

Books for children



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THE STATUS OF THE SCHOOL SUBJECT MACEDONIAN LANGUAGE FOR THE STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES IN THE SECOND EDUCATIONAL PERIOD OF THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Abstract: With the implementation of the Concept for primary and lower secondary school the duration of the elementary education is nine years. This brings the first meaningful reforms in since the independence. The students who started in first grade in the school year 2007/2008 would be in school for the next consecutive nine, instead eight years. Accordingly, the children who are five years and eight months old enroll in first grade, and the educational process is split into three different periods: the first educational period starts in first and ends in third grade, the second educational period starts in fourth and ends in sixth grade, and the third one starts in seventh and ends in ninth grade. This change implicated the need for the development of new learning plan – having in mind that there were new essential and selective school subjects, and in liaison with the new learning plan, new programs were developed which incorporated the changes and revisions of the old programs for the schools subject and new programs for the school subjects that were implemented for the first time in the educational system.

The second reform, the Concept for primary education, was implemented in the school year 2021/2022 and it addresses the reforms in the first and second educational period – in first and fourth grade. The need for the reform was necessary having in mind the students' accomplishments in the school subjects, especially their results in language and mathematics. Having this in mind, at the beginning of the Concept the new national standards are provided and explained which address the development of eight competencies sets which are enwoven in all of the taught school subjects. Subsequently, new learning plan was developed which represents the sequence of all essential and selective school subjects and their weekly occurrence.

In the second chapter of this seminar work, the status analyses of the school subject Macedonian for the students from different communities is represented.

Keywords: Concept, Elementary education, Nine-year-long, Period, Learning plan, Program, Macedonian language for the students from different communities

Introduction

Usually, the need for analysis and grasping the current events in the Macedonian educational system is imposed either as a result of the conduction of new educational reforms, or as an area for which there hasn't been a debate in the society for years. So, the interest and the involvement of the academic and media public as well as the involvement of the students, the parents and other participants in the educational processes is growing when an attempt is made for implementing educational reforms. More significant reforms in the Macedonian educational system

happened in 2007, when the Conception for nine-year education was adopted, and the next reforms happened in 2021 when the Conception for elementary education was embraced. Further in this paper both of the reforms will be considered as well as how they affect the teaching subject Macedonian language for students from other communities, which is actually the subject of our interest. So, in continuation of this paper, attention will be paid on the elementary education in RNM, and the second period of the elementary education, more precisely, the beginning of the implementation of the Macedonian language subject for students from other communities, will be especially emphasized.

The Elementary Education in RNM

As Delcheva-Dizdarevic (2020, p. 15) emphasizes, the upbringing and the education of the young generation is an invaluable capital that represents a strong factor for the development of the production and the advancement of the democratic relations in society. Furthermore, she says that the level of development and the quality of the upbringing and the education directly influence the quality of life, which is undoubtedly related to the general development of the society. She concludes that a special attention should be paid on the elementary upbringing and education, because it represents the first and the longest period in the educational system in our country. Having this in mind, it can be concluded that the elementary upbringing and education are the basis on which the next levels of education are upgraded.

The elementary education in RNM covers the students from six to fifteen years and it is organized in three educational periods, namely: the first educational period lasts from I to III grade, the second from IV to VI grade and the third educational period lasts from VII to IX grade. According to the Article 44 from the Constitution of RNM every person has right to education, which is available for everyone under equal circumstances and it is mandatory and free of charge. Furthermore, it is mentioned in the Article 8 from the Law on primary education where it talks about the obligatory of the primary education and the parent or guardian's obligation to provide his child to fulfill its obligation for mandatory primary education and upbringing.

The principles of the primary education, as described in Article 4 from the Law on primary education, refer to the full development of the student, its preparation for lifelong learning, its autonomy, competence and responsibility, its active participation in the school and the community, advancement of the similarities and acceptance of the differences and interculture. In Article 7 from the Law on primary education are stated the numerous goals of the primary education, including: "developing students' literacy and the ability to understand, to inform and to express themselves, beside on Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, on the language and script of its members of the communities that speak a language other than the Macedonian language", which corresponds directly to the subject of this research.

Educational Periods in the Primary Education

According to the amendments of the Law on primary education from the schoolyear 2007/2008, the primary education in RNM lasts nine years, compared to the previous eight years primary education. As stated in the Conception for nine-year primary upbringing and education (2007, p.79), each educational period represents a relatively round whole in terms of the students' developmental characteristics and the laws in learning, as well as in terms of the assessing and evaluating the knowledge of the students, the forms of individualized and group teaching, the levels of knowledge and skills and the progress of the students. This type of teaching organization creates greater opportunities for continuous expansion and deepening of the system of knowledge and skills. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the changes triggered by the introduction of the nine-year elementary education refer to:

- The number of educational periods: first educational period from I to III grade, second educational period from IV to VI grade and third educational period from VII to IX grade;
- The age at which the students start their educational cycle: the children go in first grade at the age of five years and eight months;
- Program layout;
- Organization and implementation of the teaching: in addition to the classroom teacher for the implementation of the teaching in particular subjects should be hired subject teachers, in order to ease the transition from primary to subject teaching;
- The teacher's role;
- Teaching aids.

The Second Educational Period in the Primary Education

At the age of nine the students start the second educational period. They are expected to continue the process of continuous acquirement of new experience and knowledge, as well as to develop their thinking skills which is less dependent than the concrete experience which is more characteristic for the first educational period. Having in mind the cognitive and the affective areas of development now the student is expected to perform thought activity with complex logical operations on higher level. What is considered for special characteristic, according to the Conception for nine-year education (2007, p.83) is that the child's opinion can be independent from the perceptive elements of the cognition, which should testify for the student's ability to classify objects into a suitable group, to group into related categories, etc. So, accordingly to the previous said, there will be changes in the teaching plan, based exactly on the students' knowledge and skills expected in this educational period. If we consider and compare the teaching plan for the first and the second educational period, we will conclude that the changes refer to the number of obligatory subjects and their weekly representation. So, for the mandatory course Macedonian language, the number of classes, from five classes per week reduces to four in sixth grade. This trend doesn't change til the end of the primary education. The mandatory course Macedonian language for the students from the other communities, according to the teaching plan, starts from fourth grade for the students who follow the teaching in a language different than the Macedonian, and the number of classes in the second educational period is two classes per week in fourth and fifth grade, and three classes per week in the sixth grade. In seventh grade the number of classes per week is three again, but this changes in the two final years of the primary education, when the number of classes for the subject Macedonian language for the students from the other communities is two per week again. The representation of the teaching subject English language is extremely interesting since it keeps the same number of classes in the first, the second and the third educational period of the primary education: three classes per week from second to ninth grade, and only in first grade this number is two classes per week. The mandatory courses (except Macedonian language for the students from the other communities that we have already mentioned) that are introduced in the curriculum in the second educational period are: Technical education that is introduced in the fourth grade, Computer work and basics of programming in the fifth grade, Second foreign language in the sixth grade, Informatics in the sixth grade, Geography and History in the sixth grade.

Macedonian Language for the Students from the Other Communities

Defining the Macedonian Language as Second Language

In the primary education, according to the Law on the use of the languages in the education, the educational activity takes place in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, but for

the members of the other communities, the educational activity takes place in a language other than the Macedonian which is a native language for the students of the other communities. For the students from the other communities the learning of the Macedonian language is mandatory and they start learning it in the fourth grade of the primary education as a teaching subject called Macedonian language for the students from the other communities. Naming the teaching subject in this way, or rather avoiding defining it, in this context, as second or nonnative language may make the terminological standardization and harmonization more difficult, therefore in the scientific articles about the study of the Macedonian language by the native speakers is different from the Macedonian, there is a hesitation in choosing the right term for the language studied in this subject, or the name of the subject is mentioned to avoid ambiguity. Crvenkovska and Petroska (2010, p. 13) talk about the need for standardization and accurate definition, and they state that when it comes to a non-native language in the sociolinguistic, for the language that is learned or adopted as non-native, the following terms are most commonly used: non-native language, foreign language, second language or heritage language. The term second language describes a language that is available as a medium of communication, the language that is learned by the citizens born in the same country who have other native language, different from the one that is official in that country. Of course, the defining of the Macedonian language as a second language will significantly contribute to its norming and affirmation in the context of literature, scientific papers, comparative studies and research, especially if we take into account that the study of a second language is an interdisciplinary field that includes several linguistic scientific branches, cognitive psychology, educational research, sociology and neuroscience, and so far there has been no progress in this field.

Statistical Data about the Students Who Study Macedonian Language for the Students from the Other

In the academic year 2019/2020, the total number of students in the second educational period, from IV to VI grade is 63.114 thousand. 40.584 thousand of them follow the curriculum in Macedonian language and 22.530 thousand follow the curriculum in a language other than Macedonian, or 19.999 in Albanian, 2405 in Turkish, 43 in Serbian and 83 in Bosnian. If we look at the numbers by grades, we can conclude that in IV grade the total number of students who study in a language other than the Macedonian is 7938 (6919 in Albanian, 973 in Turkish, 18 in Serbian, 29 in Bosnian), and in VI grade the total number is 7117 (6474 in Albanian, 607 in Turkish, 10 in Serbian, 26 in Bosnian).

From these data we can conclude that in the second educational period the number of students studying Macedonian language for the students from the other communities is 22.530 thousand. The statistical data for the same parameters for the academic year 2021/2022 are not available.

Implementation of Macedonian Language Teaching for the Students from Other Communities According to the Program Orientation

Macedonian language teaching for the students from other communities is intended for students for whom Macedonian is not their first language of communication, and who acquire their language skills under the influence of the environment. For these students the Macedonian language teaching is conducted through two different teaching subjects, depending on the ethnicity: Macedonian language for the students from the other communities who study in Albanian and Turkish language and Macedonian language for the students from the other communities who study in Serbian and Bosnian language. The subject is studied from fourth to ninth grade, it has a status of mandatory subject and it is represented with two classes per week or seventy-two classes per year in total. According to the Conception for the primary education, the new curriculum, as

well as according to the approach to the contents, the name of the subject is changed to Macedonian for students from other communities, and the other parameters, i.e. the educational periods when the subject begins to be studied, the type/category of the teaching subject and the fund of weekly, i.e. annual lessons does not change. Currently, fourth grade students study according to the new curriculum, while fifth through ninth grade students follow the “old” curriculum. Currently the primary schools use two different teaching programs for the subject Macedonian language for the students from the other communities. Namely, the adoption of the Conception for primary education happened in March 2021 and the implementation of the new teaching plan and the new teaching programs started in I and IV grade in the academic year 2021/2022. Taking into account that the teaching subject Macedonian language for the students from the other communities, according to the “old curriculum” and the new teaching plan is studied in the second educational period, the students from IV grade from the other communities are studying according to the new curriculum and program, but the students from V to VI grade in the academic year 2021/2022 are following the “old” curriculum and program of the same subject. It should be noted that the students who are finishing the IV grade in the next academic year 2022/2023 will continue working according to the new curriculum and program, and the students who will be in VII, VIII and IX grade will study according to the “old” curriculums and programs.

The essential difference between the new and the “old” teaching programs consists, first of all, in the naming of the teaching subject, then in the presence or absence of connecting the competencies with the national standards, the teaching contents from which the learning outcomes directly derive, as well as the assessment standards. It should be pointed out that in the “old” curricula, account is taken of the differences in the approach to the contents of the Macedonian language, which mainly arise from linguistic reasons, more precisely due to the genetic kinship of the Macedonian language with the Serbian and Bosnian languages and the genetic dissimilarity of the Macedonian language with the Albanian and Turkish language, and that difference is not taken into account by the new curricula and programs. The changes in the curricula should also be reflected in the teaching aids. According to the Conception for creating a textbook and Methodology for evaluating a textbook (2010, p.13) the textbook should be closely related to the defined goals of the curriculum for a specific subject and fulfill the general and specific goals of each thematic unit. Furthermore, the textbook should follow the modern achievements of the specific scientific field and the appropriate professional terminology and be a synthesis of several pedagogical, psychological, methodical and didactic elements, the mutual relationship of which is correlative, complementary and dynamic. The textbook should be appropriate to the age of the students and should strengthen the educational component, the positive attitude towards knowledge, the development of civic and national identity, multiculturalism and gender equality. However, despite the fact that for the students who started in the fourth grade this year, 2021/2022, the new curricula are being implemented, among which is the curriculum for the Macedonian language subject for students from other communities, according to the announcements of the Ministry of Education in context of the textbooks for this subject, they are still being prepared, that is, they are not available to the students following this subject. In terms of the realization of the Macedonian language teaching for the students from other communities, it should be noted that it is the responsibility of the class teachers in the fourth and fifth grades, and of the subject teacher in the sixth grade. This is an extremely interesting fact and less contradictory, taking into account that in the curricula, the subject teachers of the Macedonian language, and not the class teachers, are named as implementers of the teaching from the fourth to the sixth grade. Finally, the assessment or the evaluation of the students’ knowledge is realized both formatively and summative, in accordance with the assessment standards, but there are no rubrics for gradation of values in the assessment.

Conclusion

Based on the data presented in the seminar paper, it can be concluded that since the independence until today, two significant reforms have been implemented in the Macedonian educational system. The results from those two reforms are reflecting or will reflect in the students' achievements. The status of the teaching subject Macedonian language for the students from other communities is interesting for analysis, especially due to the absence of its defining as a second language which can significantly contribute standardization and affirmation in the context of scientific papers and research, further, to the preparation of textbooks in accordance with the teaching programs for which it is necessary to define it in didactics and methodology, etc. There are no textbooks available for the Macedonian language subject for students from other communities for the fourth grade, or rather they are in the process of being made, and the teaching is carried out by class teachers in the fourth and fifth grades for who is being assumed that are members of the other communities since they teach in a language other than Macedonian, so their expertise in teaching this subject is called into question, although according to the standard for teaching staff in the new curricula, subject teachers are encouraged to teach in the Macedonian language for students from other communities.

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