

# PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

“Increasing Students’  
Active Engagement  
through Digital Media Clubs”

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## Executive Summary

*This document is an end-of-cycle evaluation of the project called Increasing Students' Active Engagement through Digital Media Clubs: Capacity Development in Basic Education in Kosovo. This project was aimed at equipping youth with the knowledge and critical-thinking skills required for facing the vast transitional landscape of media. This includes traditional media, such as television and radio, as well as novel media, such as social media and online platforms. The project achieved this through the creation of Digital Media Clubs 20 Champion Schools in seven municipalities of Kosovo.*

*The Department of Psychology, University of Prishtina, managed this evaluation. The objective of this evaluation was to evaluate the impact of the project's implementation and to document the results of the project in relation to the overall objectives and expected results as defined in the project proposal. Additionally, the evaluation process was aimed at identifying good practices and lessons learned for future interventions.*

*The evaluation employed a mainly qualitative research design, which included a comprehensive desk review combined with semi-structured interviews to develop an in-depth understanding of the project's accomplishments and lessons learned. In-depth interviews were conducted with beneficiaries of the project. These include teachers (project coordinators), as well as students from four regions: Prishtina, Gjilan, Gjakova, and Podujeva. In total, seven students and seven teachers participated in the evaluation.*

*The results from the evaluation indicated that the workshops and the establishment of the digital media club were crucial for improving students' and teachers' digital media-related knowledge and abilities, changing their attitudes toward media, and integrating digital media into the learning and teaching process. Students highlighted their satisfaction with the instruction organized through the digital media clubs. Specifically, they explained that the schools had more pleasant atmospheres. Their experiences with the digital media clubs seem to have contributed to their personal and professional development. Finally, the evaluation process showed that the project was highly relevant, effective, and efficient in terms of building digital skills and critical thinking from the perspective of both, teachers and students.*

## Background

Research shows that today's generations of students are engaged in broad media and learning environments due to the development of information communication technologies (ICT) (Vickery, 2014). In this regard, it is of crucial importance to use digital media within schools to provide opportunities for alternative and blended learning while simultaneously developing students' media digital literacy skills. The enrichment of digital literacy skills not only increases students' awareness, attitudes, and ability to use digital tools appropriately but can also help with identifying, accessing, managing, creating, and analyzing digital resources (Martin, 2006).

Research furthermore shows that one of the main frameworks for defining skills in the 21st century is described as KSAVE (K – Knowledge, S – Skills, A – Attitudes, V – Values, and E – Ethics), which Binkley et al. (2010) developed. According to this framework, 10 competencies are related to 21st-century skills, which are grouped into four categories, such as ways of thinking (creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and meta-cognition), ways of working (communication and collaboration), tools for working (information literacy and ICT literacy), and living in the world (life and career, personal and social responsibility, citizenship). In this regard, it is important that teaching and learning practices in the 21st century support students in mastering skills that are relevant in the digital age. This requires classroom activities to be adapted as preparation for life and working (Leahy & Dolan, 2010).

## Kosovo Context

Kosovo is one of the youngest countries in Europe and has the youngest populations: 93% of the population has access to the internet, and 50% are young. Even though internet coverage is considered to be important for the overall development of the country, it is of crucial importance that the education system and other relevant stakeholders work on raising media and information literacy awareness among the general public and students. Young people are especially susceptible to the risks, as they lack the experience and knowledge needed to analyze what they consume and with whom they may come into contact. Critical thinking is a significant aspect of combatting these dangers. The constant exposure of youth to media presents an educational challenge—one that has only increased in the current electronic and digital age. Separating fact from opinion, evaluating text and image for bias, and constructing and deconstructing a text based on the principles of logic are teachable skills.

In this line of thought, DokuLab, a program department of DokuFest, played an active role in providing tools to teachers to successfully implement the National Strategy for Education and to equip youth with the knowledge and critical-thinking skills required for facing the vast transitional landscape of media. This landscape includes traditional media, such as television and radio, as well as novel media, such as social media and online platforms.

This document is an end-of-cycle evaluation of the project called Increasing Students' Active Engagement through Digital Media Clubs: Capacity Development in Basic Education in Kosovo. The Department of Psychology, University of Prishtina, managed this evaluation. In addition, Associate Professor Zamira Hyseni Duraku and Associate Professor Kaltrina Kelmendi carried it out in strong cooperation with graduate students at the School Psychology and Counseling Program, at the Department of Psychology, including Blerta Azemi, Vjollca Ademi, Donika Maloku, and Fiona Haxhikadrija.

The objective of this evaluation was to evaluate the impact of the project's implementation and to document the results of the project in relation to the overall objectives and expected results as defined in the project proposal. Additionally, the evaluation process was aimed at identifying good practices and lessons learned for future interventions.

The evaluation process included an overall analysis of the desk review performed and the in-depth interviews conducted with beneficiaries of the project. These beneficiaries include school teachers or project coordinators, as well as students from four regions: Prishtina, Gjilan, Gjakova, and Podujeva.

## **Brief Description of the Project**

The aim of the project that the DokuLab developed was to promote the establishment of digital media clubs at school to increase the quality of education provided via extracurricular activities. The project was also focused on introducing alternative and modern ways of teaching and learning through the arts and media by allowing students to create and produce media stories, newsreels, and school magazines. The project was furthermore aimed at promoting equality and diversity, in addition to helping students to develop their creativity, logical thinking skills, analytical ability, critical-thinking skills, technical skills, and social skills.

This project's goal was to equip youth with the necessary knowledge and critical-thinking skills required for facing the vast transitional landscape of media. This landscape includes traditional media, such as television and radio, as well as novel media, such as social media and online platforms, through the creation of Digital Media Clubs 20 Champion Schools in seven municipalities of Kosovo. The established digital clubs provided 10–15 students on average with learning opportunities related to print and digital media in the form of online and printed newsletters, online magazine, and videos for the YouTube Newsreel Channel, Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook.

The project was also aimed at providing teachers with the necessary skills for supervising and further developing the clubs for generations to come. For instance, teachers received trainings on the inclusion of audio-visual equipment. Films and content on media literacy were also provided to help teachers to develop a discerning and critical approach to news coverage. The project was additionally designed to promote media awareness and the development of media and information literacy to combat misperceptions, prejudices, and hate speech. In addition, the goal was to help teachers to be able to act as managing leaders who will guide future generations of students. Furthermore, due to the pandemic, the DokuLab adapted the project methodology and activities from face-to-face to online activities, and these activities represented a new experience with the usage of digital media in education.

Overall 95 training sessions were conducted, including 73 face-to-face and 22 online training sessions. In total 27 teachers participated in workshops and 778 students participated in sessions [excluding the participation for the online sessions].

The outcome of the project resulted in creation of Virtual Classroom with 13 Lesson Plans for the subjects of Geography, Civic Education, History and Chemistry.

Moreover, four additional videos as a process of training in Edutainment were created solely by students guided by their coordinators and were uploaded to School Channels created in Gjirafa Video. Also two newspapers were created, in schools 'Zekeria Rexha' in Gjakova and 'Thimi Mitko' in Gjilan

## **The Complexity of Intervention**

This section's aim is to explain the framework for the evaluation of the project. The logic of intervention could be described through two main perspectives: the theory of action and the theory of change.

The theory of action includes the workshops, informational materials, and establishment of digital clubs within the schools, which contributed to capacity building among the school staff for supporting the development of digital clubs within the schools. The theory of change aspect of the intervention includes the outcomes and improvements produced through the knowledge and skills obtained during this process. Specifically, the indicator of change will be evaluated through the KSAVE framework (K – Knowledge, S – Skills, A – Attitudes, V – Values, and E – ethics) that Binkley et al. (2010) developed.

## **Methodology**

The evaluation mainly employed a qualitative research design, which included a comprehensive desk review combined with semi-structured interviews to develop an in-depth understanding of the project's accomplishments and lessons learned. The desk review consisted of an exploration of project documents to acquire information and an overview of the project before the evaluation strategy was designed and the fieldwork was conducted. This process was followed by semi-structured interviews through individual meetings organized either online or face to face to explore some of the issues relevant to the project. The evaluation involved 14 participants from four municipalities (Prishtina, Gjilan, Podujeva, and Gjakova), including teachers and students. The participants were selected from the list of coordinators that have been provided by DokuLab. We have selected randomly every fifth school for participation. Primarily the school coordinators were selected, they were interviewed and then they provided us with contacts of students for interviews. For the purpose of qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and a coding scheme was developed based on the skill components discussed in the theoretical background. The interviews were coded separately for teachers and students.

# Results

## Teacher Perspective

Overall, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from four municipalities. The coding scheme used was aimed at understanding how the digital media club projects advanced teachers' teaching and assessment methods.

Teachers highlighted the importance of the knowledge they gained through the DokuLab training in terms of the usage of information technology and its application. Specifically, the teachers valued the knowledge they gained regarding using audio-visual equipment in their lectures and classroom activities. Moreover, most of the teachers expressed enthusiasm about using the digital clubs for presenting their course activities and objectives.

In addition, instruction that used audio-visual materials seemed to be much more attractive and thought provoking for most of the students. In this line of thought, one of the teachers reported: We see many benefits in terms of teaching and learning activities with usage of audio-visual equipment.... Students are much more engaged, motivated and create a better understanding of the phenomenon.... I can see that you can engage more students in discussions and debate after the presentation of a short video or short documentary on a specific topic.

Most of the teachers from an information and technology background reported that they were familiar with the audio-visual equipment that the DokuLab provided. However, only a few of them used them in the process of teaching and learning. They emphasized that this experience opened a new way of thinking in terms of using digital media. Also, most of the teachers viewed a short DokuLab training on the creation and development of audio-visual content and products as very helpful and informative. One of the teachers highlighted:

*It is of crucial importance that we worked together with students and DokuLab since we have not used digital media before, and the short training helped us in understanding how to use this equipment and how to support students in the process of the creation of their materials for the projects of the digital clubs.*

The project not only helped with building teachers' skills in terms of the usage of digital media but also helped to create an environment that was supportive of the inclusion of media literacy and ICT in the processes of learning and teaching. One of the teachers mentioned that:

*We as teachers must be more reflective and adaptive to the needs of the students.... Older teachers must be more receptive to changes and try to be less resistant toward the inclusion of the modern ways of teaching... because the student would get more... and we could enhance the quality of teaching... and promote learning. Since students would be better motivated and they will perform better.*

Also, teachers considered that digital media and digital clubs within the schools provided opportunities for creativity and innovation during discussions on certain topics, specifically those that are more complex, such as cultural diversity or social activism. Moreover, one of the teachers highlighted the importance of using videos to explain difficult topics for which the laboratory setting is needed. For example, one of the coordinators mentioned that:

*The teacher of chemistry, due to a lack of labs in our schools and all of the necessary materials, used videos in explaining various phenomena in chemistry and describing the experimental procedure.*

Another important finding that most of the interviewed teachers discussed is related to the collaboration and cooperation developed through DokuLab. They considered this collaboration to be a resource for the development of many other innovative projects within their schools. One of the teachers said:

*It is very important to have the links between schools and civil society organizations since they provide us with many opportunities for developing extracurricular activities which we could not afford in the school environment. The establishment of digital clubs opened a new perspective on learning and teaching for both students and us (teachers).*

### **Student Perspective**

Overall, seven students from four municipalities were interviewed for the evaluation of the project. The coding theme was developed based on the theoretical framework that guided this study. Students were very happy about the skills they obtained through their engagement in the digital media clubs, including interviewing skills, taking a picture, video editing and social media management, working on the school newspaper, and the preparation of online classes. Most of the students reported that these activities were very interesting and helped them to better understand complex and sensitive issues. In addition, students believed that the skills and knowledge gained through this project would help them with their future professional development and created an opportunity for them to explore their potential and abilities. One of the students said:

*I liked it a lot because I was able to learn something new, but differently, and it was not boring.... On the contrary, it was fun. And this is what I like about this project.... It will be good if all students would have this opportunity.*

Most of the students reported that teachers from various subjects began to include audio-visual materials and to use the equipment from the digital media clubs, including in biology, chemistry, informatics, music, and art. One of the students said:

*It is very good; we use them in almost every subject, and it gives us a different perspective. Before, we lacked this kind of experience in the process of learning.*

Students also emphasized the resulting changes in the school environment in terms of the infrastructure and new spaces for learning. They were very happy about the cameras and new furniture used in the clubs created through the DokuLab project.

Another important project aspect that students mentioned in terms of the skills they obtained during the activities is related to the improvement of their communication skills with teachers and their peers. The project also helped them in terms of problem-solving skills, working in groups, and organizing and sharing responsibilities. One of the students emphasized:

*It was an interesting and challenging process since a lot of people worked on it.... We tried to share responsibilities. And sometimes people were delayed, so we needed to manage the delays and also find a way to help and support each other in this process.*

Another student highlighted:

*I have noticed that my friends have a different perspective on the same issue and on the way to organize the work, and discussing together to create a base ground for working or developing a story was of crucial importance to move forward; otherwise, it was not working.*

Most of the students underlined that the work done within the digital clubs helped them to develop a multidimensional way of thinking about an issue. It also motivated the students to engage in course activities. One of the students said:

*I never thought that it would be so much fun to learn about gravity in the way we did with the video. When I learned the theory, it was a bit complicated, but when we worked on the development of video recording, most of my unanswered questions were answered.*

Furthermore, students discussed how they learned ways of raising their voices about issues that bother students, such as bullying, decision-making in schools, and gender discrimination. The project also provided the opportunity for students to be creative when producing audio-visual materials. Furthermore, when students argued, they found that they were more willing to represent their needs and worries through videos or photos. Also, one of the students mentioned the importance of the radio been established in their schools:

*The radio in the schools created a very pleasant atmosphere since we can inform students about the activities in schools, news, and also congratulate on birthdays of students and staff; it is so much fun.*

## **Lessons Learned**

The establishment of the digital media clubs within the schools was considered to be important and beneficial to both students and teachers.

Teacher participation in the workshops on the use of digital media, as well as other workshops that DokuLab organized, seemed to be very effective, as the workshops increased the teachers' belief in the importance of media literacy.

The use of digital media opens a new perspective on thinking and learning for both teachers and students.

Students found instruction with audio-visual equipment to be very pleasant and were much more motivated to participate in the course objectives.

Students were able to develop digital skills, which are considered to be important in today's digital times not only for achieving course objectives but also for personal and professional development. Students were able to obtain skills related to communication and problem-solving on teams.

Students were able to develop novel and creative ideas regarding sensitive topics related to their fields of interest.



## **Conclusions/ Recommendations**

The evaluation process showed that the project was highly relevant, effective, and efficient in terms of building digital skills and critical thinking from the perspective of both, teachers and students.

The evaluation process showed that the project created sustainability in terms of the usage and application of the digital media clubs

The evaluation showed that findings from the project could serve as a reference for expanding the same project to other schools and educational institutions.

The current project results may serve as a baseline reference for raising awareness the effectiveness of such programs within the school context.

The current project results may also be valuable additional course materials for increasing students who will be working in the schools, regarding the importance of the inclusion of media literacy and digital media in the learning processess.

## **Limitation/Future Direction**

Evaluation highlighted the need for comparative groups in order to explore the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

The inclusion of more beneficiaries of the project to explore in depth the effectiveness of the project.

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