

**Civil Education in General High School and Lyceum.  
Investigation of the perceptions of teachers of Secondary Education in Eastern  
Attica for the adaptation of educational practices and objectives for Civil Education**

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**Summary**

The review of contemporary literature shows that changes at a global level (globalization, technological development, migration) have readjusted traditional views of citizenship. As the concept of citizenship is constantly being redefined, it is found that in educational reality the concept is linked to the cultivation of values, new skills and abilities of students. By applying these guidelines, students become active members of the student and wider community and are led to learn attitudes and initiatives that lead to practical active citizenship. This paper includes a brief theoretical approach to contemporary citizenship and then presents the connection of the concept of new citizenship with educational practices, approaches and actions in secondary education (Middle School & High School). The results of a survey in which teachers from 4 neighboring schools (Middle School & High School) participated are then included, which concern specific teaching practices, as well as targeted methods of approach and initiatives adopted in the educational reality of secondary education with regard to civil education (e.g.: active participation in social events, undertaking initiatives at a national and transnational level). Additionally, special reference is made to the benefits of implementation and the difficulty of the project, especially in the General Lyceum, due to the burdened curriculum and the Panhellenic Examinations, and at the end, suggestions for improvement are proposed. Finally, the analysis of the results, the discussion and the drawing of final conclusions regarding the redefinition of the concept of citizenship and the readjustment of practices and goals to the educational reality that lead in this direction follow.

**Keywords:** citizenship, education and citizenship, educational practices and actions

**Introduction**

The definition of the term citizen, as well as the status of citizenship, has been the subject of study and conceptual approach from antiquity (Aristotle) to the modern era. Semantic analysis has undergone many approaches, which are redefined according to the ideological and cultural system of each historical period, as well as the historical, political, social conditions and the political power at that time.

The prerequisites for defining the concept varied depending on the place of action (Athens/Sparta), while the catalytic element was the concept of free descent, acquired by birth to free parents. Additional symbols of the term were property (right to a lot), hoplite/military ability and participation in religious events. However, citizenship was primarily approached politically, in the sense that traditionally "the citizen was the one who participated in the exercise of political power" and citizenship "signified his participation in the sovereign people within the state" (Karakatsani, 2004). In Athens, the field of participation was the Municipal Church, the Parliament and the Iliaea, while in Sparta participation was manifested in the Assembly of Delos or the Senate.

However, progressively due to global economic, political, environmental changes the term citizen is expanding and is not limited to the traditional exercise of political power. In addition, new data, such as globalization, technological development, migration, have played a central role in the transformation of the traditional citizenship into a transnational and universal approach to the concept. Consequently, the term is

conceptually expanded to issues that extend beyond the sphere of politics and is linked to the social dimension, which consists of participation in institutions that make up the broader social context, active participation in the broader socio-political process and the taking of initiatives at a national and transnational level (Marshall, 2001).

For the Greek educational reality, the 1990s were a turning point for the new approach, from which onwards the concept of citizenship in everyday school life was redefined. With the new data, emphasis is placed on the cultivation of values within school units, on the development of new skills and on the promotion of abilities that make students active members of the community. At the same time, targeted initiatives are recorded by the Greek educational community, which attempts to integrate the actions carried out within school units into a broader redefined target plan. According to this, the new educational practices in Secondary Education (General Gymnasium and Lyceum) aim to highlight the active citizenship, to undertake active practices/initiatives centered on social happening and to develop a responsible role of the modern citizen (Balias, 2008).

The purpose of this research is: 1. to record the views of secondary education teachers regarding the methods of approach and the initiatives/actions adopted in the educational reality of this level, 2. to identify the benefits of their implementation, 3. to identify problems of practical implementation in the general learning process in General Gymnasium and Lyceum and 4. to identify suggestions for improvement with a view to more successful implementation and points for adjustment.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *The concept of citizenship in the modern European educational reality*

A milestone year for the concept of citizenship, as well as for the connection of Education with the term, was 2005, which was declared the "European Year of Civil Education" by the Council of Europe. During the Council conference, an expanded definition of the status of Citizen was presented, which responds to the modern challenges and demands of the time. According to it, the Citizen is defined as the individual who is active, actively participates in the society in which he lives and has practical involvement. At the same time, it is assumed and emphasized that the formation of the characteristics of the citizen, the acquisition of his rights, as well as the redefined fulfillment of his obligations are not inherent characteristics, but are acquired through broader education and mainly through the corresponding targeted education that he receives during his general studies (secondary education) (European Commission, 2005).

### *Education and citizenship in Greek general secondary and high schools*

Under this revised perspective, secondary education (general secondary and high schools) aims, beyond the learning component, to highlight multifaceted life skills, such as: dedication, responsibility, awareness, information and broader long-term involvement in society. At the same time, the approach that citizenship is linked par excellence to obligations, but also to values such as: equality and equity, human dignity, honesty and freedom, as well as social justice (Pasias, 2006) is crucial. Therefore, as a shift from a classical to a complex approach is observed, Secondary Education is faced with a challenge and a creative combination: on the one hand, it serves its traditional learning role, on the other hand, it is called upon to incorporate lessons and specific actions, which cultivate citizenship in practice and constitute an integral part of the educational process (Alexiadou, 2007).

### *Ways to promote citizenship in Secondary Education - Teachers' Views*

Citizenship education has been an integral part of the curricula in Greece, both in the Gymnasium and in the Lyceum since the mid-1990s. The subject is taught as a compulsory and autonomous subject for two to

three hours per week in the last year of the Gymnasium and in the first year of the Lyceum (Karakatsani, 2005).

However, beyond the traditional teaching format of political education, numerous initiatives/actions are gradually being adopted in the educational reality, such as the following:

From the current year 2024-2025, the new Curriculum "Active Citizenship Actions" was implemented at all school levels. Through this, it is sought to strengthen students with critical thinking, collaboration and social responsibility skills, so that they become active citizens capable of responding to the constantly changing global environment, responsibly undertaking action and initiatives. In order to raise awareness and better prepare them, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as established by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, were chosen as a framework. The SDGs offer a global charter for sustainable development, calling on citizens to contribute to the shaping of a just, peaceful and sustainable future. In this context, the Curriculum (CS) "Active Citizenship Actions" promotes a holistic approach, integrating the 17 SDGs and cultivating in students the ability to address complex social, economic and environmental issues. Only one action can be implemented in each class, regardless of grade (Noula, 2014). (<https://iep.edu.gr/el/component/k2/content/199-drasis-energoy-politi>)

In addition, the introduction of active learning through innovative pedagogical methods, in the context of which students become practically familiar with citizenship, is an integral part of the educational process. In this light, teachers carry out most extracurricular activities, environmental initiatives, communication with neighboring or non-neighboring school units, voluntary visits to local social structures, partnerships with organizations and excursions (domestic and foreign), democratic initiatives in a multicultural environment. (Circular 146472/Γ84/6-12-2024). The aim of all these initiatives is active participation in social events, cooperation with most organizations, local government, partnership with parents and teachers and the undertaking of initiatives at local and national level (Waite, 2011).

Furthermore, through student councils, the participation of students in school life and school administration is achieved in practice (Ministerial Decision 23.613/6/Γ2/4094/86). Although student councils have limited formal powers, they nevertheless empower students' voices, familiarize them with communication, collaboration and leadership skills, and provide students with their first practical experience in the democratic process, which is valuable for their subsequent introduction into the community (Karatzia, 2003).

#### *Benefits-Added Value*

The benefits of introducing initiatives in the context of strengthening the concept of citizenship in General Gymnasium and Lyceum are multi-level and multiple. In the Government Gazette No. 6048 (Issue B' 6048/01.11.2024 ) their added value is summarized in the following points:

Students are made aware of the problems of the community, school, local and wider, plan organized interventions to address these problems and undertake organized action. The result of the above is that in the long term: self-awareness, identifying new interests and utilizing multiple abilities in various fields, openness to new challenges, acquiring new skills, critical questioning, goal-focus and commitment to achieving goals, cooperation with others in pairs or groups are strengthened. In addition, the sense of obligation to participate in democratic decision-making, the taking of initiatives within social events, the emergence of ethical dimensions for various choices and actions, as well as common values at the group level, is developed. Finally, the design and implementation of integrated action plans is achieved, which enhance communication-collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making and taking initiative, with the aim of promoting quality of life, social justice, solidarity, providing assistance, respect and contribution (Lunenborg, 2010, Pasiadis, 2012). In general, it is assumed that by adopting initiatives of active citizenship, creative and critically thinking citizens are prepared and formed. The latter can contribute substantially to the achievement of civil competence, as defined in the Recommendation of the

Council of the European Union (2018/C 189/01). Students, through their active participation in actions and programs, are trained to understand the complexity of modern challenges, to act with a focus on sustainable development and to cultivate the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to contribute to a sustainable, fair and solidarity-based future (Government Gazette Issue B' 6048/01.11.2024 ).

#### *Difficulties of the project - Implementation problems*

This paper will examine the difficulties of implementing active citizenship actions in a school unit, which are due to internal causes. These include the limitation of resources, especially in programs that require extroversion, the lack of funding and equipment that dynamize implementation. In addition, teachers may not have the necessary training or experience to design and implement effective active citizenship programs (Mattheiou, 2002). Furthermore, the success of the actions depends on the active participation of students, teachers and the school community, which is not always easy to ensure either due to heterogeneity in composition or due to lack of organization (Mattheiou, 2002). A decisive deterrent factor, especially for General Lyceums, is the lack of time, due to the already burdened curriculum and the Panhellenic Examinations. Finally, the already operating school program is particularly burdened, resulting in the little time available for the implementation of additional actions, such as those related to active citizenship (Dirogianni, 2016).

#### *Suggestions for improvement*

In contrast to the above, there are targeted suggestions for improving the negative points. Particularly important is the preliminary selection of actions, which respond to the age interests, learning characteristics of the students, their abilities and have a substantial impact on the society in which they are integrated. In addition, ensuring mass participation through incentives or common goals is a determining factor in their adoption. Furthermore, the training of teachers either through seminars on the benefits or through scheduling methods is extremely auxiliary in this direction. Finally, a crucial point for the Lyceum is their integration exclusively within the school year, as due to the burdened curriculum and the Panhellenic Examinations, students are unable to successfully integrate into activities outside the school environment (Govas, & Kyrdi, 2016).

#### **Methodology**

The quantitative method was chosen to conduct this small-scale research, as its use allows the researcher to collect quantitative data from a large sample of respondents simultaneously, while providing the possibility of presenting the results grouped, highlighting trends. A questionnaire was given for investigation. The research was carried out in the period 10.01.2025-10.06.2025 on a sample of 60 secondary education teachers (2 Middle Schools-2 High Schools) of Eastern Attica.

The questionnaire used for the present study was tested for reliability and validity after conducting a pilot study on a limited numerical sample. The questions included in it were the following:

1. Gender

**Man****Woman**

2. Years of experience in secondary education

**0-5****6-10****11-15****16 και****More**

3. Education level

**High****School****Lyceum**

4. Please indicate your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements regarding the benefits of cultivating civil education in general secondary school, based on the following scale: 1=Completely disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither disagree nor agree, 4=Agree, 5=Completely agree

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Cultivating civil education fosters communication and encourages cooperation between students.</b>					

<b>Through the actions, students become aware of the problems of the community (school and wider community) and mobilize themselves by planning interventions to address the problems.</b>					
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**Through taking initiatives, new skills are acquired and goal-orientation and commitment to achieving results are cultivated.**

<b>Cultivating new skills prepares and shapes creative, democratic and critical thinking citizens.</b>					
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**Students, through their active participation in activities and programmes, strengthen their voice, which has a positive impact on the improvement of the infrastructure, the educational process and the quality of life in the school.**

<b>The educational initiatives are an ideal opportunity to relieve the heavy teaching</b>					
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**schedule of high schools.**

Through the implementation of educational activities, cohesion is achieved and undesirable behaviours in the student community are prevented.

5. Please indicate your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements concerning the difficulties of implementing active citizenship activities in a school unit on the following scale: 1=Completely disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither disagree nor agree, 4=Agree, 5=Completely agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Resource constraints and lack of funding and equipment.</b>					
<b>The lack of necessary training or experience of teachers in designing and implementing effective active citizenship programmes.</b>					
<b>The heterogeneity in the composition of the student population and the lack of organisation on the part of teachers.</b>					
<b>The workload in high schools and the lack of time, due to the busy curriculum and the Panhellenic Examinations.</b>					
<b>The busy school schedule and the shifting of activities outside school hours.</b>					

6. Please indicate your level of disagreement/agreement with the following statements concerning the points of proposals to improve the implementation of active citizenship actions, based on the following scale: 1=Not at all, 2=Somewhat, 3=Actually, 4=Very much, 5=Very much.

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>The selection of activities according to the age interests, the learning characteristics of the pupils, their abilities and the substantial impact on the society in which they are integrated.</b>					
<b>Ensuring student participation through incentives or common goals.</b>					
<b>Training of teachers either through seminars on benefits or through scheduling methods.</b>					

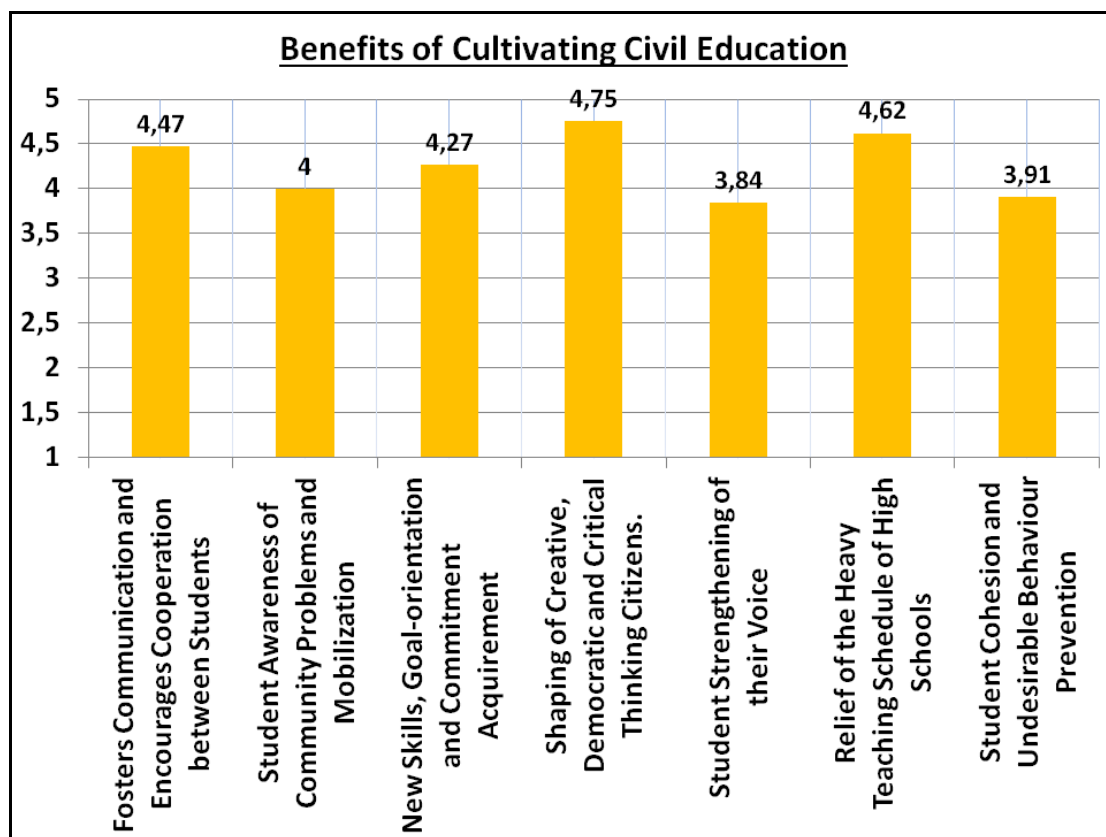
The integration of the actions exclusively within the school year due to the busy curriculum and the Panhellenic Examinations.

The active participation and support of teachers, as well as the school administration.

Most teachers were female (62.5%), with 10-15 years of experience (55.9%) teaching in high school (60.5%).

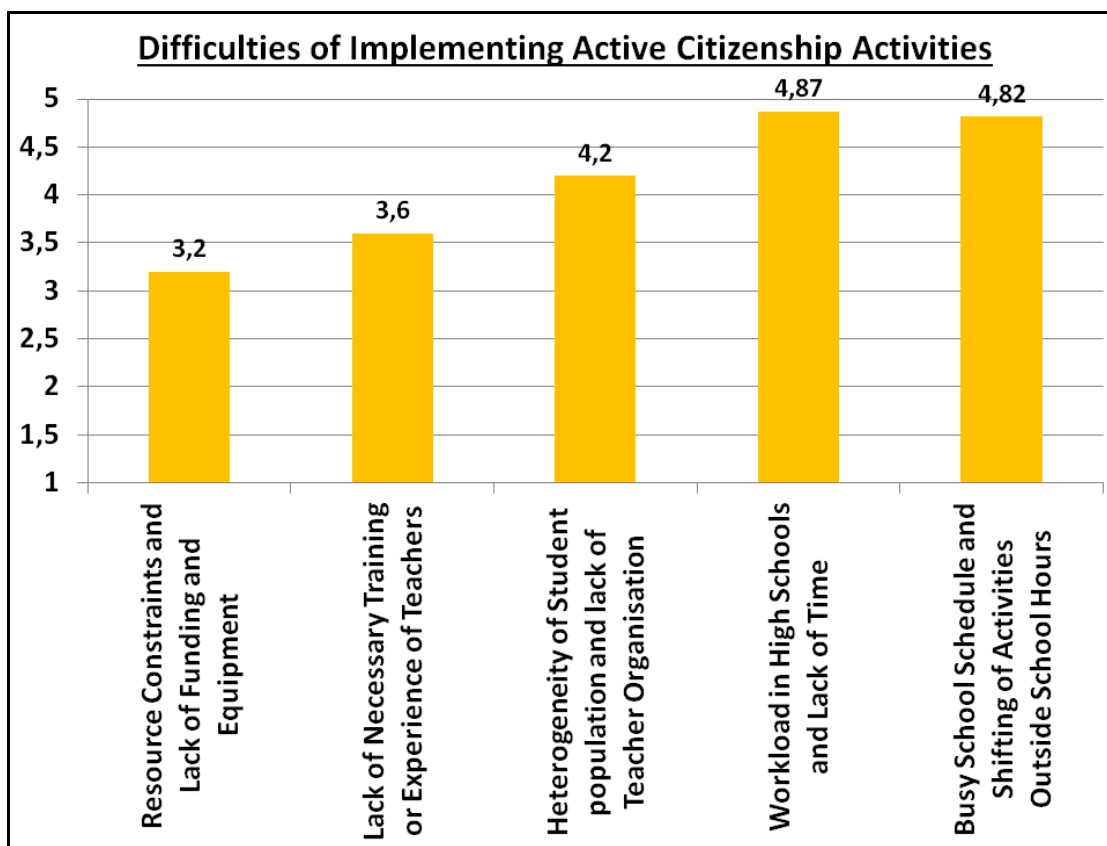
### Results

Most participants agree that multiple benefits of cultivating civil education in general secondary and high schools are identified in the learning process, especially in terms of raising awareness of the problems of the wider community, preparing creative and critically thinking citizens and preventing undesirable behaviors in the student community (graph. 1). No difference was found in the opinions of the respondents based on their demographic data.



Graph 1. Illustration of the average benefits of cultivating civil education

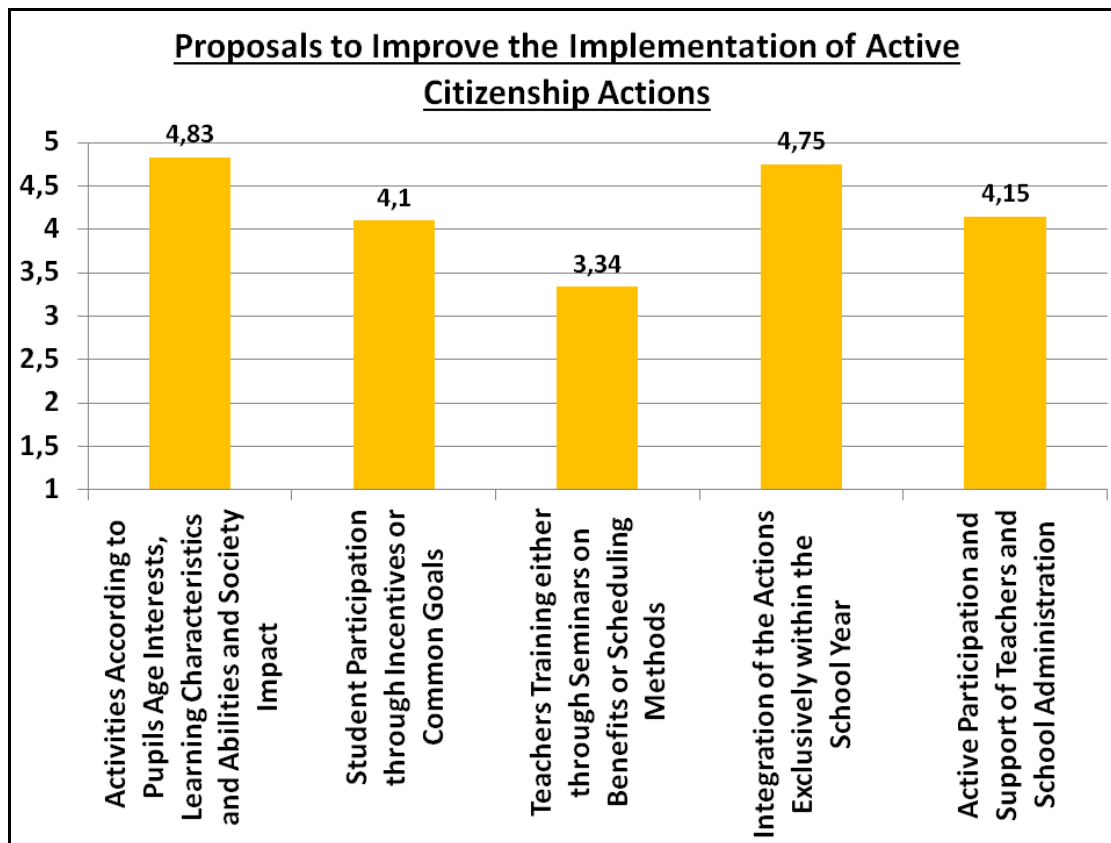
With reference to the difficulties of implementing active citizenship actions in a school unit, both before and during their implementation, the participants agree that the limitation of resources and the lack of funding and equipment, the lack of necessary training or experience by teachers in the design and implementation of effective programs and, above all, the burdened school curriculum and workload in high schools can constitute destabilizing elements in the performance of active citizenship actions (graph. 2). No difference was found in the opinions of the respondents based on their demographic data.



**Graph 2. Illustration of the average of the difficulties in implementing active citizenship activities.**

Finally, when finding points for more successful implementation of active citizenship actions by teachers, it was found, in contrast to the aforementioned, that the selection of actions according to age interests, learning characteristics, abilities and the substantial impact on society, ensuring student participation through incentives or common goals, training teachers either through seminars on the benefits or through scheduling methods and the active participation and support from teachers, as well as the school administration, guarantee the success of the implementation of active citizenship actions (graph. 3). No difference was found in the opinions of the respondents based on their demographic data.





**Graph 3. Illustration of the average of proposals to improve the implementation of active citizenship actions.**

### Discussion

From this small-scale research, it was found that teachers recognize the benefits of strengthening civil education in general secondary and high schools in the learning process, a finding that is consistent with the proposals of other scholars, both for the benefit at an individual level and in general in the school community (Balias, 2008, Passias, 2006, Alexiadou, 2007, Lunenburg, 2010). Especially for the benefits at an individual level, teachers contribute to the finding of activating communication, interaction and cooperation, for raising awareness of the problems of the wider community, points that are in agreement with the findings of previous empirical studies and Government Gazettes (Waite, 2011, Government Gazette Issue B' 6048/01.11.2024). Also, the teachers' responses conclude that by performing civil actions, new learning is developed through collaborative teaching and learning interaction, elements that more successfully consolidate new knowledge. The above conclusions are consistent with the proposals of other scholars regarding the strengthening of students' academic performance and the prevention of undesirable behaviors. At the same time, they establish that, especially for secondary education (High School), their implementation activates and positively motivates students. Finally, it was found that through active citizenship actions, the opening to the local and broader economic and cultural society is practically achieved, students realize that they are part of a broader and universal process. Students understand that with the new skills they acquire, they form the form of a citizen who is responsible for the issues that occur around him, actively participates in their resolution and insists on them. Their action has a positive impact on school life as the collective effort between the involved actors can lead to improvement of the

infrastructure, the educational process and the quality of life at school, an element that is also confirmed by the bibliographic record (Waite, 2011, Karakatsani, 2005, Karatzia, 2003, Lunenburg, 2010, Government Gazette Issue B' 6048/01.11.2024).

### **Conclusions**

This paper attempted to highlight the benefits of civil education in the school community, to identify the elements that make the implementation of the activities dysfunctional and to detect ways to conduct them effectively. It was perceived that teachers agree on their benefits to the learning process as they find that they activate students in multiple ways. However, their realization may not have a successful outcome if basic prerequisites and conditions for their implementation are not met. At this point, the intervention of teachers, who are called upon to prevent potential failures by means of appropriate planning and organisation, is considered to be crucial. It is estimated that the contribution of the present study in the field of education lies in the fact that it utilizes the literature references in their ad hoc implementation, their performance in secondary education, traces the data of the Greek reality and attempts to find solutions to possible adversities. The present study can be applied in the educational process and can be utilized especially in the field of proposals for improvement, as the teachers' responses revealed fruitful ideas for future adoption and usable concerns.

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