the process by which people learn to respect diversity in society, and how to establish and maintain relationships for the benefit of the common good without discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, social class, religion, and ability.

What is the target of democratic citizenship education?

As implied above, democratic citizenship education in Albania is for all citizens, regardless of their role, position, or status in society, including those in power and in charge of the country’s institutions.

Advancing democratic citizenship education is not a privilege of just any institution or social group in society. At this period of Albanian history, none of the institutions, whether it is the family, religion, or the media, is in a position to initiate and carry out a viable democratic citizenship education movement. The only institution that may be able to do this is the school, because, as explained earlier, it is the only one with the proper culture and conditions to claim its mission to be democratic citizenship education. The school has the children and youth under its supervision for a long period of time, and is in a position to create an environment in which they can practice democracy. This does not mean, of course, that democratic citizenship education starts and ends in school. The other institutions must also learn how to play a part.

The role of the school is to engage in citizenship education by impacting the following three domains of the student:

- Theoretical or cognitive:
  The students are taught a particular system of age-appropriate knowledge about individuals, social groups, and society in general—its fundamental laws, institutions, and other aspects.
- Affective:
  The affective domain includes beliefs and values related to democracy, including a sense of responsibility.
• Skills for active participation:
  Such skills are dialogue, compromise, decision-making, and a variety of social
  skills like listening, respecting the opinion of others, and the like.

School and social crises

There is no question that the school has an important mission. It should be recognized,
however, that the school is operating in an environment that is full of challenges, mostly
problematic. Society is changing very fast, and quite often finds itself in periods of crises.

The school is facing phenomena it never faced before. Quite often there is violence, and a
street culture prevails that is caused by uncontrolled and questionable sources and channels.
Print and electronic media, as well as the internet, bombard young people with information
that is not always accurate or objective. School children have difficulty managing all of this
information, especially when it contradicts what they learn in school. The school is often at
the point where it loses its influence over the students. For some students, discos have
become more important than the school.

The changing of the family presents another challenge. Divorce, and one-parent families
are now common. On top of that, there is alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and crime.

Then, there are the challenges presented by the rapidly increasing process of globalization.
Albania is no longer isolated, and the children are exposed to all kinds of influences coming
from different parts of the globe.

The school cannot ignore all these influences and conditions, and the challenges they
pause. It is important for the school to consider them for inclusion in the school curriculum.
The appropriate knowledge, values, and skills should be taught to help the students cope with
them. In this respect, democratic citizenship education, with its emphasis on solid
information about society, human rights, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills,
becomes a significant part of the school’s program.

Opportunities for discussion:

Comments on the following statements:

• School is where democracy can and should be taught and practiced.
• A culture of dialogue and debate is important for the school’s program.
• The development of the affective domain is a function of the school.
• The school has a historical responsibility to include democratic citizenship
  education in its program.
• Active citizen participation skills should be taught in school.
• Student government promotes civic life in school, and prepares the students for
  adult life.
• Violence and street culture are challenges for the school that cannot be
  ignored.
• Sensational and biased media information adversely influences children.
There is a set of indispensable principles, which guide the process of establishing democracy in school. They deserve proper consideration and recognition. They are as follows:

**Principle I**

*Change is too important to be left out of the school program.*

Each student is and should be an agent of change in everyday school life. By learning to cope with and adjust to changes in school, students learn how to effectively face changes as adults.

**Principle II**

*Change is a continuous process, not an objective that can reach a final stage.*

**Principle III**

*Neither centralization nor decentralization can guarantee successful establishment of democracy in school life.*

Centralization may control everything and suffocate the initiative and responsibility of groups and individuals, whereas decentralization may lead to deterioration of conditions, and finally to chaos. For these reasons, both approaches are needed, but they should carefully be balanced and managed.

**Principle IV**

*Both, the individual as well as the group are equally important in school life.*

Both, the individual and the group should be equally encouraged and supported, which means that neither one of them should be valued more than the other.

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**Chapter II**

**Bases of democracy**

**A. What is democracy**

**Chapter objectives:**

- List particular moments from the history of political thought related to democracy as a system.
- List some of the types of democracy known so far.
- List some of the principal characteristics and values of democracy as a system.
- Gain knowledge of Athenian and contemporary democracy.
- Distinguish between democracy, totalitarian systems and communism.
- Provide various definitions of democracy as a system and present their advantages and disadvantages.
- Give arguments to support the claim that democracy is not just a system of ideas, but also a system of practices.
- Give arguments to support that democracy is the *institutionalization* of freedom.
- Give arguments to support that none of the definitions of democracy is, and can neither be definitive.
“...as the idea of democracy is stable, its implementation is uncertain...”

Cister

Ideas on democratic organization of society date back to 2000 years ago. Elaborated in the course of centuries and historical events, in spite of failures, the idea and efforts to apply democracy have been successfully tested through centuries to be regarded as the best possible system known and accepted so far.

The idea of democracy has already been rooted in the consciousness of human society which still continues to aspire and fight for it. Mankind has not only aspired, but also invested its efforts to make democracy really work in different times and countries, different nations and communities and, whether successful or not, they represent attempts to apply the idea of democracy.

The aspiration for democracy seems to be inherent in the very human nature and strong sense of individual freedom for self-accomplishment. They are probably the source of mankind’s titanic effort to touch democracy. Aspiration for democracy is both individual and collective, and this is what makes democracy possible.

The history of mankind provides human society with different models and practices in the path from ancient democracies of antiquity and Athenian democracy to contemporary and American model of democracy.

In spite of the long journey and numerous tests the idea of democracy has gone through, the same questions repeat again and again:

What is democracy, what is its essence?
Can democracy work?
Why do we still ask these questions today?

Explanation relates to the fact that, even today, democracy as a system is not yet safe, it is exposed to risks, and its lifetime is always questioned. It happens this way, - underlines Cister, - because, as the idea of democracy is stable, its application in practice is uncertain.

Examples from history confirm that democracies never fail because of the lack of ideas to apply them or because idea of democracy is incomplete, but because individuals lack the skills and experiences of life in democracy. Most important of all is the fact that each individual should recognize, accept and apply the essence of democracy, i.e.: Understanding of freedom and individual rights.

Individuals’ need for freedom has been identified long ago as an almost instinctive demand, which, of course, was formulated in fundamental universal documents on human rights during the last century. If people’s need for freedom is intrinsic, then we should learn to pursue it and make it work. However, individuals need to become aware that their pursuit of freedom should never take the path of war or rebellion, but that of compromise, understanding and tolerance, instead.

It is essential that each individual distinguish between the meanings of “freedom” and “democracy”. In everyday practice these words are often used interchangeably, as words with similar meanings and functions. In fact, the word “freedom” carries a human, individual message, which people are born with and on the basis of which they shape their entire lives;
the word “democracy”, instead, carries a social message; it is a form of government that tries to unite individuals in a society, which guarantees each individual’s rights and freedoms. In fact, “freedom” and “democracy” complement each other. When discussing about this issue, experts underline that:

“Democracy is not just a system of ideas about freedom, but also a system of often sophisticated practices, actions, in short, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom”.

This is one of the most complete definitions of democracy as a system, but we can never say it is the final one. Experts underline that it is difficult and often senseless to give final definitions of democracy, and there are several arguments to support this:

• First, democracy is a system of ideas and practices applied in different times and different cultural, political, social, economic and ethno-psychological settings.
• Second, democracy is a process, not just a single act.
• Third, not only does democracy incarnate and enhance almost all parameters of the society in which it is applied, but also acquires the dimensions of that particular society.

Definitions of democracy are practically impossible, because democracy as a system is applied in different times and different countries. On the other hand, the perspectives of experts and scholars as well as their areas of origin largely affect definitions of democracy as a system of government.

• A politician approaches democracy from the perspective of politics and formulates the following definition: “Democracy is the form of political organization which provides for and encourages public competition on different economic development alternatives”.
• A lawyer considers democracy as a system and defines it as follows: “Democracy is the rule of law”.
• A moralist regards democracy as a system of social relations, which are based on social “compromise”, and considers “democracy as compromise”.
• Ex-President Lincoln defines democracy as: “Government of the people, by the people and for the people”, in other words “people in power”.
• Sartor underlines that: “The essence of each democracy is governance through discourse”. From this perspective, debate, dialogue and opposition are the language of democracy.
• “…In democracy we agree to disagree…” democracy as the only system, in which pluralism of ideas and alternatives is the only path towards human society development.

One of the definitions of democracy, which experts still continue to focus on, is the one Lincoln formulated in Gettysburg, in 1863:

“Democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people”.

This definition continues to provoke debate because of its complexity. According to the above definition, people perform two powerful roles at the same time: the governor, and the governed. More than logical, this message coming from Lincoln’s definition sounds as a very powerful stylistic paradox, and experts say it is very likely to work as one.

In conclusion, we may say there is no final definition of democracy as a system of government, since it is a process that develops in time and nobody can predict its future
dimensions. However, democracy has an existing dimension: “individual’s responsibility in society”.

Opportunities for discussion:
- Comment on the above definitions and choose the one you think is most complete. Give arguments for your choice.
- Analyse Lincoln’s definition of democracy.
- For many researchers, the words: freedom, democracy and peace complement one another. Then, it is worth commenting on the following formulation: 
  *Peace is the goal of human society - tolerance is the means to achieve it.* 
  Only under these circumstances can individuals and group enjoy their own freedom, without violating the freedom of others. That is when we may claim to have established democracy.

B. Types of democracy

Representative democracy

This type of democracy is based on the system of individuals’ free vote, according to which, individuals vote and elect people to whom they delegate the right to represent their interests in government structures. Voters delegate this right to a particular group of individuals, which, in their opinion, have the capacity to protect their rights. Citizens exercise their power (power through vote or electoral power) only during elections, which is the only time when individuals are sovereign in absolute power.

Participatory democracy

This type of democracy is otherwise recognized as Athenian or direct democracy. It used to be a sort of spectacular democracy, in which the entire people participated in decision-making, but not all people could actively participate in their implementation. In this sense, this type of democracy was not entirely functional because of the great number of participants.

Referendum democracy

This type of democracy is achieved through the right of individuals to resort to referendum for issues regarding all people. In a sense, it is direct democracy. It is a type of democracy with no intermediaries. Individuals express their opinion through their vote and accept its outcome.

Albanian democracy is a representative democracy, i.e. people vote individuals to whom they delegate their power – members of parliament. Our Constitution also has provisions for referendums. Article 150 states: “A minimum of 50 thousand citizens, with the right to vote, are entitled to a referendum to repeal laws or ask the President of Republic to authorize a referendum for issues of special importance” Thus, Albanian Constitution foresees the application of these two types of democracy.
Democracy – The goal
Consensus, compromise, tolerance, understanding – The tools

Consensus, how and how much it serves democracy

Consensus facilitates democracy. Consensus is a constant requirement of democracy. Consensus is both a principle and a tool, through which democracy is achieved.

Is consensus one party’s active consent of something proposed by another party? Is it the mere acceptance of something under certain circumstances? Or is consensus participation in respecting the rules of the game?

Consensus is a procedural rule. This implies clearly formulated rules of political game, which can lead to the resolution of potential conflicts in the course of governance. Thus, we may identify procedural consensus and fundamental consensus. If debate, discussions and controversy regard particular individuals in government but not the form of government itself, we may say that procedural consensus is violated, whereas fundamental consensus is not.

We have so far described consensus as a tool, which facilitates the establishment of democracy. We have also described the meaning of the freedom of individual and its values: compromise, tolerance and understanding. These three elements represent the values of individuals. Yet, is it possible that individual members of the same society be equally rich in these values? Can individuals in the same society have the same level of understanding of individual freedom? This is where we need to stop and realize that the risks of applying democracy relate to the fact that there are as many understandings of individual freedom as there are individuals, and each individual’s understanding of freedom reflects his/her formation, origin, interests, socio-economic status, etc. Therefore, there is very little chance that these diverse understandings of freedom and rights among individual members of the same society can converge.

Second, can democracy be established and work through individual values alone? Or does it require something else, i.e. law and social institutions to work on the basis of these values, which should become principles of life in democracy.

Is democracy safe in a society governed by a system of laws, even when they are perfect? Of course, the answer is – No.

This is closely related to the fact that society is not governed only by state-formulated laws, regardless of how perfect they are, but also by unwritten laws (moral codes elaborated in years). Society is equally governed by state and other social institutions, such as family and religion, which on their part, are governed by unwritten laws. It is true that society is governed by laws, but it is also true that society is equally governed by reason, psychology and feelings.

Democracy relies on individuals

The best guarantors of democracy as a system of government are educated individuals, who possess values, assume responsibilities and take initiatives. But, how can individuals acquire values, knowledge, skills, and responsibilities, which empower them to establish democracy and enjoy its fruits?

Individuals should go through two processes: humanization and socialization.
**Humanization** is a process, in which individuals establish relations with their own selves. It should be perceived as a process that cultivates individuals’ internal dimensions, their ability to communicate with their inner selves in order to analyze their attitudes, choices, relations with others, etc.

**Socialization** should be understood as a process, which prepares individuals to establish relations with others, join their interests with them, make common decisions and respect them.

Which are, then, the social institutions that cultivate humanization and socialization of individuals? Family and religion are two consolidated institutions, which significantly influence the accomplishment of these processes among individuals. In the following chapters, we will deal more in details with what each of these institutions offers to individuals.

To better understand the essence of democracy and its dimensions, we need to carefully analyze the content and essence of two other forms of government, namely: **Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism**.

Analysts identify them as opposites of democracy. Authoritarianism is abuse of power and totalitarianism implies an extremely politicised state and society. These two forms of government are both related to the fascist philosophy of government. Mussolini, whose slogan was “Everything within the state, nothing against the state”, adopted such practices of a military government. Totalitarianism as a form of government manifested the following characteristics: **Official ideology, one single political party, monopoly over education and media, terrorist police system, centralized economy**.

**B. Foundations of democracy**

Foundations of democracy in society are related and conditioned by how and how much its individual members are able to assume responsibility, accept authority, and apply justice. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the content of each of them: how do we understand responsibilities and their sources; what is our understanding of authority and power; what are the relations of individuals with power and authority; how do individuals apply justice, and how do they understand justice in the life of their society?

**Responsibility**

Responsibility as concept and practice consists in what individuals assume to do or not to do in the social community or group, which they form part of. In our literal and moral context, to assume responsibility means to be aware of obligations you have towards yourself and others in concrete circumstances and environments. Does this always happen?

The following questions deserve attention and consideration: What price do individuals pay in case they assume responsibilities or not? What are the sources of responsibilities in everyday life? What responsibilities should students assume in their school community? What are the sources of individual responsibilities?

**Promise**

The first group includes those responsibilities, which originate in individuals themselves and are not imposed by external factors. Individuals learn to assume such responsibilities, first of all, in their family, e.g. you make a promise to your mother, brother or sister and automatically you assume the responsibility to keep that promise under any circumstances.
A task given by someone
The source of this group of responsibilities is not internal but dictated by a task given by others, who might be your parents, friends, members of your group, teacher, an adult you have certain relations with, etc.

Customs
Some individual responsibilities relate to customs and are neither internal nor imposed by someone else. Instead, they are naturally transmitted from one generation to another. Customs form responsibilities in individuals, automatically e.g. helping elderly people in the street is not a responsibility conserved by custom or tradition.

Moral
Part of our responsibilities comes from moral norms adopted by individual members of a given society with a given moral. Most of the responsibilities individuals assume depend on their understanding of good or bad behavior.

Citizenship
Another group of responsibilities comes from obligations that individuals have as members of a particular society. Responsibility over the “vote” is a particularly important civic responsibility, which is not imposed from either family or religion. It comes from the obligation that individuals have towards the future of their society and common good.

Responsibility is inseparably related to individuals’ deliberate participation in the life of their social group and in the process of harmonizing their interests with those of the group for the sake of common good. Responsibility is first of all individual, but it becomes important when attached to collective responsibility, which remains the final goal of citizenship.

*Individuals assume responsibility in accordance with their age, education background, social roles and their communities.*

Responsibilities can be individual, collective, moral, social, governmental, local, regional, global, etc. Individuals assume responsibility depending on how much they are used to taking responsibility in their lives as well as on how and how much they have been influenced by social institutions: family, religion, school, government, etc. Family and school are the first social institutions, which have the responsibility and duty to cultivate responsibilities among individuals.

*Assuming responsibility is a value,* but it may also lead to problems. When you assume responsibility and perform well, you are financially and morally rewarded, you feel better and more independent, you acquire new knowledge and skills, face new challenges and better know yourselves, you may become leaders of your group, but...it may also happen that individuals with many responsibilities spend more time at work and have less time for leisure; they may be penalized in case of failure, etc.

When individuals assume responsibility, it is quite possible that, under certain circumstances, responsibilities conflict with one another. Sometimes individuals find it impossible to have two responsibilities at the same time. In such case they have to make a choice, which, in fact, is a typical situation of conflict between your individual values and your responsibilities. For example: suppose you are having an exam in physics and the friend on your right is looking at your papers for correct answers to avoid a negative grade; you either try to stop him/her by hiding your papers, or you allow him/her to take a look.
Opportunities for discussion:

Responsibilities
- What is the conflict between your values/duties/interests/responsibilities? Responsibilities often conflict with immediate needs, which forces individuals to make choices. For example: Tomorrow you have a test in physics and a visit to your dentist. What would you choose to do?
- School and your responsibilities within this community.
- Discuss about Article 36 of Normative Provisions.
  - Together with your students identify and list in two groups: responsibilities as individuals and as students.
  - Comment on the source of responsibilities formulated in this document, which regulate relations between actors in school life.

Authority

Whenever we deal with issues of authority in our everyday lives, we also touch upon issues of power. That is because authority and power tend to transform into each other. Authority comes from certain powers, but sometimes authority may abuse power. Trying to explain the content of authority, specialists state that: Authority is the right of a single individual, structure or group of individuals to influence or control the behaviors of others.

But what is authority? Authority is a rule, a law, a parent’s word, teacher’s word, a religious leader’s prayer, power, etc.

Authority may come from parents, bosses, laws, moral, religion and street, altogether or separately and at the same time. How do individuals accept authority and react to it? Which are the sources of authority?

Customs

Part of authority comes from customs. Individuals usually take certain things for granted simply because they have happened in a particular way over long periods of time. Individuals do not rebel against authority coming from customs and traditions of a given society. Nobody ever rebels against a grandmother’s words.

Rules & Law

Another part of authority comes from rules established with the consensus of individuals themselves. When rules are approved by community members, justice, then, depends on needs, capacities and merits.

C. Democracy and education

Or…Education and democracy?

Who can make citizens interested in democracy and how? This question becomes even more important if we consider that citizens exercise their electoral power every three or four years and afterwards have to accept what they themselves voted for, until they can exercise their power of vote again.

What do democracy and education mutually exchange with each other?

This might be the best perspective and approach to this relationship. As a system founded on pluralism, democracy provides individuals with opportunities to approach phenomena
from different perspectives, without prejudice, and in a climate of freedom of thought and reason.

Education provides democracy with individuals, who are illuminated by reason, educated, conscious of their own values and constructive opponents of change; they are not blindly obedient soldiers but courageous civic opponents with critical thinking skills. This constitutes one of the strongest points of democracy.

Education provides democracy with individuals, who develop dialogue and debate; individuals with consolidated social and political consciousness, able to wisely exercise their right to vote as the only mechanism that so far has successfully and naturally brought about changes in society. Education safeguards democracy from “idols” and “cults”, which are typical characteristics of other social systems. The only cult education in democracy cultivates are “free individuals”.

Democracy is the only socio-political system hitherto known that does not use school as a mechanism to achieve narrow political interests. Guided by freedom of individuals and pluralism of ideas, democracy never seeks power over individuals, but empowered individuals instead.

- **Education in democracy**

Having considered what democracy and education exchange with each other, our next step is to focus on education in democracy. Education process in democracy bears no similarities with other types of education in other systems. The differences consist in the starting point, philosophy, goals, strategy and methodology adopted by education in democracy. Education for democracy in democracy is a complex concept and practice, which can be presented by the following scheme:
This process includes some types of education: education for human rights, civic, legal, economic, global, environmental education, etc. The above scheme helps to study how all aspects of education for democracy are achieved in everyday school life. It also contributes to a better study and understanding of difficulties and opportunities for education for democracy. In no other socio-political system has school had the goal to provide individuals with knowledge about and for human rights and freedoms of individuals.

All socio-political systems have been prejudiced and scared of this goal. They feared that school, oriented towards rights and freedoms of individuals, could cultivate rebellion, instead of group spirit, uniformity and collegiality. Currently, in many democracies, school as an institution has assumed the responsibility to educate for democracy in its entire complexity.

Opportunities for discussion:

- Promote discussion and bring arguments to support these claims: 1- the starting point for school in democracy is individual freedoms and rights; advantages and disadvantages of this education; 2- democracy seeks no power over individuals, but empowered individuals.

D. Main principles of democracy

Democracy and the processes that make it work are founded on a system of well-synchronized principles. Therefore, it is important to properly understand the content of each of them as well as the complexity of their relations.

Principles, on which democracy is founded and through which it works, are universal principles, in the sense that they hold true for every society attempting to apply democracy, regardless of its historical tradition and culture.

These universal principles are:
- Majority rule and protection of minority;
- Consent of the governed;
- Governance restricted by constitutional law;
- Open society;
- Human dignity and individual sanctity;
- Sovereignty of law.
Majority rule and protection of minority

In democracy, most of the decisions are made through and depend on majority vote, which reflects majority opinions. On the other hand, because of concerns that majority may misuse or abuse power and govern for long periods of time, experts have also dealt with the concept of “limited majority” and “limited power”, in the sense that majority will not have power over everything and its power be checked; that its power can be opposed and majority’s primary duty is to take into consideration minority interests and goals, otherwise democracy is questioned and distorted.

Consideration of objections from minority is so important, that one of the definitions of democracy states: “Real democracy depends on what majority power guarantees to minority. The strongest confirmation that democracy in a country works, - says Ferrero, - is the safety and security of minorities.” Suppressing minorities means suppressing the most courageous and civil part of society, the part, which dares to think differently. In democracy, it is necessary to find and legalize all ways and means to provide minority with opportunities to participate in governance. Options and suggestions coming from minor groups should be guaranteed by law and institutionally considered. Minority exercises its power through opposite opinions and actions.

If there are no laws to protect minority opinions, there is a risk for such opinions to be subject of abuse and consequently create problems for minority. The Constitution of Albania acknowledges the right of minority to present objections. The institution of non-confidence, interpellation and constitutional court are mechanisms in the hands of minority to protect its rights and protect majority from the risk of degeneration and abuse of power.

Majority cannot always be right. And this is not simply because it has the numbers to make decisions, but also because there is often a risk that it may abuse its power. Therefore, there are provisions for opposition and legal opportunities for minority, which on its part should not abuse the rights recognized in constitutional documents or parliamentary regulations. There is a risk that both majority and minority may abuse their power, although they possess different types of power. To guarantee equilibrium between governance from majority and opposition from minority, democracy establishes not only the institution of constitution, but also the constitutional court, which guarantees correct application of constitutional law.

Assignment

- From the Constitution of Albania identify articles, which guarantee minority rights.
- From the Constitution of Albania identify articles, which recognize majority rights.
- Identify some of the duties of the Constitutional Court that protect minority opinions.
- Identify some parliamentary rules, which guarantee minority rights.

Consent of the governed

“Supreme power belongs to the people” is the philosophy and principle guiding every democracy. Democracies can only work when the governed (the people) give their consent on the form of governance. When we talk about the governed we imply both majority and minority, which should both give their consent as to the form of governance. Although governance represents the interests of voting majority, those who govern have the obligation to also satisfy the principal interests of minority. This means that voters, who have not voted
for those in power, should not be prejudiced or marginalized. But, can the governed express their consent (or disapproval) for the governors and how can they do it? How should and how can this work in reality? It is important to understand that the governed exercise their supreme power through their free vote, not through manipulated, or worse, violated vote. That is why voting process and vote are sacred and should never be abused.

People (the governed) vote a particular political program and individuals, who can implement that program. At the same time, citizens are free until they have cast their vote; right after that they have in a way “lost” their freedom, as they have already delegated their power to others (governors). It is up to the governors to decide how to use citizens’ vote and how to realize the program they presented to their electorate.

This principle can function if relations between the governed and governors are qualitative and continuous, especially after electoral campaigns. Power comes from the governed and should always be checked by them. The principle “consent of the governed” can very well function through such mechanisms as open parliamentary sessions when laws are formulated and discussed, and through popular referendums for important issues.

Opportunities for discussion:

• Discuss about the content and functions of Law nr.24 of 1992, according to which, all officials of the old communist administration should be fired. Consider the historical framework of this law, your understanding of democracy and how it works.

Governance restricted by constitutional law

Another principle of democracy is governance based on law, namely on the fundamental law of any state, its constitution. Like all types of power, government tends to first remind individuals of their obligations and responsibilities, and then their rights, i.e. government tends to exercise power over individuals, sometimes even abusing it.

While exercising executive power, government may abuse or speculate on behalf of power and violate fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, thus threatening democracy itself and breaking the balance between government’s rights and its obligations towards individuals. Because government is inclined to become omnipotent, society in democracy creates legal and social mechanisms to control and eliminate potentials for abuse.

First, there are special articles in the constitution, which oblige government to recognize and respect conventions and declaration of human rights, ratified by the state. On the other hand, laws are formulated in such a way, which guarantees the protection of individuals and limits possibilities for power abuse.

Second, The constitution guarantees the separation of powers, legislative, executive and judiciary, which neither condition nor depend on one another. On the other hand, the constitutional court, as an independent institution, guarantees the correct application of constitution and also protects it from speculations. The most evident mechanism, which protects governance from abuse, is parliamentary opposition with its powers to block majority decisions and the creation of independent institutions, which require approval of opposition, such as High State Control, State Lawyer, People’s Lawyer, etc.

In a democratic system, respective laws guarantee all individual rights and freedoms. The issue is how much citizens recognize, apply and appeal these laws in respective institutions.
Open Society

Researchers underline that democracy is the market of individual open views, which means that individuals in democracy are totally free to choose their views and their membership in organizations, engage in open debate, agree with or oppose debates, express their opinions on any issue, without risking their freedoms and rights.

Open society has another dimension: state in democracy does not make secret decisions. Media has the right to inform citizens about decisions regarding issues of interest to all; government publishes data and facts, which citizens may oppose.

NGOs are another dimension of democracy that contributes to making it an open society. They are mechanisms, which oppose the state, or in particular cases, complement it. The right for demonstrations, referendums, the right for free media and free press also contribute to making democracy an open society.

The right to hold open views on and about issues of concern to all citizens is another confirmation of the open society principle. The right of each citizen to be informed is the best illustration of this fundamental principle of democracy.

Human dignity & individual sanctity

Democracy tends to be a system in which individuals rule. State and governance should serve individuals and provide them with opportunities for self-accomplishment and enjoyment of their rights and freedoms. Laws, institutions and economic opportunities contribute to the accomplishment of individuals.

Constitutions of different countries aspiring for democracy refer to the Universal Declaration of Individual Rights of 1948, according to which, individuals and their human dignity are the greatest wealth of mankind, and therefore they deserve all efforts. Individual rights and freedoms are sacred. Individuals should be protected, regardless of their age, sex, gender, race, and social or political status. In case of detention, individuals are entitled to their rights of life and dignity.

People’s Lawyer, the right to a lawyer during detention, the right for information in prison, press, contacts with lawyer, health conditions and assistance during detention, etc, confirm sanctity of individuals as the most organized being so far.

In many societies, individual sanctity has acquired other dimensions, which have been difficult to accept by conservative institutions, as for example: the right of divorce, same sex marriage, and other issues from the private life of individuals.

Death penalty is today one of the most disputable issues in countries with long traditions in democracy, according to which, individual’s life is sacred and can not be taken away, even when the individual is a criminal. In such case, the individual may be sentenced for life, but his/her life cannot be taken away. It is evident that democratic systems seek more freedom for individuals, on behalf of their sanctity. This concept seems to have been borrowed from religion and relates to the fact that life of an individual is a gift of God, and God alone may take it away.

Power of law & Judiciary

Law is plenipotentiary in democracy and all citizens are equal before law. Only when this is achieved, can we claim to have captured the very essence of democratic society. But this
objective, equality before law, is technically difficult to achieve in everyday reality of judicial practice.

First, because of loopholes in laws;
Second, because of formulation of laws (process);
Third, because of lack of coherence in laws;
And last, because of how and who interprets and applies laws in particular cases.

The very essence of law inevitably leads to loopholes and inaccuracies as long as there is a diversity of cases which happen in diverse circumstances. It is impossible for the law to foresee all possible cases and provide solutions accordingly to each of them. This simple fact leads to injustice in the process of application of laws. On the other hand, laws are applied by individuals (judges), who, for a variety of reasons, cannot completely avoid subjectivism in particular cases. Each judge applies a particular article depending on their individual formation and their level of knowledge of the law.

It is worth mentioning the fact that not all laws formulated by state fully comply with the spirit of documents and conventions produced by UNO. Even when certain conventions, related to protection of rights of particular individuals or categories, such as: convention for the rights of children, women or prisoners, are ratified, states not always take measures to ratify these conventions completely and article by article.

**Fundamental values of democracy**

Before we talk about values functioning as principles of democracy in society, it is necessary to consider universal values. Values represent the most solid part of human moral, a set of rules, principles and norms that have regulated and safeguarded human relations under all circumstances. This group of rules, principles and norms societies have established and conserved in centuries is considered universal, because it has both served and resisted all changes in human society and has yet remained unchanged, although society has experienced inventions, scientific development, wars, etc.

*Freedom, tolerance, charity, devotion, gratitude and human solidarity are some of the universal values that served mankind, regardless of their bearers, social order, culture or socio-economic development.*

The establishment of such values is the outcome of contributions from each of society’s fundamental institutions and their respective values. Thus, family cultivates love of relatives, family devotion, humility to parents, grandparents and origin; religion cultivates faith in the creator, tolerance and charity; school cultivates knowledge, solidarity, etc.

These universal values, which have served and continue to serve society and have persisted in the course of its development, have managed to survive because they were not the outcome of indoctrination or dogmas. They were naturally established over a very long period of time.

Universal values otherwise known as moral values represent the first and most important values, which are the bases of all other civic values, indispensable for the establishment of democracy. Figuratively speaking, *universal values are the ground floor of human edifice and civic values its second floor.*

Each political system tries to establish a system of fundamental moral and civic values. Communism, for example, invested considerably in creating a system of values based on ten characteristics of communists, which would be the model for the profile of new man. There is nothing wrong in its insistence to do this, since each system tries to create a profile of its
citizens. However, the ways and means, adopted for achieving this system of values and
citizen profile, compromised civic moral and values in general.

Communism tried to cultivate values as top-down undisputable dogmas and prohibited
discussion or opposition regarding them. Only the communist party in power had the
authority and right to cultivate and protect values. The only thing citizens could do was to
automatically and blindly obey the so-called values of communism: voluntarism and loyalty
to the system, the party, etc.

In democracy, creation of a system of values involves all social institutions: family,
religion, school, free media, etc. In democracy, each institution is provided with opportunities
to develop its own values and individuals are free to choose the values they prefer. Democracy treasures all the heritage of values that social institutions bring with them and
provides for their use and further development. Values are not established through political
mechanisms, but through social institutions, conviction and reason, opposition, dialogue and
debate.

Values are cultivated and tested through free participation in civic life. Unlike communism, democracy confirms that indoctrination cannot cultivate long-term and
sustainable values, and that values cultivated through indoctrination are short-lived. Unlike communism, democracy as system provides ample opportunities to establish values, first among individuals, and then among collectives of individuals. Individuals with consolidated values lead to a community with an equally consolidated system of values.

Individual values in democracy are not cultivated under pressure or control from any
mechanisms. This makes the creation of values a more sustainable process. Individuals are not
censured in terms of their choices, beliefs or affiliation. The very freedom of individuals to
choose their values and not be victims of prejudice constitutes an individual value and
freedom.

Values of society in democracy are the outcome of citizens’ values, which society
formulate and holds as standards (agreements) for the profile of its citizens. They develop
through consensus and dialogue among all social institutions.

A democratic system is very likely to develop when it has a consolidated system of
universal values and inherits consolidated institutions from the past. As a system, which
allows free movement of citizens and cultures, democracy provides opportunities to confront
and integrate cultures, and consequently, universal values pertaining to them.

Which are some of the fundamental values, which make democracy work?
• Common good
• Justice
• Equality of opportunities
• Diversity
• Truth
• Patriotism

Common good

Common good may be considered both as principle and value: as a principle, upon which
democracy should be constructed; and as a value, which democracy should stimulate and
cultivate. Let us now focus on common good as value, since we have already considered it
from the perspective of principle.
It seems that common good has very little chance to work in democracy, which invests more on individuals than group. In fact, we should carefully consider this issue, as it closely relates to our understanding of freedom and opportunities of individual achievement. Empowered individuals may fully demonstrate their capacities in community. Therefore, the more empowered individuals are in community, the more consolidated the community will be, since community is a group of individuals interested in a common cause. As a fundamental value of democracy, common good relies on the idea “not how much do I benefit from..., but how much do all of us benefit from...” It is true that in democracy empowered individuals are very important and everything is done for them. However, on the other hand, democracy also encourages actions that benefit the common good of all, since there is no guarantee for individuals outside common good.

As concept and practice, common good should be closely related to the concept of “community”, since the latter cannot function unless interested in the common good. As a concept, common good benefits a great number of people. It can be shared but not divided among separate individuals. As a principle, common good is opposed by Schumpeter, according to which, this principle is not very likely to work. Common good can only be achieved by all and under no circumstances by individuals. Common good is widely dealt with as concept and public demand in British policies. First mentioned in Scotland in 1943, it became obligatory in 1948 for all public authorities in construction, which were obliged to protect environment as a common good.

Issues like: peace, environment, energy, cultural heritage, national parks, monuments of nature and culture may be considered as “common good” since considerable numbers of people are interested in them, and at the same as a good that cannot be divided among individual community members. Only issues like these can represent major objectives, which may bring a great number of people together.

Opportunities for discussion:

• Which issues or objects may be considered “common good” in your school community?
• List some objects in your city that you consider “common good”.

Justice

Justice may be regarded as both principle and value that democratic society can and should cultivate. The essence of this value regards relations between individuals, truth and law.

Justice relates to how independent, impartial and unprejudiced individuals are with regard to themselves and others. Individuals should seek justice from others, and at the same time exercise justice in their relation with others. This can only work when individuals know how to establish relations with moral and law, and when they are guided by both written and unwritten norms and rules.

Justice is a demand coming from individuals in all systems. But, how are they educated and prepared to exercise and seek justice in their relations with others? This issue relates to each individual’s formation, culture, community, knowledge of law and social roles they have assumed.

On the other hand, there is always a misbalance between how much and how individuals seek justice for themselves and how much and how they exercise justice with regard to others.
This complicates the application of justice and the process of its transformation into a value of society.

Law and social institutions constitute the essence of justice. It is imperative that law and its institutions apply justice among citizens, free of preference and prejudice. The risk that law and people applying it can be compromised may at any moment threaten democracy and application of justice.

**Which are some of the ways to avoid the risk that justice be compromised and degenerated?**

- Process from formulation to approval of laws.
- Formulation of laws in compliance with UNO international conventions in order to guarantee sufficient space for individual rights and freedoms, according to international documents.
- Establishment of institutions of law, such as: Parliamentary Commission for Individual Rights and Freedoms, which controls application of law to the benefit of citizens.
- Establishment of the institution of People’s Lawyer, which guarantees individual rights and freedoms in relation with state.
- Establishment of free public media, which guarantee freedom of speech and opinion.

All of these are some of the means that provide for justice and encourage its cultivation as value and principle of life in democracy. It is undisputable, however, that justice remains an issue related to individuals’ civic awareness to ensure, first, individual and then, collective freedom.

**Equality of opportunity**

This principle and value of democracy is borrowed from the fundamental document of human freedoms and rights – Universal declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

The essence of this principle and value relates to the fact that individuals are born free and equally entitled to life, free of prejudice and discrimination.

In democracy, however, being equal does not imply equality of incomes in society. Democracy as a system guarantees equality of individuals before law and equal opportunities for all individuals. This means that all individuals can make an equal start, but not all of them, will equally achieve objectives and standards, since individuals have diverse capacities, starting points and interests.

Democracy cannot guarantee equal distribution of incomes and material goods, as theoretical communism does. In democracy, state and society guarantee equality among citizens only with regard to vital things, like: *vaccination system, information network, equality of formal rights, access to national parks, artistic institutions, protection of law, right to a lawyer, etc.*

Some experts distinguish between two concepts: “equality” and “egalitarianism”. The latter is at the same time an acceptable restriction of individual freedom. According to them, there can never be absolute equality in the distribution of material goods or values, since individuals do not equally invest, in terms of quality and quantity, in generating incomes and values. That is why *egalitarianism* is at the same time a misuse of individual freedom and individual accomplishment.
The issue of equality as both value and principle in democracy also relates to individuals’ understanding of individual rights and freedoms, which is one of the most controversial issues today. The fact that understanding of rights and freedoms is entirely individual significantly complicates the functioning of rights. This explains why issues of equality remain one of the permanent goals of life in democracy.

Diversity

Diversity is a social fact. Society consists of individuals of diverse races, origins, formation, preferences, beliefs, interests and social profiles. Human society itself consists of diverse races, ethnicities, faiths and socio-economic development levels. This means that diversity is a fact to be accepted. All we can do is to devote our attention and consider diversity as wealth of human society. There is ample evidence that diversity has been considered a barrier to development; that being different has led to conflicts; that it has been difficult to agree and compromise.

Over the last decades, diversity is being considered a treasure of human society, as potential for its improvement, qualitative and quantitative development and not as potential for conflict.

Social groups and categories
Social roles

We often feel the need to focus on issues like: What is society? Why are individuals grouped together for particular interests and under particular circumstances? Why different individuals of different origin make joint decisions and respect them, etc? In our everyday life we talk about social groups and, for different reasons, we can be members of more than one social group at the same time. There is hardly any individual who is not a member of a particular social group.

In order to better grasp the essence of social group we need to explain the concept “social group”.

When talking about “social group” it is important to understand that group members intentionally relate among them on the basis of interests, age, gender, desires, needs, blood, etc. However, not every random group of people may represent what we identify as “social group”, which, of course, is not a casual group of individuals.

There can also be groups of people gathering at the same place and time, which have no long-term common goals, such as: a group of people waiting in a hospital garden, train station, etc. Interaction and relationships in such groups are neither long-term nor focused. In such cases instead of a “social group”, we have to do with the concept “aggregate”. Social studies also recognize the concept “social category”, which differs from the two concepts above. Social category is a statistical grouping of individuals with common characteristics, such as, people with similar social status, salary, etc. In order to fully grasp the essence of the concept “social group” we should distinguish it from the other two concepts: aggregate and social category.

Opportunities for discussion:

Comment on the following definitions:
• **Social group** is a number of individuals, who have clearly stated goals, periodically interact with one another on the basis of unwritten laws, which are obligatory for all group members.

• **Social category** is a statistical grouping of people, classified on the basis of their common characteristics related to social, economic status, etc.

• **Aggregates** are casual groupings of people at a given time or place, without any common and long-term goals. Their relations are not governed by special rules.

Try to answer the following questions:

• Is asylum or asylum seekers a social category or a social group?

• Are patients in hospital a social group or a social category?

• Are Roma people in Albania a social category or a social group?

• List social groups, categories and aggregates you know in your country.

• Make a list or a scheme and try to include all social groups you are a member of, and the social category you think you belong to. Give examples of obligations you have in each of the social groups you are member of, beginning with family.

• List social groups in your school and tell which of them you are member of and why.

Each individual belongs to one or more social groups, categories or aggregates. We have one or more roles to play in each group, category or aggregate, in which we take part. Our relations with other members of group/groups, categories and aggregates have different characteristics and dimensions. They may depend on gender, blood or emotions; they may be formal, informal, temporary or short-term relations; they may depend on time, place or whether they are casual, conditional or indispensable relations.

Family is the first group individuals are members of. This social group is based on blood relations and functions on the basis of some universal values, like: mutual love, support and help. This social group has a conspicuous identity and its members stick together for a long time not only because of blood relations, but also because of a series of relations, like: family name, property, inheritance, etc.

• **Why do individuals feel the need to attach to other social groups, beside family?**

Individuals fall in different social groups for various reasons, which may satisfy their needs and wishes. They group together to solve immediate needs and problems they cannot solve as individuals, to avoid solitude, demonstrate who they are and their aspirations or long-term goals, to take initiatives and draw attention on common issues for common good, etc. Social groups may also bring individuals together because of age, profession, views, ethnicity, race, cultural, religious or economic interests, etc.

Membership in a particular social group is an indispensable commitment of individuals in the life of every society. This process of individuals’ membership in one or more social groups is an inherent need, and at the same time, a sacrifice for these individuals. The sacrifice of membership in social groups depends on the personality of individuals. When in group, individuals spend part of their energy, values, knowledge, time, etc.

*Individuals’ membership in a group is first a need, and then sacrifice.*

Need relates to the very existence of individuals, who exist as such only if they establish relations with the group; sacrifice relates to the fact that once individuals become members of a particular group, they begin to give something from their own self to meet the expectations of their social group. However, it very often happens that the group fails to satisfy
expectations and aspirations of individuals. The group may sometimes reward individuals, and some other times it may exhaust individuals or suppress their individuality.

What does the group offer the individuals?

First, the group seeks to offer equality between its members. The group comprises individuals with diverse individualities. In this sense, we may talk about equality among unequal individuals, since individuals in a group have diverse individualities, value systems, abilities, capacities and attitudes. Individual members of a group have to adjust to group uniformity and reach unanimously approved decisions.

Group membership and contacts with others help individuals, on one hand, to accomplish part of themselves, enrich human consciousness, avoid solitude, test their human values, perseverance and individuality, and on the other hand test individuals’ ability to resist average attitude that groups usually offer and cultivate.

Membership in a social group to a considerable extent ensures individuals a sense of belonging somewhere; it identifies them with the group, gives them freedom and at the same time, restricts it. This means that membership in a group allows individuals to state their demands in a stronger and more convincing way. Society is more interested to welcome and meet demands coming from groups than those coming from individuals. In this sense, individuals enjoy the freedom of being in a common front with others. The group offers individuals the certainty of survival.

Group membership may be approached from another perspective, according to which, it limits personal freedom of thought and action, since individuals’ understanding of freedom and the practice of achieving freedom depends on group decisions and strategy. Freedom of individuals depends on freedom of the group.

Opportunities for discussion:
- Discuss about the content of the idea underlined above and identify students’ opinions and their understanding of it.

Social role/roles

School might face isolation and individualism unless it devotes due attention to the initiation and promotion of active citizenship and civic action. School involves competition for knowledge, which, to a certain extent, justifies individualism. Competition is indispensable for growth and success during the learning process. To many analysts and researchers, isolation and individualism are equally dangerous and useful. Sometimes individualism and isolation are perceived as mechanisms of defense from criticism, which weaken competition. However, experts believe that increasing individualism and isolation should be considered serious concerns. What are the risks involved in case we fail to have control over individualism and isolation?

What is isolation?

Individualism makes individuals focus only on their personal experiences. Given their young age and limited life experiences, students can hardly use their personal experiences to make choices and achieve solutions. Isolation provides only an internal system of reference, and lack of an external system of reference usually has negative consequences. From another
perspective, isolation can also be positive, since it cultivates internal reflection and analysis. However, individuals do not benefit much from just coming to terms with themselves.

What is individualism?

Individualism in school encourages students’ independent thinking and personality. It enhances students’ critical thinking and enables them to resist group laws, which are not always perfect. The group is a community, which joins the energies of several individuals. Isolation is bad, but group dominance is worse. Why? Group stimulates average behavior versus creative individualities and its critical dilemma is: individualism and collegiality at the same time: “The worst thing is to remain out of the group ...” “The worst thing is not to call things by their name, for the sake of the group...”

As a social institution, school should promote individualism and collegiality, individuals and the group. This objective makes it more difficult for school to accomplish its mission and at the same time complicates the proper understanding of its role by other external factors.

Do students learn better individually or in a group?
What types of knowledge can they better acquire in a group or individually?

**Group according to Schopenhauer**

Human society is organized in groups, wherein individual members assume some social roles. The entirety of roles that individuals assume gives sense and content to human life. The more roles individuals assume and the better they perform them, the healthier and safer society becomes. However, in the final analysis, understanding of social roles remains an entirely individual issue.

So far, human society has been organized in social groups and functions on the basis of “social institutions”, which altogether create the basic structure of human society.

**Researchers identify the following social institutions:**

- Family
- Religion,
- School,
- Media.

These institutions differ from one another in terms of age (time when they were established), internal organizational structure, mission, service rendered to individuals, etc. Researchers underline that the essence of all social institutions is to serve individuals and their human nature as well as protect and develop their values.

**Family**

In terms of age, it is the oldest social institution. In spite of its type: number of members, conservative, modern, small, big, single parent, step parent or re-married parents, it still remains the first social group, in which individuals acquire their first skills and values of human behavior. Hence, it still remains the basic “cell” of society.

Although it is difficult to formulate a definition of family, we would like to underline that: family is a group of individuals, who have blood relations, at least with one part of family in the case of single-parent or step-parent families. Relations among family members are regulated by unwritten norms and rules, obligatory for all family members. Tradition provides examples of sophisticated rules and norms that have regulated and governed family life.
However, in a post-industrial society, family is confronted with several global developments, which have affected its very solid and consolidated structure. Family is challenged by:

- Spirit of women’s freedom and rights as well as global documents institutionalizing it.
- Spirit of children’s freedom and rights as well as global documents institutionalizing it.
- Spirit of sexual freedom and media.
- Women’s massive employment in industrial society and enhancement of their economic freedom.
- Massive employment among women because of lower salaries for them, led to changes in the social roles of men and women within the family.
- Women’s right to vote and their participation in decision-making also led to changes in roles within the family and stimulated divorce requests from women.

Given such phenomena, it is extremely difficult to formulate accurate and final definitions of family. In spite of changes, family remains the institution, in which individuals acquire their first skills of life within the first social group, their first individual values and responsibilities.

However, family life is part of each individual’s experience and constitutes one of their first emotional treasures. Family experiences, parent-children, brother-sister relations and those with relatives and grandparents, carry both positive and negative emotions, and sometimes tensions, which may lead to despair, anxiety, sense of fault or even conflict and animosity. Relations within family are based on blood and, therefore, should be characterized by harmony, but that is not always the case. Religion is the social institution, which continues to insist on a harmonious family. But, laws governing industrial society seem to contradict religious rules. Nevertheless, religion remains the only strong opponent of deformations occurring within the family.

In spite of all challenges, there is serious concern and commitment to maintaining a solid family. Most of the values that society cultivates, like: solidarity among its members, help, reciprocity, devotion, self-denial and trust, are also values that society has borrowed from family and strives to make its own. In many respects, society and family are guided by the same principles. This is another argument why rules, norms and values acquired in family never get lost in the life outside family. Very often, community itself operates on the same rules, as well. In most cases, society and social institutions institutionalize many of the norms and rules governing family life.

School is another institution, which is especially interested in a consolidated family. School and family have common interests, as they both involve children. School needs to be well aware of family deformations, in order to better perform its role and find the appropriate means to keep families interested in the schooling and education of their children. Cooperation between school and family can only be successful when school knows how and what to ask from families and children.

Opportunities for discussion:

Encourage discussion about the following issues.
Have your students write an essay to explain what family means to them

- Comment and debate on the following:
  “…Family violence is a serious threat to modern society. One out of four homicides in Britain involves one family member…”
- Is the following statement true?
“…Women and men in the family are equally violent…”

- List some of your arguments why family violence is possible and bring examples of extreme family violence from the press.
- List some family celebrations that promote your family unity, solidarity and values.
- Prepare an album of your family life.
- Comment on the content of the following articles from the Constitution of Albania.

**Article 53 of Albanian Constitution**
1. Everyone has the right to marriage and have a family.
2. Marriage and family are specially protected by law.
3. Marriage and divorce are regulated by law.

**Article 54 of Albanian Constitution**
1. Children, youth, pregnant women and young mothers are entitled to special protection by the state.
2. Children born illegally enjoy equal rights with children born of regular marriage.

**Religion**

This institution has a special role in the life of society and individuals, even among those who do not belong to any particular religious community. This relates to the very special profile of various religions and also to the fact that religions in the course of history have affected other spheres of life, such as: material and spiritual culture, architecture, etc. Religions have naturally and often inexplicably formed inseparable part of individuals’ lives.

Whether or not we belong to a particular religious community, whether or not we practice religious rites, they always affect our lives. Our parents held particular religious beliefs and it is natural that we all have reminiscences of what we call religious culture. Individuals often search and find explanations to their attitudes and behaviours pro or against a particular religious faith.

To many societies, religion and state are one and the same, which practically means that state is based on principles of its citizens’ religion. However, most of the states are not based on principles of a particular religious faith. They are, instead, separate from religion and constitute the group of atheistic states, i.e. these states do not fight religion but respect and allow it to exercise its activity in conformity with rules sanctioned by constitution (e.g. Albanian state).

Since religion as a social institution is a complex notion, it is important to first deal with its content. The institution of religion includes:

- **Religious literature** (holy books) which guides the lives of all believers in a particular religious community.
- **Hierarchy**, i.e. organizational structure within a particular religion. Religious leaders and their powers, decision/making system and rules governing life in a religious community, rules for inherited properties within the religious community and rules for charity funds raised by the community as one of the fundamental religious principles.
- **Religious missionaries**, i.e. individuals, who live in complete conformity with the holy book and carry the holy message to believers, elected and educated individuals with deep theological knowledge of the faith they belong to.
• **Believers**, i.e. individuals pertaining to a particular faith because of family tradition or their own free choice, who have accepted and at the same practice the faith of their choice.
• **Institutions of a chosen faith**, e.g. church, mosque, synagogue, etc, in which religious rites are conducted and members of a particular community meet together to perform rites and other services of their faith.

**Principles governing the life of religious community members**

A special characteristic for members of a particular faith is that they form part of this particular community purely because of faith and not because of interest of any kind. What unites believers in a religious community is their faith in the holy creator and holy word. Believers are individuals whose lives are guided by religious principles and entrusted to their holy creator. This makes believers naturally react to events that bring them either joy or sorrow. Faith in the creator helps believers to better manage their pain.

Believers base their individual lives on a moral code created by their faith and compare behaviours of other individuals accordingly, classifying them as either moral or immoral. What distinguishes all believers, regardless of their faith, is the fact that they do not prejudice believers of other faiths. This is one of the greatest values each faith cultivates. Religions have never caused conflicts between one another. Conflicts among religions have been stimulated by external factors.

**Religion as an institution provides its believers with:**

• Understanding of life and death and a system of referral, i.e. creator’s word. It helps them to make sense of their own attitudes and actions.
• Spiritual peace in times of great need and pain; hope in the existence of a better life.
• Opportunity to reflect on their sins and confess them to religious missionaries of their faith, which psychologically absolves believers from the feeling of sin.
• Opportunities for affiliation and membership in a particular community whose members reason in conformity with creator’s word, indispensable for each individual.
• A moral “code” to judge and distinguish between moral and immoral.
• Relief from their role of judge, since according to them, their creator is the only judge. Once free from this role, believers are also free from any prejudice with regard to themselves or others.
• A feeling of universal collectiveness; Catholic, Muslim or Orthodox believers feel comfortable in every institution of their faith all over the world and express their solidarity with every initiative coming from their faith, regardless of its country of origin.
• Freedom from fear of death; it helps believers to accept death as a natural process and an obligation to their creator.

**Institution of religion in Albania**

History of religion in Albania is unique in terms of its mission and functions. From 1967 to the end of last century, Albania was among those countries, which prohibited religion and religious practice. In 1967 Albanian society initiated the so-called progressive movements to revolutionize the lives of its citizens, such as: movement to emancipate women, movement to give priority to common interest versus personal interest, movement against religion and religious prejudice.
These three movements should appear as bottom-up initiatives from the people themselves. The struggle against religious practices also included prohibitive attitudes against clerics and institutions of religious cults, which were either closed or used for other purposes (e.g. Catholic cathedral in Shkodra became a palace of sport). “Naim Frasheri” Secondary school in Durres was the initiator of this movement, which later spread all over Albania. Communist power used this movement against religion to support emancipation of women and girls, most of which were victims of the status they were given from their religion.

The period between 1967 and 1976, when the new Constitution of the Republic of Albania was proclaimed, were years, which seriously damaged religion in all its aspects and distorted religious culture and institutions. The Constitution of 1976 definitely sanctioned the new situation created after 1967 and the attitude of Albanian state towards religion and faith. It stated: “...Albanian state recognizes no religion. It supports and conducts atheistic propaganda in order to cultivate scientific materialist outlook among people...”

After the proclamation of New Constitution of 1976, Albania banned the creation of any religious organization and sanctioned the secular character of school.

The ‘90s marked the return of religion in the life of Albanian society and the reestablishment of religious institutions Albanians had been lacking for a long time. The first constitutional package of 1991, for the first time after the Constitution of 1976, formulated the right to practice religion. The Constitution of 1998 sanctioned the right to practice religion as well as the atheistic character of Albanian state. The preamble of the Constitution of 1998 states: “...We, the people of Albania, proud and aware of our history, and responsible for our future, with our trust in God and other universal values ...”

Article 10 and Article 24 of the Constitution states:

**Article 10**
1. There is no official religion in the Republic of Albania.
2. State is neutral in issues regarding faith and consciousness and guarantees freedom of their expression in public life.
4. State and religious communities mutually respect one another and cooperate to the benefit of each and all individuals.
5. Relations between state and religious communities are regulated by agreements between representatives of these communities and Council of Ministers.
6. Religious communities are legal entities. They independently administer their property according to their principles, rules and codes as long as they do not violate interests of third parties.

**Article 24**
1. Freedom of consciousness and religion is guaranteed.
2. Individuals are free to choose and change their religion or convictions, as well demonstrate them individually or collectively, in public or private life, through cults education and rites.
3. No one can be obliged or prohibited to take part in a religious community and its religious practices or to make public their convictions and faith.

School
“...One of the principal duties of school as an institution is to show individuals how they can work together...” - Suel
“...School is an institution, which works with students - a very flexible public, with very complex...”

In view of the above definitions, we may naturally accept that school as an institution is currently assuming new dimensions and missions, which should be considered in the framework of changes occurring in other social institutions as well.

**Relations between school and other institutions**

School both affects and is affected by others. Often in a spontaneous and unconscious way, school and other institutions exchange with one another. This is so much so, that today there are discussions about location of school premises, which, for several reasons, should not be outside urban environments. Instead, they should be close and in contact with such environments to provide for direct knowledge of certain elements of urban life, such as traffic, traffic rules, market, etc. This naturally makes us believe that, once an independent institution, school is to some extent losing its independence, which is significantly influenced by intensive changes occurring outside it. Thus, we should accept the first definition, according to which, *the primary mission of school is to teach individuals how to act together.*

The following scheme helps to better understand the complexity of relations schools engages in. See scheme 2.
Some decades ago, school had to cope with a system of programmed academic knowledge in separate scientific disciplines. Nowadays, it has to cope with all spontaneous and uncontrolled information coming from other sources. This has made it necessary to also deal with notions of cross and extra curriculum, so widespread in contemporary theories of education. At the moment, school should not only provide information on separate disciplines, but also on global issues, which fall under no particular discipline and cannot be neglected. In the theory of education this group of issues is identified as “cross and extra curricular objectives”.

To better understand the role, dimension, historic and future mission of school, we should compare and distinguish it from other social institutions, such as family, religion, media and state. School differs from family (in spite of crises the latter is going through) in that the family is based on blood relations and family members strongly support one another, sometimes perhaps, unconsciously. The difference between school and religion is that relations between individuals in a religious community are based on “faith” in the creator, dialogue but not debate, and consequently there is very little room for conflict, prejudice or disagreement among them.

School is different because its community members are not individuals with blood relations, nor are they guided by principles similar to those guiding believers. School provides more room for debate than dialogue, since its community members represent a homogeneous group in terms of their age, interests and desires, but a very heterogeneous group in terms of origin, social and economic status, parents’ education background, etc. Cultural, economic and social differences among students, members of school community, are at the same time, wealth and potentials for debate and conflict. That is why, unlike the other two institutions, it is the duty of school to teach students “to work together”.

It seems that knowledge transmission is no longer the primary mission of school. We need to be very careful in admitting neither one nor the other. Rather, we need to combine them together and consider them equally important.

School and current tendencies

Currently there is an evident tendency to give priority to human and social subjects as well as cross and extra curricular objectives. There is sufficient evidence that the role of school as an institution and several things within school are considerably changing. On one hand, there is a tendency and efforts to make substantial changes in curriculum and provide more space for social studies, global dimension of education, human rights, conflict resolution, development of individual internal dimensions, and, on the other hand, there is commitment and insistence to adopt new student-centered methodologies, group work, role play and delegate power from principals and teaching staff to student and parent community representative structures in school.

However, external factors at the same time put increasing significant and challenging pressure on school. Unless we understand the circumstances in which school works and the metamorphosis it is going through, we will hardly be able to successfully cope with changes that school faces every day.

School – An opportunity to reduce poverty

School nowadays is also considered an institution, which helps to reduce poverty and social inequality among students of diverse social status and origins. School in general and
compulsory education in particular are supposed to do that. But are they really doing it? And, what do we mean by poverty? Currently, poverty does not literally mean simply hunger. It also implies lack of a minimum system of knowledge, skills and attitudes, indispensable for the survival of individual citizens in a particular society, which average students are able to acquire through a curriculum of compulsory and free of charge education, textbooks, etc.

Current tendencies and Albanian school

Albanian education policies have devoted special attention to new, global tendencies in which school as an institution is involved. This is quite evident in two fundamental documents regulating school life in Albania, namely: Pre-university education Act, ammended in 1998 and Normative Provisions, a document from the Ministry of Education, 2000.

The first document, i.e. Pre-university Education Act, formulates the principles, goals and mission of school. It underlines that education is a priority and provides equal opportunities; education seeks to cultivate students’ personality and prepare them as citizens with full rights and critical thinking capacity. The second document, Normative Provisions, includes the functions of all stakeholders in school life (teachers, students, boards of parents, student councils, student governments, principals) and relations between them, which govern school life. The fact that these documents are not based on any particular ideology has avoided school indoctrination. However, these documents are obviously influenced by global tendencies in education and fundamental documents on human rights, such as the Universal Declaration of 1948 and the Convention on Children’s Rights, which have both been ratified by our state.

Comment on the content of the following articles:

Article 57 of the Constitution of Albania:

1. Every one has the right for education.
2. General, compulsory public education is open to all.

Governance

Given their age and history, government and governance as a process are considered as an old institution, born of people’s (community) need to govern (manage through discipline and law) individuals in community. Thus, there were several reasons for people to create government and governance: First, for their needs (individuals) to meet basic demands and guarantee the survival of both individuals and community and, second, to guarantee that minimum desires of individuals and community were met.

Government as an institution is much younger and more complex than either family or religion. Consequently, government has benefited from principles governing the lives of the above-mentioned institutions. In its modern meaning, government is a system of institutions including several synchronized institutions, the purpose of which is to:

- Provide public services to citizens;
- Guarantee law and order for citizens;
- Enforce law to the benefit of citizens;
- Synchronize activities of government institutions;
- Synchronize central and local government.

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In a democratic system, government and governance should serve citizens. This means that governance in democracy is guided by principles and philosophies, which give priority to universal rights of individuals and also a system of laws based on fundamental human rights and freedoms of individuals. However, the nature of each government and governance consists in their relation with individuals, reminding them, first, of their obligations and then, their rights. This is the essence of each government (state). The extent to which this relation dominates government, determines the nature and level of democratic governance.

Historically, governments have reminded individuals of their obligations and have rarely assumed responsibilities to guarantee the rights of their citizens. The second half of twentieth century shifted the focus towards individual rights, forcing governments, especially in UNO member countries, to adopt governance to the service citizens. This helped governance to avoid most of its sins in relation with individuals.

Democratic societies produce institutions, which oppose government and guarantee individual freedoms and rights, thus making government and governance better and more humane. Such institutions help government and governance to avoid abuse of power and remind them of individual freedoms and rights and of their obligation to meet not only the basic needs but also the basic desires of individuals. With regard to this new perspective, experts say that introduction of documents on individual rights and freedoms has changed the very essence of governance and state, i.e. its primary duty is to remind individuals of their duties, not their rights, since individuals remind themelves of the latter.

In our century, governance tends to be more humane and guarantee fulfillment of individual rights. Article 15 of Albanian Constitution underlines: “Fundamental human rights and freedoms are inseparable, inalienable and inviolable. They constitute the fundaments of law.” The content of this Constitutional Article determines the type of government in relation to citizens. And according to this article, governance should neither violate nor alienate the rights of individuals.

Governance in a democratic society is based on the following principle: Government and governance neither have nor can they exercise unlimited power on individuals, and this restriction appears as follows:

- **First**, restriction on governance relates to the fact that government executes laws passed by legislative power, which in our country is pluralist parliament.
- **Second**, government is always checked and interpellated by opposition in parliament.
- **Third**, government has no authority to produce legal acts, since such acts need to be approved by legislative power, i.e. parliament.
- **Fourth**, institutions like People’s Lawyer and State Lawyer protect citizens in their relations with government.
- **Fifth**, NGOs are institutions, which oppose government under certain circumstances.

Government has the authority to produce legal acts, which are formulated in compliance with and execute laws approved by parliament. In a pluralist democratic system, government gives priority to individuals and provides opportunities to empower them in all aspects. Democracy works on the following principle: No powerful state, similar to totalitarian systems, but empowered individuals instead. This constitutes the platform of government in democracy: Government to serve individuals, not individuals to serve government.
State in new democracies lacks experience and, consequently, there can be abuse of power from both government and individuals, which inevitably leads to weak individuals and government.

Economy, or market economy in a democratic society, is part of governance. Free enterprise of individuals depending on market needs as well as human and natural resources is the main characteristic of market economy. Economy as an institution in democracy implies:

• Freedom of individuals to produce goods for which there is demand in the market.
• Freedom to buy and sell based on free enterprise and in conformity with rules and laws of market economy.
• Freedom to make legal profits and settle all obligations with tax authorities as a way to guarantee one of the fundamental principles of life in democracy: common good.

Media

This is a relatively new institution as compared to other institutions, like family, religion, school, state, etc. However, it is a particularly important institution, if we consider its influence and power on individuals in general and schoolchildren in particular. This influence is so evident, that sociologists are completely right in calling it “fourth power”. In essence, the institution of mass media was born to inform individuals, but with time, it acquired other functions, such as attracting and shaping, sometimes even manipulating public opinion with regard to particular issues; influencing market and global economy and even becoming an entirely new business.

Currently, as Gidens underlines, powerful media tend to reflect interests and views of ruling groups in society. This is due to the fact that ownership of TV and newspaper networks is concentrated in few hands. The mission of mass media is to guarantee freedom of thought and non-manipulated opinions, inform society about what happens on a national and global level without politically influencing the information they convey. However, things in real life are often different.

Which are some of the missions of mass media?

The institution of mass media has multiple functions:
• Inform citizens about issues of interest to all social groups and categories
• Directly inform the general public (take the microphone to citizens)
• Inform and guide citizens to make the right choices in the wide diversity of opinions and facts, especially with regard to political, administrative and governance issues of interest to all
• Select facts from daily life, which generalize social phenomena and inform citizens
• Encourage critical thinking and independent opinions, which can lead citizens to common good
• Provide opportunities for opposite views when it comes to attitudes that benefit citizens

Modern mass media include all mechanisms providing information, such as: radio, television, printed press, scientific magazines, marketing, etc. Computer and Internet have become powerful means of information nowadays. The institution of mass media, especially electronic media, provide such rapid, intensive and diverse information, that individuals can hardly digest without suffering its consequences. Instead of helping individuals, such information often tires and even manipulates them.
Mass media and Albanian legislation on public and private radio-television

The history of modern mass media in Albania is rather short. It is related to democratic changes in our country after the ‘90s. Until then, media operated in the framework of a totalitarian state and served its interests, consequently, there was limited legislation on Albanian media during that period. The first constitutional efforts were made with the Constitutional Package of Albania and culminated with Article 35 of the Constitution of 1998, which states: “Radio-television programs respect private dignity and fundamental rights, integrity, neutrality and pluralism of information, Albanian culture and language, human and constitutional rights of citizens and ethnic minorities, in conformity with international conventions signed by the Republic of Albania”.

This act, otherwise known as Act Nr. 8410, 30/09/1998, is the most complete legislative document regulating relations between media, state and operators. It has been amended twice, and amendments have mostly regarded relations between operators and regulatory, financial authorities. The act in question is permeated by the spirit of constitution and fundamental documents of human rights. It underlines the twofold mission of mass media: “to inform and be informed”.

The legislation on mass media includes comprehensive and exemptive, protective and prohibitive articles and sanctions. However, it lacks what we could call “preventive legislation”, i.e. institutions and mechanisms to periodically check the power of mass media. Albanian legislation on mass media lacks a system of “preventive symbols”, which should be declared and promoted as part of this legislation, to help parents protect children from television violence.

Albanian Act on mass-media and child protection

This act includes provisions for direct or indirect protection of children: in Chapter 1, general provisions; in Chapter 2, National Council of Radio and Television (NCRT); in Chapter 3, Council for Complaints; in Chapter 5, Programs; in Chapter 6, advertisments; and in Chapter 12, sanctions. CHAPTER III WHAT THREATENS DEMOCRACY? ALBANIAN EXPERIENCE

Chapter objectives:

- Get to know the fragile nature of democracy;
- Analyze some risk factors that undermine democratic processes in Albania, such as:
  - Ambiguity about democracy and lack of democratic skills among citizens and politicians;
  - Unlimited power, authoritarianism;
  - Violation of the free vote;
  - Inappropriate understanding and resolution of conflicts and disputes
  - Lack of government transparence
  - Lack of social infrastructure and lack of a sustainable economic system;
  - Neglect of urban tensions;
Populist understanding of pluralism and assimilation
- Neglect of the importance of democratic citizenship education;
- Analyze school goals in a democratic society.
- Give arguments on the influence of risk factors undermining democracy in school life.

People have an inherent inclination towards freedom, independence and rights. Democracy is the social order that incarnates all of them. Out of many, two are the most important reasons why humanity seeks democracy:

1. Liberty, independence and sanctity of the individual
2. Equality among humans in making the rules which influence social life and order.

No one is born a good citizen, capable of enjoying one’s own liberty and respecting the rights of others. No nation is democratic by birth. On the contrary, the citizenship of an individual and that of a nation or a social order are lifelong processes. Young people’s involvement in this process is a precondition for civil growth. Education remains the most powerful instrument for cultivating citizenship. Failure to involve young people in citizenship education constitutes a real threat to democracy and the pursuit of freedom.

WHAT THREATENS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy is very fragile and there is always a risk of failure. Historical experience shows that we need to devote special care and attention to the social and political processes through which democracy is achieved. This is particularly indispensable, especially during the first steps towards democracy, since there is no perfect democracy and no perfect ways for a nation or a group to write and accept their own rules.

Speaking about the threats to democracy, Prof. Theodore Kaltsounis underlines: “The enemies of democracy are numerous and most of them are permanent”. Freeman Butts goes back to the political thinking of Greek Antiquity, represented by Socrates, in search of such ancient threats to democracy as individualism, corruption, despair, etc. Another source, the Curriculum Network Committee for social and historic subjects, identifies the following modern threats which erode and destroy democracy: lack of effective governance, citizens’ indifference to their rights and responsibilities, lack of civic courage and will, egoism and seizure of power by extremist and antidemocratic groups.

In a report of the United Nations Security Council, the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, generalizes that “…wherever there is insufficient responsibility on the part of the leadership, lack of transparency, lack of control, lack of law enforcement, lack of peaceful means of change and lack of respect for human rights and dignity, the threats to democracy become major and real”.

More than any other social order, democracy calls for the civic conscience of its citizens, not only for the simple reason that people hardly violate the rules they themselves establish, but also for the belief that laws written after a deliberate joint participation are much more respected than any imposed rules. That is why democratic order is considered as the best. However, very often civic conscience does not react to social appeal and people lack the mechanisms of participation in law and decision making. That is why democracy remains the most vulnerable and fragile order society has ever known.

WHAT THREATENS DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA?
In view of what was underlined above and what has happened in Albania during these last years, it is worth asking: Which are the most threatening factors to democracy in Albania? Almost each election season is accompanied with socio-political cramps. It is right to suspect that perhaps the individual and his/her sanctity are not properly valued in our culture. It is equally right to suspect that equality in centuries of misery has badly eroded the hope for equality before the rules of “a society of equal individuals”. Is the history of our lives hindering us from empowering individuals? Have the patterns of our relationships deformed our hope for equality? Are the vocations of our recent past or the sophisticated rhetoric of our present what is hindering us? Part of the answer could be “Yes”. Below, we are listing some other threats to Albanian democracy. This could help us to re-dimension the need for a genuine and deliberate civic education. Let us start with our impossible:

**What can Albanians learn from the experiences of the last decade?**

The historical experience of Eastern European countries, the experience of development and consolidation of democratic societies, shows that the path of democracy is neither flat nor straight and the existence and consolidation of democracy are not safe by definition. The establishment and consolidation of democracy has its ups and downs, and often is seriously questioned.

Totally aware that our answers are far from perfect, below we are listing the most aggressive threats to the Albanian society in its efforts for democracy:

1. Ambiguity about democracy and lack of democratic skills among politicians and citizens;
2. Unlimited power and authoritarianism;
3. Violation of free vote
4. Inappropriate understanding and resolution of conflicts and disputes;
5. Lack of government transparency;
6. Lack of social infrastructure and sustainable economic system;
7. Neglect of urban tensions;
8. Populist understanding of pluralism and assimilation;
9. Neglect of the importance of democratic citizenship education.

**Opportunities for discussion:**

A: Reflecting over your personal life experience, analyze how life in your community has changed.
B: Reflecting over your professional experience, identify some of the changes that have occurred in your school in terms of its democratization.
C: Reflecting over your professional experience, give your judgment about cases from your school life which manifested unclear concepts of democracy.

**AMBIGUITY ON DEMOCRACY AND LACK OF DEMOCRATIC SKILLS**

During the last decade of the last century, Albanians demonstrated special interest in democracy. Political pluralism rewarded their enthusiasm. The real concern about our democracy began with the efforts to guarantee the power of free vote. Alongside with this concern, there was also significant evidence of the lack of democratic skills which was apparently dictated by:
1. **Authoritarianism** of the previous regime which prohibited and severely punished opposite and non-conformist ideas. Tolerance, compromise and understanding of alternative ideas and actions were totally unacceptable and punished by the totalitarian regime. Individuals were educated to serve the state and the party in power. That was the standard of judgment about their integrity and identity.

2. **Cold war**, which erected an impenetrable wall for the peoples of ex-communist countries, encouraged the development of two different social cultures and prohibited any source of knowledge about social practices and skills coming from western citizens. Albanian isolation has been exceptional. For more than three decades Albania was totally isolated from any form of eastern, non-orthodox socialism.

3. **Lack of an organized and active dissidence**, which hindered the cultivation of a different way of thinking. Genuine socialism labeled and treated its opponents as political and ideological enemies. Dialogue and compromise with them was hard to imagine and ideological and political opponents were severely punished or liquidated. The logic of exclusion was hard to oppose and automatically led to moral, political or natural death.

4. **Lack of a democratic tradition**, which historically has almost been inexistent in our country. Democratic ideas and action were almost unknown and always persecuted by the Albanian state. Monarchy and dictatorship did not allow for democratic ideas, let alone the application of democratic skills. Albanian policy and government policy after the ‘90s seem to have underestimated the real value of democracy and ignored the need for democratic education and creation of a democratic climate. At the beginnings of Albanian democracy, tolerance was alternated with intolerance, consensus with lack of dialogue, compromise with a severe and unprincipled fight against political opposition.

5. **Use of outdated standards to judge and evaluate what was happening.** Events in society should be evaluated by future rather than past standards. Past standards of measurement are no longer valid in a democratic society. Yet, over the last ten years we brought convincing evidence that we find it hard to divorce ourselves from past standards of measurement, the oldest of which seems to be the one we use to measure freedom, rights and values in society, freedom of expression, election and participation in the civil and political life of our country. Social life in a democratic society requires more than its citizens’ enthusiasm on voting day. Political life in democracy is not only some “good days”. Its days are all sacred and one should feel them and make them count. In democracy there is no room for spectators. “The old” and the “The young”, the “newcomers” and the “natives” must all talk with one another in order to solve their problems.

6. **Almost nihilistic and paralyzing way of evaluating democracy and democratic processes.** Transition brings confusion over democratic principles. Some consider it as “a goal to be achieved”; others consider it as “a process to be undertaken and protected by all”. The first consider democracy as a final product, difficult to be produced and enjoyed by those living in the limits of civilization. The latter consider it as a process which encourages hope among those who have a lot to do in life. Both considerations are common among us.

7. **Ambiguity** on how to involve everyone in the civilized processes of democratic participation. Participation has often been identified with the use of extreme, violent means, use of force and social impatience. Ambiguity about democracy and lack of democratic skills has constantly harmed democracy over these transition years.
UNLIMITED POWER AUTHORITARIANISM

The separation of powers is the most fundamental question of democracy. Although widely known and accepted, the separation of powers, in practice, remains difficult to implement without civic contribution. This phenomenon is evident because:

The constitutional separation of powers is far from perfect. Although the new constitution relies on the models of western democracies and has a wide consensus, it naturally bears imperfections related to the country’s non-democratic tradition. Despite the rhetoric of the separation of powers, we are still affected by the burden of totalitarian mentalities and practices.

Political separation of powers is difficult to achieve, as powers often overlap with one another. Relevant institutions should resolve in compliance with the law all disputes or conflicts that result from this inherent overlap of powers. Malfunction or manipulation of institutions responsible for the separation of powers is a dangerous phenomenon for democracy. Institutional and citizen apathy with regard to this phenomenon allow one of the powers, usually the executive power, to interfere with other powers in order to achieve its own political interests. Disregard of legislative and judicial powers by the executive power and its efforts to subdue them, constitute a pure expression of authoritarianism which, if consolidated, marks the beginning of the collapse of democracy.

Local structures, trade unions and nongovernmental organizations are still inexperienced and not well-organized. Their split and confusion caused by the demolished old economic social structures; their lack of independence and neglect of their strengthening, have created functional vacuums which have been quickly filled in by the executive power. For example, recently, local government is gaining more decision-making space. In the field of education, they are taking over ownership of school buildings and inventories, but they still have no part in the selection of human resources. Executive power seems hesitant to cede this right and most probably will not, unless local structures have a civic voice. In the process of defining educational functions on a local level, lingering traits of atavistic authoritarian tradition still resist the decentralization tendency, and the eagerness of the executive power to control the decision-making processes remains strong. This is a clear example that jeopardizes the plan for the decentralization of local structures. Lack of action space for local structures, and furthermore, their intentional exclusion as well as their tutelage by the executive is both harmful and dangerous for democracy.

VIOLATION OF FREE VOTE

Democracy cannot be achieved simply through legislative reform or improvements in the Constitution and legislation. The basic foundation of democracy is respect and protection of the individual and the free vote of free citizens. Free vote is the sole mechanism of democracy, through which power is transferred. It is through the free vote of the governed that the elected are promoted or demoted. Democracy functions and develops through the people’s free vote. If free vote is violated, democracy is directly undermined.

In our country, respect for the free vote is still fragile and the individual’s sense of responsibility towards guarding this process is evasive. There are several reasons for this, of which we would like to point out:
• **Citizens do not yet realize the value of free vote in democracy.** Formal voting under dictatorship, for years in succession, totally devalued the concepts of “vote” and “voting”. People seem to hardly value the power of free vote in the first years of democracy. A large majority of citizens believe they have fulfilled their obligation towards democracy once they have cast their vote, and they stop paying further interest to the fate of democracy.

• **Power syndrome** which still seems to be strong among government officials. Once in power during the first years of democracy, they attributed themselves great merits and consequently and automatically competences, which exceed the limits established by the democratic laws they themselves have proposed. Failure to understand and accept democratic rotation of power leads these people to the most antidemocratic act: violation and manipulation of free vote. Violation of free vote undermines relationships between position and opposition, dialogue, compromise, and consensus. It questions the principles, practices and values of democracy and democracy itself.

**INAPPROPRIATE UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES AND CONFLICTS**

At the dawn of democracy, a lot of conflicts and disputes appeared in political, economic, social, and spiritual areas. The previous regime had carefully sugarcoated not only large conflicts, but also the most natural disputes among people, even those among family members. The establishment of democracy broke down the wall that concealed or suppressed disputes. The destruction of previous economic, political and social structures brought about new conflicts, which were often unknown before. As natural companions in the path for the construction and consolidation of democracy, disputes and conflicts deserve proper attention and must be resolved by democratic means. If not properly cared for and resolved, these conflicts and disputes threaten democracy and may even bring about its collapse.

As stated, Albania’s democratic transition process and urbanization of life have generated multiple social problems, disputes and conflicts. They have caused the proliferation of self identity problems, crime, ethnic tensions, greater intolerance and inflexibility. Transition broadened the range of problems and conflicts in urban areas. Day after day, it is bringing diverse cultures and mentalities closer together, to live side by side; opposite social values frequently neighbor one another. Urbanization, the companion of transition, seems to coincide in time with the revival of old social problems in new forms, such as: poverty, crime, localism, sexism, environmental degradation, etc. It also coincides with an increasing polarization of society.

The new structure of the Albanian public, resulting from the migration of population from rural to urban areas, seems to have generated even more social tension and conflict. The large and small public has drastically changed and creates new tensions and dynamics, the intensity of which is becoming a decisive factor for the direction and development of democracy in the country. The prevailing tension among the newly urbanized public has been the one between social unity and diversity. Fifty years of “Unum” culture has suddenly been translated into a “Pluribus”, a tension of political, economic, social, and cultural connotations. In this rush of changes, it is difficult to establish an equilibrium between what unites and what divides people. Tension among the people seems strong and uncontrollable. This unity-diversity tension confirms that the country’s urban structure is split by conflicts and tensions. There are sporadic sparks of civic initiatives and efforts to integrate community
potentials in civic life. Yet the dilemma - Can the country’s urban structure be abandoned to spontaneity – remains unanswered and consequently the basis of democracy remains shaky. Dealing with social and urban tensions remains on infantile level, which is evident in:

- **Exclusion of dialogue** as a means for achieving a satisfactory level of adaptation to the new administrative situations and as a tool for the resolution of disputes and conflicts. The insensitiveness of government officials to the new need of society is extremely dangerous for democracy. For example, In spite of a continuous talk about decentralization practices in education, central units on local level still retain control over most of the decision making which belongs to local government authorities, at a time when these central units have not yet formulated their own functions in the framework of decentralization. The arbitrary assumption that centralization and decentralization are two mutually excluding practices undermines any possibilities for dialogue and constructive decision-making that can benefit the quality of education. This paradoxical decentralization, which seeks to strengthen political and managerial skills in the central level, is often ignored by the executive, thus seriously threatening democratization.

- **Placing narrow political and party interests above common social interests, and common good.** Conflicts born out of interests or aggravated by them may appear in political, social, economical, and psychological forms. Failure to respect or, even worse, maltreat the opposition, the correlation of either socio-economic success or failure with political affiliation, abuses in the privatization process and the complete denial of a half-century period of history, stimulated new conflicts which added to the already existing ones.

- **The treatment of constructive opposition as destructive** and the avoidance of any cooperation with the opposition for resolving major problems. This tendency artificially aggravates disputes and conflicts.

- Lack of reliable democratic institutions to pursue issues of justice among the parties in conflict.

**LACK OF GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY**

Continuous, comprehensive and multilateral dialogue among the governing and the governed is a fundamental prerequisite of democracy. It paves the way to people’s sovereignty, control and evaluation of elected officials, open and free debate, consensus and cooperation in dealing with and resolving the most important problems. Communication is complete when both sides, the governed and the governing, listen to each other. Its effectiveness is enhanced by respect for the general public. Lack of vertical transparence breeds organizational incompetence in local government, which can consequently address community problems in the wrong time and place. Tardiness and narrative transparence create the impression that nothing special is happening.

Lack of government transparence cancels peoples’ dynamic demands for change. Their social dynamics fails to produce the proper reaction among government authorities. Thus, for example, the dilemma on how local government can cope with the social needs of displaced people, vulnerable groups, such as, children, youth at risk, etc., still provides no practical answer for ordinary citizens.
Lack of transparency frequently occurs over these transition years, because:

- We are still under the legacy of totalitarian mentalities and practices according to which “government and leadership know, arrange and repair everything and people must only trust them”
- There are still gaps in the legal framework which hinder the institutionalization of government transparency
- Control authorities and official information media still lack the proper status and experience to appropriately play their role in democracy. Executive power continues to influence them through various ways and means
- Whenever in difficulty, government officials do not hesitate to either misinform public opinion or remain silent, for the mere sake of political interests or power. Lack of information exchange and the rose-colored presentation of democratic processes constitute a major cause for new tensions. The tendency to present democracy as a smooth and untroubled process simply leads to social and internal conflict. Such shortsighted people resemble the polar bear, which, being itself white, believed the entire world was white. They aggravate people’s irritation and their disappointment with democracy to the point of making them tired of it. Common people have plenty of questions, and information would help them to adopt a positive attitude towards democratic processes. Lack of governmental transparency, especially on critical issues regarding the country’s present and future, might be fatal to democracy.

**LACK OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC SYSTEM**

It is difficult for people to concentrate on what needs to be developed in a democratic system if they are not able to meet their basic demands, at least for food and shelter.

Under communism people used to work for a system, which in the best case scenario only guaranteed their survival. After the collapse of the communist system, people found themselves with no land or living resources, and no skills and initiative to proceed further, while it became difficult for the new government to offer continuous assistance. Economic freedom has a twofold value: it accomplishes the right for human existence and, at the same time, becomes an irreplaceable guardian of political rights.

**POPULIST UNDERSTANDING OF URBAN TENSIONS**

Political changes of the ‘90s brought a storm of urbanization which was considered free movement of free people not only by the politicians and media, but also by specialists as well. Newcomers’ desire for a better life, essential changes in their lives, as well as their will to grab this new opportunity that political changes brought along, assumed almost Biblical proportions.

At the beginning, urbanization was experienced as a populist phenomenon involving heterogeneous strata and groups, mainly from northeastern areas. Populism was manifested not only in the way people moved towards urban areas, but also in the way this boom of uncontrolled and unrestrained movements was interpreted. Several people adopted a negative attitude against the movement of the rural population to urban areas. Sometimes it was even experienced as “aggression” against well established communities in urban areas, their lives and traditions.
The civilized world experienced similar movements long ago. Movement from rural to urban areas is one of the most important phenomena that humanity has gone through over the last two centuries. The outcome of such movement is the creation of large cities and a new dimension for civilization, media, art, and artistic life. In this respect, civilization can also be considered as an outcome of urbanization, which, on the other hand, has resulted in more freedom and opportunities for individuals. Urbanization has had an impact on the lives of millions of people.

Another area of tension is the perception of time. Newcomers want changes to occur very rapidly, and inhabitants of cities want their numerous problems caused by newcomers to end for good. Everybody wants to see things settled as soon as possible. However, changes like urbanization and urban community development take considerable time and efforts before they are fully accomplished. The ideal situation would be for both parties involved to retain their current positions. In its very essence, instead of tension, this should be better considered as a manifestation of the wish for change, improvement and civilization, which remains always alive in civilized societies.

However, there will always be people who get tired of the rhythm of changes and their expectations of democracy and urbanization. This category of people makes it difficult for others to properly understand the dimension of time in urban changes. There is another category of people who exalt and exaggerate their positive descriptions of the urbanization phenomenon, which, beyond any doubts, does no good to the process. On the contrary, it prevents people from realizing that urban changes take time and increases the potential for people to complain that reforms, changes and democracy are impossible in Albania, that this country is cursed and led by incapable people, parties, governments, etc. Tension arising from an incorrect understanding of our society’s accomplishment of democracy in time may be minimized if we consider experiences from other countries. It took London, which in the year 1400 had no more than 35,000 inhabitants, six other centuries to achieve today’s level of urban life.

**POPULIST UNDERSTANDING OF PLURALISM AND ASSIMILATION**

Democratic society can otherwise be defined as the entirety of all types of smaller communities (Dewey 1916, Rawls 1971). Eagerness to see people share unified values and cultures is but a manifestation of adopting outdated standards and views. Experience from democratic countries shows that overestimation of assimilating practices has had negative consequences on the progress of democracy. The slogan “We want our Tirana back!” is not much different from the call for unified values, views, cultures and political attitudes of the era we left behind. Pluralism is a new value, but it is considered as such only in the political framework. In fact, pluralism is inherent in the diversity of human nature, values and cultures. We need to renovate our standards regarding issues like pluralism and assimilation. Pluralism in democracy would be false unless it includes cultures, as well.

In fact, the practice of empowering the individual is still fragile. Very little of what has happened over these years has been able to give people the power they should have as citizens, responsible for the fate of democracy in Albania. Successful democratic processes can only be accomplished if they totally rely on common peoples’ shoulders.

**NEGLECT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**
The aspiration for democracy is a reality, and so are the problems that accompany it. Part of this reality is also the fact that no magic power, legislative and constitutional changes, economic changes in the market or political leaders can definitely assume the responsibility for their solution. Then, which is the way to minimize tensions accompanying the democratization of society? The answer is: Democratic citizenship education, because, as processes which improve the administration of society, democratic processes can never be accomplished without the total involvement of all citizens. A democratic society, in which government comes from the people and belongs to the people, and where people are free to exert their creative and self-realization potentials is by definition interested in democratic education. Democratic citizenship education prevents regress and fosters the socialization and humanization of society, as well as the integration of social groups and preservation of diversity.

Bringing citizens to the level of conscious participation in civil life can be achieved only through education. In this respect, education relies on the best of values. This preparation should be perceived as providing people with intellectual knowledge and skills for democratic action. Education aims to instill in citizens the belief that democracy is the most humane and effective form of government. It is not a system of abstract ideas on freedom, but an institutionalized system of practices that makes freedom a reality in the context of human rights and equality of citizens before the law. The future of the country largely depends on peoples’ vision of freedom, equality, justice, and democratic values, regardless of their urban age.

School fulfills a part of this task. It is and will remain the cradle of hope for a better tomorrow. It is the place which cultivates critical thinking and indisputable respect for the laws of a democratic state. However, the very way society is organized and functions remains an equally important school. The key to successfully minimize transition problems through education for democratic citizenship lies with the effort to build small communities and, through them, civil life. It is time that education involves all members of society. Democratic citizenship education goes beyond individuals and diversity. It empowers and prepares the individual to participate in the country’s political and social life, to construct and enjoy a fair life in community.

Opportunities for discussion:

A: How have the above mentioned erosive factors to democratic processes affected:
- The quality of life in your community,
- The quality and activities in your school,
- Your personal civic commitments?
B: Can the institution of school itself raise the level of immunity from the socio-political problems of society? How?
C: Does your school have a development plan? Do you believe that such a development plan helps the school to better concentrate on priority objectives and minimize its vulnerability to socio-political influences? Give arguments to support your answer.

SPECIFIC GOALS OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

An analysis of the influence of the recent past on new democratic development experiences reveals that there are multiple threats to democracy and there is only one
possibility to prevent them: Formation of citizens. Threats will remain aggressive in Albania as long as democratic citizenship education will be neglected and its ultimate goals abandoned.

- Democratic citizenship education seeks to transform people from passive into active beings, capable of making decisions for themselves, their community and their job.
- Democratic citizenship education seeks to provide individuals with the skills to communicate and work in group.
- Democratic citizenship education seeks to cultivate the idea that government and its officials have little say in a citizens’ life, that decisions regarding one’s life are purely personal, that future is the concern of the community and society and not a concern of individual politicians and government.
- Democratic citizenship education seeks to cultivate the skills to operate in the new macro environment. Mixing people of different origins in the learning, production and business processes as well as the extension of economic and political contacts with the world need to be continuously stimulated. Democratic citizenship education helps to learn the most human of all lessons: people have different predispositions but equal rights.

Finance education is a component of democratic citizenship education. The attitude towards finance and incomes not only orients people towards honest work but also avoids corruption and other social wounds.

*Can the Albanian school accomplish these specific goals of democratic citizenship education for a new generation of citizens, capable of eliminating these threats?*

Recently, Albanian school has undergone consistent changes on behalf of a more mature functioning in terms of citizen preparation. School system changes because people aspire for more and for better. Though short and intensive, the time of changes in Albanian schools has taught us some lessons:

Complex changes, like democratization of education, are very difficult to manage. The problems of growth have little in common with zealous planning. They often carry with them perversity and insecurity.

Changes in education are naturally accompanied with problems that do not pertain simply to migrants, but to the entire society. It is important that they are not experienced as problems, but as potential projects for action. This would avoid the tension inherent in the word “problem” and open the path to hope, inherent in the word “project”.

School does not borrow the values of democracy from politics and politicians. The gist of civil life is inherent in school communities. Although changes in education appear to be major changes on behalf of democratization, they still retain an emergency character. Systemic, holistic changes and the restructuring of education remain neglected and at times even forgotten. Democratic citizenship education is hard to imagine without systemic changes. School has serious deficits in terms of its commitment to achieve the goals of democratic citizenship education and this is evident in its following characteristics:

School mostly resembles a boat in rough waters which largely follows the current. It is so unlike the powerful-engine ship which not only knows where to take its passengers, but
also how to get them to the promised destination. Today’s Albanian school has no clear contract with its customers, its passengers. Neither the school nor the passengers know their destination. Efforts to repair the boat (school) very rarely affect its engine (system). They just seem to try to make our boat look beautiful.

A new rhetoric on the place of schools in the community has been developed during the last few years. There is hardly any school which has not turned its attention to parents, businesses and local government. But, what does “school of the community” mean? A school which lives on community charities and contributions? A school which serves the community? Or, A school which empowers the community? It seems that, instead of serving the community, our practices attempt to establish relations based on financial dependence. They are not yet aware of the need to establish a partnership which seeks to empower the community. The fact that schools lack material resources has obliged everybody to consider communities as cows to be milked and not as potentials of ensuring democracy and citizenship.

School is the place where students learn and develop through competition. Is it honest competition and personal enhancement through this, what schools are offering children? It seems that the school’s environment is very contaminated and not only inhibits the principled implementation of democracy, but also undermines it.

A democratic school is an institution with a clear mission: the formation of citizens. The purpose of all school initiatives and activities is the achievement of this goal. A school with a clear vision provides ample opportunities to ensure quality. The Albanian school system and its mission still suffer the pressure of administrative regulations and acts, which, in spite of their good intentions, often clash with its democratic mission. The assumption that schools are led by regulations and normative acts, which also regulate relationships in these institutions, paralyzes any efforts to open the path to practices that ensure quality in education through each school’s individual commitment to accomplish its mission.

Schools make no sin in setting their own educative goals, but the means they employ to address educational issues in everyday life often lead to sin. That is what happens when the issue is to encourage students in their quest for knowledge: a repeatedly declared goal. Everyday practices in education are designed in a way which encourages performance, reproduction, loyalty to authors and their opinions instead of real achievement, success, critical thinking and the cultivation of necessary skills for one’s life.

School is subject to evaluations which are based on its output, i.e. the citizens of tomorrow. The fact that schools are evaluated on the basis of their output soon becomes a wonderful regulatory mechanism for many teaching, learning and evaluation practices as well as relationships within the school. But which are the current evaluation criteria for schools in Albania? The dominant criterion is evaluation of inputs, i.e.: How many pupils registered? How many boys and girls? How many attend school? How many graduated? What will be the budget for education and what investments will be made? No doubt these are basic evaluation criteria for education, but they are no good for evaluating the work of schools for the formation of citizens. Schools must formulate evaluation criteria based on their output and that is where they should try to become more attractive.

School in a democratic system constantly carries the message that it is centered on children and their needs, that it serves the interests of children and theirtaxpaying parents.
School reformation has continuously ignored children’s immediate and future needs, children categories and special needs of children with learning disabilities. The system is a failure for considerable numbers of children. Such a rigid school system paralyzes the idea that society and its institutions can be constructed and function for the individual.

Democracy encourages free initiatives to increase internal resources, which generate development. Schools can raise money in a legal way. The law establishes that schools can make profits and, in a way, it encourages the creation of funds and their administration. *Is our school actually trying to generate funds or is it just a consumer of funds?* Children grown in physically ramshackle and mentally barren schools will never learn to normally navigate towards fair personal profit and development. Good citizens are hardly educated in schools that do nothing but complain and wait for the government to repair their roof, without ever thinking of their own potentials to generate their own funds. Good schools prevent, whereas ordinary schools cure their problems. In its everyday practice, our typical school spends much energy to fight against negative phenomena and teachers feel exhausted by the never-ending range of unpredictable problems. Schools that are clearly focused on developing citizenship skills monitor school vital parameters in a meticulous way. They monitor the learning and working environment so that the undesirable and unwanted are avoided.

In order to accomplish the noble goals of democratic education, school must encourage participation instead of hierarchy. Currently, Albanian school is a very hierarchic institution. It constantly encourages respect for hierarchy and either neglects or hardly trusts the potentials of civic participation.

Another compromising aspect of school growth is its failure to incorporate market values, which practically delays the accomplishment of its mission to promote democratic values.

All of the above mentioned aspects illustrate the real difficulties that hinder the development of the present Albanian school and the accomplishment of its mission: democratic citizenship education of children and youth. Pessimism seems to be the easiest way of judgment about school and its work. A quick glance at what has happened and is happening around us would easily lead us to believe that our life is nothing but a huge mountain of suffocating problems and fatalities. I have observed several pupils and students who experienced a feeling of being lost and tired in vain. Let us not forget that any of us may very easily come to experience the same feeling. It is time for us to be emotionally intelligent and educate our feelings so that they accept reality as it is, confident that reality belongs to the moment, whilst the future holds other things in store for us.

**Opportunities for discussion:**

- Which is the mission of school?
- How intentional are you in your pedagogical activity in favor of your students’ citizenship education?
- Identify practices which favor citizenship education. Juxtapose them with ineffective strategies and practices that compromise the mission of school.
- Think of strategies for doing away with practices which compromise the mission of school for democratic citizenship education.

**CHAPTER IV**
BASES FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Chapter objectives:

- Analyze principles of citizenship;
- Analyze everyday teaching practice based on requirements of democratic citizenship education;
- Evaluate potentials for improvements in teaching skills and techniques;
- Discuss and give arguments about new tendencies for improving quality of democratic citizenship education.

Main principles

Education, which guarantees the formation of citizens is free and non-repressive. It promotes free development of personality; it does not discriminate, on the contrary, it is comprehensive and provides development opportunities to everyone.

Democratic citizens are individuals living in small communities: families, workplaces, communities, religious groups, political parties, etc. Based on the loftiest social principles they are able to establish relationships within their community, always protecting every member’s personal identity.

Democratic citizens do not have others to make decisions for them, violate their rights or exert pressure or violence on them.

Democratic citizens respect government principles and at the same time act as opponents to its practices. In pursuit of their pragmatic interest they never violate government principles.

Democratic citizens behave as democrats because society, community, and education have formed them as such.

Such a citizen profile is only possible when children learn how to work together, how to be interdependent and yet equal, how to resolve their conflicts and work together to elaborate strategies, how to respect diversity and conserve pluralism, how to actively participate in social life and master successful learning strategies, how to create and be practical. It is a prerequisite of citizenship that children be themselves, independent and capable of respecting their own personalities. It is also indispensable that they take independent action, develop positive personal traits, have morals and values, and be able to speak on behalf of themselves and the law.

Democratic citizenship education activities are based on fundamental documents like: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, European Convention of Human Rights, UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on Protection of National Minorities, as well as European Charter on Languages of Minorities in Europe. Their goal is to prepare children to live together in a democratic society, which is based on fundamental principles of pluralist democracy, respect of human rights and rule of law. Curricular and extracurricular democratic citizenship education activities should seek to educate pupils with skills for living together in peace, prepare them
for active participation, empower them as individuals and cultivate their respect for others despite their differences.

The goals of democratic citizenship education are achieved through the acquisition of fundamental democratic values and skills for respecting them. This is done in a holistic way, which affects cognitive, affective and social spheres of students’ personality. Values are taught through methods that encourage democratic citizenship education, based on interaction among students and their participation in learning activities. Its principal components are: education with human rights, multicultural education and education for peace.

It is evident that this type of education requires the participation of several players: teachers, parents, local authorities, community members, NGOs, etc. Teacher’s role is that of facilitator, leader and supporter, which in essence is totally different from their traditional role. The goal of democratic citizenship education is to cultivate a civic culture, in which there is no room for violence, humiliation, exclusion and marginalization, violation of rights, intolerance and aggressiveness. It seeks to strengthen social cohesion, social justice, and promote common good through mass information and students’ training on social contract.

Education for democratic citizenship is the product of an education system, which continuously reflects on its mission, methods for its accomplishment, its outcome profile. It continuously intertwines bottom-up and top-down initiatives, in search of a sustainable and effective systemic change. It expects all players in education to enhance their widely accepted crucial role in school life and calls for full and continuous commitment on the part of school administrators. Schools are not the only factor responsible for civic education. Government and civil society are equally responsible for this education. School effectiveness is largely conditioned by partnership amongst all players.

As such, democratic citizenship education is multidimensional. It has:

A political dimension: It intends to cultivate students’ skills to participate in decision-making and enable them to exercise their rights and political power.

A legal dimension: It endeavors to cultivate students’ skills to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a parliamentary republic, in compliance with the country’s constitution.

A cultural dimension: It encourages students to respect human diversity and fundamental values of diverse cultures, accept and share their past, despite their different present affiliations with particular social groups or classes, and contribute to real peace, interaction and mutual benefit.

A social and economic dimension: It aspires to create realistic perspectives among youth by teaching them to encourage social access for vulnerable groups, respect gender equity and rights, put an end to poverty, avoid exclusion, and work in, with and for the community.

A European and global dimension: It strengthens students’ skills for cooperation, tolerance and peace in the region and in the entire world.

Democratic citizenship education is a powerful means for the accomplishment of democratic processes. However, despite its crucial importance in shaping the country’s educational policies, democratic citizenship education remains fragile and vulnerable like democracy itself. As part of general education, it represents a conscious process of social reproduction and empowers individuals. Democratic citizenship education involves much
more than just skills for life. It is youth’s gate to the world of justice, virtue, truth, and reality. The issue is how can we sooner and better fulfill the task of social reproduction and empowerment of individuals; how can we ensure and monitor the quality of the “final output” of social reproduction.

The civic profile of a school’s output requires a complicated process of reflection. This is especially indispensable for a society, which manifests increasing conflict between global and local, universal, and individual, traditional and modern values, immediate and future needs, and which does not recognize fair competition and social equality as values. Many people think that political socialization is the most solid part of democratic citizenship education. However, considering the achievement of this task in reality, it seems to form part of informal, rather than formal education. School independence from politics and political ideology is too fragile a victory to be experimented with.

GOALS OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The formulation of national standards in education constitutes a real professional and programmatic achievement for Albanian school, which openly declares the deliberate and ambitious goals of democratic citizenship education.

This commitment of our school springs from the values of society. Mere transmission of knowledge and skills is insufficient for youth. It must be complemented with values and attitudes. Only in this way will students be able to understand that, as individuals, they have common interests with society, that they form part of society and must play their role in social life.

Teaching values in school might turn out to be problematic, unless they reach children through the right track. Cultivation of values is not a dogmatic objective. Dogmatic values often violate freedom. Cultivation of democratic knowledge, skills and values is achieved through free education, which respects and encourages children to be themselves and become what they choose in life. Only education which, combines values and freedom, can guarantee cultivation of democratic values and respect for individuals’ integrity and sanctity.

In order to achieve this major goal, translated into detailed and concrete objectives in fundamental school documentation, democratic citizenship education has to be a challenging process. The ideas presented to students through different methods should challenge their experiences. Regardless of the subject taught, teachers need to create a cooperative community in the classroom. They should rely on and encourage children’s desire to learn. Teachers’ job is more than just teaching; it demands cooperation with children and guiding them towards new ideas, original arguments and solutions.

The objectives of democratic citizenship education can be achieved through effective teaching and active learning practices. Reproductive learning is outdated and ineffective. It does not match the courageous objectives of democratic citizenship education, and as such, it must be substituted by cooperative and active learning. Teachers need to encourage students’ critical thinking, provide them with opportunities for discussion, research projects and personal experience in decision-making and conflict resolution.
The objectives of democratic citizenship education to cultivate skills for critical thinking, democratic participation in debates and democratic decision-making, complement one another. They help to link classroom teaching and learning with the community at large.

The mechanism for accomplishing objectives of democratic citizenship education in school is inherent in these objectives, as they encourage cooperation in society. When students work together in group, not only do they help themselves, but they also influence one another. They learn to be productive, careful and committed to relationships. Group work boosts students’ self-confidence, self-evaluation and social capacities. This mechanism promotes quality in education, social cohesion and homogeneity in diversity, coexistence among different groups and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Objectives of democratic citizenship education eliminate stagnation in education development. They impose an agenda of activities, which call for the participation and contribution of all school players and learning community as well as application of social skills necessary for democratic life, such as: active participation and conflict resolution skills, decision-making, democratic mediation skills, role and responsibility skills, etc.

Curricular objectives in the field of social studies encourage students to gain democratic knowledge and skills, clearly understand the reasons for society’s continuous changes and learn the basic concepts of democracy and democratic processes. Democratic citizenship education should reach students through complementary and integrated subjects, which incorporate and intertwine the whole range of problems that individuals and society face. Such subjects include history, geography, moral education and ethics. Children are taught all these subjects at the same time, in order to prevent dogmatism in teaching values.

Democratic citizenship education holds very ambitious objectives, which require supportive implementation policies to definitely narrow the gap between school legislation and practice. Otherwise, objectives of democratic citizenship education remain works, well written by distinguished authors, who exactly know what needs to be done in the beautiful garden of humanity. Family, state or experts cannot claim ownership over the course life and future. Objectives of democratic citizenship education require the consensus of all actors in education, teachers, students and parents, which should cooperate because they work for a common purpose. What happens in reality is what really matters.

Education in democracy is a synergy of efforts to expose children to different systems and life styles, wherefrom they are free to choose. If we give children such an opportunity, we need not be afraid of them making wrong choices. They make their own choices based on what they think of themselves and their own abilities. The “Who-am-I?” paradigm in a way determines what one chooses to become in life and how to become what you choose to. One’s choices for self-achievement largely depend on cultural coefficient. Learning English or Hindu is not an entirely free choice for children. It is largely determined by culture, which considerably limits one’s choices in life. We need to put an end to fear from others’ freedom, especially fear from children’s freedom. The creation of conditions for cultural cohesion that promotes freedom remains a task of education. This task is performed in schools and classrooms, where students learn commonalities and differences.

It has become professionally necessary that the following legal obligations are properly implemented in practice: “The mission of school is spiritual emancipation, material progress and social development of individuals”, or “Compulsory education aims at
developing students’ intellectual, creative, practical and physical skills, at providing them with basic elements of civic culture and education”. According to these legal provisions the goal of democratic citizenship education is: “…The preparation and training of future citizens to exercise their civic rights and responsibilities and successfully face future challenges through active, deliberate and responsible participation in social life.

Citizenship needs to be understandable to all.

**Opportunities for discussion:**

- How much room do citizenship education principles have in your everyday work? Identify aspects of your work where these principles are mostly outspoken.
- Make your own interpretation of school mission as specified in the law for pre-university education:
  - “The mission of school is spiritual emancipation, material progress and social development of individuals”
  - “Compulsory education aims at developing students’ intellectual, creative, practical and physical skills, at providing them with basic elements of civic culture and education”

**KNOWLEDGE**

In order to better achieve the goals of democratic citizenship education, Albanian school has chosen to teach democratic citizenship education as a separate subject, besides other social subjects. Knowledge on citizenship and democracy includes facts, concepts and generalizations, which are indispensable for citizens to become active participants in democratic processes. Knowledge constitutes the fundamentals of values, skills and attitudes. Curriculum development in social subjects is based on the principle that the more complete citizens’ knowledge on society is, the higher the possibility for their activities to be successful will be.

Students can gain knowledge on citizenship and democracy not only through the curriculum of social studies and democratic citizenship education, but also through other sources, such as: personal and family experiences, their school and community life, mass media, national and international issues and situations, etc. Students receive a considerable amount of information from multiple sources. Democratic citizenship education enables them to distinguish between true and false data, assess facts and opinions, check the truthfulness of information sources and search for opportunities to use them.

Cognition starts with knowledge acquisition. Giving knowledge is the means to achieve certain goals, i.e. students’ knowledge of concepts and facts is not an aim in itself, but a means towards active participation in social life.

Knowledge is age-appropriate and reflects students’ personal experiences. The body of knowledge includes carefully selected concepts, generalizations and social problems, which form the core of democratic citizenship education and reflect social reality.

Knowledge on democratic citizenship is grouped around the following topics:
Nature of community: Community is a group of people who differ in terms of abilities but share values and visions for a future, in which citizens and legitimately elected leadership respect one another and work together to achieve their common goals for the common good of all. Community linearity starts with family, to continue with school, local community, nation and end with the entire world. Community provides both its individual members and group with safety, affiliation, identity and opportunities to develop, meet personal needs and become masters of their own destiny. The nature of community is determined by the rule of law and order as well as harmonization of individual needs and interests with those of the society.

Citizens’ role and interaction in a democratic society: This topic group deals with issues like: Nature of cooperation and competition among individuals, groups and communities, concepts of equality and diversity among individuals and groups, nature of communities and their interdependence.

Citizens’ rights, duties and responsibilities comprise a very important topic group providing information on citizenship. It deals with topics like: importance of laws and rules in society, duties, civil rights and responsibilities, honesty, justice and moral responsibility.

Democracy in action is considered in the framework of Albanian political system, role of trade unions, nongovernmental organizations and other social groups, types of government (democracy, dictatorship, monarchy).

Citizens as producers and consumers: This topic group provides information on essential characteristics of market economy, demand and supply, money, role of state in economy and citizens’ role in market economy, etc.

Professions, employment and leisure time give a picture of the values of welfare, labor and leisure time for individuals and society, types of professions (in industry, agriculture, services) and choice of professions.

Public services are a topic group, which introduces students with public services and their dependence on taxation, differences between private, voluntary and public services on local and national level.

Citizens and natural environment: deals with human being, health, environment, ecological problems, energy resources and their use, as well as citizens’ role in environment protection.

VALUES

How the country is going to be governed in the future largely depends on how educators work with their students today. Education not only constitutes the framework of politics, but also dictates the rules of the game. Education contains the solution to the greatest political dilemma: Who should decide on how the country’s democratic citizens should be educated?

The ultimate goal of democratic citizenship education remains the cultivation among students of democratic virtues and their ability to establish clear goals in the deliberate
participation process of social reproduction. Values constitute a very important element of
democratic citizenship education goals. Values are sustainable convictions governing
individual behavior. Like knowledge, they affect the behavior of individuals, the way they
face their challenges and make their decisions. The more conscious people are of their values,
the better they control their behavior and decision-making skills. Individuals become stronger
and more committed when they, based on reasoning, accept that values play such a very
important role.

There are significant efforts in Albanian society to avoid, even eliminate political
opposition. Emotional reaction against political decisions of a certain group is not a rare
event. It is far from constructive and discourages the will for cooperation in policy making
and implementation practices. Policies are imposed according to a top down scheme, which
does not encourage participation in policymaking. The scenario presents a closed-cycle
repetition. A handful of people vest themselves with the right to decide on policies, which
govern the education of future citizens. The truth is that educational policies are well
formulated. However, it is the very way they are formulated which questions their
implementation. Consequently, anyone may privately decide on the future citizen’s profile,
which, as a practice, seriously threatens democratic citizenship education in schools.

Consequences are evident: Although there are well-written policies and a general
awareness towards education problems in schools, in everyday practice, everyone seems to be
doing what they best know under their own circumstances and trying to justify the outcome.
Lack of open discourse on policymaking and implementation in pursuit of quality practically
leads to professional abandonment of education. Furthermore, education policies cannot face
the challenge of who should decide on “the technology to use for the preparation of future
citizens”. Sometimes this situation seems to either give credit to the claim that “education has
run out of values”, or provoke indignation against similar claims. Public discourse on
education and how it accomplishes its fundamental task – formation of future citizens - should
be based on values in action.

In an attempt to identify a methodology, which could practically provide answers to
the question: “Who decides on the profile of future citizens?” liberals believe that
stakeholders should include consumers of education, parents and student structures in
education. They stand firmly on their belief that there should be a clear methodology for
defining education aims. In order to assume responsibility over the profile of future citizen,
education consumers should have a significant level of political sensitivity and ability to
exercise their participation skills in policymaking. Given the diversity of consumers and their
interests, liberals’ call is very clear: law should sanction the right of professionals to design
school policies in compliance with the nature and demands of diverse communities. Their
answer to: “Who should decide on what future citizens should learn?” opens the path for the
pedagogical elite to define community or group values in education.

Functionalists, on the other hand, consider education as an instrument for producing
social capital: a totally diverse capital, which differs in terms of their role in capitalist
economy. To functionalists, reproduction of social differences is indispensable. The more
unified education practices become, the less diverse social capital will be, and, consequently,
the more difficult it will be for individuals to play their own role in capitalist economy.
Functionalist ideas in the theory of education lead to individualistic values.
We mentioned these two theoretical trends in education in an effort to identify an answer to how future citizens should be educated. **Liberals**, call for experts and professionals to compile and impose policies to the benefit of certain communities or groups. Such policies will meet education needs of people, who, because of their professional ignorance, are unable to clearly state them. **Functionalists**, regardless of their political orientation, fail to provide an answer to *what should or will shape future citizens at school*. They abandon education to spontaneity, thus contributing to perpetuation of poverty, social cramps or economic marginalization. These theoretical considerations and respective practices are introduced here as a reminder of their importance on how value education functions.

As a matter of fact, it is practically very difficult and, under certain circumstances, impossible to identify *who* should decide on *what* future citizens should know and *what values* they should hold. The focus of values nowadays has shifted from the individual to the family, from the past to the future, from collectivism to individualism and competition. Since solutions are difficult and temporary, education with values assumes significant importance. At a time when consensus and agreements with clear moral obligations and boundaries are difficult to achieve, the question “what future citizens should know” would be much better answered by efforts to make future citizens demonstrate their democratic values.

Education with democratic values assumes special importance considering the history of last decade in Albania. The role of school in this process is directly related to the establishment and consolidation of democracy. For this reason, in school curriculum, values should not be taught separately, but in close connection with problems and reality of democracy. Democratic values are neither absolute nor unchangeable. At certain stages of development, people review their importance and encourage new values in their relations with one another. However, one can hardly change certain values which people have fought for, such as: *people’s sovereignty and human rights*. Democracy cannot exist without respect of human rights and without the constitutional possibility for citizens to control their government.

An outline of most important values is presented in the previous chapters. They include individual or human rights, common good, equality, justice, diversity, truth and patriotism. Cultivation of such values amongst children and youth remains the ultimate goal of democratic citizenship education, which is still threatened by functional or liberal philosophies.

In this chapter, we will deal with democratic values from a new perspective. They are described together with the respective specific strategies for their cultivation.

*Respect of Human rights*

Democracy is founded on the conviction that citizens are entitled to a certain realm of rights, sanctioned by law and guaranteed by government. The most important among them are: right of life, pursuit of happiness, personal freedom, political freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of association, right to a due trial process, etc. In this decade of transition to democracy we tasted the miracle of freedom, and, together with it, the impression that not all
of us work to make it happen. The history of these years and of the years to come convince us that nothing in this world equals the value of freedom.

Citizens should learn about their human rights since their early childhood. They should get acquainted with fundamental documents that sanction and guarantee their rights. They should also be provided with opportunities to analyze problems and events related to them.

**Common good**

The concept of common good implies a complex of values and interests defined by community, which benefit the entire community and equally affect all its members. Values and interests included in the common good are important because they contribute to the welfare and safety of all individuals and groups.

Such values are also reflected in fundamental legislative documents, for example, in the package of laws on human rights, environment protection, etc. The study of these documents will enable students to better understand and explain common good and its importance, as well as to make the right decisions when common good conflicts with their own individual interests.

**Justice**

Justice is another value, amply dealt with in democratic citizenship curriculum. Justice implies impartial judgment and consideration for all members of society. A society ruled by justice never restricts the freedom of its citizens, and its organization provides opportunities for every citizen (at a given age) to be elected to a government position and be free to make his/her own choices in life.

Another characteristic of a just society is the existence of different mechanisms to settle injustices, wherever and whenever they might occur, government included. Students should learn to recognize justice in real life and be able to distinguish between just and unjust actions in politics, administration and other fields of life.

**Equality**

The goal of topics on equality is to enable students to explain the concept of equality in its various manifestations and analyze the implementation of this value in different aspects of political, economic and social life.

There are two perspectives of equality:
1. Natural equality amongst all individuals: people are born equal;
2. Equality of individuals before the law, manifested as political, legal, social and economic equality.

**Diversity**

A society in constant change and movement, like Albanian society, should always be aware of the diversity of cultures and individuals. Diversity is a value widely accepted by society. It has the potential of causing social, economic and political tensions which citizens should be prepared to face. Therefore, in the very initial years of their education, citizens
should be able to understand and recognize the concept of diversity, its values and different forms of manifestation, identify problems related to diversity, such as: religions, regional origins and dialecticisms, as well as analyze and assess situations in which diversity leads to conflict.

**Truth**

Truth is one of the fundamental values of democracy. The constitutional democratic system is the only form of government in which every citizen is free not only to tell the truth about private matters, but also play an important role in the proclamation and protection of truth in political and social life. Truth is a civic value that breeds mutual trust and social credibility.

By studying this value, students learn to explain the concept of truth and truth-related values in a democratic society as well as different problems related to truth; analyze situations in which truth conflicts with certain interests or values; analyze consequences of public indifference in cases when truth is distorted.

**Patriotism**

Patriotism is one’s dedication to his/her fatherland as well the principles and values it is based upon. It forms the essence of a value, which unites individuals in a society. Patriotism differs from nationalism. In their lives, patriotic citizens are guided by common good. However, this value does not exclude critical attitudes and opposition to government. By studying patriotism, students become able to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. Under particular circumstances, the latter may be detrimental to the country; they also learn to resolve conflicts arising when patriotism conflicts with certain values and interests.

**SKILLS**

School largely affects society and the nature of relations among individuals, as it deliberately seeks to cultivate social behavior skills and early socialization among children. Civic skills are a part of social skills. Civic skills presume freedom and independence of individuals, encouragement of their critical and independent thinking skills, awareness of their rights and responsibilities, ability to cooperate in a group, dialogue and consensus. Civic skills are acquired during one’s life and need to be continuously maintained and reinforced. School is not simply a source of moral, value and civic education for younger generations, but also a theater of moral, value and civic conflicts. Teachers, which are often the only adults in a school environment, always make moral decisions. The very nature of teacher’s morality may either aid or undermine the formation of civic behavior skills.

Skills imply a reflective, creative and independent use of knowledge. By means of skills students learn to identify, describe, explain, analyze information and bring arguments for their attitudes in particular cases. Intellectual skills demonstrate students’ ability to:

- Compare and analyze civil societies and states.
- Classify information and distinguish between attributes of democracy, totalitarian systems and other forms of government.
- Explain the functioning of electoral or economic systems;
- Analyze political situations and discover their impact on government policies.
- Explain differences between individual and social responsibilities.
• Identify loopholes in legislation and give arguments about the need for its improvement.

PARTICIPATORY SKILLS

Participatory skills reflect students’ ability to affect public and civic life by working together with others in order to clearly formulate their ideas and interests, establish relationships and know how to resolve conflicts. Civil participation is not an aim in itself. Its purpose is to affect social life and public policies. Citizenship education seeks to prepare students so that they can appreciate and use voting to make joint decisions and elect their government, make petitions and speak in public, accept or oppose a given political idea, participate and be active members in organizations, associations or political groups.

Participation is achieved through such skills as cooperation, which requires group work, informed participation, and exchange of opinions in order to design effective action plans. Development of participatory skills can be ensured through:
• Information from multiple sources and diverse perspectives;
• Participation in groups with common interests;
• Cooperation to reach compromises;
• Debate over social, health, education, peace and environmental issues, etc.

Civic participation requires the mastery of such skills as:
• Ability to carefully listen to others
• Ability to establish contacts with officials
• Ability to follow issues in mass media
• Ability to collect and analyze information from different officials, groups or organizations.

Citizens’ inclination to be active in resolving community problems is the basis for the formation of participatory skills. In a democratic system, this inclination significantly relates to the rights and responsibilities of individuals in society as well as the ideals of political community and civil society. It also relates to individuals’ inclination to become active members of society, respect individual values and human dignity, assume personal, civic, political and economic responsibilities, respect rules, engage in deliberate and effective information on civic issues, encourage the functioning and consolidation of a solid democratic system in Albania.

The best way to develop civic skills is to practice them in school, family or community life. Therefore, in their everyday practice, teachers and students must indispensably deal with problems related to family, school, community, nation and world. The following typically characterize the formation of the above-mentioned skills:

• **Reliance on democratic values**, individual freedom and common good.
• **Reliance on knowledge and information**. Participation may not be based on shallow knowledge. On the contrary, it requires deep and sustainable knowledge, which can be gained when knowledge and experience are intertwined, and when knowledge is transmitted through experience or closely relates to it.
• **Ability to reflect**. In their lives, people always face complicated situations, which require solutions. In particular situations, citizens may lack information on a certain issue or face challenges and conflicts that require immediate solutions. In such situations, the easiest but not the best way out is to avoid participation in efforts to resolve the problem.
Civic education curriculum should prepare future citizens with skills to reflect over complicated situations and determine their approach for choosing the alternative which best suits their interests.

- **Commitment** is another requirement for the formation of skills. It is cultivated through:
  - Reference to lives of great personalities who have brought about positive changes in community life,
  - Encouraging students to contribute to school life and solution of various problems,
  - Students’ participation in observations and interviews with active citizens, for example, active and well-known NGO leaders,
  - Organization of community service activities (assistance in hospitals, environmental protection activities, assistance for the elderly, etc.),
  - Support for students to publish their school paper,
  - Projects to address various civic issues, such as waste recycling, etc.,
  - Organization of public meetings, debates and other similar activities to either support or oppose certain public policies, etc.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION:**

- Name some of your school activities, which support democratic citizenship education? How do they contribute to the overall students’ achievement?
- To what extent do your school activities rely on principles of democratic citizenship education?
- Based on the goals of democratic citizenship education, try to analyze the situation in your community.

**STANDARDS IN DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

It is widely believed that standards in education are instruments, which help to ensure quality in schools. As obligatory achievement parameters, standards, express the moral ideals of society and contemporary education policies. Their achievement requires the synergy of all stakeholders in education and mutual support amongst them. Standards in democratic citizenship education reflect the real values and goals of education as well as claim the key to success in quality assurance in school system. The current standards in democratic citizenship education impose a holistic and student-centered approach, which encourages continuous participation.

“Standards” is commonly used in all areas of human activity. Standards are a key word to producers and consumers, economists and politicians, sociologists, education researchers and specialists. They are considered crucial to the reformation and evaluation process of Albanian education. It is through standards that Albanian governments accomplish their educational policies and meet consumers’ needs. Standards serve as evaluation criteria for the quality of education and teaching/learning process and also help to formulate appropriate policies for their future development.

Standards in education depend on areas and levels they are used for. In this respect we may discuss about:
- **Student standards**, which specify what students should know and be able to do in the subject of democratic citizenship education.
- **Teacher standards**, which define what teachers should know and be able to do in terms of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, in order to help their students to achieve their respective standards and accomplish the mission of both, school and democratic citizenship education.

Standards are difficult to define without a careful consideration of several factors, which not only support, but also provide arguments and answers to some disputable theoretical questions, such as:

- Favorable learning environment;
- New textbooks for democratic citizenship education;
- Qualified and committed personnel.

When formulating standards in democratic citizenship education, it is important to consider some other factors, besides positive ones, which may have a negative impact, such as:

- Lack of experience in developing education standards in general, and standards for democratic citizenship education, in particular,
- Lack of properly qualified teachers in the above-mentioned area,
- Lack of a proper definition of the concept “standard” and presence of numerous definitions for that particular concept because of different experiences.

However, development of standards in democratic citizenship education has been subject to systematic internal peer reviews. It is the outcome of several consultations, round-table debates, professional discussions, questionnaires, etc, which have practically finalized a horizontal and vertical review. Alongside with internal review, foreign specialists have also made their contribution in such areas as procedures, methodology and content, so that Albanian standards could reflect European dimensions.

**STANDARDS OF CONTENT**

There is a wide acceptance of the essence of Civic Education standards, i.e. what students should know and be able to do after they have graduated certain levels of schooling. These standards make sure that education, a fundamental instrument for social reproduction, functions properly. Since they are designed for this particular purpose, one might very well think that these standards are perfect and require no changes whatsoever. But, it only takes a closer look at schools for anyone to understand what happens in there and how perfect these standards are. Instead of providing equal opportunities for all children to grow as independent social beings, school attempts to make children equal in what they know, feel and develop within themselves. If one takes an even closer glance at everyday school practice, one will notice that moral crisis in education is so deep that it seriously compromises its noble goal. It is no longer possible to conceal the fact that school and education have lost their importance. Instead of educating citizens, they seem to be casting doubts on democracy and law.

This situation leads us to the belief that school alone can hardly achieve civic education. Standards are not providential, but they help school to have a better and more moral contract with its customers. We may keep searching in the arsenal of various socio-political theories of civics, but we will hardly ever get a definite answer to our initial questions: **Who should have the authority to define what future citizens should know and how we can achieve a profile of a democratic citizen.**
Reflection over civic and democratic education issues must be a daily concern. Answers to such issues may only come when equilibrium of reflection is achieved. Reflection keeps us to our real world and helps us to never seek solutions via external injections, to always stick to our moral principles and never abandon them overnight. Ability to reflect over civic issues and find solutions, which equilibrate present and future interests, is the key to answer our initial questions.

Standards for teachers of democratic citizenship education sanction the body of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes which teachers need to master during their pre-service and in-service training. Teacher standards can guarantee the achievement of student standards and also serve as criteria to formulate a national strategy for training civic and democratic education teachers.

Definition of standards is based on existing documentation, which is relatively new and largely reflects contemporary experiences, thus providing ample space for further curricular changes in the future and at the same time helping to complete curriculum with new experiences from students’ lives, community, media and other social subjects. It also makes standards and existing documentation compatible and avoids contradictions between them. Democratic citizenship education occurs in a significantly dynamic and changing environment, which imposes continuous changes and improvement of goals, content and teaching/learning methods in this particular subject, and consequently its teacher and student standards, as well.

Standards reach students as dichotomies: either “good” or “bad”, either “freedom” or “virtue”, either “right” or “wrong”, either “active” or “passive”. The truth is that human behavior is complex and can never be classified as good or bad, as effective or ineffective. The value of the standards lies in the opportunities they provide for future of students.

Standards contribute to the formulation of curricula on a national, local or school level, preparation of textbooks and teaching aids, pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. Standards are not static or unchangeable. Being contemporary, standards also have the potential for changes imposed by the dynamics of both school and reality. However, the mere existence of teacher and student standards can never automatically improve their achievements or those of the school.

STANDARDS ACCORDING TO LEVELS

A. Student standards

Student standards describe the body of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should gain at different levels of schooling. When defining these standards, special attention should be paid so that they:

- Contribute to the accomplishment of national educational goals
- Contribute to the accomplishment of general objectives in this particular subject
- Be age-appropriate
- Respect students’ personal needs
- Consider the amount of knowledge that students gain from other subjects
Knowledge is organized in some principal topic areas and is reinforced and expanded from one level to another. Here are some of these major topic areas:

1. Individual and society;
2. Citizenship and law;
3. Civil rights, duties and responsibilities;
4. Social organization of society;
5. Economic relations in society;
6. Albania and global issues;

These topic areas are organized in such a way that they are compatible with particular schooling level, special characteristics of learning and conditions in which school functions. They also allow ample room for cross-curricular activities and flexibility, which contribute to:

- Flexibility in standard achievement;
- Possibilities to deal with everyday problems;
- Orderly and disciplined process of developing and improving teaching programs and objectives.

When defining standards, special attention is devoted to skills and attitudes. Their proportion with knowledge has been based on the dynamics of factors affecting each of them.

Standards for grades 1-4 focus on children and their world. Social environment, family, school, community or city is considered from students’ perspective.

In grades 5-8 curricular gravity shifts from child to society, so that students get to know how society is organized and prepare to integrate into it.

In grades 9-10 curricular priority shifts towards sociological interpretation of social phenomena, society’s inherent development tendencies, social, economic and political organization, individual-group relationships, their rights and responsibilities, etc.

Special care has been taken that standards be unified throughout different grade levels, despite the fact that the same subject in grades 1-4 appears as: “Social education”, in grades 5-8 as “Citizenship education”, and in grades 9-10 as “Knowledge on society”.

TEACHER STANDARDS

Professional teaching is an ideal aspiration that can be fulfilled. Teacher standards include parameters, which measure and promote teacher performance. They have been developed in close connection with qualification levels of civic education teachers and their training needs. As stated above, they represent criteria for formulating a national pre-service and in-service training strategy and guarantee standards of student achievement.

Implementation of national teacher standards cannot be separated from their application in everyday teaching practice. It is hard to claim that civic education teachers in particular and teachers of social studies in general, will achieve national standards unless we are seriously concerned that social studies teachers or teachers-to be are provided with opportunities for preparation and training in democratic citizenship education. In order to retain teachers, we need to give them opportunities; otherwise they will feel abandoned and scarcely motivated to professional teaching.
Teachers are often evaluated for their performance in classroom, or, even worse, for the performance of their class. The extent to which we measure teachers’ motivation to work remains seriously neglected and often has a negative impact on the goals of civic education.

On the other hand, teachers often gain their teaching skills through the ancient try-wrong, try-success method. Professional socialization is generally self-socialization and its direction depends on personal skills and professional vocation. Teachers’ professional growth is the outcome of not only reflection over their present, but also socialization forms and professional training. Teacher standards are at the same time standards for developing training programs.

Users of teacher standards include: institutions responsible for developing qualification programs in teacher training faculties, national and local training centers, and control and evaluation institutions on a national and local level. As their principal users, civic education teachers are directly related to them. Professional behavior standards for civic education teachers respect citizens’ moral independence and sovereignty and promote citizenship in schools. To become a democratic institution, school should encourage teachers’ professional discipline and professional development in a way that develops and rewards citizens.

Standards should boost teachers’ creativity, energy and skills. The truth is that there is a limited number of properly trained and certified civic education teachers; that the subject of civic education itself has been marginalized in Albanian school curriculum; that the status of civic education teachers is relatively lower than that of natural sciences or other social subjects.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION**

- Try to classify all documents issued by the Ministry of Education and Science and Pedagogical Research Institute regarding content and achievement standards in the subject of democratic citizenship education.
- Based on the above-mentioned standards, please try to identify good practices in which these standards are reflected your class.
- Based on a particular group of standards, prepare a platform of requirements to be respected when you organize:
  - Your teaching classes
  - Cross-curricular activities
  - Extra-curricular activities with your students
  - Activities with the community.

**THE CURRICULUM OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

**BASIC PRINCIPLES**

During 10 months of the year, teachers and school curriculum are the most powerful factors affecting children’s development. Teachers and students interact in complex social systems to cultivate citizenship. In this interaction process they are assisted by legislation, curricula and culture. Civic education teachers in particular seem to attach more importance to
the subject they teach and the methodology they use than the moral dimension of their interaction with students. The concept of curriculum goes beyond the subject as such to also include the moral dimension of teaching. It is student-centered and serves their cultural interests, social status, national, ethnic and sexual identity and different learning styles. The main ideas and values of democratic citizenship education constitute the basis of curriculum.

Curriculum of democratic citizenship education deals with universal interdependence and general cooperation. Citizenship education guides students to navigate in different international contexts, world community, cultures of other countries, diverse economic systems, global politics and their mutual interdependence, in an effort to connect civic education with the world we live in. This is achieved by introducing students to Albanian cultural environment and the role of every Albanian citizen in a democratic society, as well as by providing them with examples from real government practices and lives of citizens.

The manner in which curriculum presents knowledge, values, and skills makes it either descriptive or dynamic.

In a dynamic curriculum, the content is closely related to students and their social circumstances. Knowledge encourages students to take action for improving society, based on social principles and values. Students are provided with opportunities to consciously judge these values. Dynamic civic education curriculum enables students to:

- Get a better picture of democratic society and the way it functions;
- Clearly understand the distinction between social principles and laws, as well as their role in society;
- Understand state organization structure, separation of powers and their respective functions;
- Get acquainted with legislation and its role in a democratic society;
- Accept the diverse reality of the society they live in;
- Take active part in political, social, cultural and economic life of society;
- Understand state organization structure, separation of powers and their respective functions;
- Understand interdependence between individuals, groups, nations and their respective roles in an interdependent world;
- Develop critical thinking skills;
- Develop communication skills needed to foster communication between different individuals and groups;
- Assume civic responsibility and adopt responsible attitudes;
- Make right decisions and resolve problems by democratic means.

In many schools, official curriculum is complemented with extracurricular activity programs. Such programs implemented in several schools include:

- Civic education programs designed to promote rights and citizenship in schools;
- Education programs with and for human rights;
- Programs for peace, tolerance, intercultural, global education and education for disarmament, conflict resolution and mediation.

Similar pilot projects have created microenvironments for civic education in several schools. It is the duty of the system to mainstream the lessons learned from these extracurricular programs.
CONTENT OF CURRENT ALBANIAN CURRICULUM

One of the most important outputs of curricular reform is the definition of a curricular framework, which supports national standards in education and makes them flexible enough to be adapted to local needs and interests. It should provide the necessary space for an active and interactive teaching and learning process. Only a modern curriculum framework can guarantee modern textbooks and a modern teacher training system. However, in spite of existing fundamental curricular documents, teaching of civics requires continuous reflection from teachers. It is the teachers who determine whether civic education will be taught as:

- Imposed socialization through indoctrination;
- Review of major contemporary events and issues, in an effort not only to understand but also affect them;
- Accumulation of facts related to the country’s history, government and economy;
- Civic action and participation in the society of adults, assuming responsibility for both themselves and society at large;
- Scientific reasoning on society and its phenomena;
- Need for general human development
- Preparation for global interdependence.

It is up to teachers to decide, of course, depending on context and circumstances.

OFFICIAL CURRICULUM

Civics is taught as a separate subject from grade 1 to grade 10 of schooling. It is divided into three cycles:

In the first cycle, grades 1-4, “Social education” is taught with one lesson a week during the entire school year. The purpose of this subject is to provide children with knowledge and skills indispensable for their participation in social processes and help them to master values and beliefs characterizing citizens in a democratic society. Curriculum content is organized around the following topics:

- Children in the family
- Children at school
- Children in society
- Communication and community
- Public health and environment

In the second cycle, grades 1-8 “Civic education” is also taught once a week. Its objective is to train students as future citizens. Curriculum content intertwines social, political, judicial and economic concepts with universal values in order to provide students with knowledge and skills necessary for civic life and enable them to master democratic values.

Curriculum content for this particular age group is organized around the following topics:

- Nature and role of community.
- Citizens’ rights, duties and responsibilities,
- Relations between individuals and state
- Being a citizen and role of law
- Contemporary problems
- Citizens as producers and consumers

“Knowledge on society” is the name for civic education in the lower secondary level, grades 9-10. It is taught twice a week and its objective is to provide students with knowledge and skills necessary for active participation in social life and for exercising their freedoms and rights as citizens of a democratic society. Content is organized around the following topics:

- Family
- Culture
- Science and technology in an information society
- Labor and society
- Urbanization and society
- Unacceptable behaviors in society
- Man and the environment
- Albania as part of international relations

A special characteristic for this level is a sociological approach to issues dealt with. An analysis of the existing program shows that it reflects the best characteristics of a well-designed civic education curriculum.

Citizenship education outside formal curriculum

Citizenship education is a very complicated process and its objectives can hardly be achieved through the subject of citizenship education, alone, regardless of how complete its formal curriculum can be. Democratic citizenship education is influenced by several other factors, which deserve serious consideration when school formulates its policies for the formation of future citizens.

Cross-curricular interrelations

Besides the separate subject of civic education, other subjects also deal with several elements of democratic citizenship education. For example, history and geography have significant importance in promoting the study of values, beliefs and relationships between individuals in a group, from the perspective of their change and development in time and space.

In general, social studies help to create a broader concept, which can determine the development of civic education. Other subjects as well, like: literature, arts, natural sciences and technology complement students’ civic formation.

Life-long learning

Democratic citizenship education is life long. It has a strong social component in the sense that it represents learning about society, for society and on society, learning how to live together in peace. It implies democratization of learning by focusing on students, their autonomy and independence in the course of changes in their behavior. It is achieved through a wide variety of interrelated and interdependent methods, which respect reality and students’ life experiences. It requires an open curriculum that encourages participation and cooperation, harmonization and convergence of formal and informal learning environments and respects continuous assessment and students’ self-assessment as well.
SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE

How schools life is organized and functions considerably affects student achievements, behavior, attendance and quality of learning. The message of citizenship is effectively carried through in schools which promote very close relations between teachers and students and the latter’s participation in decision making; encourage mutual respect, tolerance and a favorable environment for students to exercise their responsibilities; promote active teaching methods and sound relations with community.

Although the wind of democracy is blowing in schools, the education system is still too centralized to be compatible with aspirations for political and social democratization outside it. Evasive decentralization trends seem to rely on the principle that local government and school itself are far more sensitive to the needs of smaller communities than central government. They are more motivated and able to make decisions, which meet not only national expectations of the public but also education needs of students, families and community.

Decentralization strategy in education system is part of the decentralization strategy of public service in general in Albania. School decentralization is considered an instrument for creating a democratic environment for students. Decentralization implies changes in the content of school culture, teaching and learning methods, as well as more opportunities for both students and parents to participate in developing formal and informal curricula. A decentralized system provides students with more opportunities to be both objects and subjects of their rights. It also provides more room for several players to play their role and more possibilities to change legal and financial schemes.

Central government controls all decision making on school budget, curricula and staff. School principals seem to have only two main functions: report to superiors and execute superior’s decisions. Constrained to the routine of daily micromanagement, school principals are not challenged to decide otherwise, and apparently for the same reason, central levels have not institutionalized any special training for school principals. School has no budget whatsoever to either make small purchases or buy books for its own library. School is allowed to raise incomes from services to third parties, 60% of which goes to the state. The ministry dictates to every minor detail how and what school can use the remaining 40% for.

School has no influence whatsoever in hiring vice principals, teachers or even non-teaching personnel. The Head of District Department of Education has the monopoly over all the hiring and firing. School principals have no right to even substitute absent teachers. This competence, again, belongs to the District Department of Education.

The Ministry of Education and Science decides about complementary books to be used by teachers at school (literature or test books, etc.). School has no right to choose any complementary book from a very diverse market. Parents resort to private courses so that their children can gain deeper knowledge in certain subjects. School cannot open such complementary courses because it has no financial means to pay for them. Principals frequently report school statistical data, which are never translated into national or local indicators. Neither central nor local government provides schools with information so they can compare among themselves. Statistical flow is always bottom up. In the conditions of an extremely narrow margin for decision-making and lack of information flow, it is impossible
for school to make any development plans. Annual school plans usually contain general formulations, even slogans, which lack measurable learning objectives, or any other objectives set by school itself.

Normative Provisions represent a document of primary importance for the decentralization of school infrastructure. School boards are expected to institutionalize school’s responsibility towards community. However, principals select members of school boards. Boards function as state instruments and not as community instruments, which inform, monitor and contribute to the quality of education children receive. Parent-teacher relations are not founded on joint responsibility and cooperation. On the contrary, families are always held responsible when their children do not succeed or have learning disabilities.

Student governments constitute another very positive step towards their responsible participation in school life. Community considers school as part of the state. It is the state, which makes all crucial decisions affecting the quality of education children receive in school. Although designed to be a pure public service institution, in essence, school is closed to taxpayers it is supposed to serve. School-community relations are far from relations like those between customer and service provider. It takes time for student governments to properly play their civic role. Nevertheless, they remain a powerful nucleus of school democratization. School moral and administrative climate does not seem to favor civic education. Its authoritarian culture still remains active. Decentralization has not yet reached school and efforts to change school structures remain purely academic.

**TEACHING METHODS IN SOCIAL STUDIES**

“I had just completed a wonderful training session on interactive teaching methods. I was so enthusiastic about using them in my everyday teaching practice. One day, I brought colorful buttons with me in classroom. Students were supposed to choose a button and get together in groups with buttons of similar color. I surprised my students by spontaneously dropping all the buttons on the floor and invited them to pick their favorite color. I could never imagine what was about to happen. “What’s going on here?” shouted the principal, embarrassed by all the confusion. “I am experimenting John’s method”, I mumbled and tried to calm down my students, who kept shouting, pushing and fighting with one another for their favorite buttons.”

Ever since that incident, Merita, the teacher, who shared with us her initial experience with interactive methods, never stopped experimenting, despite the difficulties this method involves. Now she is both enthusiastic and proud with her students’ success.

Teachers of social studies should prepare their students to assume social roles and help them to create their own identity: who they are, what they want to become and how they can become the people they want to be in life. Teachers’ leadership role is perhaps the most important and can be fulfilled through encouraging active learning. Cooperative learning is a valuable tool for schools, with principles firmly grounded in students’ freedom to freely learn from and together with others. In cooperative learning, students follow their curiosity, their interests and learn through hands-on experiences; teachers act as facilitators, not as sources of knowledge; formal assessment is re-formatted and students have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned, by practicing in groups.
Cooperative learning contributes to students’ socialization and prepares them to live in a society, which respects individuals for what they are. It teaches students to respect cultural relativism, according to which any culture bears its own values and there is no room for hierarchy among values. It also encourages interaction and cooperation as indispensable tools for citizens in a multicultural society. Socialization achieved through intercultural and cooperative learning overcomes nationalism, helps to create empathic attitudes, and leads to the formation of skills to explore other cultures and gain knowledge about them.

Cooperative learning has rendered good service to the formation of citizens with useful skills and knowledge. This learning model seeks to cultivate cooperation skills and create complementary human networks. Through cooperative learning students learn to set goals, cooperate in groups, share responsibilities, effectively use limited resources and learn from one another.

Active learning in real life settings is another well-known form of learning. The purpose of this learning system is to enable students to orient themselves in real life situations, by making use of all available information sources. Such forms have proven to be successful in achieving democratic citizenship goals in western countries. Methods through which they are implemented will be described in detail in the next session. Teachers select the method, which best suits their objectives. Teachers of civics and those of social studies in general, should deliberately pursue the goal of cultivating citizens, i.e., they should introduce students to judicial and legal aspects of the state, citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms, social contract as concept and practice of relations between a democratic state and its citizens, and at the same time provide students with necessary skills required for their successful inclusion in social and public life.

It is widely believed that continuous use of active teaching methods creates an indispensable climate of democracy. Yet, what is the value of our commitment to teaching democracy in school and formation of civic skills and attitudes unless our students learn how to apply them in the real ocean of human relationships? Democracy and citizenship are learned through human cooperation, far from pedagogical sterility. Democratic citizenship education encourages children’s predisposition to manifest pro-social behavior, their ability to adopt alternative skills and attitudes and their ability to critically analyze real life facts and situations. Devoid of these learning prerequisites, education remains formal and expected outcomes can hardly be achieved. Interactive learning is a very effective tool for achieving the above-mentioned goals in the education of school children.

The most important components of interaction are: direct interaction, formation of interpersonal skills, and formation of group cooperation skills. Structured group work remains the best way to encourage cooperation throughout the learning process. Interaction stimulates communication skills (students talk to teachers and group leaders, discuss within their groups, their entire class or community members, compile personal reports, talk about their achievements in public or in front of parents, teachers and school, teach the skills they already master to younger students and, when necessary, provide lawmakers with facts).

Through interactive activities, students have an opportunity to acquire writing skills. They write reports, essays, papers, articles, keep diaries, describe cases or events, write guides for others, prepare school newsletters and magazines, complete portfolios and folders, etc. In the process of interactive learning children develop as citizens, they collect data on different events and phenomena and bring them to class, conduct deliberate observations of everyday
life, assume and perform certain roles, plan and monitor their own group activities, support programs and activities of other groups, involve other children in their projects, plan expenses for their projects, etc. They learn to bring to class cameras, videos, recorders, albums, collections, etc. They learn to play, dance, have fun and perform in front of others. Such skills taught at school are the basis of civic interaction.

Another important method of teaching democracy in school is direct learning through experiences, which includes the following methodological components:
- Experience
- Reporting on feelings and lessons learned during each experience
- Reflection over experiences
- Generalization
- Application of what has been learned during each experience so that old behaviors are changed or moderated

Concrete activities shared in class help students to:
- Be more motivated to learn, since learning is pleasant
- Develop the level of their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes
- Change, since activities provide everyone with opportunities to change themselves and others as well
- Involve generally shy students who do not like to dominate and otherwise might be pedagogically abandoned
- Hold themselves responsible
- Boost their self-confidence
- Reduce their feelings of intellectual dependence and inferiority
- Strengthen solidarity among children thus contributing to the quality of society.

Interaction among children cultivates:

**Attitudes and Values**

People cultivate their skills and values through social interaction. Part of human knowledge comes from books, media, publications, etc., whereas part of behavior, which relates to values and attitudes, comes from communication and interaction. People of different backgrounds, levels of schooling and experiences interact with one another and exchange knowledge and information. It is through this exchange that human attitudes, values and perspectives are formed and afterwards guide our behavior for most of our lives.

To a considerable extent, human values are neglected in school. Most of the subjects and classes, in which students compete among them for positive assessment, reinforcement and feedback, require nothing but facts. Very little attention and time is devoted to reflections on human values, beliefs and rights. If this represents the common picture of the work done in school and if students’ values and attitudes are seriously neglected, it is no surprise that values and attitudes acquired in the street, outside classes and schools will guide individuals’ behavior during their lives. Entire generations may miss the opportunity to cultivate sustainable components of values in their behavior.
Interactive methods are pedagogical tools, which help students to gain, not simply fragmented facts, but also cooperative values and attitudes as well as ability to learn independently, both inside and outside school.

**Pro-social behavior**

Decent behavioral patterns, pro-social patterns, which directly contribute in respecting human rights and enhancing prerequisites for a democratic society, are rarely found in social microenvironments, family included. Population mobility to urban areas, tensions between values and cultures, unemployment, increasing daily work hours and career ambitions, higher divorce rates and numbers of immigrant parents increase the potentials for a serious lack of opportunities for children to acquire positive values and attitudes in family life or in a closer friendship setting.

Physical time that parents and children spend together in the family tends to be more modernistic, technocratic, formal, impersonal and complex. This already grave situation is further aggravated by additional stress, difficulties and challenges of everyday life. Consequently, children have fewer opportunities to shape certain pro-social behaviors, cultivated only in a family environment, in which children dare to test with adults what they have received from open and wider environments. Under these circumstances, classrooms should take over functions that family can hardly perform. Classrooms should provide opportunities for children to be under professional influence of educators.

Interactive methods encourage the creation of family-like environments. However this depends on good planning and leadership of activities. Interactive situations in classrooms may successfully teach children pro-social behavior.

**Alternative views and perspectives**

It is common knowledge that one’s perspectives and views are always challenged from those of others. Likes and dislikes, facts we hold dear or contradict are all shaped by our contrasting them with others. Alternative perspectives and views we come across each day, and part of which, we analyze and make our own, constitute the raw material for creating sustainable civic skills. They are afterwards transformed into values and attitudes through our use of critical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving techniques. This is so much so, that active exchange of views and the very tension generated during this process are believed to be catalysts of human personality development.

Environments resulting from the use of interactive methods are havens of interaction in which one can orchestrate hundreds of alternative even opposite views.

**Integrated Identity**

Interactive methods directly affect students’ personality by changing how children work and how they learn who they are, what they can become, and how they can become what they choose to. Deeper knowledge of oneself can be achieved through social interaction. Social interaction reduces self-perception contradictions, narrows down the dual personality gap, and consequently, increases the probability for self-integration. When placed in an interactive setting, students demonstrate who they really are.

**Development of critical thinking skills**
One of the major reasons for using social interaction methods is to encourage the development of critical thinking skills. Students’ involvement in social interaction contributes to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The truth is that advanced thinking skills cannot be cultivated outside interactive environments. Sustainable thinking skills develop in environments, which encourage manifestation of positive values and attitudes, pro-social behavior, and alternative views. Typical forms of active thinking, like: analysis, synthesis, and decision-making are more likely to develop in interactive environments than in isolated ones. Textbooks, lecturers, books in general are good sources for students to gain knowledge and learn how to apply them in life. However, they can hardly set the stage for silent thinking and internal discourse which are prerequisites of independent, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Classes with a formal, verbal and fragmented teacher-student communication channel can never make students think about their own rights and those of others.

Encouragement of critical thinking skills has extensively become a teaching and learning major objective for the entire educational system in Albania. The essence of critical thinking differs from widely adopted schools practices, which overburden children with facts and encourage creative and intuitive thinking or information processing skills. Critical thinking is independent thinking; it is students’ own thinking and nobody else can do it for them. Teachers’ respect of students’ ownership over their own thinking is the prerequisite for a class, which encourages development of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking does not necessarily mean original thinking. One may refer to others’ thoughts as well. Critical thinking is what students and researchers do with the information, facts, ideas, texts, theories, data and concepts they possess; critical thinking is stimulated by the need to find answers to questions and solutions to problems.

**How to structure a cooperative class**

To properly plan and teach a cooperative class, teachers should observe the following steps:

- Specify the goal of teaching activity!
- Structure the assignment!
- Teach students how to cooperate!
- Monitor group performance!
- Give students the opportunity to speak about what they experienced!
- Assess students on the basis of cooperation!

**How to specify the goal of teaching activity**

Before teachers decide on the type of activities to bring in class, they should clearly define the goal of each activity. The goal of civic education teaching is to prepare children for changes on a personal and social level. Activities in this particular subject should be construed in a way, which contributes to the formation of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Harmonization of goals with properly selected activities should be the primary aim for all effective teachers. The following are some good pieces of advice for teachers to select successful activities:

- Start the activity exactly where students have stopped. Rely on what they know: their experiences and opinions!
• Organize the activity in such a way that all students can participate in discussions and cooperation, which promote their learning from one another!
• Organize activities in a way that students find it easy to translate what they learn in class into their daily life outside classroom and undertake initiatives or actions!
• Your activity should seek what students can achieve during a class. Clearly describe the expected outcome and possibly illustrate with an example!
• Check whether students have properly understood their assignment!
• Create a climate of cooperation and collaboration in class!

What does a cooperative class look like?

When development of cooperation skills is the goal, teachers divide their class in groups. Here is some more advice for teachers:

• Create groups; (Pay attention to group composition. Be aware of passive students in a group!)
• Specify the time for students to complete assignment!
• Define students’ roles within groups! Here are some roles:
  - Reporter,
  - Supervisor,
  - Researcher,
  - Reminder,
  - Note keeper,
  - Supporter,
  - Observer.

How to give feedback in the course of interaction

• Through grades for the group or each member,
• Through bonuses,
• Through assignment of social responsibilities,
• Through granting privileges.

How to teach interactive skills to students

• Teach your students to clearly communicate their ideas and feelings to others,
• Teach your students to carry their messages to others in a complete and specific way,
• Teach your students to respect their friends’ ideas and feelings,
• Encourage a climate of support and respect,
• Teach your students to check that their interlocutor/s understood their message correctly,
• Teach your students to paraphrase one another’s views,
• Demonstrate your students how to negotiate on understanding as a process and specific understanding of situations or concepts,
• Teach your students participation and leadership.

How to monitor group performance

Monitoring group work means to identify the moment when the group needs assistance and determine what type of assistance is most effective. In some cases groups may
need re-orientation towards completing the assignment. Monitoring a group means to be able to help students out of emotional states in particular moments during their interaction or fulfillment of assignment.

**Debriefing or feedback**

Debriefing is a cognitive review of the progress of students’ involvement in their group in the course of completing a given assignment. Although teachers accept the importance of debriefing at the end of a teaching session, they often neglect it in their everyday practice, because:

- They are pressed for time,
- Debriefing is evasive, unclear and difficult,
- Not all students manage to cognitively review what has occurred in the group and what has happened to them,
- Students do not take part in debriefing, they are reluctant to talk about what they have experienced,
- When students give their opinions in writing, their reports are incomplete,
- Very often during debriefing students manifest the opposite goal of a particular cooperative learning activity.

Teachers who have practiced cooperative learning notice that interaction among students:

- Develops attitudes and values
- Creates pro-social behavior patterns
- Allows for alternative perspectives and views
- Develops coherent integrated identity
- Develops critical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills.

**Teachers notice that such skills and behaviors help pupils to:**

- Improve social cooperation skills
- Improve self-assessment skills
- Improve achievement levels
- Better learn and respect their limits and rights of others.

**HOW TO ORGANIZE AND STRUCTURE INTERACTION**

There are some types of cooperative teaching. Here we present some simple schemes, which can be easily used by teachers:

A:
1. Teachers present information in the form of conversation or lecture.
2. Students work in groups to process information delivered by teachers.
3. Assignment in the form of test.
4. Teachers assess students for their achievement individually or as a group.

B:
1. Teachers present new content in the form of lecture.
2. Groups work with workbooks or group assignments to process information delivered by their teachers.
3. Groups compete among them for higher scores.
4. Teachers sum group scores to declare, at the end of the month, a winning group whose members share common privileges.
C: 
1. Students themselves read parts of textbook; each of them is given a separate topic.
2. Students reading the same part of textbook get together to discuss in expert groups.
3. Students get back to their initial groups to re-discuss initial issues.
4. Students take a test for each of the issues they have discussed about.

COMMON DIFFICULTIES IN ORGANIZING INTERACTION

One of the most common handicaps to the use of interaction in students’ education with human rights is teachers’ shallowness in planning their lessons. This lack of professionalism inevitably leads to a feeling of loneliness and failure against multiple challenges school is faced with. This category of teachers suffering from loneliness and persecuted from professional isolation create a climate of tension in school, which contradicts the very vision of their institution.

Albanian school has traditionally stressed the importance of knowledge and neglected cultivation of skills to appropriately apply it. To narrow and eliminate the gap between the considerable amount of knowledge and the lack of skills and abilities to apply them in practice, specialists suggest the use of problem-solving method. Below are some important steps:

- Present a problematic situation,
- Hypothesize about its solution;
- Give arguments over various hypotheses;
- Agree on the best hypothesis for resolving the problem
- Solution of problem;
- Evaluation of solution.

The teacher orchestrates the whole process, bearing in mind students’ age, problematic situation and available resources, natural and social values of teaching/learning microenvironment.

Continuous efforts to find the most convenient methods, which can make teaching in class a democratic process, remain one of the characteristics of our school. Below is a list of the most effective of these methods:

- Methods based on democratic goals and development;
- Methods which encourage scientific research;
- Methods that provide room for practical activities.

Citizenship education requires methods, which encourage students to participate in structuring their classes and help them to learn how to make the best use of their knowledge through participation and personal experience.

Before teachers decide on the method and activities, they should think about their students’ learning styles. Individuals have very diverse learning styles. They also use different styles to make sense of the world surrounding them. Teachers should be aware of the variety of methods to use in order to optimize all their students’ learning capacity. The most common learning styles are:
Holistic style: Typical among children who are not keen on details but prefer to focus on the whole and ignore its partial details.

Surrealist style: Common among students who cannot see the background of information, fail to assemble information as a whole and are more focused on the part, or successive parts.

Besides these two dominant styles, children may also be characterized by even minor behavior details, which help to group children as follows:

Active learners are children who do not need much encouragement while learning; they voluntarily engage in activities, hate apathy during lessons, and do not require external motivation. Active learners are easily tuned to learning mode.

Reflective learners: They are the children who do not learn directly from a particular learning activity, but through reflection on what has been done. Such children need time to reflect on what has happened and what they have learned.

Systematic learners are children who prefer arguments for knowledge they receive and like to get to the basic concepts or essence of the phenomena they study. They prefer to use their reasoning and other thinking processes and usually resist to practical environments and situations with multiple requirements.

Pragmatic learners: These are children who learn well if knowledge is strongly applicable and they can see that what they are doing can be applied in their everyday life. Such children hate scholastic learning.

Teachers should respect these learning styles when selecting teaching methods.

Problem-solving method can either be used as suggested in the above scheme or be modified and adapted to group research, role-play, conflict resolution, simulation methods, etc.

Let us describe some lesson structures modeled after the above-mentioned methods

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Use of conflict resolution method in social studies teaching can be considered not only as a bridge between students’ knowledge and values, but also as a very successful tool for developing positive personality values. People often happen not to understand one another when it comes to solutions to a particular situation or problem they face. The set of values we possess may often be insufficient to lead towards successful solutions to conflicts. Their successful resolution requires harmonization of our values and knowledge.

Values constitute an internal driving force that shapes individual behavior. The ways we handle challenges and conflicts and make relevant decisions are aspects of human behavior. This explains why values affect decision-making and conflict resolution to the same extent that individual knowledge does. They influence our perception, interpretation and judgment of reality.

Individuals in general and students in particular, are not always aware of the role of values in their behavior and decision-making. Research shows that the more conscious of
their values people are, the more responsible they become in their judgments, decision-making and resolution of social problems. Conflict resolution method enables students first of all to use reason in conflict resolution.

The term “conflict” usually applies to very obvious aspects of a particular social problem, the solution of which requires critical analysis of various possible and valid alternatives, decision-making and concrete action by people examining it. For years, our school believed that the level of cognitive development was the key to a successful decision-making, which could provide solutions to difficult situations, including students’ preparation for life. The tendency to give students as much information as possible, the imposition of learning techniques to process and utilize that information and the forms of control and assessment adopted by our school bear sufficient testimony that development of cognitive sphere is the primary task of school in students’ civic education.

There is a relation of interdependence between cognitive, affective and psychomotor spheres of personality. If the purpose of everyday teaching practice is to harmonize their development, it should then encourage the development of both, values and emotions.

Teaching which cultivates values follows the following steps:

- **Presentation of conflict and social problem.** Conflict may be presented through a simple question. For example, Can physical abuse be justified as a means of power in family?
- **Presentation and discussion about information and values related to all aspects of the problem already presented.** The issue of family violence stimulates students’ thinking to understand other problems that might relate to it. This process requires knowledge of concepts and generalizations. Students should know the definition of family and violence; consequences of family violence. They need to answer questions like: What are the physical, anatomic and psychomotor characteristics of different genders and ages? What is the nature of parent-children, husband-wife and children-children relations in a family? Students may have some initial information. Teachers should take into account what students already know and give them additional necessary information so that students can approach the problem in all its dimensions

Teachers observe how students use their values to judge and discuss the issue. Some children think that family violence in search of power is immoral, punishable and unforgivable. Others think that submission to the principal financial contributor in the family must be accepted, tolerated and justified. Teachers point out differences among students’ opinions. Students need additional information to help them in their further judgment about the issue; otherwise they will be guided by passion, emotion, and experience.

- **Discussion and analysis of all possible solutions to the conflict on the basis of students’ values.** Faced with a real-life problem, children react according to the values they possess. They have a family, and have, of course, experience of relations in their families. Shy children try to hide conflict; others who are livelier try to come up with a satisfactory solution. The answer to the problem depends not only on teachers’ work during the above phase, but also on how children filter the received information through their system of values. Some witnesses of family violence try to justify it, others condemn it, and some others, although they might consider violence as harmful, provide different solutions to the problem; someone considers power in family as a moral thing, others don’t.
Meanwhile, another phenomenon may be observed: students, who are aware of their values, are more willing to reason and suggest solutions. Others, who are not equally aware of their values, give formal answers. To come to the right solution to the conflict, specialists suggest that two conditions be fulfilled:

- Increasing students’ awareness on existence of several possible alternative solutions.
- Increasing students’ awareness on the decisive role of values in accepting relevant solutions.

To fulfill the first condition, teachers confront students with all possible alternatives to conflict resolution and ask each of them to suggest a solution (teacher writes alternatives on blackboard). Whereas, to meet the second condition, teachers ask each student to give arguments in support of the solutions they suggest. Value clarification in this phase is done through declaration technique. (I think… because I believe…). Neither teachers nor class make any moralizations at this point.

- **Detailed analysis of positive and negative consequences of each solution.** There is a bit of suspicion as to the value of the following concluding remark by teacher: “So, my dear students, It is not good to resort to violence for power in the family”. These words simply declare the solution, which is closer to the teacher’s values, or society’s ideal values. Children may remember their teacher’s suggestion, but nothing will change in their values and behavior. It is no surprise if, that very evening, one of them starts a quarrel with a younger brother or sister at home, or witnesses a conflict between parents, and he/she is unable to help in its resolution.

Teachers should provide students with opportunities to analyze the consequences of each solution. This can be achieved through action in class. For example, expressions like: “I have no opinion so far”, “I fully agree”, “I partly agree”, “I am against”, “I am not able to judge”, etc. should be displayed in different locations in the classroom, and students are invited to go to the place corresponding to their opinion. After this, they are asked to explore consequences of each alternative. That is the moment when students return to their own values, understand them and present them to others, at the same time comparing their values to those of others. What students experience can be described as follows: Before the lesson in class begins, his/her knowledge, values and attitudes are in equilibrium. What happens in the first stages of the lesson (volume of knowledge increases) make the student lose this equilibrium and look for a new one, which he/she generally achieves through one of the following: he/she either blocks and ignores new information, or changes his/her values and behavior.

For the sake of equilibrium, children, who believe that family cannot do without violent power, refuse to accept “uncomfortable” information. On the other hand, those children who believe that power is necessary and violence is not, change their values in such a way that solution matches their belief and equilibrium is maintained.

- **Students’ equilibrium to accept a new solution and justify it.** What we have described so far cannot make all students change their judgments and values. Each student should be encouraged to give reasons for their choices. Teachers must take care that students assess all information received. This discourages conformism and helps students to agree with one another.
In order to achieve the goal of social studies (preparation of students to make their contribution to the proper functioning and improvement of society), teachers should also plan the last stage of this method.

- **Students in action.** It is this stage, which makes this method different from problem-solving method and the variants described above. During this stage, students can establish an organic and sustainable connection between their new knowledge and new values.

Children’s activity based on knowledge, thinking and commitment is known as “social action” or social participation. Thus, children involved in resolving the problem of family violence may participate in concrete action, related to their leisure time or to younger children. Students first organize for action and then act.

Depending on circumstances, children may also write about what they see, make generalizations, address the media or their community on problems they observe, etc.

- This process ends with an assessment of children’s work. During assessment, teachers judge all the steps taken by their students, expected and achieved outcomes, students’ desire to return to their entire activity and expectations.

Conflict resolution method may be used with all ages. It gives satisfaction through direct participation in concrete activities and encourages children’s desire to consciously engage in development of their personal values.

**DECISION MAKING METHOD**

Decision-making is another method interchangeably used with conflict resolution. It is used in simpler learning situations. Teachers sometimes might choose to use it for certain parts of the lesson. Decision making scheme is simple. It follows the following steps:
- Presentation of the situation, which requires decision-making. Students are invited to explore the values and level of knowledge they have, and base their decision on them.
- Different hypothesis are made,
- One alternative hypothesis is selected,
- One alternative is pursued,
- The achieved result is assessed.

This method is used to help students develop critical thinking skills, responsibility, and civil commitment. It helps students see whether they can resolve real life problems in accordance with their best interests and those of the community, their responsibilities and commitments. It does not directly deal with the cultivation of desired values. It just helps to make students socially smart. This is why it is widely recommended that these two methods be used interchangeably. These two methods used together make learning more cooperative, help students to develop a steady basis for continuous reflection on their skills and values, as well as stability in their value system. They should be used with other complementary methods and techniques. Below we are listing some of them:

**Group research**

Group research method holds that students are part of society and grow as individuals who participate in social life. Students cannot escape the social character of life. They are
always in search of ways, which can guarantee their independence and enhance their dignity. Research strengthens students’ conflict resolution skills and freedom of activity; at the same time, it enriches their knowledge and skills to participate in social life.

Steps of group research method:

All research starts with presenting a problem situation, which urges students to react and discover contradictions between previous goals or knowledge and the way students perceive this new situation. They need to identify the problem, define appropriate roles to resolve it, be active and report achievements. Reading, observation and consultations with teachers are obligatory in all these steps.

Application of group research is not an easy process. It requires teachers with high levels of professional and pedagogical skills. To check progress of group research classes, teachers should frequently ask themselves the following questions:

- Are social problems properly dealt with in class?
- Are students gaining knowledge?
- Is group work bringing them closer to one another?

The following are important steps of group research:

- **Research.** During this stage, students collect data, classify previous and new ideas, make logic reproduction, formulate hypotheses and attempt to confirm them, analyze potential consequences, prepare action plans, etc. Research is based on students’ curiosity. In the course of research students learn to generalize and assess. Students are often the only source of information; therefore other steps should follow this one.
- **Knowledge acquisition** is the purpose of each method. During group research, knowledge is acquired through application of previously acquired knowledge, principles and rules, in a new research process. The very structure of group research provides opportunities for generalizations and acquisition of new skills. Knowledge acquired in group is accompanied with emotions which spring from everyone’s involvement in research and their increased awareness during research. During this process teachers may easily observe their students’ anxiety and suspicions, as well as the knowledge and problem-solving skills they acquire.

- **Creation of groups.** Groups may consist of 2-15 students. When selecting group members, teachers should see to it that students share common values, easily communicate with one another in order to come up with potential solutions, and that every group member is active.

**ROLE PLAY**

The essence of role-play is to place students in real-life roles and assign them tasks for solutions. This method helps students to analyze particular situations and resolve conflicts through democratic procedures. During role-play, students experience and understand their attitudes, values and judgments, gain new skills and learn to approach a particular problem from different perspectives. Role-play brings a particular learning situation in the classroom, which makes students think “here” and “now”, understand how their feelings affect their behavior and teaches them to listen to and appreciate one another.
In social studies and, especially in the subject of civic education, the following could be the steps to a successful role-play lesson:

- Preliminary preparation of group. This is achieved through problem presentation, explanation and assignment of roles
- Preparation of students for their roles, definition of steps, careful explanation of roles
- Preparation of listeners, which is achieved through advising students to concentrate in certain parts of their interpretation
- Role-play, in the course of which teachers should intervene to either encourage or terminate it
- Role-play evaluation. If appropriate, role-play may be repeated with other students taking part
- Discussions and generalization of values in role-play and its relation with real-life problems and experiences.

During role-play, teachers should:

- Accept all students’ attitudes while playing their roles and positively evaluate their efforts to express their opinions and feelings
- Instruct students on different aspects of their roles without affecting their attitudes
- Make them aware of the importance of original answers, by using praise
- Encourage them to play the role by being themselves
- Make them believe they acted correctly, since they properly played the role they were assigned.

HOW TO USE ROLE PLAY IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Teachers think of problem situations and require students to solve it by placing them in the very center of such situation. While students act and give their own opinions on resolving the situation, teachers should concentrate on how students manifest their feelings, attitudes, judgments and values when trying to solve the problem, on the extent they understand the problems related to their roles, etc. and make all these elements object of his future work.

In the subject of civic education, teachers may use real-life problem situations, which allow them to identify how values intertwine with age, social, or community problems. Achieving a proper solution to a particular problem is a complex process, which begins with a simulated solution

SIMULATION

Simulation is a similar method to role-play. In the process of simulation students are practically in a role-play. However, unlike role-play, simulation requires that acting students learn the steps, which lead to the solution. This is achieved through analyzing, with assistance from teachers and peers, each step towards the solution to a particular situation. In role-play students learn to overcome certain emotional barriers in the path towards resolving a particular situation. In simulation students learn to master skills, which help them to resolve real-life situations.

During simulation, teachers should explain all steps leading to the solution of the situation, guide students’ progress in acting the role, instruct them in each step, anticipate
other factors affecting the situation, and lead all discussions and analysis of all errors or successes related to that particular solution.

**Main steps in simulation**

*Orientation* is the phase during which teachers present the topic of simulation and main concepts related to it, explain the purpose of simulation and structure of simulated action.

*Preparation of participants in simulation*, during which teachers set the rules, roles, procedure, evaluation and purpose of simulation.

*Simulation* is the next step, during which students perform the simulation and teachers point out wrong and right solutions, clarify all misunderstandings, etc.

*Discussion of simulation outcomes*, during which students judge how simulation was performed, its positive and negative aspects, its theoretical value.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION:**

- Reflect over your personal professional experience and try to identify reasons for your preference of methods you most frequently use in class.

- Identify the source of the need to use a particular method. Is it:
  - Students’ need
  - Your need
  - Your school principal or inspector’s need?

- Create a portfolio of the best activities, which cultivate civic behavior skills. Share it with your colleagues.

- Discuss with colleagues about steps of interactive methods and techniques you most frequently use. Which are the most common difficulties you encounter? What about your colleagues? Help one another to understand the purpose of each cooperation step as well as the purpose of using certain techniques in certain situations.

**EDUCATION OF TEACHERS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY - NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES**

A lot of changes have already occurred in Albania affecting laws, parliament, government and the way they function. However, changes in peoples’ mentality, stereotypes and skills cannot happen rapidly or spontaneously. Solutions to problems related to the way people think, take time and patience. Teachers are a powerful factor which may accelerate this process. With their personality, professionalism and skills, they may set living examples of new patterns of thought and action. Time calls for teachers to:

- Master fundamental concepts of democracy and democratic processes
- Master intellectual and participatory skills in democratic processes
- Possess democratic participation values

To rise to the level of democratic society values, teachers should be educated through well-organized pre-and-in-service training, and self-educated through a long program of reading, reflection and planning. That is the only way for them to fulfill their task of
educating younger generations of Albanian citizens. This major task cannot be accomplished by teachers’ good will alone. It requires planning for new organizational forms and structures.

The nature of teacher-training structures often serves as a criterion of judgment for the entire society. The level of attention devoted to teacher education reflects the vision of society for the future. Concern for teachers is part of a nation’s culture.

Pre-service and in-service teacher training should provide special room for democratic values. This requires a review of structure, methods, evaluation and curricula for teacher training, as well as the position of teacher training universities in relation to school in general.

TEACHER TRAINING STRUCTURE

Teacher training has significantly modernized its terminology but it has failed to equally modernize teaching practices. If teachers in class fail, so does education system.

Common teachers are loyal to textbooks, which are not considered as tools to achieve certain teaching goals, but as formal objectives for student achievement, even when textbooks are overburdened. Common teaching is textbook-centered. On the other hand, the majority of textbooks are fact-oriented and most of the students find them extremely difficult.

Due to professionally inadequate and superficial pre-service training of teachers in universities, common teaching is dominated by teachers’ word as the principal source of knowledge and has little or no room at all for critical and creative learning.

Teacher training structure (pre-service and in-service) is facing great challenges and changes. Independent, impartial judgment on the part of authorities responsible for structural changes in the system and continuous presence of constructive intellectual opposition are indispensable conditions for creating a structure, which can be as close as possible to society’s needs and interests.

Methods adopted in teacher training have important significance. Future teachers need to know how and under what circumstances teaching can be most effective.

Teacher training curricula also need to be subject to review and should take into account that education about participation is one of its most important parts. All teachers-to-be need to learn concepts of participation, basic concepts of legislation, history, geography, economy and philosophy, study the relationship between school, society, culture, democracy, didactics and values.

Assessment of teachers-to-be is an important element of their formation. How they are assessed affects how they learn to assess others.

Partnership with schools is a new element in pre-university teacher training. Traditional partnership between schools and universities is outdated. Higher education in Albania is engaged in an entire system of reformation in the framework of Bologna Agreement. It is expected that teacher-training structure becomes more flexible and effective. Extension of university studies to a five-year period is expected to provide special opportunities for reforming above-mentioned elements of teacher training.

School involvement in the achievement of democratic citizenship education goals is closely related to teacher training. Training of future teachers affects parameters of future citizens. The sooner students learn the arsenal of methods used for the formation of citizens,
the easier and clearer it will be for them to find solutions to problems presented in this manual.

TENDENCIES

Albania still lacks a well-defined teacher training system. Three training systems have been experimented within a 10-year period and teacher training appears extremely de-concentrated.

Teacher training faculties are mainly state-subsidized and cannot compete in the market. Their service function is limited to non-essential services. Universities provide neither training nor other services for teachers. Failure to directly serve schools may lead to isolation. Funding for scientific research in education is practically minimal. University autonomy in teacher training faculties is extreme. This extremism in teacher training faculties is the outcome of lack of standards, which can ensure quality. Respective departments make all decisions on curriculum content, without any external expertise. Everything is up to initiatives from pedagogues or departments and nothing is defined as exit or graduation criteria for students in the teaching profession.

All university programs in teaching faculties have been subject to review and change, over these recent years. The purpose of these changes was to substitute previous curriculum, which was designed to serve an authoritarian system and planned economy, with a new curriculum, which develops characteristic values of an open political system and necessary skills for market economy. Social studies teacher-training went through radical changes. However, current curriculum is dominated by transmission of knowledge versus interpretation of knowledge, abstract learning versus learning from experience. Professional curriculum in most faculties of natural sciences and philology is extremely overburdened and hardly trains new teachers to perform tasks of democratic citizenship education.

Universities have an exaggerated tendency to favor content scientific update. However, there is still no tendency to include flexible elements of socio-political information on democracy, citizenship, human rights, global education, European integration and conflict resolution. On the other hand, the unbalanced character of university reform is evident in the neglect of school needs for a contemporary teacher profile. University curriculum development remains a hermetic academic cycle.

School is, on one hand, the institution incarnating government responsibility to provide educational service to its citizens, and on the other hand, the institution, which directly serves its customers in the community. Schools must open up to local community activities and become community centers, which is another important step of education reform on a school level. Decentralization in education would never work unless it goes as far as school autonomy. School autonomy is a broad concept. Authors of education reform use very concrete terms for a real and effective autonomy and its gradual achievement. Increased school decision-making authority should be accompanied with increased responsibility towards democratic citizenship education and implementation of its principles.

Normative provisions are mandatory for all public institutions included in the pre-university network in the Republic of Albania. The goals of pre-university education include: students’ social emancipation and personality development, development of critical, creative, tolerant, constructive thinking and action, cultivation of patriotic, human, moral, and
democratic values, equal opportunities for all. These goals stated in normative provisions, in fact, express the deliberate involvement of school in the preparation of students with knowledge of their rights as well as its commitment to education with human rights and respect of cultural diversity. At a time when civic, social and human rights education is declared as one of the principal goals of school, school legislation continues to reflect serious inconsistency regarding school programs. Civic education accounts for 3-5% of school curriculum for each grade level. This should make all of us stop and think seriously.

In spite of curricular changes so far, last decade developments have brought to the fore the indispensability of a thorough curricular reform, as one of the important terminals of future reform in the entire education system, in general. This reform will develop a curriculum, which not only provides information about democratic values, but also cultivates these values and better adjusts curriculum to current and future needs of market economy.

Social studies in school teach students what history brought them in the form of the present and how they can make their present better. Civic education is the subject which best guides them. It is time to give civic education the attention it deserves. It is time to decide whether we want to breed democracy with totalitarian methods, or definitely give our children and ourselves the courage of freedom.