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ANALYTICAL REPORT

Student expectations for
quality education



EduPod 3



KEC
Qendra për Arsim e Kosovës
Kosova Education Center

The project Innovating Development for Education Advancement - **IDEA 2022**, is funded by the Office of the European Union in Kosovo (EUOK) and implemented by Kosova Education Center (KEC). With the aim to improve the quality of education, the project seeks to identify core issues in the field of education in Kosovo by expanding opportunities for public debate by means of podcasts as innovative technology. These discussions include key parties involved in the education system, such as students, teachers, parents, policymakers etc. who come together to share their thoughts compare points of view.

The series of podcasts **EduPod** is the first of its kind in Kosovo, as the first podcast that focuses specifically on issues of education in this form. EduPod seeks to expand the outreach of education debate by allowing the voices of all parties to be heard, with special focus on students themselves. These analytical reports contain summaries of the discussions and recommendations from the podcasts.

Design: ***envinion***

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Introduction

“**EduPod**”, the first podcast with a specific educational/instructional character in Kosovo, was launched on March 23, 2022, under the project *Innovating Development for Education Advancement – IDEA 2022*, funded by the Office of the European Union in Kosovo and implemented by Kosova Education Center, KEC. IDEA 2022 seeks to improve the quality of education by employing broad-based public debates to identify and address education issues in Kosovo.

The podcast titled ‘*Student expectations for quality education*’ is the third in a series of podcasts planned during this program year. This topic for this podcast was inspired by the recent protest of high school students across Kosovo, organized by the Student Council of Kosovo under the motto ‘*Can’t go to school like this*’.

Students are both primary and end users of education products, and at the same time they are the party with the greatest potential to provide direct input on how to address challenges. Seeing that they are ready to raise their voice and offer their contributions to overcome the challenges, the guests on this podcast were representatives of the Student Council of Kosovo and the NGO Kosovar Youth Council (KYC). The purpose of this podcast was to hear first-hand student expectations for quality education, as well as their ideas on how they can be met. Student ideas deserve to be heard in a respectful manner, and the blaming game between stakeholders must be put to rest.

The guests on this podcast were invited after the latest developments with the student protest, which drew out a large number of high school students represented by Denis Krasniqi, and the publication of the report titled ‘*Quality in Education: Student perceptions about the content, process and learning environment*’, published by the Kosovar Youth Council (KYC).



The participants in the discussion were:

Denis Krasniqi, representative of the Student Council of Kosovo, and

Ditjon Fetahu, Project Manager at Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) .

The direction of the discussion during EduPod 3 was planned in close collaboration between the expert hired to support the production of this podcast and the IDEA 2022 Project Manager. The consultant drafted a number of pertinent questions for the two guests. The questions were designed to provide opportunities for open discussion and fresh analysis, rather than citing report findings or already-known facts.



EduPod 3

3 was livestreamed on the Facebook page of Kosova Education Center (KEC), where by the 27th of June 2022 it had reached



604
views



and hundreds of reactions and/or comments and shares.

The podcast recording in audio and video version has been published on KEC YouTube channel.



Also, the audio version (mp3) was broadcast on the Nationale podcast platform and on the public radio channel Radio Kosova. You can listen to EduPod 3 at any time by clicking on the following links:



KEC Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/QendraperArsimeKosoves/videos/547830560552283>



KEC official YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQaZDvTK4jk&t=6s>



On the Nationale Portal:

<https://www.nacionale.com/Ballina/PodcastsDetails/157>

The results identified from this podcast, as well as upcoming podcasts to be developed by the project IDEA 2022, will be analyzed and addressed by the pre-university education CSO network established by the project. The outcomes will go towards advocacy initiatives taken jointly by network member organizations, that seek to involve students in the wider conversation about the quality of education they receive.

Discussions

The discussion started with **Ditjon Fetahu** who explained the reasons for drafting the KYC report titled '*Quality in Education: student perceptions about the content, process and learning environment*'. Ditjon stated that KYC established the Student Council of Kosovo (SCK) in 2005, through which they receive information on issues to be pushed forward and recommendations to improve the situation of students in Kosovo. This is the third out of three such reports, with the first published in 2010, the second in 2016, and the third in 2022. The 2022 report differs from earlier reports due to the fact that it projects additional statistics. KYC considers it important to raise its voice and find ways to improve the situation in educational institutions. The report can be downloaded at <https://kyc-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Raporti-i-III-te-PRILL-2022.pdf>.

Ditjon showed that the findings of this report are almost the same as the other two reports, which means that for more than two decades the situation in schools has not changed, despite KYC expectations for at least better learning environment, given the investments in this regard. But again they observed the recurring phenomenon of locked and unused equipment, books and other tools.

The report is focused on quantitative data, and the data is quite alarming. As a result, it managed to stir greater commotion than earlier reports which were qualitative in nature. He pointed out that the Municipality of Fushë-Kosova is already building on the KYC report and is conducting similar research in primary and lower secondary schools at municipal level. KYC will soon publish reports focused on the municipal level, produced by the youth monitoring group and the SCK.

Based on the report and its findings, leaving aside issues related to infrastructure, the functioning of libraries and the provision of psychologists in schools, the discussion continued with **Denis Krasniqi** regarding teaching and the teacher-student relationship. The report has produced data that shows that half of the students consider teaching to be boring, while half of students also consider that they are bullied by teachers.

Denis said that students experience schools as prison, not only psychologically but also physically. According to him, schools need to work in two fronts. First, schools should have sufficient numbers of laboratories, computers and books to make teaching more attractive and qualitative. Second, the number of years that teachers work with students should be reduced. Teachers with long experience can continue to contribute as mentors, advisors and drafters of curricula, teaching aids and education policies, because they lack the energy to deal with students. Although this idea is very good, it requires great planning and a considerable budget due to the large number of teachers. Denis added that the assumption that young teachers are more suitable for teaching may not necessarily be correct, but the number of years of direct work with students must be reviewed, because it is really intense, especially at this time of great changes brought by technology.

As for the teacher-student relationship, Denis considers that addressing the issue of teachers' active work span will help reduce bullying by teachers, because older teachers don't consider certain behaviors as harassment or bullying.

Taking into account the fact that rights go hand in hand with responsibilities, and expectations go hand in hand with contributions, Denis discussed how students can contribute to a better quality of teaching. During the protest, the students' slogan was 'With us and for us', which represented their way of asking to be included in working groups and offer their input in cases where decisions are made for them.

Ditjon discussed the ways in which student councils can be strengthened throughout Kosovo in order to contribute to better education, where the key one is to recognize the rights of students and functionalize Student Councils. KYC works continuously in this direction, and two years ago it managed to enforce the Administrative Instruction defining the manner of election and functioning of Student Councils at school, municipality and country level. This helped a little in the depoliticization of Student Councils, and consequently influenced the depoliticization and autonomy of School Steering Councils. He also mentioned the failure to elect Student Councils within the allotted 3-month period, after which the competencies pass to the school director; according to KYC reports, this has happened in many cases, preventing student voices on issues that concern them.

However, the aforementioned was done with the support of projects and donors, which means that there is a lack of systematic support for Student Councils from government and local institutions, such as space or resources. According to Ditjon, this is a very important factor towards strengthening Student Councils, which would contribute to a better education system.

The next part of the discussion was about issues related to the mental health of students, and the extent to which they are understood and supported by teachers.

According to Denis, mental health should be a separate subject the curriculum, to help students acquire deeper knowledge of the field and be more open to seeking the help of a psychologist. He also emphasized that schools should have psychologists who can help with the mental health of students who are heavily influenced by social media. Ditjon agreed that mental health should be a separate subject and that schools should also have psychologists. However, unlike Denis, he thinks that this problem isn't related to students alone. Teachers should be willing to help, and at the same time the Student Council of the school should assist by referring cases.

The discussion ended with Denis describing what a proper day at school would be for him. According to him, everything should feel welcoming as soon as you enter the school, and there should be no shouting from the school staff, whether teachers or technical staff. As far as the school environment, classrooms should be more pleasing to the eye, and it would also help to allocate a space where students can write or paint whatever they like. Teachers should be in the mood to teach, rather than bringing all their problems into the classroom. Furthermore, they should lose their authoritative approach, because it leads to disrespect and failure to communicate with students. Students need to feel respected.

On the issue of respect, Ditjon also agreed, and stressed that respect should be mutual. This requires proper monitoring, as the monitoring procedures currently in place are not efficient at all. When it comes to respect, it is the teachers who should strive to fix problems in the first place, because they are the adult professionals whose duty is to shape the classroom atmosphere .

Differences between generations were highlighted several times by both guests, as one of the problems causing misunderstandings and creating gaps between teachers and students.

Conclusions

Participants in EduPod 3 brought a lot of ideas and recommendations to help improve teaching.

Some of the ideas and recommendations given during EduPod 3:

- Consider and give due weight to the findings in the report '*Quality in Education: student perception about the content, process and learning environment*', produced by KYC in cooperation with Kosova Students' Council;
- The school environment should be more pleasant for students, and students themselves can contribute to it;
- Schools, in cooperation with MEDs and MESTI, should provide specialized classrooms, computers and books;
- The number of years that teachers work directly with students should be reduced, and combined with advisory duties, monitoring and mentoring in different instances;
- Students should be invited to working groups where decisions are made about them;
- The Administrative Instruction on Student Councils should be duly implemented, to ensure that their voices are heard;
- Schools and their staff should support Student Councils, by allocating space within the school or by allowing the use of facilities after classes, which would help students feel they belong in their own schools;
- School psychologists should be considered a necessity at this time of great technology development and cyber bullying;
- Mental health should be a subject in the curriculum.



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