The paper deals with students perspectives on social responsibility in three countries. The research project was planned and realized in secondary schools in Greece, Czech Republic and Lithuania which aimed at mobilizing students so that they can deal with the contemporary social problems. During the last two years Europe experiences an unprecedented economic crisis which led the population to situations of unbearable financial difficulty. Large groups of the population live in a situation of social fragility whereas the political system seems unable to establish new routes and to give solutions. European society has reached a financial impasse which is expressed by financial slump with social trivialization, situations of national depression and a slightly complete opposition to the political system and the politicians who served it. At the same time, solutions or even proposals for solutions seem to come from nowhere. The results from empirical data shows how students understand the social responsibility from their personal perspective. The paper is prepared on the bases of author’s presentation at the conference at York University (Kyridis et al., 2012)

**Keywords:** social responsibility, Greece, Lithuania, Czech Republic.

**Introduction**

The concept of Social Responsibility is used by contemporary politicians, economists, sociologists, educationalists (researchers and practitioners). But still content of this concept depends so much on the context in which it is used. Authors of this article understand the Social responsibility as a personal investment in the well-being of others. It takes intention, attention, and time (Berman, 1990). Nevertheless some may question Berman’s definition of social responsibility: what constitutes “well-being”, exactly who are the “others”, will the well-being of others be promoted by free trade agreements and by immigration reform; others may question whether social responsibility can be taught. World Business Council for Sustainable Development in its publication *Making Good Business Sense* by Lord Holme and Richard Watts, used the following definition: “Corporate social responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large” (Baker, 2004, p. 76).
The definitions of Social Corporate Responsibility (Dahlsrud, 2006) have different connotations, and different dimensions such as: the environmental dimension which refers to natural environment; the social dimension which refers to relationship between business and society; the economic dimension which refers to socio-economic or financial aspects, including CSR in terms of business operation; the stakeholder dimension which refers to stakeholders or stakeholders groups; the voluntariness dimension which refers to actions which are not prescribed by law.

The main challenge in educational context is how to teach Social responsibility at schools? What kind of understanding do students have regarding social responsibility? These are questions for which we look answers in the article.

The **major aim** of the article is to present student’s knowledge and understanding of social responsibility in Greece, Czech Republic and Lithuania.

**Research questions:** in order to teach social responsibility we need to know how students understand it. What does it mean for them to be socially responsible? What are the main components of the concept social responsibility?

**Object of the research:** students understanding of the social responsibility.

**Research method:** literature review, questionnaire.

1. **Teaching social responsibility**

Most educationalists (Mirow, 2009) agree that students most effectively can learn skills to help them to work productively in a group, as well as skills in organizing, problem-solving, consensus-building and decision-making. They can learn skills to help them think critically, to inquire, to engage in dialogue and listen well. They can learn skills in conflict resolution. Students can gain understanding of global interdependence-socially, economically and ecologically. They can apprehend the complexity of many public issues and multiple points of view on these issues. They can learn about the power of individuals and groups to make a difference. They can consider possible solutions. Even if social responsibility can’t be taught directly as knowledge, it can be “caught” in a variety of ways—through observations of the behaviour of parents, friends and others; through reading and discussions; through a sense of injustice that demands personal action. It can also be caught through schools that encourage community service in some form or through immersion in a class project that, whatever its success, can transform a person’s life.

Considerations of what a socially responsible education may mean in terms of educational content seem more vexed and complicated. Thus we can think of two
kinds of responsibility: responsibility to that which is social, and responsibility for that which is social. There may be some responsibilities which are both.

The expression “that which is social” is used instead of the word “society” as there are many social structures within society at large which make claims of responsibility on us (e.g., my social circle, mi barrio, my homeys, my religious group, my colleagues, my teenage clique, my platoon, etc.).

An education that is interested in conveying responsibility to “the social” needs to teach students “cultural fluency,” i.e., an understanding of the cultural rules, signals, mores, etc. – and this includes the responsibilities incumbent on membership in that particular “the social” (Forbes).

Most school curricula nowadays provide neither guidance on how to promote socially responsible citizenship nor the time necessary for it. Administrators usually are more concerned with orderly classrooms than with the substance of the teaching and learning that takes place in them. Case studies did show that some of the teachers consider of citizenship and social responsibility as confined to flag pledges, voting, philanthropy, completing assignments and obedience. Many teachers also are fearful about promoting active citizenship and some parents and community members think a school’s primary function is to get students to memorize facts and score well on tests so they can get into universities. Thus it seems that are many obstacles in relating citizenship and social responsibility in schools and there are many parents and community members who may protest student involvement in controversial public issues.

2. The research methodology

The whole project is constructed in a context of a two phases (pre-post) action research. We used a weighted scale which measures the social responsibility of the students and a weighted scale which measures their political socialization. Pupils and their teachers carried out a project concerning the awareness about major social problems such as unemployment and poverty in European societies in order to cultivate a spirit of social responsibility and active participation in everyday problems. The Sample of the research was consisted by 46 students of from northern Greece, 50 students from Lithuania (Vilnius) and 50 students from the Czech Republic (Ostrava). 50 students from Secondary schools aged 15–17 from were randomly selected for filling out questionnaires. Most of them have a motivation to study at universities after finishing schooling. They come from different family social background. In general, all of them have positive achievements of their studies, almost all act actively in different
civil society organizations. Some of them see their future in politics. Motivation for participation in the research can be evaluated as highly. This survey deals with democratic rights and responsibilities, differences among people, personal responsibility, and community mindedness. We attempt to understand the different opinions that are held by students, as well as the actions that students take. In this piece of research we have selected the questionnaire as a research tool for the following reasons: a) The questionnaire attracts the interest of the people questioned more easily and increases their participation in the research procedure (Javeau, 1988; Anderson, 1990), b) The necessity of using a large sample of subjects (Davidson, 1970), c) The questionnaire is suitable for the collection of information, such as perceptions and opinions, which cannot be easily observed (Fraise & Piaget, 1970; Verma & Mallick, 1999) and d). The questionnaire is a research tool that provides the opportunity for continuous trials and interventions, in order to be constructed in the best possible way (Javeau, 1988) The questions / statements had to be answered by a fixed answer on the basis of Likert’s five-point scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither Disagree nor Agree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree). The questions with negative implications were reversed in order to derive positive implications. The questionnaire includes 31 sentence-statements which investigate the above mentioned issues. The corpus of data was analyzed on the basis of Factor Analysis, which is widely applied in Social Sciences. Factor Analysis was employed with a view to investigating the social subjects’ / students’ response motif which enables interpreting a complex set of variables, reducing them to a smaller number, each of which is equivalent to a greater number of the initial ones. In addition, Factor Analysis enables identifying the variables, which are typical of each factor (factorial axis) and conducive to its development. Finally, the specific analysis facilitates the identification of the groups of students, in terms of their attitudes / views to social responsibility the internal consistency of the questionnaire was estimated in terms of alpha reliability. Alpha coefficient (Cronbach’s a) is the means of all the probable dichotomy reliability values for the questionnaire and was applied because it is not dependent on the statement layout (a = 0,771).

3. Results of the research

a) The case of Greece

In general the personal beliefs and the opinions of students in Greece are similar to students from other countries. Students agreed stronger with statements such as “Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution”.
Some positive attitudes were expressed towards statements, like: I think about how my decisions will affect other people; Other people’s problems don’t bother me; No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible for my own actions.

People should be judged for what they do, not where they are from.

**Table 1**

Students’ opinions regarding issues of Social Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral or unsure (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about how my decisions will affect other people.</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>10,9</td>
<td>60,9</td>
<td>21,7</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>54,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view.</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>10,9</td>
<td>39,1</td>
<td>41,3</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece is a better country because people from many different cultures live here.</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28,3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people’s problems don’t bother me.</td>
<td>32,6</td>
<td>41,3</td>
<td>19,6</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>30,4</td>
<td>47,8</td>
<td>17,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible for my own actions.</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>19,6</td>
<td>47,8</td>
<td>15,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All people should have equal chances to get a good education in Greece.</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>10,9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should be judged for what they do, not where they are from.</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>8,7</td>
<td>19,6</td>
<td>34,8</td>
<td>34,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems like pollution and poverty are not important to me.</td>
<td>65,2</td>
<td>23,9</td>
<td>6,5</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community. & 2,2 & 2,2 & 30,4 & 45,7 & 19,6 \\
I don't care about what's happening in politics. & 15,2 & 19,6 & 32,6 & 15,2 & 17,4 \\
Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect the environment. & 2,2 & 6,5 & 13 & 47,8 & 30,4 \\
I feel that I can make a difference in my community. & 4,3 & 15,2 & 50 & 21,7 & 8,7 \\
People should discuss social and political problems that affect the future Greece. & 0 & 2,2 & 30,4 & 30,4 & 37 \\
The world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves. & 8,7 & 8,7 & 19,6 & 47,8 & 15,2 \\

Furthermore, after the implementation of the project the students declared that from now on more frequently they will: talk to their friends about what is happening in other countries; participate as a volunteer in a community organization or event, talk to their friends about issues like world peace or global warming; help neighbours or relatives when a job needs to be done, talk with your friends about government and politics; speak out when other students use negative language to talk about people from other cultures; try to be nice to other students when they are sad about something.

b) The case of Czech Republic
In Czech Republic, the first pre-test stage of survey has been held in two provincial town schools of the industrial part of the country located near the border with Poland and Slovakia. Considering human opinions and patterns of behavior to be results of interactions with environment the people live in, we offer a brief description of surrounding the survey respondents influenced by. The region the respondents live in is an important center of heavy industry (mining and metallurgy) and multicultural area with numerous groups of indigenous communities such as Polish, Roma and Slovakian minorities and the groups of new-comers such as Viet-Nameeze and Ukrainians.
Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution.

I think about how my decisions will affect other people.

Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.

People should be judged for what they do, not where they are from.

Problems like pollution and poverty are not important to me.

Canada is a better country because people from many...

I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person’s...

Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.

I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair.

I feel that I can make a difference in my community.

I don’t care about what’s happening in politics.

Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community.

Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect...

I don’t care about what’s happening in politics.

People should be judged for what they do, not where they are from.

All people should have equal chances to get a good...

No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible...

I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair.

Other people’s problems don’t bother me.

Canada is a better country because people from many...

I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person’s...

Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.

I think about how my decisions will affect other people.

Problems between people are best handled by working...

Fig. 1. Students’ opinions regarding issues of social responsibility

The most significant opinions Check students agree are: Students need to accept responsibility for their actions; people should be judged for what they do, not where they are from; problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution; all people should have equal chances to get a good education.
c) The Case of Lithuania

Analyses of Lithuanian national policy documents show how important for society are education social values and responsibilities of young generation. According the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania it’s stated that the educational system guarantees continuity of the values that make a persons life meaningful, that grant social life coherence and solidarity. (Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009). In the light of the challenges faced by society today, as well as taking into account that knowledge society, secure society and competitive economy are defined as priorities in the Long-Term Development Strategy of the Lithuanian State, the mission of education is stated as: “to help an individual to understand the contemporary world, to acquire cultural and social competences and to become an independent, active and responsible person who is willing and able to learn and create a life of his own and life of society” (The National Education Strategy 2003–2012 Provisions, approved by the Parliament of Lithuania, 2003).

Stated mission of Education is implemented into national Core curriculum: “While learning social subjects as cognitive knowledge and understandings… students develop their social competences and values…” (Core Curriculum for basic education in Lithuania, 2008, pp. 3–4). Besides Curriculum students at age 12–16 has to have “Social activities” (2 hours per week) as an obligatory extra curriculum activity. During these hours students do different service work in communities as volunteers, in nongovernmental and youth organizations under supervision of teacher. It is expected that participation in these activities will help students to develop social responsibility, sense of community, practical civic competences, etc. There is developed manual and recommended guide for teachers supervising social activities of students (Zaleskiene, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ opinions regarding issues of social responsibility</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (%)</th>
<th>Disagree (%)</th>
<th>Neutral or unsure (%)</th>
<th>Agree (%)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems between people are best handled by working together to find a solution.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9,7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about how my decisions will affect other people.</td>
<td>3,2</td>
<td>9,9</td>
<td>58,9</td>
<td>23,7</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students need to accept responsibility for their actions.</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person’s point of view.</td>
<td>4,3</td>
<td>10,9</td>
<td>39,1</td>
<td>41,3</td>
<td>4,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My country is a better country because people from many different cultures live here.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>4-point Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My country is a better country because people from many different cultures live here.</td>
<td>8,7 13 37 28,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people’s problems don’t bother me.</td>
<td>22,6 51,3 19,6 4,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I base my decisions on what I think is fair and unfair.</td>
<td>0 4,3 30,4 47,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No matter how angry someone makes me, I am still responsible for my own actions.</td>
<td>8,7 8,7 14,6 51,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All people should have equal chances to get a good education in Lithuania</td>
<td>2,2 2,2 10,9 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should be judged for what they do, not where they are from.</td>
<td>4,2 6,7 19,6 34,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems like pollution and poverty are not important to me.</td>
<td>60,2 28,9 6,5 2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers should find ways to help others in the community.</td>
<td>2,2 2,2 35,4 40,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t care about what’s happening in politics.</td>
<td>15,2 19,6 32,6 15,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers have a responsibility to do what they can to protect the environment.</td>
<td>2,2 6,5 13 47,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can make a difference in my community.</td>
<td>4,3 15,2 50 21,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should discuss social and political problems that affect the future</td>
<td>0 2,2 30,4 30,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The world would be a better place if people were free to do what was best for themselves.</td>
<td>8,7 8,7 14,6 51,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results did show that most important element for understanding social responsibility is “Students need to accept responsibility for their actions”. Another stressed point by students is “All people should have equal chances to get a good education in Lithuania”.

**Conclusions**

1. Secondary students in all three countries have similar opinions and understandings of social responsibility. They expressed strongest component of social responsibility “Students need to accept responsibility for their actions”.

Irena ZALESKIANĖ, Ifigenia VAMVAKIDOU, Jelena PETRUCIJOVÁ
2. The students’ social interests are more oriented towards closest community: close friends and schoolmates. They are not aware so much about global issues.

3. Some differences between students from different countries could be pointed out: other people’s problems don’t bother me (Greece); I think about how my decisions will affect other people (Check); I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person’s point of view (Lithuania).

References


Santrauka
Irena ZALESKIENĖ, Ifigeneia VAMVAKIDOU, Jelena PETRUCIJOVÁ
SOCIALINĖ ATSAKOMYBĖ, MOKINIŲ POŽIŪRIU: GRAIKIJOS, ČEKIJOS IR LIETUVOS ĄTVEJAI


Empirinio tyrimo duomenų pagrindu formuliuojamos išvados apie tai, kad visose trijose šalyse mokiniai panašiai supranta socialinę atsakomybę. Teigiamiausias verti-
nimas teikiamas teiginiui: „Mokiniai privalo prisiimti atsakomybę už savo veiksmus.“
Visų apklaustų vidurinių mokyklų mokinių interesai orientuoti į pačią artimiausią
bendruomenė: draugus ir klasės draugus. Išryškėjo ir tam tikrų skirtumų. Pavyzdžiui: „kitų žmonių problemos manęs nejaudina“ (Graikija); „aš galvoju, kaip mano
sprendimai padarys įtaką kitiems asmenims“ (Čekija), „man kartais sunku įsijausti
į kito nuomonę“ (Lietuva).

Esminiai žodžiai: socialinė atsakomybė, Gaikija, Čekija, Lietuva.

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