

Research Article

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The Inclusion and Promotion of Values in Albanian ABC-Books in Kosovo from 1945-2022

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Abstract

Background/purpose. ABC-books, as foundational texts for learning to read and write, play a crucial role in the general education of children in Kosovo. They also significantly influence cognitive and linguistic development while contributing to the formation of social values and principles.

This study examines the inclusion and promotion of values in Albanian ABC-books in Kosovo from 1945 to 2022. Its purpose is to analyze and present how values have been integrated and promoted in the Albanian ABC-books used for decades in Kosovo schools to educate students. Additionally, the study explores the changes and continuity of values reflected in these educational texts over different time periods, taking into account various historical, political, social, and cultural contexts that shaped them.

Materials/methods. This research was conducted using content analysis, a qualitative research approach employed to examine the values represented in 14 Albanian ABC-books.

Results. The findings reveal that these books incorporate historical, national, and sociocultural values. The study highlights the importance of ABC-books as educational texts that contribute to instilling values in students while also emphasizing the need for education policymakers to ensure that the teaching materials included in ABC-books align with the goal of value-based education.

Conclusion. Based on our research findings, ABC-books mainly present historical, national, and sociocultural values. As a result of the change in the social system, the content of ABC-books has also changed in terms of including and promoting certain values.

1. Introduction

From the period after the Second World War to the present day, Kosovo has undergone significant historical, political, social, and cultural transformations. These changes have impacted all spheres of life. However, they have also significantly influenced the education system, an integral part of which has been and continues to be value-based education. Value-based education is related to the development of a person's character, civic responsibility, and moral decision-making (Lickona, 1992). Since value-based education is one of the key pillars of individual and societal development, Kosovan society, regardless of its political orientations or systems, has consistently prioritized this type of education. In this context, the family, school, and society are key factors on which the formation of values depends, which presents a complex and prolonged process. Therefore, textbooks also play an important role because they are considered important factors in the education and socialization of children.

This study focuses on researching the values included in first-grade textbooks called "Abetare" (ABC-books), which were used in Kosovo schools from 1945 to 2022. The concept of the ABC-book, or "Abetare," refers to a foundational educational textbook used to teach reading, writing, and values to first-grade students. In order to carry out this study, we have analyzed 14 ABC-books in terms of the inclusion and promotion of values, including *My First Song*, published in 1945, then ABC-books published in 1946, 1947, 1948, 1951, 1955, 1966, 1967, 1972, 1982, 2003, 2008, 2012, as well as the one of 2022. Thus, the Albanian ABC-books used in Kosovo were analyzed within a certain period of time, where the main goal was to research the inclusion and promotion of values, always taking into account the historical and social context in which these ABC-books were created. The secondary goal was to delve into the study of changes, continuity, and the messages that those values convey to students.

From the analysis of the content of the ABC-books, it is easy noticeable that in different historical periods, they represented a powerful educational tool, which has helped students not only to learn to read and write but also to learn the Albanian language and national culture, even in cases where tendentious and assimilationist policies have challenged these values. Therefore, the importance of studying the values in ABC-books is significant because, through this book, students learn to distinguish between good and bad, to respect others, empathize with others, and prepare to live according to the norms established by the social system. Since value-based education is an important pillar in building a democratic society, such research is considered a priority as it can raise awareness among educators and all stakeholders in education regarding the need for value-based education, the preparation of school textbooks, and the development of educational policies in Kosovo. The main research question guiding this study is: What key values are included and promoted in Albanian ABC-books used in Kosovo between 1945 and 2022?

The importance of such studies in our society and beyond is as great as the value-based education itself, which helps students build their character from a young age. Through value-based education, students learn about honesty, respect, tolerance, and justice—values that are fundamental principles or standards guiding human behaviour and social interactions (UNESCO, 2015). These are essential values for a successful and happy life and are a condition for developing a truly democratic society. When students develop these values from an early age, they become responsible citizens and contributors to society. They also help create a good socio-emotional climate in schools as well as in the environment where they live and work. In addition, if a society aims to become a truly democratic society and to develop a quality education, then value-based education is indispensable. In this regard, the educational impact of values can be promoted not only through ABC-books and other school textbooks but also through teachers, which are key factors. So, everything is connected and dependent on the educational system.

According to UNESCO, "... there are two main principles that can be applied in any determination of quality education. The first "identifies learners' cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems", and the second relates to how an education system is able to promote "values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development" (UNESCO, 2004, as cited in Brownlee, 2012, p. 17). According to Toker Gökçe (2021), the educational system has been creating new generations of people adept at adjusting to technological advancements but lacking the knowledge necessary to promote social harmony, democracy, and prosperity. In the context of Kosovo, emphasizing education that adheres to such values is considered essential, especially in view of the country's greater social, political, and cultural challenges. Knowing the importance of values education for the well-being of a society, we focused on carrying out this study, hoping to make a modest contribution in this regard.

2. Literature review

The word "value" is an abstract expression that generally refers to a person's certain subjective beliefs that are part of a "value system". According to Schwartz (1994), values are desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives. Values are the deep mental frameworks that individuals and societies use to distinguish between good and bad. In this context, they are closely related to, and often identical to, morality or ethics and also play a role in human behaviour. In this regard, Hughes and Kroehler (2005) express their beliefs by stating that values are broad, abstract ideas about desirable, correct, and good behaviours shared by society members. They provide criteria for evaluating people, objects, and events based on their worth, merit, beauty, or morality without explicitly specifying acceptable behaviours. "People tend to appeal to values as the ultimate rationales for the choices they make in life." (p. 46-47). According to Neubeck and Glasberg (2005), values are assumptions and judgments about important, desirable, and worthwhile goals or states of existence.

In addition, the subject that deals with 'what is of value' or 'what is valuable to a human being' is called 'value education'. Halstead and Taylor (2000) define value education as the explicit and implicit educational activities that promote moral development and the internalization of core values. Value education is perceived as every aspect of the process by which educators and other adults instill moral principles in their students. It can be done at home, in schools, colleges, institutions, prisons, and youth volunteer organizations. Value-based education is related to the many pedagogies, techniques or programs that educators use to create value-based learning opportunities for their students. The hidden curriculum also facilitates such education. Values education is extremely important because it affects the development of human character. (Revell & Arthur, 2007; Brayan, 2005; Akar & Temli, 2007). Haydon (1995) emphasizes the importance of values in educational settings, namely in shaping the teaching and learning processes. These values are fundamental principles or standards that guide our actions, influencing educational objectives and strategies. According to him, the curriculum, teaching strategies, and school rules reflect all the values that support education. In addition, in the context of Kosovo, value-based education helps promote the well-being of our citizens and indicates whether we are on the right path toward integration into the European Union (Misha, 2015).

According to Gaur et al. (2010), values thus provide the basis for all our actions. There is an essential complementarity between values and skills that must be ensured in any education system. According to Katılmış (2010): "To fulfil the expectations of the community and school's own responsibility, the school's activities practised for the value acquisition or values development of the youth, are called "values education" (as cited in Ersoy & Şahin, 2012, p.1548). Learning values affect the way people live, behave and interact with others. In addition, the importance of values education is undeniable because it is related, among other things, to social justice and the well-being of all citizens of a country, especially marginalized groups. In our context, ABC-books are considered

important educational texts for the education of children; therefore, these texts are considered teaching materials that help children, among other things, in value education.

ABC-books are the first books that students use to learn to read and write, and not only. An ABC-book, also called an Alphabet book, is a primary educational text used in the first grade to teach literacy skills such as reading and writing, often introducing foundational knowledge and cultural values (Osmani, 1983; Nimonaj Hoti, 2014). For consistency, the term ABC-book will be used throughout this study, and it is considered synonymous with 'Alphabet book'. In this regard, several studies have been conducted and they have been studied from different perspectives. In the "Pedagogical Dictionary", the ABC-book is defined as a basic text for students in the first grade of eight-year school that is used to teach reading and writing as well as to provide a certain amount of elementary knowledge (Osmani, 1983). Meanwhile, according to the "Dictionary of the Albanian Language" (as cited in Nimonaj-Hoti, 2014, p.2) we find this definition, "ABC-book, a primary book for learning to read and write". In addition to writing and reading, these educational texts are valuable teaching materials that provide a lot of elementary knowledge, including knowledge about values. The lack of studies on ABC-books in terms of values has compelled us to explore this issue.

2.1. On the history of Albanian ABC-books in Kosovo

The history of ABC-books and the education system cannot be treated separately from the general history of the Albanian people. Albanians, regardless of the areas where they lived, have been ruled by the great empires of the time. According to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (n.d), "In the 2nd century BC, the Illyrians were conquered by the Romans and from the end of the 4th century BC, they were ruled by the Byzantine Empire. After the conquest of the Visigoths, Huns, Bulgars, and Slavs, the Albanians were finally conquered by the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century". Meanwhile, after the end of the Second World War, the new socialist government under Josip Broz Tito systematically suppressed nationalism among ethnic groups throughout Yugoslavia and created six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) as integral parts of the Yugoslav federation. As a result, Kosovo came under the administration of Yugoslavia. This period was characterized by major political, social, and cultural changes, which also had a direct impact on the education system. Therefore, during this period, the education system in Kosovo was an integral part of the Yugoslav education system. The Albanian population had a key problem with education in the Albanian language. With the establishment of the socialist system, the Albanian population was given the opportunity for education, which had been completely impossible during the Kingdom of SKS/Yugoslavia (Mala-Imami, 1998). Due to the lack of textbooks in the Albanian language in Kosovo, in 1945, Albania sent 20,000 copies of ABC-books entitled "My First Song", then other school books and 100 teachers and educators for primary and secondary education. Then, during the following periods, 14 other ABC-books were published in Kosovo, which were used in our schools for teaching reading and writing, but also for learning values.

During the period 1945-1952, the development of education, like the general economic, political and social development in Kosovo, was accompanied by a discriminatory policy that hindered the development of Albanian education and schooling in general. During this time, national history and culture were not cultivated as much and as they should be. According to Kojçini (2006), "After 1948, national symbols were banned, while all national content was removed from the curriculum, going so far as to deny the origin of the Albanian people". Until 1966, the vast majority of textbooks used in the Second Yugoslavia were translated from the Serbo-Croatian language (Buletini, 1982) and educational trends aimed at promoting brotherhood between Serbs and Albanians were observed. In this context, the values that the government sought to instill in the Albanian population were reflected in the school materials. As Brown et al. (2002, p. 121) argue, "The major difficulty of making a textbook the curriculum is that textbooks primarily reflect the views of the dominant society..." Such reflections are evident in the ABC-books of that era. Thus, it can be said that the general

historical, social, and political developments have been reflected in the contents and in the historical development of Albanian ABC-books in Kosovo. According to Giddens (1984), education does not take place in an environment devoid of traditional values, as these values are in continuous interaction with institutional aspects of education. In this context, ABC-books reflect the broader historical, political, social, and cultural environment of the time. Although these books were drafted by Albanian authors, they were evaluated by special commissions that determined the policies of their preparation. As such, the inclusion of values was also imposed to a certain extent. Feng (2019) emphasizes the fact that literacy can be used as a tool for ideological control. During the socialist system, education was conducted in the spirit of Yugoslav socialist patriotism (Koliqi, 2004). This influence is also evident in the values portrayed in the ABC-books of the time. After the liberation of Kosovo in 1999 and the declaration of Independence in 2008, the ABC-book took on a new dimension within the framework of efforts to build a modern and national education system. It continued to play a key role in educating students in literacy while promoting uncensored national historical values and sociocultural ideals. The education of students for values in general and for national values, in particular, affects their personal development as well as their national identity.

According to Toker Gökçe (2021), throughout history, various societies have developed a range of common values to preserve their own survival and the unity of their nations. Even in our social context, the development of values has influenced the preservation of our national identity. Education influences various social structures and contributes to preparing citizens to adapt to the social norms and principles of a given society (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Therefore, the integration of values—not only in ABC-books but in education more broadly—is of great importance. As Tillman and Hsu (2019) state: "When education has positive values at its heart, and the resulting expression of them as its aim, we will create a better world for all" (p. 5). Education for values is thus considered an investment in a better future for society. "Values such as peace, love, respect, honesty, cooperation and freedom are the sustaining force of human society and progress" (Tillman & Hsu, 2019, p. 5). Therefore, the inclusion of such values in our ABC-books provides opportunities for a better future.

2.2. Inclusion of values in Albanian ABC-books during the years 1945-2022

The values included in the ABC-book reflect the social and political dynamics of the country in different historical periods. Starting from the first ABC-book of 1945 to the one of 2022, we come across poems and stories about the homeland and, national heroes and more. In the post-war ABC-book, the names of the heroes of the national liberation war are included, including Boro and Ramizi - heroes of the people. From the first ABC-books to the period of the breakdown of relations between Albanians and Serbs, we see that these books promote equality between people, a positive attitude towards the people of the former Yugoslavia, cooperation, respect, assistance, friendship and brotherhood and unity. According to Mialaret (1997), "UNESCO's first task at the end of Second World War was to prepare programs of international understanding and education for peace; in this context, the cleaning of school textbooks from any kind of racism or offensive attitude towards other peoples and nations was undertaken. Some of the most representative stories of this philosophy can be found in the 1946 ABC-book, which states that "the youth of Yugoslavia was the one who first began to sow the seeds of equality and brotherhood between the people of Yugoslavia". In addition, the ABC-books include many examples of hospitality, assistance, etc. This can be seen from a concrete example in the story "Stani i Qamilit" (Qamil's Shepherd Hut), where it is shown that the partisans were welcomed and fed there.

After the liberation of Kosovo in 1999 and the declaration of Independence in 2008, the ABC-books began to more openly include and promote Albanian historical-national values. These texts reflected the new efforts to build an independent state and consolidate national identity. Now, the ABC- books include content that promotes historical-national values that coincide with our tradition

but also with universal values, which are the demands of the time. In this context, the story "Gjini" talks about the Albanian language and tells the story of an Albanian child born in Germany who returned to his father's birthplace and is continuously learning Albanian better, "Blin's Birthday" shows February 17 as the Independence Day of Kosovo and Blin's birthday. "Skenderbeg's Last Message" transmits the message to always stay united. "Mirushe Park" shows the beauty of the Mirushe waterfalls located in Kosovo (Gjokutaj et al., 2022). We find love for family as a value emphasized among Albanians in all the contents that talk about the family in general or about one of the family members. The contents of the poems and stories promote such love through the verses and sentences included in the texts of the ABC- books. In this context, we find the love of the sister for the brother in the poem "Petrit's Letter" and in the story "Vera has a brother" (Gjevari, Kostari & Raça, 1945).

The ABC-books include texts and poems that provide knowledge about various professions, along with examples and role models of working individuals, illustrating the values and importance of work. In the ABC-books, the spirit of sowing love for books and school is felt, in which case we have stories, verses and messages that strengthen the value of knowledge, books, the ABC-books, the teacher, the school, placing them among the most important factors in the acquisition of knowledge in general, as well as reading and writing in particular. In the ABC-book of 1945, we read: "Naim Frashëri said: He who does not learn, leads a black life" (Gjevari et al., 1945).

The compilers of the ABC-books have also paid great attention to humanistic education, making efforts to include and promote positive behaviours, eliminate prejudices, and resolve conflicts. Nel Noddings (2011) appealed for the entire curriculum to be organized around "themes of care." Some of the topics that should be addressed are "Care for oneself," "Care for family and friends," and "Care for others and the world" (Woolfolk, 2011).

In the era of globalization and international integration, the influence of the socio-political context extends beyond national borders, also influencing the promotion of global values. Integration into international structures such as the European Union, the Council of Europe or the United Nations has influenced the increased inclusion of human rights, social justice, and environmental protection values in the educational systems of countries in transition such as Kosovo. This trend is observed in the new ABC-books. As we can see, the values included in ABC-books (also known as alphabet books) have a local and global character. They relate to those principles, norms and beliefs that help shape students' behaviour, attitudes and relationships in Kosovar society and beyond. As such, they are taught to students to develop a strong character and create a stable basis for decision-making in life, as well as to be aware of their obligations to themselves, their families, their communities, and their nation. ABC-books include and promote values of a historical-national character as well as sociocultural values. A balanced presentation between these two groups of values contributes to the preparation of our students to be part of a global society.

According to Kidder (1994), eight universal values essential for a sustainable twenty-first century include love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility, and respect for life. These values are considered fundamental to human survival and well-being in an increasingly complex and fragile world.

The human values included in the ABC-books are moral principles or guiding ideas that are seen as important for students' lives. They influence their actions and have a significant impact on building a sustainable future. In ABC-books, an effort is made to cultivate human behaviors towards children, adults, partisans, the sick, the disabled, the elderly, teachers, and animals, etc. According to Schmidt & Walach (2014, cited in Carvalho et al., 2020), human values belong to the category of fundamental values that are valid for all humanity and are part of the inner experience of reality, which goes beyond social agreements of a political nature, presenting a very sensitive nature.

The ABC-books include all of the core values outlined by Kidder in the sociocultural values group. Additionally, the values of Besa—literally "to keep the promise"—and hospitality, which hold a special place in Albanian culture, are prominently emphasized. Albanian hospitality as a value is widely recognized and has been emphasized in travelogues and works of various authors who explored Albanian regions, including Edith Durham (1909), Lord Byron (1812), and Robert Elsie (2001).

2.3. Promoting values through ABC-books

Value-based education is a requirement of the time (Halstead & Taylor, 2000) and is related to one of the goals of pre-university education in Kosovo, which is to prepare students for a conscious life in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and coexistence between all communities living in Kosovo (MEST, 2015). The promotion of these values in ABC-books has influenced the shaping of the identity and character of students over the decades. Through various stories and characters, they promote moral values and models of appropriate behaviour. The contents and messages of ABC-books strongly impact students' character, helping them understand and adopt norms of acceptable and desirable behaviour in society. They help students build social awareness and prepare them for life as responsible citizens in a democratic society.

According to Sylaj (2010), schools should prioritize teaching/learning civic values, which highlight the ideals and practices of democratic civilization. Such a mission is possible if education is a priority in the promotion of values. Such education is essential, especially at a time when "Young people are increasingly affected by bullying, social problems, violence and a lack of respect for each other and the world around them" (Tillman & Hsu, 2019, p. 7). ABC-books are essential tools for conveying formal educational programs and are widely used by teachers as core teaching resources.

Our study shows that ABC-books offer numerous opportunities for students to learn about values and adapt to different cultural environments, as these books actively promote a wide range of values. On the other hand, textbooks are of particular importance because "Many teachers rely on textbooks for much of the curriculum. If the district provides a textbook for a subject, the book too often becomes the major source of information in the classroom, even at the elementary level" (Brown et al., 2002, p. 121). As Nelson et al. (2004) have found, "There are many variations on these purposes of either socializing students to conform to social values or liberating them to engage in social improvement" (p. 313). In this context, ABC-books also offer opportunities for the proper education of students from their childhood, promoting national and universal values.

Incorporating values and their promotion through ABC-books ensures an education that is in line with the curriculum and the laws on education in Kosovo. According to the Law on Pre-University Education (2011), the goals of pre-university education and training relate, among other things, to value-based education. It emphasize personality development, the development of respect among students for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the development of respect for parents and teachers, for the cultural identity, language and values of their community, for the values of the Republic of Kosovo, for respecting diversity, responsible living in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship with members of all communities in the Republic of Kosovo and beyond, as well as respect for the environment are the goals of this law (MEST, 2015).

In addition to the existing laws, the Curriculum of Kosovo (Department of Education and Science [DES], 2001), which we consider as the "Constitution of Education," is based on competencies, and one of the components of competence relates to the development of values. According to Feng (2019), the curriculum is critical in value education. The curriculum foresees that students, in addition to academic knowledge, should also be educated about values, whether they are national or universal. "Curriculum and education have a duty to incorporate and model social, cultural, and political ideals, that are recognized in society" (Saqipi & Bercnik, 2020, p. 121). In this context, adherence to standards when preparing ABC-books can be an important tool in value-based

education. Except this, teachers also help promote values through all the activities they conduct in their classrooms during their daily work with students. Through clear rules, safe environments, and educational practices in their classrooms, teachers assist students in adopting values essential for living in diverse cultural settings and encourage students to use their moral knowledge to improve society (Lickona, 2004). Although value-based education begins in the family (Passy, 2005) and then continues in school and other social environments, it is more structured in schools. According to authors Baloglu and Balgamiş (2005), during early development stages, individuals begin to develop values within the family, which serves as a social institution. Family values teach children truth, wrong, good, and bad, varying consciously or unconsciously based on cultural, social, and economic characteristics. School values education is more structured than family education, focusing on students' acquisition of local and universal values of their society. Schools teach students to challenge social norms and improve the future of humanity (Kidder, 1994).

In addition, when values are part of a school's culture, the school will be an environment where students will not only be educated but also experience satisfaction (Ryan, cited in Nucci, 1996). Along with the family, schools and teachers within schools have a major influence on the development of children's values (Halstead & Taylor, 1996). It is the responsibility of teachers to help solve social problems so that human society can achieve the desired goal (Gaur et al., 2010). This requires effective teachers who are qualified in their field of teaching, personal development, and education (Temli et al., 2011). Teachers and students act together to understand values (Barone, 2004).

On the other hand, in the promotion of values, cooperation between teachers, educational institutions, and parental involvement also plays an important role, as explained by Greenspan and Shanker (cited in Nucci, 2014). In teacher-student or student-student relationships, children observe each other's values, attitudes, and behaviours in much the same way as within the family (Passy, 2005). Educators know that without the help of parents, their influence will be limited (Lickona, 1988). In this context, also according to Pestalozzi, in the education of children, the positive example is important, primarily that of the mother and the educator (Koliqi, 1998).

Thus, in this sense, it is clear that to build an education system that cultivates values, several key elements must be combined: the meticulous implementation of educational standards, the careful selection of teaching materials, and the professional preparation of teachers to integrate values in every subject. Equally important is the inclusion of these values in their daily work and their promotion as living models for students. Only through this harmonized approach can we inspire new generations with a solid moral foundation.

3. Methodology

This research was conducted using the content analysis method, as a qualitative research approach employed to examine the values represented in 14 Albanian ABC-books. This method facilitated the identification and examination of values represented in ABC-books (also known as alphabet books—educational texts traditionally used to teach children the letters of the alphabet, often featuring stories, poems, and illustrations) that were used in Kosovo schools from 1945 to 2022. Content analysis, which is acknowledged as an impartial and rigorous research strategy, is described as a way for obtaining findings by systematically and objectively recognizing distinct aspects within messages (Holsti, 1969). The main research question guiding this study is: What key values are included and promoted in Albanian ABC-books used in Kosovo between 1945 and 2022?

A content structure analysis was employed in order to respond to the research questions. As the primary source of data, fourteen distinct ABC-books from various eras within the Kosovo educational system were chosen. The values found in the ABC-books were analyzed, taking into account historical occurrences, proverbs, poetry, and other didactic components that support value education. Following that, the values' coding system and analysis were the next steps. Historical-national and

sociocultural values were identified as the two primary value types. The material from each text was carefully chosen in accordance with the coding category method. Every time a value appeared, it was noted. In order to determine which values were most frequently promoted in all of the chosen materials, the data was quantified based on the number of frequencies, which indicated how frequently each value appeared. In addition, the data was coded and interpreted in light of Kosovo's cultural, historical, and political contexts over the course of several decades. This quantitative aspect of the analysis allowed for the identification of the most prominently emphasized values across the ABC-books. Finally, these recurring values were synthesized and presented as thematic groups.

The application of content analysis enabled a comprehensive exploration of how values were embedded in these educational texts, as well as the contextual messages they conveyed. According to Krippendorff (2004), "content analysis allows researchers to better understand textual information and the contexts of their use" (p. 18). In this study, the method also allowed for the interpretation of how these values were linked to the cultural, historical, and political contexts of Kosovo during the analyzed period.

4. Results

This section presents the research findings based on a content analysis of Albanian ABC-books. The analysis aimed to examine how values are included and promoted in these texts. After an in-depth examination of the identified values, we categorized them into two main groups: historical-national values and sociocultural values.

4.1. Historical-national values

The findings from our research show that the contents of Albanian ABC-books, covering the period from 1945-2022, include and promote historical-national values through stories or poems that talk about the acts of historical personalities, various historical events, national symbols and the Albanian language.

The promotion of historical figures and personalities is found in the text about Skanderbeg, which states, among other things: "Skanderbeg was a king of Albania. He fought all those wars against enemies and always won, as he was very brave and smart. That is why we always remember the name of Skanderbeg." (Gjevari et al., 1945, p. 10). In addition to Skanderbeg, the ABC-book also talks about Naim Frashëri, who "has worked a lot for Albania. He has written many beautiful poems. We love those who work for Albania very much. That is why we never forget them." (Gjevari et al., 1945, p. 17). Also, in "Skanderbeg's Last Message", it is said: "Skanderbeg said – none of you could break the united birches. One by one, little Gjoni broke them. Therefore, my last message is: "Stay united..." (Deva & Krasniqi, 2008, p. 75).

However, after the last war in Kosovo, national values such as national symbols, language, and patriotism began to be freely promoted. National symbols are also promoted through the poem "Flag", which states:

The flag is red,

With the two-headed eagle,

Give us the most beautiful name,

I am an Albanian with faith and honor (Gjokutaj et al., 2012, p. 55).

Also, the poem "The Albanian Language" promotes national values, when it says:

Like the wave of the seashore,

Like the sound of the lightning rod

Like the sound of an earthquake,
Like our Albanian language (Gjokutaj et al.,2012, p. 100).

The story "In Theth" promotes the value of patriotism by describing and promoting Albania's beauties, such as mountains, plants, water, and the wonderful air of Theth.

The poem "How is the homeland preserved?"

We must preserve

The shores and paths

Because my homeland

Is my river and a spring (Gjokutaj et al.,2022,p.120).

While historical events are found in the story "Unforgettable Meeting", where it is written that: "On the occasion of November 28, Flag Day, Albanians from Ulcinj, Presheva and Bujanovac, from Tetovo, Kosovo and Albania organized a concert in Vlora", and in the story "Blin's Birthday" it is said that: "February 17 came. Blin is happy that he has two joys in one day: his birthday and the Independence Day of Kosovo" (Gjokutaj et al.,2022, p.104).

4.2. Sociocultural values

This section includes the findings derived from our research. We see that the authors of the Alphabet books have given great importance to presenting and promoting sociocultural values. Among these values, special emphasis is placed on respect and honor for the family, the elderly, people in need, solidarity, work, and education.

We find respect and the importance of the family promoted in the poem "Naim Frashëri said", where he writes:

Love your mother and father,

That they may give you a blessing

They suffer for you

As you are the light in their eyes (Gjevori et al., 1945,p.17)

Honor as a value is found in the poem "The Father's Heart", where respect and honor towards the father is promoted by saying:

For you day and night

He works hard

The father is tired

Blessed is he who honors him (Gjevori & Shushka, 1955, p.43).

Solidarity as a value is evident in the story "Brotherly Love", where we learn:"Stevo was left without parents... The Partisans took him to an Albanian village. There, Ram Bardhi welcomed him and said: "Stay with us. This is my son, Agim. He will be your true brother. This is your new home." (Gjevori, Gjino & Kostari, 1947, p.66).

Through the story "The Disabled Man", the aim is to promote empathy as an important value, where it says:"Merita helped the disabled man who had fallen and broken his hip. She went home, fetched a cane, and brought it to him, and the man stood up. The teacher said, 'You did well. Honor and help the disabled.'" (Hoxha, 1977, p.95).

The story "The Wheat Ears" carries the message of sharing and generosity:

"We will have plenty of wheat. We will fill the granaries and help the hungry," he shouted joyfully. (Deva & Krasniqi, 2008, p.69).

In the story "Mother Teresa's Heart", solidarity and altruism are highlighted:

"Mother Teresa is known worldwide. She had a great heart. Her entire life, she devoted to helping the poor. She aided suffering children. Her message is: 'Be kind-hearted, love one another, and help those near you.'" (Gjokutaj et al., 2012, p.90).

Finally, the story "What is Peace?" emphasizes small acts of kindness and mutual respect in everyday life: "Peace is achieved through small actions in daily life. Be kind to parents, siblings, and grandparents. Love your classmates. Help anyone who needs you. Do not insist when you are not right. Treat others as you would like to be treated." (Gjokutaj et al., 2022, p.125).

The research data conclude that a love for school and books is a value strongly emphasized in Albanian ABC-books. Additionally, this theme is highlighted in the poems "What I Want" and "The Book."

What I Want

I want games and lessons,

I want work and entertainment,

I love my teacher and my books,

I love the school that gives me knowledge (Gjevari & Shushka, 1955, p.126).

The Book

It has no mind, but it teaches you.

It has no mouth, but it speaks to you.

You live with it every day.

A close friend for life (Gjokutaj et al., 2022, p.133).

The analysis of ABC-books has identified a clear trend emphasizing the importance of work, particularly after World War II, when the values of labor and dedication to rebuilding the country were prominently highlighted.

Uncle Kolë

"Uncle Kolë makes shoes—he rises early in the morning and goes to the workshop; there he works all day to support the household and feed the children. If you don't work, you won't have food, clothes, health, or joy." (Gjevari, et al., 1945, p.27)

Morning

All the workers, before dawn,

Have left their beds and risen. Some with hoes, some with spades, Now they have begun their work (Gjevari et al., 1947, p. 44)

5. Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that the contents of ABC-books in Kosovo have changed in accordance with general social changes. In this context, the values included in ABC-books have evolved in tandem with broader societal transformations, reflecting the shifts in political and cultural ideologies over time. Such values have become part of the curriculum as well as textbooks. The findings from this research align with opinions of Apple and Bascom (1992), according to whom

"cultural forces affect textbook content, and the readers respond to such texts". Additionally, Apple (2004) emphasizes that education is fundamentally non-neutral by examining the complex ways that larger socio-political and economic ideologies impact educational institutions and curriculum. According to this view, dominant groups use education to maintain their power and influence over society by adapting the curriculum to suit their views and preferences. In this context, the ABC-books analyzed in this research offer a clear example of how educational texts can reflect and reinforce the cultural identity of a people as well as document the political and social transformations experienced over time.

Through a systematic analysis of the inclusion and promotion of values within ABC-books, two overarching categories emerged: historical-national values and sociocultural values. The study reveals that while certain values have been consistently presented across all editions, others have experienced deliberate omissions or shifts, aligned with political agendas and systemic decisions regarding which values to emphasize or suppress. This fluctuation underscores the role of educational materials not only as instructional tools but also as instruments of cultural transmission and ideological influence.

To present more detailed data regarding the inclusion of types of values in ABC-books, we have divided these educational texts into three groups. The first group includes only the first ABC-book "My First Song" (1945), which was brought to Kosovo from Albania, because at that time there was no such text in the Albanian language. This text consist of more historical-national values than other ABC-books until 1999 and also includes sociocultural values. So, from the findings derived from this research, it is seen that the two groups of values are included in the first ABC-book. The second group includes ABC-books published from 1946-1999. The findings of our research show that due to the impact of politics on education, the presentation of values in ABC-books has also changed. The events that occurred in 1948, after the appearance of the Information Bureau and after the breakdown of good relations between Yugoslavia and Albania, marked another turning point in the development of Albanian education in Kosovo (Islami, 2001). Albanian ABC-books were evaluated by special commissions of the system of that time, and the historical-national values of the Albanian people were not included in the content of the ABC-books, except for those that proclaimed brotherhood and unity among the peoples of Yugoslavia. In this regard, our findings present a concrete example on brotherhood: "In the great celebration of July 7, our people, in Kosovo and Metohija, Albanians, Serbs and Montenegrins, all participate together, because it is the greatest day, the day that brought to light and ensured brotherhood and unity for our people" (Gjevori et al., 1948). These findings are in line with the findings of the research on ABC-books in the Albanian language by the author Nimonaj Hoti (2014) as well as with the findings of researcher Kalmus (2001), according to which the socialist system promoted a collectivist culture. The inclusion of the values of brotherhood and unity in the spirit of the socialist system was of special emphasis until 1966. From 1966 onwards, during the research, we notice that the authors have tried to move away as little as possible from the imposed values of the system of that time. With the deterioration of interethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs, and with the closure of printing houses, the 1982 ABC-book was used until 2000. During these years, we have not included historical-national values, only sociocultural values. During these years, historical-national values were not included, but only sociocultural values. These ABC-books include sociocultural values because, on the one hand, the coexistence of several people had to be cultivated and brought to life, and on the other hand, the authors included these values for the education of new generations and outside of the political claims of the time.

The third group consists of the ABC-books published in Kosovo after the Kosovo War in 1999 until the last ABC-book of 2022. Our findings show that in these books, the spirit of freedom is felt, and freedom is promoted as a value. While in terms of including and promoting the historical-national values of the Albanian people and sociocultural values, there is more emphasis than ever before. The

presentation of two national figures, such as: Skanderbeg and Saint Teresa, for the first time after the conflict in our textbooks, encompasses historical-national and sociocultural values of international significance. In addition, based on our research, it is important to note that not all values apply equally to all societies, and what is considered a value for a given individual or society at a given time period does not mean that it applies to all human societies and for all times. For example, while in American society "the major value includes the assignment of high importance to achievement and success, work and activity, efficiency and practicality, material comfort, individuality, progress, rationality, patriotism, and democracy" (Williams, 1970, pp. 46-47; Huges & Kroehler, 2005), in Albanian society and culture, the main values are related to family, honor, respect, loyalty, hospitality, culture, tradition, and work. The Albanian ABC-books clearly illustrate that values shift in response to broader societal changes. In addition to traditional national values, they now incorporate universal and democratic principles.

6. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the inclusion and promotion of values in ABC-books. Based on the findings of this research, it emerges that the inclusion and promotion of values through ABC-books is seen as a real opportunity for the internalization of values among students; therefore, as such, it must comply with the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, the Kosovo Curriculum and the standards for school textbooks, as well as avoid any bias by supporting and promoting tolerance, mutual understanding, equality, justice and social cohesion, etc. Also, the research findings show that through the ABC-books, students have had the opportunity to receive information about the values that are considered necessary for the time or the existing system and have contributed to the preparation of citizens for coexistence, tolerance, social harmony, equality, justice, etc. In the ABC-books of the years of the former system, there is a focus on values such as brotherhood-unity, care for the family, respect, love for work, school and teachers, etc. As a result of systemic change, especially during the post-war and lengthy transition period, the focus moves from moral principles to what are known as democratic values, such as tolerance, equality, fairness, sincerity, understanding, diversity, etc. We think that focusing on education for values is a contemporary necessity that cannot be disregarded, since it is one of the fundamental components of the competencies that students must learn.

Finally, we must reiterate the importance of studies related to values, as raising children's awareness of values education is a guarantee for a better future. Furthermore, the integration of values into the education system offers opportunities for justice and social cohesion. Our conclusions align with the opinions of researchers such as Brownlee (2012), Morin (1999), and others. According to them, 'Social cohesion can be promoted in the early years if we help children experience and internalize moral values related to human rights, and develop their own opinions and moral responsibility' (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007, cited in Brownlee, 2012). Additionally, Morin (1999) states that during a specific period of social development, characterized by multidimensional structures, it is essential to place the concept of competencies in a context that reflects the stage of development within a multifaceted and global reality. Thus, in Kosovo, where people from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds live, learning through texts that present and promote values as an integral component of competencies is crucial for peace, well-being, and social cohesion.

7. Suggestion

Focusing on values education and their inclusion and promotion in all textbooks and in all subjects can be considered possible suggestions for teachers in general and textbook writers in particular. To ensure that students learn critical moral and ethical values like empathy, respect, responsibility, and justice in addition to academic subjects, schools should incorporate value-based education into the core curriculum from a young age.

Teachers have a crucial role in educating pupils about morality. In this regard, training on teaching values and creating social cohesiveness can be a part of professional development programs. Except this, motivating students to think about societal issues, ethical dilemmas, and their personal contributions to the cause of social justice is essential. Schools can include debates, discussions, and projects that help students think about moral issues and take responsibility for their actions.

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