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INTERCULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Abstract: The ethos of intercultural education is based on values such as: acceptance, respect, empathy, openness, equality, non-discrimination and impartiality. The principles and goals of primary education are closely correlated with them and should be incorporated as a component of the educational process. The leading role in this multi-layered initiative is played by the class and subject teachers, as well as the professional associates. Systematic and planned, long-term support and transformation of the teaching staff can contribute to intercultural enrichment of the teaching process.

Intercultural education should be a naturally embedded component in the daily educational process, regardless of the ethnic and linguistic structure of students and teachers in a school.

That is why it cannot be reduced to the contours of a school subject, but to be promoted through a series of intercultural initiatives and skillfully designed educational approaches with a sign of transversality and cross-curricularity.

In the past two school years, a content analysis of over 500 intercultural interventions conducted in primary education has been performed, within several subjects, and it has been seen that teachers create a multitude of solutions for subtle intercultural dimension in almost all subjects, contrary to the widely accepted opinion that they are most common in content related to languages, art, sports. The sensitization of teachers and professional associates is a key prerequisite for skillful and continuous recognition and promotion of opportunities embedded in the national curriculum, and in close correlation with the philosophy of interculturalism.

Keywords: Interculturalism, Transformation, Educational initiatives

Introduction

The ethos of intercultural education is embedded in the following postulates: acceptance, respect, empathy, openness, equality, non-discrimination and impartiality. These values are elements of the key principles, goals and tasks of primary education, whose contents – according to the most recent pedagogical tendencies – should be enriched with the impact of interculturalism.

Intercultural education creates space for support and promotion of ethnic, racial, linguistic, social, gender and cultural diversity, which results in the need to build a wide range of upbringing approaches to develop sensitivity and awareness of any kind of diversity, *otherness*, uniqueness.

Hence the several multifaceted dilemmas related to the design of guidelines and approaches for promoting interculturalism as a long-term and continuous strategy in advancing the intercultural context in our upbringing and educational system.

Starting from the clear positions that define the intercultural education as:

- pedagogical trend equally relevant to multi-ethnic and monoethnic schools, and
- reflection of the cross-curricular approach,

opens a wide range of opportunities for incorporating intercultural dimension in the immediate upbringing and educational process, as a naturally embedded upbringing component.

Hence the initial idea to organize qualitative research which will reveal the most common modalities that teachers apply in order to promote intercultural values through upbringing and educational activities enriched with diverse contents.

Research Methodology

The goal of the research was focused on perception and assessment of sensitization of teachers towards the introduction of intercultural elements in the upbringing and educational process during two school years (2020/21 and 2021/22).

The subject of content analysis were 512 daily preparations for various teaching contents provided by curricula for almost all subjects defined in the national curriculum for nine-year primary education.

The daily preparations were created by 140 primary school teachers. Some features of the teachers' sample are:

Table 1

Profile of upbringing and educational staff

Class teachers	105	75%
Subject teachers	27	19.3%
Professional associates	8	5.7 %
Total	140	100

Table 2

Gender structure of teachers

Female	138	98.6%
Male	2	1.4%
Total	140	100

Table 3

Ethnicity of teachers per school year

Ethnicity	School year 2020/21	School year 2021/22
Macedonian	80%	77%
Albanian	14.4%	15.6%
Bosniak	1.3%	3.1%
Vlach	4.3%	4.3%
Total	100	100

This research was used to analyze intercultural practices of teachers from almost all regions of our country. Over 23% of them are from Skopje, 14.6% are teachers from Kumanovo, with the same percent of teachers who work in primary schools in Bitola and surrounding areas. 11.2% of teachers are from the municipality of Gostivar, while almost 9% of the teaching staff come from the neighboring municipality of Tetovo. Slightly less than 7% of teachers in a sample work in the central school and regional schools in the municipality of Krushevo. The remaining third of the sample include teachers from almost all other regions of the country, like Berovo, Probishtip, Shtip, Valandovo, Prilep, Radovish, Kavadarci, Veles and Kichevo.

The qualitative analysis of the content component of daily preparations, as part of the pedagogical documentation in academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22, was oriented towards the categorization of the intercultural interventions in a set of four indicators, i.e.:

- interaction between *different individuals* (e.g., respect, exchange, helping, multilingualism, etc.),
- cultural identity (e.g., tradition, customs, holidays),
- stereotypes and prejudices (e.g., their identification and prevention, discussions about them, dealing with them, etc.),
- openness to the world (e.g., respect for global cultural, ethnic, racial and linguistic diversity).

Following those indicators in the content analysis enabled easier and more concise tracing of the concluding remarks on the intercultural reality and context in our country, which also served as a guide in defining the recommendations for possible steps to be taken in intercultural transformation of the upbringing and educational process in primary education.

Research Results

The content analysis of 512 daily preparations in which the class and subject teachers also pointed out the implemented intercultural interventions (as a naturally embedded components with an emphasized upbringing dimension) enabled us to see to which category of four defined indicators belong the most common upbringing and educational impacts in correlation with the principle of interculturalism. Certainly, the analysis also indicated where the upbringing and educational staff rarely practice intercultural enrichment, which in turn will be an indicator of what kind of professional support would pose a largest challenge and demand.

One third of the realized, embedded intercultural elements are a reflection of the indicator: interaction between different individuals, while emphasizing the respect, exchange, helping and cooperation between children, peers and adults characterized by linguistic, ethnic, social, gender, cultural, etc. diversity. Teachers find this type of values as the easiest to recognize and further upgrade with intercultural impacts. Analyse of the teaching contents in which the teachers saw the possibility of promoting the above-mentioned indicator mostly points to the contents given within the curricula of Macedonian/Albanian/English language or the curricula of the elective subjects: Language and culture of Roma, i.e., Vlachs. Teachers also find the contents within the curricula of History and Society, Civic Education, Physical Education, Art Education, Music Education and Life Skills as suitable for emphasizing this indicator. Various examples of activities have been observed that emphasized the cooperation between e.g., boys and girls, as well as adults that differ in race, religion, ethnicity, language, social status, physical appearance, etc. Students are most often presented with various audio-visual sources with encouraging examples about the benefits of mutual cooperation and support, but also with certain problem situations in which discrimination is observed against a certain individual/s due to some aspect of diversity, which would encourage them to play a proactive role in fostering impartiality, both in local and global contexts.

Unlike this indicator, the second indicator, which is focused on the promotion of cultural identity, is observed in almost 42% of the analyzed preparations. It is mostly represented and recognized in a range of activities that promote national and religious holidays or certain important international days. Also evident was a series of various activities initiated by teachers in order to promote particular traditions and customs relevant to the celebration of various holidays, family or social events, ceremonies, etc. Again, most of these upbringing and educational approaches are operationalized within the contents provided by the curricula in the field of languages, history, civic education or art. Teachers have largely initiated different types of projects that would allow students to become more familiar with both their own cultural traditions and customs and those of other ethnic or cultural groups and communities. Important emphasis was placed on recognizing similarities between different cultural elements, customs, traditions, holidays, etc. that take place not only in our immediate local environment, but also at national, regional or global level.

Only 11.2% of the daily preparations of teachers provide insight into the upbringing and educational interventions that are reflection of the third indicator, i.e., recognition, dealing with and prevention of stereotypes and prejudices of different kinds. Teachers in an extremely few cases have reported planned initiatives to address this major challenge. This type of upbringing and educational intercultural impacts are most often found in the processing of few contents within the curricula of languages or life skills. The analyzed daily preparations reveal interventions that are largely aimed only at recognizing the source of a certain stereotype or prejudice, while students are rather rarely allowed to devise sustainable strategies for their prevention and overcoming. Activities are dominated by the development of awareness, but without any higher sensitivity of students to actively deal with ethnic, racial, social, gender, etc. stereotypes and prejudices.

Slightly less than one fifth (17.4%) of the analyzed daily plans of teachers point to the nurturing of the intercultural spirit, in line the fourth indicator, i.e., the openness to the world. This is mostly found in upbringing and educational approaches to the contents within the subjects such as: geography, mathematics, foreign languages, natural sciences, art and history. Operationalization of intercultural goals is observed through the presentation and promotion of certain geographical regions, unique and distinctive specimens of flora and fauna, top representatives and encouraging examples in the field of film, theatre, literature and art, as well as biographies of world-famous artists, scientists, writers, athletes, politicians, etc. which are accepted and recognized worldwide.

Summarizing the analysis of all 512 daily preparations, it is clear that over 70% of the analyzed daily plans of teachers (over two thirds) are mainly focused on the promotion of cultural identities (mostly local), as well as fostering interaction between *different individuals* (which in turn largely relates to the promotion of peer interaction and cooperation).

The third and fourth indicators – i.e., increasing the intensity of activities that would contribute to dealing with stereotypes and prejudices, as well as fostering an intercultural, open and impartial world view – offer a lot of opportunities for expanding the scope of upbringing and educational practices.

An encouraging finding is that teachers see the opportunity for introducing an intercultural dimension in a range of subjects, as opposed to the rigid misperception that it is expected to be found in the fields of art, sports and languages. It is certainly a kind of positive consequence of the changed notion and definition of intercultural education, thanks to the clear distinction between two related concepts, i.e., multiculturalism versus interculturalism.

Encouraging intercultural environment in a number of realized activities is also a reflection of another important benefit, i.e., the continuity of realization. Teachers who participated in the research voluntarily and on their own initiative have carried out a series of activities enriched with intercultural elements, as opposed to another misconception that such activities are occasional and take place only during certain major holidays, the school anniversary day or some important international day.

An important qualitative benefit can be found in the presence of this type of upbringing and educational developments, i.e., their representation in both multi-ethnic and monoethnic schools, which is a practice directly opposed to the deeply ingrained belief that intercultural initiatives are relevant to school environments with a heterogeneous (ethnic, linguistic, racial, etc.) structure only.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A key assumption for intercultural transformation of the upbringing and educational process is the sensitization of the teaching staff about the necessity of intercultural action as a long-term and planned commitment. It is the intercultural sensitivity of teachers that enables intercultural education to gain the status of a naturally embedded component (unlike the occasional implementation of particular initiatives) as a sublimite of integrated multicultural and multilingual elements.

Fostering intercultural awareness among teachers should be a reflection of continuous and repetitive professional, occupational support and training, which would be organized in sets of training modules. The content of modules can be structured according to the above-mentioned indicators in order to build immediate practices and to share teaching experiences, challenges, difficulties and dilemmas in operationalizing intercultural interventions.

Teaching staff in both class and subject teaching can make use of models of activities, practicum, manuals and e-platforms as an additional and auxiliary resource in designing and building intercultural cross-curricular strategies for primary education.

Support for the teaching staff should be designed both in the direction of professional and in addition to personal transformation, which would be a prerequisite for fostering the impartiality and openness of teachers, as fundamental assumptions for intercultural action.

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF EDUCATING MIGRANT CHILDREN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Abstract: Most of the migrant children currently residing in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been on the move for a long time, changing their countries of residence, and different education systems. Some children did not even get an education, while some of them had interruptions in their education for several years. UNICEF's Manual for the Inclusion of Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Children in the Education Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina highlights the need to overcome a number of challenges. This research paper aims to analyze the forms of education of migrant children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to show positive examples of integration of children on the move in the education system, but also the shortcomings of the inclusion of migrant children in B&H society. Using the content analysis, comparative, descriptive, and interview methods, we intend to deepen the understandings that are present worldwide, including in