

**FOUNDATION OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE MACEDONIA
CREATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAM**

**TEACHERS' ATTITUDES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE –
THE EFFECTS OF THE “SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION PROGRAM”**

Evaluation report (2008 – 2009)

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Executive Summary

In the course of the academic year 2008 – 2009 around 450 high school teachers went through two training modules (for the duration of three days each) within the “Social Justice Education” as part of the “Creative Teaching and Learning” project (funded by USAID). The main goal of these trainings was to influence both teachers’ attitudes on the basic notions of social justice and for them to gain new knowledge and skills that they can apply to their everyday work. The training was conducted bilingually, all material was translated into Albanian, and there were Albanian native speakers in the team of trainers.

Before the start of the first part of the training and at the end of the second part of the training, the participants filled out a 42-item questionnaire, with all items covering some of the aspects of tolerance, interculturality and social justice. This study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- a) What are the dominant attitudes on the basic notions of social justice education before and after the training?
- b) Is there a significant difference in understanding the concepts of tolerance, difference, prejudice/stereotype, oppression, building alliances and the professional role of teachers after the conducted trainings as opposed to their attitudes before the training?

The methods used for data processing were descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages and contrasting differences between the percentages from the first and second testing).

In the base-line study, the sample was made up of 437 teachers from 11 high schools in Macedonia, whereas the second study included 405 teachers. The sample was very heterogeneous in terms of the teachers’ towns, schools and ethnicity (the two dominant ethnic groups: Macedonian and Albanian are roughly equally represented in the first and second module). As far as gender is concerned, the number of women is slightly higher than that of men for both the first and the second module. The heterogeneous nature of the sample (in terms of towns, schools, language of instruction and ethnicity) is suited for the promotion of social justice ideas and values, but requires additional efforts in the organization and implementation of the training, as well as great abilities on part of the trainers.

The study shows a very constant and consistent trend of changes in attitudes in the direction of a clearer understanding of these notions. Social Justice Education is carried out through working on three components: naming the problem; readiness to discuss and talk about the problems; building alliance for engaging in appropriate action. An analysis of the results revealed that a change occurred and that the training contributed towards changes in all three components: problems that exist in society (a culture of respecting difference, the existence of prejudices) were named and are more clearly recognized, teachers are more prepared to talk about the problems children and parents of minority groups are faced with, and not deal only with education (a change in the professional role) and more significance is attached to alliance, as well as their own roles in that process.

The main results show changes in the following:

- **The attitudes that changed the most** after the training are those related to the perception of the professional role of the teachers: from an exclusively educational role (“my part is to teach according to the plan and curriculum”) to a role that includes caring for the rights and status of children and alliance in the change of their (marginalized) status.
- **The teachers respect the role of alliance in the fight against discrimination significantly more than before the training**, and recognize the role of experiences and learning in the process of deconstructing stereotypes/prejudices (tolerance can be learned and it is possible to rid people of their prejudices).
- The results also reveal that **teachers understand to a greater extent the mechanisms that maintain stereotypes and the system of discrimination in society**, such as the mechanisms blame the blamed party and unequal starting points.
- **Attitudes towards assimilation** (It would be better if those who are significantly different would try to adapt instead of always insisting on «having their own way» and demanding special rights) **are also significantly changing, with a larger number of teachers clearly voicing their disagreement.**
- Regarding the change in perception of one’s own professional role, there was a significant increase after the training in the teachers’ attitudes towards children’s rights. **A larger number of teachers recognize the importance of children’s rights**, a lower number of them consider that adults can always determine the best interest of the child, and there is a significant decrease in the number of teachers who justify the invasion of the child’s right to privacy in the name of the professional role of the teacher.
- **Tolerance is now seen as less of a weakness and lack of authority.**
- **Teachers agree to a greater extent that it is important to actively demonstrate tolerance** (similar results were noted in the part about alliance and the professional role), **as well as to talk about problems** (the process of naming, which was an important component of the training).
- The training also contributed to the **reevaluation of the conventional patterns of thinking**, seeing as most of the teachers stated that they are aware of their own prejudices, and that they are critical towards certain phenomena in society, such as the openness of schools to difference and the widespread fear of difference.
- The training also contributed, although to a lesser extent, to a **different understanding of the relationship with parents and the parental role in the education of children**. This is an area where there is a positive trend of attitude change, but this is at the same time an area that should be given more attention in future teacher training, as a certain number of teachers still believe that parents are to blame for the success and actions of their children.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the “Creative Teaching and Learning” project (funded by USAID), high school teachers went through two training modules (for the duration of three days each) within the “Social Justice Education” program. The main goal of these trainings was to influence both teachers’ attitudes on the basic notions of social justice and for them to gain new knowledge and skills that they can apply to their everyday work.

The training was conducted bilingually, all material was translated into Albanian, and there were Albanian native speakers in the team of trainers.

The trainings provided a setting for a study the main goal of which was to determine the effects of the program aimed at social justice education and respecting difference. This study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- c) What are the dominant attitudes on the basic notions of social justice education before and after the training?
- d) Is there a significant difference in understanding the concepts of tolerance, difference, prejudice/stereotype, oppression, building alliances and the professional role of teachers after the conducted trainings as opposed to their attitudes before the training?

Before the start of the first part of the training and at the end of the second part of the training, the participants filled out a 42-item questionnaire, with all items covering some of the aspects of tolerance, interculturality and social justice.

The methods used for data processing were descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages and contrasting differences between the percentages from the first and second testing).

SAMPLE STRUCTURE

In the base-line study, the sample was made up of 437 teachers from 11 high schools in Macedonia, whereas the second study included 405 teachers. Tables 1 through 3 give an overview of the sample structure based on school, gender and nationality in both the first and the second study.

School	No. of participants I	No. of participants II
SOU Gostivar – Gostivar	48	44
Naum Naumoski Borce – Kruševo	17	18
Kočo Racin	37	37
Niko Nestor	8	6
Ibraim Temo	11	9
Kiril Pejcinovik	86	75
Goce Delcev Kumanovo	78	75
Zef Ljush Marku	49	47
Zdravko Cockovski	34	30
Josip Broz Tito – Bitola	13	14
Josip Broz Tito – Skopje	56	50
TOTAL	437	405

Table 1 – Sample structure based on schools

GENDER	No. I	No. II
Male	189	172
Female	242	222
No answer	6	11
TOTAL	437	405

Table 2 - Sample structure based on gender

Ethnicity	No. I	No. II
Macedonian	200	196
Albanian	208	179
Turkish	10	10
Vlach	3	4
Serbian	6	6
Macedonian – Muslim (<i>Torbeš</i>)	2	4
No answer	8	6
TOTAL	437	405

Table 3 – Sample structure based on ethnicity

It is evident from the tables above that the sample was very heterogeneous in terms of the teachers' towns, schools and ethnicity (the two dominant ethnic groups: Macedonian and Albanian are roughly equally represented in the first and second module). As far as gender is concerned, the number of women is slightly higher than that of men for both the first and the second module. The heterogeneous nature of the sample (in terms of towns, schools and ethnicity) is suited for the promotion of social justice ideas and values, but requires additional efforts in the organization and implementation of the training, as well as great abilities on part of the trainers.

The decrease in the sample (there were 32 teachers less in the second training) for trainings of this kind is expected, because the plan was to leave at least 3 months between the two trainings, so as to allow the participants to think about the experiences gained at the training, to try out the new insights in practice and in everyday life, as well as attempt to apply some of the activities covered in the training. In the words of the participants, one of the main reasons for the decrease was the process of external evaluation that was taking place at the same time. Due to the high level of motivation that they exhibited, some of the teachers that did not take part due to the stated reason were given the opportunity to join other groups that were given the same training. As the decrease was below 10%, we believe that it will not have a significant impact on the interpretation of the results.

ASSESSMENT OF ATTITUDES

INSTRUMENT

The study used a questionnaire that contained 42 items, all of which are related to some aspect of tolerance, interculturality and social justice. These also more or less reflected the areas covered in the training. The items are grouped in such a way so as to represent typical attitudes in the following areas and formulated in the language teachers most commonly use:

I ATTITUDES ON TOLERANCE – These are the most basic attitudes that the trainings do not cover directly, but indirectly and that are severely influenced by the general context in society. This group includes attitudes related to a) the idea of tolerance through

the most common misconceptions of what tolerance is, and b) the possibility that tolerance is learned over time.

I a The Notion of Tolerance – Most Common Misconceptions

- Tolerance does not need to be actively demonstrated – it is more important to be tolerant in one’s views
- The most tolerant of all are those that keep silent and do not interfere in others’ problems
- Tolerance is a sign of weakness, we show respect to others when we are too weak to confront them
- The situation we are in right now is due to our loss of strength and having become too tolerant for everything
- Tolerant professors are those that are unable to establish authority
- If someone doesn’t show us respect, it is only natural to reciprocate
- It would be best if everyone did their job responsibly instead of getting into discussions on respecting difference and tolerance

I b „Teaching” Tolerance

- People can learn tolerance, i.e. intolerance

II ATTITUDES ON DIFFERENCE – DIFFERENCE AS THREAT – This group includes attitudes concerning the negative connotation of the notion of differences: that difference is negative, that it threatens and disturbs the existing peace and harmony which would exist if there were no differences between people. They also reflect attitudes on facing problems directly.

- Differences between groups (nationalities) in our country are so big that the occurrence of intolerance is unavoidable
- Provided we had the conditions (material, cultural) to decrease difference, intolerance would also be decreased
- It is better not to talk too much about problems, so as to not attach more importance to them and make them even bigger
- The fear of difference is fairly widespread among the youth today

III ATTITUDES ON DIFFERENCES – RESPECTING DIFFERENCE – this group includes attitudes that reveal respect for difference, i.e. an acceptance of difference as something that is common and desirable.

- At our schools, the culture of respecting difference is predominant
- The atmosphere at school should be as close to that in the home as possible because the culture the children are brought up in is important in the educational process
- People should be judged individually and not be lumped into the group they belong to

IV ATTITUDES ON MINORITY GROUPS – this group includes attitudes on minority groups, their rights and the justification/condemnation of their demands for equal treatment. They also reflect the (in)ability to comprehend the effects of prejudice and discrimination.

- If I were a member of a minority group, I would know that I cannot always be respected
- It would be better if those who are significantly different would try to adapt instead of always insisting on «having their own way» and demanding special rights
- Minority groups have only themselves to blame for their marginalized status
- It is not right for any minority to have the same rights as the majority in a society
- The execution of the rights of the minority groups is often at the expense of the rights of the majority group

V ATTITUDES ON CHILDREN FROM MINORITY GROUPS – this group includes attitudes on the education and treatment of children who belong to minority groups: attitudes on the actions that are being taken with the aim of solving the problems these children are faced with, their education and the difficulties they encounter, relations between children from minority and majority groups, etc.

- The more we talk about the problems children from minority groups are faced with, the more aggression is directed at them
- Children who go through the school system have to know the official language of the country they live in and be educated in that language
- Actions that affirm children from minority groups create inequality between the children and are unwanted
- Children from minority groups are difficult to work with because school does not interest them
- I believe that children from minority groups are often favored over other children
- Any child can get good marks as long as he/she tries harder

VI ATTITUDES ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS – this group includes attitudes on children's rights (regardless of whether the children in question are from minority or majority groups) and on their importance. Special emphasis is placed on the best interest of the child and the role of the adult in the estimation of that interest, as well as the right to privacy which is one of the most often violated children's rights.

- When there was no talk of children's rights, there were also no violations of those rights
- Adults who work with children know what is in their best interest
- In society, it is important to act according to the law, as opposed to everyone demanding their rights
- Teachers need to exchange confidential information about children and their families because it is important to know everything about them
- Punishment is the best way to teach children rules

VII ATTITUDES ON THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER – this group includes attitudes on the way in which the teacher's role is perceived: is the teacher's role strictly educational, i.e. to teach children and foster their development, or does their role include influence in the area of social justice and providing equal treatment for all children, equal starting points, as well as making sure that their rights are respected (activist role of the teacher)

- Because I can change nothing in terms of the equal treatment of children, it is better to direct my energy to what my job essentially is: educate them
- The school's main task is to educate children and for each of them to acquire the knowledge projected with the curriculum
- Teachers should not get involved in politics and thereby advocate for the rights of children and families from minority groups
- Teachers should stick to the plan and curriculum, and children should just study

VIII ATTITUDES ON PARENTS – this group includes attitudes on parents, both from minority and majority groups, their motivation to cooperate with the school, their attitude

on education, as well as the importance of education and the system of values they teach their children.

- Parents are not motivated to cooperate with the school
- Parents from minority groups do not care about their children's education
- The root cause of violence among the youth is the system of values they learn from their families

IX ATTITUDES ON PREJUDICES – this group includes attitudes that reveal whether the participants are aware of their own prejudices, as well as whether they believe in the possibility of learning/ridding themselves of a prejudiced way of thinking

- I think that I am a person who has no prejudices
- We cannot rid anyone of his/her prejudices

X ATTITUDES ON ALLIANCE – considering that alliance is an important part of social justice education, it is important to test the attitudes on the need for allies in the fight against discrimination, as well as the role of the teacher as ally in the process of educating and fostering the development of children

- The fight against discrimination is an individual act that does not require allies
- Teachers cannot tend to the needs of all children

For each of the items, the participants were asked to assess the degree to which they agree/disagree with the statement. Grading was from 1 to 6:

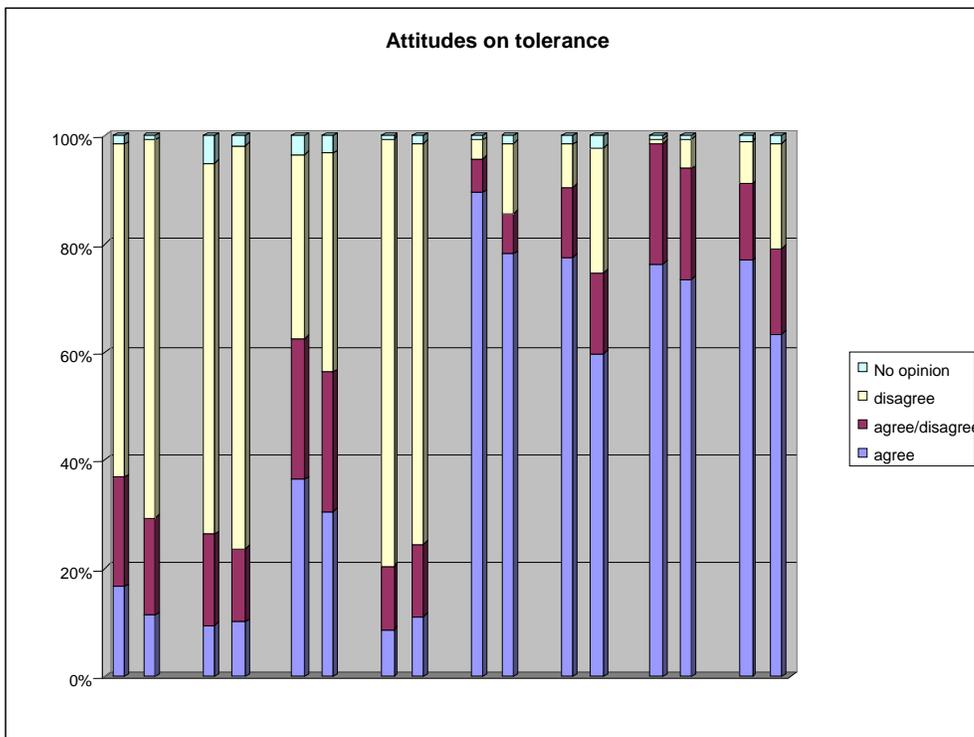
- 1 – Strongly agree
- 2 – Agree
- 3 - Both agree and disagree
- 4 – Disagree
- 5 – Strongly disagree
- 6 – No opinion

OVERVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This part of the report will survey the results from the analysis of the questionnaires. As stated in the introduction, descriptive statistics were used in the processing of data (frequency, percentages and comparing differences between the percentages from the first and second study).

The data is processed and grouped in such a way that the graphs (tables) contain data from each of the statements that make up a category. Each graph (table) contains data from the first and the second study. Considering that there were six possible answers (strongly agree, agree, both agree and disagree, disagree, strongly disagree and no opinion), the data was put together in a way that only shows four categories (agree, undecided, disagree, no opinion). A more detailed overview including all six categories of replies is in appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains tables with the data from the four categories that were the basis for the graphs below.

I ATTITUDES ON TOLERANCE



Legend

1. The most tolerant of all are those that keep silent and do not interfere in others' problems (14)
2. Tolerance is a sign of weakness, we show respect to others when we are too weak to confront them (18)
3. The situation we are in right now is due to our loss of strength and having become too tolerant for everything (41)
4. Tolerant professors are those who are unable to establish authority (19)
5. If someone does not show us respect, it is only natural to reciprocate (8)
6. It would be best if everyone did their job responsibly instead of getting into discussions on respecting difference and tolerance (12)
7. People can learn tolerance, i.e. intolerance (1)
8. Tolerance does not need to be actively demonstrated – it is important to be tolerant in one's views

Graph 1 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with attitudes on tolerance after the first and second training module

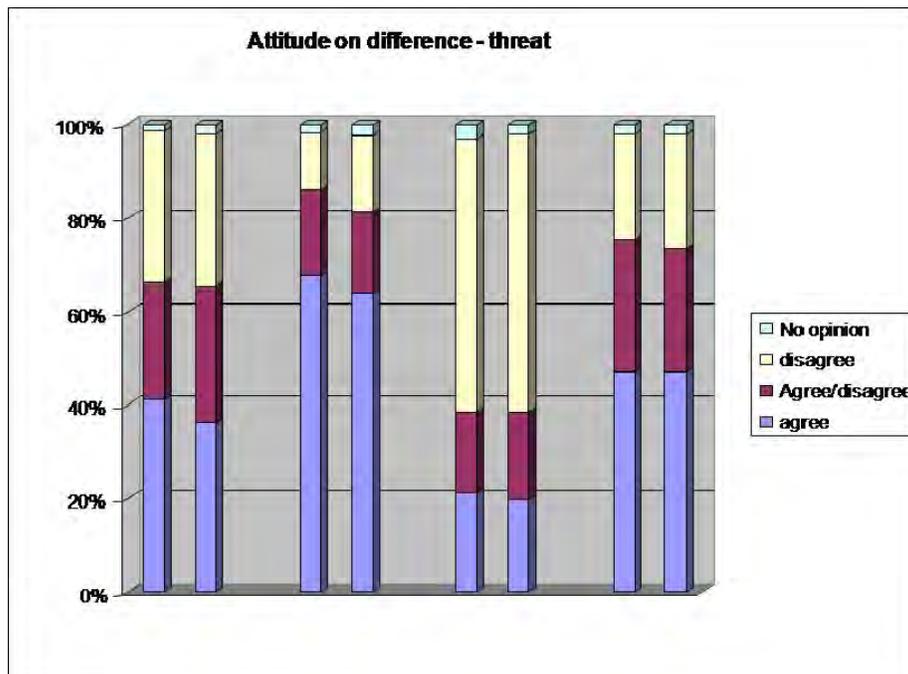
The category for understanding tolerance is made up of opinions related to common misconceptions on the notion of tolerance (that it is a sign of weakness, lack of authority, “all talk”, etc). Even though these opinions were not directly covered in the training, with the participants dealing with them indirectly while working on other content, the results of the second study are encouraging because they point to a significant increase in the understanding of the notion of tolerance. There was improvement on all statements (from 6% for those statements where the participants had previously displayed an understanding of tolerance, to 15% for the statements where the understanding of tolerance was less clear). The significance of this improvement should be seen in light of the content of the used items, considering that the statements in question are such that agreement/disagreement with them depends a great deal on social context and socio-political conditions. Aside from the increase of replies that indicate a change of opinion (from agree to disagree, when common misconceptions about tolerance are in question), what also points to an improvement in the degree of understanding the essence is the shift towards the middle of the continuum, i.e. an increase in the undecided category, when it comes to certain statements. This shows that some of the participants questioned the conventional patterns of thinking and that they no longer see tolerance as a black and white issue, but as a complex area that can be thought about on many different levels. The biggest change in attitude was regarding opinions and actions in relation to tolerance. A significantly larger portion of the participants think that it is not enough to only be tolerant in one's opinions, but that those opinions should be actively displayed and that tolerance and respecting difference should be discussed. In addition, a significantly lower number of participants agree with the statement that when someone disrespects us, we

should reciprocate, which reveals that they are considering other forms of reacting in situations of disrespect.

An especially interesting and noteworthy change occurred with the statement “Tolerance is a sign of weakness; we show respect to others when we are too weak to stand up to them“, where the percentage of participants who were undecided in the first study was decreased by 3,2% (from 5% to 1,8%). One of the objectives of the training was to motivate the members of the silent majority and we believe that this was accomplished in this case.

It seems that the training raised the question of nurture, i.e. the possibility of learning tolerance, i.e. intolerance, which gives the impression that the training turned the participants’ attention to the complexity of the problem, the need to invest a conscious effort in making changes and adopting different values and actions (“prejudices and stereotypes are adopted easily and spontaneously, deciding is difficult and requires a conscious effort”), which explains for the minimal increase in the percentage of undecided replies.

II OPINIONS THAT REVEAL THE ATTITUDES ON DIFFERENCE – DIFFERENCE AS THREAT



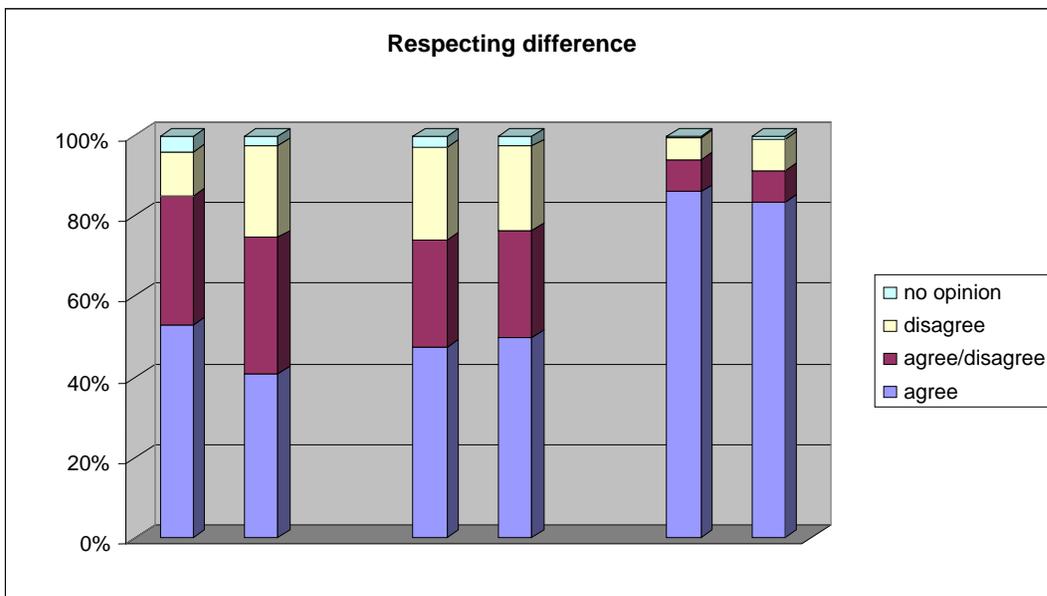
Legend

1. Differences between groups (nationalities) in our country are so big that the occurrence of intolerance is unavoidable (9)
2. Provided we had the conditions (material, cultural) to decrease difference, intolerance would also be decreased. (10)
3. It is better to not talk too much about problems, so as to not attach more importance to them and make them even bigger (26)
4. The fear of difference is fairly widespread among the youth today (7)

Graph 2 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with statements that reveal attitudes on difference after the first and second training modules

As far as notions of difference are concerned, the results from the second study reveal that there is a trend of attitudes changed towards understanding the relationship between difference and tolerance. There is a 5% decrease in participants who agree with the statement that difference is the cause of tolerance and that society would be more tolerant if differences were decreased or negated. As far as the perception of fear of difference among the youth, there is no difference in attitude between the first and second study, i.e. more than half of the participants continue to believe that fear of difference is present among the youth. Considering that this is related to the perception of a phenomenon in society, the fact that there is no change in attitude should not be worrying. Moreover, the role of the training was also to name and recognize problems that exist in society, so it would not even have been surprising if there was an increase in the number of participants who believe that the youth in their communities have a problem accepting difference.

III OPINIONS THAT REFLECT THE ATTITUDE ON DIFFERENCE – RESPECTING DIFFERENCE



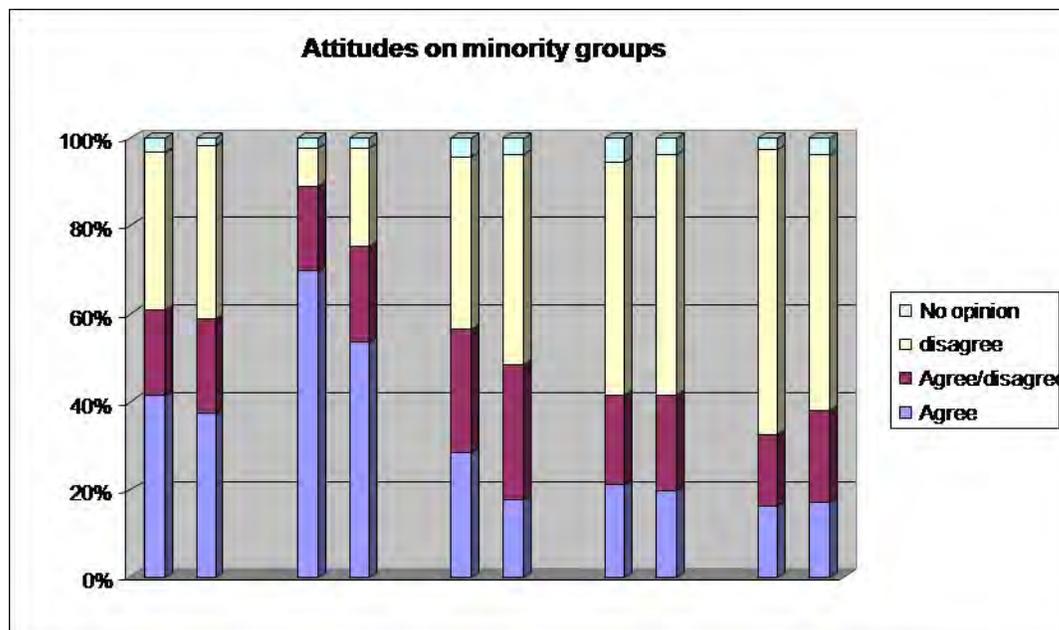
Legend

1. At our schools, the culture of respecting difference is predominant (2)
2. The atmosphere at school should be as close to that in the home as possible because the culture the children are brought up in is important in the educational process (33)
3. People should be judged individually and not be lumped into the group they belong to (16)

Graph 3 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with statements that reveal attitudes towards respecting difference after the first and second training modules

Considering that one of the components of the training was to encourage participants to recognize and name problems that exist in their environments, as well as question commonplace beliefs and opinions, it is very significant that after the training there was a 12% increase of participants who disagree with the statement that there is a culture of respecting difference in their schools. This is an important positive change, as it points to a critical attitude towards the school context when it comes to respecting difference. The statement that points to a tendency for stereotypical thinking («People should be judged as individuals, not lumped in the group they belong to») remained prominent with the vast majority (85%) of participants still in disagreement, which is a significant percentage. The small increase in the percentage of participants who stated that they disagree with this statement was explained by the participants with the fact that being part of a group, and especially a minority group with limited resources, marks us and influences our accomplishments in life to a great extent.

IV ATTITUDES ON MINORITY GROUPS

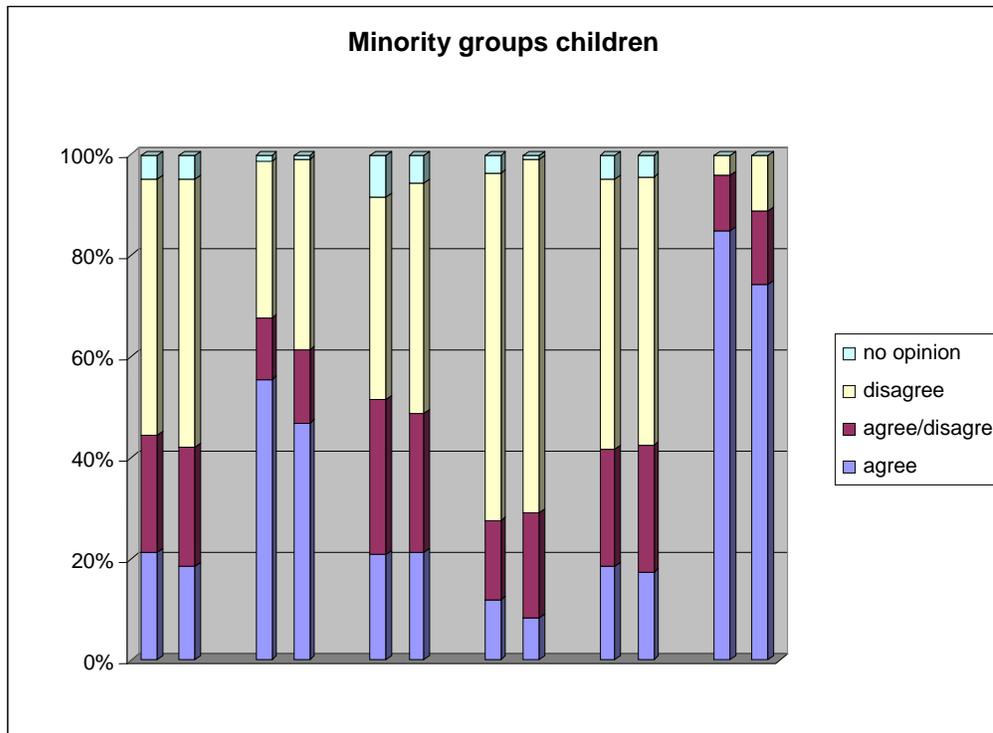


Legend	
1.	If I were a member of a minority group, I would know that I cannot always be respected (11)
2.	It would be better if those who are significantly different would try to adapt instead of always insisting on «having their own way» and demanding special rights (5)
3.	Minority groups have only themselves to blame for their marginalized status (6)
4.	The minority's practice of their rights is often at the expense of the rights of the majority group (32)
5.	It is not right for any minority to have the same rights as the majority in society (13)

Graph 4 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with statements that reveal the attitude towards minority groups after the first and second training modules

Considering that an important part of the training on Social Justice Education is the deconstruction of dominant stereotypes of minority and marginalized groups, as well as recognizing mechanisms that support and maintain those stereotypes, the data that reveal a significant change in the individual statements is encouraging. There is a 17% increase in participants who disagree with the statement that minorities should be assimilated and that there is no justification for the minorities' demands for respecting their rights. Furthermore, more than 10% of the participants (compared to the first study) do not believe that minority groups are responsible for their marginalized status. This is significant because an important part of the training was dedicated to recognizing and analyzing mechanisms that support the oppression of minority groups (such as the “blame the blamed party” mechanism and disregarding unequal starting points). In light of the objectives of the program, it is good that it was precisely with these attitudes that a significant improvement was noticed in terms of better recognition of the status of minority groups. That there was a questioning of opinions is also evident in the replies to the questions on the relationship between the minority and the majority, where the biggest change occurred in the undecided category (both agree and disagree), i.e. a larger number of participants is undecided on the opinion of the relationship between the minority and the majority (It is not right for the minority to have the same rights as the majority). A better understanding of the relationship between the minority and the majority was noted (about 5%), as well as the percentage of a 5% change in the “both agree and disagree” category, which points to a process of reevaluation.

V ATTITUDES ON CHILDREN FROM MINORITY GROUPS



- Legend**
1. The more we talk about the problems children from minority groups are faced with, the more aggression is directed at them.(28)
 2. Children who go through the school system have to know the official language of the country they live in and be educated in that language (34)
 3. Actions that affirm children from minority groups create inequality between the children are unwanted (31)
 4. Children from minority groups are difficult to work with because school does not interest them (36)
 5. I believe that children from minority groups are often favored over other children (25)
 6. Any child can get good marks as long as she/he tries harder (21)

Graph 5 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with statements that reveal the attitude towards children from minority groups after the first and second training modules

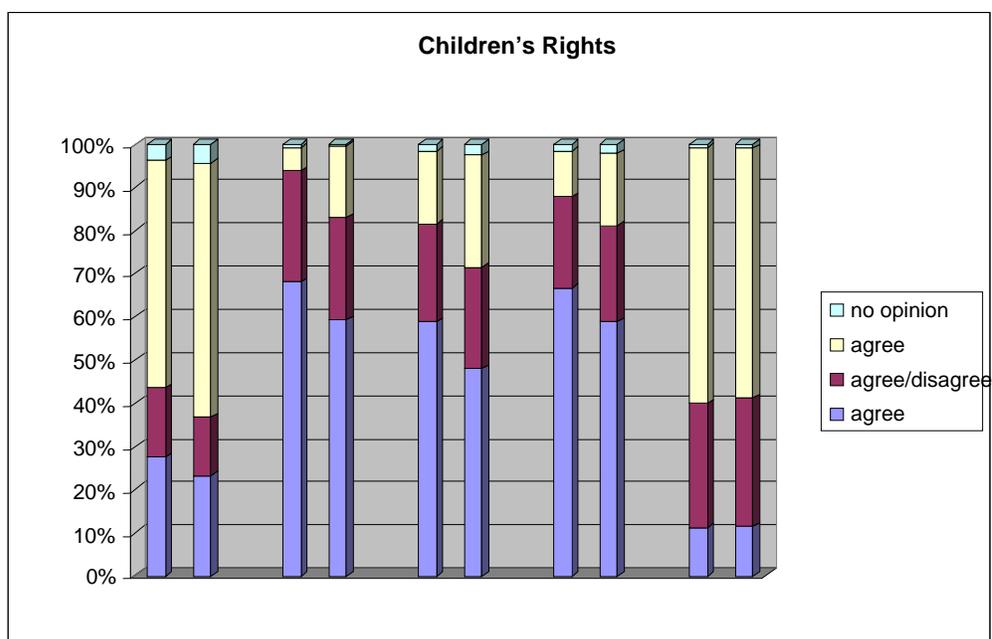
As part of the attitude on minority and marginalized groups, the content of the training was especially focused on understanding the status of the children from those minority and marginalized groups. The results are very significant and positive, as we noted a trend of improved understanding of the status of children from marginalized groups for all statements of this category. This is most evident with the statement that speaks to the understanding of unequal starting points for children from minority groups in contrast to other children. Almost 10% less of the participants agree with the statement that every

child can succeed if he/she tries, which reveals that they have started realizing that the success of children from minority groups does not only depend on their efforts, but also on external factors that do not favor these children.

There is also an improvement in the other statements (about 7%) in the direction of a better understanding of the status of children from minority groups, which was one of the objectives of the training. Especially interesting is the change in the statement that the children from minority groups should speak the language of the majority upon starting school, with 8% of the participants considering it unnecessary post training.

The statements that saw the least change were those that revealed an understanding of the status of minority children even before the training (such as the case with the opinion that the status of these children should not be discussed because it draws additional aggression towards them – more than half of the participants disagree with this statement; as well the opinion that it is not easy to work with children from minority groups because school does not interest them – two thirds of the participants disagree with this). In these cases, the large number of participants that have no clear opinion on some of the problems (such as the question of affirmative action and how this may be interpreted by the members of the dominant group) may be a positive sign as it points to the fact that that participants understand that this a complex problem and that there is no clear cut answer.

VI ATTITUDES ON CHILDRENS' RIGHTS



Legend

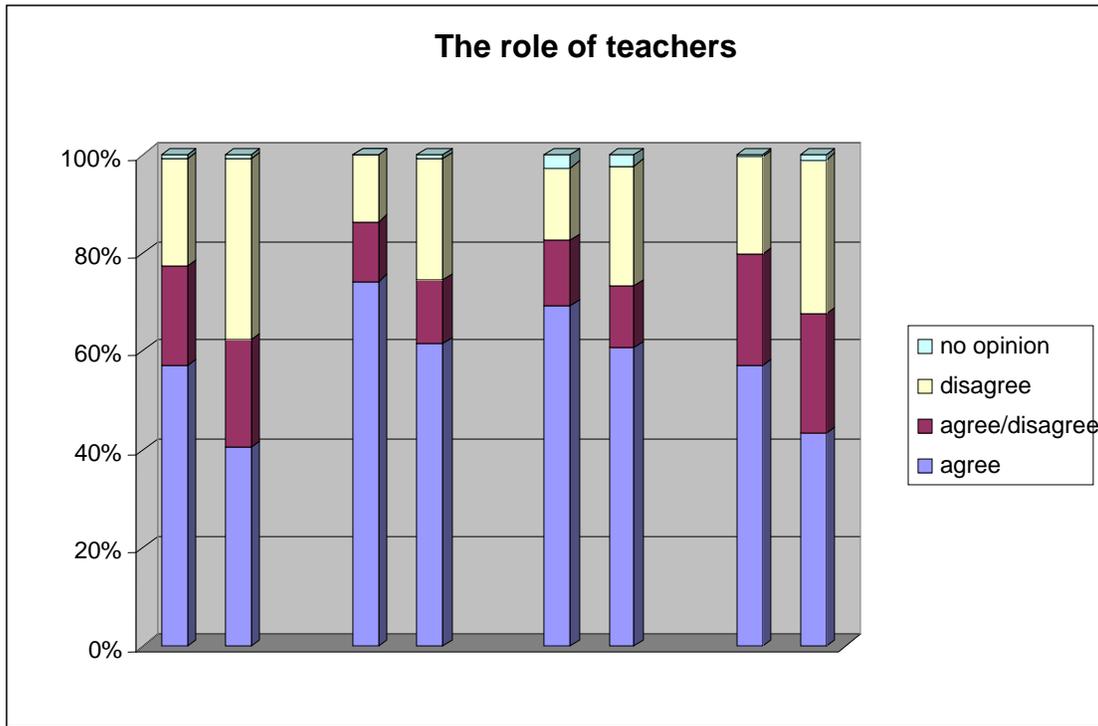
1. When there was no talk of children's rights, there were also no violations of those rights (27)
2. Adults who work with children know what is in their best interest (30)
3. In society, it is important to act according to the law, as opposed to everyone demanding their rights (15)
4. Teachers need to exchange confidential information about children and their families because it is important to know everything about them.(35)
5. Punishment is the best way to teach children rules (20)

Graph 6 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with attitudes on children's rights before and after the training

The content of the training did not directly aim at children's rights, but there was talk of this issue with the reassessment of the attitude on children in the school context. The results show that the area of children's rights was one where there were significant changes when it comes to understanding the role of children's rights and respecting those rights. That more significance is placed on children's rights after the training is also evident in the fact that more than 17% of the participants changed their mind in the direction of better understanding the importance of children's rights. There was also a significant change in their perception of the role of the adult in determining the best interest of the child, as a significantly smaller number of participants (12% less than in

the first study) believes that adults can always determine what is in the best interest of the child. As far as privacy rights are concerned, 8% more of the participants are ready to respect the child's and the family's right to privacy (8% more disagree with the statement that teachers should exchange confidential information about the child and his/her family).

VII ATTITUDES ON THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER



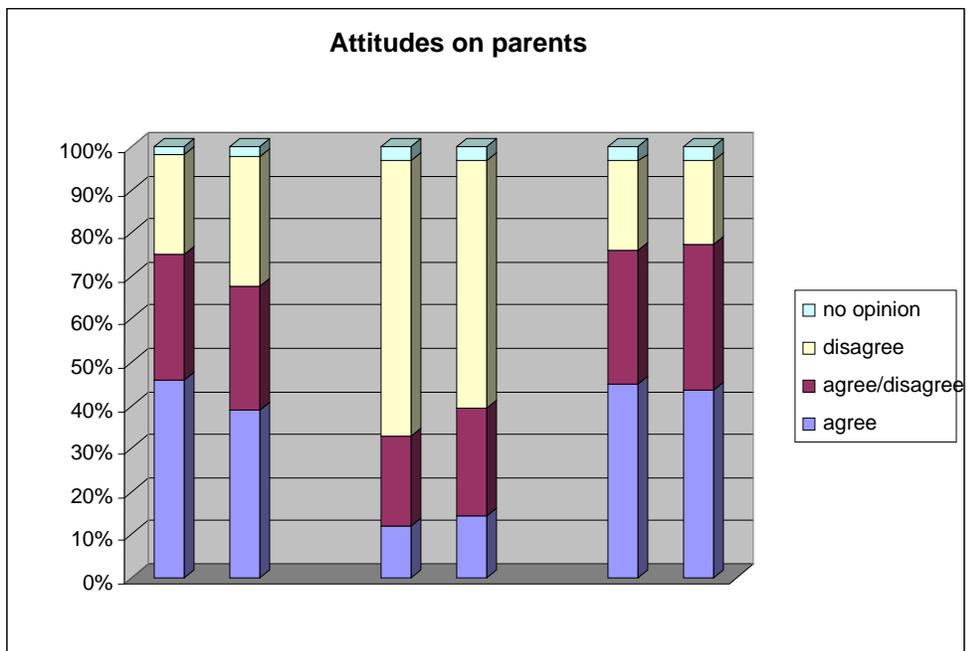
- Legend**
1. Because I can change nothing in terms of the equal treatment of children, it is better to direct my energy to what my job essentially is: educate them (29)
 2. The school's main task is to educate children and for each of them to acquire the knowledge projected with the curriculum.(38)
 3. Teachers should not get involved in politics and thereby advocate for the rights of children and families from minority groups (39)
 4. Teachers should stick to the plan and curriculum, and children to just study (40)

Graph 7 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with attitudes on the role of the teacher before and after the training

The statements in this group represent attitudes on the role of the teacher and how this role is understood: whether the teacher's role is exclusively educational, i.e. to teach children and foster their development, or that the role includes acting in the area of social

justice and providing equal treatment for all children, equal starting positions, as well as making sure their rights are respected (the activist role of the teacher). Based on the teachers' replies, we can note significant changes in the perception of their own professional roles: more than 15% of the teachers disagree with the opinion that their role is only to educate children and do nothing for the improvement of their status, including that the role of the school is only educational. A larger percent of the teachers (about 10%) now see themselves as someone who in addition to teaching the children should also advocate for their rights. All of this adds to the conclusion that the training contributed towards a change in perceptions of the teachers' perception of their own professional role in the direction of increased activism.

VIII STATEMENTS THAT REVEAL THE ATTITUDE ON PARENTS

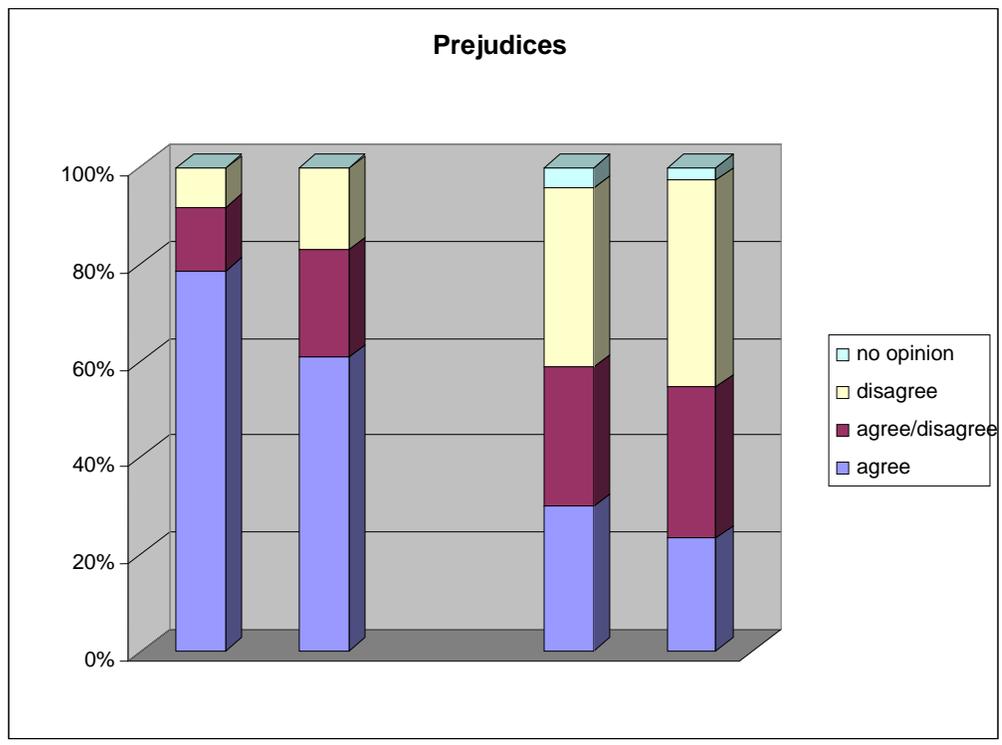


- Legend**
1. Parents are not motivated to cooperate with the school (22)
 2. Parents from minority groups do not care about their children's education (23)
 3. The root cause of violence among the youth is the system of values they learn from their families (24)

Graph 8 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with attitudes towards parents before and after the training

The attitude on parents from both minority and majority groups was not central to the training, but is one of the central and perhaps most controversial topics in the educational system, because the relationship with the parents is often mentioned in the context of mechanisms that support dominant stereotypes. The inclusion of the parents decreases as the child grows older, and the most common causes are seen in the lack of motivation. The trend of improvement after the training is evident and reveals that there is capacity for change. About 7% more of the participants disagrees with the statement that parents are not motivated to cooperate with the school, and 5% more of the participants disagrees with the statement that parents from minority groups are not interested in their children's education. This change is extremely important and encouraging, because the parents of children from minority and marginalized groups are often blamed for their children's failures, instead of taking into consideration the role of the system.

IX ATTITUDES ON PREJUDICES

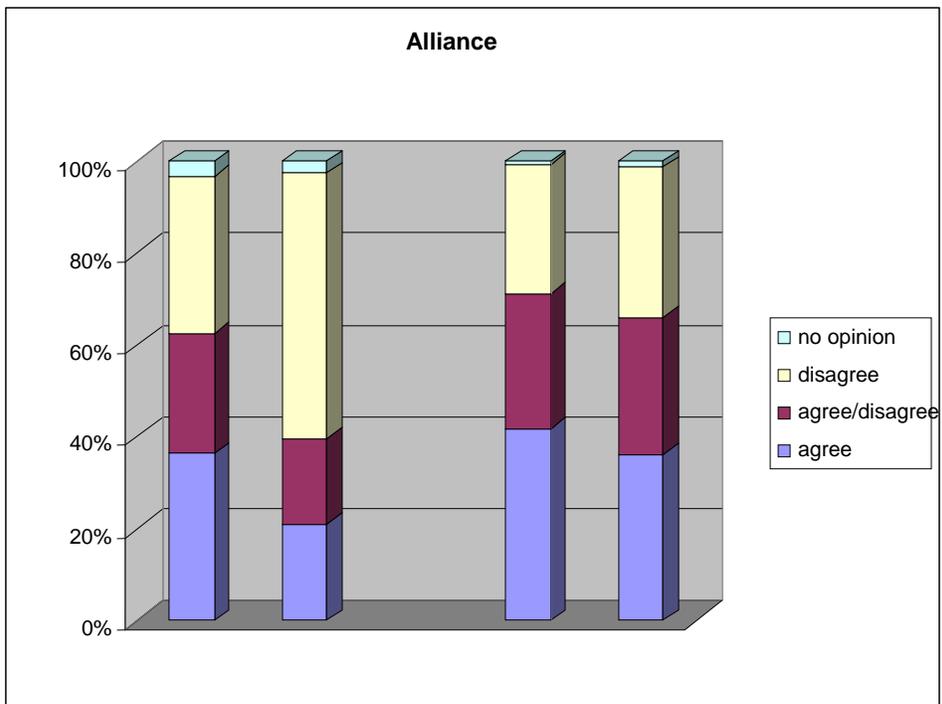


- Legend**
1. I think that I am person who has no prejudices (3)
 2. We cannot rid anyone of his/her prejudices (17)

Graph 9 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with attitudes on the existence and teaching of prejudices before and after the training

Considering that one of the most important components of the training was becoming aware of one's stereotypes/prejudices and finding ways to deconstruct them, it is encouraging that a high percentage of the teachers (about 20%) stated they are not prejudiced, in contrast to the first study, and that there was a significant increase in the number of those who are undecided (about 10%), which could point to a process of self reevaluation that is taking place among a large number of participants (about 30%). The difference is slightly smaller when it comes to the statement that speaks to the possibility of »unlearning« prejudice: 6% more of the participants believe that people can »unlearn« a stereotypical way of thinking (which is in line with their belief that tolerance can be learned), and we noticed a slight increase in the percentage of those who became undecided on this question, which means that they are reassessing. This data is positive for the program's ideas on education against stereotypes and prejudices, because it reveals that it is sensible to raise awareness on the importance education has in ridding them from conventional, stereotypical patterns of thinking.

X ATTITUDES ON ALLIENCE



Legend

1. The fight against discrimination is an individual act that does not require allies (42)
2. Teachers cannot tend to the needs of all children (37)

Graph 10 – Percentage of agreement/disagreement with attitudes on alliance before and after the training

Alliance is an important topic in the framework of the program and one part of it is devoted to creating alliances and ways in which all of us can be an ally in the framework of our own professional and personal roles. After the training we noticed a significant difference in terms of the perception of the necessity of allies in the fight against discrimination: 15% more of the participants agree with the statement that we need allies, and there was a significant decrease in participants who were undecided on this question. Minor improvement was noted in the attitude to one's own role as an ally, but there are nevertheless more teachers than in the first study who believe that teachers can meet the needs of the children. This minor improvement can be explained with the way the school is organized and the way it works, as it is really difficult to meet the needs of the different groups of children in such a school system (no individual approach, etc).

DISCUSSION

As far as the changes in attitude on the important notions of social justice (tolerance, difference, discrimination, relationship between minority and majority groups and alliance) is concerned, the study shows a very constant and consistent trend of changes in attitudes in the direction of a clearer understanding of these notions.

The attitudes that changed the most after the training are those related to the perception of the professional role of the teachers: from an exclusively educational role (“my part is to teach according to the plan and curriculum”) to a role that includes caring for the rights and status of children and alliance in the change of their (marginalized) status.

The teachers respect the role of alliance in the fight against discrimination significantly more than before the training, and recognize the role of experiences and learning in the process of deconstructing stereotypes/prejudices (tolerance can be learned and it is possible to rid people of their prejudices).

The results also reveal that **teachers understand to a greater extent the mechanisms that maintain stereotypes and the system of discrimination in society,** such as the mechanisms blame the blamed party and unequal starting points. There was a significant change in their attitude towards adults and children from marginalized groups (in considering them less responsible for the failures and marginalized status). They also take into consideration the reasons behind the way the system in society works, i.e. behind the unequal opportunities for all groups and different starting points.

Attitudes towards assimilation (It would be better if those who are significantly different would try to adapt instead of always insisting on «having their own way» and demanding special rights) **are also significantly changing, with a larger number of teachers clearly voicing their disagreement.**

Regarding the change in perception of one’s own professional role, there was a significant increase after the training in the teachers’ attitudes towards children’s rights. **A larger number of teachers recognize the importance of children’s rights,** a lower number of them consider that adults can always determine the best interest of the child, and there is a significant decrease in the number of teachers who justify the invasion of the child’s right to privacy in the name of the professional role of the teacher.

Yet another group of opinions that went through significant changes were attitudes regarding the nature and essence of tolerance and tolerant behavior. This is a very encouraging result, as the training was not directly intended to deal with the notion of tolerance. **Tolerance is now seen as less of a weakness and lack of authority.**

Teachers agree to a greater extent that it is important to actively demonstrate tolerance (similar results were noted in the part about alliance and the professional role), **as well as to talk about problems** (the process of naming, which was an important component of the training).

The training also contributed to the **reevaluation of the conventional patterns of thinking**, seeing as most of the teachers stated that they are aware of their own prejudices, and that they are critical towards certain phenomena in society, such as the openness of schools to difference and the widespread fear of difference.

The training also contributed, although to a lesser extent, to a different understanding of the relationship with parents and the parental role in the education of children. This is an area where there is a positive trend of attitude change, but this is at the same time an area that should be given more attention in future teacher training, as a certain number of teachers still believe that parents are to blame for the success and actions of their children. That this is not an isolated case is evident from data from other studies that deal with the cooperation between the family and the school and the participation of parents in school life. A study conducted with teachers and principals from grade schools in Serbia reveals that they believe the main cause for the insufficient involvement of parents in school life are the parents themselves, as well as their passivity and disinterest. Considering the importance cooperating with the family has in the education and development of children, attention should be given to this issue.

Social Justice Education is carried out through working on three components: naming the problem; readiness to discuss and talk about the problems; building alliance for engaging in appropriate action. An analysis of the results revealed that a change occurred and that the training contributed towards changes in all three components: problems that exist in society (a culture of respecting difference, the existence of prejudices) were named and are more clearly recognized, teachers are more prepared to talk about the problems children and parents of minority groups are faced with, and not deal only with education

(a change in the professional role) and more significance is attached to alliance, as well as their own roles in that process.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: From changes in attitudes to changes in actions

One of the basic starting points in the programs that deal with education against prejudice, respecting difference and social justice is that changing attitudes is a long and difficult process and that the first step in the assessment of the effect of the program is in changes in actions. In this sense, the Conference that took place between November 13th – 15th 2009 (after the conclusion of both training modules) under the title “Social Justice Education – from Training to Practice”, represents a kind of evaluation of the program and especially the component regarding change in actions. In this case, the extent of the success of the program was evident in the variety of ways the participants are encouraged to take the experience and knowledge gained from the training and apply it to their work and direct environment.

The attendance at the Conference (400 participants), the variety of topics the participants talked about, as well as the initiatives that were started after the Conference (for example, the student group Optimus made a film about the problems of discrimination with the aim of raising awareness in their environment of the problems that exist), point to the fact that the training had an effect both on the teachers’ practice and on those the teachers work with (their colleagues, students and teachers).

The topics covered at the Conference were wide-ranging: including content on interculturality and social justice in the official curriculum (through units in various subjects); creating curricular and extra-curricular content for the students with the aim of encouraging them to think about the prejudices and discrimination that exist in society; the application of experiences from the seminar in working with parents; the transfer of experiences from the seminar to their colleagues, etc. All this points to the impact the experiences from the training had on the participants. What is necessary for further support and encouragement of their work is a system of supervision and mentorship. In practice so far, this has proved to be important and efficient in the process of maintaining the enthusiasm and energy after the training: one way to maintain the enthusiasm is to

find ways to constantly apply and test the knowledge in practice (in this sense, the sharing of experiences at the Conference was very significant), and another way of maintaining continuity is by means of expert exchanges and mentoring systems.