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INTERCULTURAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Abstract: Intercultural and multicultural education is the basis of the individual to fulfill one's civic duties and responsibilities in accordance with the values and main principles of our modern society: peace and brotherhood among people, respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance, solidarity and understanding, protection and preservation of the environment and the cultural heritage, integration with other cultures.

Intercultural and multicultural education is a progressive approach to transforming the education system, based on the ideas of educational equality and social justice. It is an approach that enables students to get to know, understand, respect and appreciate cultural differences and similarities and to recognize the achievements of different ethnic, racial and socio-economic groups. Intercultural and multicultural education is a combination of knowledge, competencies, skills and leads to a change in the way of thinking. This is a process of personal growth – with an effect on the whole society.

A major pillar of intercultural and multicultural education is to learn to live together as a society with our diverse difference. For the practical implementation of this principle it is necessary to employ in unity both educational work and forms of extracurricular activities with students.

Intercultural and multicultural education in Bulgaria and Bulgarian schools abroad is developed through various channels. In Bulgaria a fruitful experience is reached through working in teams on different projects; intercultural clubs/forums; sharing teaching practices; festivals and initiatives such as “Roses of Bulgaria”.

Keywords: Education, Intercultural, Multicultural

In the fast-moving, fast-developing and fast-changing world that we live in, globalization has affected every aspect of our everyday lives. People have changed their perspectives, way of living, way of thinking and, in this manner, have either accepted globalization or still try to disregard it. Elaborating on the different characteristics of the fast-spreading route of globalization, one specific aspect stands on the surface, that causes an instant reaction in the society. That is culture. We define “culture” as the combination of values, religious practices, ideals, forms of artistic expression, patterns of social and interpersonal relationships, socially acquired forms of perception, behavior and thinking. The perceptions of different people, along with their presuppositions, are culturally predetermined. How we feel and think, how we behave and how we react reflect our cultural belonging (Solidarity in Action Foundation, 2019).

The introduction of various cultures in a closed society, presenting different beliefs, traditions, ways of living, eating habits etc. causes a shock in one’s mind and urges oneself to reject the new ways and even find them hostile. This is why intercultural and multicultural education are from an utmost importance for the preservation of peace and brotherhood in a globalized society.

Internationalization, regionalization and localization, as trends within globalization, have provided new kinds of requirements and opportunities for intercultural dialogue and learning (Lasonen, 2009). Differences in cultures lead to differences in education approaches as well. Therefore, the unification of systems is yet another goal to be achieved.

Interestingly multicultural and intercultural education are often used as if the terms are universally understood and referring to only one type of education (Holm & Zilliacus, 2009). However, Multicultural refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups. People live alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other, whereas intercultural describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships. In an intercultural society, no one is left unchanged because everyone learns from one another and grows together (Schriefer, 2020).

Intercultural and multicultural education is a set of knowledge, skills and competences that lead to a change in thinking. It is a process of growth, a basis for individuals to fulfil their civic duties and responsibilities in accordance with the values and basic principles of our modern society: peace and fraternity between people, integration with other cultures, respect for human rights, including the rights of the child, tolerance, solidarity and understanding.

Hill (2007) goes on to propose that intercultural understanding is a principal, common objective of multicultural and international education and should serve to bring together scholars and practitioners in both fields whereas the literature and practice shows them, by and large, operating independently with little reference, one to the other. Greater collaboration can only be of mutual benefit in achieving common objectives and improving practice.

Intercultural and multicultural education are key deterrents to the exclusion of sizable groups of people. An intercultural approach to education allows every kid and student to be treated equally during the learning and educational process. Additionally, it should be implemented in accordance with the guidelines of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Intercultural education and upbringing is a progressive approach to transforming the education system and is based on the ideas of educational equality and social justice. It is an approach that empowers pupils and students to get to know, understand, respect and value cultural differences and similarities and to recognize the achievements of ethnic, racial and socio-economic groups.

A fundamental pillar of intercultural and multicultural education is to learn to live together, to learn to live with others. The aim of this education is not only to create a dialogue between cultures, but also to develop a responsibility towards one another, making us learn from it or integrate it into our own lives. Openness to the other, respect for difference, active tolerance, acceptance of the reality of other cultures, ensuring equal opportunities, and combating discrimination, serve as a foundation for effective training of pedagogical specialists.

Intercultural education contributes to building a tolerant multi-ethnic environment in Bulgarian schools. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop and implement specialized programs for training in ethnic tolerance of students, teachers and parents, studying cultural features and customs (Popova, 2017). Ethno-cultural diversity in Bulgaria makes relevant the problem of ensuring a sustainable balance, equality between different ethnic groups for the realization of the essence of their cultural and language identity and their full integration in society.

In the program for the development of education, science and youth policies in the Republic of Bulgaria as a contemporary challenge is pointed out the emergence of multicultural values and the strengthening of international contacts, communication without borders to obtain quality education. In Bulgaria the governing principle is unity in diversity, which indicates that the education, training and upbringing of children and young people is carried out within a unified cultural and educational environment which guarantees the protection and development of different cultures and traditions within a common educational policy and a common cultural and linguistic space. The aim of Bulgarian education policy is to promote intercultural and multicultural education and training.

Furthermore, Solidarity in Action Foundation members along with children's teacher at Albany Community School, Vermont, USA embraced the initiative by the teaching staff of two kindergarten classes in Tvarditsa, Bulgaria and developed a Teacher's Guide, „Methods and Approaches for Working in an Intercultural Environment” as part of educational training, of which the Solidarity Foundation attended in August 2019. The manual is prepared to be a guide for teachers in all levels of education and gives insights on specific methods and approaches.

Intercultural and multicultural education and upbringing, whose mission is to make the accepted moral requirements for tolerant behavior a reality of relationships in society. There are many different cultures in Bulgaria, but it is through multicultural education and upbringing that peace and understanding are achieved. Multicultural education is a progressive approach to transforming the education system that is based on the ideas of educational equity and social justice. The components that are mandatory for multicultural education include:

- integration of curriculum content
- working against prejudice
- creating an empowering learning environment and social culture (Solidarity in Action Foundation, 2019).

Intercultural and multicultural education and training is a daily activity that is needed both for understanding the past and for living in the future: peaceful coexistence, solidarity, respect for other ethnicities. This upbringing and education is linked to the acquisition of social skills for listening, for communication, for teamwork and the ultimate goal in this respect is social competence.

Multicultural education and upbringing implies diversity in terms of content, structures and methods. This is a progressive approach to transforming the education system based on the ideas

of educational equality and social justice. It is an approach that enables students to know, understand, respect and appreciate cultural differences and similarities and to recognize the achievements of different ethnic and socio-economic groups.

In the modern Bulgarian school the educational programs aim both at educating the young generation in tolerance, humanity, mutual help, getting to know the different ethnicities, and at intercultural education. These objectives are achieved in compulsory education classes, free elective education and in extracurricular and out-of-school forms.

For the practical realization of this process it is necessary to use in unity the educational work in different subjects, the forms of extracurricular and out-of-school activities of students.

Multicultural education can be introduced on many levels:

- with kindergarten children – a club „fairy-tale world without Borders”;
- primary school children – in lessons, interest clubs and other forms;
- secondary and upper secondary pupils – in lessons, projects and conferences;
- through extracurricular and out-of-school activities – trips to museums to learn about different cultures,
- participation in literary competitions and art competitions
- students participate in projects with different themes not only for Bulgaria, but also for other countries of the world; seminars; International practices.

In Bulgaria and in Bulgarian schools around the world, children, pupils and students celebrate ethnic diversity through celebrations reflecting the ritual calendar in Bulgaria and in different countries through:

- themed festivals – the festival “I am Bulgarian” is held every year in different countries around the world where there are Bulgarian schools;
- competitions for writing a literary composition or drawing competitions;
- other initiatives, one of which is “Roses of Bulgaria” – held every year since 2018.

In Bulgaria and in Bulgarian schools around the world on 11. May students play choro – a traditional Bulgarian dance and make exhibitions of drawings on this theme.

All forms are used to reach the transformative approach that weaves together a range of perspectives on the whole learning process with the aim of living together in a society composed of many different cultures in peace, understanding and tolerance.

In Bulgaria, the education programme enables students to learn about other cultures, customs and traditions, so that they can live peacefully together and understand the behavior the behavior of children from other ethnic groups.

All students, regardless of their background, can complete higher education at any Bulgarian university in their desired specialty so that they can acquire the foundations for a successful professional life. Collaborative work on international university projects and cooperation in international groups requires knowledge of the processes and problems of intercultural communication, which encompasses and unites diverse fields.

Globalization and the free movement of people have made the world a very different place and encounters between representatives of different cultures have become a daily occurrence. This requires the mastery of a new and vital competence – intercultural communicative competence – which will enable us to communicate effectively and efficiently with those different from us.

Intercultural and multicultural education and training today is an integral part of general education and training. The global goal is the ability to communicate tolerantly with people from another cultural community. The modern person of the 21st century meets representatives of other cultures and societies on a daily basis and thus evaluates his culture in a new way and compares it with that of others.

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INFORMAL EDUCATION – OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESSFUL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: The knowledge in the 21st century is a significant link in the development of society. However, the question arises as to how much formal education manages to keep up with the changes that are taking place in society. Hence, the need to introduce an unconventional form of education is imposed, as an opportunity to overcome the gap that arises with the speed of change and the inertia of formal education.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to emphasize the role and importance of non-formal education in society, as an important tool for acquiring additional skills appropriate to the current changes in society.

As a starting point in the research for this article, conclusions and recommendations arising from the exchange of experiences with the business community were used. On the other hand, attention is paid to the relationship to knowledge, as one of the most important features of the 21st century. This means, having in mind the rapid technical and technological development, we can freely say that today, new educational challenges have been set for all those who want to remain competitive on the market and develop their careers. This emphasizes the need to adapt the process of education to the changes that are taking place in society.

Thus, given the nature and nature of formal education, and how much we work on its flexibility, we cannot always follow all the changes and new knowledge. In response to this phenomenon, we have the phenomenon of decentralization of the educational process and strengthening of informal and non-institutional forms of education. This means that non-formal education should be a carrier for reducing the gap between existing and necessary education.

Although non-formal education does not have directly defined rules for what it should look like, there must still be a framework in which it will be implemented. Therefore, due to the differentiation of educational content, it must be flexible and appropriate for all participants.