

# DEMOCRATIC THINKING AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN GREECE: AN ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODEL

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents a research that was carried out in autumn of 2021 in Thessaloniki, Greece. Main purpose was to find out the link between democratic behavior of Greek young adults and the civic education that is obtained in public secondary education. For this reason, 524 students of the department of political sciences were asked questions regarding their points of view on civic education in public schools. This sample was chosen due to the political sensitization they have, because of their main field of studies. The results showed the emphasis they pose on public schools as far as the political education is concerned. Moreover, views that politicization is connected with peer groups and watching TV were refuted.

**Keywords:** Democratic Behavior, Greek Educational System, Secondary Education, Civic Education, Students, Ordinal Regression.

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## INTRODUCTION

Significant socio-political changes are in line with the expectations of the citizen's education. For example, the expansion of suffrage in the 19th and 20th centuries has prompted national governments to adopt or adapt citizenship education to prepare people for their new role as citizens and to instill a renewed sense of status of the citizen (Filzmaier 2007; Heater 2011).

Citizenship education is not the only educational field used by governments to achieve specific social and political goals, but it is a candidate for goals directly related to a benevolent state, such as encouraging and motivating citizens to bring social and personal responsibility for their actions, to participate in political affairs or to obey the law. Therefore, the content of the curriculum of citizen education is a sensitive issue that needs careful analysis.

As far as educational policy in the European Union is concerned, relevant data were grouped according to predefined criteria related to the four areas of citizenship skills (effective and constructive interaction with others, critical thinking, acting in a socially responsible manner, and acting in a democratic manner) (Council of Europe 2010).

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The first thing that can be noted is that an effort is being made to cover all four skills of citizenship in all education systems of EU. The second important observation is that the degree of coverage of these skills varies. Thus, in primary education, there is a relatively greater emphasis on "effective and constructive interaction with others". This skill is related to students' personal development and interpersonal relationships. According to a grouping of the Eurydice network, this skill has a value of 282, i.e., it appears 282 times in national curricula in Europe. It is not surprising that "critical thinking" and "democratic action" do not have a prominent place in the curricula of primary education. Those in charge of educational policy seem to "distribute" the content of the citizen's education in the various educational levels according to the cognitive abilities of the students, which, of course, develop during the school years (Eurydice 2017).

Democratic action, which involves knowledge of the country's political institutions and the importance of participation, including at the school level, is a skill best suited for older students. Likewise, critical thinking presupposes the ability of analytical thinking, a skill more developed in older students. Alternative explanations are also plausible because educational authorities set different goals for educating the citizen (European Commission 2009b). For example, it makes sense to provide students with knowledge so that they can behave democratically towards the end of secondary education, which normally defines the end of compulsory education, since at that age students gain the right to vote in the country's elections. Similarly, educators may want to teach younger students how to behave towards their fellow human beings and how to act in a socially acceptable and responsible way, so that they instill the corresponding values deep inside them.

The democratic act is the most "political" of the four skills. It contains dimensions related to the institutions of democracy as well as their practical implementation. Encouraging students to participate is present in all curricula of most European education systems (EACEA/Eurydice 2012a). In this way, Political Education in Europe tends not only to teach theoretical knowledge about democracy, but also to encourage students to become active citizens who are involved in public and political affairs. Along with "participation" as a general concept, a narrower category (knowledge of participation in civil society) was added in order to further encourage students to actively participate in civil society. The results show that this is the exception rather than the rule. Only 7 curricula report it at the primary level. The number is rising to the upper levels (13 for the lower secondary, 18 for the upper and 15 for the vocational) but remains a minority of education systems (European Commission 2009a).

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As far as Greece is concerned, after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, for reasons related to the political situation, new conceptions of education came to light. The change of government will bring citizenship education back to primary and secondary education and it will continue to be taught to this day with various modifications and changes.

"Citizen Education" is the dominant model of political education during the post-war period - and until 1982 -, since the adoption of other proposals was not realized, due to political changes and social conditions. The main goal was the national proselytism, the political mindset of the students, the strengthening of the relationship with the nation, the homeland and the Greek-Christian culture. The aims and objectives of the course began to differ with the reform of 1976 and significantly after 1982, where the transition to a different model of political education that approaches the standard of social studies is attempted. Thus, issues of socio-political interest and reflection are analyzed and the education of the student is promoted through practice and experience. It remains, however, the model of the "good and right citizen" that fits harmoniously into social and political life (Karakatsani 2004).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the emphasis was mainly on knowledge of the legal framework of society and its political structures and consequently in the legal dimension of citizenship, a fact which promoted the model of participatory democracy. In the curricula of this period the relevant courses are referred to as law and political science courses and their teaching is assigned to legal and political scientists, a new specialty of teaching staff that was added to secondary education in the 1980s.

From time to time the course received the following names: "Duties of the Good Citizen, Duties and Rights of the Constitutional Citizen, Citizen Education, National and Social Education, State Education, Elements of Democracy and Law, Social and Political Education, Principles of Political Science Elements of a Democratic State ". And later "Introduction to law and political institutions (YA C2 / 6953/1997 Government Gazette 1057 / 1-12-1997) and today with the name" Politics and Law "(Government Gazette 2299 / τ.Β 27-10- 2009 with YA 128416 / Γ2 / 19-10-2009), "Political Education", "Modern Citizen" for lower high school and "Social and Political Education" for upper high School.

The disturbances that characterized the history of the Greek state and democracy, were also reflected in the education of the citizen: changes in the title of the subject, in the teaching

hours and in the content of the school knowledge, highlighting the dependence of the course on the socio-political and ideological context (EACEA/Eurydice 2012b).

At secondary level a significant number of national curricula also cover issues related to international organizations, especially in the EU, international agreements, especially UN agreements, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (knowledge of international organizations), agreements and declarations. It is surprising that the above skill is not included in the educational systems under consideration. The reason is probably that not all countries are members of the EU (Centre for Social and Economic Research (CASE) 2009).

Civic education occupies a more or less stable position in the timetable programs of the education system that is, two to three hours per week, in primary and secondary education. This course is offered in the last two grades of elementary school, and in the last grade of lower high school (gymnasium) and in first grade of high school (lyceum) (Karakatsani 2005) as an autonomous and independent course.

However, it seems that citizenship education is a field that is still under discussion and that is constantly being enriched, transformed and evolved. Since the mid-1990s, special emphasis has been placed on civic education and concerns have been raised about the interpretation of citizenship, and traditional forms of political education have been challenged in relation to the desired civic model (Karakatsani 2005). In the context of this reflection in the European Union, through a series of texts and instructions, the elements that should be included are sought, in order to achieve the political and social education of the citizen (transmission of data-knowledge, cultivation of values, formation of consciences). In the Green Paper and specifically in Art. 126 indicates that: "Education systems [...] must [...] shape young people on the principles of democracy, the fight against inequality, tolerance and respect for diversity. They must also instill in them the idea of a European citizen. In this context, the reference to Europe is a dimension that does not replace the other dimensions of education but that enriches them" (Nikolaou, 2006 p. 448).

Having the above information in mind, main purpose of this paper is to find out the relation between democratic behavior and civic education in public Greek schools. More specifically, the research focuses on students' points of view regarding the knowledge they gained during their school years and the impact it had in the formation of their attitude towards democracy and its procedures.

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#### **Research Methodology**

A questionnaire was used as a means of data collection. Particular importance was given to maximizing the validity of the research tool. For the final configuration of the content of the questionnaire, the critical remarks of Greek and foreign experts in matters of political education were taken into account (Hoskins & Mascherini 2009). The test application of the questionnaire to a small sample of students (25 people) aimed to assess the time required to complete the process, to identify any difficulties of young people in understanding the questions and to identify any shortcomings of the questionnaire. After the adaptations, the final questionnaire was distributed to 524 students approximately. The questionnaire used is divided into six sections, which consist of closed-ended questions. Beyond these sections there are questions related to some demographic data (Papaoikonomou 2020). In the first section

(A) the views of the respondents are asked regarding the subject of political education in the school, its possibilities and its place in the timetable. In the second section

(B) the questions aim at the detailed recording of the reasons for the existence of the course, always according to the point of view of the respondent. Emphasis was placed on its advantages and disadvantages, as well as on its existing teaching framework. The third section

(C) concerns the importance of the lesson for the politicization of the individual but also the attitude of the teachers, in the view of the students towards this lesson. The questions of the fourth section

(D) relate to the emphasis placed on the respondent's school in relation to political education. The personal experiences of each student and the general skills he / she acquired were requested. The questions of the fifth section

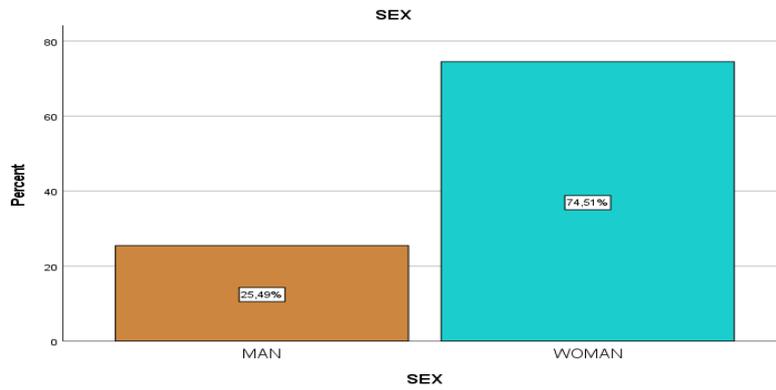
(E) were about being born, what students should learn in school and, finally, in the last sixth

(G) section asked the views of students in relation to the good citizen and the emphasis to be given.

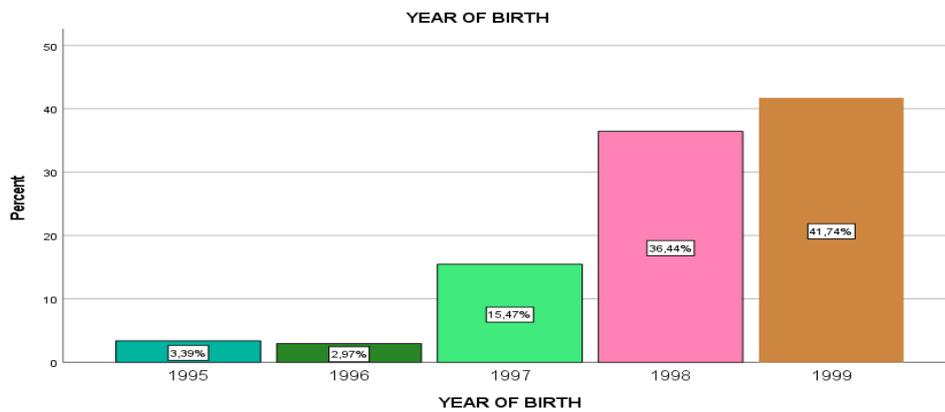
#### **Sample Characteristics**

The participants in the study were 524 students from the department of political sciences of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. About 74.5 per cent were women and about 25.5 per cent were men.

Graph 1. The sex of the respondents

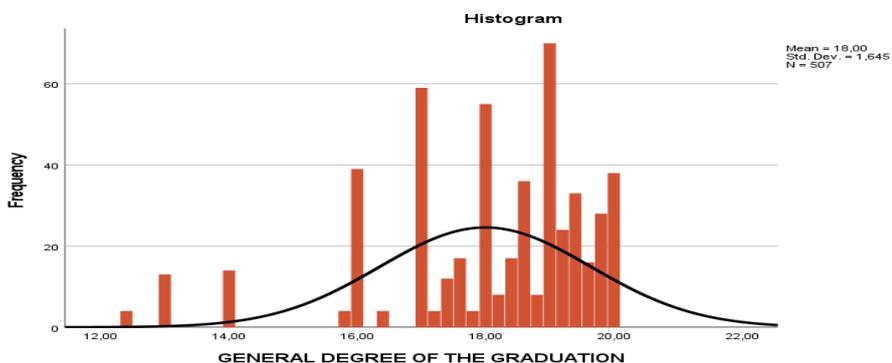


Graph 2. The birth year of the respondents



As far as the degree of graduation, we can observe that the majority of the students who participated in this research received excellent marks, a fact that shows their consistency and diligence. It has to be noted that the range of grades in Greek educational system is from 1 to 20.

Graph 3. Degree of graduation



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#### Ordinal Logistic Regression Model

Logistic Regression is a technique designed to perform data analysis related to the study and prediction of values of a categorical dependent variable and uses quantitative and qualitative independent variables. The study of the relationship of the categorical dependent variable cannot be performed through the Linear Regression algorithm for two main reasons.

- First, when we predict the values of a categorical dependent variable, we are essentially calculating the probability with which the dependent variable will receive a particular value. The value of this probability should, by definition, take values between 0 and 1. Using Linear Multiple Regression, probability values greater than 1 or less than 0, i.e., inverse, can be calculated.

- Second, the multiple linear regression must satisfy the assumption of equality of variations. However, if the dependent variable is dichotomous, it has a standard deviation (St dev)  $(p)(1-p)$ , where  $p$  is the mean value of the variable. Due to the functional relationship of the standard deviation to the mean, the homogeneity of the value variation of the dependent variable cannot be satisfied.

The defining feature of the logistic model is that increasing one of the independent variables multiplies the probabilities of the given result at a constant rate, with each independent variable having its own parameter. for a binary dependent variable, this generalizes the probability ratio.

#### Results

First, we go to the first table Model Fitting Information and consider the value of Sig. in the last column (specifically the price in the last line, which corresponds to the model). We want this price be less than 0.05 for its model to be statistically significant linear regression. In our example, this value is  $0.000 < 0.05$  and we conclude that the model is statistically significant.

The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients table gives us the value as well as the corresponding p-value of the  $2 \times X$  statistic to check that the overall model is statistically significant. That is, it is the equivalent of the F-test of linear regression. We observe that the p-value is less than 0.05 therefore the model is statistically significant.

**Table 1.** Model fitting information

Model Fitting Information				
Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	986,067			
Final	534,165	451,901	31	,000

Link function: Logit.

**Table 2.** Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

Omnibus Test <sup>a</sup>			
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	Df	Sig.	
259,562	20	,000	

Dependent Variable: Democratic Behavior

The Parameter estimates table (Table 5) is the most important part of our analysis, telling us specifically about the relationship between our explanatory variables and the outcome. Here, we have the regression coefficients and significance tests for each of the independent variables in the model. The regression coefficients are literally interpreted as the predicted change in log odds of being in a higher (as opposed to a lower) group/category on the dependent variable (controlling for the remaining independent variables) per unit increase on the independent variable. We interpret a positive Estimate (b) in the following way: For every unit increase on an independent variable, there is a predicted increase (of a certain amount) in the log odds of falling at a higher level of the dependent variable. More generally, this indicates that as scores increase on an independent variable, there is an increased probability of falling at a higher level on the dependent variable. Significant predictors of the importance of civic education are highlighted in the following table (The numbers that follow friends, pc and newspapers variables mean: 1=every day, 2=2-3 times a week, 3=once a week, 4=2-3 times a month, 5=rarely or never. Regarding the other independent variables, the scale goes from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. As far as father education is concerned each number shows a higher level beginning with totally illiterate level).

**Parameter Estimates**

Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	Df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval
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						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Threshold	[Democratic behavior= 1]	-30,615	2,530	146,419	1	,000	-35,574	-25,656
	[Democratic behavior= 2]	-28,224	2,365	142,392	1	,000	-32,860	-23,588
	[Democratic behavior= 3]	-25,201	2,320	117,957	1	,000	-29,749	-20,653
	[Democratic behavior= 4]	-19,539	2,219	77,514	1	,000	-23,888	-15,189
Location	Grade	,054	,121	,202	1	,653	-,183	,291
	[friends=1]	-17,477	,732	569,941	1	,000	-18,912	-16,042
	[friends=2]	-16,433	,704	544,553	1	,000	-17,813	-15,053
	[tv=1]	-,712	,491	2,099	1	,147	-1,674	,251
	[tv=2]	-1,242	,526	5,576	1	,018	-2,272	-,211
	[tv=3]	,538	,620	,753	1	,386	-,677	1,752
	[tv=4]	-2,133	,801	7,096	1	,008	-3,703	-,564
	[it must be taught as a special course=2]	-2,948	,797	13,682	1	,000	-4,510	-1,386
	[it must be taught as a special course=3]	-12,886	,522	30,543	1	,000	-3,910	-1,863
	[teaching of civic education is very important=1]	8,754	1,020	73,689	1	,000	-10,753	-6,755
	[teaching of civic education is very important=3]	5,094	,618	67,976	1	,000	-6,305	-3,883
	[teaching of civic education is very important=4]	-2,965	,376	62,333	1	,000	-3,701	-2,229
	[Autonomous critical thinking=2]	,761	,645	1,393	1	,238	-,503	2,026
	[Autonomous critical thinking=3]	-2,357	,541	18,993	1	,000	-3,418	-1,297
	[Autonomous critical thinking=4]	12,965	,547	29,363	1	,000	-4,038	-1,893
	[Students should learn to be obedient citizens=1]	-1,243	,796	2,438	1	,118	-2,805	,318
	[Students should learn to be obedient citizens=3]	-1,859	,449	17,183	1	,000	,980	2,738
	[Students should learn to be obedient citizens=4]	-1,867	,509	13,481	1	,000	,871	2,864
	[Significance of the vote=1]	-4,260	1,799	5,609	1	,018	-7,785	-,734
	[Significance of the vote=2]	-,928	1,558	,354	1	,552	-3,982	2,127
[Significance of the vote=3]	,346	,587	,348	1	,556	-,804	1,495	

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[Significance of the vote=4]	-1,995	,381	27,462	1	,000	-2,741	-1,249
[Participation in peaceful protests=1]	-3,222	1,419	5,157	1	,023	-6,004	-,441
[Participation in peaceful protests=2]	2,587	,690	14,065	1	,000	1,235	3,940
[Participation in peaceful protests=3]	,208	,445	,218	1	,641	-,665	1,080
[Participation in peaceful protests=4]	1,111	,456	5,952	1	,015	,219	2,004

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Link function: Logit.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

More specifically, there is a negative relation between democratic behavior and frequent meetings with friends. For every unit increase on every day or once or twice a week meetings with friends there is a predicted decrease of 17.4% and 16.4% respectively in the log odds of being in a higher level of the dependent variable, that is of learning the democratic behavior by the means of civic education in schools.

On the other hand, rare TV watching seems to have a negative effect on democratic behavior since for every unit increase of TV watching there is a decrease in the log odds of civic education as being a means of learning active democratic participation in schools. Moreover, students do not think that democratic learning can be taught by means of a special course in schools. For every unit increase on disagreement regarding civic education as a procedure taught by means of a special course there is a decrease 12% in the log odds of democratic learning in schools. On the other hand, students believe that civic education is very important, since for every unit increase on agreement with this statement there is an 8% increase in the log odds of learning about democracy in public schools.

The fact that the students think very high of civic education as a learning procedure in public schools can be observed in the following finding: autonomous critical thinking is strengthened in public schools by the means of civic education. For every unit increase on agreement with the above statement there is a 12% increase in the contribution of civic education in strengthening democratic behavior of the future citizens. The same applies with obedience; it is connected with the subject of civic education but in a lesser degree. For every unit increase on the agreement of the necessity of students being obedient there is a 1.8% increase in the log odds of the importance of civic education in schools. The same applies, more or less, with the significance of vote, since for every unit increase of the disagreement of the importance

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of vote in the democratic procedures, there is a decrease in the importance of civic education as a means of strengthening democratic behavior.

Last but not least, statistically important was the relation between the disagreement of the connection of civic education and the participation in peaceful protests. More specifically, for every unit increase on the disagreement of the above there is a 2.5% increase in the log odds of being civic education a means of boosting democratic behavior in public schools.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research was carried out in a sample of students regarding the contribution of civic education in public schools to the boosting of democratic behavior of future citizens. The sample of students consisted of university students of the department of political sciences. This department was chosen due to the sensitization of its students to political matters (EACEA/Eurydice 2011).

The method used was a model of ordinal regression, since most of the variables were nominal or hierarchical. The results showed that students thought very high of civic education, but not as an autonomous course. On the other hand, they believe that it should be embodied in other subjects in the curriculum. In this way it can become an effective tool for strengthening democratic behavior to future citizens. Meeting friends and watching TV are not considered factors that promote democratic learning. On the other hand, they connect critical thinking and civic education, a fact that links politicization process with the educational system.

Even though, Greek educational system is tantalized by many internal problems, many of whom are considered particularly negative (large percentage of private tutoring, university entrance examinations that cancel and underestimate many subjects especially in the higher secondary education), students still believe in the necessity of an organized civic education curriculum which will be able to teach in a coordinated way what is essential for them as future citizens (EACEA/Eurydice 2009). Important duty of the democratic state is to re-consider the present condition of the subject, to take into account the results of the multiple researches so as to reformulate civic education curriculum following the needs of future citizens in our changing world.

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