



CIVIC EDUCATION IN MONTENEGRO:

An Evaluation of Teaching and Learning

May-June 2008

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for the
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Preface

This report evaluates the status of teaching and learning of Civic Education (CE) in 12 primary and 7 secondary schools in Montenegro. The field work was carried out in May 2008, while the focus groups were conducted in June 2008.

The aim of the study was to investigate how schools, teachers, parents and students view the introduction of Civic Education, not only as a curriculum subject but in relation to the principles and values of democratic “citizenship” in the context of school life. The methodology for the study, as agreed with the BES and FOSI-ROM, was for the research team to visit a sample of primary and secondary schools in urban as well as rural settings; to observe CE classes in 6th and 7th grade (primary) and grades 1 and 2 (secondary); to conduct structured interviews with principals and teachers; to conduct and analyse a survey of students in the CE classes visited; and to convene focus groups with teachers and parents in order to obtain as wide a range of views and data as possible within the framework of the study.

In all, the team observed about 20 classes, interviewed all school principals in the sample schools, conducted structured interviews with CE teachers in each school, and obtained 456 responses from students on a 25-item questionnaire administered in each class. Three focus group sessions were conducted - for primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, and parents respectively. Summaries of the student survey analysis, and of the focus group sessions, are included in this report. Full statistical analysis of the survey, and transcripts of the focus group discussions, are available from BES.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BES	Bureau for Educational Services (Montenegro)
CE	Civic Education
CFS	Child-Friendly Schools (UNICEF)
EDC	Education for Democratic Citizenship (Council of Europe)
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FOSI-ROM	Foundation Open Society Institute – Representative Office Montenegro
FOSI-ROM ERP	FOSI-ROM Education Reform Program
MDG	Millennium Development Goals (linked to Education for All)
MES	Ministry of Education and Science (Montenegro)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSI	Open Society Institute
RAE	Roma, Ashkaeli, and Egyptians
SEE	South East Europe
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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<u>Three focus group meetings were held in Podgorica on 23 and 24 June 2008. One was for primary school CE teachers, one for gimnazium CE teachers, and one for parents of students in CE classes at both levels. Each focus group consisted of 8 participants, and lasted two hours. Teachers came from all over the country, while parents were from Podgorica and Nikšić. The discussions were recorded and transcribed, with synopses in English. The following section will summarise the key points raised by the focus groups.....</u>	<u>22</u>
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Executive Summary

Key findings

- The **most important findings** from the observed classes suggest that the vast majority of teachers are fully aware of the importance of open but respectful classroom **dynamics**, and that they devote a lot of their thinking and expertise to achieving it. In almost all classrooms, we saw a very good working atmosphere and it was obvious that students don't have any problems in following **the rules of communication** in the classroom. Students were generally interested in what was going on and motivated to do the work assigned by the teacher. The level of **students' participation** was fairly high, and they were often encouraged to present their views and thoughts to the others.
- Nearly all principals, teachers, students and parents were **positive** about the introduction of Civic Education. They believed it helps students to develop their independent thinking and reasoning skills, and prepare them for their role as citizens. The methodology used in CE also encourages them to examine issues and values that are not usually addressed in other subjects.
- Some concerns were raised about **time-tabling** CE, about the level of difficulty of some of the material for the younger students, and about the need for professional development of CE teachers.
- Although CE is a **compulsory** subject in primary grades 6 and 7, most teachers, parents and students think it is right that, at gimnazium level, it should be a **voluntary** choice. The general view is that allowing older students a choice is a recognition that they should start to take responsibility for their own learning, and also reflects the principle of democratic freedom.
- Others believe that CE develops values and citizenship skills that are needed by every young person, and that therefore the two compulsory years in primary school should be extended to grades 8 and 9 and possibly to the first two years of gimnazium, but this appears to be a minority view at present.
- An important concern is about **time-tabling** CE classroom hours within the overall curriculum. A significant number of students (and teachers) said that lessons often attempt to cover a great deal of complex material in a 45-minute period, and that one lesson a week was not sufficient to cover the curriculum. Several schools visited tried to resolve this by scheduling a 90-minute period every two weeks for CE, which allows more time for preparation and discussion but has the disadvantage of reducing the number of times the teacher and the class meet per term, especially when there are school holidays. Some teachers said they only met their classes two or three times in a given marking period.
- A related issue is that CE classes are often scheduled **at the end of a school day**, which sends the subliminal message that CE is less intellectually demanding than other school subjects, and can therefore be scheduled when students and teachers are tired and ready to go home. The legitimacy of CE as a “serious” subject could be enhanced by more fully incorporating it into the school day.

- In relation to the **curriculum**, the consensus is that the topics covered are important, and that – certainly at gimnazium level – the curriculum is age-appropriate. But a significant number of teachers and parents participating in the focus groups and interviews said that some of the material is difficult for 6th and 7th-graders, and might be better postponed until these children are a little older. The majority of primary school teachers suggested that the curriculum content might be too extensive. At gimnazium level, where at the time of this study there was not yet a common textbook, it was less difficult for teachers to be creative and use class time to introduce topics of interest to teenagers, such as healthy lifestyles, family relationships, and sexuality.
- The primary school **textbook** is considered to be useful, except that for younger students (grade 6) some of the material covered is difficult to grasp. Parents and teachers felt that some topics could better be postponed until later, perhaps extending CE into grade 8 and/or 9 to make a more continuous link with gimnazium grade 1. **Materials** other than textbooks are lacking, in particular at gimnazium level where (at the time of this study) there was no textbook and teachers have to improvise their own materials. In particular, there are few materials available for additional reading by older students; school libraries have only a limited supply of literature relevant to CE. On the other hand, some gimnazium teachers liked the fact that they are not constrained by a specific textbook, but could choose topics and materials that fit the interests and maturity of their students.
- The impression gained by the team is that CE is seen by many as an opportunity to introduce inter-active **methods of learning and teaching** into a still fairly traditional curriculum, and sometimes also as a way to instil moral values. This may reflect a lack of clarity about what CE is; but in the best cases, it may also be that CE gives students a much-needed opportunity to discuss their concerns and hone their reasoning and communication skills in an open and non-judgmental environment.
- On the other hand, the team observed far too many lessons (especially at primary level) where teachers did not make optimal use of the time available. The ubiquitous use of “**poster sessions**” – where small groups of students present a prepared “poster” pertaining to a particular topic – is a poor use of class time, and often results in a hurried series of (rehearsed) presentations by a small number of students while the others are passive, bored, and inattentive. It was our impression that some teachers confuse project learning with “presentations”, and co-operative learning with “group work”.
- Moreover, many of these “poster sessions” bear more resemblance to a geography or history lesson: for example, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the geography, population, culture, and customs of (e.g.) India, China, Brazil, and even Eskimos -- rather than raising students’ awareness of social issues in their own community. In addition, many of these presentations relied on **stereotypes** of foreign cultures (not everyone in Africa lives in a mud hut, nor do Italians all eat spaghetti or all Eskimos live in igloos). It is true that the younger children do enjoy dressing up in “foreign” costumes, and certainly

cultural awareness has a place in CE; but the similarity of these “poster sessions” from school to school (and probably from year to year!) shows a lack of imagination in teaching CE, and also undermines the subject’s perceived seriousness in relation to, say, mathematics or literature.

- The **best lessons** observed by the team were those where teachers found ways of engaging *the whole class* in active discussion of a topic that related to the students’ own experience or interests; or where part of the lesson was used for active small-group-work, for example where students were given a specific task to complete in small teams, and then present (and discuss with the class and the teacher) their own spontaneous views and ideas. Important skills such as active listening, logical reasoning, debating, and developing ideas were encouraged, resulting in an atmosphere of engagement and positive energy.
- This raises the issue of subject-specific **professional development of teachers**. Primary school teachers were, in general, better prepared and had more in-service seminars or workshops specific to CE, but they still felt they needed more -- and more continuous -- professional development, not only through seminars but through interaction with other teachers of CE in other schools, an exchange of lesson plans and materials, and regular meetings. At gimnazium level, there appears to be a serious lack of systematic CE-related professional development, and the team heard on several occasions that teachers of other subjects had simply been assigned to teach CE because they had some hours available in their workload. In practice, this sometimes meant that teachers used their usual teaching methods in CE classes, rather than use time for discussion, group work, or other more inter-active ways of teaching and learning.
- At both primary and gimnazium level, teachers said that the **Association of CE Teachers** could play a much bigger role, perhaps not only in professional development but in serving as a clearing-house for innovative lesson plans or materials, for example through a web site. A regular newsletter or magazine for CE teachers was also mentioned. In future, the Association might also have a role in designing and implementing a professional **accreditation** mechanism for teachers of Civic Education. Such a move would enhance the status of CE as a “serious” academic subject requiring professionally prepared and accredited teachers.
- Although there is some verifiable evidence of the quantity and (to some extent) the quality of the teaching of CE, there is virtually none with regard to what students actually **learn**. Since this evaluation was expected to cover both teaching **and** learning, the evaluators were disappointed to find that this side of the teaching/learning equation receives so little attention. The student survey conducted in the classes visited by the team sheds some light on student opinions and attitudes – and indirectly on the quality of their learning – but nearly all the emphasis was on whether the curriculum and the materials and the teaching are adequate to the task of teaching. Whether they are also conducive to student learning was almost never discussed, except in connection to the level of difficulty of learning materials (books), which some teachers and parents considered too demanding.

This is mainly because there is so little clarity about the **assessment** of student learning in Civic Education. A few teachers said they used some form of testing; others based their marks on classroom or group participation, presentation of posters, and similar forms of student activity. At present, very few teachers use descriptive marking, probably because there is no clear understanding of what, in CE, constitutes a satisfactory [or unsatisfactory] level of student achievement. Some teachers believe that there should not be *any* marks in CE (except descriptive marking), and they circumvent the problem by giving all students the *same* mark (usually a 5), which in essence means they give no marks at all. However, this then raises questions from other teachers, as well as from parents and students, and to some it appears as if CE is an easy way to gain a top mark. This issue needs to be resolved, for example by agreeing on **band descriptors** [i.e., specific descriptions of the kind of *evidence* a student needs to show in order to obtain a certain mark, say a “3” or a “4”]. Teachers say they have no difficulty in deciding about failing marks [“1” or “2”] or excellent marks [“5”], but have no clear idea of what distinguishes a “4” performance from a “5” or a “3”.

- One of the goals of CE is to create a school environment in which the values of **mutual respect and equality** are reflected in the way people behave towards each other. This would mean that no person is bullied, excluded, or ridiculed; that teachers respect the rights of all students to fair treatment and support in their learning; that everyone listens to others’ views, and is allowed to speak freely about his or her own. Most schools visited were working hard to create such an environment, and directors said that the introduction of **CE had made a substantial difference**, if not (yet) in actual behaviour then certainly in awareness of what is, and is not, acceptable in a civil society. The classes visited by the team also showed good relationships between students and their teachers, and the group work showed that students were able to co-operate and work productively as a team.
- However, it was also obvious to the team that not all students were treated equally; “inclusive” education does not, it seems, extend to children with special educational needs (SEN) or to children from the Roma community or other disadvantaged groups. In reality, **very few SEN and RAE children** were in the primary school classes, and if there were, they were invariably seated together, often in the back of the classroom, and not fully integrated in the work of the class. Teachers did not seem to be aware of this, and (from our observations) did little to engage these children and encourage them to take part. The attitude of other students towards their SEN and RAE peers was also less than “inclusive” – we observed no explicit hostility, but neither did we see the same level of interaction between these children and the majority of their classmates.¹

¹ Nationally in Montenegro, low achievement and drop-out rates among RAE children are worrying. According to figures supplied by the Ministry of Education and Science, while nationally [2007/08] 375 Roma children were in Grade 1, this dropped sharply to 239 in Grade 2; 179 in Grade 3; 170 in Grade 4; and only 48 made the transition from Grade 4 into Grade 5. This means a “survival” rate of *less than 13% to Grade 5*. If CE is to have any impact on the lives of these children, the CE values must be part of the entire school ethos right from Grade 1: because by Grade 6 – when CE becomes part of the curriculum -- most of them will have dropped out.

Recommendations

System and Schools

- Although CE appears to be well accepted by schools, teachers, parents and students as part of the formal curriculum, it must be made clear to school directors and teachers that the **values and principles of CE cannot be confined to CE classes**, but must be reflected in everything the school and the school community do in their day-to-day interactions. Similarly, inclusion of SEN children will only be achieved if the mainstream schools build an **inclusive attitude towards all children**, and instil these values –with the help of CE -- in their teaching staff as well as in students and parents.
- Review the curriculum, especially at gimnazium level. Because each year new students can opt for CE, large parts of the first-year CE curriculum need to be repeated for newcomers in the second year. The group suggested having two groups – one for newcomers, and one for students who are continuing with CE after year 1.
- The aim must be to create a “**child-friendly**”, **rights-based and inclusive** school and education system. In 2007, the Bureau for Educational Services, together with UNICEF-Montenegro and the Ministry of Education, initiated the development of Child-Friendly School (CFS) standards for Montenegro, based on a system of quality indicators that have been refined by the Montenegro MoES over a number of years. CFS’s five principles are inclusion, quality, effectiveness, gender sensitivity, and involvement of communities and families, and therefore are fully compatible with the values that form the basis of Civic Education. It will be important to ensure that the BES involves CE specialists in developing child-friendly school standards for Montenegro, and to include those new standards in the CE curriculum as appropriate.
- Reconsider the position of CE in the new **Matura** examination, which is to be taken in 2009/10 by gimnazium students who enrolled in school year 2006/07. At present, CE cannot be taken as a separate subject; nor is it on the list of obligatory electives that could be combined with other, similar subjects for Matura standard. This inevitably affects CE’s status as a curriculum subject, and thus its attractiveness to students and parents at gimnazium level. At least, it should be on the list of obligatory electives with the possibility of combining it with another subject for Matura standard.
- Reconsider the **timetabling of CE** to make optimum use of available time; also reconsider extending CE into grade 8 or maybe grade 9 in order to make a smoother transition into gimnazium.
- Extend opportunities for professional development of CE teachers, not only through formal seminars but through informal ways of communication and exchange; also, take care that teachers receive certificates for the seminars they attend. This would be an incentive for teachers to become better qualified, and –

in due course – to lay the groundwork for formal accreditation of teachers of Civic Education. In this connection:

- Extend the role of the Association, for purposes of professional development, networking, exchange of materials and best practices; and accreditation.

Teaching and Assessment

- Be sure that schools use already trained CE teachers instead of assigning CE classes to teachers who are not adequately prepared.
- Extend opportunities for professional development of CE teachers through informal ways of communication and exchange;
- Get rid of the poster sessions! – or, if they must be retained, make them more relevant to Civic Education, focussing for example on family, social or local community issues and how they can be addressed via the values of CE -- and less like repetitive and generalised geography lessons.
- Develop band descriptors for descriptive marking and provide training to teachers in using these. In an ideal situation, grading/marking in this subject should not be needed, but at least teachers should be much more clear and confident in what they “measure” when they assess student learning in CE., and how these measurements can be communicated to parents and stakeholders.
- Provide additional training in project teaching/learning and co-operative learning methodology, and critical thinking strategies. The training should be adapted to the needs of teachers in CE classrooms.

Learning

- In a subject like CE, much of the “evidence” of student learning will lie in observable behaviour as well as in the understanding of concepts and facts (e.g., knowledge of human and child rights, an understanding of civil legislation, models of government, voting procedures, etc.) Evaluating the quality of learning is thus no easy task. But the fact that it is *difficult* should not mean that the issue of evaluating learning is ignored. Countries that include CE in their curriculum can offer some experience that might be useful to the BES. It would be the team’s recommendation that this issue be researched more seriously: teaching without clear evidence of desired **learning** outcomes cannot be effective teaching.

Introduction

The Legal and Policy Context of Civic Education in Montenegro

In **primary** schools, Civic Education for 6th and 7th grade was introduced in school year 2005/06 as a new, compulsory subject, with 35 classroom hours per year as part of the normal timetable. The curriculum builds on what has been taught in lower grades, for example *Nature and Society* (grades 1, 2, and 3), *Nature and Technology* (grade 4) and *Society* (grades 4 and 5). In 2006/7, a new elective subject for grades 8 and 9 of primary school was introduced-- called *Study of Humanitarian Law* -- in the absence of a Civic Education curriculum for these grades.

In **secondary** schools, Civic Education is an “obligatory elective”², which can be chosen from 1st through 4th grade (gimnazium). Students are free to enter or leave the subject each year. There are 35 classroom hours in grades 1 and 2, 70 hours in grade 3, and 64 hours in grade 4. The curriculum builds on the long tradition in Montenegro of teaching a subject called *Constitution and Citizens’ Rights*, which was aimed more narrowly at “political literacy”.

In terms of the new **Matura** examination, which is to be taken in 2009/10 by gimnazium students who enrolled in school year 2006/07, Civic Education (because it is an elective) cannot be taken as a separate subject; nor is it on the list of obligatory electives that could be combined with other, similar subjects for Matura standard. This inevitably affects CE’s status as a curriculum subject.

In **secondary vocational** schools, Civic Education is not offered as a separate subject. It has been suggested that the curriculum for *Sociology* in three- and four-year vocational schools might be adapted to include elements of education for democratic citizenship.³

Main Questions Considered by the Evaluation Team⁴

System-level issues

- Curriculum*. Place of CE in the national curriculum – how does it fit? To what extent is the curriculum too ambitious for the time available?
- Time-tabling*. Is there enough time? Is there a case for extending the 7th Grade curriculum into the 8th Grade, to provide more time to cover the curriculum,

² This seemingly contradictory term means that secondary schools must offer at least five subjects chosen from a list of approved electives. Each secondary school student must then select the two electives he/she prefers from among those offered in the school.

³ *Strategy for Civic Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in Montenegro 2007-2010*. 2007. Podgorica: Bureau for Educational Services, page 20.

⁴ These questions served to frame the team’s approach to this evaluation. Many were answered in the course of the work, but others remain “on the table”, for example whether the shift system serves “the system” more than it serves parents and learners; whether 45 minutes/week or 90 minutes/2 weeks is preferable; who should lead the accreditation of CE teachers; or which forms of assessment are most suitable for CE. These remain to be resolved.

without having to choose between 45 minutes 1 x per week and 90 minutes 1 x every two weeks?

- Accreditation of teachers of CE.* Should it happen? Who should do it?
- Textbooks and other learning materials.* Are they flexible and non-prescriptive enough to allow teachers to use their own initiative, & respond to student interests?

School-level issues (general)

- Is there still a real need for shifts?* Class sizes are generally going down, and most classes observed by the team were not over-crowded esp. at secondary level. One-shift timetables have important benefits for parents and students, and allow more continuity in the preparation and display of student work.
- Time-tables* -- the shift system often works against “opportunity to learn” and time-on-task in the classroom. Also: CE is often placed at the end of a shift...is this good or bad?

School-level issues (related to CE)

- Is CE “modelled” in *school life* -- for example, is inclusive education practised in the way the school operates, and in how RAE and SEN children are treated by the school community?
- Materials* (what else can be made available?)
- Is the available *class time* used productively and in ways that allow each student to be actively engaged?
- Is CE treated as a variant of (e.g.) geography or sociology, or is it accepted that CE requires a *different approach* to teaching and learning?
- Is it better to have one period of 45 minutes per week for CE, or to have 90 minutes every two weeks?

Teacher-related

- What kind of CE-specific in-service training has been provided for teachers? Is more needed?
- Should CE teachers be specifically *accredited*? What kind of professional development is available? Can the new *Association of CE Teachers* serve as a focus for professional recognition of Civic Education teaching?

Learner-related

- What form(s) of assessment is/are best suited to Civic Education principles and standards?
- Do the curriculum and pedagogy of Civic Education give students an awareness of social issues *in their own community*?
- Does Civic Education have an effect on students' behaviour towards peers and others in the community, including those with SEN or other types of disadvantage?

Methodology Used for the Study

The main sources of information were:

- (1) Field visits to a sample of 19 schools, consisting of 12 primary and 7 secondary (gimnazium) schools in Podgorica, Kotor, Herceg Novi, Bar, Danilovgrad, Cetinje, Nikšić, Ulcinj, Vladimir, Mojkovac, Kolašin, Andrijevica, and Rožaje.
- (2) Structured interviews with CE teachers in these schools, and discussions with their principals.
- (3) Class observations (with an observation protocol developed by the team).
- (4) Student questionnaire, developed, administered and analysed by the team.
- (5) Focus groups with teachers (primary and secondary), and a focus group with parents.

Instruments used

Classroom observation protocol, teacher interview protocol, student (Likert-scale) questionnaire, and focus group guidelines are found below or in the Annexes to this report.

Results

Field visits. Each school visit lasted approximately 3 to 4 hours, and consisted of a discussion with the school principal about her/his views on the introduction of CE and its impact on the school; observation of one or two normally scheduled CE classes; interviews with the teacher(s) of these classes; and administration of the student questionnaire. Examples of classroom observation and teacher interview protocols are at Annexes A and B. Summaries of teacher interviews are given in the relevant sections below.

Student questionnaire. A total of 456 students in classes visited by the team responded to the 25-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Students were given assurances that their answers would be anonymous, and would not be seen by anyone other than the team. The results were coded and entered by the BES, and analysed in the UK using ITEMAN software. The questionnaire is included in this report (see section on Student Survey, below), as is a summary of the findings. The complete data analysis is available from the Bureau for Educational Services.

Teacher interviews. Teachers of the CE classes observed by the team were interviewed according to a loosely-constructed protocol. In most cases, these interviews were conducted by Tomislav Reškovic so that there was no need for an interpreter, and teachers felt free to communicate with a colleague who teaches CE himself. In a few cases, team members split up to visit two or more schools simultaneously, and then the teacher interviews were conducted either by Mr Reškovic or by Mrs Crighton (accompanied by an interpreter). Usually, the interviews with school principals were conducted by Mrs Crighton while the teacher interviews were taking place elsewhere in the school. Teachers were asked about their views on the curriculum, the time table, the textbook (in primary) and/or materials they used, the teaching methods they preferred, how they assessed students' progress, whether they had had any special CE-related training, how they thought the introduction of CE had affected relationships in the school community, and what they needed to improve students' learning of CE concepts and principles. The interviews with principals were not structured, and were more generally concerned with the day-to-day functioning of the school, resources, staffing, and relations with the community.

Summaries of teacher interview findings and classroom observation findings follow below (see Table of Contents).

Focus groups.

Three separate focus group sessions were held in June 2008 by Tomislav Reškovic, in Podgorica: one with primary school teachers, one with secondary school teachers, and one with parents of students taking Civic Education classes. The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed, and translated into English so that summaries could be made for this report. These summaries are found below in the section pertaining to Focus Groups.

Student survey Montenegro Civic Education May 2008

General

- A total of 456 students completed a 25-item questionnaire
- Students were in Grades 6 or 7 in elementary school, or in Years 1 or 2 in gymnasium
- They were between 12 and 17 years old.
- A 5-point Likert scale was used:
Strongly Agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree
- In addition to the overall analysis, an analysis by six sub-scales was also carried out, categorising the items by topic.

See **Annex A** for the full questionnaire and for more information; the full item-by-item statistical analysis is available from the BES on request.

Summary of Survey Findings

1. Analysis of all statements

The 25 items were deliberately “mixed up” -- not only in relation to topic but with regard to whether they were positive or negative, to avoid influencing students’ responses. Generally speaking, their responses to the items were overwhelmingly positive, with 18 of the 25 items having an item mean <2.5.⁵

Seven items received a negative response, with item means >2.5; these were items 4, 8, 15, 19, 20, 21, and 25. As noted earlier, three of these items (15, 19, and 21) could not be conclusively classified as either “positive” or “negative” statements, but for the purposes of this analysis, they were grouped with the “positive” items. This means that results for these items need to be interpreted more carefully (see below).

In addition, in 9 out of 25 cases there was a high degree of consensus among the students, with item variance scores below 1.000. For example, on items 1, 2, and 3 the item variance was respectively 0.565, 0.413, and 0.591, which means that nearly all students said that (1) they looked forward to their CE lessons; (2) their teacher usually made the lessons interesting, and that (3) they believed CE is useful for their future. Because these are the first three [positive] items on the survey, it must be assumed that – to some extent at least – students gave what they believed to be the “expected” response; later on, the responses are more varied and perhaps more spontaneous. In fact, the largest item variances occur in the latter part of the survey.

The highest item mean (3.088) and the largest item variance (2.523) were found in item 25, “The best way to assess what I have learned about Civics is by having tests”. The students were fairly evenly divided among those who “strongly agreed” or “agreed”, and those who “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that tests were the most appropriate way to assess their learning, with a small proportion (.15) neutral or undecided. Since the

⁵ See Annex A for further explanations.

interviews with teachers conducted during the field work indicate that few CE teachers actually *use* tests as a means of assessment, it is interesting that a substantial proportion of students (.43) think that testing has a place in assessing learning in CE.

Other items with relatively high item variance were item 4 (“I get bored when we talk about politics or voting”, 1.629) and item 8 (“I often talk about my CE lessons with my family”, 1.697). In each case, a sizeable proportion of students chose the “neutral” option (.25 and .24 respectively), and the proportions of “*strongly* agree” or “*strongly* disagree” responses were modest.

Analysis by Sub-scales (categories)

Six sub-scales or categories were also analysed, as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. About “Me”: | seven items | 1, 3, 4, 8, 20, 23, 25 |
| 2. About CE: | seven items | 6, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22, 24 |
| 3. About the Teacher: | four items | 2, 5, 9, 11 |
| 4. About School: | two items | 10, 13 |
| 5. About Books: | two items | 7, 17 |
| 6. About Relationships: | three items | 12, 16, 19 |

Sub-scale 1: About “Me”

Generally speaking, students think that CE lessons are enjoyable, useful, and a valuable chance to discuss and express their opinions in a relaxed environment. A proportion (.42) do get bored when the lessons are about the “mechanics” of democracy: political parties, voting, etc. (item 4), and they are luke-warm about discussing their CE lessons at home (item 8), with about one-third stating they don’t do this, and about one-quarter choosing the “neutral” option.

They think they learn more from actively discussing ideas in class than from listening and taking notes (item 20), although a relatively small proportion⁶ (.22) disagree or strongly disagree with this and feel more comfortable taking a less vocal (but still attentive) role. Most of the students (two-thirds) do say they enjoy talking about society’s problems in class (item 23). They are divided about the value of using tests as a way of assessing their learning, and indeed most CE teachers seem to avoid them.

Sub-scale 2: Students’ views about Civic Education

Again, responses are strongly positive, with most items in this category having item means well below 2.5. Students believe CE helps them to understand the way a democratic society functions (item 24), and the value of tolerance and respect for others (items 6 and 12). They don’t think CE is a waste of school time (item 14), or that it takes time away from important subjects like mathematics or science (item 22), although a small proportion (.18) is unsure about this. On the question of relevance to their own lives (item 18) they are strongly positive, with more than half (.55) asserting that CE is highly relevant to them.

⁶ Where only a small proportion of students take a contrary position – as here – this may not always be significant; it is noted for completeness, and also to indicate that perhaps a few students have a specific experience. See, for example, Item 10 (“School is a place where I feel safe”); some students were not sure (.13 chose the “neutral” option) and a few felt unsafe (.04) or very unsafe (.04).

They do not agree that “Boys are more interested in CE because they want to get jobs in the government”(Item 15), although a sizeable proportion (.26) chose the “neutral” option, and a small proportion (.14) do think boys are interested in CE because they have political aspirations. Conversely, on item 21 (“Girls get more out of CE classes than boys”) there is slightly less consensus, in that the proportions are divided: .22 strongly agree or agree; .25 are neutral; and .53 disagree or strongly disagree.(The item mean on this item is 3.466 and the variance is 1.771). Class observations during the field work did show that boys and girls participated fairly equally in discussions, although in the “poster presentations” the girls tended to be more articulate.

Sub-scale 3: Students’ views about the Teacher

Four of the survey items related to students’ perception of their teacher’s methods and attitudes.⁷ Responses were consistently favourable. Teachers usually made the lessons interesting (item 2; item mean 1.398, item variance 0.785); and encouraged students to think for themselves (item 9; item mean 1.670, item variance 0.800).

In addition, students said they enjoyed discussing their ideas with their teacher (item 5), although on this item the consensus was not as strong. A proportion of .19 chose the “neutral” option; .12 disagreed; and 0.8 strongly disagreed. Nevertheless, proportions choosing “strongly agree” (.29) and “agree” (.32) dominated. It seems that, for many students, CE lessons are a nice break from the rest of the school day, in terms of both methodology and content.

Item 11 (“My teacher does not listen to what I think”) also produced an encouraging response. A high proportion of students said they “strongly disagreed” with this statement (.50) or “disagreed” with it (.25). But of the remaining part, .10 felt strongly that their teacher did *not* listen to their ideas, while .08 were also less complimentary and 0.07 ticked the “neutral” box. This means that about one-quarter of the students⁸ still feel that their ideas are not always being heard.

Overall, however, it is clear that students feel valued by their teacher, and that they appreciate the way CE lessons help them develop and express their own ideas.

Sub-scale 4: Students’ views about the School

One objective of introducing CE into elementary schools and gimnazia is to improve the general “tone” of the school, and to make it more friendly, open, and non-violent. Two items on the survey pertained to this issue. Item 10 (“School is a place where I feel safe”) was answered positively by more than three-quarters of the students (“strongly agree”, .50; “agree”, .28). There were, however, some students who were not sure (.13 chose the “neutral” option) and even a few who felt unsafe (.04) or very unsafe (0.4). For them, coming to school was clearly not a happy experience, and their learning – or even their

⁷ In each class taking part in this survey, students were assured that the teacher would not be shown their answers, and that neither their own nor their teacher’s identity would be documented in any way.

⁸ The team did not try to discover whether this quarter was dispersed among *all* schools, or whether they predominated more in some schools than in others. However, should the BES wish to investigate this further, the statistical data might yield more information although the school-by-school compilations might be more difficult to interpret. The focus of the survey was on *individual* (subjective) responses by learners relating to *their own* teachers, not on the wider question of teacher quality.

attendance -- will be affected. Schools are doing much to reduce playground bullying, fighting and other forms of aggressive behaviour, but no child should feel frightened or belittled in school. UNICEF supports the “School without Violence” initiative in Montenegro, and -- together with CE -- this should improve matters.

On the item “My school is a more friendly place since we started to learn about Civics” (item 13), the response was positive overall, but mixed. Proportions were .37 “strongly agree”; .27 “agree”; .26 “neutral”, 0.6 “disagree” and 0.5 “strongly disagree”. While this is encouraging after only a few years of CE in schools, more still needs to be done.

For example, it was the field work team’s observation that, in a few cases, Roma students were not encouraged to participate in class, or were ignored or openly criticized by the teacher (e.g., if they did not bring a “poster” to present). They were also nearly always seated at a separate table, in one case together with the only special-needs child in the class; that group did not participate at all in the lesson.

If one purpose of CE is to “model” inclusive education in school, teachers and principals must take responsibility for ensuring that *nothing* in the way the school (or the classroom!) operates sends an overt or “hidden” discriminatory message to any child or person within the school community -- and this includes parents as well as students, teachers, and support staff.

Sub-scale 5: Students’ views about CE Materials

Two items related to the books and materials used in CE. At the time of the field work, there was a textbook for elementary school Grades 6 and 7 only; a textbook for gimnazium Grades 1 and 2 is under preparation. Items 7 and 17, therefore, were not only about books but also about other (text) materials used in CE.

The statement “The books and materials we study are difficult to understand” (item 7) produced the following statistics: item mean 1.932; item variance 1.214; and a high proportion (.79) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, meaning they did *not* find the books or materials very hard⁹. Of the remainder, .11 were “neutral” and .10 found the book or materials either difficult or very difficult to understand.

As for item 17 (“The books and materials we study in Civics lessons are interesting”), the focus was no so much on the level of difficulty, but on whether they stimulated students’ interest. This item produced the following statistics: item mean 1.815; item variance 1.000; and four-fifths of the students (.80) said they either “strongly agreed” (.48) or “agreed” that the books and materials were interesting. Only a very small proportion found them un-interesting (.04) or very un-interesting (.03) while 0.13 had no opinion one way or another. It seems, therefore, that the level and topics of the materials used in CE are well suited to the interests of most students,

However, in the teacher interviews conducted during the field work, nearly all teachers said they would welcome having a wider choice of materials; ways should be found for teachers of CE to exchange or otherwise share materials or lesson plans that have been proven successful in the classroom.

⁹ Indeed, the field work team heard many times that the book (for Grades 6 and 7) was very good, and appropriate for the age level. Students and teachers seemed to like it very much.

Sub-scale 6: Students' views about Relationships

It could be said that this group of items is aimed at the most important aspect of CE in schools – at the way people behave towards each other both inside and outside school walls.

Items 12, 16 and 19 touch on just a few of such issues. Item 12 (“Civic Education helps me to be more understanding towards people who are different from me”) received a strongly positive response. A majority of students (.58) “strongly agreed” with the statement, while .29 “agreed”. Of course, it is likely that these responses were affected by what students thought they were *expected* to say, but the high level of consensus (item variance 0.832) shows at least that students understood the statement and were familiar with the concept of tolerance. Only a small proportion either “disagreed” (.02) or “strongly disagreed” (.03), while .09 had no opinion.

Item 16 (“When I get angry with my friends I often fight with them”) was rejected by students, with a proportion of .62 “strongly disagreeing” and .22 “disagreeing”. While it has to be said that school playgrounds are not likely to be havens of peace and harmony, nor are the streets and neighbourhoods where youngsters congregate – at least the students understand that fighting is not an acceptable way to resolve conflict.

Item 19 (“People who come here from other countries should learn Montenegrin and become more like us”) turned out to be the most problematic, but also the most interesting one for the students and teachers. The statement itself was poorly formulated, because it contains two separate issues (language learning, and assimilation) and it is not clear whether “people from other countries” were those who come to Montenegro to settle, or whether it might include short-term visitors or even tourists.

A few students said they “agreed” with the first part (always assuming that it refers to longer-term settlers) but “disagreed” with the second, because they felt that everyone has a right to his or her own identity. Others agreed (or disagreed) with both parts. Therefore the statistics produced by this item should be regarded with caution. Nevertheless, the item provoked some of the most lively and revealing classroom discussions, showing that many students are ready and able to engage with complex social and political issues at a quite sophisticated level, especially those in Grades 1 or 2 of gimnazium.

Summary of Findings from the Classroom Observations

The research team visited 19 CE classes in 12 primary and 7 secondary schools. The purpose of classroom observation was to obtain a view of the teaching and learning processes in CE classrooms. The observation focused on three main aspects:

1. Classroom atmosphere and participation
2. Lesson goals and content
3. Methodology.

1. Classroom atmosphere and participation

One of the most important specific goals of CE classes is to build the environment that will stimulate and encourage students to participate actively, express their thoughts, beliefs and feelings and communicate and work with others in a productive, tolerant and mutually respectful manner. When this is achieved, CE classes are transformed into a "democracy playground" where students learn and practise values and patterns of behaviour that are crucial for a democratic society.

The key findings from the observed classes suggest that the vast majority of teachers are fully aware of the importance of this type of classroom dynamics, and that they devote a lot of their thinking and expertise to achieve it. In almost all classrooms, we saw a very good working atmosphere and it was obvious that students don't have any problems in following the rules of communication in the classroom. Students were generally interested in what was going on and motivated to do the work assigned by the teacher. The level of students' participation was rather high, and they were very often encouraged to present their views and thoughts to the others.

However, in a number of classes that were designed around various poster presentations, it was also clear that only the students who were delivering their presentations were fully engaged, while the rest of the class was more or less patiently listening and waiting for their turn, or just for the bell.

2. Lesson goals and content

Teachers of CE typically do not receive pre-service education that prepares them to teach civics. In Montenegrin primary schools, CE is taught by teachers with very diverse pre-service background and in-service experience: their main subjects include mother tongue, history, geography, foreign languages, biology, chemistry, music, arts, and even physical education. Unlike their colleagues who teach only main subjects, CE teachers need to put additional efforts in order to master the content area that is sometimes rather technical and specific.

While the majority of subject curricula in Montenegrin schools are still predominantly focused on cognitive learning goals (which is very often translated at the classroom level as information-based knowledge), CE curriculum offers the opportunity for a more balanced approach which includes development of not only cognitive, but also certain communication and social skills. One of the goals of classroom observations was to find out how seriously this opportunity is taken.

Most of observed lessons were properly integrated into the curriculum, while teachers demonstrated sound knowledge of the subject matter. However, in a few cases the observed lesson were not really a CE lesson, but a lesson in geography or some other subject that happens to be the teacher's main subject. In all these cases, teachers have not received any (or almost any) CE-related in-service training.

Almost all observed classes were designed to encourage development of various social and communication skills (group work, oral and written presentations, discussion etc.). Unfortunately, we saw very little of cognitive skills work, with virtually no critical thinking activities (problem solving, critical reading, argumentation etc.).

While most of the classes integrated various awareness-raising activities related to certain civic values, in some situations it was discouraging to see that both teachers and students were completely unaware that socially marginalized and segregated children (Roma, children with specific needs) were marginalized *even in their own classrooms*, sitting around separate tables at the far end of the classroom.

3. Methodology

The methodology of CE instruction is specific to the extent that it reflects CE's specific curricular goals. The goals of the Montenegrin CE curriculum require teaching and learning methods and strategies that will help students to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to understand their communities, and to participate in them as active and responsible citizens. The methodological framework for such goals needs to be shaped by the principles of interactive and experiential learning, skills-based strategies and the philosophy of critical thinking. While these principles were clearly reflected in most of the observed classrooms, there is still significant potential for improvement.

The vast majority of teachers used certain types of hands-on methodology, but very few of them used more than one teaching method during the whole lesson. There was a lot of group work going on in all classrooms, but often it was neither very effective nor very efficient, and did not include elements of co-operative learning. Furthermore, we saw a great many poster presentations, but very often they seemed to be goals in themselves, and not the final part of some comprehensive project or research activity. These impressions suggest that some of the teachers are more familiar with the technology of teaching methods and strategies they already use in their other classes, rather than with CE's educational philosophy and underlying purposes.

Methodology related to development of cognitive skills was very rarely used: very few teachers used some type of problem-solving or critical thinking activities. However, we had the impression that primary school teachers pay much more attention to the methodology they use in the classroom, than their secondary school colleagues do. While this is not something specific either to Montenegro or to CE, one of the reasons might be that teachers of CE in Montenegrin gymnasias received almost no training in methodology suitable for their CE classes.

Summary of Findings from the Focus Groups

Three focus group meetings were held in Podgorica on 23 and 24 June 2008. One was for primary school CE teachers, one for gimnazium CE teachers, and one for parents of students in CE classes at both levels. Each focus group consisted of 8 participants, and lasted two hours. **Teachers came from all over the country, while parents were from Podgorica and Nikšić. The discussions were recorded and transcribed, with synopses in English. The following section will summarise the key points raised by the focus groups.**

Focus Group I: Primary School Teachers

Seven topics were discussed:

1. The curriculum
2. The textbook
3. Teaching methodology
4. Assessment of students' learning
5. Teacher competence
6. Classroom environment and motivation for learning.
7. Improvement of quality.

1. The curriculum.

Overall, the primary school CE teachers considered that the curriculum was ambitious but appropriate to the subject of Civic Education, and they did not think it needed any significant change. However, they did have some concerns.

First, they said that usually they could cover only about 75-80% of the curriculum in the time available. Second, their experience was that, especially for the younger students in 6th grade, the concepts, terminology and language of CE are unfamiliar, and that some students could not cope with them. Third, they considered expectations and objectives of primary CE to be too wide-ranging and demanding, and more suitable to older students.

In discussion, however, the teachers agreed that there is enough flexibility in the curriculum for teachers to be able to decide what to cover and what not: "It is not a strict curriculum, and we can decide what is most needed and most useful." Better use of this flexibility, and better management of class time, could reduce the pressure so that those students who had difficulty understanding the material could catch up.

When asked what changes they would like to make to the curriculum, the consensus was that no fundamental changes were necessary, although the objectives could be simplified. In addition, they felt that the expectations are set a bit too high academically, given the age and abilities of children in grades 6 and 7.

2. The textbook.

Opinions about the CE textbook for primary students were mixed. Several teachers said that the language was too theoretical, and should be more suited to the children's age; and that some of the illustrations were bizarre and unrelated to the topics. Other comments were: "Not enough clear examples...too much to read, and the students don't understand...they cannot find their way around the material...with mixed-ability classes, there are always some slower learners who get lost in the sentences and the new words... it's too complicated."

In discussion, positive aspects of the textbook were also mentioned, and teachers agreed that the book is not intended to be read in class but more as a resource for students to study at home. Some parts, such as the tables and tasks and examples, are very useful; moreover, the teachers' guide is excellent and helpful for teachers.

Summing up, the group agreed that the textbook should not be treated as the main teaching material for the class. When it comes to its usability for independent learning at home, some students will find it too demanding, especially those who have difficulty reading complex texts. When asked whether the teacher could show students how to use the textbook for studying at home – for example, by explaining key concepts and systematizing them in some way -- the group still felt the material was too extensive, and that children would understand little while studying alone.

iii.

Teaching methods.

The question here was not so much for participants to say which methods they used, as for them to think about whether their methods achieved the subject goals. The group was well aware that CE requires a different approach to teaching, but admitted that, partly because of time constraints and partly because of lack of experience, they were not always able to choose the best methods to get the key CE goals across to their students. For example, it was not always possible to organise surveys or interviews outside the school in order to make the link with the local community: it required much effort. In addition, there was not enough time for activities (45 minutes per week).

Teachers said they did the best they could, varying methods as appropriate to the class and the topic, but some admitted that they tended to use the same methods they used in their main subject classes (e.g., geography or chemistry).

One insightful comment was that, by the time students reach grade 6, there is already a well-established pattern of "normal" classroom communication and behaviour, and it is not easy to create a different, more interactive climate in CE classes while all their other classes remain more traditional. But the group agreed that students enjoyed having a chance to express their opinions freely, and that it had a positive effect on their development.

They also thought that the creativity of CE classes had started to affect the teaching in the rest of the school. Colleagues started to notice that students were more interested and engaged in their learning when they had a more active role in the learning process, and some had changed their approach to teaching. On the other hand, there was still some reluctance on the part of other subject teachers to accept CE as a serious subject; some regarded it as unnecessary, and saw CE's emphasis on democracy and human/child rights as something undesirable.

iv.

Assessment.

This topic was possibly the least discussed by the group. The question was whether the teachers thought they had found the assessment method(s) *appropriate for CE* but the discussion was about the giving of marks. The impression was that the teachers were not clear what the *criteria* for CE assessment should be: what constitutes a “5” achievement, or a “3” achievement, in terms of CE objectives?

As a result, the teachers said they used a range of non-specific criteria, from preparing a good poster or being active in group work; “It sort of becomes clear as we go along”. They rarely gave bad marks (mostly 4s and 5s); “no child deserves a bad mark”. There was some sense that perhaps quarterly assessments might be reduced to end-of-term only. But there was no discussion about the wider question – whether CE requires a different way of assessing learning, and what the criteria might be.

v.

Teacher competence.

On being asked to what extent they felt they were professionally competent to teach CE, the teachers said they were quite competent as teachers, although they agreed that Civic Education did require some additional training. This particular group felt they – as “first generation” CE teachers -- had had very good CE-specific seminars and workshops, but they implied that this might not be the same for others taking up the subject later. Those with a background in the social sciences felt most comfortable teaching CE.

vi.

Classroom “climate” and motivation for learning.

See above, under “Teaching methods”. Here, the question was: to what extent teachers had managed to attain in class the atmosphere which is good for productive work, but also enables open communication patterns, not based on hierarchy but on equality? The response was mixed; some felt they had established that kind of classroom atmosphere, but others said they were not happy, and that it was difficult for one teacher to achieve such a change: “You need the whole school for that”.

vii.

Improvement of quality.

Interestingly, the group saw this question strictly in terms of improving the quality of their own *teaching*, not of improving the quality of students’ *learning*. They said that there should be a more prominent role for the Association of CE Teachers, with regular meetings and exchanges of ideas. No mention was made of how to improve students’ understanding of Civics Education in relation to their own experience, attitudes, and relationships at home, in school or in the community.

Focus Group 2: Secondary (Gimnazium) CE Teachers

The same seven topics were discussed as in Focus Group 1: the curriculum, materials, teaching methods, assessment of students' learning, teacher competence, classroom environment and motivation for learning, improvement of quality.

1. The curriculum.

The group thought that it was acceptable – it covers more or less what it should cover, and is well suited to the age of students in grades 1 and 2 of gimnazium. However, because each year new students can opt for CE, large parts of the first-year CE curriculum need to be repeated for newcomers in the second year. The group suggested having two groups – one for newcomers, and one for students who are continuing with CE after year 1.

- As with the primary school teachers, this group also felt that CE classes were so different in subject matter and approach that students had difficulty switching back and forth between these class periods and the traditional format of other curriculum subjects. “One moment they are sitting in a circle discussing their ideas, and then they leave for their Maths class, different philosophy, and in a second the school turns into a Bastille, the tread-mill of their youth.” “The whole school – the whole education system – should change.”
- A related issue was some misunderstandings on the part of other teachers in the school. “In second grade, one of the topics covered is children's rights – the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. I tell them of their rights, and they all jump up and speak all at the same time: ‘Teacher, how can you say that, our rights are not respected. It is only in your class that we can behave like this.’ I tell them: ‘You have the right to say freely what you think, provided that you don't offend anyone; you need to respect people.’ Then when I step out of the classroom, my fellow teachers say: ‘What are you telling them?’ I have that problem with my colleagues, but not with the students.”

2. Books and materials.

Because there is not (yet) a CE textbook for gimnazium, teachers have to rely on other materials, but these are not available in many schools. Lack of money is one problem; lack of suitable CE-related reading material for students is another. Many teachers bring newspaper articles or prepare their own lesson material for discussion; others use the textbook for primary school grades 6 and 7, which they find very useful.

On the other hand, the group thought there are some disadvantages in having a formal textbook for these older students; there is a risk that the subject becomes too rigidly structured, and that issues are limited to those raised in the book. “It is better for students to develop an active interest in current issues, and to seek their own answers to social and community problems.” A gimnazium-level CE textbook should not be heavily structured or give ready-made answers; it should be more like a compendium, working materials, so that students can be actively involved.

3. and 4. Teaching and assessment.

Here, the focus group was more or less in agreement with the primary teachers in focus group 1. However, in the absence of a textbook and teachers' guide, gymnasium teachers have to frame the subject themselves, and try to structure it around key topics: "Basic aspects of democracy, how decisions are made, first in their own context, local, community, school, classroom-level; what rules are to be followed in our class work, in our teaching, and even how we are to discuss things. We also have the notion of a family. How to resolve conflicts peacefully, how to take a stand in difficult situations."

As for assessment, few of the focus group participants used tests. Some saw a basic contradiction between the aim for students to become autonomous and free personalities, and the requirement to assess and give marks. "*Civics should not be graded*, except maybe by descriptive marking... To me, the 1 to 5 grades are contradictory to the Civics Education goals. Thus I abolished grading by giving everyone the same grade, the highest. If they all have the same grade, it's the same as having no grading at all...I just enter the mark every three months in all the registers, since I'm required to do so by the director. Acting on my own responsibility, I abolished grading since they all have the same grade... Then students are fully free, they may speak and write whatever they wish."

Others in the group said they based marks on behaviour in class, and on the level of participation. If a student can present a well-argued point of view, defend his ideas well, then they can get a high mark. Bad marks (= 3 or below) are very rarely given. Some also felt that if *all* students get top marks, it indicates to other teachers and to parents that CE is not a very serious subject: why are there bad or failing marks in maths, in chemistry or physics, but not in CE?

5. Teacher competence

Like the primary school teachers, this group said they were quite competent as teachers, although they agreed that Civic Education did require some additional training. Unlike their primary school counterparts, however, they did not have the same amount of preparation: "We started teaching Civics last year without having had a single hour of preparation organised by the Bureau. It will happen for the first time next April. Almost six months have elapsed since we started to implement the curriculum. The first seminar was just a general introductory seminar for teachers of all subjects, to get to know the spirit of CE. It was only the second seminar that concerned active teaching methodology and planning the reformed systems, but again it was universal for teachers of *all* subjects. We had no training concerning active teaching methodology related to CE."

6. Classroom "climate" and motivation for learning.

The response was mixed; some felt they had established an open and relaxed classroom atmosphere, but others said that it was difficult for one teacher to achieve this in a school environment that remains traditional. They also felt that teachers of other subjects resented the fact that many students were opting for CE: "Physics, chemistry and maths teachers are losing classes, and sociologists have extra...they also don't like the fact that we discuss student rights, and that as a result some students will challenge the teacher if they disagree with something." Some colleagues also think that CE is "a second-rank subject, lower class" and that students choose CE just because it is "a lesser evil" than maths or physics or chemistry., that it is an easier option, and to some extent this is true.

7. Improvement of quality.

This group thought that more CE-specific professional development was needed, as well as more help in making a range of learning materials available – not necessarily a textbook only, but perhaps other readings related to specific topics in the CE curriculum. (Note that, as with Focus Group 1, this group responded to this question *only* in terms of improving *teaching*, not student learning.)

Focus Group 3: Parents

This group consisted of parents of both primary and gimnazium-level students. The discussion focussed on four issues:

- 1) How happy the parents were that their child has a subject called Civic Education;
- 2) To what extent the values promoted in CE coincide with their family values and the way they bring up their child, or whether there was some conflict;
- 3) To what extent the teaching of CE meets their expectations;
- 4) What they see as positive, and what as negative aspects of CE.

Not surprisingly, the response of parents of primary school (grade 6 and 7) students differed in some ways from the response of parents of older gimnazium students. In relation to question 1, parents of primary school children felt that the curriculum – especially aspects of the workings of the state, government, concepts of democracy etc., were too “serious” for their age, and that the language and terminology used in the textbook were too hard for them to grasp. Some felt that, at this level, CE should focus on family and school; and that perhaps it would be better to integrate CE with similar subjects, and introduce the more difficult concepts gradually.

However, others disagreed and said that much depended on the teacher: “Civics has improved the quality of not only the teaching, but the kids. That is my impression, but that can depend on the teacher. Maybe that is the reason for my different impression. I think children were very happy. It is not a subject where one should follow the book closely, to learn by rote, but they give proposals, they have some insights, have some correlation, if this is so then *why* it is so, etc. I think it is very good and if I like anything about the reformed school then it's Civic Education. Especially having in mind all the things we have gone through, after all the things that have shaken the country, after all the burdens we have placed on the shoulders of our kids, I think it is very nice to learn they are the same, equal, how much they need to respect each other.”

In relation to question 2, one participant said: “Regardless of us all living here within the town, they are not the children of the same parents. We are all different as parents and we won't all teach our children the same things. Not all have the same value systems and we do not all believe in justice, freedom and equality. I am absolutely in favour of this subject and it is quite possible it depends on the teacher, on the disposition of power, on the child itself, but I think this subject can help a lot to be able to cope with conflict situations and overcome certain difficulties.” The parents agreed with the underlying principles and values of CE, and particularly liked the emphasis on non-violence and conflict resolution. They said CE builds self-confidence, individuality and intellectual abilities such as reasoning, and helps to counteract xenophobia.

Others felt that parents expected perhaps too much from Civic Education: “No subject was ever expected to have such a strong impact in primary or secondary school as was the case with Civics. This subject is to fill every gap in upbringing that we working with older kids miss. At this point I can’t criticize because this is only the second year of Civics in schools, but I just hope -- and still have the same expectations -- that it is to make an amazing link between what they learn at school and real life.”

With regard to **question 3**, the quality of teaching, the lack of teacher preparation was an issue: “They just assigned CE to teachers who did not have a full workload”, on the assumption that any well-prepared teacher (in any subject) could teach CE. As a result, some gymnasium-level parents said their children were disappointed, and wished they had chosen another foreign language (or other elective) rather than CE .

“Teachers often behave as if they are teaching their main subject, or, if they try to do something different, classes become disorganised and discipline is lacking.... But they are not really to blame, because many were assigned to teach CE as an extra, just to meet the work load requirements. The true shape of the subject, the one we dreamed of and wished to see as a follow-up to their home upbringing, the values and all things that values imply, I’m afraid the students can’t get as yet.”

When asked (**question 4**) what could be improved, the group had several important ideas. What CE’s main objective should be, given the 70 hours of classroom time, is to teach students to be “*humane* in the widest sense of the word”; to resolve conflicts without resorting to force; to be proud of their country’s history but respectful of others. One parent said: “I’d really like [CE] to teach him to open up, to feel the freedom of expression. It seems to me children are not relaxed enough yet, that there are still those who keep trying to be heard, and nobody listens to them. Here, I’d like you to work on what I’ve missed, to relax him. No one taught me that, and I was always told to keep quiet and to study. That is what was omitted from my education and I’d like a Civics teacher to carry that out. To have a clash of opinions in these classes, some kids to open up and all kids to speak. That’s something I consider very important.”

Summary of Findings from Teacher Interviews

The research team interviewed 19 teachers of CE in primary and secondary schools. The interviews were typically conducted immediately after the class observation.

The interviews were structured around teachers' views of the following:

1. Curriculum
2. Textbook and teaching materials
3. Teaching methodology they use
4. How they assess students' performance
5. CE-related in-service training
6. Status of CE in the school and its potential impact on students and school life
7. How to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their CE classrooms.

1. Curriculum

Most of the teachers think that the curriculum is adequate in the terms of goals and topic areas it covers, and that the content is generally appropriate to the age of students. They also see the optional part of the curriculum (20% of the curriculum content is left to be shaped by teachers and schools) as an excellent opportunity to introduce additional topic areas that are relevant to the students and their local communities. Many of the teachers interviewed said that they particularly appreciate the "open" character of the curriculum which is not over-regulated and leaves enough space for their professional freedom and creativity.

At the same time, a significant number of teachers (particularly from primary schools) feel that certain topics and concepts are too demanding, and sometimes excessively "theoretical" for the age group.

When asked what was the percentage of the CE curriculum they manage to cover, most of them said that it was between 70 and 80 percent. Those who said that they covered it completely, admitted that they had to "run" through it on a very superficial level. It was also pointed out that continuous use of inter-active methodology requires significantly more classroom time than simple lecturing, and that teachers are very often forced to choose either to teach inter-actively or to cover the curriculum content entirely.

Almost all secondary school teachers said they were confused by the significant overlap of the curriculum content in grades I and II, and that they were not sure what to do about that.

2. Textbook and teaching materials

The majority of primary school teachers are generally satisfied with the textbook quality. However, there is also some degree of consensus that the textbook is not very useful *during* the classes, since it lacks the material (texts, exercises, assignments etc.) that might be stimulating for "hands-on" work and discussions. Therefore most of the teachers prepare their own teaching materials, which is a very demanding task if we have in mind the scarcity of available resources and the workload of the average teacher.

This is even more so in secondary schools, since there is no CE textbook for secondary level at all. Some teachers perceive it as a major obstacle for quality teaching and

learning, some use the primary school textbook, while a few take the situation as an additional opportunity to be creative and autonomous.

3. Methodology

Virtually all interviewed teachers were completely aware that appropriate methodology is crucial for effective teaching and learning in CE. When asked if they managed to find an adequate methodological framework, they answered more or less positively. At the same time all of them said that they would need more training and professional support related particularly to this issue.

A significant number of teachers pointed out that 45-minute classes are too short and therefore very discouraging for regular use of inter-active teaching and learning strategies.

The dominant methodological pattern consists of various types of group work, presentations, very loosely structured discussions and introductory lectures. Besides that, some teachers use different project and research activities (even field research) in a very thoughtful way.

4. Assessment

The issue of assessment raised many important and interesting points. It can be concluded that, generally speaking, teachers assess their students' performance rather intuitively and very often informally. When asked what and how they assess, most of them mentioned students' participation and behaviour in class, individual or group presentations, and homework assignments. Very few use tests or formal oral examinations. It is not clear how they actually assess students' cognitive performance, for example, their understanding of key concepts.

They also pointed out that assessment is very often the most troublesome and frustrating part of their work. They feel that they do not have a clear picture of what needs to be assessed and how, and that they are not able to define assessment criteria. Some of them believe that assessment which results in marks is completely inappropriate for the subject. Virtually all teachers use only upper part of the marking scale (3-5).

5. In-service training

Primary school teachers were generally satisfied with the CE-related training they received. Most of them think that the seminars they attended were very useful for their everyday work. Teachers from the secondary schools are in a quite different situation, since they have not received any (or almost any) significant CE-related training. There was a high degree of consensus among all teachers that additional training is needed, preferably through continuous professional development. Most needed areas are methodology and assessment.

6. Status and impact

All the teachers said that their school principals support CE in general. However, there are still schools where CE classes are always scheduled at the end of the shift, while in very few schools teachers have the opportunity for 90-minute classes.

Almost all teachers said that the attitude of their colleagues towards CE has evolved from mostly negative to mildly positive. Nevertheless, in most of the schools CE is still perceived as less demanding and less important than "serious" subjects (mathematics, science, history etc.).

When asked whether they noticed any impact of CE on students, most of them answered positively. In their opinion, CE influenced the way they communicate with each other, students became more open-minded and active, and more assertive about their needs and rights. Other teachers also very often mention the latter, and some of them see it as a negative influence of CE.

In relation to the potential impact of CE on whole-school ethos, very few teachers were able to answer positively. It is a general perception among the CE teachers that it would be too ambitious to expect any significant change after 2 or 3 years.

7. Quality issues

When asked what could be done to raise the quality of CE, there was a consensus on two things. The first one is further CE-related training. The second one is networking and sharing of experiences, ideas, and best practices. Many teachers mentioned the need to share teaching materials and lesson scenarios, while some would welcome the opportunity to observe other teachers' classes.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX A: Student Survey Questionnaire and Analysis

ANNEX B: Classroom Observation protocol (Sample)

ANNEX C: Teacher interview framework (Sample)

Student Survey Questionnaire and Analysis

General

- A total of 456 students completed the questionnaire
- Students were in Grades 6 or 7 in elementary school, or in Years 1 or 2 in gymnasium
- They were between 12 and 17 years old.
- There were 25 items on the questionnaire
- A 5-point Likert scale was used: Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree
- Positive and negative items were deliberately mixed up, as follows:

Positive: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 23, 24, (15), (19), (21)

Negative: 4, 7, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 25

(Brackets indicate items that cannot easily be classified as “positive” or “negative”; thus they cannot be interpreted in the simple way other items are and need more care. For purposes of analysis, however, these items have been classified as “positive”.)

- Positive statements are calculated with STRONGLY AGREE = 1, AGREE=2, etc.
- Negative statements are calculated with STRONGLY AGREE = 5, AGREE=4, etc.

Therefore a mean score <2.5 always indicates a positive response.

The ‘Item Var(iance)’ indicates the dispersion of responses – low numbers indicate a high degree of consensus.

An analysis by six sub-scales was also carried out, categorising the items by topic:

1. About “Me”: items 1, 3, 4, 8, 20, 23, 25
2. About CE: items 6, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22, 24
3. About the Teacher: items 2, 5, 9, 11
4. About School: items 10, 13
5. About Books: items 7, 17
6. About Relationships: items 12, 16, 19

Item analysis was done using ITEMAN software version 3.6, using its conventional Item and Test Analysis program.

ANNEX A cont.

“What do You Think?”

We want to know how you think and feel about your Civic Education lessons.

Here there are 25 statements. Read each one *carefully* then just tick (✓) the answer that is *closest* to your own feelings.

Don't worry - this is not a test. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

	Strongly agree ☺	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	☹ Strongly disagree
1. I look forward to my Civic Education lessons.					
2. My teacher usually makes Civics lessons interesting					
3. Learning about Civics is useful for my future.					
4. I get bored when we talk about politics or voting.					
5. The students in my class like to discuss their opinions with the teacher.					
6. Because of Civic Education I understand more about how I can help my country be a peaceful place.					
7. The books and materials we study are difficult to understand.					
8. I often talk about my Civic Education lessons with my family.					
9. My teacher helps me to think for myself.					
10. School is a place where I feel safe.					
11. My teacher does not listen to what I think.					
12. Civic Education helps me to be more understanding towards people who are different from me.					
13. My school is a more friendly place since we started to learn about Civics.					
14. Civic Education lessons are a waste of school time.					
15. Boys are more interested in Civics Education because they want to get jobs in the government.					
16. When I get angry with my friends I often fight with them.					
17. The books and materials we study in Civics lessons are interesting.					
18. What I learn in Civic Education class has nothing to do with my own life.					
19. People who come here from other countries should learn Montenegrin and become more like us.					
20. I learn more from listening and taking notes than from discussing ideas in class."					
21. Girls get more out of Civics classes than boys.					
22. We should spend more time on important subjects like mathematics or science and less on Civics.					
23. I enjoy discussing society's problems in Civics classes.					
24. I know more about how democracy works because of my Civics lessons.					
25. The best way to assess what I have learned about civics is by having tests.					

Thank you.

Summary of Survey Findings

1. Analysis of all statements

The students' responses to the items were overwhelmingly positive, with 18 of the 25 items having an item mean <2.5.

Seven items received a negative response, with item means >2.5; these were items 4, 8, 15, 19, 20, 21, and 25. As noted earlier, three of these items (15, 19, and 21) could not be conclusively classified as either "positive" or "negative" statements, but for the purposes of this analysis, they were grouped with the "positive" items. This means that results for these items need to be interpreted more carefully (see below).

In addition, in 9 out of 25 cases there was a high degree of consensus among the students, with item variance scores below 1.000. For example, on items 1, 2, and 3 the item variance was respectively 0.565, 0.413, and 0.591, which means that nearly all students said that (1) they looked forward to their CE lessons; (2) their teacher usually made the lessons interesting, and that (3) they believed CE is useful for their future. Because these are the first three [positive] items on the survey, it must be assumed that – to some extent at least – students gave what they believed to be the "expected" response; later on, the responses are more varied and perhaps more spontaneous. In fact, the largest item variances occur in the latter part of the survey.

The highest item mean (3.088) and the largest item variance (2.523) were found in item 25, "The best way to assess what I have learned about Civics is by having tests". The students were fairly evenly divided among those who "strongly agreed" or "agreed", and those who "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" that tests were the most appropriate way to assess their learning, with a small proportion (.15) neutral or undecided. Since the interviews with teachers conducted during the field work indicate that few CE teachers actually *use* tests as a means of assessment, it is interesting that a substantial proportion of students (.43) think that testing has a place in assessing learning in CE.

Other items with relatively high item variance were item 4 ("I get bored when we talk about politics or voting", 1.629) and item 8 ("I often talk about my CE lessons with my family", 1.697). In each case, a sizeable proportion of students chose the "neutral" option (.25 and .24 respectively), and the proportions of "*strongly agree*" or "*strongly disagree*" responses were modest.

Analysis by Sub-scales (categories)

As noted earlier, six sub-scales or categories were also analysed, as follows:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. About “Me”: | seven items | 1, 3, 4, 8, 20, 23, 25 |
| 2. About CE: | seven items | 6, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22, 24 |
| 3. About the Teacher: | four items | 2, 5, 9, 11 |
| 4. About School: | two items | 10, 13 |
| 5. About Books: | two items | 7, 17 |
| 6. About Relationships: | three items | 12, 16, 19 |

The results of this sub-scale level analysis are included in the text of this report, above.

EXAMPLE OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

CE EVALUATION CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (Primary school)

JVC			NO	To a certain extent	YES	NOTES
		Primary grade 7. 24 students; 11 girls, 13 boys. There are 5 groups, more or less mixed M/F although two groups are single-sex (one group = boys only and one = girls only). Teacher is enthusiastic.				The lesson plan is well worked out. The groups have previously been asked to investigate a current issue in the local community (e.g., employment, poverty, road safety..) and this time they present their findings; and then are asked to propose possible „solutions“.
	1.	Students participate actively, not just receptively			√	
	2.	Students speak freely and spontaneously, not only when asked by teacher		√		
	3.	Students respect the basic rules of classroom communication			√	
	4.	There is an appropriate working atmosphere in the classroom			√	
	5.	Students are interested in lesson and motivated for learning		√-----→	√	Not during the first, „rehearsed“ presentations, but later when they work in groups, yes.

PARTICIPATION AND CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE						
	6.	Lesson fits properly into the curriculum framework			√	
	7.	Lesson encourages development of various cognitive skills		√----->	√	
	8.	Lesson encourages development of various communication and social skills			√	
	9.	Lesson includes raising			√	Social awareness in connection with their

LESSON GOALS AND CONTENT		awareness/sensitivity related to various social problems and civic values				investigations about local problems/issues, e.g. poverty - they have discovered that there are about 250 economically & socially disadvantaged families in Kolasin, and that poverty affects children and the elderly in particular.
	10.	Amount and type of information presented during the lesson is appropriate			√	These students could probably do more – concepts, ideas.....
	11.	Teacher has good knowledge of the subject matter content and how to teach it		??		Can't tell specifically about CE, but it is obvious that she has a great deal of teaching experience.
METHODOLOGY	12.	Teacher uses multiple instruction methods during the lesson		√		
	13.	Teacher, besides the textbook, uses other teaching materials		√		
	14.	Methods used in the classroom are appropriate to students age and lesson goals			√	
	15.	Teacher uses "hands-on" methods			√	
	16.	Teacher uses methods that encourage students to express their thoughts, beliefs and feelings			√	Apart from the initial team „presentations“, which are very rehearsed and staged and therefore rather boring for the others, she then asks the students to

						work on their proposed solutions <u>in class</u> and then present their ideas.
	17.	Teacher uses problem-solving methods			√	To some extent at least but it is still more about „identifying“ problems than about solving them.
	18.	Teacher uses cooperative learning methods		√		Not in the strict sense of „co-operative“ learning but the in-class group work is very good.

Notes: A refreshing change from the usual prepared poster sessions...some of the work is done in-class, and the children do discuss and exchange ideas, and even „vote“ on their preferred solutions. They seem very engaged in their work.

Interview protocol with teachers of Civic Education

1. What is your main subject?
2. How many hours a week do you teach CE?
3. Are there other CE teachers in your school?

. CURRICULUM:

1. What do you think of the curriculum?
2. How much of the content can you actually cover? [%]
3. Are some parts too demanding for the students?
4. Which ones?
5. What do the kids enjoy most?

B. TEXTBOOK AND Learning/Teaching Support Materials

1. Is the textbook useful for you? In what way?
2. How do you use it?
3. Are the language and topics appropriate for the students?
4. Do you use other learning/teaching support materials?
5. Which ones?
6. Would it help to have more?

C. METHODOLOGY:

1. Classroom methods?
2. What works best?
3. Would you find it better to have more class time for discussion?

D. ASSESSMENT:

- 1 What do you assess?
2. How?
3. What is the range of grades you use [3-4-5?]

E. WHAT IS THE PERCEPTION OF CE IN THE SCHOOL?

1. How do you think the principal perceives it?
2. Does the principal influence the timetable, so that 90-minute classes are possible?
3. When are [most] CE classes scheduled...at the end of the shift?
4. How do other teachers perceive CE?
5. Do you notice any effects of CE teaching/learning in school life?
6. If yes, what sort of evidence is there?

F. IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING:

1. Did you receive any in-service training for Civic Education?
2. What kind?
3. Do you think you need more?
4. What kind?

G. NEEDS:

1. Are there any obstacles you face that could be removed?
2. What would be of most help to you? For example,
 - Co-operation with other teachers
 - Networking
 - Sharing materials
 - Association of CE Teachers
 - Other:

NOTES: